

Barrow BID Open Meeting

18th Feb 2020

Agenda

Introduction (15 mins)

A year in brief and plans for the future (30 mins)

Questions (20 mins)

Ideas for the next five years (20 mins)

27 in attendance inc board

Paul Hodgson (Chair), Sandra Colling, Kieron Hart, Kay Bower, Allan Kerr, John Graham, Phil Heath, Colin Garnett - BID Manager

Introduction by PH

The BID is grateful for all those who have chosen to attend this meeting but to keep things on track we have decided not to have open questions. Attendees are asked to fill in slips asking for feedback and questions regarding the BID and its future. The BID aims to answer as many of these in the timeframe of this meeting, anything not answered will receive a response by email.

Attendees are given 5 minutes to write any questions or ideas they have for Barrow BID going into a second term.

Presentation by CG (can be found on our website)

The BID is in its fourth year, with the ballot for re-election looming in 2021. We are hopeful that re-election will allow us to put long term plans into fruition and continue to build on the strong foundation we have already laid out.

Presentation Summary

CLEANING

BID has been working with Zest Community action to host community cleans within the town centre. Through the clean-up of the town centre we aim to raise civic pride. It is our long term plan to establish a Sunday clean. We will continue to lobby the council to take greater action and provide a deep clean service initially on a monthly basis.

PREMISES GRANTS

The BID has a grant pot of £45,000 to offer to levy payers within the town to improve existing businesses. This can be used for new signage, painting, replace doors and canopies and just generally provide a facelift to businesses in the town centre. We urge levy businesses to take advantage of this grant and to use up to £1,000 pounds from the BID to make a difference to their frontage.

SPECIAL PROJECTS GRANT

Through our Special Projects Grants, Barrow BID has supported various non-profits and community groups offering them up to £1,000 pounds for their own projects. These have included: Christmas Light Switch On, Santa Dash, Love Barrow Running Festival and the This is Me Flashmob

SUPER SOAPBOX CHALLENGE – Sunday 24th May 2020

The Super Soapbox Challenge was Barrow BID's premier event in 2019. Our aim was to really put Barrow on the map with an event that is a unique feature for Barrow and something very different to what surrounding towns are offering. The Soapbox was chosen as it matched Barrows industrial heritage and engineering based heart. BAE Systems sponsored the event last year and we are happy to announce they will be sponsoring the Super Soapbox Challenge in 2020. An outside impartial company estimated 14,000 people attended the Soapbox challenge and this was translated into a £350,000 economic boost to local business, plus £100,000 in free marketing for the town. This year we are moving the event to Sunday 24th of May which will create an extra trading day for many businesses will have a further positive impact on the town, we are looking at putting on Saturday events to really make it a bank holiday Barrow remembers.

FESTIVAL OF TRANSPORT – Saturday 11th July 2020

The Festival of Transport was another success that Barrow BID supported in 2019. This event has its own committee and we are looking to partner with local businesses and residents. Having events run by voluntary committees makes them more sustainable in the long run and takes Barrow BID away from being an Events Management Company. The Festival of Transport will be returning on sat 11th July bigger than ever, this year we have booked a motorcycle stunt show.

COMEDY FESTIVAL

The Barrow Comedy Festival was a newcomer for us in 2019, it let us work with evening economy businesses in a way we haven't before. Though successful and enjoyed by those who attended we are not bringing it back for 2020 and are looking for an alternative.

CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT

We are aware of the importance the Christmas period has for businesses, particularly in retail. Barrow BID are dedicated to ensuring that people shop within the town centre for the festive period. BID arranged free parking on the 30th November in partnership with Barrow Council, one of the busiest shopping days of the year. We also co-ordinated late night opening on the last three Fridays before Christmas in an attempt to draw the daytime shoppers into evening customers. We supported a number of events including the Christmas Choir Competition, a Festive Window Competition, visits to retailers from Father Christmas and The Santa Dash. These events worked really well and helped to engage with a broad range of ages including families and young people.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Barrow BID purchased new Christmas lights in 2019 as the old lights were dated and didn't reflect the welcoming atmosphere we were looking to create in the town. Using the council's contractor for installation Barrow BID purchased lights for the trees, icicle drop lights to hang above pedestrianised streets and 2D shapes and speakers in the ginnel alongside the Forum.

