



RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

# RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PLAN

FOR TOURISM  
AND HOSPITALITY

*'When the  
time is right'*

**JULY 2020**



*Ribble Valley tourism and hospitality businesses have endured the most painful economic crisis of recent times, but there are good reasons to look forward to recovery in a spirit of optimism. By working together in providing a safe and welcoming destination, we will continue to overcome the present difficulties and achieve prosperity for our borough.*



**Cllr Stuart Hirst**  
**Chairman of the Economic Development Committee,**  
**Ribble Valley Borough Council**

*Ribble Valley is an incredibly special place, alive with innovation and home to many entrepreneurs. Tourism and hospitality businesses have recovered from difficult times before, and changing the way we operate, being creative and working together, it can recover again.*



**Amanda Dowson**  
**Chairman of Ribble Valley Tourism Association**



## The purpose of a ‘Response and Recovery’ plan

This plan is designed to create a cohesive and imaginative strategy to attract visitors following the Coronavirus outbreak, and to guide tourism through a period of inevitable change.

Ribble Valley Borough Council and the Ribble Valley Tourism Association have come together to develop an approach that will:

- Deliver confident, consistent messages to existing and new audiences
- Use our limited resources effectively for maximum impact
- Develop new ideas collectively in order to maximise expertise
- Engage with local businesses, communities, and stakeholders, to support and champion the voice of tourism in Ribble Valley

Recovery will take time, and the timetable of this plan will need to remain both flexible and responsive to external change, so long as the future course of the pandemic and its resulting restrictions remains unclear. We do, nonetheless, have this opportunity to create a template for the restoration of the visitor economy, and maximise any available opportunities by working together.

This plan relates specifically to the areas of tourism promotion and development, and not to the wider and extensive responsibilities of Ribble Valley Borough Council in response to the Covid 19 crisis.



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**Some sectors of the industry have been particularly badly affected**



## Where are we now?

Tourism and hospitality form a major part of the Ribble Valley economy, both in terms of income and employment. The most recent figures indicate that Tourism in Ribble Valley contributes over £260 million into the local economy. In recent years, and certainly up until the current crisis it has been a most successful and rapidly expanding sector, in which both the economic impact and visitor numbers were rising by over 7% per annum.

Tourism and hospitality have been amongst the hardest hit sectors by the COVID-19 shutdown. The resulting restrictions, at the start of the Spring/Summer season, had a devastating impact on all tourism-related businesses, including the food and drink sector, wedding venues, accommodation providers, and attractions, along with a wide variety of support services and other supply industries. Some businesses may not reopen, significant refunds have had to be made, and countless staff were furloughed.

Uncertainty about the implications of social distancing and other restrictions, which may need to be introduced to ensure the safety of visitors, present further challenges to the viability of individual businesses, and to our retail centres.

Over the longer term the sectors most seriously affected in Ribble Valley by physical social distancing measures include -

- Dining experiences
- Weddings
- Group travel
- Residential / adventure centres
- Theatres/Cinemas
- Events

For these, intervention by way of promotion and support will need to be carefully programmed.

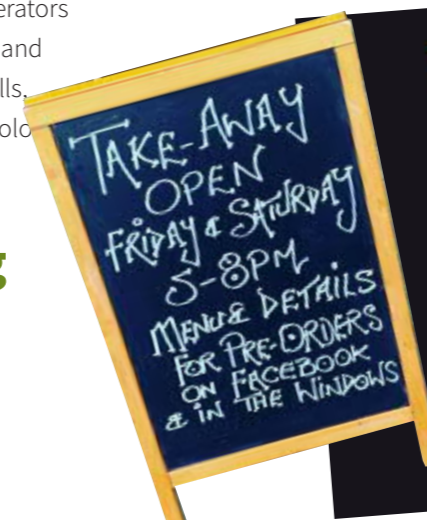
## Support and Innovation

Many tourism and hospitality businesses have benefitted from the various programmes of central government support, many of which have been successfully administered at district level. Ribble Valley Borough Council was one of the best performing Councils in England in their prompt administration and distribution of Hospitality and Leisure grants. A good number of businesses have used the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to furlough their staff, and therefore avoid redundancies. A survey of the hospitality sector nationally reported 84% of businesses have used the scheme and only 2% have laid staff off. This is encouraging news for the recovery period, with a wealth of talent ready to return to work.

