

January 2018

The future of Harrogate: Could a BID be the answer?

The future of Harrogate was under the spotlight at our January meeting, when the Harrogate BID Board and consultant Mo Aswat presented an update on plans for a BID (Business Improvement District) in Harrogate.

This time last year, we heard from the leaders of Leeds and Skipton BIDs about their successes and the challenges they faced along the way. Since then, significant progress has been made towards establishing a Harrogate BID and late last year, consultancy firm The Mosaic Partnership was appointed. Mosaic has advised on the establishment of 92 BIDs, guided them through the planning stages to getting support and



successfully establishing their BID.

Mo began by explaining the background to BIDs and what they can achieve for their members. From negotiating insurance and trade waste contracts for large groups to organising events and improving the street scene, there is almost no limit to what they can do.

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February meeting: Employment for the Future

Employing your first member of staff, or expanding your team, can be a minefield. Not only do you need to have the right documents and insurance in place, but you also risk engaging the wrong person who isn't a good fit for your business.

Our February meeting will look at the options out there in the modern world of employment, from apprenticeships to training programmes. Co-ordinated by

Debra Forsythe-Conroy of Harrogate College, it will also see guest speakers invited to share their expertise with the audience.

It takes place at Pavilions of Harrogate on Monday 5th February. Informal networking begins at 5.30pm with the business from 6.15pm. Please register via the website. Guests are welcome and if you do invite anyone, again please encourage them to register via the website.

One thing that is completely outlawed is for a BID to take on any of the statutory functions of local authorities. A BID can, however, enhance this work, such as by arranging additional street cleaning or paying for a dedicated police officer for a particular area.

There are about 300 BIDs in the UK and they are generally run by not-for-profit private companies limited by guarantee. The setting up of a BID is driven and controlled by businesses—they establish a task group and a board which report regularly on their work. While a local authority may be represented on a BID, it has no control over the BID.

Money has to be raised in an equitable way, so larger businesses contribute more than smaller ones. The mechanism for establishing business size, is Rateable Value. The BID levy is collected by the Local Authority and paid over to the BID. The levy is typically about 1.5% of the Rateable Value, but there is some variation across the UK.

For Harrogate, the process of establishing a BID is expected to take around 12 months. This will be:

- **Foundation:** deciding the area it will cover, such as just the town centre or the wider town including business parks. Establishing how the contributions should be calculated. Ensuring the plans meet the legislative requirements. Mosaic will complete this work in the next month or so and recommend how to proceed.
- **Development:** establishing support for the project by creating a BID task group, with a make-up that represents the demographics of the businesses in the BID. Consultation and communication with the affected business will be key, via various media platforms, and most importantly in face to face discussions. Businesses will be asked for their suggestions of what they would like to see a BID achieve. This phase will take up to six months.



Chamber chief executive Sandra Doherty, left, and president Mike Procter, right, with BID consultant Mo Aswat and Harrogate BID board member John Fox.

- **Campaign:** once the business plan has been developed to show what the BID will use its money for, it will be put out to local businesses and a vote will be organised—this is currently expected to be in November this year.

All businesses which would have to pay into the BID are entitled to vote. For a BID to succeed, it must meet two criteria: at least 50% of the businesses which vote must support it, and those in favour must have at least 50% of the rateable value of all those who vote. The turn-out for BID votes is usually below 50% but the more people who are engaged, the better the turn-out

If the ballot is successful, it will take two to three months to begin working, and will last for up to five years before a vote is taken on its renewal. Around 90% of BIDs are renewed and they often expand their remit over the years as they gain wider support and are seen to achieve their initial aims.

There have been around 50 BIDs which failed to gain support. Often this was due to having insufficient consultation before creating the business plan, or not having the right representation on the task group.

Mo outlined some of the projects undertaken by other BIDs in the UK. They include:

- a business incubation and acceleration centre for creative industries
- collective contracts for trade waste, more than saving the money each business put in to the BID
- Subsidising periods of car parking
- organising a town voucher scheme to keep money in the local economy
- Christmas lights and other festive events

Mo concluded by saying BIDs are only as good as the people involved in them. It is down to local businesses to drive them forward, come up with viable plans, persuade others to support them and ensure they are delivered.

During the discussion (see p 4 for a summary of the Q&A), contributions were also made by **John Bywater**, chairman of **Leeds BID** prior to its establishment, who said his experience in Leeds had highlighted the role of complacency: Liverpool and Manchester had upped their game and the Leeds business community had certainly got its act together. If someone had said Leeds was the fifth best city in the UK, they would not have been happy with saying they were "top 5" - all towns and cities should strive to be the best in their field. He urged all businesses to think about where Harrogate will be in 10 years' time if it doesn't pull its socks up.

Harrogate Borough Council chief executive **Wallace Sampson** praised the progress made in the last year. He recognised the amount of work still to be done by the business community to drive the BID forward, but said the council would stand shoulder to shoulder with the business community. He highlighted the advances seen in other towns where BIDs have been set up. This is an opportunity for Harrogate to compete not just with local towns, but also nationally.

Mike Procter, chamber president and Harrogate BID board member:

A first steering group meeting of about

20 people supportive of a Harrogate BID was held in May and subsequent meetings were held in June, July, August and September. By October we had a rough idea of three possible BID areas, the associated income, a draft brochure and website, and data-handling software.

Lots of conversations with businesses resulted in loads of ideas for projects to stimulate growth and save businesses money. We were almost ready to start wider engagement, but lacked two things: enough people with time to do the consulting, and professional help.

Mosaic have now been appointed to steer us through the process of establishing a BID. They will undertake a lot of the back-office work themselves and focus the time given by members of the Task Group in the most effective manner.

