

## **Newport Now Business Improvement District**

**Board Meeting 4pm, March 20, 2025**

**Mercure Newport, Upper Dock Street**

**Meeting notes for publication**

### **Agenda**

1. **Welcome:** ZB welcomed everyone to the meeting and highlighted it would be AE's last meeting before retiring from the Board. ZB paid tribute to AE for his time on the Board, being the first Chair of the BID, and his unwavering campaigning for the city centre.
2. **In attendance:** Zep Bellavia (Bellavia & Associates, Chair), Kevin Ward (BID Manager), Ian Lamsdale (Newport City Radio), Dan Smith (M4 Property Consultants), Robin Hall (Kymin Financial Planners), Tracy Stokes (Belle Femme), Emily Grimes (Friars Walk), Nikki Marshall (Newport Arcade), Alan Edwards (Vacara's), Gavin Horton (Horton's Lounge), Nicky Vignoli (The Newporters), Rachel Phillips (RJ Phillips Interiors).

**Also in attendance:** Matt Tribbeck (Newport City Council)

**Apologies for absence:** Catherine Macnamara (Livertons), Councillor James Clarke (Newport City Council), Richard Ellis (Treasurer, Ellis Lloyd Jones)

3. **Declarations of interests for Register of Interests**
  - DS re the pop-up shops project; GH stated he attended Board meetings as a business owner and levy payer not as a city councillor, IL re Newport City Radio.
4. **Approval of minutes of last meeting**
  - Approved unanimously.
5. **Finance update for 24/25 & 25/26**
  - Cash in bank in the BID's current account as of last night is £10,702 with all payments up to date, including full rent, business rates, BID levy and M4PC management fees for the pop-up shops project.
  - The cash in bank includes £3,300 in ring-fenced grant funding for the Night Ambassadors.
  - Therefore, the 'real' cash in bank is £7,402 – and this is where we will end the financial year. Forecast at the start of the financial year was £8,800. This is a better performance than predicted at the last Board meeting, helped by additional levy payments of £2,400 since the last Board meeting.

- Levy collection for the year was £158,000 or 93% of the total levy bill for the year.
- Grants received totalled £169,000. The first time grant income has exceeded levy income.
- Total income for 24/25 was £382,496 and expenditure was £371,794.

## **6. External funding update**

- A reminder that we applied successfully this year for grants from the Police & Crime Commissioner, and the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The full £36,000 grant for the Night Ambassadors scheme has been received by the council from the PCC. We continue to invoice for this at a monthly rate of £3,300 (March payment awaited).
- I was informed last week that funding is secure for 25/26 and we will be announcing this at the open meeting later.
- The Shared Prosperity Fund grants were for the following...
  - £40,000 for last year's Countdown to Christmas event – full grant received and spent.
  - £39,400 to bring an urban beach into John Frost Square last August. Full grant received and spent.
  - £15,000 to bring a Christmas street market into High Street last December. Full grant received and spent.
  - £35,000 to deliver two pop-up shops in the Kingsway centre between October and March. Full grant received and spent.
- DS provided an update on the pop-up project, which comes to an end at the end of April. He confirmed that Kash Kraft was now in negotiation with Kingsway to take a permanent unit following its time using the pop-ups. All agreed this was a great result as the aim of the project was to encourage businesses to take permanent retail units in the city centre.
- The UK government has confirmed the Shared Prosperity Fund will continue for 2025-26 and this is described as a 'transition year'. KW said he was delighted to be able to inform the Board that we will receive full funding again for the Urban Beach (all 31 days of August), Countdown to Christmas and the Christmas markets. This amounts to more than £120k in external funding. We budgeted cautiously at £25,000 a year for the full term so have already exceeded that when Night Ambassadors is factored in. We will be able to announce this at the open meeting later.

## **7. Events/footfall update**

- City centre footfall has continued its upward curve for the first two months of 2025. Footfall year to date is up 4.5% compared to the first two months of 2024. This compares to footfall in Wales being down 0.3% and in the UK down 1% for 2025 v 2024 to date.
- Footfall performance continues to be a great story to tell, though it is becoming increasingly difficult to persuade local media to carry positive stories. IL raised Newport City Radio as positive media in the city. It was proposed and agreed that ZB & KW arrange to meet the Editor of the South Wales Argus to raise concerns over negative coverage of the city centre and impact it has on businesses. IL to look at putting together a specific NCR advertising package for BID members.
- Forthcoming events: Newport Festival of Words (Various city centre venues, March 20-23), Newport Music Trail (Various city centre venues, March 28 & 29), Newport Marathon Festival (April 13), Love Live Music Awards (June 5).