Many businesses have tried to remodel and provide alternative services during the lockdown, in order to generate at least some income, and to keep in contact with customers. There are also good examples where our businesses have supported their communities and key workers, including offering take-away services, donating to food banks, and making rooms available for quarantine purposes.

There have been some amazing examples of innovation during this time. Some businesses have kept in touch with their customers using social media and newsletters, or by staging virtual events, each designed to maintain contact ready for when they are able to reopen. Similarly, many operators have used lockdown to physically refurbish and refresh their business, and develop their skills, particularly with respect to the use of technology.

## Innovation during lock down, keeping in touch with customers and communities



## Challenges ahead

Looking ahead, there are many uncertainties, for example, it is hard to anticipate public behaviour post-crisis, nor can we predict how the virus and its control may yet develop. Some of the important considerations in our plan will be -

- Responding to fear – visitors hesitant about travelling, activities and accommodation
- Risk - different age bands or sections of the community may be more or less risk averse
- Booking methods and patterns will change as will payment methods
- Initial consumer markets are likely to be located in Lancashire and the North West
- Business viability due to social distancing measures and travel restrictions
- Anticipated short bursts of “over tourism” often influenced by weather
- Potential over-demand for what may be perceived as safer accommodation e.g. caravans, camping, holiday homes and self-catering
- Potential for local vs visitor conflict

The plan takes into consideration each of these points, resulting in broadening our tourism markets beyond those which historically, have been targeted, to embrace new markets. We will need a long-term approach, driving opportunities for all seasons, and encouraging a spread of visitors to help us enjoy sustained recovery.

## Post virus opportunities

As restrictions are lifting, and people travelling more freely, competition, in terms of tourism marketing, is fiercer than ever. That is why it is so important for Ribble Valley, where tourism and hospitality are so integral to the to the local economy, to stay ahead of the game. Latest research indicates some very distinct consumer trends emerging from the crisis, from which we should take heart. These include -

- A boost in the UK domestic travel market
- The need for visitors to feel and be safe – both during travel and whilst at the destination
- A desire to visit open space and countryside, and experience nature
- Strong interest in visiting and staying relatively locally
- Greater interest in buying locally made products and eating locally sourced produce

The make-up of Ribble Valley’s tourism businesses, together with its location and physical geography, make it well placed to respond to these trends.



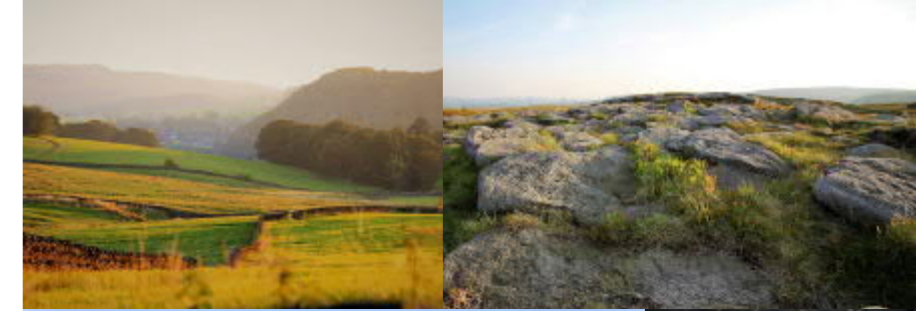
## Consultation

This Response and Recovery plan has been the subject of wide consultation, albeit over a relatively short but necessary timescale.

We have received direct responses for which we are grateful, and we also used the facility of Ribble Valley Tourism Association’s weekly webinars to test some of the concepts.

It is fair to say that the consultation endorsed some clear messages, including-

- The crisis has brought the RV tourism community together and there are many benefits to be achieved by working collaboratively
- 'Ribble Valley' is one of Lancashire's strong and generic tourism brands, which people are keen to ‘rally behind’
- The food offer is particularly distinctive to Ribble Valley, and it should feature more significantly in tourism promotion
- The countryside is an under-maximised resource which could realise its potential as part of the recovery process
- By working together and being creative, Ribble Valley tourism has all the necessary ingredients to thrive in recovery from this crisis.



