



**BedfordBID**  
 Business Improvement District  
 Funded by Town Centre Businesses  
[www.lovebedford.co.uk](http://www.lovebedford.co.uk)

The Bedford Business Improvement District (BID) continues to engage with town centre businesses across all sectors, better promoting the town, creating economies for levy payers' money and creating a safe, clean and friendly welcome for visitors.

We have recorded the highest ever numbers of businesses participating in the Love Bedford gift voucher scheme and of unique visitors to the Love Bedford website. The voucher redemptions go straight back into the tills of the town centre businesses and the Love Bedford website promotes every BID business.

Our biggest contribution in 2014/15 is the increasing number of people coming into the town vs. decline nationally and regionally\*.

BID zone vacancy rates have fallen from 14% to 12.5% during 2014/15 with the number of business openings rising from 48 to 61\*\*. New businesses mean new visitors. Gallone's Ice Cream and Coffee Republic in The Arcade are amongst the list of new arrivals together with Délices Patisserie and Bakery on Howard Street.

Further new openings are planned on Mill Street and in the newly refurbished Townscape Heritage Initiative properties on the High Street, to which BedfordBID businesses contributed £100k over five years. We are also delighted to see the reopening of Gunns Bakery and that work has started on the old Porter Blacks unit and The Merton Business Centre on St Cuthbert's – two major gateways into our town.

An unprecedented level of businesses have been involved in BID publications, events and promotions including 40 businesses in the recent Love Fashion Love Beauty magazine and an average of 60 business attending the BID breakfast networking and briefing

meetings. Guest speakers have included local MP Richard Fuller, recently appointed to the Business Innovation and Skills Parliamentary Select Committee.

This summer, events such as the FREE Outdoor Cinema attracted more than 1,000 to the Castle Quay whilst Mounds of Fun events performed to 850 visitors over two Sundays as well as capturing competition entries to cultivate the expansion of our database. Goodie bags offered incentives from a variety of different BID businesses. A prize draw for tickets to the Proms generated responses from all BID business sectors. The opening rate of e-shots is now between 25-28% against an industry average of 16-17%. Please make sure we have your up to date contact details!

A change in the marketing direction last Christmas, a critical period for retail, focused our efforts on bringing more people into the town via high impact outdoor media, strong creatives and farther afield advertising. The FREE Sunday parking message proved to be of further benefit to the town centre. The foot flow for the week of Christmas was +20% and the website visits trebled with the highest views on both the directory and launch event pages.

Building on the outstanding success of the Christmas fireworks and lights switch on last year, BedfordBID has again negotiated the "blast off" to take place at 7.00pm so businesses can capitalise on the footfall in the town that evening. Adding to the festivities this year is Bedford's very first Christmas Emporium which kick-starts the launch of late night shopping. Santa and his reindeer will be making an appearance, while bands, choristers and live entertainment add to festivities. Completing the merriments is the ice rink at Bedford Swan Hotel.

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# Chairman's report

2014/15 was an interesting and important period for the BID as it not only continued the refocusing of the offer to businesses started in the previous year, but was also the time in which the BID went to a vote of its electorate for a further five year mandate. In order to establish that mandate directors 'took to the streets' to ascertain the likes and dislikes, hopes and aspirations of the businesses within the BID area.

The mandate produced was made available to all businesses and remains a living document by which the directors deliver the service of the BID to businesses. I do not intend to rehearse the details of the mandate here as the document is still available to all in hard copy and online.

It was with great delight that the BID received the necessary level of support in October 2014 to have another five years in which to continue the development of Bedford, in conjunction with others as partnership has proven to be the best way to meet the BID's objectives, from the 1st April 2015. Although the turnout at the ballot was in line with the national average for re-ballots, some might consider it disappointing, but it should not take away from the fact that the BID received a mandate to continue. It is incumbent on the present and future directors to see that mandate through and to continue to identify what the BID businesses want in readiness for BID4. We look forward to engaging you in the process for the BID4 ballot in due course.

As I have said 2014-15 continued the development of the refocus of what the BID had to offer and one of the great successes was the B2B Breakfast meetings at which levy payers had the opportunity to meet with other levy payers, hear about important issues relating to the town's development e.g. Riverside North, and discuss what the BID was intending to do over such things as Christmas opening.

It is always difficult to produce a report on a financial year which has passed without making reference to the year in which it is being presented. However, it is worthy of note that the B2B breakfast meetings are going from strength to strength; the operations of the board are even more transparent and each board meeting is preceded by an open session at which any levy payer can attend to ask questions, make suggestions or simply observe; a full programme of activity has been developed and is proving popular with levy payers and the public at large and regular meetings are taking place, initially in Mill Street, of localised businesses to discuss issues which particularly affect them. All these were in the manifesto produced by the BID for the October vote.

