

Living Lerwick Ltd Annual report 2021/22



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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 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 first year of the third BID term. Year ten overall for the Lerwick BID.

Living Lerwick project work is managed on behalf of the Board by Emma Miller and Joanne Williams of Réalta Events Management, which is also a member business.

In 2021/22 Living Lerwick had 9 registered Directors (1 as proxy).

Current Directors for the year were:

- Steve Mathieson (VisitScotland – Chairman)
- David Coe (Ninian),
- Edna Irvine (Smith & Robertsons)
- Stewart Jamieson (Harry's)
- Ben Mulla (The Camera Centre)
- James Tonge (Aa Fired Up)
- Gemma Tonge (Aa Fired Up—proxy)
- Michael Laurensen (Cee & Jays)
- 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 Councilors Stephen Leask and John Fraser who both returned to their roles following a council election in May 2022.

Period 1st September 2021 to 31st August 2022. Full accounts are available to Living Lerwick members on request and filing accounts are available on the Living Lerwick website.

Income	2021/22	2020/21
Business Improvemnet District Levy receivable	£72,631	£69,799
Lerwick Community Council grants received	£2,000	£1,954
SIC core funding	£5,000	£5,000
Miscellaneous income	£1,442	£3,625
Covid Resilience grant income	£11,790	£14,046
Scotland Loves Local Funding	£9,404	£3,550
Town Centre Capital Grant funding	-	£17,540
Total Income	£102,267	£115,514
Expenditure	2021/22	2020/21
More Attractive project	£22,575	£40,589
More Business Support project	£2,413	£4,613
More Footfall project	£27,060	£23,475
More Marketing project	£13,790	£24,785
Covid Resilience	-	£888
Management and Administrative fees	£17,989	£35,756
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£83,827	£130,106
SURPLUS /DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR	£18,440	£-14,529

Living Lerwick is a 'not for profit' company and all surplus funds will be invested in project expenditure going forward.

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 2021 were a focus on:

- More Footfall to the town centre
- More Marketing of town centre businesses and activities
- Increasing access options for the town centre
- Activities to make the town centre more attractive
- Providing business support to town centre businesses

Income

All members within the BID area are legally required to pay the business improvement district levy, based on the non-domestic rate value of their property. This income is the main source of funding to pay for the work done by Living Lerwick and is billed and collected by Shetland Islands Council.

In 2021/22 there were 156 member properties with a billable levy total of £74,500.

Levy payments increased more than budgeted this year, with the inclusion of over £19,000 of debt from prior years paid. The level of current debt paid was much improved from the previous year, resulting in an overall increase in income.

Over £20,000 was received through government grants for Covid recovery projects, including contributions from Shetland Islands Council, who also support the BID with an annual £5,000 grant for administration expenses.

Some of the project work was carried out in summer 2021 with funds only accounted for after year end, therefore appearing in the 2021/22 accounts.

Expenditure

Savings were made this year on management charges due to a change in working practices by the BID project manager. The absence of a renewal ballot also meant that renewal, administration and postage charges were all either removed or significantly reduced.

Expenditure on projects developed for Covid Resilience and Scotland Loves Local funding were accounted for under the project headings they relate to, such as More Footfall or More Marketing. With a shift away from strict regulations to manage Covid, activities can be more flexible once again.

With a significant surplus at the year end, the project team are able to allocate additional funding to procure equipment and services for additional activity when the Tall Ships Races return to Lerwick town centre in July 2023. Directors approved the additional expenditure with responsible financial margins.



The first year of the new five-year term of our town centre's Business Improvement District has been encouraging in that we have had a full year of trading for the first time since 2019/20 and hopefully the worst effects of the pandemic are well and truly behind us. Having said that, trading conditions remain particularly challenging with the increased costs of materials and energy, high inflation figures and continuing recruitment issues.

The Living Lerwick project team received high praise during the pandemic for the support and advice they shared with members and I'm very pleased to say that they have maintained that high level of engagement throughout the last year. With a return towards normality, we have been able to get back to business as usual in some respects with a number of events and activities around the town designed to appeal to potential shoppers and their families, such as the easter chick, trow, cat, and elf trails which certainly kept the bairns amused.

After the success of the Peerie Hairst Spree in October 2021, we hosted the Peerie Jubilee Spree for the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebration, which drew large crowds who gathered all through the day and evening to enjoy the festivities of the weekend.

We also ran a Jubilee School art competition and the Jubilee Beacon Trail, which was great family fun and located at seven shops around the town centre.

What we didn't realise is that sadly this would be the final opportunity for a royal celebration during the Queens lifetime.

