

# Operations Report: March –April 2020

Over the last two months, the BID team has focused on:

## **Covid-19**

Events during mid-March onwards presented unimaginable challenges to businesses, the community and beyond as never seen before. The timeline of the BID's operations as the Covid-19 crisis unfolded is as follows:

### **7 March**

#### ***Awareness and planning***

Early in the month as conversations regarding the Covid-19 issue started circulating, we began planning ahead to let our businesses know we were ready to support them. On 7 March our eNewsletter featured the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's guidance to Businesses and Employers in respect of the Coronavirus-Covid 19 as soon as it was released.

### **16 March**

#### ***Communication***

At this stage it was all about downloading, digesting and communicating information to levy payers as it was released by the Government. We assembled our own Coronavirus Guidelines on Business Support and sent it out to BID businesses via the eNewsletter, social media and website. This included links to information on the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Time to Pay Helpline, Statutory Sick Pay Support and Private Lender Funds.

### **18 March**

Reassuring businesses whilst being realistic about the impact the pandemic would likely have on businesses became key at this point. Therefore, when the Government's new business support measures were released on Tuesday 17 March we were quick to publish them:

- Statutory sick pay relief package for SMEs
- 12-month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England
- Small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- Grant funding of £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000

### **23 March**

As the events started to rapidly unfold and it became apparent that the business landscape would be severely affected on all levels, we sent out a strong message of reassurance to levy payers via our media channels. We promised the BID would rise to all the challenges presented, work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep everyone updated with all the latest government information along with easy-to-understand steps on how to access it. We promised we would listen, support, and of course do everything we could to ensure local businesses are kept relevant and supported through our marketing and social media channels. We also assured levy payers our BID website would be an essential go-to point for them by keeping it regularly updated, our phone line would remain open and all emails responded to quickly. We also arranged a Business Rates & Business Support webinar on Wednesday 25 March to give those who wished to voice their concerns a platform to do so.

We launched a "Covid-19" section on the BID website containing useful links and information on:

- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme
- HMRC Time To Pay Scheme Business Support scheme including measures that include a 100% business rates relief for retail, hospitality, leisure and nursery businesses on their bill for 2020-21.
- Explanation of the £10,000 grant for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief and the £25,000 grant for businesses with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000.
- Free Business Support from the CBI - the UK's most effective and influential business organisation representing 190,000 businesses and about one-third of the private sector-employed workforce.
- The BID team emergency contact details
- Kent and Medway Growth Hub: local website listing business guidance, support, mapping and alerts.
- COVID-19: support for businesses: from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- Self-employed rights during the coronavirus crisis: Top advice from one of the UK's leading newspapers.
- How to stay healthy and proactive when working from home: Top tips for employers and their staff to ensure the work keeps getting done!
- Mental health awareness during the Coronavirus outbreak: With many having employment, health and money worries, it's vital everyone supports and manages their wellbeing at the moment.
- How small businesses can survive coronavirus: A 13-step plan on how to keep going throughout the pandemic from ES, London's leading lifestyle magazine.

## 25 March

We informed BID businesses of the new timelines for business support as soon as they were published - together with step by step guides to applying for it:

- **Business Rates:** We explained how Canterbury City Council will contact all those eligible for COVID-19 Business Rates Relief on Thursday 26 March (where they have email addresses) and on Friday 27 March (where they only have postal addresses by 2nd class post), so all those eligible for whom they have contact information will be contacted by early next week. We reassured that if businesses had not heard from them by Thursday 9 April, there will be a form to fill in on CCC's website.
- **Grants:** We told how local authorities were awaiting further details from central government, and that they were expecting grant money to reach them by 1 April. In the meantime, we told how CIVICA were preparing a new solution to process the grants and communicate the information.
- **Eligibility:** We published a list of businesses eligible for business rates relief and a list of those eligible for grants together with full explanations. We stressed how this could change and we would apply any updates received from central government as and when they arrived.

## 2 April

We hosted a series of webinars designed to help with the challenges being faced, including financial, legal, marketing and digital media support, sourcing local experts who kindly provided their time as pro-bono work, reinforcing our commitment to providing cost-effective training during this critical time. We told how projects and activities such as the summer marketing campaign (including the maps and guides), networking, the ambassador programme, floral displays and cleaning had been postponed, so they could be reinstated when they would be most beneficial.

