



Bedford BID



Forward Thinking: Five Years

BedfordBID the next five years

1st April 2015 – 31st March 2020

In April 2015, the Bedford Business Improvement District (BID) began the first year of its third five year term, one of the first Business Improvement Districts in the country to do so. There are now over 200 BIDs in the UK including Luton, Northampton, Cambridge and potentially Milton Keynes. It remained vitally important for businesses to 'Vote Yes' for a third term to ensure BedfordBID continued to develop the town centre promotion and experience for businesses and visitors through the delivery of projects and services outlined in its business plan, under the scrutiny of the BedfordBID board of volunteers.

In operation for over ten years, BedfordBID has achieved a considerable amount during its term to date, establishing successful working relationships with the town's business community and partner organisations and delivering activities, marketing campaigns and business services across a range of strategic themes which is critical for the ongoing prosperity of the town. A committed board and management of a small team plus close co-operation with BID, public and private sector partners, will develop the activity further.

A change in Chairmanship of the Board of Directors has seen local Bedfordian Samantha Laycock appointed and the representation from town centre businesses on the board of 12 includes favourite high street names, independents and non-retail including the late night economy. The BritishBIDs guidance states that the majority of BIDs have a board size of between 8 and 20. Full accounts are available on-line for perusal at any time together with the availability of any minutes of BID meetings. Rotation of the BedfordBID Chair is now every three years in line with the rotation of directors.

BedfordBID Board of Directors



A town by the river: above proposed Riverside North and below the John Bunyan Boat



The Business Improvement District model provides investment and engagement through a separate, independent body (BedfordBID Limited) where businesses decide on the priorities and how they want their money spent.

Bedford is developing and evolving. The Riverside North Development will be opening in 2017 offering a seven-screen cinema, a Premier Inn 100-bedroom hotel, and national restaurant operators. The completed scheme is predicted to provide Bedford town centre with a destination attracting up to 500,000 people p.a. enriching the night time economy and creating over 250 jobs.

However, there is a consensus that once the new development is complete, the adjacent areas within our town in comparison may well look neglected. It is therefore essential that the rest of the town benefits from enhancements to the environment, enabling the centre to be of an excellent standard throughout and not just in chosen areas.

The new major retail development at Rushden Lakes, an out of town shopping facility in East Northants, is also likely to impact upon the popularity of Bedford's town centre for shoppers living in the north of the county. Essential to Bedford town centre (as to any town centre), is growth with over 7000 houses being built.

Whereas Bedford achieves a strong market share from within its core and total catchment, in reality it is likely that Bedford falls short of achieving its full market potential. This is because the affluent shoppers within the catchment will be shopping in the nearby towns of Cambridge and Milton Keynes. As Bedford is located within an area with the most affluent Wealthy Achievers found in rural areas, there is great potential however, tactical changes are not enough. Having an attractive town centre as well as a critical mass of retailing is also an important element of the package needed to attract new businesses, employers and employment to a town. As is a retailing centre that serves the needs of the local community; leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities; access to public and private sector services; an employment and business sector; accessibility by a number of transport options; and a positive perception by the local community of their town centre (source: Association of Town & City Management)



Our Vision

To create a vibrant environment and broaden the role of the Town Centre beyond shopping towards being a great place for people to spend time – work, visit, stay and live.

Aims and objectives for BID3 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2020

- To market and promote Bedford Town Centre and make Bedford a destination.
- To enhance the visitor experience and broaden the customer offer.
- To continue to forge strong partnerships, working with others to create a vibrant, economically strong and attractive town for residents and visitors alike.
- To be sustainable.

