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● Pictured receiving a mammoth £15,123.96 cheque on behalf of Macmillan Cancer Support was the charity's Calvin Lovelock in Princetown last weekend. The money was raised following a marathon sponsored bike ride during the summer. See page 9. Picture by James Bird

Don't Forget Two Bridges Bridal Fair

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Chamber issues appeal for support

‘Christmas lights and Dickensian is precious — we would not want to see it go’ — chairman

CHRISTMAS events in Tavistock could be hit this year if the town's multi-national businesses fail to contribute to an £11,000 appeal to stage the popular Dickensian Evening and Christmas Lights.

The rising cost of the Christmas extravaganza means Tavistock Chamber of Commerce is facing its toughest challenge yet.

Almost 95% of the cost has been met in the past by local independent traders, with only three of the national chains making any contribution, despite receiving an annual request for funds.

The Co-op, Boots and Morrisons have responded and made donations in the past.

Chamber chairman Nigel Eadie said everyone's support was needed: ‘Unless we can galvanise support from almost the entirety of

retailers we will have a problem in staging these events,’ he said.

‘We have around 15 multi-nationals in the town and we do not get a penny from the majority, despite organising things which bring their companies massive amounts of extra business.

‘Every time, it is the small trader who is the first to step up and put their hands in their pocket and it is only through this support that things have happened in the past.

‘The Christmas lights and Dickensian is so precious and important to the town we would not want to see it go.’

Mr Eadie said the Dickensian late-night shopping experience was ‘magical’ for visitors and had grown in popularity in recent years.

‘We were hoping to have even more activities and entertainment to add to

the Dickensian ambience of the evening this year.

‘If every business in the town makes an appropriate contribution then we will achieve our target.’

Last year, 110 businesses contributed to the Christmas appeal. This year, large businesses like multi-nationals, banks and building societies will be asked to give £150, medium-sized firms £90 and small businesses £50. Market traders will also be requested to give £10 per stall.

A spokesperson for W H Smith said: ‘We are keen for local stores to play an active role in the community.

‘We do not have an endless budget to be financing a huge range of local initiatives, but stores can decide what charities or organisation they want to be involved with.’

A spokeswoman for Julian Graves said she

did not believe the company had received a request from the chamber yet.

She said: ‘It's certainly a worthwhile cause and we would probably consider it, but when you think how many requests we get nationally, we have to take this into consideration.’

Somerfield said the company received thousands of requests for money but store managers could make recommendations to regional managers for ‘ad hoc payments’ for local good causes or a member of staff could suggest projects to receive cash under the staff lottery fund.

The supermarket chain also supported one particular charity each year and staff were geared towards raising money for that cause — this year it was Macmillan Cancer Support.

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