

TOWN TEAMS

SCHOOLS



POLICE

CHARITIES

MAYORS

BIDs



LEPs



COUNCILS

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

A guide for convenience store retailers

ACS | the voice of
local shops

INTRODUCTION

Convenience stores operate in all communities across the UK and serve every member of society on a daily basis. We know that convenience stores are highly valued by their communities and ranked in the top three for businesses that have a positive impact on the locations they trade. In order for convenience stores to maintain their valued status in communities, retailers must be ready to engage at all levels with a broad group of local stakeholders. The options for local engagement are vast, with the need to consider communicating with a range of different partners.

This guide aims to support convenience retailers to consider how to engage locally. The guidance will help convenience retailers to:

- Understand the changing shift towards local decision making
- Identify who the most important people are to engage with locally
- Learn new practical ways to engage locally based on other retailers' experience

START LOCAL

From the outset we want convenience retailers to keep one rule in mind when considering their local engagement strategy:

Start at the shop door!

Build relationships with the people, groups and institution most local to you and your business as they are likely to make the biggest difference. The Police Community Support Officer operating in your area is going to have more of a direct impact on your business than the Police and Crime Commissioners.

Your Ward Councillor will be more influential over local decision making than your member of parliament. Create the foundation of good relationships around your business and build up from there.

WHO TO ENGAGE WITH?

Here we highlight some of the key local partners that local shops, both large and small, can consider engaging with. We explain later in the guide how you might attempt to work with or monitor their impact on your business and community.

Fill in the name and contact details for as many of the categories below and consider what contacts you know best and the areas where you might need to do more work to engage with different groups. Later on, this guide will help you learn more about the groups you are not currently engaged with.

<div>Business Improvement Districts and Town Teams</div>	BID or Town Team name:
	BID or Town Team contact details:
<div>Local Enterprise Partnerships and Growth Hubs</div>	LEP name:
	LEP contact details:

<div>Local Councils</div>	Ward Councillor name:
<div>Combined Authority</div>	Combined authority name:
	Directly elected mayor contact details:
<div>Police</div>	Police Community Support Officer name:
	Police Community Support Officer contact:
	Police and Crime Commissioner name:
	Police and Crime Commissioner contact:

<div>Local Media</div>	Name of local newspaper:
	Editor or reporter contact details:
	Name of local radio station:
	Editor or reporter contact details:
	Local community social media sites:

THE CASE FOR CONVENIENCE

The convenience sector generates over £37bn annually in sales through an estate of over 51,000 stores. Convenience stores (74% of which are run by independent retailers) employ around 390,000 people, providing flexible work for people of all ages and social demographics.



50,095 stores



390,000 jobs

According to the ACS Community Barometer (2016), Post Offices and Convenience Stores are the two services that have the most positive impact on a local area. Many convenience stores will have Post Offices operating within them as part of their wider service offering. The Community Barometer polled the opinions of consumers, retailers and local councillors.



Convenience stores are also highly active in their communities, with the ACS Local Shop Report (2016) reporting that on average, 84% of independent retailers across the UK have engaged in some form of community activity over the last year.

The most popular form of activity is collecting money for local or national charities, whether that be through a collection box on the till or through long term, targeted fundraising projects, but there are a significant proportion of retailers that are directly engaged with community events.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY



80% collect money for local or national charities



19% provide funding or in-kind support for community events



12% provide sponsorship to a local sports team or other community activity



5% Support community, council, or local business association projects

MAKING THE CASE FOR YOUR STORE

You should consider what information you can share with your community about the contribution that you make to the local area. Fill in the sheet below with details about your store in order to make the case for your business locally. This information is invaluable to help you reflect on the work you are doing locally and understand what more you can do.

Do not assume that the local community knows how many people you employ, how much you pay in business rates, how much you have invested to make your offer better and how much you support community activity. Presenting these facts to the right people in your community can make real differences to how your business is perceived locally.

My business employs people in the local community

My store is open hours a week serving local customers

My store provides the following services (e.g. Post Office, cash machine, home news delivery etc):

.....

.....

.....

.....

I have invested in my business over the last year

My business pays in business rates annually to fund local services

My business dedicates of space in store to fruit and veg and other healthy products

Describe the community activities, events or charity work that you have funded over the last 12 months

.....

.....

