

## Aberystwyth Steering Group Meeting

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014, 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

The Oracle, Adare Street

### Attendees

Joseph Evans, Gwesty Marine Hotel  
Cynthia Binks, Clares Wools  
Becky Bolderson, Caffi Morgan  
Anwen Davies, Boots  
John Davies, T. J. Davies

Cyril Baker, The Jewellery House  
Mark Joseph, The Jewellery House  
Peter Austin, Ceredigion County Council  
Peter Williams, The means  
Laura Smith, The means

### Apologies

Rob Thomas, Rickety Ramshackle  
Chris Mackenzie Grieve, MGs  
Berith Laocherty, Broc Mor

Iestyn Evans & Sara Beechey, Y Llew Du  
Richard Griffiths, Gwesty'r Richmond Hotel

Item	Detail	Action
1.0	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b></p> <p>PW opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees</p> <p>PA introduced the commission given to the means by Ceredigion County Council to explore the development of a BID in Aberystwyth. PA discussed the initial information event at the Richmond hotel in November 2013, and the informal vote by businesses that led to a decision to progress the study through the feasibility stage.</p> <p>PW explained that the BID process was a complicated one, with each project unique to the town and its setting. Consultation with businesses is essential to assessing the viability of a potential BID. PW highlighted the role of the steering group in providing a strong local governance and ownership of the project.</p> <p>PW discussed the perceived 'death of the high street', and the degree to which this is misinterpreted; evidence indicates that town centre economies are growing. PW also offered an overview of the BID concept.</p>	
2.0	<p><b>Apologies for Absences</b></p> <p>Apologies were given as above</p>	
3.0	<p><b>Progress update – results from the surveys so far</b></p> <p>LS provided updates on surveys conducted so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>61 businesses interviewed so far</li></ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45% of businesses indicated that business performance had remained the same over the last 12 months, 34% indicated that business was improving, and 21% of businesses noted a decline</li> <li>• 73% of businesses indicated that they expected their business activities to remain consistent over the coming year, 18% had plans for expansion, whilst 9% had plans to leave the centre - the latter was mainly related to high rents and business rates</li> <li>• The core issues in the town centre were identified as parking, marketing and promotions, vacant premises and the accessibility to the town by public transport.</li> <li>• The most favoured improvements for the town were parking, increased promotional activity, improved interactions with the council and an increased availability of public toilets.</li> <li>• Of those surveyed 79% of businesses were in favour of the BID concept in principle, 15% were undecided and 6% were against the idea.</li> </ul> <p>The means will continue consulting with businesses over the next week in order to reach an effective sample for the feasibility study. The report will be submitted to Welsh Government on 31<sup>st</sup> July, and further funding should be released on review of this document.</p> <p>The means also spoke with 150 businesses informally prior to these consultations in order to build awareness of the BID concept.</p> <p>JD noted that all businesses should be given an opportunity to hear and review the information provided to the steering group; PW agreed, however highlighted that the resources were not available to meet with every business at this stage, this activity would increase if the process reaches the campaign stage.</p> <p>JE indicated that contact should be made with the Aberystwyth business club, who he suggested would be happy to distribute information and promote the BID. PW agreed to do so.</p>	<p>The means to make contact with the business club regarding the BID</p>
<p><b>5.0</b></p>	<p><b>Pilot Projects – getting things done</b></p> <p><i>Future BID projects</i></p> <p>A discussion followed regarding the possible programme of improvements if a BID was formed in Aberystwyth, in which the following points were made:</p>	

**CCTV**

- PW introduced the axing of the CCTV coverage in the area as a possible service that the BID might look to provide or support;
- MJ expressed concern that this was representative of the council passing their responsibility of services onto the BID;
- PW agreed that these were questions that needed to be discussed

**BID Levy**

- PW informed the group that the decisions regarding the levy rate were up to the steering group to decide;
- The relation of the levy to the RV of a property is to ensure businesses pay a fair contribution;
- All BIDs utilise the Local Authority as the collection agency, however the money is handed on to the BID company on collection;
- Councils are often tasked to undertake enforcement processes but this is up to the BID;
- Nationally the BID levy has an average collection rate of 98% which is higher than that for business rates.
- JD expressed concerns about placing the responsibility for such large sums of money into others hands; BB highlighted the need for effective governance in order to ensure success;
- PW indicated that it was important to focus on building support and creating a strong business plan at this stage;
- JE raised the point that the business rates should cover these kind of improvements; PA noted that business rates were only collected by the local authority before being passed to central government;
- JE and MJ suggested that the council should assist the businesses in appealing the rates;
- PW informed the group that the BID, if formed, could explore procuring rates reviews for businesses in the town at a reduced cost, as part of a collective services offering;

**Interactions between businesses and the council**

- JE noted that the relationship between the council and the business club was strained; businesses were frustrated that their voices weren't being heard; discussed recent development decisions made by the council and highlighted that they were not in the town's best interests, e.g. the planned development of a Premier Inn on the

	<p>Commodore Cinema car park site instead of a multi-storey car park for public use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MJ raised the point that the BID would be able to hold the council accountable; PW agreed with this, suggesting a summit between the council and the BID as a potential future activity;</li> <li>• PA suggested that the group nominate a business representative to attend the Welsh Government and the means BID network meetings</li> </ul> <p><b>Marketing and promotions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PW indicated that a marketing drive to promote events in the town could be an effective pilot project for the BID;</li> <li>• JE noted that, as a seaside town, Aberystwyth should promote its assets more effectively; MJ agreed and noted that the town has become too heavily reliant on the university;</li> <li>• B&amp;C.B raised the issue of the current lease arrangements for food vendors on the prom; PA informed the group that this lease was due to terminate in 2016; PW recommended the group begin to plan for then, reminding them that – should it be successful – the BID would not go live until October 2015</li> <li>• AD suggested that businesses should club together to create a website offering directory services of what is available in Aberystwyth town; CB noted that this had been previously attempted and that the initiative had cost £15,000 p/y to run;</li> <li>• CB stressed the opportunity for BID not to be ‘another talking shop’</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6.0</b></p>	<p><b>News from the Welsh Government / Ceredigion Council</b></p> <p>PA informed the group that the council were ring-fencing the Section 106 money from the Mill Street development to contribute to the BID; this amounts to £250,000 over a 5 year period.</p> <p>PA also noted that some of this money could be made available in advance of the BID being formed in order to support BID activities such as pilot projects.</p> <p>In response to discussions regarding the sometimes strained relationship between the council and town centre businesses, PA highlighted the role that the BID could play in making this relationship more effective and coherent.</p>	
<p><b>7.0</b></p>	<p><b>A.O.B</b></p> <p>In closing, PW indicated to the group the important role they can each individually play in building support for the BID.</p>	

	<p>Group agreed to explore developing a marketing campaign as a pilot project to illustrate the potential impact of the BID. PA agreed to review proposal and consider funding once idea finalised.</p> <p>LS agreed to distribute updates from the feasibility study once completed.</p>	<p>LS to explore possible options and group to discuss at next meeting.</p> <p>LS to design and distribute the results from the feasibility report</p>
<b>8.0</b>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b> Group agreed to meet every 4-6 weeks, date of next meeting to be agreed.</p>	