Feedback for the new lights was excellent and some businesses have even reported a decrease in

anti-social behaviour due to spaces being better lit. Because of this we are looking at putting some of the tree lights on separate breakers in the hope they will have the same effect during the winter months till the end of February.

VISIT BARROW

Barrow BID created the Visit Barrow brand as a way to engage with tourists. The aim is to make Barrow a destination for tourists and show them how much we have to offer. 11000 leaflets were printed and distributed within a 1hr 30m radius of Barrow in 2019. We want to shout not only about our long industrial history but also about the fantastic events we have going on throughout the year. We may not have lakes or mountains but we have such a diverse natural ecosystem, miles of fantastic coastland and plenty of history.

SIGNS

The BID have created new street signage to promote side street business. Barrow might seem like it is a long high street but there is so much off the beaten track. These new signs add colour and interest to our high street and are being installed on the backs of highway signs and telephone boxes. By using existing space we lower our costs and give a fresh look to tired space.

PROMOTIONS

Over the last 15-18th months we have been running monthly adverts with CandoFM and we have run campaigns with other media platforms in the local and regional area.

HIGH STREET AWARDS

We applied to enter the Great British High Street Awards and felt we had a strong case for the Rising Star award because we have made such an impact in the last 12 months. We were shortlisted in the final ten and this has put us on the map as a high street going in the right direction. We are all incredibly proud of this achievement and it wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of our voluntary board, levy payers and BID Manager. We have no plans to enter the award this year but with hard work and re-election we believe 2021 could be our year.

ITV TONIGHT SHOW

Barrow and the BID featured on ITV, we felt the program was balanced and showed what we as businesses are having to endure on a national scale. The programme was very people focused and gave us a forum to talk about business rates, particularly when you look at high-streets in comparison to side streets and retail parks.

FUTURE PLANS

Barrow BID has big plans for the future... plenty of last year's events are returning and the 4th of April will be Dino Day, an event which has had huge success in Lancaster. We really want all businesses to think about how they can get involved with this event to make it something really memorable.

The BID are working on a Train Station Gateway Project with the aim of creating impactful, informative signage that leads people from the train station to the town centre where Abbey Road meets Dalton Road. The signage will also act to welcome visitors and highlight the town's rich,

diverse history as well as what the town is offering them today. The signage will be placed as to direct people around the town to main shopping areas and points of interest.

POCKET PARK

Barrow BID are working on a pocket park scheme on the land next to Sports Direct on Dalton Rd. The scheme will possibly see the creation of a pre-school children play park and green seated area in a safe, gated environment.

OTHER PROJECTS

The BID are dedicated to taking advantage of as many grants for the town as we can. We will continue with our large scale events and use the special projects grant to support wonderful things like the Santa Dash. We will be printing and distributing even more Visit Barrow leaflets over this coming year and through continued hard work hope this attracts more footfall to a cleaner, clearer town.

Questions from the audience

Simon from M&S asked

Is there a danger the bid will just be known simply as an events management team?

This isn't what we want, we want local people to sit on committees to support existing events, in nearby towns like Ulverston it is the business and locals that run events. We want this in Barrow, so the BID can help with financial support or facilitation. As well as increasing footfall and providing a boost to the local economy, events enforce a sense of civic pride, increase pride and create lasting memories in young people. We want to put Barrow back on the map and to do this in the long run we need local people and local business to get involved. The BID are dedicated to gaining the involvement of large local corporations and this is something we are focusing on as we plan our re-election campaign.

Anon asked

Is there a plan to ask residents to contribute financially in the future?

The short answer is no, because that's not how a BID works, for more information on how Barrow BID and BIDs in general are structured, please visit the government's website.

Simon Crompton asked

Will the board adopt a fixed term policy on the board and use open meeting voting to appoint board members from businesses not voted by fellow board members?

At this point there is some dispute from a concerned member regarding re-election to the board in the past and if the room was asked to vote at the last AGM, it is confirmed by members of the BID board and our independent advisors that this did take place and we would direct anyone to the minutes from that meeting if they would like further confirmation. More information can be found on the Barrow BID website about how we elect and how to nominate candidates in the future.

