

BYRES ROAD & LANES BID COMPANY LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT

1 APRIL 2019 – 31 MARCH 2020

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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. The BID comprises 204 businesses with 190 owners.

At 31 March 2020 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
- Derek McNeil, Trios, Ruthven Mews, Ruthven Lane

Colette French, of Time & Tide on Byres Road, had resigned in February 2019. The board were seeking two new members.

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:

A: Accessibility

B: Facilitation

C: Marketing, PR and promotion

- D: Events, festivals and markets
- E: Clean, green, safe and attractive place
- F: Environment and streetscape

3. Delivery against themes

The fifth year of activity delivered projects and initiatives that developed the foundations and experience established in the first four years of the BID's existence.

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 continued to engage with member businesses on the detailed design of the City Deal public realm improvements, and liaise with Glasgow City Council to achieve the best possible outcome for all road users. The directors were pleased that the board's argument to reinstate the majority of on-street parking on Byres Road north of University Avenue / Highburgh Road was heard by the Council.

The directors were largely supportive of the Council's proposals to revise the Hillhead Parking Zone, making the spaces currently reserved for residents available both for residents' and general use. The availability of a business parking permit was also welcomed. However, the plans to charge for parking seven days a week, and extend the chargeable hours from 08.00 to 22.00 were seen as a highly retrograde step. Not only would they encourage people to shop online or in out of town locations with free parking, the impact on the evening economy would undermine the food and beverage businesses that are a fundamental part of the area's character and appeal. It would also put Byres Road at a competitive disadvantage in relation to the city centre, where charges do not apply after 18.00. This issue was unresolved when the country went into lockdown on 23 March 2020.

The BID worked with the University to successfully lobby for the reinstatement of the CityBus 15 bus service, which is the only link between Bearsden & Milngavie and the West End.

The original proposal to rollout free wifi in Byres Road by Glasgow City Council has been overtaken by events. It has been concluded that the improvement in mobile 4G deployment, allied with the removal of roaming charges for European visitors, has rendered publicly provided free wifi less important than envisaged in the business plan.

Theme B: Facilitation

Acting as a unified voice of the business community, 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) continued in post. A full-time marketing & events co-ordinator was in post until August 2019, when she went on maternity leave. Cover was organised to ensure that there was continuity of work in that role.

A BID has a five year lifespan, and to determine whether there will be a second term, a ballot is undertaken of all businesses. This was a major focus of activity from June 2019. Considerable work was undertaken on consultation and the process and documentation required by the Scottish

Government and Glasgow City Council for approval to hold a ballot. The directors were concerned that the area of the BID in its first term did not include businesses in the southern part of Byres Road. This was becoming particularly relevant as they would be impacted by the City Deal works and the extension of the University of Glasgow onto the site of the former Western Infirmary. After consultation it was decided to extend the proposed BID area to include those businesses. The BID proposal was submitted in October and the final documentation provided in December. The ballot opened on 14 February and closed on 26 March. The ballot achieved a yes vote and gave the BID a second five year term.

Across the year, the BID was concerned about the increasing number of empty units on Byres Road and the Lanes. Maintaining a good mix of uses in the area is fundamental to its success, as reflected in planning policy. An objection was submitted to an application for the change of a retail unit to a restaurant at the top of Byres Road. However, after consultation with local businesses the BID withdrew the objection to the landlord's appeal, and the change of use was granted. The situation regarding empty units is monitored. Relationships are being developed with landlords and property agents to highlight the benefits that the BID can bring to prospective tenants and foster a more collaborative approach.

Liaison also continued with the University of Glasgow and their contractors to ensure that the campus redevelopment offers opportunities for BID businesses in the short, medium and long term

The BID continued to work with and support the developing Love Great Western Road BID, including attendance at a meeting of the steering group. The BID continued to represent Glasgow at the Scottish Cities BIDs grouping, and was represented by the Chair and Project Manager at the Scottish Towns Partnership conference in November. In October the BID project manager was invited by the Council's Development & Regeneration Services to a workshop looking at Glasgow's town centres.

The BID made an unsuccessful bid to access some of the Town Centres Capital Fund. This would have resulted in a condition survey for the former baths building on the Church Road site.

The collaboration with Changeworks Recycling and eyebright continued to deliver significant cost savings for BID businesses on commercial waste and utility costs respectively.

The BID was asked by Scotland's Towns Partnership to host two delegations, from Japan and Portugal, who were researching the BID concept for development in their countries.

The BID staff have produced regular e-newsletters and printed newsletters, as well as communicating with all businesses on an ad hoc basis to keep them informed on emerging issues and opportunities. This became increasingly important in February and March as the impact of the coronavirus on business and communities made itself known

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 respect of the blog, newsletter and an up-to-date events section.

Significant resource was dedicated to social media activity. Further development of curated content saw Facebook likes increase by 19% to 7,913 at the end of March. Twitter followers increased by 22%

to 1,899 over the same period. For the second year in a row, Instagram recorded the highest growth, increasing by 43% to 2.408 followers by the end of the year.