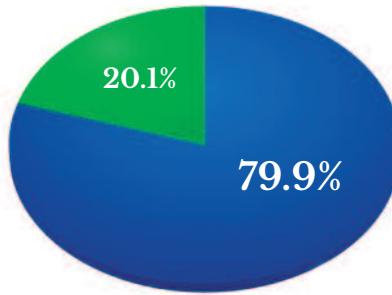


Rae Levene

# How we spend your money

April 2014 – March 2015

We strive to ensure that our levy payers' money is spent both carefully and transparently on those initiatives which will add value to the town as an important commercial, retail and leisure destination.



**Projects**  
of which 62.33% is spent on Marketing and Promotions

**Overheads and Management**

**Surplus on continuing operations** - Due to the nature of the operation, a surplus is carried forward each year to provide funds for activities at the start of the financial year to carry over until the first payment of levy income is received.

# How we measure our success



## Love Bedford Website

Total unique visitors increased to 88,319 from 60,348 in 2013/14. Twitter rose to 5,000 followers. Facebook interactions have also increased. Our database for direct email to the public is on the up as well.



## Vacancy rates

have fallen from 14% to 12.5% during 2014/15



## Retail Radiolink & Exclusion Scheme

The number of members and participants in this scheme has increased to 243. Bedford BID was awarded a distinction accreditation for the Safer Business Award by the National Association of Business Crime Partnership.



## Footflow

Year to date +7.5% versus -1% nationally.



## Love Bedford Gift Vouchers

Vouchers issued to date £826,000, redemption rate 91.09% and participating businesses have risen from 250 - 284, our highest ever.



## Positive Media Coverage

Positive coverage has increased across all channels : on-line, in newspapers, periodicals and related websites. Increasingly Love Bedford is a call to action and a headline.



# Saving businesses money

Many have benefited from a free utilities consultation with savings equating to the cost of the BID levy for many businesses, over a 12 month period, as a result. Future savings are currently being identified by a further 90 business, the majority of whom want to engage Utilitrack nearer the time of their renewal. Over the next 12 months we will continue to engage with businesses and communicate our results.



# BID3 *April 2015 - 2020*

BID3 began in earnest with the relaunch of the Taxi Marshall scheme, expansion of the Love Bedford Easter Trail, collaborations and engagement with younger audiences at the Bedford College Hair & Beauty Show, developing the 'Fashion on the Streets' concept and sponsorship of the first 10k town centre run. Further focus on the non-retail business sector was made including the launch of a dedicated business magazine, strategic topics from guest speakers at the B2B breakfast meetings such as the East West rail consortium project, transport strategy and the £6m street lighting project. Open board meeting 30 minute sessions have now been introduced and the start of sector BID business meetings has begun in Mill Street.



New initiatives include the launch of the BedfordBID Offers Site, development and relaunch of the Love Bedford website directory. The website will include various new features i.e. fully mobile device compatibility; FB and Twitter feeds, google maps link for each business; voucher banners for relevant business, link to Offers page, facility for much larger images and option for more than one photo e.g. exterior and say a special promotion, plus improved search functionality using individual words. We are also starting a monthly featured business starting with Michael R Peters. Christmas light enhancements will complement Bedford's very first Christmas "Emporium" as part of the launch of seasonal late night shopping.

Bluecaps continue to help to keep the town safe, clean and offer a friendly welcome. The role of the BedfordBID Bluecap is to provide high quality customer care and service for shoppers, visitors and businesses in Bedford Town Centre whatever the weather, Monday to Saturday.



Bluecaps log, photograph and arrange the removal of graffiti, as part of the Wipe:Out scheme, helping to keep our Town Centre graffiti-free. They feedback information about shops and businesses in the town. They also share up to date information on events taking place in Bedford Town Centre. Not only do the Bluecaps give out maps and written directions to visitors but they often accompany people to their destination ensuring that they are getting them to the right location quickly.





## Creating a safe environment

Bluecaps are linked to the town centre CCTV and Bedfordshire Police by radio and are trained to make rapid responses to situations that can arise in a busy town centre. The BedfordBID Bluecaps are all first-aid trained. They can administer first aid, provide assistance, and call on the emergency services with the touch of a button with the RadioLink radios. Bluecaps work with Bedfordshire Police who endeavour to ensure people do not drink alcohol, ride bikes or skateboard in the pedestrianised area. The Bluecaps are in constant communication with the Police and CCTV and can call for back up if people continue to carry out anti social behaviour.

