

BYRES ROAD & LANES BID COMPANY LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT

1 APRIL 2016 – 28 FEBRUARY 2017

1. Introduction

Following a successful ballot it was decided that the Byres Road & lanes Business Improvement District 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. The BID comprises 204 businesses with 190 owners.

At 31 March 2017 the board of directors was as follows:

- David Howat, Pattison & Co (Chair)
- David Nicholls, Brett Nicholls Associates
- Bruce Finnie, By Distinction Art
- Elizabeth Williams, The Ubiquitous Chip
- Chris Finnieston, Di Maggios Restaurant Group
- John Turner, Janet & John

2. Objectives

The BID has a number of objectives:

- To create a strong local partnership that gets things done and makes our voice heard
- To improve the economic opportunities and the trading environment for the businesses in the road and lanes
- To increase customer footfall, customer linger time, customer spend and customer retention
- To make the BID 'cost-neutral' by saving businesses money through collective working
- To improve businesses relationships with each other, the local authority and the community
- To market Byres Road to a local, regional, national and international audience via consistent marketing campaigns, a range of events, festivals and markets and branding the area as a destination
- To give businesses a strong unified voice to engage with Glasgow City Council on area improvements and lobby for changes
- To support local voluntary groups who are working in partnership with the BID
- To act as a vehicle for attracting larger scale external funding

The BID business plan is arranged around six delivery themes:

- Accessibility
- Facilitation
- Marketing, PR and promotion
- Events, festivals and markets
- Clean, green, safe and attractive place

- Environment and streetscape

3. Delivery against themes

The second year of activity delivered projects and initiatives that built upon the foundations developed in Year 1.

Theme A: Accessibility

In the research carried out to inform the development of the business plan, 81% of businesses felt that there was inadequate parking available, with 71% believing Byres Road to be dominated by cars and traffic. 67% thought that updating the Byres Road map was important or very important

The BID is working with the design and consultation team working on the comprehensive public realm improvements and redesign of Byres Road, to be delivered through the City Deal.

The BID has continued to lobby Glasgow City Council against the introduction of the £700 parking permit for businesses. Initial monitoring is underway to assess the impact of the new parking regime on footfall and business turnover.

A new area guide has been produced, and has been distributed to key tourist sites, accommodation providers and VisitScotland iCentres. The guide features a bespoke illustrative map of the area and sketches of the key buildings.

The rollout of free wifi in Byres Road by Glasgow City Council continues to be delayed, but the BID will continue to work in partnership with the Council and BT to achieve the deployment of this utility, with benefits for both visitors and businesses.

Theme B: Facilitation

Acting as a unified voice of the business community, and bringing businesses together to work and communicating effectively were seen as key issues in the business plan research.

A BID project manager (30 hours per week) continues in post. A full time marketing & events coordinator was in post until December 2016; a successor is being recruited. The latter post attracted funding support from the Glasgow Guarantee.

The BID staff have produced monthly e-newsletters and quarterly printed newsletters, as well as communicating with all businesses on an ad hoc basis to keep them informed on emerging issues and opportunities.

Preferential rates have been negotiated with Business Advisory Support and Changeworks Recycling to lower BID business costs.

Non-domestic rates continue to represent a significant proportion of businesses' overheads and are the highest in the city, outwith the city centre. The BID worked with levy payers to facilitate a collective appeal against the level of non - domestic rates, citing the closure of the Western Infirmary as a material change of use. Having taken professional advice, the appeal was subsequently withdrawn, as there was insufficient evidence of an overall reduction in rental levels to support the appeal. Proposed rateable values were published by the City Assessor in December 2016; these demonstrate strong variations across the geographical area. The BID will work with levy payers to facilitate appeals on a finer grained basis.

Theme C: Marketing, PR and promotion

The business plan research identified dissatisfaction with the way in which the area was marketed to tourists and locals. Development of a brand, more effective PR and the development of collaborative social media were seen as the most important actions.

The website continued to be developed in terms of the blog, newsletter and an up-to-date events section, creating reasons to come back. The number of visitors increased from 800 per month in March 2016 to 1847 in February 2017. Search engine optimisation work resulted in improved rankings on Google and Bing.

Continued development of tailored content on the Facebook page increased the number of likes from 1541 in March 2016 to 4004 in February 2017, an uplift of 160%. Likes and followers also increased on Twitter and Instagram.

