

Chair's Report

Barrow BID began its second term in September 2021, with over two thirds of levy paying businesses voting in favour of electing Barrow BID for another 5 year term, cementing the real sense of business community which a business improvement district represents.

In the period of which we are reviewing tonight, from September 2021 to August 2022, Barrows town centre, along with the rest of the country, was still recovering from the after effects of covid and multiple national lockdowns. With times being tough for businesses, Barrow BID invested heavily to ensure that Christmas 2021 delivered a much needed economic uplift. This included the extension of our Christmas lights and a Christmas Town Centre Shopping guide which was distributed to 3000 homes in the surrounding area. 2021 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 2022, we continued to make significant contributions as partners to the large scale capital regeneration projects alongside Barrow Borough Council. This included 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 which will involve the redevelopment of Barrow Market and the surrounding area. Throughout the period we have also continued to help support businesses to invest in their property through a modified grant scheme, renamed the Business Growth Grant Scheme, with a new focus on benefiting businesses looking to develop their proposition, as well as outside organisations looking to deliver events within the town centre to increase footfall.

As a BID, we continued to develop our calendar of large scale events, with May 2022 marking the return of our ever popular Dino Day, which saw over 16,000 visitors to the town centre. July 2022 then saw the return of the Festival of Transport, which took place in July, attracting over 200 vehicles to the town centre and an estimated 18,000 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 15th July this year. We took a break from the Soapbox Race in 2022 due to the proximity of our 2021 event caused by the rescheduling following covid restrictions.

Probably one of the most significant changes which were made towards the end of the period under review, was the internal restructuring of the BID Team. With the resignation of our previous BID Manager, this allowed us to review the way we operated and amend our operating model to a new structure with the key focus being on communications with businesses, the local authority and other stakeholders, as well as sharing our benefits (such as social media reach) and a renewed focus on sustainability. This resulted in the replacement of the BID Manager role with a new BID Project Manager and Communications and Marketing Coordinator.

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.

Jenny Fazackerley - Barrow BID Chair