- 1.1 **EVENTS, DRIVING VISITS & BUILDING AWARENESS:** A comprehensive full year calendar of events designed to create a compelling reason to visit the town, was produced and published in readiness for the coming year with dates of BID meetings. The events are devised to attract a mix of regional and local visitors, with some aimed specifically at fostering pride of place within the local businesses and community but ultimately to bring people into the town and enhance their 'experience'. We have also used our events to promote different parts of the town, streets or sectors such as Castle Quay and the evening economy. They included:-
- 1.1.1 Town trails involving 25 town centre businesses each time; sponsorship of Bedford College Hair & Beauty Show, the Love Bedford 10k run, Outdoor Theatre and Comedy Cabaret Shows on the Mound, Outdoor Cinema at Castle Quay Archaeological site, Comic Convention at the Corn Exchange and Diwali Festival of Light at the Harpur Suite; promotion of BID businesses to the Bedford College Fresher's Week Fair, support the High Street Showcase, Independents' Day promos and Love Bedford Chilli Festival and inaugural Christmas Emporium with family entertainment on Harpur Square as a prelude to the Christmas lights switch-on and launch of late night shopping. BID also provided support for The Passion Play procession from Church Square through the town centre during Easter 2016.
- 1.1.2 An unprecedented level of businesses were involved in BID events, promotions and publications including 40 businesses in the Love Fashion Love Beauty magazine and 58 in the B2B publication plus full directory listing. The open air cinema attracted more than 1,000 viewers to the Castle Quay whilst 'fun on the Castle Mound' attracted 850 visitors over two Sundays with competition entries expanding the BID customer mailing list. Love Bedford branded goodie bags also included incentives from a variety of different BID businesses.
- 1.1.3 The pre-Christmas lights switch-on event 26th November attracted families after school and extended dwell time before the town centre lights. Foot flow to the town doubled compared to the previous year and businesses reported "exceptional trading" during this time year on year. The inaugural Christmas Emporium, attracted participation from businesses Goldings ; Mellow; Thorntons; Smoke Shack; Wilko; Re-Use Centre; Michael R Peters ; Lingers High Class Butchers; BedfordBID; Gallone's ice cream and Adrian Bullers photography.
- 1.1.4 The John Bunyan, Bedford's Community Boat which was sponsored by BedfordBID when it first started operating in 2013, continues to be a tremendous tourism boost to the town centre; it has now carried over 22,000 passengers since it first started operating. The boat which was launched by the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust, it is run by volunteers and provides river cruises along the Great Ouse in Bedford.
- 1.1.5 **ATTRACTING VISITORS:** A multimedia annual marketing campaign was executed to communicate the compelling reasons to come to Bedford targeted at a 20 minute drive time including the new residential areas and comprised of bus backs and sides, train stations in Bedford, St Neots and Milton Keynes, regional radio, rural publications, door to door glossy magazines, digital, online and social media plus the local weekly 'Three Reasons' in a column in the Beds on Sunday.





1.1.6 **EVENING ECONOMY:** Bedford's vibrant evening culture has also been promoted by BedfordBID within the town's press, radio advertising and websites. It also provided individual business marketing opportunities through 20,000 copies of the Love Food and Drink brochure dining guide, listing all bars and clubs. BedfordBID continues to finance Taxi Marshalls which enables a safe and friendly dispersal of visitors during the evening from the town centre, and provides funds for assessments and BIIAB Level 1 training in Responsible Alcohol Retailing. BedfordBID will also be supporting evening economy businesses on national policy changes such as the 'late night levy' whilst helping the town gain accreditation for having a well-managed and safe evening economy. Night time economy courses held in January 2016 resulted in:-

- 8 people received the Award in Responsible Alcohol Retailing
- 12 people completed the Personal Licence Course
- 19 people completed the Emergency First Aid in the workplace course
- A further Personal Licence Course is in hand for the near future

1.1.7 **SUPPORTING THE NON RETAIL SECTOR:** Having an attractive Town Centre as well as a critical mass of retailing and entertainment, is also an important element of the package needed to retain and attract new employers plus employment to a town. BedfordBID promotes new business arrivals; creates conduits for B2B cross-marketing opportunities and relationship development; promotes through a new section on the website entitled Business of the Month, social media and e-shots; runs promotions; and a dedicated B2B publication and continues to engage through either 1-2-1 discussions or through the Blue-caps.

1.1.8 **Heritage Bedford Group:** BedfordBID's website is not only pivotal to the delivery and fulfilment of marketing activity but also to the provision of 'tourism' services. Appreciating there is an 'on the ground' Travel & Tourism Centre, the Love Bedford website not only showcases what Bedford town centre has to offer visitors but also needs to provide up-to-date information. A dedicated new section on the website has been established for Bedford Heritage plus support given for the provision of the services of an independent consultant to help develop promoting the Heritage offer in Bedford as well as joint funding for a Talking Statues project, sponsorship of a Guided Walks programme and marketing material for a new package of Heritage Bedford Day Tours at the Coach Operators Exhibition.

1.1.9 BedfordBID has established close links to Bedford College and to a lesser extent the University of Bedford but now is providing information about the town to students at Fresher's events and award ceremonies. To develop this area further, BID is consulting with students on how best to attract their loyalty in order to procure the student pound for the town.

