

Newport Now Business Improvement District

Board Meeting 4pm, Thursday, September 19, 2024

Conference Room, Riverfront Theatre

Meeting Notes for Publication

Agenda

1. Welcome

2. In attendance: Zep Bellavia (Bellavia & Associates, Chair), Nikki Marshall (Newport Arcade), Ian Lamsdale (Newport City Radio), Gavin Horton (Horton's Lounge), Councillor James Clarke (Newport City Council), Alan Edwards (Vacara's), Tracy Stokes (Belle Femme), Cath Macnamara (Liverton Opticians), Nicky Vignoli (The Newporters) via video link, Dan Smith (M4 Property Consultants), Robin Hall (Kymin Financial Planners), Kevin Ward (BID Manager).

Also in attendance: Matt Tribbeck (Newport City Council) via video link.

Apologies for absence: Richard Ellis (Ellis Lloyd Jones, Treasurer), Simon Pullen (Friars Walk), Roger Jeavons (Newport City Council).

3. Declarations of interests for Register of Interests

- GH stated he attends board meetings as a business owner and levy payer, not as a councillor.
- IL declared an interest in Countdown to Christmas as Newport City Radio is contracted to host the stage.
- DS declared an interest in the pop-up shops project, as he will be managing it.

4. Approval of minutes of last meeting

- Approved.

5. Ballot for 3rd term update

- We sent out 500 surveys to levy payers and received 122 back. The vast majority wanted current services provided by the BID to continue. Only one respondent indicated they intended to vote 'no' at ballot.
- The survey results have informed the content of the 2025-30 Business Plan, which has been signed off by the ballot working group under its delegated powers.

- Copies were available at this meeting for all Board members. We have only had 20 draft copies printed at this stage. With Board approval this evening, we will get 800 printed at a total cost of £599. The surveys/newsletters cost us £359 to print. Total cost of the ballot campaign to date is £958. At this stage in the last ballot campaign, we had spent £9,600 on consultants to deliver the ballot campaign.
- The Business Plan will be formally launched at an open meeting for levy payers at the Mercure Newport on the evening of October 17. As usual, we plan to have updates from the council and the police at the event.
- On the same date, the formal notice of ballot will be posted to all levy payers. This will include a copy of the Business Plan.
- Ballot papers will then be sent out on October 31. The postal ballot will run until November 28, with the result declared on November 29.
- The formal ballot arrangements have been made with the council's electoral services team. A reminder to Board members that, as per BIDs legislation, the council is the formal ballot holder.
- In consultation with British BIDs, we have identified the people with voting responsibility at key nationals in our area. We have contacted all of these and confirmed the address to send notice of ballot, Business Plans and ballot papers. This information has been passed to the electoral services team to ensure ballot papers go to the right people and not to local branches who do not have the power to vote.
- Likewise, we have identified the correct names and addresses for local levy payers with more than one hereditament to ensure ballot papers are sent to one place rather than multiple premises.
- We have postcards designed and ready to print that we will deliver via the Ambassadors during the ballot period, encouraging levy payers to vote and explaining to them the consequences of a 'no' vote.
- Once we are in ballot, we will make as many checks as possible with levy payers to ensure they have received their ballot papers and that they know where to post them. If necessary, we will collect them and take them to the Civic Centre.
- All help provided by Board members in encouraging their contacts and neighbouring businesses to vote 'yes' will be appreciated.
- The two remaining 'formal' elements of the ballot period are the operating agreement and baseline services agreement, both of which need to be agreed and signed by the council and ourselves. This is in hand.

- ZB and KW gave a presentation on the BID and the ballot campaign to the City of Newport Business Club last week.
- GH asked whether the Business Plan would also be printed in Welsh. KW confirmed BIDs are not covered by Welsh language legislation and there were no plans to do this.
- GH asked whether the Business Plan aligned with the council's city centre Placemaking Plan. JC said this was still in early stages of consultation process. There will be a cross-party group overseeing the Placemaking Plan.
- KW explained the BID had been fully involved in the consultation process and that he represented the BID on the Placemaking Plan steering group.
- GH asked whether the new Coleg Gwent campus and leisure centre would be in the BID area when built and open. KW confirmed they would.
- The Business Plan was approved unanimously.