Describe the community activities, events or charity work that you plan to support over the next 12 months

.....

.....

SOCIAL MEDIA

I use the following to engage with customers in my business:



Twitter



Facebook



Instagram



LinkedIn



Pinterest



Snapchat



YouTube

LOCAL DECISION MAKERS

There are new political structures that have been created in communities across the UK like Police and Crime Commissioners and Metro Mayors.

As political appointments, you can lobby their offices to ensure your concerns are understood and considered in their agendas.

LOCAL COUNCILS

Local Councils are the centre of power in communities, engaging with the council on issues is key to aligning your business with their priorities or understanding how your business needs to adapt to local needs.

Local Councils are responsible for making key decisions that are relevant to your business, like trading standards priorities, planning policy, business rates collection and economic growth. Councils must be transparent about the decisions they make and publish all the details of their meetings on their websites under the 'Your Council' section of their website.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Most parts of England have two systems of local councils made up of district, borough or city Councils and the County Council. Other parts of England have one unitary authority like London boroughs and metropolitan boroughs.

Your ward councillor is an important individual to engage with as they will vote on issues in main council and sub committees that could affect your business. It is important that your local councillors know your business and the work you do in the community. You can find out about your local council on the Directgov Local Authority finder and you can find out who your local councillors are via Writetothem.com.

The council controls enforcement officers like the licensing team, environmental health team and trading standards teams. Part of these department's role is to advise businesses about compliance with the law so consider contacting them directly and inviting them in store. Your council website will host their contact details.

CASE STUDY: CHAZ CHAHAL, VILLAGE STORE (INKBERROW, WORCESTERSHIRE)

To support the opening of his new store in the centre of Inkberrow village and build connections with the local community, Chaz arranged for local councillors to host a meet and greet with customers at the store. Councillors held a morning surgery at the store with the opportunity to speak with customers about local issues.

Chaz said: "The meet and greet was a great way to show the store as a hub of the community but also for us to get to know our local councillors. At the earliest stages of buying the store I have kept the councillors up to date on the development of the store and this has paid dividends in terms of a close working relationship."



UNDERSTAND

Do you know who your local councillors are and what committees they sit on in the council?

Do you know the political leaders of your council?

ENGAGE

Invite your local councillor or relevant enforcement teams to your store to discuss your concerns

INFLUENCE

Get your councillor to raise an issue at a full council meeting or ask them to write to the chairman of the relevant committee (planning / licensing) that may affect your business

POLICE

Local shops are often victims of a range of different criminal activity from shop theft and anti-social behaviour to violent attacks and burglaries. Therefore engaging with your local police forces at the right level is an important part of community retailing.

The Government has introduced 40 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in every force area to make police forces more accountable to their communities. The role of the PCCs is to be the voice of the community and hold the police to account.

They are responsible for the totality of policing. PCCs aim to cut crime and deliver an effective and efficient police service within their force area. However, it may be more effective for business to engage with the neighbourhood policing team that operates in your area first.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

You can find out who the members of your local neighbourhood policing team are by visiting [Police.uk](https://www.police.uk). There are opportunities to meet with local policing teams at beat meetings. [Police.uk](https://www.police.uk) contains information on local policing priorities, action taken to address them and the latest data on local crime.

Police and Crime Commissioners have to develop police and crime plans that set out their priorities for the area. Police and crime plans are reviewed annually and you can suggest new priorities. You can find your police and crime commission and their police and crime plans via the Association of Police and Crime Commissioner website. Writing to your Police and Crime Commissioner about the challenges faced by your business will support them with the development of local police and crime plans.

CASE STUDY: JONATHAN JAMES - IN-STORE POLICE SURGERY, ELY (CAMBRIDGESHIRE)

Jonathan provided Cambridgeshire Police with back office space at one his stores free of charge. The arrangement allowed shoppers to discuss concerns with local officers and gives police a greater presence in the town. He found that the police presence led to a decrease in shop theft incidents.

Jonathan said: "Officers walk round the store and are a great visible deterrent. Then they make sure that they're available for customers to speak to at the front of the store."

CASE STUDY: ADRIAN COSTAIN, BOOTLE (LIVERPOOL)

Adrian Costain wrote to his Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable about the problem of alcohol duty fraud in the region. He arrange a meeting with his Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss the impact on his business and the local community. The Police committed to refocus efforts on businesses dealing non-duty paid goods.