1.1.10 **EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY:** www.lovebedford.co.uk was redesigned and relaunched in 2014 and with further developments in 2015 is now the "best read website for the town centre" and fully compatible with today's mobile devices. Unique visitor numbers have risen to from 69,069 to 95,009

- 1.1.11 The website has the capacity for businesses to be represented by listing their services, opening hours and offers. Further improvements have also been made to offer the facility for online purchasing of the Love Bedford Gift vouchers and information to aid new business arrival decisions. BedfordBID's social media is already linked to and from the main website and traditional press campaigns. It also continues to feature local businesses and provide the town's customers with information to support their visits. More recently, videos have been added to the landing page promoting the wider offer and endorsements from residents as to why they "Love Bedford". These have been shared with local property agents.
- 1.1.12 **SOCIAL MEDIA:** Followers on Twitter have increased to 7k. Nurturing a social media strategy is an area that BedfordBID has been developing to help advertise the town and through the Facebook page, Bedford BID is also establishing a regular rapport with users; including competitions, event information, photos and chatter about what's going on in Bedford.
- 1.1.13 **BUILDING LOYALTY:** BedfordBID has devised a number of initiatives including the BedfordBID Town Centre Gift Voucher scheme, Town Trails, Independent's Day and national competition, influenced the FREE parking, Radio and Social Media competitions as well as a focus on special events and sectors such as Valentine's Day, Food Festival and Christmas. To cultivate our growing loyalty and address 'leakage', Bedford BID continues to devise innovative promotions, to make use of emerging technology and adapt to changing trends over the next five years. As a start, BedfordBID has replaced the Reward Card with the online Offers site which also forms the basis of a season-driven e-marketing strategy, announcing store offers and events, plus a B2B marketing campaign with a target of £1m of vouchers to be issued.
- 1.1.14 **PUBLIC RELATIONS :** Free editorial, air time, coverage in print and on-line plus TV positive spins are regularly arranged. Slots throughout the year in otherwise unobtainable media AND the equivalent for on-line stories (which may be in addition to, or different from print versions) and properly targeted awareness- raising has all been achieved with an estimated advertising equivalent of £15,000. Reputation management of the BID and the town centre is carefully balanced.



- 2 **A WELCOME TO DELIGHT:** When customers arrive, we want them to have the best experience possible. We know first impressions matter and 'the welcome' is all important. This includes everything from gateway signage, Christmas decorations, navigation and guides, to shop fronts, window displays and the general ambiance of the town centre. Businesses beyond the town centre and in the periphery of the BID area are now benefitting from enhanced Christmas lights complementing the existing provision by Bedford Borough Council. BedfordBID also arranged dressing of windows of empty shops on the high street, vinyls at Newsfayre, large directional map replacements and intervened for the car park operator to maintain and weed the Broadway car park.
- 2.1.1 BedfordBID Christmas light enhancements were completed for Christmas 2015 on lampposts and trees at The Broadway, St. Peters Street and gardens, Howard Street, Mill Street and Harpur Square.
- 2.1.2 BedfordBID has continued to raise awareness of town centre issues through appropriate channels i.e. CTAG and Pedal Cycle task force and for the monitoring and reporting of the number of cyclists in the town. A Public Space Protection Order for cyclists is now in place which restricts cyclists from riding bikes through the main pedestrian area between 9am and 6pm. PSPOs can be enforced by a police officer, police community support officer and authorised council officers.
- 2.1.3 The BedfordBID Retail RadioLink & Exclusion scheme was awarded a distinction for the Safer Business Award by the National Association of Business Crime Partnerships.
- 2.1.4 BedfordBID continues to fund the Taxi Marshalls scheme designed to aid safe dispersal from the Town Centre and to assist bona fide licensed vehicles to use the lay-bys, and to assist members of the public to hire these vehicles, as well as financing further training for bar staff for the pub/club sector to gain an Award in Responsible Alcohol Retailing (ARAR) from the British Institute of Inn keeping (BII).
- 2.1.5 **FRIENDLIER, SAFER AND CLEANER:** The Bluecaps continue to help make the town friendlier, safer, and cleaner and enhance the public realm through such schemes as the BedfordBID Retail RadioLink & Exclusion Order scheme (RRL); ChildSafe and WipeOut which is our graffiti monitoring, recording and reporting for action programme. Bluecaps work and interact with not just members of the public but also retailers, businesses, emergency services, council officials, event promoters, street cleansing and highways engineers for repairs and reporting hazards. They are often the first point of call for identifying antisocial behaviour and first aid incidents.
- 2.1.5.1 Bluecaps continue their principal function of acting as the primary link between BedfordBID and businesses ensuring all are fully aware and able to participate in all our projects with the aim of helping to improve the commercial viability and profile of the area and inform businesses how they can make savings through our partnership work with Utilitrack. Results include the targeting of new businesses for the RRL scheme which now includes 243 members and the highest number of businesses redeeming vouchers ever, peaking at 284.
- 2.1.6 During the year the Bluecaps have also made daily reports to 101 for ASB particularly in reaction to rough sleepers and beggars. The issue of people sleeping rough on the streets, or in squats and/or begging has been debated widely as well as the BID breakfast. BedfordBID produced a leaflet providing information on the definitive extensive support available to homeless people in Bedford which was widely shared. BID has also been liaising with absentee landlords. The consequence is a Business Watch scheme which will pick up momentum later this year.
- 2.1.7 It is planned to expand the successful WipeOut scheme where Bluecaps already work in partnership with Bedford Borough Council to identify and report eye level graffiti which is then removed by the Council. Bluecaps will be issued with mobile phones to report using the Love Clean Street Bedford App and <http://www.streetlink.org.uk/>
- 2.1.8 THI: The BedfordBID contributed £100k towards the Townscape Heritage Initiative designed to restore key historic buildings and replace unsympathetic shop fronts and reinstate architectural detail whilst bringing upper floors back into use with 'whole building' schemes. High Street works are very close to completion at 100 High Street (was Porter Black's now Meatcure). Works are also progressing on site at 65-67 High Street and 77-79 High Street (was Cash Converters / Cheque Centre), the final 2 projects.

