



Living Lerwick Limited
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Living Lerwick Ltd Annual report 2019/20



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Introduction - Living Lerwick Ltd

Living Lerwick Ltd is a Business Improvement District management organisation, which operates to improve the physical, trading and community conditions in Lerwick town centre. Votes were cast in favour of a BID in 2012 and 2017, and Living Lerwick is now entering the final year of its second term.

All business properties in the BID area which are listed on the Local Assessors Valuation Role are automatically members of Living Lerwick, unless exemptions, as specified in the BID Proposal, apply.

There are over 40 BIDs across Scotland encouraging collaborative working practices over wider community areas in the public, private and third sectors. These all focus on supporting and improving conditions for businesses.

This report is a summary of the third year of the second BID term. Year eight overall for the Lerwick BID.

Living Lerwick Business Plan

The Living Lerwick Business Plan sets out the areas of work that the project management team work towards. Priority areas identified by member businesses at the renewal ballot in 2017 were a focus on:

- More Business Support
- More Marketing
- More Footfall
- More Attractive
- More informed decision making on Access

Each priority has a separate budget and areas of work through the year.

Management & Board of Directors

Living Lerwick projects are managed by Réalta Events Management.

In 2019/20 Living Lerwick had 9 registered Directors. (1 as proxy)

Dave Williams stepped down as a Director in June 2020, and Leann Laurenson of Begg Shoes was appointed in September 2020.

Current Directors are:

Steve Mathieson (VisitScotland – Chairman), David Coe (Ninian), Edna Irvine (Smith & Robertsons), Stewart Jamieson (Harry's), Ben Mullay (The Camera Centre), James Tonge (Aa Fired Up), Gemma Tonge (Aa Fired Up—proxy), Michael Laurenson (Cee & Jays) and Leann Laurenson (Begg Shoes) .

In addition, there were two SIC Elected Members who were invited to attend Board Meetings in an informal advisory capacity. These are Stephen Leask and John Fraser.

Income and Expenditure Account

Period 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020. Full accounts are available to members on the Living Lerwick website, or on request.

Income	£	£
Business Improvement Levy receivable	70,266	
Improvement Districts Scotland Grant	1,500	
SIC Community Development Fund	2,982	
SIC Core Funding	5,000	
Covid Resilience Project Funding	22,467	
Town Centre Capital Grant Fund	74,782	
Donations	621	
Turnover		177,618
Project Expenditure		
More Attractive	84,494	
More Business Support	5,179	
More Footfall	22,896	
More Informed Decisions on Access	31	
More Marketing	15,505	
Covid Resilience	21,579	
BID Management	12,363	
Admin Costs (inc. bad debts)	13,688	
Total costs		175,735
Surplus for year		1,883

Living Lerwick Ltd is a 'Not for Profit' company.

Income and Expenditure Summary

Income

All members within the BID boundary are legally required to pay the business improvement levy, based on the rateable value of their property. This income is the main source of funding to pay for the work of Living Lerwick.

Shetland Islands Council invoices and collects the levy on behalf of Living Lerwick, There were 142 members with a total levy amount due of £70,266.

Levy payments actually received for 2019/20 and prior arrears were significantly less than in previous years, (approximately £10,000) due to pressures of the pandemic. Bad debt and debtors provision increased to take account of this.

Conversely, income from external sources was significantly increased this year with funding from government backed schemes totalling around £90,000 for additional support and capital projects. This meant that Living Lerwick was able to continue to provide full support to businesses despite a shortfall in levy income.

A grant from Improvement Districts Scotland in December 2019 funded a community benefit project providing Christmas gifts worth £2654 from town centre businesses.

Expenditure

Project expenditure increased significantly this year. BID management and operational costs were reduced again.

The town centre art trail was the most significant expense under More Attractive, with additional Christmas lights also included here.

Business support was one of the most important activities this year, increasing by over £1,700.

Additional support costs are also included under the Covid Resilience heading.

More Football expenditure increased by over £14,600 with the purchase of football counters and a focus on re-opening activities.

More Marketing expenditure increased, with a focus on Buy Local messaging.

Covid Resilience activities were additional and externally funded activities to help member businesses during lockdown and recovery.

Bad debts continue to be a problem area and improved debt management is required. This has been difficult during a year when many businesses were closed for a time due to the pandemic.

Chairman's Foreword

As we move into the final year of the second term of Lerwick town centre BID, we have seen a steady consolidation of the good work that commenced in the first term plus many new initiatives which are detailed in this report. Much loved activities like the Christmas Parade and lights and the summer flower scheme continued, while campaigns such as Think Local First and Spend at Da Street have been hailed great successes.

