

Newport Now Business Improvement District

Board Meeting 4pm, Thursday, May 16, 2024

Conference Room, Riverfront Theatre

Meeting Notes For Publication

Agenda

1. Welcome

2. In attendance: Zep Bellavia (Bellavia & Associates, Chair), Robin Hall (Kymin), Kevin Ward (BID Manager), Dan Smith (M4 Property Consultants, via video link), Nicky Vignoli (The Newporters), Nikki Marshall (Newport Arcade), Tracy Stokes (Belle Femme).

Also in attendance: Matt Tribbeck (Newport City Council, via video link), Matt Phillips (QRLA, via video link).

Apologies for absence: Alan Edwards (Vacaras), Simon Pullen (Friars Walk), Ian Lamsdale (Newport City Radio), Richard Ellis (Ellis Lloyd Jones), Councillor Jane Mudd (Newport City Council), Catherine Macnamara (Liverton Opticians), Gavin Horton (Horton's Lounge).

3. Declarations of interests for Register of Interests

- IL (re agenda item 9).

4. Approval of minutes of last meeting

- Approved.

5. Presentation from QRLA

- Matt Phillips and Ewan Deeley are part of the current incubator cohort at Alacrity in Newport. They have launched a business aimed at solving the growing problem of QR code fraud, and are keen to promote QRLA to BID members. MP provided a presentation to the Board. <https://www.qrla.io/>
- The BID Board agreed to promote to BID members. KW to organise.

6. Finance update

- Cash in bank in the BID's current account as of last night is £11,397.
- Levy collection for 24/25 to date stands at £98,698 or 57% of the total levy bill for the year. This is almost identical to the collection rate this time last year.
- Reminder letters to those who have yet to pay the levy will be issued early in June.

- Total income for 24/25 to date is £33,448 and expenditure is £22,111. Income includes an initial BID levy payment for the year of £22,200, a VAT rebate of £2,548, last year's budget surplus of £4,740 and £3,600 in remaining levy from 23/24.
- We await the first full monthly levy payment of £20,400, which was due yesterday, and also the first £3,300 payment of the PCC grant for the Night Ambassadors (please see item 7).
- Not an immediate issue but the Board should be aware that our bank Virgin Money is being taken over by Nationwide. At the moment, Nationwide does not offer business accounts.

7. External funding update

- A reminder that we applied successfully for grants from the Police & Crime Commissioner, and the Shared Prosperity Fund in March.
- The Night Ambassadors service, the funding for which ran out at the end of the 23/24 financial year, has been secured for another 12 months via a £36,000 grant from the PCC. This guarantees the service until the end of March 2025. Processing the grant has been delayed by the PCC elections but the council has agreed to cover the first three months' costs of the service (£9,900) with this sum then recovered from the grant (which is paid to the council and then forwarded to us). The grant includes a £3,600 annual management fee for the BID.
- The Shared Prosperity Fund grants are for three city centre events during the year.
- £40,000 for this year's Countdown to Christmas event.
- £39,400 to bring an urban beach into John Frost Square for the month of August.
- £15,000 to bring a Christmas street market into High Street for the month of December.
- The urban beach has been booked, and Green Top Markets have been engaged to deliver the Christmas market. We will continue to work with Arena Projects for Countdown to Christmas.
- All three grant award letters have been received, signed and returned.
- MT suggested doing more around Christmas with the potential for further funding. KW to meet MT to discuss.

8. Third term ballot update

- Our ballot for a third term will be taking place in November. The ballot itself will run from October 31 to November 28, with the result declared on November 29.
- At its last meeting, the Board took the decision not to engage consultants to deliver the ballot campaign but to take this work in-house.

- KW proposed forming a small working group of board members meeting monthly to oversee the campaign, with all board members kept informed of progress at all times. ZB, AE, RH and NV have volunteered to be part of this working group. KW to arrange first meeting.
- At the last Board meeting, it was agreed to consider increasing the levy rate for 2025-30 to 1.5% of rateable value (1.25% for businesses in managed shopping centres).
- This would be the first levy increase since the BID began operations in 2015, and reflects what is happening across the BIDs industry as BIDs attempt to maintain income and services in the light of reductions in rateable values.
- In Wales, only Cardiff and Swansea have lower levies than Newport and they are considerably bigger organisations with annual levy incomes of £1.1m and £360k. The average BID levy percentage across the UK is 1.5%.
- A 0.25% increase in our levy would generate an additional £44k income a year. The average annual levy would increase by around £37 a year or 70p a week.
- The Board approved the increase for the start of the 2025-30 financial year, pending the ballot result.
- KW attended a training session run by British BIDs earlier this week. This training was based on how to run and manage a ballot and was extremely useful.
- Over the next week, KW will be building a timeline for the ballot process and ensuring the key legal milestones, including formal notification to Newport City Council (the ballot holder) of our intention to extend the BID to a third term via a ballot.
- The first stage of the business plan consultation will start at the beginning of June with a survey of levy payers, which will be emailed, hand-delivered, on our website, and in a special newsletter.