**Evidence predicts a boom in domestic tourism, with a strong trend towards rediscovering the countryside, experiencing local culture and food, whilst keeping travel distances to a minimum.**





# *A period of change and uncertainty*

## **A Two Phased Approach – the objectives and measures**

There are two stages to this plan, Response, in which we react to the immediate impact and the necessary restrictions imposed, and Recovery planning for the way in which tourism and hospitality will need to adapt and change in the future. We now take each of these principles to describe the measures we aim to put in place before moving into the action plan, which has more detail about what we are planning to do.



**Businesses are working tirelessly to put all the necessary measures in place to offer a fantastic service in a safe environment for both customers and staff.**



## Response phase

*'Remaining confident for the period during which closure restrictions are in place'*

### Objective 1 - Support messages from central government

- ▶ Disseminate and convey relevant information to businesses
- ▶ Promote sources of guidance and support
- ▶ Intelligence gathering

### Objective 2 - Protect and support local businesses

- ▶ Distribute grant aid and promote other sources of support
- ▶ Publicise and support local best practice
- ▶ Facilitate knowledge sharing, networking and promote relevant training opportunities
- ▶ Communicate with key stakeholders to gain support for our Recovery Plan

### Objective 3 - Maintain Ribble Valley brand awareness and develop tourism products

- ▶ Rebrand our marketing, keeping Ribble Valley very much in the mind of consumers
- ▶ Work with tourism businesses to meet any new restrictions and guidelines
- ▶ Develop new tourism products ready to be shared with the media
- ▶ Prepare targeted campaigns to attract residents and day visitors
- ▶ Monitor consumer behaviour to identify potential new markets
- ▶ Participate in wider campaigns to maximise exposure of the area and its businesses

### Objective 4 - Stay engaged with communities and promote the importance of tourism

- ▶ Share relevant public information
- ▶ Promote an understanding of the importance of tourism
- ▶ Adapt and continue event planning
- ▶ Mitigate any potential impacts of 'Over Tourism'

# Social media campaigns reinforce our key messages



# A place for all seasons



**New experience itineraries for driving, cycling, and walking**



**Promoting Ribble Valley as a safe and welcoming wedding destination**



**Relaunch the Ribble Valley Food and Drink Trail**



**More self-guided walks with great, safe dining experiences**



**Celebrate local arts, music, crafts and creativity**



## Recovery phase

*'confidently adapting, as restrictions are relaxed'*

### Objective 1 - Reinforce Ribble Valley brand awareness

- ▶ Unify and deliver positive, up-beat messages to manage visitors' perceptions – conveying 'safe and welcome' messages and ensuring Ribble Valley's unique qualities stand out
- ▶ Engage with press and media identifying key opportunities for promotion

### Objective 2 - Support local businesses

- ▶ Continued promotion of government guidance and support
- ▶ Support businesses in dealing with peaks and fluctuations in visitor interest
- ▶ Create opportunities for direct partner involvement in campaigns
- ▶ Continue to promote networking and knowledge sharing
- ▶ Facilitate and promote business-to-business support and training

### Objective 3 - Create and promote safe and welcoming tourism

- ▶ Review all tourism marketing to ensure safe and confident messages are portrayed
- ▶ Encourage tourism businesses to embrace new regulations and join accredited schemes
- ▶ Promote examples of innovation and best practice
- ▶ Introduce safe and innovative ways to present information to customers

### Objective 4 - Develop a programme to support different tourism themes

- ▶ Promote to new markets including younger audiences
- ▶ Launch a 'Love the Great Outdoors' campaign (walking, cycling, drives, and virtual experiences)
- ▶ Develop food and drink experiences
- ▶ Sustain promotion of important longer-term markets
- ▶ Promote Ribble Valley as 'a place for all seasons'

### Objective 5 - Manage tourism responsibly

- ▶ Monitor visitor flows, and indications of 'Over Tourism'
- ▶ Promote seasonal offers and encourage a year-round calendar of events
- ▶ Promote and support responsible and safe visitor behaviour





# RIBBLE VALLEY

*Love*

## *Response and Recovery*

the time is right  
to take a fresh look

Here are some of the headlines of our plan, lifted from the detailed action plans which follow in this document. In each of these we will be keen to work with partners to develop the detail and, when the time is right, to ensure their successful implementation.

