

## Annual Report 07/08 - Debenham web site

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### 1. Introduction

The current web site editor took over on 1 May 07. This report is a brief summary of highlights and changes made – hopefully for the better!

One of the first tasks was to propose a three phase quality improvement strategy. This was scheduled to run until Jun 08 with overlapping phases but, primarily due to delays getting the ‘new look’ site implemented with UK Hosts (the web site service provider), this has been extended to Aug 08. The three key phases were:

- I. Increase the number of content providers
- II. Increase the number of visitors
- III. Increase the number of advertisers

These were in addition to the business as usual activities e.g. invoicing, new advertisers, maintaining good standards, day-to-day content updates etc.

### 2. Revenue

The table below shows the month-on-month revenues received, gained, lost and forecast

Item	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
YTD received	N/A	120	230	230	230	530	560	667	917	982	1039	1039
YTD gained	41	355	357	357	364	365	382	632	632	632	632	632
YTD lost	0	0	310	482	482	482	482	482	482	519	521	521
07/08 forecast <sup>1</sup>	N/A	1036	1026	726	626	996	882	903	1157	1116	1114	1114

In summary:

- Revenue received out-turned at **£1,039** against a target of **£750**. The discrepancy between ‘received and ‘forecast’ is due to outstanding advertiser payments and Google revenues which will now fall into 08/09.
- **1** sponsor (Lawrence Homes) was lost, but **2** others (M C Keeble and Flagship Homes) were gained.
- **3** advertisers were lost, **2** advertisers were gained and **3** advertisers downgraded from £45pa to £10pa.
- Google revenue from click-throughs is fairly steady month-on-month and yields around **£144pa**.
- The blockage on receiving Google revenue was eventually overcome (with a lot of pain!) and cheques have been flowing since. Note – cheques are only sent when the revenue gained exceeds **\$100**.

### 3. Traffic indicators

Item	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>Traffic</b>												
Traffic	18K	19K	21K	26K	20K	21K	24K	25K	26K	23K	21K	22K
Visitors > 1 min	1098	1104	1253	1422	1108	1351	1366	1459	1690	1660	1362	1383
Email subscribers	88	89	89	90	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91
Last monthly poll	N/A	144	25	28	n/a	n/a	84	n/a	39	n/a	n/a	23

Overall traffic growth shows a steady increase albeit with fluctuations month on month. A better indicator is the number of visitors staying on the site for more than one minute which again is increasing albeit with the similar fluctuations. One of the reasons for this might be the new look web site where it is much quicker to dip into the front page, find what you want and go out again.

The number of email subscribers has remained fairly static.

The last monthly poll stats are a bit more difficult to translate as some polls run for longer than others. The polling question raising the issue of street lights in Back Lane generated the most response – most of the other polling questions have been on fairly low key topics and perhaps not perceived as very interesting.

### 4. Interface with UK Hosts

Previously, communication with UK Hosts tended to be based on verbal telephone calls and ad-hoc emails. There was no traceability or archive of decisions made. The Editor instigated an Issues List to record all outstanding issues and agreed a 1hr (max) weekly audio conference slot with UK Hosts to review issues, assign actions and record actions from past issues.

This was well received by UK Hosts – who actively participated - and, in total; about 20 issues were tracked to completion. Since the last audio conference (Jan 08), all issues had been resolved and we agreed that there was no longer any benefit in a weekly call. However, if any further issues arise, these are added to the Issues List and either resolved by email (list updated) or the calls will be re-instigated.

Overall, UK Hosts have been very good and cooperative. They respond to urgent issues very quickly e.g. removing a ‘dodgy’ feature on a Sunday morning after a 1/2hr email exchange. Response to more run of the mill issues tends to be a bit slower but the Editor does tend to flag non-urgent issues as such and only escalate them if they become more major.

### 5. ‘New Look’ web site

The proposed changes to the web site had been specified in early 2007 by Reeza Awoodun and the (then) Web Site WG. The changes proposed were implemented by UK Hosts and thoroughly tested before the ‘new look’ site eventually launched on 1 Aug 07. The overall objective was to make more content directly accessible on the front page. At the same time, the opportunity was taken to clean up some of the pages to give the site a bit more of a consistent look and feel.

