

BYRES ROAD & LANES BID COMPANY LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT

1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024



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1. Introduction

Following a successful ballot in 2015 it was decided that the Byres Road & Lanes Business Improvement District (BID) should operate as a private company, limited by guarantee. The Byres Road & Lanes BID Company Limited was incorporated on 16 April 2015 and began trading on 5 May 2015. At the end of five years a BID needs to secure a mandate for a second five year term via a ballot of the businesses. This was achieved in March 2020, with the second term starting on 1 May 2020.

The BID comprises 235 businesses.

At 31 March 2024 the board of directors was as follows:

- John Turner (Chair and Finance Director), Janet & John, De Courcy's Arcade, Cresswell Lane
- Chris Finnieston, Di Maggios Restaurant Group, Ruthven Lane
- Robert Fletcher, Vision Express

2. Objectives

The BID has a number of objectives:

- To promote Byres Road & the Lanes as a prime 'must go to' destination for locals and visitors alike
- To help reduce your overheads and save you money
- To work closely with Glasgow City Council on the delivery of the City Deal project to enhance Byres Road
- To build and maintain closer links with the University of Glasgow as the work on the new campus continues
- To work closely with the Council, landlords, agents, and others to proactively encourage businesses to move into the area
- To seek additional funding to enable us to host a wider range of festivals and events in the BID area

The BID business plan is arranged around six delivery themes:

A: Getting here and getting around

- B: Working for our businesses
- C: Marketing, PR and promotion
- D: Events and festivals
- E: Clean, green and safe
- F: Environment and streetscape

3. Delivery against themes

The United Kingdom continued to recover from the COVID pandemic, with high energy costs, a cost of living crisis and issues in recruiting and retaining staff continuing to have an impact on business viability. The BID team continued to provide promotion, information, support and assistance to businesses from the office at 61 Byres Road.

Theme A: Getting here and getting around

In the research carried out to inform the development of the business plan, 88% of businesses thought that availability of parking was important or very important.

Contractors for Glasgow City Council had started implementation of the first phase of the £10m Byres Road City Deal project in January 2023, working on Church Street and Byres Road south, from Partick Cross to University Avenue. The project's aim is to increase the attractiveness and usability of Byres Road. The scheme was programmed to run for eighteen months and would result in widened pavements, the introduction of cycle lanes, the introduction of seating and the development of rain gardens to improve the environmental quality of the street.

The BID had lobbied for the removal of residents' only spaces in the Hillhead Parking Zone to offset the on-street parking spaces lost on Byres Road through the City Deal project. The residents' only bays were an anomaly in the city and resulted in many parking spaces remaining unused throughout the day. The lobbying was successful, and a Traffic Regulation Order allowed the new arrangements to come into force in January 2024. It also delivered a much-needed loading bay in Great George Street.

However, the BID team continued to oppose the increase in parking charges introduced in April 2023, particularly the removal of the discounted first hour price. The BID teamed up with the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to provide a united business front to Glasgow City Council against any increase in parking charges in subsequent years.

Theme B: Working for our businesses

Acting as a unified voice of the business community, working to bring new businesses to Byres Road and the Lanes, and acting as the point of contact between the Council and their contractors in the City Deal works were seen as key issues in the business plan research.

A BID project manager (30 hours per week) continued in post. The full-time marketing & events co-ordinator role was the subject of a job share, with one person working the first half of the week and the other the second half. The holders of both of these job-share roles changed over the year.

With businesses apprehensive about the rising costs within their operation, it was vital that communications continued to be relevant and timely. The BID continued to be as a key source for information and support for members and helped many businesses with a wide range of queries,

from help with bureaucracy to marketing. A business survey was undertaken to provide up to date information on the position of BID businesses that could be shared with Glasgow City Council and other authorities.

The collaboration with Changeworks Recycling and eyebright continued to deliver significant cost savings for BID businesses on commercial waste and utility costs respectively, even in a challenging energy market.

The BID team established new contacts within various teams at the University of Glasgow, an objective in the business plan but one that had been delayed by the Covid pandemic and the resultant re-opening of the university to in-person learning. An early invitation was for the BID to be part of the group looking at the animation of St Mungo Square, the new public space at the heart of the new campus development.

As part of that developing relationship, the BID team was invited to the Kaplan International Fair at the Kelvinhall in February. This is a welcome event for international students and the team was able to promote BID businesses to these new customers. It was a successful initiative and the team was invited to attend the next event in September 2024. Plans were also made to attend the two days of the University of Glasgow Welcome Event in September.

The BID continued to represent Glasgow in the Scottish city BIDs grouping, which provided relevant feedback and intelligence on the varied Covid-19 recovery responses across the country.