Two promotional films were produced featuring the town centre during the course of the year and Christmas saw a massive turn-out for the annual parade. The lights and the Christmas tree at Market Cross were installed as usual to bring some cheer to the dark winter nights and the "Spend at Da Street" card continues to be popular with shoppers.

Lerwick town centre continues to dynamically evolve as time goes by and business and shopping habits change. It is inevitable that in an environment of mainly small, independent retailers, some businesses will close because of normal factors such as retirement while others will open and take the place of the old. Interest in opening new businesses in Lerwick is very healthy with regular enquiries, though we know that with the general economic situation in the country adversely High Streets we can't afford to be complacent. We will continue to support our members to the best of our ability and strive to maintain a thriving economic hub for the Shetland community.

Steve Mathieson
Chair
August 2022
Tel:01595 743141

Social Media

Social Media continues to be a well used medium to engage with potential customers for town centre businesses.

The Living Lerwick Facebook page attracted an additional 610 follows, up to 5357 and the Instagram account increased in popularity too, with 1968 followers. The Facebook page reached an audience of 174,061 people, with 21,099 page visits through the year.

Website

The website was regularly updated during the year with news, events and business information. Unique users were up slightly on the year before at 18,127 though individual visits reduced by around 400 to 22,531.

The most popular pages were:

- 1.Home page (5954)
- 2.Events (2327)
- 3.Business Directory (2021)
- 4.Jobs (1601)
- 5.Vacant Properties (1422)

Promotional Films

Two promotional videos were produced, assisted by funding from the Scotland Loves Local project.

This included the Trading town film, released in March 2022 which gave an insight into the early development of Lerwick town centre, which was a trading post for Dutch fishermen from the very beginnings of the area. This film included historical images from the Shetland Museum photo archive and had a reach of over 3,600.

The Christmas film in 2021 was based on the 12 Days of Christmas carol and highlighted the range of great gift ideas that are available locally. This reached over 17,000 people.

The films were professionally produced by BID member business, Keiba Film, and included many of the businesses in the area in the content.

All films produced can be viewed on the Living Lerwick website or YouTube channel.



Summer Scheme

The town centre summer scheme always brightens the area up and despite a significant increase in costs, the summer bunting was procured and installed in spring. In addition, 116 planters, baskets and tubs were prepared and distributed through the town centre area with beautiful flowers provided by Frakkafeld Garden Plants.

Town Centre Window Graphics

The large town centre map which was previously installed at D & G Leslie was updated with business information where properties had changed use. This continues to be a useful and attractive guide to the town centre for locals and visitors.

A new window graphic was installed at the long term vacant property at the Market Cross, replacing unsightly temporary window coverings. This promotes the town centre business directory and improves the visual appearance of the heart of the town centre.

Christmas Decorations

The new supplier for the Christmas tree provided an impressive centrepiece for the Market Cross once again, which was delivered and installed with valued support from Northwards Ltd, Serco NorthLink and Shetland Islands Council. Christmas lights were installed throughout the town centre, and with the removal of the coloured aspects and specific Christmas themed items, remained in place until the end of February as 'winter lights' to brighten up the dark nights and bring a bit of cheer to the area.



Other Jubilee Events

In addition to the Peerie Jubilee Spree, other activities to celebrate the platinum jubilee included an art competition which received 120 entries, the winning selection being displayed in a town centre window, and a digital trail where visitors could follow the story of the royal household cartoon characters.

Geocache

The town centre Geocache trail increased in popularity again this year, with 100 finds. This is more than double that of 2021 as the islands were still recovering from Covid.

Spend at da Street

The popular customer loyalty scheme continued this year and was extended thanks to funding from the Scotland Loves Local Fund and Shetland Islands Council. From January to December 2022, 4 x £50 prize vouchers were issued every month and the Christmas 2021 bumper draw was doubled, with 12 winners receiving prize packages worth £175 each. Between September 2021 and August 2022, 7894 completed cards were handed in and 46 luck local shoppers won prizes. An additional 20,000 loyalty cards were printed ensuring the scheme will continue.

Christmas Parade

It's not time for Christmas until Santa Claus arrives on the Lerwick Lifeboat to greet the crowds and switch on the lights – and we were pleased to be able to welcome Santa to the town centre as normal, despite Covid numbers being high. A safety assessment was made and the event went ahead to the delight of the gathered crowds. Unfortunately the indoor Grotto event was cancelled, amid concerns over Covid numbers.

Footfall Counters

In January 2020 footfall cameras were installed with funding from the Scottish Government Town Centre Capital Grant Fund, administered by Shetland Islands Council. The footfall figures were not previously reported as it was difficult to ensure statistics could be verified when the town centre was shut down for much of 2020.

