

## **Barrow BID AGM - Chairman's Report - 2020**

Thank you all for attending this evening.

Although the world we live in now has changed significantly over the past year, at tonight's meeting we are actually starting by looking back at a pre-covid time, which seems like a long time ago, the end of 2019.

2019 was the year when the BID Board took the decision to make a significant investment in improving the Christmas lighting in Barrow to improve the experience for everyone visiting the town over the festive period. The feedback we got from this was extremely positive and has led to us extending the new lights for 2020. We also ran a program of events throughout Christmas 2019 including organising Santa to visit the town centre, "Shop Barrow Day", Late Night Shopping, live music, a Choir Competition and supporting the Santa Dash in association with St Marys Hospice.

As we moved into the new year of 2020, we made a significant commitment to regeneration by partnering with Barrow Borough Council as a supporter of the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) centred around Duke St. This was alongside representation from Barrow BID being present on the two large scale investment projects being undertaken in Barrow, the Towns Deal (which became Brilliant Barrow) and the Future High Street Fund (FHSF). Throughout the period we also continued to help support businesses to invest in their property through our Business Premises Grant Scheme, with numerous businesses receiving match-funded grants. We were also nominated as a finalist for the "Rising Star" category in the Great British High Street awards.

In March of 2020, the first national lockdown began due to the outbreak of Covid 19. At this point, the role of Barrow BID changed drastically to one of very much of support for businesses to get them through this difficult period. As a BID, we used all our advertising channels to promote local businesses throughout the year including running a "Business Focus" campaign on our social media platforms. As businesses were allowed to re-open, we worked with them to assist with this and provided free floor stickers and posters to help them once again open their doors to customers. We also ran a significantly scaled back, Covid safe Dino Day event following the relaxation of restrictions to give people of reason to go back to visiting our town centre.

As a BID we have delivered numerous other projects and initiatives over the time period in question, many more than I have time to go through tonight. There is no way of hiding from the fact though that times are tough right now.

The role of a BID, of us as a group of business owners and managers coming together is more important now than ever before. With us all working together we will overcome this latest hurdle and continue to build a sustainable town centre that can be the hub of our community, a town centre we can be proud of. To this end, if any of you have any ideas for the future of Barrows Town Centre, for what you want to see Barrow BID delivering, then I would encourage you to get in touch with either myself, Colin our BID Manager, or any of the BID Board Directors.

Thank you