Our online presence has really been ramped up over the past three years, with a Virtual High Street, a dedicated YouTube channel and Shetland Webcam sponsorship sitting alongside enhanced social media activity on Facebook and Instagram, all designed to heighten awareness of what Lerwick has to offer on a constant basis to an increasingly tech-sophisticated audience.

Of course no-one could have predicted what would happen in the first quarter of 2020, with Shetland suffering the health and financial effects of the pandemic along with the rest of the world. Although the effect of Covid has been devastating, the work of the Living Lerwick project team in disseminating clear information with regards to areas such as government rules and funding opportunities and dispensing practical help in terms of supplying Covid signage and sanitiser has been recognised as helping town centre businesses work their way through the minefield of new

regulations and schemes.

Living Lerwick helped the town adapt to the new set of circumstances and though things like street parties and parades were now a thing of the past there were still ways to help the community through re-opening and finding new ways to engage with customers.

Living Lerwick has not rested on its laurels and there are more projects happening still to enhance the town further and attract potential customers, including a new Art Trail which has been achieved with external council funding.

We continue to develop ideas for improving the place where we work and the relationship we have with our customers, all based on what you, our members, have told us.

Lerwick Town Centre is a community of businesses that needs to work together now more than ever in order to carry us all successfully into the post-Covid era. The Directors and project management team are looking forward to the challenge of keeping the momentum of improvement happening and would urge you to vote YES to a new term for your Lerwick BID in August 2021.

**Steve Mathieson—Chairman
September 2020
Tel: 01595 743141**

Mid Term Review

As 2020 was the mid point of the BID's second term, a review was undertaken, examining activities and progress towards the Business Plan objectives.

Review questionnaires were sent to members, Directors and Stakeholders, receiving a minimal response. This could not easily be followed up during Covid lockdown.

Using statistics, reports, and information compiled by the project team, the review identified only one area of concern which was the level of arrears in levy collections. This was discussed with the local authority who are responsible for this and actions agreed to address this.

Other areas where progress could have been better were in relation to activity delivery requiring member engagement. A plan of increased member visits and engagement had already been put into place to address this for the future.

A report was presented to Directors with a list of recommended actions and timescales which were approved and will be implemented.

The current BID term ends on 31st August 2021 and planning for the renewal Ballot will begin in September 2020.

The final report was approved by Scotland's Improvement Districts.

Covid 19 Pandemic

As the worldwide pandemic hit in early 2020, the operations of the BID had to be carefully considered as people were asked to stay at home and much of the normal activity would not be possible.

In April, the Project Manager produced a report on options for operational levels based on finances available and reported options to Directors. At this time, it was decided to move to a semi-dormant mode where only minimal administrative tasks and business support would be offered and all other activities suspended. This was in part due to cashflow levels affected by levy arrears.

With the announcement of funding available, a plan was developed for a Business Resilience Project which would enable higher levels of support and marketing to be provided to businesses. £10,000 was secured from Scotland's Towns Partnerships, with an additional contribution of £4000 from Shetland Islands Council.



More Business Support Activity - 2019/20

Providing support to member businesses was a priority for Living Lerwick in 2020, with rapidly and constantly changing trading environments for everyone.

The development of the Business Resilience Project allowed funding to be secured in order to provide a dedicated support service to our own members but also widen this out to over 40 other businesses in the rest of Shetland.

PPE Support

This also allowed the sourcing and distribution of PPE materials including branded social distancing floor markers and information posters. Additional funding from the Shetland Retailers Association and Lerwick Community Council saw 141 businesses throughout Shetland receive 440 floor stickers and 300 bottles of sanitiser. Disposable face covers and gloves were also provided to personal retail businesses in the BID area.



Business Communications

Monitoring and interpretation of Government updates and guidance meant that Members were given quick and clear links to funding support or changes in rules applicable to their own business.

During the year there were 862 direct engagements with individual members and 38 business support updates issued by email.

The project team were in daily contact with businesses to gather and publicise details of access and opening arrangements in the lead up to and during the lock down.

Since re-opening the project team have maintained an ongoing and visible presence on The Street and make regular visits to businesses.



Prior to lock down, a meeting was held with members who were given details from the Lerwick Port Authority on details of the cruise ships expected. Only one ship ever arrived, due to the pandemic.

More Attractive Activity - 2019/20

Town Centre Art Trail

Shetland Arts were engaged to deliver the LOCUS project, funded by the Town Centre Capital Grand funding from Scottish Government. The grant of £63,770 will provide four pieces of public art in the town centre. An international selection process identified 4 artists, all of whom visited Shetland and carried out workshops and visits with schools and suppliers prior.

Work unfortunately came to a halt during the pandemic, but the project is ongoing and will be completed in summer 2021.