Three members of the BID team were furloughed as of 3 April 2020 to ensure that we operate a streamlined organisation, befitting of the current situation.

## 7 April

Breaking down the updates on the latest government guidelines during the Covid-19 pandemic became a priority, especially making them relevant for local businesses. We arranged for David Redgate (Commercial Property Law Specialist) and David Morgan (Employment Law Specialist) from local firm Girlings Solicitors to feature on an interactive talk for levy payers to participate for free. Topics included:

- Employment Law: Furlough Leave, redundancy and layoff
- COVID-19: business closure regulations
- Temporarily relaxing rent
- Landlords not being able to forfeit leases
- Suspension of all ongoing housing possession action
- Review your lease - have you a break clause?
- Business rates relief – who qualifies and how it works
- Brief review of government loans
- Building insurance policies

### 15 April

Keeping business informed of how much support has been given out to date is helpful and reassuring for the local business community. We told how Canterbury City Council gave out just over half of the total cash grant available, to just under half of the eligible businesses, leaving £16.735 million left to be awarded to 1,484 businesses. We strongly pushed the message out there to businesses yet to make a claim to contact the Council urgently so they could process any outstanding grants. We also promoted a new dedicated email address for businesses to get an answer about a specific grant queries.

### 23 April

We published other useful information:

- Girlings Solicitors providing a helpful analysis of Temporary Change of Planning Use for Public Houses during the coronavirus crisis that covers; permitted permanent changes of use not requiring planning permission, Local Development Orders and Neighbourhood Development Orders, restrictions and conditions for temporary flexible uses, Temporary Change of Use during the Coronavirus pandemic and permitted use in a lease.
- The UK Government’s newly-launched tool that helps work out eligibility for loans, tax relief and cash grants called “Business Support Finder”.
- The Kent and Medway Growth Hub’s new helpline to all Kent based businesses needing advice and wishing to speak to someone directly
- The University of Kent’s bespoke help and advice service to the local business community where business-related questions were addressed by an appropriate academic with expertise in the related field.

## Training

The BID’s free training sessions have always proved exceptionally popular with busy businesses in the city, especially as many simply do not have the time to travel or the resources to pay for expensive training sessions. The rapidly changing business landscape during March meant that we had to adapt our training sessions to be compliant with the social distancing measures and alter each session’s content to reflect the needs of the crisis.

To address this, we hosted the following FREE training sessions over March and April via online forums, at no cost to BID businesses and hosted by panels of local and national experts to address the ongoing concerns. Attendance rates were good with the new Webinar delivery format being received well:

- **Understanding Business Rates - Weds 25 March** -delivered by Sadie Furner of Civica, Canterbury City Council  
*Turnout: 15 attendees from 15 different businesses*
- **Free Digital Support for Businesses in Kent - Fri 3 April** – delivered by Ben Pearce from digitalbeans and Floortje Hoette from Produced in Kent.  
*Turnout: 17 attendees from 17 different businesses*
- **Legal Guidance with Girlings Solicitors - Tues 7 April** – delivered by David Redgate (Commercial Property

Law Specialist) and David Morgan (Employment Law Specialist) from Girlings Solicitors

*Turnout: 26 attendees from 24 different businesses*

- **Making the Most of Digital Marketing - Thurs 16 April** - delivered by Pip and Ben from digitalbeans.  
*Turnout: 33 attendees from 25 different businesses*
- **The Financial Climate and how it affects you – Tues 28 April** - delivered by Simon Ludden, Managing Director of Tarvos Wealth  
*Turnout: 9 attendees from 9 different businesses*

We also encouraged business to make the most of other free training available:

- **Google Digital Garage**
- **Hubspot Academy Business Skills**
- **Instagram Masterclass** with Elise Darma, Instagram Marketer and Agency Owner of Canupy
- **Facebook Business Training** with Lucy Hall, a Kent-based Facebook Certified Trainer

## Purple Flag:

We are proud to lead the city on the Purple Flag accreditation, which recognises the fact Canterbury provides a vibrant mix of entertainment while promoting the safety and wellbeing of visitors and its residents between the hours of 5pm and 5am. Due to the social distancing measures put in place, our Purple Flag re-assessment scheduled for Saturday 28 March was cancelled. The Purple Flag Award Ceremony scheduled later in the year at the Cathedral Lodge was also postponed until later in the year.