A comment we've heard a lot is how short of time people are. Some large stores in Harrogate have seen a 50% reduction in staff, as costs are cut. We still need enthusiastic supporters please.

We have already raised a significant amount of money to finance the campaign, but we still need to raise more money. Any member or business who wishes to pledge money should contact me. The money will be repaid if we get a successful YES ballot.

Support for any BID by the Local Authority is not only advisable, but it's also a legal requirement. I'd like to thank HBC, who have been incredibly supportive. As tenants and owners of large properties in Harrogate, they will contribute a significant income to a BID, but they've also agreed to match-fund 50% of the cost of establishing it.

In addition to the council, I'd also like to thank Simon Kent at The Harrogate Convention Centre, Chris Bentley at Hornbeam Park, Myles Hartley at the Caddick Group, James White at the Victoria Centre, and Sarah Barry at Stray FM for their significant financial contributions. Thanks also to Harrogate Festivals, Visit Harrogate and Duthie Law for their financial contributions.

Harrogate BID: Q&A

How is the area decided?

We look at how many businesses would fall within a boundary and what their composition is. We examine whether the work can be delivered with the money that area would raise and whether there is a need for what can be delivered.

Why was a previous BID in Harrogate in 2005 abandoned?

BIDs only came into being in 2004, so any discussions in 2005 would have been extremely early. Legislation has changed and there are many more examples to learn from now.

Who decides what functions are performed by a BID?

We get a sense from within the BID area of what will be popular during the research and development stages. The task group will look at what is feasible and come up with a final business plan, which is the basis for the yes/no vote.

How can we support it?

At this stage, tell your fellow business owners about it and encourage them to look out for upcoming events and information. Soon, we'll be looking for task group members, so put yourself forward if you would like to contribute.

The York BID seems to have been less successful than Leeds. Why?

Mosaic only recently became involved with York. Its BID was approved two years ago but since then it hasn't had the right set-up to be successful—just one person was trying to run an £800,000 project. Changes are now being made so it is run in a more business-like way. In Leeds, although the BID has been successful, it is part of a wider picture of improvements to the city which have all contributed to the way Leeds has changed its image and taken large steps forward.

Business news

Working For Your Business

Harrogate Borough Council produces a monthly business e-newsletter called Working For Your Business. It contains useful information for local businesses, including events and news. If you would like to receive your free copy, email business@harrogate.gov.uk and ask to be added to the list.

Administrator wanted!

Washburn Heritage Centre is recruiting for an administrator to deliver around 12 days' work per month—this could be an individual or a business. For full details, visit the blog on our website or email ian@ianbergelassociates.co.uk.

Best foot forward

Congratulations to Chloe Bellerby, who is preparing to embark on a charity walk from Leeds to London in aid of MIND. Chloe, 17, suffered from mental health issues throughout her teenage years

which culminated in her attempting to take her own life in 2016. With the support of coaches at **Harrogate Town Football Club** and the PE staff at Rossett School, she has made great progress and even earned a soccer scholarship to a university in New Jersey.

She will complete her 10-day challenge in April and hopes to raise £10,000. Sponsor her at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/chloe-bellerby.

Outdoor events

If you organise events, **Harrogate Health and Safety Forum** is holding a half-day session to guide you through planning and running a safe and secure outdoor event. It takes place at Pavilions of Harrogate on Wednesday 7th March from 11.45am. Tickets are £10 + booking fee from www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/harrogate-amp-district-health-and-safety-forum-9767222289.

Members' Forum

January and February at Norse *by Paul Rawlinson*

Last week we published a blog post asking for people to support the restaurant that was widely shared across social media, regional press and trade journals. We have altered our format to a familiar starter/main/dessert a la carte menu in a bid to broaden the appeal of the restaurant.

Norse would be delighted to offer all chamber members a little extra incentive to visit us in January or February and

we'll greet you with a complimentary drink on arrival. We'd like to offer you 20% off either our tasting menu or the newly launched a la carte menu. (Valid Tue-Fri until 28/02/18)

If you are able to eat a little earlier you may prefer to try our fantastic value Early Evening menu offering 2 courses for £18 or 3 courses for £22.

We look forward to serving you our modern food using Yorkshire produce.

Please mention 'Chamber Member' when booking.

New chamber members

The following organisations joined us in the last month. Full details can be found on the directory page of our website.

Four Corners Events

Mark James
www.wearefourcorners.com
07885 608165

Harrogate Rugby Club

Iain Salkeld
www.harrogaterugby.com
01423 815420

Travail Employment

Lisa Headford
www.travail.co.uk
01423 530138

Chamber News

Meetings 2018

Our 2018 meeting planner is now on the website (click the Diary tab for all dates, venues and subjects). As ever, if anything urgent comes up, we will try to include it in our programme as soon as possible which may mean occasionally making a change to the planned meeting. We'll keep you informed if that happens, of course.

If there are any topics you would like us to explore, please do let us know. It's your chamber—and chances are, if it's something you'd find interesting or useful, so will other members. Whether it's learning something practical to implement in your business, or holding a debate about a topical issue, we're always happy to consider suggestions.

Management Group

The chamber is run by a committee of around 18 members known as the

management group. They meet quarterly over lunch for two hours to do everything from planning meetings to discussing the chamber's position on new developments in the area.

Members of the management group have usually been in the chamber for at least two years and attended regular meetings. If you would like to be considered to join the group, or would like to nominate a fellow chamber member, please let us know.

Thank you

Many thanks to David Ritson and the team at The Old Swan Hotel for hosting our January meeting. For information about their meeting rooms and other facilities, visit the website: www.classiclodges.co.uk/our-hotels/the-old-swan.