



Chairman's Report October 2019

Dear Members,

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to attend this year's AGM.

This is just a brief overview of some of the work that the BID have been involved in over the past twelve months – not everything because we would be here all night and I'm certain the board would agree that we have enough of those!

The year started with a thought provoking session from Geoff Ramm on how to improve the experience for both visitors to the town and customers to our businesses and, as a board, we agreed we needed to take some action.

We created a Special Projects Grants scheme to enable community groups and organisations to deliver activities and events within the BID area - this has been well received and examples of how this has been used include; Christmas carol competition, This is Me flashmob, Love Barrow running event and an upcoming Santa Dash.

We have held our third car show – now branded as Festival of Transport which has gone from strength to strength, with its own committee, sponsors and exhibitors requesting places instead of having to be chased, we see this growing each year and becoming even better attended in the future.

Our Festival of Comedy was also well received with some fantastic feedback from attendees and hosts and this is also something that we believe can be grown into something that will benefit more businesses in the future.

And how could I possibly ignore our first Super Soapbox Challenge? Approximately 14,000 people onto the high street, a high profile celebrity, hospitality spending through the roof and a feel good factor this town centre has not experienced for what seems a lifetime!

There were hurdles (not on the track but maybe next year!) and not everything worked or was best positioned but we have listened, taken on board suggestions and will try to learn from mistakes and work with you all to try and ensure that as many members as possible benefit from future events.

We have partnered (alongside BBC) Zest Community Action Group in some additional high street cleans and provided them with an industrial weed clearing machine and this, in conjunction with equipment provided by the council have enabled them to keep our town tidier. We are continuing to lobby and work with BBC and CCC to improve our traffic circulation and potential public transport routes into the centre. Due to the costs involved, this work needs to be supported by government funding and I'm pleased to say that following a joint bid, we have been shortlisted to receive some of this funding in the future.

Our business front improvement scheme has also seen numerous businesses take advantage of our match funding in order to improve the look, commerciality and enhancement of their property and I would encourage more of you to apply for a grant.

We are just about to embark on a gateway improvement scheme starting at the station where a lot of our footfall comes from. Directing them into our town centre and letting visitors know what our town has to offer. This is a scheme that will spread throughout the BID area in due course.

I could of course go on and on but as promised I wanted to keep this brief, I would encourage you to talk to Colin or the board if there is anything that is causing you concern or you have a suggestion to make.

Finally, as I hinted at in February, due to the fact that my business will cease to trade in the BID area from March next year, I will be ineligible for a position on the board and as such will have to resign. I have decided that this AGM, as it is year end for the BID, is therefore the best opportunity for me to do so.

Paul Hodgson has deputised for me on several occasions now and has put himself forward to take over the role of chairman. This has been welcomed by the board and I hope you all give him the same level of support that I have had during my time in the chair.

So, with my address complete and the BID in good shape, I wish you farewell and good luck for the future – please look after my town!!