3. **PARTNERSHIPS:** BedfordBID continues to forge strong partnerships. Working with others, we aim to create a vibrant, economically sound and attractive town for residents and visits alike through enhanced levels of engagement. To date, 9 BID breakfasts have been arranged hosting on average 60 businesses from retail to businesses services and now includes representation from Harpur Centre, Howard Centre, The Arcade and Markets. The Bishop of Bedford also joined a Breakfast representing two churches in the town centre.

Guest speakers have included MP Richard Fuller (appointed to the Business Innovation and Skills Parliamentary Select Committee) and the recently elected Bedfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner who spoke about issues around crime and ASB. The Harpur Trust launched its 450th anniversary celebrations as part of this year's special events which included the 850th Anniversary of the Royal Charter. There has also been regular updates on town centre matters i.e. THI High Street programme, Riverside North Development, Bedford Bypass.

- 3.1 The BedfordBID Board Meetings now offer an 'open session' at the beginning of each meeting, the Retail RadioLink & Exclusion Scheme meetings are held once a quarter with businesses and their in-store security, Mill Street business owners meetings are held once a quarter following the BedfordBID board meetings.

- 3.2 Bedford is now a member of the Healthy High Street programme aimed at "providing intensive support for high streets". Backed by corporate partners these businesses collaborate with local town teams to develop and implement activities including the provision of expert help and resource. For Bedford, there are four key areas around which a plan has been developed with the HHSt Champions who include representatives from M&S, Greggs, Santander, Boots, Harpur Centre Management, EE, Woodfine Solicitors and BedfordBID:-

- The BIG Local Business Town Centre Spruce Up Tuesday 12th July 2016 ahead of the massively popular River Festival businesses when business got involved with their teams to show some love for our town!

- FREE 'peer to peer' support through a business mentoring and upskilling programme to get local businesses working together to improve skills for the benefit of the town's economy.

- A method of establishing a productive working relationship with Bedford markets to enhance the presentation and sharing of good practice to promote the town. This has began with supporting the Love Your Markets Week with social media training, sharing of favourite photographs and tagging in: Love Bedford, the Mayor, Bedford Borough Council and Bedford Markets. Love Bedford Gift Vouchers are now also redeemable at a variety of market stalls indicated with the appropriate signage.

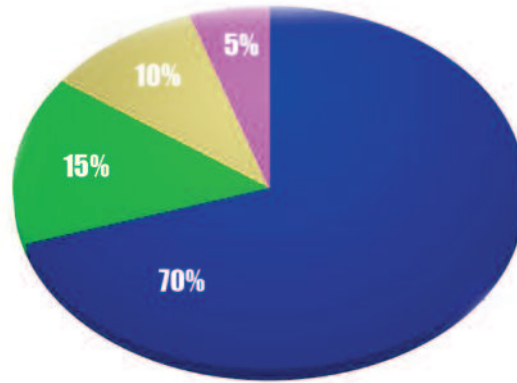
- A Pathway to Employment programme working with a local charity The Kings Arms Project is also in sight. Discussions are in hand to explore the feasibility of introducing a scheme that will work with recently homeless and rough sleepers, helping them to make the huge leap from homelessness to employment. It is split into three distinct areas: Mentoring, Life-skills courses and Voluntary work placements and employment.



4. **SUSTAINABILITY:** Through measurable success, BedfordBID is committed to demonstrate to all stakeholders that the Business Improvement District is beneficial to its levy payers.