Numbers have been monitored and an allowance made for some level of discrepancy at busy times. Figures show a total of 640,581 pedestrians passing the Bank of Scotland area of Commercial Street between 9am and 5pm from 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021. The same period and location in 2021/22 recorded 655,315 visitors to the area. This is an average of just over 1,750 and 1,790 respectively each day. This is an average of just over 1,750 and 1,790 respectively each day

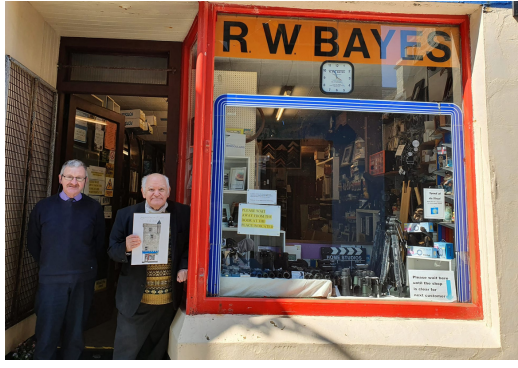
Advertising

Additional advertising was placed during the year through funding from the Scotland Loves Local project. This included a permanent online presence on local media websites, print advertising in the Shetland Times and extended radio advertising on member business, SIBC.

In addition to promoting events and activities, a higher priority was placed on the Buy Local message using the 'Think Local First' branding and highlighting the local loyalty 'Spend at da Street' scheme.

Blog Posts

We continued to offer promotional blog posts to our members. There is a low take up on this, but five were published and the team will continue to work with member businesses to create and post new blog posts to promote goods and services available in the town centre.



An additional focus on parking in the town centre was published on social media channels to address the misconception that there is limited parking in Lerwick town centre. There are 744 parking spaces in the immediate area, with 646 of them free to use.

There has been limited progress on the other actions included in the business plan under this heading. With no statutory powers to enforce parking restrictions or alter access arrangements, Living Lerwick are limited in what we are able to do as an agency.

More Business Support

General Support

Providing support to town centre businesses continues to be a significant priority for the Living Lerwick team. During the year there were over 600 individual contacts with members, in addition to 13 full member update emails issued and 8 sector specific bulletins. This number has decreased this year as the prior year saw a significant amount of information on funding, Covid Guidelines and changes to rules being communicated on a regular basis. The flow of information on these matters has decreased, though the team did still assist a number of members with funding claims and advice during the year.

More Business Support Continued

The Living Lerwick team liaised with members on a wide range of issues, following up with the local authority or other agencies for assistance where required.

This included consultation with many stakeholders on anti-social behaviour issues reported at Harrison Square.



Cruise Ships

As Living Lerwick provide regular updates to member businesses on the number of cruise ships and passenger details, this item is listed under business Support in the business plan.

Lerwick Port Authority reported 94 Cruise ship visits for the year, bringing 58,450 people to Lerwick – most of whom visited the town centre on disembarking ships or using the shuttle bus from Mairs Quay or Holmsgarth.

Living Lerwick liaised with members and provided weekly updates direct to cruise tour operators on businesses open on Sunday visits to share with passengers. The team also worked with cruise expedition companies to try and navigate a compromise to allow passengers to visit shops during the bubble restriction phase of Covid.



Staff and Property

With ongoing staff shortages, a section was added to the public website for town centre job listings. Many businesses provided details of vacant positions which were added to the site and also shared through social media.

A page was also maintained on the website for vacant properties.

Living Lerwick receive regular enquiries from member of the public looking for office or retail space available within the town centre so keeping this information publicly available is a good way to reduce empty properties which are available for rental.

Some vacant properties are not made available for rental by the owners, so are not included on this page.

More Footfall Activity

Trails

Living Lerwick delivered 5 town centre trails with local businesses – several involving characters created by businesses themselves, which were very well received by participants. 449 people took part, with the more popular trails being the Halloween trick or treat bags and the Easter Chicks.



Peerie Sprees

In October 2021 the first Peerie Spree was held with a great turnout despite the cold October day. Funding was provided from the Scotland Loves Local Fund, Shetland Islands Council and Lerwick Community Council for a wider Buy Local campaign which included the purchase of a marquee for community events in the town centre.



The Peerie Hairst (autumn) spree took place on the middle weekend of October with live music from a diverse selection of local bands, face-painting, craft activities and a bar provided by The Lounge.



Over 550 people attended the event throughout the weekend with many businesses reporting brisk trade and high footfall along the length of the street.

The event was very well received and so was repeated in June with the Peerie Jubilee Spree marking the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen. From 11am to 9pm hundreds of people gathered throughout the south end of Commercial street to enjoy carnival games, facepainting, live music and the bar provided by the Thule.