6. Finance update

- Cash in bank in the BID's current account as of last night is £73,448 with all payments up to date. Please note that we have received our SPF funding for the Urban Beach in full (£39,400) and 50% of the grants for Countdown to Christmas (£20,000), and the Christmas markets (£7,500). We will invoice for the remaining 50% of these grants at the end of this month.
- With full payment made to the Urban Beach providers (£23,580), the cash in bank includes £43,320 In ring-fenced grant funding.
- Therefore, the 'real' cash in bank is £30,128.
- Cashflow forecast for September end was a closing bank balance of £24,740.
- Levy collection for 24/25 to date stands at £140,000 or 81% of the total levy bill for the year. Summons for non-payers were issued this week as BID levies are statutory payments with a court date set for October 10.
- Total income (levy & grants) for 24/25 to date is £215,807 and expenditure is £142,186.

7. External funding update

- A reminder that we applied successfully for grants from the Police & Crime Commissioner, and the Shared Prosperity Fund in March.
- The full £36,000 grant for the Night Ambassadors scheme has been received by the council from the PCC. We are now invoicing for this on a monthly basis.
- The Shared Prosperity Fund grants are for three city centre events during the year.
- £40,000 for this year's Countdown to Christmas event.
- £39,400 to bring an urban beach into John Frost Square for the month of August.

- £15,000 to bring a Christmas street market into High Street for the month of December.
- The urban beach took place from August 2 to 27 and was extremely successful. While there was the odd challenge with the weather, we only had two days when we could not open and 5 days when we either opened late or closed early.
- The response to the beach was very positive on social media, and we also received good press coverage.
- On average, 363 children used the beach each day it was open. For each hour the beach was open, there were an average of 45 children using it. So just under 9,500 children used the beach during the month. Please note these figures do not include the adults who accompanied the children, and the numbers include multiple visits by some families.
- Green Top Markets will be delivering the Christmas markets. These are confirmed for every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from December 5 to 23 (the last date being a Monday) and will run in High Street. The aim is to have at least 30 stalls each day and a different theme each week. At the moment, we are looking at the markets being open 11.30am to 5pm each day to ensure we do not have a negative effect on deliveries and that we can make use of loading bays. Discussions are taking place with the council regarding access for traders through the barrier at the top of High Street beyond its 10am closure. We will provide stewards to ensure only market traders have access.
- We have emailed levy payers to make them aware they can register their interest in having a stall, and that these are free for levy payers (providing they turn up to trade).
- Plans for Countdown to Christmas on November 16 are well advanced. The main musical act is booked and we are looking at getting a local Paralympian to switch on the lights. The new site for the fireworks display is confirmed with the assistance of Friars Walk and this is all booked in. Timings are being confirmed, but the stage event is likely to start at 2.30pm and conclude with the lights switch-on at 5.15pm and fireworks at 5.30pm.
- As well as the usual fairground on the Riverfront, we will also have fairground rides in Commercial Street and High Street on the day.
- KW and DS are also working with the council to use SPF for pop-up shops in the city centre for fledgling businesses considering opening retail outlets. DS confirmed he had agreed the use of two vacant units in Kingsway and a full proposal had now been sent to the council to agree the costings. DS asked that if board members knew anyone interested in a pop-up shop to contact DS.

- JC asked if there was an opportunity for more than one business to use a unit at the same time. DS confirmed it was an option.
- DS said the pop-ups were not restricted to retail; could be other sectors as well (services/leisure etc).
- ZB referred to the budget for 2025-30 for external funding being cautious due to not being sure what funds will be available from next year.

8. Events/footfall update

- For the first 8 months of 2024, footfall in the city centre was 2.9% up on last year. This compares to footfall in Wales being down 4.6% and in the UK down 0.9% for the same period versus 2023.
- August was the best month for footfall of the year to date.
- Since the last Board meeting, the city centre has been the venue for the Big Splash festival, our Urban Beach, and Pride in the Port. Both the Big Splash and Pride in the Port were sponsored by the BID.
- Other major events through the rest of the year:
 - Food and Drink Festival, October 11-13.
 - Countdown to Christmas, November 16.
 - Winter Wonderland, from November 21.
 - Christmas street markets, December 5-23 (Thurs/Fri/Sat/Sun) in High Street.
 - Small Business Saturday, December 7.
- The BID is partnering with the council, Friars Walk, Newport Live, and Newport Market on Festive Newport – which was launched yesterday. This draws together all the Christmas offerings in the city centre under one banner.
- As part of this, it was announced yesterday that parking in council-owned car parks in the city centre will be free on every Saturday from November 16 to January 31.
- DS suggested using traditional media (leaflets) to promote independents for Small Business Saturday.
- GH asked if there was a way to monitor usage of free parking to see how many are city centre workers (ie staying for 8-9 hours). JC to take up.
- There was a discussion around promoting retailers ahead of and during the lights switch-on, and publicising footfall.

