



Living Lerwick Ltd
info@livinglerwick.co.uk
www.livinglerwick.co.uk
T:07379 765 020



Living Lerwick Ltd
Annual report 2020/21



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Introduction- Living Lerwick Ltd

Living Lerwick Ltd manages the Lerwick Business Improvement District which operates to improve the physical, trading and community conditions in Lerwick town centre. Votes were cast in favour of a BID in 2012, 2017 and August 2021.

All business properties in the BID area which are listed on the Local Assessor's 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 fourth and final year of the second BID term. Year nine 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

Management & Board of Directors

Living Lerwick projects are managed on behalf of the Board by Emma Miller and Joanne Williams of Réalta Events Management.

In 2020/21 Living Lerwick had 9 registered Directors. (1 as proxy)

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 Laurensen (Cee & Jays) and Leann Laurensen (Begg Shoes) .

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

Accounts

Period 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021.
Full accounts are available to members on the Living Lerwick website or on request.

Income

Business Improvement District Levy receivable	£69,799
Lerwick Community Council Grants received	£1,954
SIC Core funding	£5,000
Miscellaneous income	£3,625
Covid Resilience funding	£14,046
Scotland Loves Local funding	£3,550
Town Centre Capital Grant funding	£17,540
TOTAL INCOME	£115,514

Project Expenditure

More Attractive	£40,589
More Business Support	£4,613
More Footfall	£23,475
More Marketing	£24,785
Covid Resilience (2020 project)	£888
BID Management	£15,079
BID Renewal	£8,774
Administrative Expenses (inc bad debts)	£11,903
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£130,106
Deficit for the year	£(14,529)

Living Lerwick is a 'not for profit' company.

Finances

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. In 2020/21 there were 154 eligible BID properties at 31st August with a billable levy of £73,900.

Levy payments actually received for 2020/21 were £69,799 - down marginally on the previous year, and including almost £17,000 of arrears from prior years. This shortfall has further increased outstanding debts and further action will be required to address this.

£42,090 of additional income was sourced through various local grants and Government funded Capital works and Covid resilience schemes which allowed a full programme of activities and support to continue despite a shortfall in levy income.

Expenditure

Overall project expenditure decreased this year mainly due to the reduction in external funding received for specific projects. Spending on 'More attractive' projects was less than half following the spent on the art trail sculptures in the previous year through the Town Centre Capital Grant Scheme. Additional murals and new winter lighting was purchase through this scheme in 2021.

There was a slight decreased in Business Support costs, as Covid Resilience funding for the intensive support of the year before was not received. Instead, the Bid Resilience funding was targeted at increasing footfall and marketing, so we see increases in project expenditure in both those areas.

The Renewal Ballot, additional BID management costs and an increase in depreciation costs did result in a large increase on Administrative expenses which was expected and partly accounted for in cashflow during previous years as no external funding is received to cover renewal costs.

The accounts show a deficit due to the increased costs for the year and an ongoing situation with levy arrears not being collected. The BID does however continue to be viable with a well-managed cash flow to deliver projects and support to businesses.

Chairman's Foreword

The final year in the second term of our town centre's Business Improvement District continued to be a challenging one for businesses, and for our team. The ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic coupled with the added pressures of staff shortages and Brexit has had a significant impact on all sectors. We continued to offer support to businesses and encourage footfall to the town centre in a responsible way, and received very positive feedback on our efforts.

The renewal ballot gave us a chance to engage more closely with members, albeit with social distancing precautions. The consultation on member priorities and the development of the new five-year business plan ensured all members were able to express their views and aspirations for the town centre. Having the chance to follow up and visit members to discuss this was extremely helpful to me and the other directors. Member support and engagement has been of the highest importance to directors and to the project team in recent years as we all struggled with ever changing rules.

Going forward that engagement continues to be a prime concern and, as always, I would urge you to keep in touch with the team and perhaps even consider becoming a director yourself to have your say in what we do.