How we spend your money

Projects 70%
Management 15%
Overheads 10%
Operating Surplus 5%



■ Projects ■ Management ■ Overheads ■ Operating Surplus

BedfordBID's influence is just as important as its budget. Through consultation and dialogue with those in authority, BedfordBID has also helped address concerns of businesses and the general public. BedfordBID continues to focus on improving the overall environment, travel and parking and to play a part in enhancing the environment and experience to raise the profile of the town to attract more visitors including giving advice on small business rates relief, hardship and cost savings, listening and acting upon concerns and offering practical advice and support to businesses to address their issues.



COMPANY REPORTING & TRANSPARENCY

How we measure our success - Key Performance Indicators

- Vacancy rates have fallen from 12.5% to 11.8% (8.2% ground floor level vs. 8.7% nationally)
- During 2015/16, 84 businesses opened and 69 closed. Last year 63 opened and 53 closed
- Footflow year on year increases throughout the year +10% year on year vs. -1.8% nationally (source: Springboard Research May 2015). Final outturn, year to date Bedford -1.9% vs. national -2.2%
- Love Bedford Gift Vouchers issued to date £887k, redemption rate 91.62%, and participating businesses at its highest level of 284.
- Love Bedford and new directory website 95,009 April 2015 to March 2016 + 31,936
Retail RadioLink & Exclusion Scheme membership increased to 243 members. National Association of Business Crime Partnership Safer Business Award accreditation.
- Utilitrack continues to provide all BedfordBID levy payers with the opportunity to benchmark the rates in their energy contracts against the best available rates in the market. Utilitrack have facilitated a saving of £35K for businesses over the last 12 months which is an excellent indication of the success.



BedfordBID YOUR BID BOARD

The governance of the BedfordBID is undertaken by a team of levy/business rates-paying large and small businesses who volunteer to sit on the BedfordBID Board. A list of our Directors and contact details is on the www.lovebedford.co.uk together with the invitation to become a Member/director and associated forms:-

Samantha Laycock, Harpur Centre
Kamljit Chana, T K Heaven
Michael Green, Blue Arrow
Zahid Hussain, McDonalds
Stephen McBrearty, Cash Converters
David Roffey, Bedford College
Charles Royden, Bedford Borough Council
Mark Thompson, Re-Use Centre
John Yatchisin, Woodfines Solicitors
Christina Rowe, BedfordBID



Bedfordshire Police also attend alongside invited guests.

Samantha Laycock

BEDFORDBID HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH YOU

How do you know what BedfordBID is doing for you?

OPEN MEETINGS

BedfordBID holds regular 'open' board meetings when representatives of the wider business community of the Town Centre are invited to attend along with ward and local councillors. Dates are displayed on our web site www.lovebedford.co.uk

B2B Breakfast networking meetings have been recently introduced providing businesses the opportunity to meet and promote to fellow businesses, learn more about BedfordBID and hear about developments affecting the town.

BUSINESS VISITS

All businesses are visited regularly by a member of the BedfordBID team. Bluecaps capture feedback from businesses in the BID area and report back. They deliver invitations to participate in marketing and promotional activities.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

We realise it's important that businesses are able to air current concerns that are affecting their business right now. Therefore, both the BID team and members of the BID Board have an open door policy when it comes to listening to your feedback or formulating plans of support. We make our contact details available on all communications.

BedfordBID BOARD

The Director of Operations meets, at least, on a six weekly basis with the Board, to report on performance, financial updates and ongoing issues as well as through ad hoc communication as and when necessary including regular 'drop ins' to their businesses. The Director also has regular meetings with other directors on specific topics outside of the formal meeting cycle.

www.lovebedford.co.uk is regularly updated with details of our activities and how to get involved as well as key information regarding latest news and developments within the Town Centre. Newsletters are hand delivered to all businesses and regular emails are sent out relating to BedfordBID activities and promotions that businesses can get involved in.



LATE SHOPPING & FREE PARKING

All Year

FREE parking for the first 2 hours on Saturdays
at all town centre council-owned multi-storeys

FREE parking ALL DAY on Sundays
at all council multi-storey and surface car parks
PLUS Harpur Centre and on-street parking

On-street parking and Lurke Street multi-storey
FREE after 6pm every day

Lurke Street and River Street multi-storey
car parks open 24/7

Christmas

LATE SHOPPING in Bedford until 8pm Thursdays
from 24th November - FREE parking at the Harpur
Centre from 5.30pm

PLUS shops open until 8pm every weekday from
Monday 19th to Friday 23rd December -
FREE parking at the Harpur Centre from 5.30pm

*Individual store opening times may vary
Please check your favourite stores for details*



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