**Tom Pridmore**

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# Our Love Ribble Valley Campaign headlines

## Response Phase

### Campaign 'When the time is right'

Launch promotional video and social media marketing campaign

This campaign is designed to keep Ribble Valley very much in the mind of consumers, but with the clear message that we look forward to seeing them 'When the time is right'. Once tourism businesses open, the messages change to 'Now the time is right'.



Our video  
**'When the time is right'**  
reached tens of  
thousands of people'

**#LoveRibbleValley**

### Campaign #Love Ribble Valley

Celebrate individual businesses as they reopen by developing the #Love Ribble Valley brand to promote safe visitor experiences

This is important in the restoration of consumer confidence

## Recovery Phase

### Campaign 'Love the Great Outdoors'

- New experiences itineraries and 'Trustworthy Trips' for driving, cycling, and walking, including visitor attractions, heritage and food
- Developing 'Virtual Visits' - Online virtual experiences of Ribble Valley
- 'Walks with Taste' - More self-guided walks with great, safe dining experiences
- Reviving other walking experiences including the Tolkien Trail and Ribble Way

These will maximise our open space and attractions, and, most importantly, direct economic benefits to businesses

### Campaign - 'Love Food and Drink'

- Relaunching a 'Ribble Valley Food and Drink Trail' as an interactive online promotion
- 'Love picnics' - Experiences of locally sourced foods enjoyed in great locations
- Investigate the potential for a week long Ribble Valley-wide series of food and walking events, culminating in the Clitheroe Food Festival

These will raise the profile of RV food and drink, championing them in the tourism offer

### Campaign 'Love Our Businesses'

- Celebrate individual businesses as they re-open or introduce change
- Support the redesign of tourism, ensuring it is safe and welcoming
- 'Made in Ribble Valley' - a celebration of arts, music, craft, and creativity

These will help to restore confidence, and retain interest in local products and talent

### Campaign 'Love Weddings'

- Promotion of Ribble Valley as a safe and welcoming wedding destination

It is critical to support this sector which is so important to our local economy

### Campaign 'Love Short Breaks'

- 'A place for all seasons' campaign - to grow year-round tourism, with an emphasis on midweek breaks

An opportunity to spread the value of tourism, making use of our natural beauty and available capacity

### Campaign 'Love Meeting'

- Promotion of 'safe and welcoming' venues for business and family occasions

Important in building confidence and creating new opportunities.

Phase One -

# Response

*‘Responding confidently for the period during which closure restrictions are in place’*



## Measure: Support messages from central Government

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale
Disseminate and convey relevant information to businesses	Promote on website and circulars. Reinforce, in all communications, current government messages regarding the coronavirus	RVTA	Immediate and ongoing
Promote sources of guidance and support	Regular ‘Tourism Update’ e-shots to tourism-related businesses, containing the latest guidance	RVTA	Initially every 10-14 days
Intelligence gathering	Promote and respond to consumer and business consultations and research	ML VE/VB	As and when required

## Measure: Protect and support local businesses

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale
Distribute grant aid and promote other sources of support	Promote the availability of grant aid and other support through regular E-shots to businesses. Promote RVBC and RVTA websites as central points of reference	RVTA	Grants - ongoing as funds are available
Publicise and support local best practice	Features on social media platforms	RVTA	Ongoing during crisis
	Share good news to media and Lancashire audiences	ML	
Facilitate knowledge sharing, networking and promote relevant training opportunities	Regular webinar meetings with business on various themes	RVTA	Weekly
	Distribute the latest guidance on social distancing and safe practice		As it becomes available
Communicate with key stakeholders to gain support for our Recovery Plan	Involve stakeholders in the preparation of the plan and consult with stakeholders during English Tourism Week	RVTA and other stakeholders	English Tourism Week

