

## **Christmas Working Group meeting notes, actions, and report to Full Council. 30.01.2024**

**Attendees:** Cllr Brian Rothero  
Cllr Steve Thomas  
Cllr Steve Campodonic  
Cllr David Devauden  
Rev Rob Waygood  
Mrs Ting Waygood  
Mrs Michelle Lewis (Pembrokeshire Learning Centre)  
Mrs Nicki Hill-Thomas (Pembrokeshire Learning Centre)

**Apologies:** Rev Alan Chadwick  
Ms Jessica Bowler

### **Report and feedback on Christmas 2023 events.**

A number of events were arranged by Neyland Town Council as part of what was billed a Christmas Extravaganza weekend, with planning and organising beginning in August 2023. The events were originally scheduled for the weekend of the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> December, however we were forced into a change due to Neyland Community Hub later scheduling identical events that weekend, and moved the events to the weekend of the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> December. This turned out to be extremely fortunate as we could not have asked for better weather on Friday the 1<sup>st</sup>, the main evening of celebrations.

The events were to include Santa's Sleigh Run around Neyland, Santa's Grotto and a Christmas market with fairground rides and hot food on the Friday, a Santa's 5km fun run during Saturday day, and Christmas party nights in Neyland's public houses in the evening, and then on Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup>, lighting of the Town Christmas tree, followed by the Christmas Miscellany service. Despite planning beginning in August, little progress was made with arrangements until November, when work was passed backed to just a few Councillors. One of the biggest issues with the lack of progress was a failure to advertise events in good time, resulting in the Clerk advising Full Council that the Christmas Market and Fair should not go ahead. However, the decision was made to push on with all events, but with little more than three weeks to go, the failure to advertise effectively led to additional pressures, and a great deal of effort was needed to overcome the issue.

As a consequence, with numbers signed up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> December Santa Run stalling in the mid 20's, and a desire to ensure that our generous sponsors Dragon LNG were supporting a strong event, the decision was made to postpone the Run until Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup>. This delay provided opportunity to increase advertising using Facebook, our website, increased leafletting, arranging additional banners, and directly promoting our Run at Tenby's Santa Fun Run and the Broad Haven Pudding Run using banners and leafletting. As a result of this, and adding an additional sign-up tier, competitor numbers were over 50. There was an additional benefit to the change in date, much better weather on the 16<sup>th</sup> than the all-day down pour we experienced on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The events on the **1<sup>st</sup> December**, were a huge success. More than 250 children got to see Santa in his Grotto, set up in the Army Cadet Detachment Building. The Grotto looked fantastic and has had a great deal of praise from members of the community, both on the night and in the following weeks. The Grotto benefitted from a Magician who entertained children and adults alike, which greatly

helped with the queuing process. The Christmas Market had 13 traders and the Mayor's Charity raffle table, up from the original three or four that had initially booked, and the market was bustling from the time it opened until almost 9pm, with hundreds of people enjoying all that was offered. We also benefitted from a great performance from the Neyland Ladies Choir, who once again did Neyland proud. There has been a great deal of positivity reported about the Market, including on setting and location, and whilst feedback has not been received from all traders, everyone that has been spoken to has been extremely positive with people already asking if they can book for next year, and they are also spreading the word to their trader friends, describing the market as one not to be missed. Both food and ride traders also gave positive feedback and have asked to return this Christmas. The event benefitted from Closure of Neyland Hill, achieved within just three weeks and communicated to residents via letter, and coned and signposted at no cost; the generous donation of area lighting, and The Legionnaire getting in the Christmas spirit with a fantastic light display and Christmas music. There has been a request for a ride suitable for younger children at future events.

The **2<sup>nd</sup> of December** obviously saw the postponement of the Santa Run, and whilst Neyland's Public Houses were contacted about events for the Saturday evening, due to the pressures experienced from arrangements for events being made late in the day, this contact was unfortunately too late to be able to support Publicans with arrangements. Fortunately, no negativity has been reported about this.