The BID continued to work with My Shawlands BID and the community BID in Possilpark, to explore areas of opportunity and collaboration across Glasgow. The Glasgow BIDs continued to liaise closely with the Economic Development team at Glasgow City Council, contributing to the development of the Council's Green Business Programme

Theme C: Marketing, PR and promotion

Consultation undertaken for the development of the business plan indicated that 82% of businesses recognised the importance of marketing and advertising campaigns, with 77% thinking a strong social media presence to be very important or important.

Significant resource was dedicated to social media activity. Continued development of curated content saw us gain 438 new Facebook followers; from 9,392 to 9,830 by the end of March. That's an increase of 4.67%.

Our Facebook reach, the number of unique users who see your post or page, grew by 753% to 267,700.

Content interactions grew to 8,600, an increase of 60.4%.

A need for the BID to engage and promote businesses more via Instagram was recognised in October 2023. We gained 249 followers before the end of the financial year, from 7,713 to 7962.

Our social media audit advised that Twitter was less relevant to businesses. We therefore had gained 58 followers by the end of the financial year.

Our Instagram reach grew by 25.7% to 486,000. This is the number of unique users who see your post or page.

Content interactions grew by 100% 323 in total.

Five out of the six top-performing Instagram reels by reach were ones made or shared to advertise our businesses.

Work started on the redesign of the website. In parallel and supported by Scotland's Towns Partnership, an independent audit of the BID social media was undertaken. Results were positive and confirmed that the direction that the team was taking, with an emphasis on video content, was correct.

The Visit West End gift card continued to be promoted, with sales reaching a peak in December 2022. This prepaid Mastercard card was available to buy online and offers recipients over sixty Byres Road & lanes outlets where it can be redeemed. The BID continued to absorb all the costs associated with the scheme: businesses pay no more than they would by taking any other payment by Mastercard. By offering the gift card, the BID is able to compete with retail competitors such as the Buchanan Galleries and Silverburn. It retains money in the local economy and is attracting spend into the West End from across the Central Belt and beyond. Whilst still available as a physical card, it is also available as a digital product, which has proved to be the most popular option. The 'load this card' option continued to be available, with stands of cards for people to load themselves distributed around the area. The BID team produced specific promotions to highlight the gift card through Easter, Father's Day, Freshers and Christmas campaigns, and a 'guess the location' video competition featuring businesses that took the gift card. A professional photo shoot added to the image bank of BID businesses

One of the objectives in the 2020-2025 business plan was an increase in business collaboration and business to business spend. The 2023 edition of the staff discount card continued to be a popular vehicle for this. Businesses submit offers and discounts, which are posted on the BID website and can be changed as the businesses wishes. Each member of staff is issued a simple card and is free to take up the offers. It has been very well received.

For the second year an advertisement was placed in the Kingfisher city guidebooks placed in bedrooms in key hotels.

BID businesses were again featured in the American Express 'Small Business Saturday' campaign in November and December.

Theme D: Events, festivals and markets

Events and festivals are recognised as a key method of increasing footfall to the area, raising awareness and boosting spend. The business plan research indicated that 80% of businesses thought that new events and festivals were very important or important, and 73% saw Christmas events as important or very important. Unlike other BIDs, there is no easily accessible exterior space available in the area in which to host events, resulting in charges for road closures and parking suspensions.

The Christmas community event was produced again on Vinicombe Street at the end of November. A stage showcased local musicians and singers in festive mode and a small number of stalls offered seasonal gifts and food. The event culminated in the switching on of the lights on the LED Christmas tree. The event was undertaken with Beatson Cancer Charity and achieved excellent press coverage, including the front page of the Glasgow Times. The event was undertaken in association with the Winter Wonderland events put on by the Ashton Lane Proprietors Association. The BID team continued to lobby for a reduction in the cost of using the pedestrianised area of Vinicombe Street for this community event. The Council views it as a commercial event as it has stalls selling festive gifts, and charges £1,500 for the twelve-hour hire.

For the third year Make Music Day was celebrated, held annually across the world on 21 June. The exact form the event takes is flexible, but the music must be free of charge to the audience. It was decided to liaise with businesses in traditional and non-traditional venues to encourage them to stage music events in their premises. Events took place in the Record Factory, the Alchemy Experiment, Jinty McGinty's and Cresswell Lane.

The fifth edition of the Byres Road Book Festival took place over the September weekend, in partnership with Glasgow Life, Waterstones, the Oxfam Bookshop and the Glasgow Grosvenor hotel. The festival was designed to drive footfall and spend to Byres Road and the lanes, and it succeeded in that aim. The audience survey showed that 86% of the respondents had spent money in the area (excluding book sales), with 35% spending between £20 and £50.