## **8. Ambassadors (Day and Night) update**

- We have again been successful in securing funding for the Night Ambassadors service for from next month. The funding comes from the Home Office via the Police & Crime Commissioner with support from Newport City Council.
- KW is now talking to partners about how we find a longer-term funding solution to cover multiple years rather than 12 months at a time.
- The daytime Street Ambassadors continue to have a good rapport with businesses and provide an excellent level of intelligence for the police and other authorities.
- Newport Business Against Crime Partnership manager Bob Bevan retired at the end of last month following the expiration of his contract. KW said he was pleased to report we have found a replacement in Dominique De Cet, who will take on the role on the same consultancy basis as Bob. Dominique has the same role in Cwmbran and operates the same systems there as we have in Newport so it should be a fairly seamless transition. Bob is remaining on hand to ease the handover process. This is a good result for NBaC as its future was uncertain. Our £8k funding will therefore continue for 25/26.

## **9. City centre app update**

- The Newport Now app is currently promoting 168 businesses – 35 via deals and the remainder via events listings and trails.

- To date, there have been 12,478 interactions with the app, 3,547 interactions with the trails, and 2,865 deal redemptions. The app has 1,241 registered users in the Newport area.

#### **10. Gift Card update**

- The digital gift card will be launched in April and will run in parallel with the physical card offer. There is some due diligence to be completed but we are well advanced with this. The digital version of the card is contactless and sits in the Google Pay or Apple Pay wallets on smart phones.
- We will promote this new offer heavily once we have the go-ahead from Miconex to do so.
- Cards worth a total of £225 (5 cards) have been sold to date in 2025. A corporate order for 200 cards worth £2,000 is currently being processed so this will give us an excellent first quarter with the digital offer being launched next month.
- In 2025 to date, £679 worth of cards (30 cards) have been in the city centre at Boots, Primark, M&S, Prezzo, Bubble Trouble, The Entertainer and Waterstones.

#### **11. Savings Advisory Service update**

- Total savings identified by PSP for BID levy payers now totals £110,839 to date; with realised savings of £63k.
- 41 different businesses now have contracted support via the service, with average savings of £2.7k.
- PSP were in Newport last Thursday and Friday and will next be with us in June.
- ZB highlighted the importance of increasing use of all services such as the gift card, app and SAS. DS said the services sector was an option for promoting SAS.
- KW said conversations were ongoing with NCC regarding combining information available on the app and the council's What's On website.
- There was a conversation around the Big Splash festival for 2025 and whether more acts could take place in Commercial Street/High Street/Cambrian Road this year.

#### **12. AOB**

- KW said business rates relief for 2025/26 has been confirmed. This remains the same Wales-wide at 40% relief for businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. For the third successive year, Newport City Council is providing an additional 25% for RHL businesses within the BID area. Links to apply for the relief are now live on the NCC website.

- KW reported that Scope has announced that 41 of its charity shops are to close at the end of this month, including the one on Commercial Street. A further 36 will close during 25/26.
- KW said Green Kitchen Bakehouse & Café opens on March 27 on the site of the former Secret Garden Bistro on Charles Street.
- KW said Santander has announced it is closing 95 branches across the UK – almost a quarter of its total branches. However, the Commercial Street branch is not on the closure list.
- EG said the food festival was to have a larger base in John Frost Square as well as High Street/Bridge Street.
- MT spoke about progress on the building of the leisure centre on Usk Way and emphasised it would include two swimming pools despite disinformation online.
- RP raised a question around the length of time pedestrian crossing lights stay on red on Queensway near the Information Station.
- RP said lots of her customers were saying how much better the city centre is since action was taken around anti-social behaviour at the Upper Dock Street bus station.
- IL asked if Pride in the Port had reached out to BID for sponsorship etc. KW said not yet but we have it in budget. EG also asked for a contact for Pride in the Port.
- RH raised the issue of the lack of Christmas lights on Queensway. MT referred to increased costs for energy.