UNDERSTAND

Who is your local PCSO?

Who is your local PC?

Who is your local Police and Crime Commissioner?

ENGAGE

Contact your local PCSO and PC and invite them into store to meet your staff

INFLUENCE

Write to your Police and Crime Commissioner about the challenges your business has to deal with like shop theft and anti-social behaviour.

MAYORS, COMBINED AUTHORITIES AND DEVOLUTION DEALS

Many councils have a civic mayor or chairman of the council. They carry out ceremonial duties and chair meetings, but can't make decisions about council business. 16 councils in England are currently led by directly elected Mayors and they have responsibility for all local services. The Government have also created a new 'Metro Mayor' position that oversee combined authorities and may have additional powers through devolution deals.

Combined authorities may be set up by two or more local authorities. They may take on statutory functions transferred to them by an Order made by the Secretary of State, plus any functions that the constituent authorities agree to share. There are new Devolution Deals currently under development by the Government, which are agreements to devolve more powers for local authorities to run services, such as business support services. Existing Devolution Deals include a range of new powers on public health, transport, licensing and much more.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

There are currently 16 directly elected Mayors across England and this is expected to increase over the next parliament. There are nine elections for newly appointed or existing Mayoral Elections coming up in 2017. You can find the latest details on the areas covered by directly elected Mayors [here](#).

The Local Government Association hosts a map of the existing Combined Authorities and Devolution Deals across England. There are currently 10 devolution deals that have been agreed in England for North East, Tees Valley, Sheffield City Region, Greater Lincolnshire, East Anglia, Cornwall, West of England, West Midlands, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester.

CASE STUDY: GREATER MANCHESTER DEVOLUTION DEAL

The Greater Manchester Devolution deal was agreed in 2011 and is the longest standing deal. The Devolution Deal describes both the offer of powers and budgets from central government, and the reforms and measures that Greater Manchester will need to deliver:

The creation of a newly directly elected Mayor for Greater Manchester with the following powers:

- Responsibility for devolved and consolidated transport budgets
- Powers over strategic planning, including the power to create a statutory spatial framework for Greater Manchester
- Take on the Role of Police and Crime Commissioner

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority will receive:

- Responsibility for devolved business support budgets, including the Growth Accelerator
 - Control of the apprenticeship grants for employers in Greater Manchester
 - Jointly commission the next phase of the work programme
-

UNDERSTAND

Do you trade in a combined authority area? If yes, when is the next election for the directly elected mayor?

ENGAGE

Check to see what powers they are bidding to be devolved to your area and how this will impact on your business

INFLUENCE

Write to your directly elected Mayor and invite them to your store

LOCAL ECONOMY

The Government are focused on driving more powers to communities by empowering local councils and creating new local and regional institutions.

New pieces of primary legislation, like the Localism Act and Cities and Local Government Act, have created new local institutions like Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Improvement Districts and more informal partnerships like town teams.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BIDs) AND TOWN TEAMS

BIDs are business-led partnerships focused on improving and enhancing commercial areas including town and city centres, commercial locations and industrial estates. There are now over 200 BIDs in operation around the UK and they mainly exist in town and city centres.

Town Teams are informal town centre partnerships that were set up as a result of the Government's Portas Review. They are local partnerships that exist to promote the town centre and enhance shopping areas for local consumers.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

BIDs are funded by a business rate levy of 1% for the businesses in an area, a BID can only be formed after a ballot of local businesses and majority vote in favour.

BIDs exist for a range of different reasons but largely to enhance local business areas to increase footfall and trade. BIDs may also include provisions for discounts or exemptions from the levy (for example, for properties below a certain rateable value).

BIDs want to engage with all businesses in their area to understand their needs and views on the local strategy. British BIDs is the leading organisation for BIDs and there is more information their website on where to find your nearest BID or how to set up your own BID.

There are over 330 town teams that operate across the UK, many of which have received central Government funding to support their activity. These partnerships will hold regular meetings with local businesses that trade on high streets and local parades. You can find the latest work by town teams on the Association of Town City Management website.

CASE STUDY: RAVI JHANGIANI, TAVISTOCK ONE STOP

Ravi, a One Stop retailer from Tavistock, engaged with the Tavistock BID and their programme to promote the town centre. At the request of the local BID Ravi store offered to host the local tourist information centre in his store. This was in response to the closure of the local information office that was viewed as essential to the town .

