

PORTFOLIO:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Report of
Portfolio Holder:

COUNCILLOR
MRS MARILYN BOWMAN

1. City Centre Business Improvement District.

The development of the proposed City Centre Business Improvement District continues to gather pace.

In early February a Newsletter and Survey was distributed to around 400 businesses within the city centre explaining the potential benefits of a BID and asking what was important to them being able to run a successful business within the city centre. City centre residents also received a letter setting out the proposals.

To give further impetus the City Council Executive also gave authority for an interim City Centre Management Company to be formed that will now act as the formal proposer of the BID process. The Board of Directors, including the Chair, for this company will be predominantly drawn from private sector businesses within the City Centre, as well as having representation from the City Council.

A website for the BID is in the final stages of development and this will be firstly utilised to publicise what the BID is about and subsequently will be used to publish the statutory documents required to progress the proposal.

A draft business plan as to what the BID would deliver is currently being compiled and this will then be subject to a period of formal consultation during April and May. This will set out the proposed area of the BID, the threshold for Rateable Value of businesses to be included, the proposed additional levy on commercial rates, and the overall budget that this would produce.

All of this will lead to a formal Ballot of qualifying businesses at the end of July, which if produces a “yes” vote, will enable the City Centre BID Company to be operational by 1st September.

2. The Visitor Economy

We all know this but now its official – Carlisle is the happiest place to live in the UK.

According to a survey by property company, Rightmove, Carlisle ranks as the top place to live. The ‘Happy at Home’ survey questioned 25,000 people about their level of contentment on everything from size, value and decor of their homes to safety, how friendly neighbours are and qualities of local amenities being asked.

Unsurprisingly this has once again put Carlisle into the national spotlight with the news being featured in both the Sunday Times and the Daily mail.

This has all added to the attractiveness of Carlisle to both potential visitors and business. The ongoing work by the City Council to promote tourism has resulted in recent coverage in the New York Times; the Discover Britain magazine; and the ‘Britain’ magazine, along with a double page ‘All in a Day’ feature in the Group Leisure magazine.

The 2012 Discover Carlisle & Hadrian’s Wall Country Visitor Carlisle has recently been distributed across the country to Tourist Information Centres and potential visitors. The council has printed 30,000 copies of the guide.

In addition, 200,000 of the new Places to Visit guide for 2012 are being distributed throughout the county and are available from Tourist Information Centres as well as available online. A local events guide for February to April has also been produced and distributed.

3. Pirelli International Rally

Carlisle city centre will play host to the ceremonial start of the Pirelli International Rally on Friday 27th April, which marks the 21st year of sponsorship by Pirelli of this prestigious event in the rallying calendar

As a round of the British Championship, the rally attracts a horde of young up and coming British drivers keen to use it as a stepping stone onto the world rallying scene

The rally, which will also be based at Carlisle Racecourse, also attracts hordes of enthusiasts and it has become a "Must See" for thousands of spectators who turn up every year to enjoy the high speed action as well as providing a boost to the local economy.

4. Urban Design Guide Public Sector Award 2011-12

In my last report I advised you that the City Council has been shortlisted for an urban design award for the Castle Street public realm improvement scheme. From an original list of 30 nominated projects we had been shortlisted to the final six. On the night we came second, however the presentation of the scheme was well received and there was clear recognition of the quality of the scheme and the hard work of all those involved in the project.

5. Central Plaza

Work is ongoing to the Central Plaza to ensure that the building is wind and watertight and are now nearing completion of the Urgent Works. The works commenced on the 6th February and have been undertaken by a Cumbrian company Team Northern Construction Ltd. Once complete the Council will pursue recovery of the costs of the work undertaken.

**Councillor Mrs M Bowman
Economic Development Portfolio Holder**