11. Ambassadors (Day and Night) update

- Funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Night Ambassadors' service for the first quarter of 24/25 was forward funded to us by the

council due to the PCC election period. This will be reclaimed by the council from the OPCC. The remaining 9 months' funding will be claimed by us from the council on a monthly basis at £3,300 per month.

- The daytime Street Ambassadors did a great job encouraging businesses to complete the Business Plan survey, and also collected all hard copy responses (just over 100).
- The Ambassadors have been provided with new fleece and rain jackets, as the existing ones were in need of replacement. There is no additional cost to us for this.

12. City centre app update

- The new version of the app branded entirely as Newport Now is now complete and live on the Apple app store. It will be live on GooglePlay early next week.
- An e-shot went out to BID members yesterday, making them aware of the new app and asking them to forward any deals or offers they'd like to feature on it.
- The new app will be launched to the public on October 17. All new deals and offers will be available then. Existing content has already transferred from the Loyal Free app, which remains live until October 17. Existing users will be contacted in the week before the public launch of the new app.
- The Loyal Free app is currently promoting 166 businesses – 32 via deals and 143 via events listings and trails.
- To date, there have been 10,826 interactions with the app, 3,357 interactions with the trails, and 2,276 deal redemptions. The app has 1,043 registered users in the Newport area.
- Discussion around independents trail on the app. KW to progress.

13. Gift Card update

- Since the last Board meeting, there has been a disappointing uptake on gift cards which cards worth £50 sold. This gives us total sales for the calendar year to date of £705.
- During the period since the last Board meeting, £21.90 worth of cards have been spent in the city centre. Year to date, £1,012 worth of cards have been spent.
- KW said he had not been able to focus on the gift card over the summer due to the demands of managing the Urban Beach, the survey, and writing and designing the Business Plan. However, this would change as we move towards Christmas.
- GH asked whether the app could be linked to the gift card. KW to check.

14. Savings Advisory Service

- Total savings identified for levy payers to date £106,949, with £61,143 savings realised by businesses.

- KW's planned meeting with our contractors PSP regarding new marketing materials and breaking down savings by category was postponed and will now take place on the morning of their next visit to Newport on November 22. The new marketing materials have been received and are in use.

15. Purple Flag

- The self-assessment has taken place, led by the council's licensing team.
- The next step will be to formally apply for retention of Purple Flag status, which will be happening within the next month.

16. AOB

- Since the last board meeting, as well as meetings referred to in agenda items KW has attending meetings with new manager at TGI Fridays, PastPortTours, Inspector Rob Ball, Vicinity, Newport City Council events team, Matt Southall, Newport City Radio, Pendragon Fireworks, NCC Placemaking Plan Steering Group, NCC SPF team, NCC Community Protection Manager, Homewards Project, Green Top Events, Safer City Centre, Secrets of Cymru, Daniel Dyer, Smart Money Cymru, and Richard Frame.
- ZB reported on board member recruitment. The board agreed to co-opt Rachel Phillips of RJ Interiors on Bridge Street for the remainder of the BID term.
- Board members may have seen the announcement today that construction of the city centre's new leisure centre (which will be in the BID area) will begin in November. The new leisure facility, which will be located on the riverfront on land between the university campus and Castle Bingo, will include a modern leisure pool with fun elements including a "lazy river", slides and play equipment. There will also be a teaching pool for children's swimming lessons and exercise sessions, modern changing facilities, a café and relaxation area, fitness suite, and a large active space for community use, group activities and children's birthday parties. It is set to be one of the UK's first net zero leisure centres, powered entirely by electricity from renewable sources to make it future proof. Construction is expected to take about 18 months.
- NV asked about gift card suppliers Miconex's 'vote for your favourite business' competition. KW confirmed we will be promoting.
- GH asked if KW had had contact from Bethan James. KW confirmed he had (Bethan runs PastPort Tours).
- JC said he had met a number of businesses as discussed at the last meeting and would continue to do so. He asked if board members had any ideas for events etc in the early part of next year to contact him.

17. Date of next Board meeting

- Thursday, November 21 at 4pm at the Riverfront Theatre.