Ravi saw an overall increase in footfall as result of taking on the tourist information centre but also made invaluable contacts in the local BID and the wider community.



UNDERSTAND

Where is your nearest BID or Town Team?

What is their latest strategy document for the area?

What businesses currently pay the BID levy and sit on the management board of the Town Team?

ENGAGE

Can you meet with the BID manager or attend their next meeting / event?

INFLUENCE

Is there a forum for local businesses to attend that are not part of the business rates levy?

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS (LEPs) AND GROWTH HUBS

A LEP is a voluntary partnership between local authorities and businesses to determine local economic priorities for investment in infrastructure and job growth in an area. LEPs were established to bring together business and civic leaders across a functional economic area to prioritise investment to where it will most effectively drive growth; and to bring a strong business voice to local decision-making to drive sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation.

A growth hub is a local public/private sector partnership led by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Growth hubs bring together public and private sector partners to promote, co-ordinate and deliver business support. They provide a mechanism for integrating national and local business support so it is easy for businesses to access and to support them to start-up, scale-up and thrive

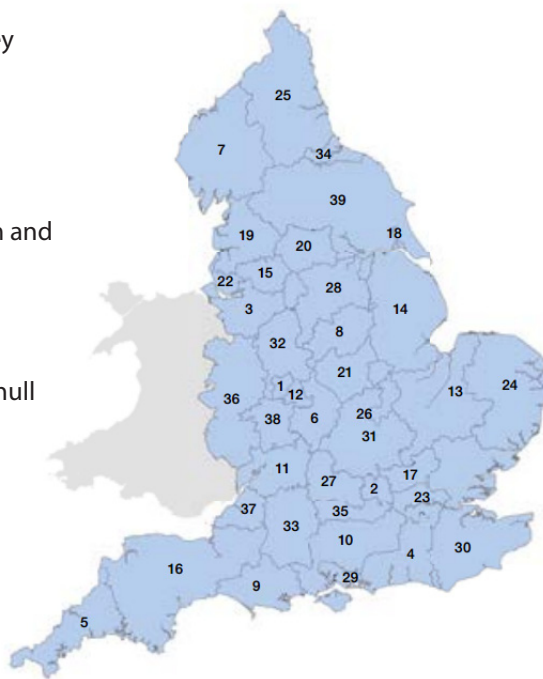
HOW TO GET INVOLVED

There are 39 LEPs that are currently in operation in England. Eight of the LEPs across England have retail representatives on their Boards but they also want to engage with smaller local businesses. The LEP Network has all the information you need to find your nearest LEP.

For support from Government please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) or contact the Business Support Helpline on Telephone: 0300 456 3565 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm) and to access support from your local Growth hub visit the Growth Hub Finder Map

LEPS IN THE UK

1. Black Country
2. Buckinghamshire Thames Valley
3. Cheshire and Warrington
4. Coast to Capital
5. Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
6. Coventry and Warwickshire
7. Cumbria
8. Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
9. Dorset
10. Enterprise M3
11. Gloucestershire
12. Greater Birmingham and Solihull
13. Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough
14. Greater Lincolnshire
15. Greater Manchester
16. Heart of the South West
17. Hertfordshire
18. Humber
19. Lancashire
20. Leeds City Region
21. Leicester and Leicestershire
22. Liverpool City Region
23. London
24. New Anglia
25. North East
26. Northamptonshire
27. Oxfordshire
28. Sheffield City Region
29. Solent
30. South East



31. South East Midlands
32. Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire
33. Swindon and Wiltshire
34. Tees Valley
35. Thames Valley Berkshire
36. The Marches
37. West of England
38. Worcestershire
39. York, North Yorkshire and East Riding

UNDERSTAND

What LEP are you covered by?

Which Growth Hub serves the LEP area?

ENGAGE

What support and help does the Growth Hub provide?

Are there any networking opportunities or events that you can attend?

INFLUENCE

Is the LEP reviewing their Strategic Economic Plan?

Is there a consultation process for contributing?

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Local shops are at the heart of communities and ongoing engagement with your customers and surrounding community is a fundamental principle of being a local retailer.

