

Newport Now Business Improvement District

Board Meeting 4pm, Thursday, March 28, 2024

Meeting Room, Mercure Hotel

Meeting Notes for Publication

Agenda

1. **Welcome** – RH, deputising as Chair in the absence of ZB, welcomed all to the meeting.
2. **In attendance:** Robin Hall (Kymin, chair), Kevin Ward (Newport Now BID) Dan Smith (M4 Property Consultants), Tracy Stokes (Belle Femme), Alan Edwards (Vacara's), Ian Lamsdale (Newport City Radio), Nikki Marshall (Newport Arcade), Nicky Vignoli (The Newporters), Gavin Horton (Horton's Lounge).

Apologies for absence: Zep Bellavia (Bellavia & Associates), Catherine McNamara (Liverton Opticians), Simon Pullen (Friars Walk), Jane Mudd (Newport City Council), Richard Ellis (Ellis Lloyd Jones), Steve Corten (Pub Watch).

3. **Declarations of interests for Register of Interests**

- DS (re agenda item 7).
- IL (re agenda item 8).

4. **Approval of minutes of last meeting on January 18, 2024**

- Approved.

5. **Finance update**

- Cash in bank in the BID's current account as of last night is £4,740.
- This total includes £2,603 remaining grant funding for the Night Ambassadors project. An update on this project is included later in this report.
- Therefore, the 'actual' balance is £2,137. There is a further £3.6k in levy for 23/24 that we will invoice for this month. Therefore we will end the financial year with a balance of £5.7k. The original forecast was £12k, reduced in January to £9.1k. The further adjustment reflects lower residual levy collected compared to last year, shopfront improvement grants paid out, and some printing and sundry costs in relation to the AGM/open meeting.
- The closing balance for 23/24 is our joint lowest, with only 19/20 being lower when we budgeted for a break-even year in case of a 'no' vote at re-ballot.

- Levy collection for 23/24 with payments related to previous years stripped out is £149k – or 86% of the total levy bill for the year.
- Total income for 23/24 was £248,082 and expenditure was £326,168. Again, bear in mind expenditure includes grant-funded projects. Taking those out, gives us an expenditure of £244,382.
- **Budget 2024/25**
- The budget for 2024/25, which is the BID’s renewal year, was approved unanimously by the Board.
- The budget forecasts a closing balance next March of 8.2k.

6. External funding update

- We have been successful in a number of grant applications ahead of the start of the new financial year.
- The Night Ambassadors service, the funding for which runs out at the end of this month, has been secured for another 12 months. We have agreed funding of £36k with the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office. This guarantees the service until the end of March 2025.
- We made three applications for funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund and each was successful.
- £40k for this year’s Countdown to Christmas event.
- £35k to bring an urban beach into John Frost Square for the month of August.
- £15k to bring a Christmas street market into Commercial Street (and possibly High Street & Bridge Street) for the month of December.
- This means that since 2022 we have secured £277,408 in external funding. In other words, for every £1 of levy we have collected during that period we have generated another 55p in external funding.

7. Renewal ballot update

- A reminder that our renewal ballot will be taking place in November.
- A document inviting agencies/consultants to tender for the renewal campaign was issued at the beginning of this month.
- We only received one expression of interest in response, from Savills Placemaking.
- KW had an informal conversation with them last week, and they are expected to now provide a formal proposal.

- However, following further budget work with RE and ZB it is now proposed that we run the renewal campaign ourselves this year utilising the lessons we learnt from 2019. This will save us £15k + VAT.
- There will undoubtedly be a role for board members and other levy payers to play in shaping the 2025-30 business plan and promoting the Yes campaign.
- KW has proposed forming a small working group of board members to oversee the campaign, with all board members kept informed of progress at all times.
- If the board is happy with this approach then this working group would meet at least once a month with board meetings remaining as bi-monthly.
- Volunteers for the working group will be needed.
- One aspect that we will need to consider as we build the business plan for 2025-30 is the levy rate. This has been unchanged at 1.25% (1% for managed shopping centres) since 2015. It is likely we will look at increasing this by 0.25% to 1.5% (1.25% for managed shopping centres).
- Among Welsh BIDs, only Cardiff and Swansea have lower levies than Newport and they are considerably bigger organisations with annual levy incomes of £1.1m and £360k respectively.
- Among other Welsh BIDs, almost all have bigger levy percentages and the majority either have or are planning to increase the percentage.
- 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.
- The Board agreed that a proposed levy increase should form part of the consultation process for the 2025-30 Business Plan.