The BID also made a financial contribution to the Vinicombe Street Gala organised by Halo Arts as part of WestFest, and augmented it with face painters and buskers in the lanes. Support was given in the form of stall hire for the Ashton Lane festival in August.

The West End played a prominent role in a number of road races that formed part of the UCI Cycling World Championships, hosted by Glasgow City Council. Unfortunately, the extensive road closures and parking restrictions had a highly negative impact on the running of businesses and turnover during that period. The BID team undertook a survey of businesses that demonstrated the severity of the impact and shared it with Glasgow City Council. The Commonwealth Games that will be returning to Glasgow in 2026 will not include road cycling.

Theme E: Clean, green & safe

67% of businesses consulted for the business plan recognised a Business Watch scheme to protect people and property as important or very important.

BID staff continued to work with Police Scotland to monitor crime rates and to relate feedback from businesses.

The Business Watch initiative continued to focus on theft and anti-social behaviour in the area. Concerns were raised about the targeted shoplifting that was becoming more common, and local police officers attended the group. Businesses were able to be connected via a WhatsApp group, providing real time information and intelligence. The increase in anti-social behaviour and theft prompted the team to explore the possible extension of CCTV in the area.

The BID team noted graffiti, rubbish, flooding and any other environmental issues, then timeously reported them to the relevant authority or Council service area. Any instances of problems that were brought to the team's attention were reported as usual. The BID team also worked closely with the Council's two neighbourhood co-ordinators.

Theme F: Environment & streetscape

The business plan research indicated that working with the Council to ensure a high-quality City Deal was implemented in a way that minimises the impact on businesses was important, as were the Christmas displays.

Throughout the year the BID team continued to liaise with Glasgow City Council on the details of the implementation of the City Deal project to improve the public realm and accessibility of Byres Road. Glasgow City Council had responded positively to a request for funding to mitigate the impact of the construction on businesses and residents. One element focused on resources to pay for a part time liaison role, acting as a conduit between the contractor, businesses and the local community. The second looked at the delivery of a marketing strategy promoting the message that Byres Road was open for business throughout the contract period.

The City Deal phase 1 works covered the length of Byres Road from Partick Cross to the junction with Highburgh Road and University Avenue, plus Church Street. The initial works at Partick Cross involved businesses outwith the BID, who were included in all liaison and communications. A City Deal marketing plan was developed to promote the message that Byres Road was open for business during the construction period. The first promotional campaign was on the Subway and on buses during the first quarter of the financial year.

There was continued close working with Partick Community Council, including attendance at their meetings.

Christmas lights were installed in Cresswell Lane and Ruthven Lane and added to the festive feel of the area. A Christmas tree was sited in Vinicombe Street for the fifth year. The tree was very much appreciated by businesses and residents.

The BID continued to fund the maintenance of hanging baskets in the southern part of Byres Road. These have been very well received by the businesses and public alike.

The BID commissioned a series of mini murals across Byres Road and the lanes. These are more domestic in scale than the large-scale street art across the city and have brought a sense of the unexpected to the area. The BID team was also invited to collaborate with the team at SWG on the 'Outside the Box' project. This initiative aimed to reclaim utility boxes such as electricity cabinets and sub-stations, bringing them to life with small scale artistic interventions. Both of these projects were well-received by businesses and the public.

4. Community engagement

The BID's objective of improving the trading environment and attractiveness of the area is also delivering value to local residents and visitors. The decision to focus on family- friendly events forms a tangible connection with the local community. It is the intention to build on these positives to present a calendar of events that is embedded in the life of the community.

5. Partnership working

As an organisation with no assets in terms of land or property in which to do things, partnership working is essential to the success of the BID. At a national level Improvement Districts Scotland and Scotland's Towns Partnership provide useful information and advice to BIDs and emerging BIDs across Scotland. The BID has attended online and in-person conferences and seminars offered by both organisations, and has had staff and director involvement at meetings with the Scottish Towns Partnership.

Glasgow City Council is one of the BID's most important partners, and relationships have been developed with key officers of the Council's Neighbourhoods Regeneration and Sustainability (Planning & Building Control, Roads, Projects, Events, Lighting, Glasgow Botanic Gardens), Finance, Economic Development and Glasgow Life.

As the BID's largest neighbour, the University of Glasgow is an important partner, particularly in the context of its significant development programme on the former Western Infirmary site. The BID board seeks to build on relationships developed across the university's departments and teams.

Glasgow, 24 September 2024

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