These are the most common ways retailers engage with their local communities based on the ACS Voice of Local Shops survey.

There are even more great examples of retailers engaging with their communities on the ACS website.

Visit www.acs.org.uk/localengagement to find out more

CHARITIES

The most favoured form of local shop community engagement (78%) is collecting money for charities in store through collections at tills or campaigns in stores. Many retailers that choose to collect a levy voluntarily for the the carrier bag charge are giving the money to local charities.

You can find details of the local charities in your areas on the Local Giving website.

CASE STUDY: JOEY AND JULIE DUHRA

Joey and Julie take an active role within their Telford community. The store has raised money for a range of charitable causes, such as a local hospice. They have also raised over £40,000 for individual causes.

Jules says: "I am a people person so I work my network in the community to take our charity work to another level. Raising money at the till is positive but it will not enhance your position in your community, to do that you have to invest time and make community engagement part of your business."

"I don't do the charity work to get more people in the store but when they see the work you are doing it inevitable makes a difference. I would say to other retailers that you have to bold when considering what charity work to do and make sure it will make a really big difference to the community you serve."



SCHOOLS

Local schools are an important partner for local shops and in the community. Whilst there are opportunities to engage with schools and sponsor events, a more in-depth and long term relationship is needed to deal with a range of issues. There may be issues about student's safety and access to the store or you can support student to make healthy food choices in store. Many retailers also choose to sponsor school events or provide refreshments. .

You can find the details of schools in your local area via the Gov.uk "Find a school" search tool with contact details for senior teachers.

CASE STUDY: DENNIS AND LINDA WILLIAMS, BROADWAY PREMIER (EDINBURGH)

Dennis and Linda regularly organise and provides food for the breakfast club of the local primary school. This has been recognised by local politicians and the MSP for helping to address health inequalities in the area and showing how local community shops and schools can partner for the benefit of the local area.

In addition to this, they have launched a 'fruit club' initiative to get local kids to eat more healthily by issuing loyalty cards rewarding them with a free piece of fruit for every four they pick up on the way to school.



CASE STUDY: PAUL AND PINDA CHEEMA

The local school is located by a busy road that is used by lorries that deliver to the local shops. Paul and Pinder approached the local school and offered to run a road safety campaign with the support of their wholesalers. They took a delivery lorry into the local school to support with educating the kids about road safety.

During the exams times at the local school Paul and Pinda offered free healthy refreshments and soft drinks for the children before their exams. They provided the school with fresh fruit from the store and soft drinks.

Paul and Pinda Cheema said: "This is the school that we used to attend so we want to provide as much support as we can. The road safety event was really important because there are a lot of lorries going past the school and we want to equip the children to be safe when crossing the roads. We provide the school with refreshments for many events but we were particularly keen to help the children directly during exam time."

SPORTS TEAMS

Sponsoring local sports teams is a great way to get publicity for your business and promote physical activity in the community.

Local sports teams will have websites and will have a range of sponsorship opportunities available.



LOCAL MEDIA

Local communities are often defined by their local media in both old and new forms. Newspapers run local campaigns to save local services and community and social media groups are increasingly prominent in keeping local communities in contact.

Hyper local websites and local social media groups are a good way to keep up to date with your community and learn more about what they think about your role in the community.

CASE STUDY: MANDEEP SINGH, PREMIER SINGH'S SHEFFIELD

Mandeep Singh from Premier Singh's in Sheffield uses social media to great effect to engage with his customers and the local community. Their Twitter account @Premiersinghs has over 5,000 followers and their Facebook group, Singh's Premier has nearly 14,000 members covering their three stores in the Sheffield area. Mandeep has two clear rules on how to use social media; keep it focused on your customers & community and measure success on the amount of interaction you have with your customers, not the number of followers.

Mandeep said: "You need to make sure your social media accounts are at least updated once every day and use different ways to communicate; short videos, films and competitions. One of our most recent competition received over 100 interactions in the first 25 minutes - these interactions should be the measure of your social media success.

"We focus a great deal on communicating local community activity such as events we have sponsored or sports teams we are supporting. However, you have to be selective about what you promote, make sure you are fully personally invested in the activity you support and steer clear of paid for promotions."