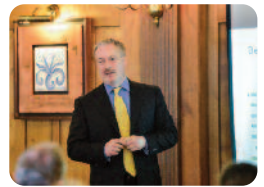
The Bluecaps monitor litter, graffiti, flyposting and damaged signs etc. The Bluecaps photograph and document all of these incidents and report them to the appropriate authorities. Bluecaps offer parents free wristbands for their children to wear in the town centre, on which can be written the contact number of a parent/guardian. Should customers ever be separated from their child, or any lost children are found in Bedford Town Centre, the scheme ensures a quick way to reunite them.

**Bluecaps**  
We're here to help

Each Bluecap visits a variety of businesses throughout a day. Bluecaps are on hand to tell them about BedfordBID and how they can be involved. The Bluecaps call around regularly with information about special promotions and events.



*Taxi Marshalls funded by BedfordBID*



As part of our ongoing programme to offer support and guidance to businesses, BedfordBID recently joined The Healthy High Streets programme which is designed to provide practical support for High Street businesses from fellow practitioners. This includes Boots, Marks & Spencer, Santander and Greggs who are collaborating with our local town team to develop and implement activities such as persuading landlords to address empty and unsightly properties.

By being re-elected for a third five year term in October 2014 BedfordBID secured its position amongst the now over 200 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) operating across the UK, with a combined levy income from

of over £65,500,000. The Government is supportive of BIDs and wants to see many more created to help deliver improvements and give businesses a stronger voice in shaping their local area. Towns without a BID are being considered to be at a disadvantage, unable to work on schemes and ideas that go beyond what their local council provides. BIDs are a true example of business-led partnerships, achieving rewards for the communities they work within through collaboration.

As part of the BedfordBID's performance evaluation, we also contribute to the British BIDs National survey which measures good practice. BedfordBID has been acknowledged as "well established and well run BID"



During 2014, Bedford's Portas Pilot programme concluded. Following the BedfordBID-led successful application to secure additional investment, the Town Team delivered a programme of initiatives for the benefit of new and existing businesses. These offered training and mentoring in business planning, marketing, social media, websites and window dressing culminating in a well-received competition. Sponsorship of the

High Street Showcase provided businesses the opportunity to 'take to the streets' and visitors to the town on Showcase Saturday increased +30% in Year One. Other activities included vacant unit dressing to improve the street scape, a programme of start-up business grants and pop up installations.

Full report [www.lovebedford.co.uk](http://www.lovebedford.co.uk)

# The year ahead

2016 promises to be a very exciting year with the 800th Anniversary of the granting of the Charter to Bedford, and the Harpur Trust 450th Anniversary Celebrations. A diverse mix of events and activities will range from The Passion Play at Easter weekend to the popular River Festival on 16th & 17th July. BedfordBID plans to be involved, we will also be arranging our own Love Bedford Day on Sunday 24th July. BedfordBID will be supporting the brand new Interactive Historical Town Tours in Bedford in the first two weeks of the 2016 Summer Holidays, starting on Monday 27th July. These Tours will be run by professional actors, who, dressed in appropriate costume, will bring stages of the tour 'to life'.

\*Source of Statistics: The national high street index is collaboration between Springboard Research Ltd and the Association of Town Centre Management to deliver a national performance index based on footfall in town and city centres. Data for the High Street index has been gathered by Springboard from around 100 million pedestrian flows per month in around 140 UK towns and cities.

\*\*Springboard gathers vacancy rates in towns and cities via an online survey of town centre managers in 450 locations throughout the UK. The vacancy rate is defined as the percentage of the ground floor units in the town centre that are vacant, and a vacant unit is regarded as one which is not trading at the time of the survey (whether or not it is let).

BedfordBID is a member of ATCM, British BIDS, Best Bar None, The National Association of business Crime Partnerships



**Free  
Parking\***



**Major Stores**

**Late Night  
Shopping**

**Thursdays from  
26<sup>th</sup> November**

**Independent Shops**

**Free lights  
switch on &  
fireworks**

**Town Centre  
Christmas  
Markets**

**Live  
Festive  
Music**

**Meet  
Santa's  
Reindeer**

**Christmas  
Tree  
Festival**

**Ice  
Skating**



**Festive  
Restaurants  
& Pubs**



**Bedford  
Town Centre  
Gift Vouchers**



# Enjoy a unique Christmas in the heart of Bedford

With plenty of **FREE** parking\*

...and enjoy our character, culture and choice with **FREE** town centre events, museums, galleries, cafés, restaurants & bars plus riverside setting.



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\*FREE parking for the first 2 hours on Saturdays at Council owned car parks. On Sundays parking is FREE at Council owned car parks and in the Harpur Centre. In addition, FREE parking is available to shop late Thursdays 26th November - 17th December from 5.30pm in the Harpur Centre.

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