

Rye Information Point – August and September 2020

August started slowly, but business built steadily over the course of the month. September improved still further, aided by good weather for the first two-thirds of the month.

	Total income	Daily average	Average spend per transaction
August	£1199	£59.95	£3.90
September	£2107	£84.28	£3.45

All figures ex VAT

After two months of trading it is clear that the distancing requirements severely hinder sales, as people are reluctant to browse – either because they are nervous about being in shops for any period of time, or because the limited number allowed inside often causes those browsing to feel rushed if others are waiting. We are also now trading in a recession.

However, the number of information enquiries handled has been encouraging. The average number of enquiries per day is approximately 40. The majority of these are visitor enquiries. This information service has proved particularly useful in the post-lockdown period, as a majority of businesses and attractions had made alterations to hours, or the function, of their operations. As a result, the Information Point is successfully able to keep visitors up-to-date, with current details – particularly as most printed material is now incorrect.

The majority of Rye’s attractions remain closed, but people have been encouraged to visit anyway after receiving descriptions of what to see (despite the closures), and encouragement from the information assistants that there is much more to Rye than just a visit to the Museum, Heritage Centre or Lamb House.

Product sales bear this trend out, with the demand for maps, books on walking and cycling routes, and history books high. Stock ordering has been kept to the bare minimum – with only small orders made, primarily for maps. The focus is on clearing stock brought from the HC, in order to improve the product range for next season.

The information assistants have also dealt with a variety of resident’s enquiries relating to the council (previously handled by the TC and DTC). Their knowledge of how to respond to the range of queries received is increasing all the time, enabling them to successfully assist members of the public with reporting potholes, trip hazards, missed bin collections, fly tipping reports, housing requests, car park complaints – to name but a few.

All staff are preparing for the enquiries and complaints that will be an inevitable part of the start of CPE from the end of September. Whilst visitor numbers are likely to tail off, as the weather deteriorates – we expect to see an increase in CPE related queries, particularly until the Library has reopened on 19 October.

It is impossible to forecast to the end of this year, let alone next, but currently we anticipate remaining on 6 day a week opening, until the end of October. We will then review the situation, before deciding on opening hours for November and December.

JN 30/9/20