

Briefing Note



Brief: An overview of York Business Improvement District activities
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The York BID started in April 2016, which means it is now just over two years into its first five year term. The BID has a small team of three staff that work on the various initiatives under the four general headings of Safe & Secure; Appearance & Environment; Business Support; and Events and Festivals.

The below headings provide an overview of the projects and initiatives the BID is undertaking in the city.

Street Rangers

The York BID Street Rangers have twice achieved national recognition for their pioneering approach. Over the festive period, the Rangers became the first private security team in the UK to gain the Secretary of State's surveillance camera code of practice regarding their transparent use of bodycams. These are worn by the Street Rangers and have led to numerous arrests due to the evidence that can be passed to police.

Not long afterwards, the Rangers were contacted by Sky News to be part of their news story about proposed changes to the anti-social behaviour laws. In the report the work of the Rangers was highlighted as an innovative and successful approach to tackling ASB on the streets.

In 2018, the Rangers have already recovered over £10,000 in stolen stock.

Street Cleansing

The York BID cleaning teams have worked tirelessly over the last 12 months to keep our beautiful city as clean as possible. Their deep cleaning sessions and swift response to calls from local businesses have helped to keep York's streets looking their best.

During 2017 the teams have;

removed nearly 1,500 instances of graffiti
undertaken around 4,000 clean-ups after revellers
disposed of more than 500 pieces of drug litter.

During the fair-weather months of last year the deep-cleaning team covered the majority of streets in the BID area.

Of the 54,000 sq/m of York pavements that were jet washed, between 5-15 pieces of chewing gum were removed per sq/m. That equates to more than 270,000 pieces of gum in total.

York Winter Lights

York's Winter Lights have been hailed a great success, helping to drive visits to the city during the off-peak tourism season. Visits to attractions and hotel occupancy levels were all up during November, December and January and the enhanced lighting scheme has proved popular with both visitors and residents alike.

This is arguably the best ever Winter and Christmas lights display the city has seen. From November to December there was a 13.2% increase in rail journeys to the city (19 November – 23 December). At the same time footfall into the city was up by 1.3% year on year and coach bookings were up by 8%.

The BID spent circa £80k in 2017, with a £45k contribution from Make it York. The same spend will take place in 2018 to continue this successful partnership.

Window Dressing and anti-loitering

So far the BID has invested in dressing 13 vacant shops across the city in an effort to improve the appearance of York's high streets.

The most notable is the BHS frontage on Coney Street. Coupled with the anti-loitering scheme enforced by the BID Rangers, this has gone a long way to improving the aesthetic of an area which has been the target of littering, rough sleeping, anti-social behaviour and drug abuse.

On a related note, the BID team have been gathering evidence to highlight the levels of drug use and antisocial behaviour in the city. This evidence was the catalyst for a joint operation between Police, Street Rangers and Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers to crack down on this behaviour, which is now underway.

The BID is proactively reaching out to SASH as well as other homeless charities to tie this initiative into devising effective solutions to this issue.

Piccadilly Car Park Trial

Working with City of York Council, York BID ran a free parking trial at Piccadilly multi-storey car park. This took place during the York Christmas Festival on consecutive Thursdays and Fridays between 3pm and 9pm.

This is the first joint initiative of its kind, set up to test how such parking offers might boost the city's early evening economy.

The results have been positive. Over the 12 individual dates of the trial, 4,265 cars in total took advantage of the free parking with 2,400 of those vehicles using the park after 6pm when it would usually be closed.

Secure Cycle Parking

Discussions are underway between York BID and City of York Council over the potential for upgrading the city's secure cycle storage capacity.

Both the Civic Trust and community cycling groups have been involved in the consultation.

Safe Places Scheme

The York BID working with York CVS to create a 'Safe Places Scheme' within the city centre. This is a national scheme which looks to identify a number of businesses that openly identify themselves as a 'safe place' for anyone suffering from dementia/ a disabled person who may experience difficulties, feel lost or frightened. Once the businesses are identified and trained, they are added to a national website. This not only supports a certain community, but identifies York as a safe place to visit which should benefit businesses in the long run.

Taxi Marshal Pilot

In 2017 a pilot Taxi Marshal scheme was run at Duncombe Place. It was a joint funded project after concerns were raised from businesses and members of the public about anti-social behaviour at the rank.

Two marshals manned the rank in the late evening/ early morning hours of Fridays and Saturdays. An independent evaluation of the scheme was carried out in November yielding extremely positive results. Customers in the queue were asked a number of questions, with 86% saying they thought the scheme was a good idea and 84% saying they felt more safe since the scheme has been introduced.

Equally positive was the fact that whilst 81% expected to be waiting 4-10 minutes for a taxi, the marshals helped efficiency by ensuring no one waited longer than 4 minutes.

This evaluation along with positive feedback from businesses including the Dean Court Hotel, will be used by the BID to look into whether this programme can be extended into 2018.

Wayfinding & Signage

The Business Improvement District (BID) is working on a new “wayfinding” scheme - to improve the signs which help visitors find their way around York’s attractions.

Earlier this month CYC agreed to put £18,000 towards the project, meaning City of York Council and the BID are splitting the cost of a trial 50-50.

In funding documents the BID prepared for the council, officials from the BID and a firm of specialist consultants said new wayfinding signs would be a significant improvement in the city centre, would encourage people to walk and thus improve health and would have commercial benefits by encouraging people to explore other areas.

Now the funding is in place BID staff are planning to install three or four prototype signs later in the summer, as a trial in a small part of the city.

Bloom! and city floral displays

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the Ancient Society of York Florists (ASYF), the oldest society of its kind in the world. To celebrate, York is hosting a new city-wide, four-day festival called Bloom! The BID has invested in 12 months curator role and is working with Make it York to ensure the festival embraces all part of the city centre.

In addition, the BID is adding circa 90 new floral displays, with many of these in areas around the inner ring road that sometimes get neglected. These will benefit businesses on the periphery and also create a more vibrant entrance to the city centre.

Business Cost savings

The BID is working with procurement specialists to try and drive down business costs, from energy, to merchant fees, to recycling. This is in its early days, but one business has already made a considerable saving on its energy costs to the point it more than covers the costs of paying the annual levy to the BID.

Indie York

The York BID has a remit to support small businesses. Indie York is bringing together independent companies into one guide. The guide is in paper format and also a glossy website. Every business, numbered in a red dot, is a star in its own right but we've gone even further to map out clusters of the city's independent strongholds including Fossgate, Walmgate, The Minster Quarter, Micklegate, The Shambles and Shambles Market, and Gillygate to name but a few.

There is over 150 business involved at the moment with another 50 joining 2018.

Public Realm works

The BID is investing in a number of public realm projects with various partners. In partnership with the York Civic Trust, it has paid for the Fossgate Banner; bench renewals in St Helens square; cigarette bins; repair of the kings staith railings; and repainted a number of street name signs. With CYC, the BID has committed 50% costs for the removal of the Parliament Street fountain and the redundant toilet block on St Sampsons square.

General support to businesses and trade associations

The BID is working closely with businesses and trade associations to fund activity that traders want/ will benefit an area. Further to some of the initiatives mentioned already, the BID has put funding into; The Mediale; The Ice Trail; Fashion City York; Micklegate Soap Box Challenge; Little Vikings Easter Festival; Shopmobility; Fossgate Festival; Gillygate 5th Quarter flags.