

FIGURES OFFER HOPE FOR SOUTH LAKES TRADERS

Last updated at 15:04, Thursday, 17 February 2011

TRADERS in South Lakeland are optimistic after figures showed towns across the district have suffered fewer shop closures than the national average.

Nationally, the percentage of empty shops in high streets and towns stands at an average of 14.1 per cent.

Figures collated by South Lakeland District Council for the last quarter show that 16 shops out of 157, or 10.1 per cent, are empty in Ulverston.

In Windermere, only three out 114, or 2.6 per cent, are empty.

Six out of 142, or 4.2 per cent, of shops are closed in Bowness. And six out of 162, or 3.7 per cent, are closed in Ambleside.

Adrian Faulkner, secretary/treasurer of Windermere and Bowness Chamber of Trade, said: "I would certainly suggest that this area is bucking the national trend.

"I think there is a positive outlook among traders. I don't think it's all doom and gloom. Yes, it's hard, yes they are having to draw in their reigns a little bit, but I think overall there's a positive stance on trading for this year."

Mr Faulkner highlighted how Bowness and Windermere traders are very dependent on tourism and said the chamber had got involved in two schemes to build on that.

A business map showing all the traders who signed up to advertise with the publication proved a success, with all 20,000 copies taken and a reprint possibly on the way.

The chamber has also taken a page out in the Welcome to Lakeland guide.

Peter Winston, Ulverston Traders' Association secretary, said there are signs of recovery following the recent closure of some established town centre retailers.

Mr Winston said: "There is just that little signal here and there that there's more people looking to open businesses in Ulverston than looking to close. There's interest in the shops again, with people ringing up about opening. There's enough of those sort of enquiries to suggest things might turn around in another few months and that Ulverston might be picking up again."

A spokesman for the Ulverston Community Partnership, a quango of Ulverston Town Council which liaises with the traders' association, said: "The UCA recognises that empty shops in the town imply recession and decline even if we are better than the national average. In fact the partnership has established a fund for the renovation of shop fronts.

"It is obviously limited due to the economic climate but we believe it is a positive step to try and freshen up the look of our important retail offering."

South Lakeland's biggest shopping town, Kendal, has 44 empty shops out of 406. That's 10.8 per cent.

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Have your say

As ever there seems to be two sides to this story. Aidan and Mr Winston bulling things up and a some struggling shopkeepers stating the opposite.

Reality and optimism rarely share the same bed these days.

Posted by Frank Davies on 18 February 2011 at 11:53

Figures can be massaged, last week we lost a greengrocers, last month a pet shop, empty shops have been empty for 3 years, most businesses still trading are up for sale, business rates are 59p in the pound higher than major cities. Tourists pull in and go away, the solution so far has been to put posters in empty shops, these have been up so long they are beginning to look tatty, can we please have the Millom town figures as just as important a town as others in the Lakes or should be

Posted by business owner on 17 February 2011 at 20:14

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