Nick Emerson from Infurness LTD asked

What is the biggest challenge that the BID is facing?

One attendee mentions Barrow council. CG agrees that 18 months ago this was the case, but a change up in the councils structure has led to a much more positive relationship. Two BID directors have been invited onto committees for the *Future Highstreet Fund* and for the *Towns Deal*.

Another difficulty has been in spreading the message about the BID and what they and levy payers are doing for the town. The BID also struggles engaging with businesses about things they have done on a non-event related scale. The BID encourages people to talk more about the BID and what they are doing to improve the town.

Alan from Got It Covered makes the comment that members of the public think the council are paying for things like the lights and agrees that the key to a successful BID is spreading the word about how levy payers are having a positive role in regenerating the town's infrastructure.

The BID hopes that the Gateway Project and Pocket Park will play a positive role in highlighting the hard work the BID does to permanently bring some life back into the town centre.

Cando FM invites any levy player to speak to the radio and talk about how the BID have impacted their own business and to tell their personal stories as business owners within Barrow

Allan from Got It Covered asked

Can we have more meetings?

Every year the BID holds an AGM and 3 open meetings, we have also canvassed on the street to talk to the public.

Anon asked

Can we sponsor CandoFM to go out and shout about the BID and talk to the public?

The simple answer is yes and Barrow BID has been doing this with regular visits to Cando FM. The BID is very grateful for the support of such a fantastic local radio station.

Idea Generation – Barrow BID 2021 - 2026

M & T Lewis from The Gallery asked

How can we attract new business to the town? And what about property development?

We did look at creating a portfolio of the town centre's empty units, however the Future High Street Project and Towns Deal already have this scheme in their prospectus so we will take advantage of that. We are hoping to speak to experts such as estate agents, surveyors and property developers to give them more information about possible grants we offer.

Paul from Oscars Nest.

What are your plans to bring more people into the town centre, why have you chosen the station for gateway signs?

The *Future High Street Fund* is going to be supporting the gateway signage from car parks and bus stops. The BID has chosen to give the station the same treatment as an initial project.

Anon asked

How can we improve the signage into the town for road users, and how can we make it easier to park cheaply?

There is intention for a sign directing people directly to the Town Centre via Abbey Road to be placed on the A590 by Highways England. Neither the BID nor the council can fast-track this as it is on Highway England's timeline and we cannot influence the timescale.

Sheila from Crafty Hobbies asked

How do we increase footfall and improve perception of the town centre?

Sheila felt her question was being addressed through the answering of other questions and discussion through the meeting.

South Lakes School of Rock asked

How can we make Barrow more attractive as a place of work?

BAE has partnered with us and sits on the same council boards as we do. Just as the BID does, BAE wants young people to have long careers and put down roots within the town. Together we want to invest in young people and the best way to do this is to invest in Barrow by helping it to thrive and feel like a dynamic place to live.

The BID is aware that it needs to work on the evening economy within the town centre. The night time economy is great but we have spare hours between 6pm and 11pm where something needs to change for our businesses. The Comedy Festival was a start but we need more ideas and the re-election of Barrow BID will help us develop a long term plan for Barrow.

Street Trading & Specialist Markets

We are pleased that the council has agreed to new street trading terms. Up until two years ago there was an outright ban on street trading within Barrow town centre. The council has now consented to street trading and the fees have been lowered. We still feel the fees are too high for shorter events such as the Christmas lights switch on and for businesses from outside the Barrow area, i.e. Ulverston and the South Lakes. We are determined to continue the conversation regarding this with the council but it is not within our power to make any changes. We want local business at town centre events and profiting from them, so our aim is to find a way that business from the outskirts of the town centre can benefit from the footfall that events bring.

Andrea Williams from CandoFM asked

Keeping wealth in the town centre. Create a welcoming and interesting town centre day and night. A "destination event(s) i.e. markets, music and cultural events; festivals. Done a good job so far!