In tandem with the Christmas Festival in December (see Events) a promotional booklet was produced with 37 businesses participating. The brochures were distributed in advance of the promotional period, to increase reach.

The Visit West End **gift card** continued to be promoted and sales grew steadily throughout the year, reaching a peak in December 2019. This prepaid Mastercard card is available to buy online and from one BID business 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.

A business networking meeting in September enjoyed a speaker casting a brighter light on current retailing and suggestions for improving sales.

The short promotional video produced in 2017, designed specifically for social media use, continued to showcase the area:

<https://www.facebook.com/VisitWestEndGlasgow/videos/716802411836201/>

The BID continued to work with People Make Glasgow to promote the area and has worked with the convention bureau staff to encourage business to participate in promotions and initiatives aimed at conference visitors. The intention is to ensure that the BID area is a 'must visit' destination within the city. The BID also gained a Bronze award in the Green Tourism Business Scheme, and encouraged BID members to join the scheme, as green tourism credentials are a major attractor for certain strands of the conference and meetings industry.

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 will be addressed to some degree by the public realm improvements planned for Byres Road and developments at the University campus redevelopment.

As in previous years, in June 2019 the BID made a financial contribution to the West End Festival and the family entertainment as part of the Ashton Lane Proprietors' Association's Festival Sunday activities on 2 June.

In November 2017 the BID contributed to support the West End Festival's St Andrews Day Torchlight Procession, supplemented by social media promotion of the events. The BID also continued its collaborations with the Glasgow Contemporary Art Fair and GlasGLOW productions to promote the events and ensure that BID businesses profited from these items in the calendar.

The BID continues to be aware of the lack of usable space to deliver activity to benefit businesses at the southern end of the BID, who continue to report significant reductions in turnover since the closure of the Western Infirmary.

After the success of the Back to the Botanics screenings the previous year, in August 2019 the iconic Glasgow location was home to the **Boogie in the Botanics'** film festival. Over 2,000 tickets were sold and there was strong audience satisfaction.

As in 2018, for the **Christmas tree lights switch-on event** on 1 December 2019, the BID continued to collaborate with the Ashton Lane Proprietors' Association to extend family-friendly activity and performances across Vinicombe Street and Ashton, Cresswell and Ruthven Lanes, which succeeded in spreading footfall across the area. Vinicombe Street again hosted a Christmas tree and a stage. There were festive performances from local acts on the stage from noon to 17.30, when the lights on the Christmas tree were switched on. Market stalls gave BID businesses the opportunity to showcase festive gifts and offers. There were 6,700 people in Vinicombe Street across the day, a decrease of a few hundred on the previous year, but a good turnout on a day when the temperature was never above zero.

The BID also partnered with the Beatson Cancer Charity, for the third year. A promotional discount booklet, featuring offers and discounts from BID members, was produced and distributed.

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

BID staff continued to work with business liaison officers PC Philip Warner and PC Mick Ferry to monitor crime rates and to relate feedback from businesses to Police Scotland. Directors are aware that this is the only area of Glasgow with dedicated business liaison police officers. Since August 2018 the BID has funded dedicated phones for these officers, to provide real-time intelligence to the police and facilitate a prompt response to incidents.

The Business Watch initiative continues to focus on theft and anti-social behaviour in the area. An increase in aggressive shoplifters had been noticed, together with significant targeted thefts from supermarkets. These were raised with PC Warner & PC Ferry.

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.

The BID undertakes a weekly condition report of the whole area, noting graffiti, rubbish, flooding and any other environmental issues, then timeously reporting them to the relevant authority or Council service area. This has resulted in good relationship with the Council's Cleansing department.

Christmas lights in Ashton Road car park and Dowanside and Ruthven lanes continued to add to the festive feel of the area. A Christmas tree was sited in Vinicombe Street for the fourth year. 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 and their contractors regarding the development of the campus into the former Western Infirmary site.

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.

Survey responses from the outdoor cinema indicate 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 valued local assets enjoyed in new ways. There has been very positive feedback regarding the outdoor cinema and Christmas Celebration. 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 the Scottish Towns Partnership provide useful information and advice to BIDs and emerging BIDs across Scotland. The BID has attended conferences and seminars offered by both organisations, and has had staff and director involvement at workshops 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 in Development and Regeneration Services (Economic Development, Neighbourhoods, Planning & Building Control), Finance, Neighbourhood & Sustainability (Roads, Projects, Events, Lighting, Glasgow Botanic Gardens) 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 with the Council's External Affairs department. Connections have been continued with the University's managing contractor, in order to reduce the impact and harness the benefits of the construction on site.

BID staff continued to work with PC Philip Warner and PC Mick Ferry, Police Scotland's dedicated business liaison officer, on a number of issues that affect businesses and residents. There are established links with Police Scotland's Operational Planning team in relation to event management and public safety.

Glasgow, 5 November 2020



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