## Communication

### eNewsletter

As the Coronavirus pandemic unfolded, we adjusted our weekly City Centre Newsletters to monthly newsletters and instead introduced as brand new “Weekly Business Update”. We broke down vital guidance and support guidelines issued by central government, local government and business support groups and published the information in a form which was bite-size, easily digestible and relevant to our levy payers  
**“Your Stories”**

During the toughest times for Canterbury's businesses, we were reassured to hear confirmation of grant money being received by local business and heard heart-warming stories of how trading has been maintained, how businesses have adapted and how the local community has been supported by the businesses. Such stories were gladly shared by us to inspire the business community and give hope to others. We were also aware that some businesses were falling through the gaps of the legislation and still struggling so we appealed to share these critical examples directly with the decision makers at national level to try and help.

### City Developments

Keeping our businesses informed of the latest developments in the city was a priority for March and April, vital for trading purposes, planning, future investment, transport and access logistics as well as helping boost business morale as new developments take place.

- **Security Bollards:** We continued to keep the city updated on the latest work on installing the Security Bollards, including road closures and access restrictions.
- **Car Parks:** We kept traders and the MyCanterbury community updated when Canterbury City Council announced the closure of most of the city centre car parks during the lockdown period to reduce operating costs and save tens of thousands of pounds. Also, how they would reopen them at very short notice when demand picks up.

### Canterbury City Council updates

Canterbury City Council updates and news are a regular feature of our B2B newsletter, helping businesses benefit from key information which may not necessarily reach them otherwise. During March we communicated the following:

One of the BID's most important tasks for March and April was to outline the Covid-19 response from

Canterbury City Council and to communicate and interpret its messages of support to BID businesses. This meant detailed analysis and interpretation of its business measures put in place, followed by easy-to-digest communication to levy payers in easy to understand formats. This also meant following up individual queries from Levy payers about Council-provided assistance

### **Canterbury City Council Meetings**

We are always fully committed to ensuring the voice of businesses are represented at Council Committee meetings. The agendas for these meetings are published clearly in our weekly eNewsletter, including the meeting topic, the time, and a link to the agenda. We also outline council meetings at the BID Board meetings if they are of significance to city businesses. Due to the Coronavirus pandemics, all Council meetings were either cancelled or held online, and the outcomes which were relevant to businesses were communicated by the BID to local businesses.

### **TV and Media**

Over March and April, we highlighted the following:

Canterbury featured on the BBC South East Tonight showcasing a fantastic 3D visualisation of the north-west quarter of Canterbury in 1450, created by the University of York who have been leading *The Becket Connection* project over the last 2 years.

## **Marketing:**

### **MyCanterbury**

The MyCanterbury online platform provided a vital artery between local businesses and the community. Rapidly changing information regarding the High Street was successfully communicated to the local community on a regular basis. A huge part of MyCanterbury's marketing strategy during March and April became all about reassuring the public and businesses alike, publishing opening times of essential businesses, assisting with call-outs for local volunteers and promoting home deliveries and take-out services.

To further support businesses, we sent regular rallying callouts to businesses for them to get in touch so we could promote their activities and keep them relevant and, if allowed to trade, their business maximised. The MyCanterbury team worked hard sourcing stories of how businesses were adapting and getting creative, and heavily promoted local products and services, bespoke deliveries and celebrated community volunteering. As such, MyCanterbury has been delighted to report a huge surge of interest from Canterbury residents as we broadcasted news from our businesses -with those offering home delivery services being of particular interest.

### **MyCanterbury E-shots**

The MyCanterbury bespoke emails were paused from mid March in order to focus on weekly themed eshots that promoted all businesses that were continuing to run at no cost – free publicity. All eNewsletters we shared on MyCanterbury's Facebook page to engage with additional audiences.