Sunday the **3<sup>rd</sup> of December** saw the lighting of the Town Christmas Tree at Policeman's Bank, the first time such an event has been put on in the Town. Despite dreadful weather, there was a good community turnout, and we were very pleased that the Tree was lit by Curtis McCaffrey and Cameron Britt from Neyland Community School, our Christmas card competition winners. Placing of the Christmas Tree at Policeman's Bank, following a successful Community consultation process, could not have happened without the support of Ogi, Network Plus+, Barrie Jones Electrical, and CEF Electrical. Thank you all for your generosity. Following lighting of the Tree, the Town's Miscellany Service took place in Bethesda Baptist Chapel. Whilst there were a couple of late notice performance cancellations, the service was well attended and we once again benefitted from a performance by the Neyland Ladies Choir, along with the readings and singing of carols. Seasonal refreshments were enjoyed by all after the service.

Raffle ticket sales in aid of the Mayor's chosen charity, the Megan's Starr Foundation, took place throughout the evening of the 1<sup>st</sup>, during refreshments following the Miscellany service, and at a further local community event. Due to a lack of resources, we were unfortunately not able to sell tickets during the fun run. Raffle ticket sales and money from other donations, raised a total of £486.61.

The Santa Fun Run took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> without hitch or incident. During Cllr Thomas' visit to the Tenby Santa Run, he was informed that in the first two years of the run, competitor numbers were low, and it was only in the third year that numbers began to grow to expectations. They now have over 100 competitors a year signing up. It is considered that with numbers approaching 60 in the first seasonal event for some years, that Neyland's Santa Run was a great success. There was a great atmosphere, everyone appeared to enjoy themselves, and Dragon LNG, our generous sponsor was very happy with the event. We benefitted from the donation of winner's prizes for the two runs being donated by Dragon LNG, and selection boxes were used for additional prizes and to show our

appreciation to our teenage volunteers from the Megan's Starr Foundation, who did a fantastic job assisting in the marshalling of the race, as did Nicki Hartevelde, the charity's founder. Following the 2023 Run, we now have enough Santa suits and medals to cover the next two Runs.

Notes for future races, the race overall would have benefitted from additional marshals from within the Council, laying out of the course, signage, etc takes several hours and must be carried out the night before the race, advertise early, and work in partnership with similar races within the County.

The remainder of the chocolate selection boxes were donated to the Christmas Lunch that was arranged by Cllr Rothero and Dinty Jenkins, leaving the Haribo selection boxes to be donated to the Bethesda Chapel Food Bank.

Regarding advertising, all events definitely benefitted from leafletting, not only with the placement of flyers in public places around Town, but also with the leafletting of the vast majority of households within Neyland. The working group would like to thank Rob and Ting Waygood, Andrew Desborough, Cllr Alison Richards, Ceri Rothero, and Jackie Thomas for their help with this, it was greatly appreciated.

Some of the promotional banners have unfortunately been damaged in the time that they were up and will need to be replaced for future years.

When considering income and expenditure, whilst not all figures are finalised, we have an estimated surplus of approximately £2880. This is as a result of the current estimated expenditure being £16,207.04 (Christmas lighting electricity bill estimated at £1,050.00, estimated expenses claim of £50, additional contribution to the Mayor's Charity of £63.39, and additional signage order listed below.) and the provisional income being £19,154.45 (awaiting payment of two donations totalling £1,500). It is the view of the Working Group that this surplus, when finalised, is transferred to earmarked funds for future Christmas events, and is in addition to the current budget figure of £15,000.

**Action:** Order additional course signage (@ £6.99 each): 4x "Caution Runners"  
4x "Caution"  
4x "Runner with straight up arrow"  
1x "Turning Point right arrow"  
2x "Blank Sign"  
2x Cable Ties (@£4.99 each)  
Total cost including delivery: £145.59 (inc VAT of £20.77) Order now to  
utilise money remaining within this year's budget.

**Action:** Deliver selection boxes to Bethesda Chapel.

**Recommendation:** That a donation of £550 be made to the Mayor's Charity, the Megan's Starr Foundation, an extremely worthwhile local cause.

**Recommendation:** That any and all finalised budget surplus be transferred to earmarked funds for future Christmas events, and that the final sum is in addition to the current budget figure of £15,000.

