

Barrow BID AGM  
17<sup>th</sup> May 2022

## Chairman's Report

Thank you all for attending this evening.

In the period of which we are reviewing tonight, from September 2020 to August 2021, Covid was still prominent, with several national lockdowns of varying degrees affecting all businesses and people from every walk of life.

With the country coming out of lockdown for the second time on 2nd Dec, as a BID we invested heavily on helping businesses capitalise on the busy festive period, from further investment in Christmas lights to a Christmas Town Centre Shopping guide which was distributed to homes in the surrounding area. 2020 also saw the return of the extremely popular "Shop Barrow Day" with us providing free parking across the town centre to make it as convenient as ever for people to shop local.

As we moved into the new year of 2021, we continued to make significant contributions as partners to the large scale capital regeneration projects alongside Barrow Borough Council. We continued 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 Levelling Up Fund after the town was unsuccessful in its bid for the Future High Street Fund (FHSF). Throughout the period we have also continued to help support businesses to invest in their property through our Business Premises Grant Scheme.

July 2020 saw the return of our first major large-scale event post-covid, with the return of the Festival of Transport, which took place in July, attracting over 200 vehicles to the town centre and an estimated 8,000 visitors, making it our most successful Festival of Transport event to date. The feedback from this event was extremely positive, with the event returning again on Saturday 16th July this year. The Festival of Transport was then closely followed by our second Super Soapbox event over the August bank holiday weekend following the event being rescheduled several times because of covid, which once again saw karts hurtling down Dalton Road to the delight of spectators once again.

Our most significant project of 2021, which was the final year of the BID's first term, was us going to ballot, with our levy payers voting on whether they wished Barrow BID to continue for another 5 years. Following the ballot papers being counted, we were extremely pleased to announce that two thirds of the businesses who voted were in favour of our re-election.

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 still tough.

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 the hurdles which are placed in our way 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 or any of the BID Board of Directors.

**Paul Hodgson – Barrow BID Chairman**