Two promotional campaigns were undertaken, one in association with the Spring Celebration in April and the second around the Christmas Celebration in November (see Events). On both occasions, promotional offers and discounts from participating businesses were collated into brochures that were distributed in advance of the promotional period, to increase reach. The Christmas initiative ran from 27 November to 4 December and incorporated the national Small Business Saturday campaign.

PR support was engaged to support the autumn and winter initiatives (see Events).

The BID commissioned a wrap of a traditional Glasgow taxi to bear the brand, which will be plying its trade around the city for a year.

After considerable preparatory work, the Visit West End gift card was launched in December 2016. This prepaid VISA card is available to buy online and from two BID businesses, and offers recipients over sixty Byres Road & lanes outlets where it can be redeemed. The BID has absorbed all the costs associated with the scheme's development and on an ongoing basis; businesses pay no more than they would by taking any other VISA debit card. By offering the gift card, the BID is able to compete with retail competitors such as the Buchanan Galleries and Braehead. It retains money in the local economy and is attracting spend into the West End from across the Central Belt.

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 92% felt that it was important to increase the number of events. 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. It is hoped that this could be addressed to some degree by the public realm improvements for Byres Road.

The BID made financial contributions to the West End Festival in June 2016 and the St Andrews Day Torchlight Procession, supplemented by social media promotion of the events.

The Spring Celebration took place in April, animating Ruthven and Cresswell Lanes with children's entertainers, activities and games. It would be highly beneficial to be able to extend this activity to the lower part of Byres Road, and BID staff will repeat their request to use the car park on Church Street for children's activities for the 2017 Spring celebration. The BID is acutely aware of the lack of usable space to deliver activity to benefit businesses at the southern end of the BID, who are reporting significant reductions in turnover (20 – 25%) since the closure of the Western Infirmary.

The first Byres Road Fashion Show took place over two evenings in May, in Hillhead library. The event was a great success, highlighting the retail fashion offer available across the area, and raising £1,000 for charities.

Cinema in the Botanics took place over two nights in August. As well as delivering memorable entertainment for the audiences in an iconic West End location, the screenings also had the advantage of taking off via Facebook, giving significant exposure to the website and other social media channels. 26,000 people on Facebook were interested in the screenings, with a reach of 1.2 million.

The mini mela at the beginning of September provided an afternoon of performances reflecting the diversity of the city. It also gave an opportunity for the BID to stage an event on the improved Vinicombe Street site.

The BID secured £10,000 from the European Union, via the Scottish Ministers and BID Scotland, to celebrate European Mobility Week over the weekend of 17 & 18 September. Cyclist, author and presenter Mark Beaumont gave an inspirational talk in Hillhead library on the Saturday. On Sunday Byres Road was closed from Highburgh Road to Chancellor Street, and a range of activities took place in the vehicle-free space, including try out bike sessions, Dr Bike & fix your own bike sessions, children's street play, street redesign with Sustrans and performances by The Clan stunt bike team, all promoting active travel.

Glasgow's September Weekend saw the inaugural Byres Road Book festival, in association with Glasgow Life, Waterstones and the Oxfam Bookshop, and with the Hilton Grosvenor Glasgow as the official accommodation partner. Over 1000 people attended more than twenty events over the four day period. The sessions were wide ranging, with a family focus on the Monday events. The festival was very well received, with an 8.5/10 audience approval rating. An audience survey revealed that over 90% of respondents had spent money in BID businesses during or after their attendance at the festival, with a third reporting a spend of over £20.

The learning that had been taken from the mini mela was applied to the Christmas celebration that was held at the end of November in Vinicombe Street. The largest single event that the BID has held, the event showcased stalls selling seasonal goods from levy payers, and children's entertainment. The stage hosted an afternoon programme of seasonal songs and carols. The finale of the day was the switching on of the lights on the newly installed Christmas tree by Judith Ralston from BBC Weather and Allan Richardson (a well known local street cleaner and artist), chosen as 'Guardian of the Tree' after public nominations. Over 6,000 people were on site over the course of the day, and the event was a great success with the community and businesses.

Theme E: Clean, green, & safe, attractive place

The business plan research revealed that 61% felt that the lanes were not visible or noticeable to visitors and shoppers.