COMMUNITY EVENTS

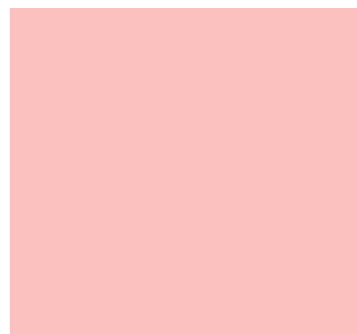
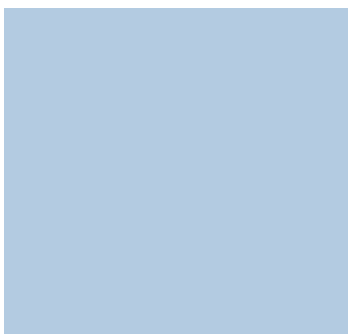
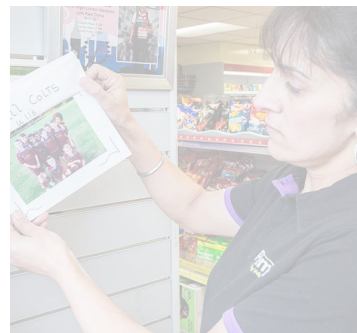
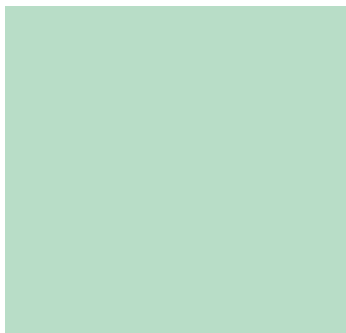
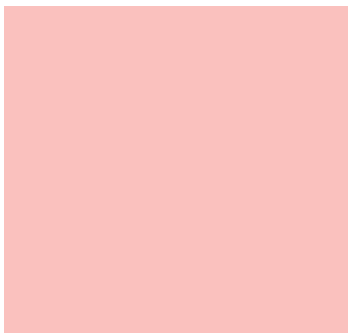
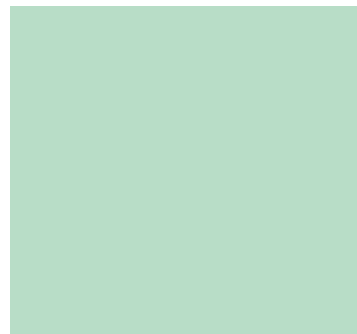
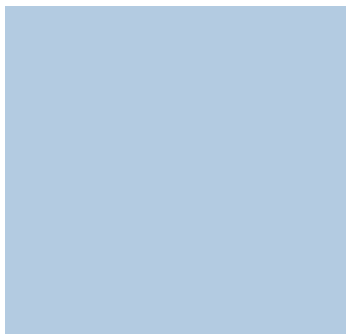
Supporting community events with sponsorship or provision of food is a positive way to enable community cohesions and 30% of local shops do this regularly. Local community events like village fetes, bank holiday weekend events or annual calendar events like Guy Fawkes Night or Valentine's Day. These events are driven locally and likely to be organised by local community groups or the local council.

CASE STUDY: JESSICA HUGHES, SOUTHERN CO-OP

The Southern Co-operative encourages local stores to engage with their communities through donations of goods, funds, time and fundraising. An example of this engagement with one of our Portsmouth stores demonstrates the mutual community and business benefits that can be gained from this approach.

"Our support for a local Christmas fair involved participation in planning meetings, volunteer time on the day, donation of goods (tree decorations, mince pies, raffle prize) with a total cost to the business of £303. The outcomes on the day were that we increased sales as a direct result of the event by over £2000 (which also was responsible for a two week post event uplift in predicted sales) our brand was seen by over 3,000 people and was part of all event literature and post event coverage (including social media, newspaper articles and radio coverage).

"Long term benefits have been improvement in perception of the business and engagement with key individuals in the community, most notably with the local councillors who were part of the planning committee. Through these relationships, issues around deliveries and road traffic were brought to our attention quickly yet informally through improved communication, which meant we were able to better liaise with the councillors, the traffic officers and delivery services to ensure a mutually agreeable solution was found. This resulted in a change of location of parking restrictions, which has allowed us to manage deliveries better without impacting on valuable parking spaces for the public."



For more details on ACS:
Visit: www.acs.org.uk
Call: 01252 515001
Follow us on Twitter: @ACS_localshops

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