## Plans and recommendations for 2024

**Mayor's observations:** I was upset, by the very poor response we had from both Neyland Community School and the Youth Club during the weekend, particularly the lack of attendance at the Miscellany service. We donate significant sums of money to the Youth Club, and frequently contribute to the school. We also have Councillors who are either on the school Board, or represent the Council at the Youth Club, and I am also disappointed in their lack of effort and support for a Council run event.

As has been noted earlier, whilst support from a number of quarters would have been appropriate and appreciated, all 2023 events were a success and there has been a great deal of positive feedback, along with requests for all events to be repeated this year. However, we do not only want to repeat the events, the Working Group want them to grow.

The Christmas Market was very successful from both a trader and visiting public point of view. We could book a dozen pitches right now, so it has the potential to double in size with the word-of-mouth promotion that has occurred. Some Members of Council have asked why the Friday evening event did not take place at the Hub. As previously reported, there was a desire to spread events around the Town, and of course involve the Church in our Christmas events. The feedback has strongly suggested that the St Clement's Road location, and the way that the market was managed and promoted, and the event laid out, that it would be the preferred choice in the future. Both The Legionnaire and Gunning's Bar are reported to have done well, and the Council should be justifiably proud of supporting the Town's businesses.

Members of staff from the Pembrokeshire Learning Centre joined us for this meeting of the Working Group. They have proposed a partnership to expand the event with the aim of creating Pembrokeshire's very own Winter Wonderland. The PLC have the opportunity, with the right support to run an Ice Rink which will take up the staff carpark. The Rink would run Monday to Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> December, throughout the school week for Pembrokeshire schools, and between 4pm and 10pm on the Friday evening for the community, as part of our Christmas Fair. The PLC are happy to arrange additional community use evenings according to demand. This is a great opportunity to bring something special to Neyland and build on all of the effort that went into the Christmas 2023 events. The PLC have also offered the use of other areas of the site, along with halls and rooms. With the increase in attendance that is likely to result from the Ice Rink, expanded Market, potentially more rides, along with the positive reputation of the event, it is highly likely that a closure of part of St Clement's Road will be needed. There will potentially also be a requirement for additional lighting and other infrastructure, the details of which can be considered at a later date.

Due to the fall of this year's calendar, we propose that this year's events are spread across three weekends. The lighting of the Christmas Tree should take place on Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> December and be followed by the Miscellany or Town Carol Service. Santa's sleigh run, Grotto, Christmas Market, Fair and Ice Rink should take place on the 6<sup>th</sup> (with additional community skating days a possible option). The Santa 5km Fun Run should take place on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> December. Additional arrangements for Christmas themed nights within Neyland's Public Houses should also be explored in partnership with Publicans. The previously suggested Christmas Tree festival should also be explored with St Clement's Church and Bethesda Chapel.

Whilst it is only January, considering the issues that were experienced with 2023 planning, we believe that it is prudent to make these recommendations and proposals at the earliest opportunity, ie. the February meeting of Full Council.

Hopefully more Councillors will be onboard this year, to help promote what will be a major event in the Town's calendar.

**Finally, we would like to thank the following for their most valuable support and assistance with Neyland Town Council's 2023 Christmas events, without your generosity the events would not have been such a success:**

Dragon LNG  
Valero Pembrokeshire Oil Terminal  
Egnedol Energy  
RWE Pembroke  
Ogi  
Network Plus  
CEF Pembroke  
Barrie Jones Electrical  
Gareth Hughes Motors  
Neyland Ladies Choir  
Rev Alan Chadwick, St Clement's Church  
Rev Rob Waygood and Mrs Ting Waygood, Bethesda Baptist Chapel  
The Cadets and Staff of Neyland Detachment, Army Cadet Force  
1<sup>st</sup> Neyland Brownies  
Milford Haven Round Table  
Nicki Hartevelde, her family, and volunteers from the Megan's Starr Foundation  
Sunbelt Rentals  
Forest Traffic Management Neyland Marina  
Dale Sailing  
Neyland Marina  
The Legionnaire  
Snack Shack  
Johnny Swales  
Paul Davies  
Andrew Desborough  
Ceri Rothero  
Jackie Thomas  
Steve and Christine Thomas

And of course, Santa and Mrs Clause for making Neyland's children's time in the Grotto so special!