The proliferation of commercial waste bins continues to present issues in terms of siting, location, condition and pedestrian circulation; the problems are highlighted in Dowanside Lane and southern stretches of Byres Road. Dowanside Lane presents a particular intrusion, where the number of bins is undermining the environmental quality of the lane and the trading performance of the businesses adjacent to the bins. Various options had been considered to identify a suitable solution to the problem; the original idea to build a storage area for the bins will not work due to access requirements, most notably for emergency vehicles. A collective approach is now being pursued with Changeworks

Recycling. One levy payer who has moved to Changeworks Recycling has seen monthly four figure reductions in waste costs.

BID staff continued to work with business liaison officer PC Philip Warner to monitor crime rates and to relate feedback from businesses to Police Scotland.

Theme F: Environment & streetscape

The business plan research indicated that street cleaning, areas to stop and sit, and creating a Christmas display were the most important proposals.

Having delivered Christmas lights to the trees in Ashton Road car park in the previous year, Christmas 2016 was celebrated by the installation of a Christmas tree in Vinicombe Street. As well as forming a key element of the Christmas celebration event, the tree was very much appreciated by businesses, residents and visitors.

The BID continued to liaise with the University of Glasgow, their consultants and potential contractors regarding the development of the Western Infirmary site. The BID offered observations as part of the planning process for the campus development framework. The directors welcomed the opportunity that the redevelopment offers to bring active uses to the southern end of Byres Road, connect the area with the cultural quarter at the Kelvingrove and add to the area as a destination. In particular, the punctuation of the currently blank façade of Church Street will allow for a larger degree of permeability between the campus and the town centre of Byres Road, enabling easy movement between the new cultural quarter, through the campus and along Byres Road to the Botanic Gardens. The focus on the new social space to be developed at the corner of Church Street will bring much needed civic space to the southern part of the BID, allowing animation and activity that increases footfall, enlivens the street scene and adds to the vitality of the place. However, the directors expressed some concern regarding the level of comparison retail development included in the plans, citing their potential impact on businesses in the BID.

The BID continued to collaborate with the Byres Road Improvement Group in the development of the placemaking vision for Byres Road. Work is underway with the design and consultation team to promote and engage businesses in the comprehensive improvement project subsequently being developed through City Deal funding

Landlord approval for the installation of art murals on the Iceland wall in Ashton Lane was obtained in late autumn and the first cohort of murals was put in place in December. They reflect Glasgow's strong industrial heritage and have attracted positive comments from businesses, residents and visitors.

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.

Audience data from the fashion show, outdoor cinema and book festival indicates that whilst people have travelled from across the Central Belt and beyond, there is a strong local element who are welcoming the experience of seeing their much loved local assets enjoyed in new ways. There has been very positive feedback, in particular regarding the Spring Celebration, outdoor cinema, book festival and Christmas Celebration. It is the intention to build on these positives to present an evolving calendar of events that is embedded in the life of the community.

5. Partnership working

As an organisation with few 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, BID Scotland and the Scottish Towns Partnership provide useful information and advice to BIDs and emerging BIDs across Scotland.

The BID continues to work with the Byres Road Improvement Group on various initiatives, most notably the Vinicombe Street improvement project. The BID is working on behalf of Glasgow City Council to enable the installation of a power supply on the site, which will increase its versatility and usability.

Glasgow City Council is one of the BID's most important partners, and relationships have been established with key officers of the Council in Development and Regeneration Services (Economic Development, Neighbourhoods, Planning & Building Control), Land and Environment Services (Roads, Projects, Events, Lighting, Glasgow Botanic Gardens), Finance and the Glasgow Guarantee team.

One of the most visible partnerships saw the BID working hand in hand with Glasgow Life staff, Waterstones and Oxfam Bookshop to develop the inaugural Byres Road Book Festival. Strong connections have been made with the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau and VisitScotland, with invitations to sessions looking at the delivery of the Glasgow Tourism & Visitor Plan.

As the BID's largest neighbour, the University of Glasgow is an important partner, particularly in the context of its ambitious development agenda for the Western Infirmary site.

BID staff continue to work with PC Philip Warner, Police Scotland's dedicated business liaison officer, on a number of issues that affect businesses and residents. Links have now been established with Police Scotland's Operational Planning team in relation to event management and public safety.

Glasgow, 1 March 2017

David J Howat, Chair

61 Byres Road

Glasgow

G11 5RG