**Measure: Maintain Ribble Valley brand awareness and begin to design new tourism products**

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale
Rebrand our marketing, keeping Ribble Valley very much in the mind of consumers	Launch promotional video 'When the time is right' during English Tourism week with underlying message of being ready soon for visitors  Launch #loveribblevalley as a focus for businesses as they reopen	RVTA	English Tourism Week
Work with tourism businesses to review their offer in line with any new restrictions and guidelines	Circulate latest information through regular E-shots and RVTA webinars  Individual support to specific business where appropriate	RVTA	E-shots every 10-14 days and weekly webinars
Develop new tourism products ready to be shared with the media	Prepare locally focused digital and social media campaigns around key early themes including walking, driving, and cycling, including a review of the Tolkien Trail and an expansion of 'Walks with Taste'	Specific local communities  Targeted businesses	Ongoing ahead of recovery
Prepare targeted campaigns to attract residents and day visitors	Draft social media marketing awareness material ready for when the restrictions are lifted	Targeted businesses	Ongoing ahead of recovery
Monitor consumer behaviour to identify potential new markets	Be prepared to alter course on campaigns and marketing, dependent on consumer behaviours to changing restrictions	AONB RVTA	Ongoing
Participate in wider campaigns to maximise exposure of the area and its businesses	Contribute content and ideas to Marketing Lancashire and similar campaigns	ML  VE/VB	As opportunities arise

**Measure: Stay engaged with communities and promote the importance of tourism**

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale
Share relevant public information	Actively promote industry best practice and other measures to ensure confidence about tourism within the community  Promote via media and social media releases with positive tourism outcomes	RVTA	Ongoing
Promote an understanding of the importance of tourism	Incorporate the positive aspects of the visitor economy into media releases	RVTA	Ongoing
Adapt and continue event planning	Monitor any new guidelines relating to event management and work with event organisers to seek solutions for 2021	Event organisers	Ongoing
Mitigate any potential impacts of 'Over Tourism'	In planning the various campaigns, take into consideration the potential for 'over tourism' and plan accordingly e.g. by promoting non-honeypots, seasonal experiences, and extended opening	AONB  RVTA	Ongoing

**RVTA** – Ribble Valley Tourism Association

**AONB** – Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Service (LCC)

**ML** – Marketing Lancashire

**VB** – Visit Britain

**NE** - Natural England - The statutory agency for nature conservation

**QIT** - Quality in Tourism – Agency delivering inspection services

**NFU** – National Farmers Union

**VE** – Visit England (National Tourist Board)

**RVWH** – Ribble Valley Wedding Heaven - a promotional/consultative group

**UU** – United Utilities

**HSE** – Health and Safety Executive

**FA** – Forestry Authority

**References**

- Lancashire Covid-19 Safe Recovery Survey – Marketing Lancashire
- From Survival to Recovery - An Assessment of the Prospects for the UK Hotel & Visitor Accommodation Industry 2020-2022 – Hotel Solutions
- Tourism Management Institute Recovery Webinars

Phase Two -

# Recovery



*'Confidently adapting,  
as restrictions relax  
but the way ahead  
remains uncertain'*

**Measure: Reinforce Ribble Valley brand awareness**

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale*
Unify and deliver positive, up-beat messages, conveying 'safe and welcome' messages and ensuring Ribble Valley stands out	Relaunch promotional video incorporating more confident key messages  Develop follow up video containing consumer activity  Use 'Safe and Welcome' narrative in all campaigns and communications	Various businesses  RVTA	Upon restrictions being lifted
Engage with press and media identifying key opportunities for press promotion	Target media contacts located within one hour's drive time and drip feed relevant content eg new experiences, publications, and events  Promote key themes to specialist media including food, walking, cycling etc	ML  RVTA	After restrictions are lifted, feed over a period of weeks  September 2020

**Measure: Continue to support local businesses**

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale*
Continued promotion of government guidance and support	Continue to promote opportunities for support and funding to businesses in the regular 'Tourism Update' newsletter	RVTA	Every 10-14 days as continues to be relevant
Support businesses in dealing with peaks and fluctuations in visitor interest	Promote 'Love to be Open' social media campaign – celebrating individual businesses as they open up  Support measures to redesign tourism, ensuring it is safe  Launch 'Made in Ribble Valley' - a celebration of arts, craft, and creativity	RVTA	Upon restrictions being lifted  Ongoing from restrictions being lifted  Once sufficient relevant businesses are open
Continue networking and knowledge sharing	Continue to host business webinar events with the RVTA  Promote suitable events organised by other parties	RVTA	Gradually relaxing frequency from weekly to two monthly over time as appropriate
Facilitate and promote business-to-business support and training	Support regular training and workshop events run by the RVTA in support of local businesses	RVTA	RVTA timetable

