

Barrow BID AGM 20th November 2018

Manager's Report

I was appointed as Barrow BID Manager at the start of July 2018, however I became involved in Barrow BID in April 2018 when I was employed as the Marketing & Communication Manager.

My first task was to present at an open meeting in The Forum on how I would tackle the issues facing the High Street and regenerate Barrow's Town Centre.

The meeting was an eye opener and highlighted the enormity of the task Barrow BID face to regenerate the town and increase footfall. My major concerns from that meeting were that:

- Barrow BID was disliked and distrusted
- Levy payers felt they weren't getting return on investment and the BID didn't do a lot for them
- Communication was poor
- There was a lot of negativity

This negativity and lack of pride has led me to focus on, what I consider to be four vital areas to begin the regeneration process and start promoting the town. I named these areas the 4Ps, which are; Pride, Positivity, Perception and Promotion.

PRIDE

How do we expect local residents to be proud of the town when we, as business owners and managers, do not have pride in it ourselves?

As Barrow BID and as a collective of business owners and managers based in Barrow Town Centre, we have to take pride in the town. This means:

- Going the extra yard to ensure our premises and the street directly outside is welcoming
- Ensuring that our customer service makes customers feel welcome and special
- Making our business premises look attractive and stand out from the crowd
- Publicising our businesses with quality promotions that reflect the standards of our businesses

At Barrow BID we wanted to promote a sense of pride with some of our initiatives during 2018, for example;

The BID Clean Event

This wasn't just about cleaning the streets, but was also about engaging with business owners and managers to show that we will go over and beyond the call of duty to ensure that our town centre environment is clean. The event showed that the town centre itself is usually cleaned to a satisfactory level, but some areas of the town need a little more attention.

Business Premises Grant Scheme

Barrow BID are currently offering grants up to £1000 to match an external business improvement project with up to 50% funding. This means that most town centre businesses can tap into a pot of money to improve the exterior of their premises and show their customers and neighbouring businesses that they take pride in their appearance. Visit: www.barrowbid.co.uk for the application forms.

POSITIVITY & PERCEPTION

Once we start to take pride in our town, our businesses and the surrounding area, we need to ensure that we promote a positive message to customers and potential customers, whether these are; Barrow residents, employees at BAE, contractors or visitors.

We need to reverse negative stories and comments about the town centre and promote a positive image. Social media is a powerful tool and many people use social media to educate themselves on local and world news and affairs. If you keep hearing that something is rubbish on Facebook or other social media platforms, would you buy it? If it was a place, a tourist attraction or a town... would you go?

We need YOU! As members and partners of Barrow BID, we need you to use your social media and word of mouth to paint a positive picture of Barrow and help us spread the message of a positive town centre so we can change the perceptions of local residents that Barrow Town Centre has nothing to offer.

I keep reading that there are NO SHOPS left in Barrow Town Centre, but we have 213 A1 classified retail units occupied in the BID area and a thriving indoor market. We have the 2nd largest amount of National retail units in Cumbria after Carlisle.

YES, we have lost town centre shops over the past four years, but what towns haven't? The majority have been National Chain stores who have closed shops across the UK. Retail is still the heartbeat of Barrow's Town Centre and we need to let people know.

PROMOTION & COMMUNICATION

Barrow BID are investing time and resources into promoting the town as a destination for shopping, eating and drinking, staying and socialising. We understand that the town needs to increase its offer to attract people and that it is not just down to the business owners, but we have to play a part by providing more entertainment. Schemes, events and initiatives.

Barrow BID's strategy for town centre events is to co-ordinate or partner on larger events, which will increase footfall but also get people talking about the town. We are happy to get involved in 'one off' events as we did with the creation of a Fanzone at the Tour of Britain, but our key objective is to put on prestige town centre events that will return year after year. The Classic & Vintage Car & Bike Show, now renamed as The Festival of Transport is a great example of how an event can create a buzz and help to promote the town centre and attract local people back to the town. The Festival of Transport returns on Saturday 20th July 2019.

When the Borough Council lost their Town Centre Manager, they also lost their Tourism Manager and Barrow hasn't got a dedicated tourism team or even an individual. At Barrow BID, we see tourism as key to promoting the good things about Barrow and using the town centre as a hub to attract people to visit. Barrow BID has taken a lead on the new 'Visit Barrow' brand and launched a website and Facebook page to promote the town and the wealth of attractions in the surrounding area. *There's More Than Meets the Eye* in Barrow and we not only want visitors from away to know this, but we want to re-educate local people that there are a diverse range of great things to see and do right under their noses. Our aim is to attract partners to work with Barrow BID to create a tourism strategy and grow the Visit Barrow brand.

www.visitbarrow.org.uk

www.facebook.com/visitbarrow

With a background in design and marketing, (Managing Director of Red Abbey Ltd for 12 years and worked as a Senior Marketing Consultant at Fat Media for 3 years), I wanted to ensure that Barrow BID are communicating to the right people with the right message and everything we produce is professional and created to a high standard. Our quarterly newsletters are distributed as hard copies and we try to reach as many levy payers as possible. Our adverts and publications promote the events and initiatives within the town centre and our own website is informative and professional.

www.barrowbid.co.uk

www.facebook.com/barrowbidcompany

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2018

This is a summary of some of the achievements during the year, but these only tell half of the story, as Barrow BID are now a trusted partner on many groups discussing town centre issues and development and we are able to have influence on policies affecting the town.