Summary of the main changes:

- A **Forthcoming Events** column is devoted to publicising one-liners on forthcoming events with a link back to the Events Calendar option. At the same time, the opportunity was taken to remove the old calendar application which was proving cumbersome and prone to getting dates mixed up between US and UK date formats. The slight downside is that the Events Calendar and the front page have to be maintained manually by the Editor but this is a quick process.
- A **Latest Updates** column was added. This enables us to publicise each and every update that is made to the web site and highlight them on the front page with a link to the related

news item. A particularly useful feature is the ability to allow visitors to add comments to the news item – and see what others have said. This option can be enabled or disabled as required.

- A **Hot Topics** column was added. Since the Latest Updates columns only displays the last 10-15 news items, some important news items can disappear off the bottom. Hot Topics was designed to enable certain key news items (usually ones inviting comment) to be maintained on the front page.
- A **Latest Comments** column was recently added to point people directly at News Items where someone had made a recent comment – thus avoiding visitors trawling through all News Items to find any such comments.
- Some additional **Shortcuts** were added to speed up navigation to popular areas of the web site.

## 6. Summary of main highlights

- 1) Debenham was listed on the Villages Online web site. Following this, the Web Site WG carried out a short exercise whereby approx 30 other village web sites were reviewed for good points, bad points and pointers to possible new features. Findings are that the majority of other village web sites either have little content or are significantly out of date. In contrast, Debenham rates quite highly – we guesstimated in the top 10%
- 2) A problem was detected with the Monthly Poll figures when anyone could ‘spam’ it and cast thousands of votes in one category. The technical problem was eventually resolved and it has been working OK ever since.
- 3) Throughout the year, the Editor (and others!) has had to be vigilant and detect instances of ‘spamming’ – usually involving some form of link to ‘dodgy’ web sites. The News Item feature is open to such abuse but, fortunately, can be detected and removed very quickly.
- 4) A new sub-site bringing together all the worldwide interest in Family History relating to Debenham was launched by Suzie Morley who has taken on the job of sub-editor maintaining the site. Any new developments will still use the main Debenahm web site Latest News to publicise them.
- 5) New feature added with pointers to Google interactive maps, route planner and satellite imagery.
- 6) The Events Calendar was extended to include a new Regular Events section
- 7) Set up better coordination with Debenham Parish Magazine – approaches made but very little response as yet apart from statements saying ‘yes good idea’.
- 8) Debenham Forum has been removed – too complex, not used, and subject to continual spamming. Recommend using Latest News with option to comment – very successful since launch.
- 9) Royal British Legion web site launched – they have bought in to using Debenham site for news/events etc
- 10) Parish Council pages re-vamped and updated to provide ‘cleaner’ look and feel and easier navigation.
- 11) Specific pages highlighting Police activity in Debenham were launched. So far, there is a holding page but reports still remain buried in Parish Council minutes.
- 12) ‘Local Ads’ page launched to replace the old Classifieds which were dropped some time ago. Not a fantastic flood of adverts but the ability to add is simple and quick.

## 7. Progress on strategy phases

- 1) **Phase I – Increase Content Providers.** Many local clubs and organisations were approached with an invitation to use the web site – not just to stake their presence but to make regular use of it by publishing regular news and event items. Overall, this has been successful albeit the Editor workload to maintain this content has increased as a result. This phase remains ongoing as not all organisations have come forward.
- 2) **Phase II – Increase the number of visitors.** A bit trickier to achieve. This was carried out using posters at strategic points around the village, including a page in the Parish Magazine

and emailing the poster to other contacts for local distribution. All the local press were also approached with a view to having a permanent listing on their local news pages but responses to this were extremely disappointing – only two replied and both said NO apart from they'll publish any specific item that we send them on a weekly basis.

- 3) **Phase III – Increase the number of advertisers.** This Phase has only just kicked in. The first task is to review the current advertising packages as these are thought to be too restrictive – we need some additional options. The second part of this phase will be to promote these advertising packages to existing and potential advertisers. Phase end is likely to be end Aug 08 but, as with all phases, these activities are always ongoing

## **8. Outlook for 08/09**

- 1) Achieve revenue target currently set at £1,100.
- 2) Increase number of advertiser packages and advertisers to achieve this target
- 3) Continue to increase content providers and number of visitors through publicity and personal contact
- 4) Maintain business as usual activities e.g. invoicing, new advertisers, maintaining good standards, day-to-day content updates etc
- 5) Review existing advertisers who are getting 'freebies' with a view to either persuading them to pay or removing them.

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