

SME DIRECTORY PROPOSAL

Definitions and Abbreviations

For the purposes of this document a Subscriber is a business who lists themselves on a directory. A user is a member of the public using a directory site.

Background

Leighton Buzzard Directory is a directory listing site for the Leighton Linslade area hosted at Leighton BuzzardDirectory.co.uk.

The directory has been set up by Andrena Carden-White Owner/Director of local community magazine, Bee Local Magazine which has been published in Leighton Buzzard since 2012.

Bee Local Magazine has operated a directory in one style or another since it began and for the majority of that time it has been a free to use service for any business in the local area. Although a natural adjunct to Bee Local Magazine, Andrena has always viewed it as a service to the community and not an integral part of her business.

Bee Local Magazine's own directory, Bee Local Directory will be switched off once the Leighton Buzzard Directory is fully operational. Bee Local Directory has approximately 150 businesses listed at the time of writing.

Rationale

Small and Medium Enterprises in the Leighton Linslade area are felt to be under supported by the Town Council in terms of facilitating visibility and raising awareness of the services they offer, particularly true for owner operator businesses based from home but also any business without a 'shop front'. Apart from the Business Network Event it is challenging to find initiatives that can achieve this.

Andrena, is a member and sponsor of the annual Business Network Event. As part of discussions on the committee it has been highlighted many times that there is no single place for businesses particularly services professionals, and trades to be listed and a privately owned business directory would not be suitable. The solution was to provide the community directory for all that was unbranded and could be supported and publicised by LLTC. Thus, taking away the weight of set up and admin from the Town Council to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Collaboration

The Leighton Buzzard Directory has been set up with SME's in the service, trade and professional industries in mind to run alongside the other proposed initiative that will provide a website 'shop front' and delivery services for retailers. Once completed Leighton Buzzard Directory will provide a menu link to "shop locally" (or similar) which will lead the public to the other site and will be reciprocated to "find a local service" (or similar). Working with LLTC to ensure that brand match across both sites is delivered will give users a continuity of service. The needs and functions for the users of each site is different, for example most home businesses would not want their address published however this is an essential function for the

retail sector, a production showcase is ideal for retail but not for trades and service professionals. Therefore, it makes sense that to have two sites collaborating that meet the needs of the subscriber

Functionality

The site functions via a front-end submission form, the subscriber (a business who would like to list themselves) can fill in a form with all their business details, this includes website and social media

links, images FAQs, opening times. Once completed the listing will be submitted for moderation – this is to check that the listing is not spam or outside of the Leighton Linslade geographical area (defined as a 6-mile radius from Market Cross). Once approved the subscriber will receive a notification that their listing has been published and will be given login details to edit their listing. Other functions can include coupons, menus, and announcements which they are then able to add.

The function of the site will remain purely as a directory, it will not be another 'local news' site or used for other purposes, this ensure it will not conflict with other businesses and sites in the town and will also keep admin to an absolute minimum.

Sustainability

Once the initial population of the directory is completed, as this is a subscriber submission site, moderation take only a couple of minutes. Administration can be carried out by anyone who is given that correct level of permission. Subscribers are able to edit their own listings so they can remain current without onerous admin updates being required at the back end. A FAQs sheet and video tutorial will be provided on the site, but should there be problems with listings then a support email will also be provided. Support and admin will be undertaken by Bee Local Magazine.

Launch

The timeline for launch is planned the first week in October. Allowing for the back-to-school/back to work time to pass but before schools break up for half-term at the end of October. This will allow businesses to re-group following the summer holidays and this is when they typically are starting to plan their seasonal marketing towards Autumn and Christmas.

Pre-launch there will be a number of test businesses invited to submit listings to report on subscriber experience and to eliminate any problems. Following this the aim is to migrate current Bee Local Directory subscribers to the new site. Then to invite businesses via LLTC BNE data to input their own businesses. Once moderation is completed on this first phase a publicity campaign to launch it to the wider business population can begin.

Support

As mentioned, the ongoing maintenance of the site will take minimum admin time however initial set up and population of the site will require additional administration time.

Administration time to set up 150 users and invite to claim their listing plus back end login and approval.

Admin training time @£15 per hour. Total £30
6-8hour delivery @£15 per hour. Total £281.25 - £375

LLTC to send out BNE invitations to submitted
Mailchimp set up and liaise with Andrena

Marketing and Advertising

Marketing the new site will be collaboration between Bee Local Magazine, LB First and Leighton Linlode Town Council. Bee Local Magazine will contribute space to promote the directory in the

first instance and campaigns can be continued on social media. An annual reminder campaign to list your business would be easy achieve alongside the Business Network Event.

The cost of hosting, maintaining, and administering the site is provided by Bee Local Magazine. There is no financial gain to Bee Local Magazine