\*all subject to further restrictions

**Measure: Create safe and welcoming tourism**

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale*
Review all tourism marketing to ensure positive and confident messages are portrayed	Review each of the tourism websites to ensure the content is portraying the new language and portrayal of 'safe and welcoming' tourism		By mid-July
	Invest in new imagery for online and print material		
Encourage tourism businesses to adhere to new regulations and join accredited schemes	Ensure that all businesses participating in promotional campaigns are adhering to new safety guidelines	RVTA VE	In accordance with each campaign
	Actively promote and encourage participation in safe and legal type accreditation	VE, QIT, HSE	
Promote examples of innovation and best practice	Actively seek out best practice and highlight on social media	RVTA	Regular weekly feed
	Incorporate best practice into the annual tourism awards		
Introduce safe and innovative ways to present information to customers	Design ways in which information can be provided for visitors staying in Ribble Valley accommodation and via our visitor information outlets	RVTA	July 2020

**Measure: Develop a programme of new tourism themes**

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale*
Promote to new markets including to younger audiences	Devise specific marketing campaigns	Hospitality businesses	September 2020
	Design and promote a 'Families together' campaign	Family-friendly businesses FA UU	August 2020
Launch a new 'Love the Great Outdoors' campaign	Promote a new series of 'Trustworthy Trips' including walking, cycling, driving itineraries along with a selection of virtual experiences	RVTA FA UU	Staggered programme over 12 months
	Reviving the Tolkien Trail and promotion of the Ribble Way, including exploring the potential of linking accommodation and luggage transport	Parish Council Neighbouring Councils	September 2020 Spring 2021

Promote food and drink experiences	Launch Great Food Experiences, with the relaunch of a Ribble Valley Food and Drink Trail, a web based mobile friendly layered map	Hospitality businesses	Autumn 2020
	Investigate the potential for a week long Ribble Valley-wide series of food and walking events, culminating in the Clitheroe Food Festival	RVTA	August 2020 2020/2021
	'Love Picnics' – locally sourced foods enjoyed in great locations	Food outlets and producers	Summer 2020
Sustain the promotion of important longer-term markets	Promotion of Ribble Valley as a safe and welcoming wedding destination – launch virtual guide June 2020 and printed guide once social distancing measures have been agreed	RVWH	June 2020 October 2020
	'Meeting Places' campaign to promote safe and welcoming venues for business and family occasions	RVTA	January 2021
	Promotion of a 'Made in Ribble Valley' arts and crafts trail	Creative businesses	Once sufficient businesses are open
	Resume group travel promotions	ML	2021
Promote Ribble Valley as a place for all seasons	Seasonal campaigns based on midweek breaks, liked to walking, cycling etc  Stronger use of seasonally themed imagery on websites and social media	Accommodation providers  RVTA	

**Measure: Manage tourism responsibly**

Action	Details	Partners	Timescale*
Monitor visitor flows and indications of over tourism	Monitor tourism carefully to ensure that 'Over Tourism' does not occur, especially in sensitive areas such as Bowland and Pendle Hill	AONB Pendle BC	Ongoing
Promote seasonal offers and encourage a year-round calendar of events	Actively identify opportunities for off season events and activities and support 'Place for All Seasons' campaign above	RVTA ML	Autumn 2020
Promote and support responsible and safe visitor behaviour	Include in all campaign and marketing the need for responsible behaviour, for example, using the countryside code and the need to be mindful of the needs of local people	NFU NE AONB	Ongoing

\*all subject to further restrictions



## #LoveRibbleValley

This document has been produced by Ribble Valley Borough Council with the support of the Ribble Valley Tourism Association. It has been produced in response to the Corvid 19 crisis and aims to guide tourism and marketing activity through a period of inevitable challenge and change. It remains a live plan and we always welcome ideas and feedback. Please contact Tom Pridmore on [Tom.pridmore@ribblevalley.gov.uk](mailto:Tom.pridmore@ribblevalley.gov.uk) or call **01200 414496**

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