Christmas Lights

An extra splash of colour was added to the Christmas lights in 2019 with a number of coloured globes accompanying the usual strings which held up well on the new wires installed the previous year. Extra lighting was added to Harrison Square and Campbell's Close.



Town Centre Maintenance

Following last year's clean up of the iconic red phone box, contact with BT resulted in the provision of official paint and the box was given a full facelift to the delight of many!



The benches at the North end of the street and all 6 large planters were also repaired and repainted.

Second most beautiful High Street

Commercial Street was named as the second most beautiful High Street in Scotland in November 2019. Coming a close second with 18% of the vote to Kirkwall's 21%.



Floral Additions

During the summer 65 hanging or wall baskets were installed along with 44 floor standing planters.

More Footfall Activity - 2019/20

Footfall was difficult to promote with events or activities for much of 2020 with clear instructions for people to stay at home and most businesses required to close.

Christmas Parade

The much anticipated Christmas parade did take place in 2019, and it was the biggest and best yet. Thousands came out to see Santa arrive by Lifeboat as he was joined by the Nativity Family and ponies dressed as reindeer. The Lerwick Brass Band and Jarl Squad, Peerie Foxes and Moar Family trikes were in attendance and much loved as always on a perfect day for the event.



During weekends in December, musicians played in Harrison Square and Connor the Goat was joined by Shetland ponies for a nativity scene stable with dress up opportunities and a shopping guide service.

Spend at da Street

The first spend at da Street campaign was launched on 29th June as retailers were permitted to re-open following lock-down. Food outlets and personal retail services followed shortly after and the loyalty campaign encouraged spending locally for a chance to win over £200 worth of vouchers. The scheme was well received by businesses and shoppers. 23 businesses took part with almost double that in the second round.

Discover Lerwick App Launched

The town centre app, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund was launched in November. The free app provides current and historical information about town centre buildings and points of interest. Download from PlayStore or App Store.



Footfall Counters Installed

Town Centre Capital Grant funding paid for 5 footfall counters to be installed along Commercial Street to monitor pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Statistical reports will be published in due course.

More Marketing Activity - 2019/20

A Buy Local campaign was developed with the tagline and branding of 'Think Local First'



This was launched and used in social media and print marketing in the lead up to Christmas 2019 and in all promotional material including window stickers displayed in shops and given to the public at events.

The Think Local First branding was used extensively in the re-opening after lockdown to encourage customers back into the town centre and was used throughout Shetland on floor stickers as social distancing markers and Covid Safety posters. It was latterly used alongside the national Scotland Loves Local campaign brand.

The logo now often replaces the Living Lerwick logo on adverts.

Food & Drink Trail Map

A new town centre food and drink map was developed to promote bars, cafes and restaurants and launched at the Taste of Shetland Food Fair in November. Pop up banners were also produced which will be used to promote the town centre at other events.

Town Centre Window Map

A map was installed in the window of Ellesmere Stores to highlight the extensive range and location of businesses in the area.



This was particularly helpful post-Covid to remind the public what was available and it will be a valuable asset for visitors in future. Funding was received from the Community Development Fund.

Virtual High Street

A Virtual High Street section was added to the website during lockdown with up to date Covid access info for businesses, including collection and delivery information. This extended to all areas of Shetland up to September, with funding from the national Business Resilience Fund.



Online Video Content

On re-opening after lockdown, a series of short videos were made with retailers to highlight what they love about Commercial Street. The 'Monday Meet' films tied in with UK Government promotion of the Buy Local message and received national press coverage.

A Living Lerwick YouTube channel was also launched which will feature ongoing video productions.

Webcam Sponsorship

Sponsorship of the town centre webcam allows for promotion of member businesses to a worldwide audience of thousands every day.



Other Marketing & Communication

The Project manager was in regular communication with local media during 2020 to keep the public informed of access and safety arrangements in the town centre. Communicating with and reporting to other local and national agencies, businesses and providers was a key task during the year.

Website and Social Media

Our online presence has been very important this year to promote information about opening times and access to businesses during lockdown and re-opening.

The website saw individual users increase by 4591 on the previous year to 15,673 unique users. This resulted in 20,959 site visits, up 6463 from the previous year.

The most visited page was the Virtual High Street with 5433 views, followed by the Home page, Business Directory and Town Centre page.

The Facebook page gained an additional 574 followers to 3924, and Instagram following is up by 150 to 1202.

Post reaches and engagement were both down as there were fewer social media posts to share from businesses with prolonged closures and fewer events and activities.



More Informed Decision Making on Access Activity - 2019/20

There is nothing to report on access activity in 2019/20 as the town centre was closed for a time, and no proposed closures, changes or updates were made.