

ENTERPRISING DUO'S

ONLINE BRAINWAVE

By Jon Coates  
CONSUMER EDITOR

TWO friends have launched an online fair to save Christmas for independent retailers right across Britain.

Kate Holloway and Sarah Hargtay met at the school gates while collecting their children eight years ago and cemented their friendship by taking long walks together with their dogs in the Gloucestershire countryside.

For the past four years they have run an autumn school fair attended by about 300 people to raise money for a local children's charity, while also allowing independent British brands to sell their goods.

With the Covid-19 pandemic preventing this year's fair they decided to create a virtual version instead and The Glorious Edit was born.

Kate, from Selsley, Gloucestershire, says: "We had about 40 brands and they were all calling us up and asking was there any chance of doing something virtually, as they were dying to meet with the customers they normally see."

"This fair was a lifeline for them, particularly at Christmas."

"We spent some time thinking about it and on a wet dog walk in September we decided that it was a good idea to take this to a virtual landscape instead."

She adds: "We knew that everyone was doing their food shopping, their yoga and their schooling online – so it seemed a natural place to take it."

"But it was tricky because fairs work so well due to them being face-to-face."

"We were both really reticent to open it

**'It's a really easy way to shop'**

up to an Amazon-type affair, which is why we decided to do an edit."

"We wanted to create a sense of fun and a community around it, and make it a human interface for the internet."

Their website launched in November with around 80 brands offering discounts on goods during a six-day fair visited by some 8,000 shoppers.

Now a larger Christmas fair with products from 100 brands will run from this Friday until the following Thursday, December 10.

Each independent retailer pays a one-off fee to join the fair and then they decide what discounts to offer.

To help customers find what they are looking for, Kate and Sarah have curated bespoke present lists for men, women, teenagers and children.

People can still use their site to look for gifts outside of the fair, with links to the brand's websites, but the discounts will only apply during the virtual fairs.

Brands include clothing from Wyse London, jewellery from Cotton and Gems, drinks from the award-winning Oxtan Liqueur Company in Nottinghamshire, Alpaca Pie clothing from Oxfordshire and leopard print yoga mats from Oxtre Fitness in Bath.

They also include Aves Innes, a clothing brand from North Scotland, Kate Preston Art from Yorkshire and Hoboko, another clothing brand from York.

Kate, 47, who used to mastermind adver-

# Visit our virtual fair...a lifeline for small traders this Christmas

## How hard-hit towns are kickstarting their festive season

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DRIVE-IN movies, Santas handing out presents and Nutcracker King statues will be used to draw families into town and city centres to kickstart the festive season next month when lockdown is lifted across England.

The 329 Business Improvement Districts (BID) in towns and cities across Britain are preparing festive events that comply with social-distancing rules to boost Christmas trade for struggling shops, pubs and restaurants.

Among the events being organised are "Festive Flicks" screened at drive-in movies in Milton Keynes from December 18 to 23, with a night time screening of Die Hard for adults.

The Guildhall building will be lit in Christmas colours in Winchester, with 14 six-foot Nutcracker Kings statues and a 12-foot statue from the Disney film displayed around the city in Hampshire from December 3.

In Stoke-on-Trent street ambassadors will be donning Santa suits and distributing hundreds of presents throughout the city in December.

Sunderland will have a city-wide virtual reality event – in which families can search the streets for hidden elves, reindeers and giant presents – by

downloading an app which also contains offers and discounts from businesses.

It will launch a gift card to be used at businesses across Sunderland and a similar scheme will operate in Leicester.

Saffron Walden in Essex is launching its own online market place for 25 of its independent retailers tomorrow. People will be able to buy items from multiple shops on the Click It Local website with a single delivery to their home.

Chris Turner, chief executive of British BIDs, said: "Towns and cities are now looking at a multitude of ways to allow Christmas to happen."