9. Events/footfall update

- The Newport Wales Marathon took place on Sunday, April 28. This year there was a half marathon and a 10k as well as the marathon (the only one in Wales). All races had a starting route that included parts of the city centre.
- There were an estimated 16,000 people in the city centre on the day and we sent out emails and socials on a regular basis to encourage businesses – particularly those in the hospitality sector to get involved.
- There was a discussion around ensuring businesses take advantage of key events.

- Newport City Radio's Love Live Music awards take place on June 6. We have sponsored the Best Music Venue award. Our Countdown to Christmas event last year has been nominated for Event of the Year, as has the BID-funded Record Store Day.
- The 80th anniversary of D-Day will be marked with a series of events culminating with a parade in the city centre on June 8.
- Other major events through the rest of the year:
 - Big Splash, July.
 - Urban Beach, August.
 - Pride in the Port, September.
 - Food Festival, October.
 - Countdown to Christmas, November.
 - Christmas street market, December.

10. Ambassadors (Day and Night) update

- Funding for the Night Ambassadors has been agreed for the next 12 months with the Police and Crime Commissioner. This means the service is guaranteed until the end of March 2025.
- We have slightly reduced the hours of the daytime Street Ambassadors to help balance the budget as agreed at the last Board meeting. Their hours are now 10am-5pm Tuesday and Wednesday; 9am-5pm Thursday-Saturday.

11. City centre app update

- The app is currently promoting 165 businesses – 28 via deals and 143 via events listings and trails.
- To date, there have been 9,810 interactions with the app, 3,226 interactions with the trails, and 1,922 deal redemptions.
- The new version of the app that will be branded entirely as Newport Now is progressing. A reminder there is no additional cost for the design and build of this.

12. Gift Card update

- During the first four months of the year, £842 worth of cards (44 cards) have been spent in the city centre across businesses ranging from Primark to the Carpenters pub.
- This week we launched an 'end of term' promotion aimed at schools. Teacher of the Year is a nationwide competition with the winner receiving £1,250 in gift cards for their area.
- In mid-June, we will be launching the Summer Freedom sales promotion.

13. Savings Advisory Service

- PSP was in Newport on April 29 and we promoted this on our social media, website and emails. They met a number of businesses already signed up whose contracts are coming to an end.
- In total, the project has identified £105,030 in savings for levy payers since it was relaunched in late 2021, with £59,985 savings realised by businesses.
- KW has a meeting with PSP on July 2 when they are next in Newport to discuss new marketing materials, and also to break down savings by category – energy, telecoms, merchant fees etc.

14. Purple Flag

- The self-assessment has taken place, led by the council's licensing team.
- The next step will be to formally apply to ATCM for retention of Purple Flag status.

15. AOB

- KW said Steve Corten has formally resigned from the Board. ZB thanked SC for this time with the Board, and asked KW to pass this on to him.
- ZB said the Newport City Summit took place on May 8 at the Riverfront. This was the first since Covid. KW was MC for the event. Several board members attended. There were presentations from Stride Treglown, the consultants delivering the new city centre placemaking plan; Business in the Community; and contributions from the Cardiff Capital Region, ABP Ports, Welsh Government, Tin Shed Theatre, KLA, USW and Tramshed Tech.
- ZB said he felt the event was useful, highlighting the many positive projects under way in the city, and it was good to see so many board members in attendance.
- KW said Councillor Dimitri Batrouni was the new leader of the Labour group on Newport City Council and would therefore become the new council leader – replacing Councillor Jane Mudd who has been elected Police & Crime Commissioner for Gwent. It was likely there would be a new council-appointed board member but this was not yet confirmed. The Board agreed to invite Councillor Batrouni to a future board meeting. KW to action.
- DS suggested inviting the council CEO to a future board meeting. KW to action.
- It was agreed to invite the city centre manager, Roger Jeavons, to the next board meeting. KW to action.
- Welsh Government Future Proofing Fund went live for applications this afternoon. MT said the council will be reopening its large capital grants scheme.

- KW gave an update on a meeting he had had with the CEO of Tiny Rebel following their decision to close in the city centre, and also highlighted the reopening of Pierre's in Friars Walk.
- DS said there was no update yet on the Debenhams building.
- DS asked for an update on the MBA Global database project. KW said he had received the latest iteration of the database from the students which gave us up-to-date emails for 350 levy payers. There is still work to be done to expand this but it is a considerable improvement from the starting point.
- MT asked if there had been any feedback from levy payers regarding new recycling regulations. NM said the bins look really scruffy if outside. RH said he keeps his indoors until collection day and would hate to have them outside. MT asked if feedback could be sought from levy payers. KW to action.
- NV asked if there could be a recycling facility in the city centre, similar to those in supermarket car parks.
- NM said four new artists were moving into Newport Arcade and suggested they could be used for decorating empty shopfronts. MT suggested working with Newport City Homes as a pilot project.

16. Date of next Board meeting

- Thursday, July 18 at 4pm at the Riverfront Theatre.