

**Minehead Gift Card gets the go-ahead as part of town centre recovery plans:**

**Businesses across Minehead encouraged to sign up**

**Press release: Monday 1st March 2021**

Businesses in Minehead are being encouraged to register for the new Minehead Gift Card, which has been given the go-ahead as part of town centre recovery plans.

All types of businesses from across Minehead are eligible to be a part of the new, free gift card programme, including retail, leisure, hospitality and services.

The Minehead Gift Card will be available for people to buy online from early April 2021, in values from £5 to £500. Each gift card works like a regular store gift card, but can be spent at participating businesses across the whole of Minehead, keeping money locked into the town and making local shopping simple for both residents and tourists.

Minehead was awarded £100,000 by Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) as part of a £500,000 Emergency Town Centre Recovery Fund in October. The Minehead Gift Card is the latest initiative from the steering group set up by Minehead Business Improvement District (BID) to lead on projects through the fund, and will work alongside regular BID activities.

The steering group is made up of local business owners and leaders from Minehead Town Council, Somerset West and Taunton and Somerset County Council. Julian Abraham, owner of Old Ship Aground, is Chair of the Steering Group and said the new Minehead Gift Card is vital for businesses in the town who have endured a third national lockdown:

“The impact of the latest lockdown has been catastrophic for businesses in Minehead. As a seaside town with a reliance on tourism, that income was decimated last year. Traders clawed back what they could in the summer last year, and the community has really shown their support by shopping local, but the reality is that most businesses are treading water and desperately need help.

“The loneliness as a business owner, trying to cope with the constant lockdowns is beyond belief. The fact that there is help coming for the beleaguered local trader with the new Minehead Gift Card will be such a relief to business owners, knowing that people care, and are driving impactful projects for the town.

“Having the Minehead Gift Card will be like having our own local currency. Cards get bought and then spent locally, supporting local businesses and local jobs. As we prepare to open up after this third lockdown, this is the ideal time for businesses to join the scheme.”

The new Minehead Gift Card is part of the award winning [Town and City Gift Cards](https://townandcitygiftcards.com/) programme from fintech [Miconex](https://www.mi-cnx.com/), with over 50 schemes across the UK and Ireland, including Bath, Exeter and Tavistock. Over £1.9 million was spent through its local Town and City Gift Card programmes in 2020.

Andrew Hopkins, Minehead BID manager said the BID first started looking at a local gift card 18 months ago: “We have a high proportion of independent businesses in Minehead so our town hasn’t been as impacted by the demise of national retailers as some places have. Because of this, occupancy rates in the town are higher than average. That said, it’s imperative that we give our businesses as much support as possible as we emerge from this third lockdown.

“The Emergency Town Centre Recovery Fund allocation means we can open the Minehead Gift Card scheme out to all businesses in Minehead, not just those in the town centre. It’s free for businesses to join the scheme and offers them a new revenue stream when people pay with the gift card. No additional equipment is needed either. It’s very simple for traders and for customers that will use the card too.

“We’ve got a whole range of businesses in Minehead, everything from gift shops, supermarkets, homeware stores and restaurants to clothes shops, pubs, hotels and hair salons. I hope to see all of these business types and more sign up to receive the gift card as payment.

“Our tagline in Minehead is ‘discover hidden treasure’ and the gift card will be a way to do just that, for locals and also for visitors. Minehead is the quintessential seaside town, the gateway to Exmoor, the starting point for the South West Coast Path and home to the longest independent heritage steam railway in England. As tourism reopens, we’ll be ready to cater for the demand, working alongside the Information Centre, Visit Exmoor and Visit Somerset.”

Cllr Marcus Kravis, Executive Member for Economic Development at SWT, said: “SWT announced the £500,000 cash boost as part of its commitment to help town centres fully recover and grow back stronger from the impact of COVID-19. The Minehead Gift Card is a fabulous example of how we can work collaboratively to put local businesses at the heart of our communities. It’s a really easy-to-use system that provides another way to improve sales and attract more customers in the changing marketplace. I hope local businesses will sign up and residents will invest in the future prosperity of Minehead.”

Research from Visa and the Centre for Economics and Business Research suggests that 81% of people are supporting local businesses more than before the pandemic began, and that the amount of money that stays in a local economy can double when people consciously choose to shop local.

Colin Munro is the managing director of Miconex and believes the Minehead Gift Card is a positive move for the town:

“Multi-venue gift cards like the Minehead Gift Card grew in popularity in 2020 against the backdrop of economic uncertainty. If people buy a gift card, they want the reassurance of being able to spend it with many different businesses. Our 2020 data showed that multi-venue gift cards are popular across the generations. The average purchase price of a gift card is £34.56 but recipients of a gift card see this as ‘free money’ and will spend up to 65% more on top. They’ll also be more experimental, trying out new businesses they’ve never used before. At a time like this, every sale matters, and being part of the Minehead Gift Card means new customers, more sales and more money locked into Minehead.”

Businesses wishing to be a part of the new Minehead Gift Card can either register using the following link: [**http://bit.ly/mineheadgiftcard**](http://bit.ly/mineheadgiftcard) or contacting **Richard Robbins at Minehead BID** by emailing **info@mineheadbid.co.uk**

**ENDS**

**Press information**

Photo attached of Julian Abraham, Chair of the Minehead Emergency Town Centre Recovery Fund steering group with the new Minehead Gift Card.

The design of the new Minehead Gift Card:

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Minehead BID includes approximately 245 businesses and includes an area stretching from the Premier Inn and the supermarkets on Seaward Way, Butlins to the West, the Sea Front, Esplanade, Harbour, The Avenue and the town centre shopping streets of Bancks Street, Blenheim Road, Friday Street, Holloway Street, The Parade, Parks Street, Summerland and Wellington Square.

For more information, please contact Andrew Hopkins, Minehead BID Manager on 07703 668928