



# Independent Businesses

*The heart of your local community*



The last year has affected our lives in so many ways, not just on a personal level but this year has also had a dramatic impact on small businesses and the livelihood of those who strive to keep them afloat in our local area. The Impact of Covid has ultimately affected and changed the way we shop, the way we think and the way we socialise. Because of the lockdown restrictions we have been left with little alternative but to do some of our shopping online, which ultimately means that we are more likely to turn to large companies for these purchases. Though large retailers offer a vast range of products and that they are convenient, they tend to not offer the personal touch, whilst also losing the ability to offer something a little special and unique, as most of their product range is mainstream. Critically, by very nature of their corporate structures, they are dominated by profit, results and shareholders.

In contrast to the dominance of mainstream retailers, small business hold a really important place in our daily lives, yet many people seem not realise their true value. Whether it is

the local nursery, pet shop, gift shop, restaurant/coffee shop, or using local registered trades such as plumbers, electricians and joiners, these companies create employment for local people whilst also providing a valuable service to the local community. By using the many local services and businesses this money is reinvested back into the area and the local community, which in turn creates not only the individuality of our local area but it also part of the sole and character of our local towns and villages that we all love, or to put it another way, the very essence of why we each chose to live where we do. Imagine on the other hand a local community with no shops, no soul, no community hub, just a huge distribution warehouse whose sole purpose is to sacrifice the individuality of our communities for convenience.

On a personal note, I should also mention the importance of supporting our local craft, Christmas and spring fair events, as well local farmers markets and weekly market stalls. There are an incredible number of local people who bring their skill, creativity and personal experience to each of these outlets and who have invested a great deal of time and energy into providing their wares. I know from personal experience just how priceless it is when somebody takes the time to stop at your stall and ask a question or two.

So, did you realise that by staying local and by shopping at independent stores and craft events:

- Keeps the business open;
- Enhances and boost the local economy;
- Create local jobs for local people;
- Provides an ability to buy a one off, bespoke piece.
- Purchasing items that are not mainstream;
- Receive a personalised service;
- Craft events and fairs gives you the ability to talk to the artist who has made the product, and to explore and understand the creative process;
- Supporting the artist helps foster talent and creates the next entrepreneurs;
- Local events helps build and support local communities;



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- Ethically – It gives you the ability to source and trace where the product has come from, such as meat at your local Farmers market;
- Facilitates engagement and social well-being with your local community.
- Gives you enjoyment and gets you out and about - we all like doing social things.

To summarise, it is a fact that small companies, sole traders and local businesses have been severely impacted in 2020 and some are now fighting to survive. When lockdown number two is over I would implore you to remember why it is just so important to support your local businesses. I know many are doing so already and we are extremely grateful for this. We all have a role to play in supporting our local area and just remember “if we don’t use them we will lose them”.

Think local, shop local, socialise local.



*Rachel*