We have had real improvements in our local bar scene, such as the opening of the Townhouse and Tailor's along with the refurbishment of The Derby, and live music at the Odd Frog. We need to find a way to engage with these businesses and promote them. We need to find ways of supporting all the great things these businesses are doing and find some solutions that are not related to drinking.

Simon from M&S asked

How can we improve public transport and on street parking?

We can't go too much into this because it is on the agenda for the Future High Street Fund, but it is in discussion, specifically regarding how bus routes are not into the retail core and are on a dangerous part of Duke Street.

Allan from Owen Baylis Digital asked

Is it possible to assist in subsidising business rates?

We can't do anything but lobby against the current business rates. We are hoping for a change in the current system that evens the playing field and gives some relief to National retailers as well as small businesses. We can assure you we are as passionate about this as you are.

Nick Emerson from InfurnessLTD

How can we be better at utilising empty places as pop up shops and hot desking?

We have a low percentage of entrepreneurship in Barrow, due in part to an over reliance on BAE as an employer. We need to work with Furness College to see how we can encourage more young people into self-employment and see if we can give them more experience in running retail businesses. The BID needs to find a way to engage with entrepreneurs and make it clear we are here to help.

Anon asked

Can we look at a scheme that encourages indoor markets stallholders into bricks and mortar shop units?

Various market trainers expressed concerns at low footfall within the Market Hall, there is some resentment over a poorly received refurbishment that took place before the BIDs formation. While the BID agrees that the market needs updating and really would benefit from heating this is not within the financial scope of the BID. The BID hopes that the Future High Street Fund or the council will take the concerns of the market to heart and make it a priority.

The BID are sympathetic to the issues facing the market and are happy to meet with traders to talk about concerns, and mediate on their behalf. BID is dedicated to trying to aid footfall for the whole of the town centre, the market included.

Anon asked

How can we engage with kids as to what they want in barrow and involve them in the future of barrow?

We are actually meeting with children from various schools to talk about the future of Barrow. We wanted to take the information we gather today to them and are very interested in getting them involved to shape Barrow-in-Furness so future generations will feel pride in.

Lynn Beech from Rebel Interiors asked

How can we get more people in the town centre on a daily basis?

BID is aware that parking is a huge issue and is something that will be addressed with the Future High Street Fund. Currently you can park using cash or a parking app, but BID are aware that this convenience comes at a high price and really hopes that a solution can be found in the future

Anon asked

Could late night opening of shops bridge the gap between day and night?

Many retailers trialled BID driven late night opening over the last three Fridays in the run up to Christmas, it was not a profitable experience for most retailers and did not receive the engagement that BID expected. Though T&T Records are a great example of how late night shopping can work for some business it is due to their “something extra special” with drum lessons ect bringing in after hours customers, this isn't something that would suit every retailer.

Late night shopping would require a change in shopping culture and this long process is not something that the current economic status of many businesses could support, with rising staff wages and declining footfall in town. Never say never but right now our efforts lay elsewhere, though who would have thought the end of Dalton Road would have the beginnings of a real cafe culture.

Anon asked

Could we have a semi-permanent performance space and garden as was promised 20 years ago in place of the outdoor market?

This is part of our plans for the Future High Street Application and we would fully support this initiative.

Nick Emerson from InFurness asked

How can the public get more involved?

The BID hopes that local people and businesses will join our events committees to aid their sustainability. The BID has plans to improve associate and voluntary membership but this is dependent on re-election because these things take time.

We want the large corporations to financially support the town's regeneration as a vibrant town is beneficial to all. We really hope these businesses want to be involved in making our town the best it can be and create somewhere that is a pleasure to, live, work and shop. With their help we know we can help Barrow to thrive.

The BID wants to train individuals working in retail within the town to act as Visit Barrow Ambassadors, these individuals would fill the role of a tourist information and provide a welcoming human touch to visitors.

The biggest way the public can get involved with BID is to talk about it and for you, the levy payers, to shout about what we have achieved together, after all it is your money that has helped us achieve such great things over the last year. It is together that we can make people proud of Barrow and to really put it on the map as a destination to eat, drink, shop and make memories.

Please talk to the BID about your concerns and hopes regarding the town because even if it is just passing it to the council we want to help you.