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Outline Notes from Residents Focus Group Meetings

Two focus group meetings were held recently for residents on 12th April. Two sessions were held – 2.00 pm and 7.30 pm. The following notes represent the discussions from both sessions.

Following introductions a range of questions were asked by the students. Some issues raised other comments and issues and these have been included under the headings.

Residents were asked how they perceived the tourism sector. Points raised by residents included:

- Litter is an issue
- The village would benefit from a new image – but a complete change would create a cost to shops. We need to make what we do better or totally transform Matlock Bath
- Difficulties with selling property as Matlock Bath is not perceived as an attractive place to live
- The village needs to attract and promote activities for all socio-ethnic groups.
- There are many rented properties, holiday homes and flats.
- The number of children attending the local school is low and the village does not seem to be able to attract young families. There is a need for affordable housing.
- A more diverse range of shops is needed, less emphasis on chip shops and cafes.
- Renting shops and paying business rates too expensive
- Discussion on Matlock Bath and motorbikes with a diversity of views expressed
- Although Matlock Bath is a tourist venue, residents gain little benefit from this
- Matlock Bath needs to attract not only day trippers but those who come for longer periods, on holiday.
- Very busy at the weekends, mid week quiet, out of season months not busy at all – seems to be one extreme to the other
- Out of season able to enjoy the quiet village vs during high season not been able to get out
- Attractions seem weather dependent
- No all year round attractions as they close in the winter and if it rains people do not visit.
- More planting around the village to make it attractive
- Matlock Bath has great potential which is currently unfulfilled
- Needs to be more pro-active in advertising walks etc.
- Better signage to show people routes of walks
- Make more of the river and Lovers Walks
- Tree management needs to be undertaken
- Matlock Bath could be marketed as an outdoor/adventure centre – cycling, caving, canoeing, climbing
- High Tor has the best limestone crag in the Peak District but it is not maintained and is becoming difficult to climb (The National Trust look after other climbing venues).

- Climbing today is a family activity, climbers bring their families and generally eat/drink after a climb
- A path on the opposite side of the river to Matlock and to Cromford would be good
- Footpaths in and around Matlock Bath are poorly signposted
- There is a lack of information about what is on offer
- Pathway to Cromford via Willersley would be good

Residents were then asked what image would residents like Matlock Bath to have. Points raised included:

- A more diverse range of shops
- Attract people to come for longer and spend more
- A hiking/walking destination – a walk from Matlock Bath to Cromford via Willersley
- Have a reputation for being open for most of the year rather than closed
- The Parish Council to support residents
- A clearer indication of what the aim is of The Friends of Matlock Bath
- The village needs to be promoted
- Parking issue needs to be sorted
- Are similar places to Matlock Bath being looked at, those who have successfully achieved a change?

The students then asked what the residents would like people to think about Matlock Bath. Responses included:

- Fresh air and health
- Don't want to discourage current visitors but attract other groups
- The area used to be known as Little Switzerland in the 19th century, trees need to be managed to improve views and the environment
- The Illuminations – extended fireworks a good thing but it would be good to have some new lights
- For visitors not to see Matlock Bath as a place for day trippers, to visit major attractions only (Gullivers, Heights of Abraham), seaside without the sea, a place for Bikers
- Accommodation – there needs to be a bigger offering, themed breaks, get people to stay longer
- Cycleways – link up Cromford and Matlock Bath alongside the river
- Steam train to Matlock Bath
- Park and Ride from Matlock
- Re-open the spring-fed paddling pool in the Gardens
- I-spy sheets for children, treasure hunts
- QR coded boards/notices in MB (mixed response to QR codes)

Students asked if anyone was part of a community group. Responses included:

- Rotary Group
- There is a playgroup in the village
- There used to be a Youth Group, their building is now derelict

Students asked how residents saw the role of the Parish Council. Responses included:

- There needs to be a place to bring the community together

Dr Sarah Rawlinson introduced the idea of the Buxton Town Team and whether the Parish Council should be a key player in taking the recommendations of the University forward.

- The Friends of Matlock Bath could be developed to assist in bids for funding
- Any group taking forward the recommendations should have residents and not just councillors
- The cable car station – a prime place to promote the village
- Can incentives be provided for businesses to work together – accommodation/attractions discounts/season tickets/pricing strategies
- Village life doesn't just hinge on tourism

Students asked what doesn't Matlock Bath have that you would like it to have. Responses included:

- The public toilets are appalling – if we want to move upmarket then the toilets need to be upgraded