The physical additions to the town centre in the 2020/21 year provided visible evidence of the work put in to improve the area. Sculptures, murals, additional public seating areas and a new Christmas tree supplier provided amenities and colourful additions to Da Street which engaged the public and kept awareness high.

We were one of the few places in Shetland to offer a Santa's grotto for bairns in 2020, and the permanent introduction of the town centre loyalty card scheme reinforced our message of thanks to customers for their support.

As we begin a new five-year term of the Lerwick town centre Business Improvement District, we take heart from the significantly increased majority of Yes votes received and promise to do all we can to support our member businesses and our town centre.

Steve Mathieson
Chairman
March 2022
Tel:01595 743141

Renewal Ballot 2021

In 2021, Living Lerwick was required to ballot members to see if there was a desire to continue with a third term of the town centre BID.

To do this, a new BID proposal and Business Plan was developed for submission to the Scottish Government, Shetland Islands Council and BID members. To gather the information to inform the content of these documents, a member survey was carried out in February and March 2021.

Of the surveys issued (to 139 businesses) 42% were returned. Due to the Covid restrictions in place, the surveys were initially emailed, however this was supported by the Directors and project team following up directly with businesses to encourage them to make their views known.

The overall aim of the consultation was to assess opinions on what has already been done; identify ways to enhance and improve the BID area; and determine what additional projects and services the businesses would like delivered to give more incentive to visit and invest in the town centre.

Businesses received email updates, telephone calls and one-to-one visits where appropriate throughout the development process for the third term of the BID, to keep them informed of progress. Due to Covid restrictions, an online event was held to launch the renewal ballot

on 23/02/21 and all businesses were invited to attend to find out more about the timeline, process and to ask questions.

Following feedback received during the consultation process, the Board organised a meeting where the 'Next Steps' document outlined what would happen next.

All businesses were invited to this meeting on 01/04/21 and copies of the document were emailed or posted to all members in advance.

The BID Proposal and associated documents were submitted formally to the Scottish Government and Shetland Islands Council on 06/05/21 and at the Development Committee Meeting on 01/06/21 Councillors voted not to veto the proposals, therefore approving the BID term, subject to ballot results.

Business Plans were sent to all members on 11/06/21 and ballot papers were issued 42 days in advance of the final ballot date of 19/08/21 by Shetland Islands Council. 62.5% of businesses returned a ballot paper, which was a return rate of 70.37% in terms of the rateable value of BID businesses.

From the 90 votes, 67 were in favour and 23 against. This gave a majority decision of 74.4% in favour of a third term of a Lerwick town centre BID. The support for the BID shown by businesses is a very positive start to the third term.



More Footfall Continued

Vikings

With no Up Helly Aa celebrations in January 2021, we looked for other ways of continuing the tradition of a late January town centre Viking invasion. Viking characters and galleys were created and placed around the town centre, with an invitation for the public to have a chat with them. At a time when Shetland was in level 3 Covid restrictions and footfall was very low, this was a welcome addition along with the accompanying window trail which included 17 past year Jarl's Squad suits loaned by the Up Helly Aa Committee.



Other Trails and Summer Activities

The Easter trail attracted 76 participants this year, with all those taking part being rewarded with chocolate prizes from Island Larder. As we moved the summer months, despite being in Level 0 for restrictions, we still kept to socially distanced activities to keep everyone safe.

The traditional boat display at Fort Charlotte linked in with a popular Shetland boat themed trail through the town centre to celebrate VisitScotland's delayed Year of Coasts and Waters, and an additional digital trail focused on sea creatures.

Colouring competitions were also offered and the activities were enjoyed by locals and visitors, now able to return on holiday.



More Attractive

Winter Attraction

In 2020 we sourced a new UK based Christmas tree supplier. The transport from Aberdeen was again supported by Serco NorthLink and Northwards, and the decision to switch was fully endorsed by the overwhelming positive public response. Extra coloured globes were added to the normal light strings and the lighting scheme was extended out to Cee & Jay's and Alexandra Building.