8. Events/footfall update

- The Newport Wales Marathon takes place on Sunday, April 28. This year there will be a half marathon and a 10k as well as the marathon (the only one in Wales). All races have a starting route that includes parts of the city centre and there are substantial opportunities for businesses to benefit from the estimated 16,000 visitors who will be here on the day – offers, early opening etc.
- As detailed earlier, we have been successful in applications for Shared Prosperity Fund (SF) funding for Countdown to Christmas along with two new events – a month-long urban beach in August and a month-long Christmas market in December.
- We have not been able to fund Record Store Day or the Big Sesh this year and neither event is now taking place. We will reassess these sponsorships next year.

- The BID is sponsoring the Best Music Venue award at Newport City Radio's Love Live Music awards later this year. The cost of this is £250.
- A reminder that the new events website for Newport - <https://whatsoncityofnewport.co.uk/> - has been launched by the council. There is an easy-to-use submission button for anyone staging events in the city.
- City centre footfall for the first two months of 2024 was 12.8% up on the same period last year. This compares to a reduction of 6% across Wales and 3% across the UK.
- Comparisons to 2019 are no longer being made.
- Again, it is worth noting that there is only one footfall counter in the city centre other than those in shopping centres, and that increased footfall does not necessarily mean increased trade. Events still have a significant effect on footfall. At the start of this year, this will have included the Newport County matches against Wrexham and Manchester United. However, it does show the potential is there for increased trade.

9. DS project update

- PDSA has moved in to Commercial Street. Conversations started with them in October.
- DS aiming to broker deal between tenant and landlord for a property in Commercial Street.
- DS attended MBA Global networking event at USW campus. USW is still looking for work placements for students. Potential funding available from USW for up to 50 work placements. DS waiting for follow-up.
- AE suggested adding a list of shops and locations to BID website. KW said he would look at this, though there was already a list of BID members on the site with addresses.
- DS suggested a city centre marketing project for the MBA Global students. KW agreed to raise this with the council's city centre manager.

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 are slightly reducing the hours of the daytime Street Ambassadors to help balance the budget for 24/25. From April 1, their hours will be 10am-5pm Tuesday and Wednesday; 9am-5pm Thursday-Saturday.
- We now have a core of 5 Street Ambassadors to ensure continuity of service. Some are relatively new and still building up their local knowledge.

11. Vicinity/Loyal Free update

- The app is currently promoting 164 businesses – 26 via deals and 143 via events listings and trails.
- To date, there have been 9,473 interactions with the app, 3,211 interactions with the trails, and 1,768 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

- In the first two months of the calendar year, £685 worth of cards (38 cards) have been spent in the city centre across 10 businesses ranging from M&S to Bubble Trouble.
- In December, £1.5k worth of cards (63 cards) were spent across 9 businesses with Boots, Primark and M&S being the most popular.

13. Savings Advisory Service

- PSP will next be in Newport on April 29 and we will be promoting this on our social media, website and emails.
- 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.

14. Purple Flag

- A Purple Flag group has now been put together and will meet on a monthly basis to ensure all actions are being taken in a timely fashion ahead of each year's submission.
- The group's meeting in February was postponed and a new date is being sought to self-assess the nighttime economy ahead of our resubmission for Purple Flag status.
- Around 95% of the application process was completed by KW in the autumn so we are well placed for this year's resubmission.

15. BID Foundation accreditation

- KW reported that our application for BID Foundation Industry Standards accreditation has been successful.
- This means we are compliant with all BID industry standards, that we operate to best practice, and that our work is transparent and accountable to our levy payers.
- We are one of only 69 BIDs in the UK to achieve the accreditation, and only the third in Wales (Cardiff and Swansea are the others).
- A kite mark will be added to our website and all future communications.

- This accreditation will be particularly useful when dealing with national head offices during the renewal campaign, but on a wider scale it shows we are a well-run and trusted organisation.

16. AOB

- We have approved Shopfront Improvement Grants of £495 for Delicious Delights and £475.50 for Secrets of Cymru. Both are new independent businesses that have opened in Kingsway.

17. Date of next Board meeting

- Thursday, May 16, at 4pm at the Riverfront Theatre. Dates for the remainder of the year:
- July 18
- September 19
- November 21
- January 16
- The conference room at the Riverfront has been booked for all dates.