



Brighton Farmers Market interim report

30 September 2013

About the Food Festival

The festival organisation operates two major festival periods in the city, every April and September, alongside a year-round programme of food and drink events including farmers markets, gourmet bus tours and tasting events with partner hospitality businesses. We also administer the Brighton Restaurant Association and run regular business-to-business events to match buyers with producers. Our International Chef Exchange initiative is raising the profile of the city and county across the globe with projects running in Maastricht, Rotterdam and Lyon, and plans underway for Toronto, Malaga and Grenoble in 2014. Interest has been shown in ICEX events in Dubai, Seattle, Perth and Miami.

Over the course of the year, we engage with around 160,000 consumers at our major events, plus in the region of 350 businesses across food and drink production, retail and hospitality. Despite being one of the largest food events in the UK, we are in the unique position compared to other food organisations, that whilst having specific community-driven objectives, we receive no public funding. The festival is a not-for-profit community interest company run by a voluntary board of directors.

About the Brighton Farmers Market

The market launched in April 2013 and runs every third Saturday of the month in a disused bus lane alongside the War Memorial on Old Steine. The market is organised by the Brighton & Hove Food and Drink Festival team, who also run the weekly Churchill Square Farmers Market on Wednesdays. We are currently undertaking a 12 month pilot of the site.

Stallholders

We've tried to ensure that we have a varied offering of fresh, local food ranging from meat, cheese and fruit and vegetables, to cakes, pastries and breads. We currently have only one 'hot' food stall in the form of takeaway curries and Indian snacks. The number of stalls increased from April to May, however the number of stalls decreased in June, July and August (see 'Competition' below).

Presently most stallholders are paying £50 of which £30 pays for gazebos and marshalling. We offered fresh fruit and vegetables, and fish, free stalls for the first six

months. Despite this, we have lost Laines Organic, Barcombe Organic and our fishmonger as they are not generating enough income to warrant their attendance.

Resourcing

The use of uniform gazebos – whilst highly desirable – is a huge overhead at £30 per stall. In other towns there is greater flexibility with stallholders supplying their own set-up, which may be an issue due to wind if we were to adopt at this location. The additional £20 goes towards subsidising the free pitches, and administrative, book-keeping and marketing costs. This additional income does not currently generate the festival organisation revenue to ensure the sustainability of the event in its current format, and certainly will not afford any revenue to be paid to the council in terms of a weekly license fee.

It is noted that in many towns – including neighbouring Shoreham – that their farmers market is managed by a paid council officer, and stalls are often owned and stored by the local authority. This keeps the cost of pitches down, whilst ensuring that the community is still getting access to locally grown food and drink, and the food economy is supported.

Consumer Demographics

The Saturday Brighton Farmers Market attracts significant footfall however the conversion rate is relatively low. Stallholders reflect to us that tourists aren't looking for fresh food but food to eat immediately, which most stallholders do not provide as we deliberately limited hot food for a variety of reasons. The number of residents shopping for food is much higher at the Churchill Square farmers market on Wednesdays which we believe reflects the greater frequency of the event plus the location is more accessible for older buying groups. Whilst there is a very obvious increase in interest in food from younger demographics, that doesn't necessarily mean they want to (or indeed know how to) actually prepare and cook from raw ingredients.

Competition

Both of our farmers market events are now competing for spend with the Street Diner events which are being held at increasing frequency in Brighthelm Gardens and St Peters (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday). The demand for street food in the city is currently very high, however we have had concerns fed back to us by local bricks and mortar restaurants, cafés and pubs that the event in Brighthelm Gardens is displacing spend rather than creating new footfall and spend. It has been reflected to us by stallholders that Street Diner is affecting our Wednesday market at Churchill Square, where we have no hot food offering.

Generally, competition for both consumer spend, and stallholder attendance, was high in June, July and August due to People's Day, the Mumford and Sons event in Lewes and the Brunswick Festival. Despite being asked to make a minimum three month commitment to the market, stallholders have followed the events where they feel they will generate most income, rather than see the long-term success of the market as being integral to their attendance (we lost the bread stall at the last minute for two consecutive months which damaged the consumer experience).

It is noted that the Open Market is due to launch at the end of the year. We have been in discussions with Ethical Properties to run a weekly artisan and farmers market at that location. If we were to proceed with this plan then this would probably mean that the current Old Steine site would become redundant. However, at this time there is concern from my fellow festival directors over the viability of the Open Market per se, so this is something that we'll need to consider closely over the coming weeks.

It may well be that there is simply too much 'noise' in Brighton to have a commercially sustainable regular farmers market. With consumers having limited spend, we are competing against not only supermarkets but also other food events and wider events and activities in the city. Our surrounding towns don't suffer from this noise – their market events are the highlight of the week and a big draw for residents and visitors.

It is noted that Petworth and Haslemere are both considering dropping their farmers markets.

Proposals to be considered

- In order to maintain operating on the current site, the council would need to waive all future fees
- We need to restructure the market so it is a combination of local farmers/producers, artisan produce from further afield and hot foods
- This location may simply be wrong, and further sites may need to be looked at. New Road is certainly the preferred option, although the licensing costs of using the site for 20-30 stalls is prohibitive
- The market is supported by funding from the council or another agency

Our Plans

- We will continue to run the market monthly in October and November, with the addition of some carefully considered hot food stalls to help build footfall
- Subject to stallholder support, on 7, 14, 21 December we would like to run a Christmas market event to generate greater awareness amongst both stallholders and consumers
- Decide in conjunction with council offers in January whether the above two activities have created a more sustainable operating environment, and as to whether a monthly (or weekly) farmers market event is actually viable at this site

27th September 2013

Chatham Place
Brighton,
BN1 3TN.

Head of Regulatory Services,
P.O. Box 780,
Bartholomew House,
Bartholomew Square,
Brighton,
BN1 1JP.



Dear Mr. Nicholls,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISC PROVISIONS) ACT 1982
SCHEDULE 4/STREET TRADING

I understand the above notice to mean that the Council is seeking to allow street trading in the Memorial Way part of the Old Steine.

I am therefore objecting to the idea of enabling all types of "street trading" to be allowed in this particular section of the Old Steine in Brighton.

I feel that only specific or licensed events for relevant memorial/commemorative events should take place at this particular location e.g. poppy selling or other relevant commemorative activities.

It should be made clear what part of the Old Steine you regard as "Memorial Way"; what type of activities are meant by "street trading"; and what is meant by a "Consent Street".

Please could you submit this response to the relevant Committee and give me a written response if possible.

Yours sincerely,