

Appendix 3 – Supporting statements from local businesses

The ice rink was a really positive addition to the Christmas festivities that take place each year in Cheltenham. Having been delayed due to Covid it was great to see the ice rink come to fruition and encourage such a large number of visitors into the town centre.

The Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce is keen to support all activities which encourage the townspeople to come together and increase the footfall amongst the retail and hospitality sectors. We do look forward to seeing the ice rink return this Christmas.

Michael Ratcliffe, Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce

Christmas 2021 was due to be a time for economic recovery for the hospitality industry, however due to Covid and political reasons it soon becomes a time for seeing cancellations of large parties. It was therefore really positive that there was a unique entertainment offering in the town centre so that it encouraged smaller, more last-minute business in to the town centre to help the industry try to make the most of the festive season. We would welcome the ice rink returning in 2022 and look forward to working with Visit Cheltenham to engage more connections with local independent hospitality.

Lindsey Holland *on behalf of* TURF Cheltenham

The introduction of the ice rink in 2021 was an excellent addition to the Christmas offer of Cheltenham. The positive buzz around social media demonstrated the popularity, which was key last year as we all looked for relief amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and supported the hospitality and events industry. From an economic perspective, events such as the ice rink are key to driving footfall and reinforcing Cheltenham as a visitor destination. For the ice rink to go from strength to strength then careful consideration needs to be given to the wider commercial offer that links into the wider activities of Christmas and enables the ice rink to be seen as a destination and not a standalone activity. With the learnings from last year and working in collaboration with the Cheltenham BID, this can be achieved which would only enhance the Cheltenham Christmas offer.

Diane Savory OBE DL Chair Cheltenham Economic & levelling Up Advisory Board

2021 saw the first Christmas Ice Rink arrive in Cheltenham and we were extremely excited to have such a wonderful addition to the Christmas calendar. On a professional basis, many of our partners went to the Ice Rink as both a team building exercise and also on a personal basis. It was hugely enjoyed as a way to relax after work and enjoy with members of the family. All of our partners would love to see it return in 2022 as it created such a happy buzz and many went back week on week. To have an activity that easily engages all ages, is both physical, fun and not screen related is a huge asset to everyone's wellbeing especially as Christmas is our busiest time of the year and some stress relief is most needed!

Commercially as a company we definitely felt a positive impact in the town as it kept people in the town a lot longer and gave them another reason to head into town for a bite to eat before or after ice skating. It really created a buzzy atmosphere around the park and got everyone in a festive mood. We would all be very disappointed if it was not to return this year and wholeheartedly support the application for it to return in 2022!

Sam Bawden, Events & Marketing Partner John Lewis

After 18 months of the pandemic and the impact it had on the businesses in Cheltenham, it was vital that we stepped up to the mark to ensure that Cheltenham was firmly in people's minds as a destination to visit over Christmas 2021. The ice rink added that wow-factor to the town, keeping the families of Cheltenham spending *in* Cheltenham and encouraging those from further afield here too. In Q4 - when the ice rink was in town - our footfall was the busiest it had been throughout the whole year.

We can't afford to fall behind the towns and cities around us who are all vying for that share of spend. We always see big increases in footfall at The Brewery Quarter when large events or festivals such as the Literature Festival are held in town, so I'm positive that another ice rink will be of great benefit to our businesses here again, along with the rest of the businesses in Cheltenham

Demelsa Coleman, Marketing and Communications Manager of The Brewery Quarter

No. 131 and The Lucky Onion were delighted with the efforts of Visit Cheltenham in 2021 with the exciting new addition to the leisure experience landscape in Cheltenham, with a quirky, timely and festive Ice rink option.

This innovative and 'must do' experience added significant value to our guests and their children and was the talk of the town. We witnessed a significant increase in interest and room reservations during this period with our proximity to the rink.

The Ice Rink complemented our seasonal and festive activities perfectly and provided a lovely extension to our marketing and programming around 'reasons to stay at No.131' and naturally visit Cheltenham.

In 2022 they should go all out as the proof points to success with the idea are affirmed and double the size. Clearly there is demand for such a great concept and I'm sure it will become a calendared favourite.

Rupert Diss, Head of Marketing The Lucky Onion Group

Cheltenham BID (Business Improvement District) supports the proposal to host an ice rink on Imperial Gardens during the Christmas period in 2022. The ice rink in 2021 brought much needed footfall back into the town following almost two years of Covid-19 restrictions and this had a positive financial impact to the businesses in the town centre.

It provides Cheltenham with an attraction during the Christmas period that brings people into the town centre. The ice rink proved to be a great Christmas activity not just for thousands of families but also businesses using it as a networking opportunity or staff social event. The ice rink, coupled with the extended markets, free street entertainment throughout the festive shopping period and enhanced Christmas lights, provides an offering which goes beyond those of the likes of Gloucester, Worcester and Bristol.

It puts Cheltenham at the top of the list of destinations to visit, alongside Bath, Cardiff and Birmingham. In a time when competition for regional and national visitors is so strong, it is important that the Cheltenham festive offering is cohesive. With very limited coach parking in Cheltenham, locating the ice rink on Imperial Gardens provides a central focus close to the coach drop off area at Royal Well.

Heath Gunter, Chief Executive of the Cheltenham BID