The Christmas Window Competition saw some fantastic entries, giving the area an extra Christmas buzz. Ninian took the prize, based on a public vote for the third year running.

Summer Appeal

New seating and planters were installed in Harrison Square by ZetTrans using funding from SusTrans. The plans were discussed with Living Lerwick and we sought feedback from members before installation.

The plans were well received and the seating was very well used after its installation in May.

This has been installed for a trial period of 18 months to see how it works.

In addition to the new planters at Harrison Square, we also received funding from Viking Energy Windfarm to purchase new planters for outside the Stewart Building at the BID boundary. The remaining flower baskets and pots were installed in June with over 100 flower displays throughout the town centre.



Public Art Trail

The LOCUS Public Art Trail was delivered in partnership with Shetland Arts, and funded by SIC with Scottish Government Town Centre Capital Grant funds. This project was delayed for a year due to Covid but saw the launch of 4 sculptures and a trail map in early July. The project was followed up with an additional 2 murals painted in August. The LOCUS concept focusses on three key themes: Where we are / Where we're going / Where we've come from. Sculptures installed were by: Civic Soup, Joseph Ingleby, Kenny Hunter, David Lemm and murals by Cobalt Collective and Gavin Renshaw.



The STP 'Scotland Loves Local' branding was used alongside our own Think Local First message to continue pushing the importance of shopping local. £3550 of funding was received from a Scotland Loves Local grant to provide a concentrated marketing campaign in the lead up to Christmas. This was used alongside the grant funding from the BID Resilience fund.

Love Local Hub

The Love Local Hub set up during the October holidays was a focal point to push the importance of the buy local message, with merchandise from a number of local businesses on display alongside promotional materials.



Video Production

With funding from the BID Resilience fund, three professional short films were produced.

The first was a story explaining the journey of £20 spent in local shops and how the benefit is passed on in many ways – simply by shopping local. This was launched through YouTube and had 5,500 views.

The second was an online launch for the Christmas light switch on since a parade was not possible. The story told how Olaf the Snowman and Maunsie worked together with local children to bring the cheer back and magically switch on the Christmas lights. This was extremely popular with 26,000 views on Facebook and 570 likes.

The third film highlighted the range of goods and services available in Lerwick town centre in a parody presentation of the area as a magical place where anything can happen! The range and diversity of goods and services is incredible, and the film showed this to the 10,700 viewers between Facebook and YouTube.

The project team carried out video production training in July 2021 in order to improve the quality and quantity of short promotional video production to accompany business blogs on the website and social media.



Christmas Activities

With social distancing still very much at the heart of event planning, the usual Christmas parade was not possible.

However, we were able to bring Christmas joy to the town centre with a dedicated Winter Wonderland Grotto in the pop up shop. This allowed 194 bairns exclusive access to the North Pole inspired space where they were given gifts from mascot Maunsie and his friend, Olaf the Snowman. The ladies from the Lerwick Lifeboat Guild were on hand as always for the Grotto to lend a hand and were given a donation of £1620 for the charity.



Other Christmas activities included the Elf trail, encouraging youngsters to submit stories and pictures based on words found in windows; a historic look back at Commercial Street in the Yesteryear trail; and a delve into the Shetland film archive with a series of tv screens in shop windows showing archive footage from years gone by. This was accompanied by a trail sheet to guide visitors around the screens and was organised in partnership with the Shetland Film Archive.

Hello Christmas Tree

A new concept for Lerwick town centre was provided by Hello Lamp Post. The company supply a text based chat system where members of the public can strike up a conversation with street furniture – Lerwick town centre offered the chance to chat with the Christmas tree, among other things. This had a great response with 500 people interacting a total of 1925 times over the 6 week period. The final 3 weeks were during a period of heightened social restrictions. The concept was repeated in January with Vikings to chat to, and again in summer with a Lamp Post and Bench offering to chat with the public.