"Christmas lights have already gone up and been turned on in many places, many are also putting up Christmas trees and organising special events to attract people in."

"Pop-ups for coffee bars and mince pies on street corners are



MOVIE MAGIC: Drive-ins are one idea

being supported." He added: "People need to support their local shops who are part of the community."

"But also don't rush. What we don't want is a mad rush into towns on December 3 because people have been locked down for a month."

"We have all gone out of our way across the country to make sure none of our events are crowd-pullers, so virtual events for light switch-ons or events where people are spread out."

"People will have three weeks to do their shopping and enjoy town centres. Christmas is going to be terrific."

Melanie Beck, the chief executive of Milton Keynes BID, who was recently awarded an MBE for keeping foodbank deliveries running during the lockdown earlier this year, started drive-in movies in its town centre for Halloween.

By selling 94 per cent of tickets for 21 screenings, £9,340 was raised for the local food bank, with pubs, restaurants and takeaways reporting a boost in trade.

Another 12 festive-themed screenings will take place from December 18 to 23. Ms Beck said: "The showings will attract hundreds of people, who will be entertained safely and hopefully spend money in local pubs, shops and restaurants – helping Milton Keynes recover."

Richard Buxton, BID manager for Stoke-on-Trent, said: "We are hoping to attract families to our high street and spread some joy after what has been a difficult few months."

to go in and shop really easily. "As we were walking we came up with the idea of present lists, because if you go to a physical fair you go round and see what other people are buying to get ideas. "People can't do this online so we have stepped in with ideas and suggestions, so it's

like having a little shopkeeper there." Sarah says: "We had some lovely feedback from customers (who attended the November virtual fair saying they had bought 30 presents in one hit and really enjoyed the experience of finding new brands that have become firm favourites."

"And brands said the customers were lovely, so in a way it felt like the village hall

with non-essential stores closed during both lockdowns and fairs and markets shut – the duo want shoppers to support their British brands rather than buying online from global giants like Amazon."

Sarah says: "It's these small independent entities who are working really hard."

"Some of them are quite new, so supporting them rather than a couple of clicks on Amazon is important."

Kate adds: "I really think people do like to buy from people, not just from big corporations."

And the pair still want The Glorious Edit to help good causes, so have asked new visitors to the site for a voluntary donation.

Sarah says: "We are supporting a social enterprise so when newcomers come to the



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## 'So many brilliant small independents'

experience of people meeting – but it was in a virtual space."

Kate adds: "A lot of other sites just list the brand's websites and it is up to people to do the hard work for themselves."

"Our unique selling point is in showing people what they can get, what would be good for the toddler who loves to play outside or the teenage daughter."

Sarah says: "We are supporting a social enterprise so when newcomers come to the

website they are asked if they want to pay £4 which goes to this lovely organisation called MeeTwo, which provides safe and anonymous support to young people."

And they are now winning praise from the brands getting involved.

Alive and Kicking, a not-for-profit organisation making footballs in Kenya, said about the site: "In what has been a challenging year of cancelled markets and difficult trading restrictions, The Glorious Edit has provided the perfect platform to showcase beautifully handcrafted balls that lift families out of poverty in some of the world's most disadvantaged communities."

And even when the pandemic is over and

the country finally returns to normal life, Kate and Sarah plan to continue holding themed virtual fairs throughout the year.

Sarah says: "We will stick to doing this because it is working, it's an easy way for people to shop."

"Whilst it's lovely for people to go to physical fairs this is a great platform."

Kate explains: "One of our brands is Alpaca Pie from way up in Scotland and there is no way of working with them if not online. It's invaluable to be able to do that."

"We would like to do a number of fairs a year in different subject areas like health and fitness, and interiors, and homeware."

"There are just so many brilliant small independent brands out there who just need a platform. "We can bring them together with our evergrowing database of people."

Sarah adds: "The internet is great because it is not confined by geographical areas, so we will keep doing this."

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