

BYRES ROAD & LANES BID COMPANY LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT

1 APRIL 2020 – 31 MARCH 2021

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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 2021 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
- Robert Fletcher, Vision Express
- Clare Gibson, Marks & Spencer Simply Food

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 went into a national lockdown on 23 March 2020. The year from 1 April was lived largely in lockdown or under coronavirus pandemic restrictions. The BID team provided information, support and assistance to businesses whilst largely working from home.

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.

Throughout the year the BID team continued to liaise with Glasgow City Council on the details of the City Deal proposals to improve the public realm of Byres Road. This included discussions on specific design elements that would impact on businesses. The timescale for the works were delayed due to the pandemic, but the BID team ensured that any plans for starting the works would not be undertaken in the run up to the important Christmas trading period.

Glasgow City Council recognised that social distancing would require additional space for pedestrians, and embarked on a programme called 'Spaces for People'. The programme has delivered a significant number of temporary travel interventions across the city to ease physical distancing in public places, mainly through the provision of widened footways, road closures and segregated cycle lanes. The initial assessment of Byres Road resulted in a proposal to widen the pavements on both sides of Byres Road; this was challenged and subsequently seen as unnecessary and the final installations consisted of just four interventions at potential bottlenecks along the length of Byres Road. One of these, at the southern end of the road, was having a significant negative impact on footfall and trade for one business. The BID raised this with the Council, it was established that the pavement extension was unnecessary and it was removed.

As part of its response to the pandemic, Glasgow City Council launched the Animating Spaces fund, designed to encourage a series of temporary interventions that would bring underutilised spaces into positive use. The directors had long been lobbying for the Council to include the lanes in the City Deal works, and saw this as an opportunity to improve Ruthven and Dowanside Lanes. Despite the very short time frame an application was submitted to install street art in the pend of Dowanside Lane, making it more visible from Byres Road, to improve the drainage and surfacing of Ruthven Lane and develop a small community garden in that lane. Ruthven Lane is privately owned, and not adopted by Glasgow City Council, and this pilot project proposal was intended to show what could be done by working in partnership. The ultimate goal is to gain grant funding that would enable the lane to be brought up to an adoptable standard. The application was successful and an award of £19,225 was secured.

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. Cover was provided for the full-time marketing & events co-ordinator while she was on maternity leave until September 2020, to ensure that there was continuity of work in that role. On her return the marketing & events co-ordinator chose to work part time for half the week, with the second half of the week being covered by the person who had provided the maternity leave cover.

As the country moved into lockdown and businesses closed it became apparent to the directors that it would be inappropriate for Glasgow City Council to issue levy notices. No levy notices were issued for the first six months of the financial year. The BID received £10,000 of support through the Small Business Bonus Scheme and £20,000 from the Scottish Government, via the Coronavirus BIDs Resilience Fund, administered by Scotland's Towns Partnership. This allowed for the BID team to continue working in the absence of levy income.

In this unprecedented year it was of utmost importance that communications were relevant and timely. When key announcements were made regarding COVID business recovery support and restrictions they were watched closely, picking out the information that was relevant to BID businesses and sending out a clear and concise message to them to cut through the buzz, speculation and reaction. As a result of this, the BID was established as a key source for information and support for our members and helped many businesses with anything from general queries to grant applications.

A number of business surveys were undertaken, to establish the key issues facing members and informing feedback to Glasgow City Council and other stakeholders as to what support and assistance was required and would be effective. One of the issues that came to the fore was anxiety, the uncertainty as to how the pandemic would develop and the impact it would have on businesses and lives. The BID commissioned a series of webinars on resilience which were broadcast live and then posted online.

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

The BID concentrated on promoting a strong Scotland Loves Local message throughout the year, demonstrating the variety of goods and services that were available on the doorstep as lockdown was established and slowly eased. This included ensuring that consumers knew about the various changes and pivots that businesses were undergoing, including click and collect and home delivery services.

The BID provided businesses with floor stickers and downloadable posters to promote the importance of social distancing.

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

From April 2020 the BID had been working with My Shawlands BID and the emerging community BID in Possilpark, to explore areas of opportunity and collaboration across Glasgow.

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 campaign, with 77% thought 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 Facebook likes increase by 11.92% to 8,857 at the end of March. Twitter followers increased by 26.38% to 2,400 over the same period. For the third year in a row, Instagram recorded the highest growth, increasing by 132.72% to 5,604 followers by the end of the financial year.

The Visit West End **gift card** continued to be promoted and sales grew steadily throughout the year, reaching a peak in December 2020. This prepaid Mastercard card was 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.

In autumn 2020 the Scottish Government, via Scotland's Towns Partnership, invited applications to a second round of the BIDs Resilience Fund. The first round had provided operational resources for BIDs to continue working to support their businesses; the second round focused on improving businesses digital presence and skills. The BID was successful in securing £13,500 to develop digital projects. Working with My Shawlands, the two BIDs were able to jointly procure two digital platforms for their businesses. ShopAppy works to develop a virtual High Street, where all local businesses can be represented, a response to the ubiquitous online retail giants. Maybe* offers social media engagement and insight tools help clients engage with conversations on social media to improve business results. The funding also enabled the production of a television advert, shown in East Dunbartonshire on the run up to Christmas. Broadcast on the Sky Adsmart platform, it was seen over 93,244 times on the Sky Channels, Channel 4 and Channel 5.

The BID was offered free advertising space by Jack Arts on its advertising drums in the West End. These were used to promote the Visit West End gift card.

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. 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.

Lockdown and pandemic restrictions meant that it was not possible to host events throughout the year. It was possible to locate a Christmas tree in Vinicombe Street to celebrate the festive season, and it offered a beacon of light at a very dark time of the year.

The BID worked in partnership with Social Bite's Festival of Kindness appeal, an initiative aimed at helping those in need at Christmas and over the winter months. The Festival used the tree as a drop off location for donated gifts, and it was a great success, with 4,000 gifts donated in Glasgow, contributing to a total of £600,000. The partnership will continue in 2021.

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. 61% saw the weekly audit and reporting of graffiti, fly tipping, flooding etc as important or very important.

BID staff continued to work with police officers PC Philip Warner and PC Mick Ferry to monitor crime rates and to relate feedback from businesses to Police Scotland. Directors were aware that the West End was the only area of Glasgow that had dedicated business liaison police officers. A reorganisation in 2020 resulted in PC Ferry being redeployed, but assurances were given by the local police inspector that more officers would be available for more time with the new arrangements.

The Business Watch initiative continues to focus on theft and anti-social behaviour in the area.

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. The Covid-19 movement restrictions meant that the area condition report could not be completed weekly. However, they were undertaken as the guidelines allowed, and any instances of problems that were brought to the team's attention were reported as usual.

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.

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 fifth year. The tree was very much appreciated by businesses and residents.

The BID made a successful application to the Scotland Loves Local Fund and was granted £3,472 for the installation and 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 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. As we regroup and emerge from the pandemic 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 conferences and seminars offered by both organisations, and has had staff and director involvement at virtual 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 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. The directors are grateful to the University's main contractor, Multiplex, for their assistance in securing a groundworks contractor for the Animating Spaces surfacing works in Ruthven Lane.

BID staff continued to work with PC Philip Warner on a number of issues that affect businesses and residents.

Glasgow, 22 October 2021



John Turner, Chair
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