More Footfall Activity

During the latter half of 2020, the town was still subject to Covid restrictions and activities to promote footfall had to take social distancing and additional hygiene practices into account.

With uncertainty over case numbers and changes in restriction levels, everything was planned with this in mind.

October Holidays

In October, and with funding from the second round of the BID Resilience fund administered by STP, a pop up 'Love Local' hub was created. This showcased products from many town centre businesses and provided a covid compliant space for customers to pick up competition entry forms, find information and meet Maunsie – the life size town centre mascot based on the cartoon creation of local artist, Smirk.

There were 578 visits to the hub over the two week holiday period, where 276 Super Star Trail bags were handed out for bairns to collect treats from businesses, and 37 votes for neepie lanterns where Peerie Foxes and LHD Custom Clothing were voted winners with the best carved neeps.



The local loyalty campaign continued, after re-launching at the Love Local Hub in October. Over 40 businesses took part in the second round, all donating a £25 value prize which saw 6 local shoppers rewarded with prizes worth at least £175 in December. The scheme continued in the new year, with monthly draws being made in 2021 for a lucky shopper to win £50. Additional BID Resilience funding was used to create and distribute additional signage to promote the loyalty scheme at till points



Other Marketing

Using our own funds and additional income from STP and SIC, an extensive Christmas marketing campaign was delivered through local online, print and radio media. A bespoke radio advert was recorded in Mareel and broadcast for a month in the lead up to Christmas. Newspaper inserts were included in the Shetland Times for more visibility of Christmas and January activities.

Paid promotion of the Spend at da Street loyalty scheme was carried out throughout the year, as was marketing of other events and activities taking place. The town centre webcam sponsorship also continued, advertising town centre businesses and the Facebook feed to a significant worldwide audience.

Website and social media

Our social media following increased during the year. Instagram followers were up by 287 to 1,489, Facebook follows increased by 596 from 3924 to 4520..

The website saw individual users increase by 3,888 on the previous year to 19,561 unique users. This resulted in 35,348 site visits, up 14,389.

The most visited page was the Virtual Highstreet with 5742, followed by the Business Directory, Events page and Vacant Properties page.

More Informed Decision Making on Access

There were no particular issues to resolve or follow up under this heading.

With the town centre closed or faced with significantly reduced traffic for much of the year, no access issues were raised.

The objective heading has been updated for the next Business Plan.

More Business Support

2021 continued to be a difficult year for many businesses with ongoing restrictions in place due to Covid. Brexit also presented challenges with the added difficulties in importing goods and having a direct impact on travelling workers who often supported the hospitality industry – which was already among the hardest hit by Covid.

PPE Distribution

We continued safety supplies support with funding from the second round of BID Resilience funds providing 26 hospitality and personal retail (health and beauty) businesses with 96 bottles of hand sanitiser and 30 boxes of disposable face-coverings.



More Business Support Continued

Business Communications

2020/21 was a year of significant engagement with businesses – both for support during Covid and for consultation on the renewal of the BID.

There were over 260 group or individual contacts with businesses during the renewal consultation and ballot process. This included phone calls, visits, emails and online messaging.

There were 39 Member Update emails sent to all members with important information regarding Covid updates, training, funding, planned activities or other relevant issues. Another 26 group emails were sent to specific business groups on individual matters relevant directly to their sector.

There were just over 1000 contacts with individual members on various matters during the year.

The project management team and Directors continue to encourage members to get in touch for support and assistance or to share information for wider promotion.

Cruise Ships

Cruise ships is an area which comes under Business Support in the Business Plan as we provide information regularly regarding ship arrivals, passengers numbers and tour times. This has been particularly challenging this year with Covid restrictions stopping cruise travel, then continuing to restrict passengers freedoms to explore independently. Later in the season individual ships made decisions on not permitting individual disembarkation which has meant that out of the 15 visits by 8 ships, only 2 of these saw passengers able to freely access town centre businesses. We hope for a return to a normal cruise season next year.

