

Chairman's Report to Windermere & Bowness Chamber of Trade
10th December 2013

2013. We were told that this would be a good year following the Olympics, a year to build on from the successes of last year!

Sadly last year did not live up to expectation and I think that this year has only improved lately and only slightly. Businesses in our area have found the recession coming home to roost, but perhaps we should not be too pessimistic. There are early signs that trade may be picking up.

At the start of the year we had the boss of the LDNPA to a meeting to give his view on the Bowness Bay Masterplan! I think that I can say, the whole Chamber did not agree with what was said and to that effect I wrote to the Gazette and to all members to raise awareness of the issues.

Richard Rogers implemented a Bowness Bay discussion group! A goodly number attended this including Tim Farron our MP. Following this the LDNPA, Stephen Ratcliffe, was put under pressure. He eventually bowed to this and certain amendments were made to his Masterplan!

The summer found the Masterplan under the microscope of the Planning Inspector, Shelagh Bussey as part of the Allocations of Land documents.

The result for us is that there will not be road closures for the Glebe and the reduced parking will be addressed by the implementation of new parking designs to give lost spaces back, so we are told. We need to be vigilant as always, there is the possibility that other plans can creep under the wire! It is not an option to let things happen, expecting the best. If you want the best for your business and our area then you must be prepared to act, do not hold back, because no else will bat for you.

This year was another good year for Windermere in Bloom. Silver Gilt was awarded in three categories & Windermere and Bowness were also a Discretionary Award Nominee for the RHS Britain in Bloom Tourism Award.

Windermere Town twinning has not been able to get the Christmas market off the ground again this year due to a lot of legislation and apathy. The SLDC will perhaps offer the free use of Quarry Mount Car Park for the market, but only as one of the free days parking in December. This body is intent on making up the shortfall in their budget from the visitors to our area through us, their undisclosed tax collectors. We must stand up to them, but also work with them, as this situation will not change in the immediate future.

A Christmas market should be on every businesses wish list; this is a brilliant way forward at a time of year when daylight is not long enough for the traditional walker. The festive lights are getting better, but complacency does not make more lights. The very hard working Winter Lights committee needs more funding. I am sorry to say that Windermere & Bowness is being left behind, visit Ambleside and mark what they have done. Their shops also look more inviting. I have had several people remarking that we are doing a poor job with Christmas here. I was sorry that very few businesses managed to get their windows into Christmas mode to compliment the lights switch-on. Don't forget the Christmas Window competition!

One more thing I must mention and that is Fibre Broadband. The Chamber supports this and so must the members and all businesses, it is vital, for us to remain competitive and we are getting left behind, please fill in the online survey as emailed out to you already.

I must thank Adrian our secretary, treasurer and main committee! For all the work he does on your behalf, without him I feel the Chamber would have no teeth.

I have enjoyed my tenure of the Chairmanship, but have also found it frustrating. We need more members, more support and more active members, if the Chamber is to continue to have a valid voice within our community. We are listened to by the powers that be and are respected for our opinions, long may that continue.

I finish by asking you to support the incoming Chairman to the betterment of the Chamber and of course, ultimately, your businesses.

Simon Everett