



**BOURNEMOUTH**  
**TOWN CENTRE BID**

**Bournemouth Town Centre BID Update**  
**May 2021**

It goes without saying that the past 14 months have been incredibly challenging for town centre businesses in dealing with the pandemic. The inexorable change in retailing habits, office working practices & the shift in commercial property occupation to residential has, in many experts' opinions, been accelerated by 5-10 years.

Thus, the way our town & city centres look & feel and their function has irrevocably changed. However rather than seeing this as a major problem that will lead to the inevitable demise of the high street, all of us with an interest in the town centre need to work together to shape this new situation. The "Save Our High Street/Town Centre" mantra is, of course, something that we can rally around BUT we have to "save it" into something that people actually want rather than simply preserving a past model.

Leading up to the first stage easing of lockdown in May, the BID undertook a number of projects & initiatives to support town centre businesses including social distancing queueing vinyls, simplified guide to grants & funding opportunities (for which BCP garnered deserved praise for the speed of issue) and significant promotion of the town centre gift card to lock spend into the businesses in town.

There were also a number of joint initiatives with BCP that underlined the fact that collaborative working is without doubt the most effective way of helping the town centre navigate this "new normal."

These included a number of jointly funded projects

- Initial repainting the 'street furniture' in the town centre with stage 2 to follow shortly
- A deep clean of the pavements & pedestrianised areas due to be completed in June
- Window vinyls on selected empty units to improve the look & feel of the town e.g., on the Beales building



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- Working with events & tourism on a series of markets in the town centre to encourage people back safely using the BID's "Let's Reconnect" promotional initiative.
- Working closely as part of the BCP Homelessness Board initiative supporting & part funding the contactless giving initiative.

Why were these things important? Well simply put the new town centres we need to provide are all about the almost overused word "experience" – two of the BID business plan pillars of "Safe & Secure" & "Clean & Green" are constantly at the top of our levy payer & visitor surveys as to things that are important. Indeed, in the last visitor survey of nearly 1,000 responses, having a clean & well maintained town centre where people felt safe & able to dwell, with lots of events & activities, were utterly key to individuals & families returning.

Here the pavement license initiative for the hospitality sector has been a great success and has shifted both the atmosphere of the town and provided the business with much needed increased capacity.

All the BIDs play a key role in the highly important R3 group, chaired by BCP which will be commissioning an important piece of research (again jointly funded by a BCP grant & BID support) to clearly identify what will bring people back into our towns as well as the new requirements of residents & workers.

Coming out of lockdown, Bournemouth was in the top 5 towns & cities in the UK for non-essential retail visits and we are anticipating a significant boost through staycations this summer. Whilst footfall is @20-30% lower than 2019, it is not out of kilter with the rest of the UK. The key here is to build confidence and, given the changes previously mentioned in retail & office occupation, provide the new experience required.

We will be working closely with Tourism & Events on the Festival Coast Live initiative in helping to curate, support & enhance the live events in key public spaces in the town centre – again this project is highly welcome as it would seem to be essential in encouraging both visits, dwell time & thus increased possibilities of spend.

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**First Floor Burlington House, Burlington Arcade, St Peters Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2HZ**  
**info@towncentrebid.co.uk 01202 296343 www.towncentrebid.co.uk**

Company Registration Number: 8107171 Registered in England

Registered Office: 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Waverley House, 115-119 Holdenhurst Road, Bournemouth BH8 8DY



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Going forward, working together in a 'critical friend' capacity is essential in not having this new reality done to us but to shape it for the benefit of those who (and will) live, work & visit the town. It's vital that

- The strategy of encouraging & incubating independent retailers to set up in the town (as ably put forward by Cllr Brooks) is progressed.
- Those developments in town that are part of the regeneration shift (especially where retail is involved) are unblocked.
- The "Take Pride" initiative is continued
- The holistic approach to ensuring our town centre is safe, secure & welcoming is given top priority.

There is confidence in Bournemouth town centre & it's future – the wonderful Bobby's initiative, Saltrock returning to the high street, 5 other units under offer, the impending opening of the Livingstone Academy plus the revitalisation of Lansdown.

It's important that we ALL play our part in this & not "take our foot off the pedal" – our innovative & resilient businesses deserve it from us.

Paul Kinvig  
Chief Operating Officer  
Bournemouth Town Centre BID



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