Many of these initiatives can be seen in the accompanying slide show.

FREE PARKING initiatives

Continuation of our FREE after 3 scheme and a new FREE after 12 noon on Friday scheme during the festive season.

New Car Park direction signs

Making access into town centre car parks easier

Street Football Festival

Although this was badly affected by very poor weather, the feedback from children and families who attended was great and we look to bring this back to the town as part of a bigger event in 2019.

Classic Car & Bike Show

This successful event has now been renamed the 'Festival of Transport' and has its own committee including managers of stores in Barrow Town Centre. This will be bigger and better in July 2019

Geoff Ramm

61 local business owners and managers came along to hear Geoff talk about creating 'Celebrity Customer Service' and improving how they market their business.

BID Clean Event

Over 75 individuals came out to help us make a difference in the town. From cleaning phone boxes and windows to cleaning the Mail's car park, our team of volunteers helped clean the town and showed how much pride we have in our town centre.

Tour of Britain

Barrow BID funded and organised a Fanzone in the town. Located away from the start, the aim of the Fanzone was to keep visitors in the town for longer and get them to move through the town from the start of the stage at the Town Hall.

Best of Barrow Premises Competition

We teamed up with the Best of Barrow and the Town Mayor to find local businesses with the best premises. This was used as a pre-event for the launch of our...

Business Premises Grant Scheme

Barrow BID have set aside £25,000 to offer grants up to £1000 to improve the exterior of business premises in the BID area.

Christmas entertainment

By teaming up with the Forum and Barrow's indoor Market, Barrow BID has been able to attract a number of street entertainers to the town and promote town centre events in a glossy brochure.

Visit Barrow brand

There's more than meets the eye in this town and Barrow BID has taken the lead on this project to promote the town to the outside world and to those local residents who might not know how good their town is.

Heritage leaflets & heritage trail

Barrow BID were happy to assist the Barrow Civic & History Society with this project and produced the leaflets using the Visit Barrow brand.

PLANS FOR 2019 AND BEYOND

It can be difficult listing all the events and initiatives that Barrow BID want to achieve, because some are aspirational and some are confidential. This list gives you an idea of the broad range of things that Barrow BID is working on:

Consultation

Surveys with business owners, market traders, BAE staff, customers and visitors

Funding

Use our own resources to lever in funding from; the public sector, grants and private investment.

Parking

Review parking issues and convenience for customers, including car parks and on street parking

Visit Barrow

Build the brand to encourage more day and weekend visitors and bring in more partners.

Events

Work with local and regional partners to put on and encourage more prestige events in the town centre

- A spring event in March
- An Easter event
- June 29th Soapbox Challenge Event
- July 20th Festival of Transport
- August 'Active Barrow Week'
- Negotiate attracting Specialist Markets back to the town
- Programme of Christmas events

Heritage

Promote the heritage of Barrow and add interest to the town centre

Improve the gateways

We have identified specific locations which act as gateways to the town and require development

Improve sign-posting

Directional signs for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to find the town centre

Roads & access

Review transport and access and lobby for investment to improve our town centre roads and transport

Urban Regeneration

Create areas of interest in the town i.e. a usable town square, public spaces, green spaces, event spaces, covered spaces.

Improve the outdoor market

Modernise the outdoor market and attract more traders to come to Barrow

Communicate with Levy Payers

Continue to communicate with newsletters, our website, Facebook and e-newsletters

Promote the town

Advertise and promote the town to the local population and target audiences

Make the town more festive

Assess how we can improve the town each year during the festive period

Maintain the streetscape

Lobby for responsible bodies to replace trees, ensure lights work and ensure signs are fit for purpose

Empty units

Promote empty units to targeted National and Independent businesses

Encourage Entrepreneurs

Encourage start-up initiatives using the indoor market or pop-up shops

Business Premises Improvement Scheme

Fund business premises improvements to enhance the look of buildings within the town

Empty shops

Create displays in empty shop windows that enhance the town and promote events. Also lobby the council to pursue persistent fly poster offenders

Work with leaders of the Night Time Economy

To attract more people to Barrow on an evening or at night

APPENDIX

PDF of images shows our achievements throughout 2018

CONTACT

If you would like to discuss anything within this Manager's Report, please contact the Barrow BID Manager on the following details:

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