

Good Business – Good Environment



Ian Gregory

Chair of the Vision Group for Sidmouth writes for the Herald

The installation of the Sidmouth railway model in the Sidmouth Toy & Model Museum reminds me that decisions taken can have long term consequences. Had the concept of sustainability been considered in the 1960s when the decision was taken to close the station in 1967 the outcome may have been very different. However, in the 1960s little thought was given to the merits of train travel and instead emphasis was placed on the development of the road network. The permanent display of the model created by Richard Harper, having been exhibited for several years on the model railway exhibition circuit, in the Toy & Model Museum provides an opportunity to reflect on times gone by and to consider future travel requirements which impact the town.

Decisions around the transport infrastructure and environment do impact the sustainability of the town. Rail travel to the town is no longer possible, so we must accept the way that visitors reach the town today will be by road, whether by bus, coach, car or even bicycle. We need therefore to maintain our road network to enable visitors to arrive in the town and to provide them with a welcoming and attractive environment. Insufficient or expensive car parks, a lack of safe pedestrian spaces, and a lack of visitor attractions will impact visitor numbers. Less cash will be spent in the town, less profit made and less money to invest in sustainable projects for the future. We do need successful businesses to make a long-term goal of net zero a reality. There are costs to achieve a net zero country and these need to be met by a vibrant and successful business community.

The Sustainable Sidmouth Champions Awards being run by the Vision Group for Sidmouth give us all an opportunity to share ideas on how we can develop the town and live in a more sustainable manner. There is still time to nominate an individual, business, school or educational group who are developing ideas from which we could all learn. For more details of the award scheme please visit the website <https://sidmouth-champions.vgsidmouth.co.uk/>

Needless to say, the decision to close the Sidmouth station in 1967 would not have made the list for the Awards!