### **Marketing Collaboration**

To further rally support for businesses, we also broadcasted Canterbury's offerings through our network of powerful tourist and community platforms, namely Visit Canterbury, Visit Kent, Canterbury Residents Group and of course MyCanterbury -all with a huge local, regional, national and international reach between them, all rallying together to support the city and share Canterbury's digital activities for free.

### **MyCanterbury listings**

As one of the very first local platforms to display special opening hours of essential grocery stores, supermarkets, pharmacies and options for online orders in an easy-to-access format, our listings proved to be a highly popular reference for Canterbury locals. We also listed priority times for the vulnerable and NHS

workers -plus key dates for the diary such as the Clap for Carers every Thursday at 8pm

### **YourLocalDelivery.com**

MyCanterbury was delighted to work with Digitalbeans, a leading digital agency based in Canterbury, promoting their brand-new FREE website solution to help local businesses impacted by the Covid-19 situation. The service was called "YourLocal.Delivery" and allowed Canterbury restaurants, toy shops, art, shops, garden centres, small convenience stores and more to put their goods online for free, creating a page that sat within their own website enabling deliveries of products to customers

### **Behind Closed Doors photography competition**

Inspired from the many stories we heard from BID businesses during the lockdown, the MyCanterbury team launched a photography competition entitled "Behind Closed Doors" to celebrate and bring awareness to the many positive offerings from local businesses. Partnering with local business Tim Stubbing Photography, we requested funny, thoughtful and personal pictures of how businesses adapted to the 'new normal' ie working from home, adapting to online trading, or precious moments outdoors

### **We congratulated:**

- **The Dog Store** for celebrating their 2nd Birthday at home (although still providing local deliveries of pet supplies). To celebrate they created a great video with a special thank you to the NHS (and a 25% discount for NHS workers).
- **Garage Coffee** for not only continuing to deliver coffee directly to people's homes, but also for launched a podcasting series called "Dialled In", featuring businesses they admire from the hospitality trade and beyond and talking about the industry.
- **Lily's Bistro** for keeping their fans connected by creating their very own digital cookbook with favourite recipes from staff members posted daily on Facebook.
- **Canterbury Brewers & Distillers** who showed amazing community spirit by manufacturing and donating hand sanitiser to help their neighbours, The Salvation Army.
- Canterbury's first **Repair Café** organised by the Canterbury Climate Action Partnership which received a fantastic turn out (pre-lockdown).
- **Westgate Hall** for hosting a fantastic celebration of International Women's Day 2020 before the lockdown took place. There were over 40 attendees, a great breakfast and talks from both Paula Spencer (Thanington Resource Centre) and Lisa our CEO
- **Shepherd Neame** for winning a prestigious Publican Award at the Publican Awards for 'Best Tenanted/Leased Pub Company (Up to 500 sites)'.

### **We welcomed:**

- The new 3D animation film created by the developers from Biggleston Yard, showing their vision for the former Nasons buildings.
- Our new office neighbours, Tarvos wealth! We have moved from above the Barretts showroom to Graylaw House in Watling Street (behind Primark)
- Fond Coffee - a new coffee shop that launched at Fruitworks co-working space on Stour Street.

### **We promoted the following opportunities (some pre-Covid)**

- **"Grow Social", the RHS's theme for 2020** to encourage events giving everyone the opportunity to share what they love about plants with other people in our community. As Canterbury has been nominated as a finalist in Britain in Bloom this year, local businesses and community groups were encouraged to get involved.
- **To enter the Visit Kent Tourism Awards.** Local tourism businesses had opportunity to enter and tell everyone what makes their business great -for free! Winners will receive automatic entry to the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence.
- **A free event to help spot the signs of children being exploited** being held at the University of Kent

(pre-lockdown). The conference, organised by CCC's Community Safety Unit, included speakers from Crimestoppers, the University of Kent's Child Protection department and Kent County Council's Prevent team.

- **Produced in Kent's "Meet the Member" online networking event** where attendees were able to hear all about their plans and priorities for 2020.
- **An innovative new website celebrating England's coastal culture.** Local businesses offering outstanding artistic, cultural, food or unique accommodation experiences or unique festivals and events have been invited to get involved -for free.
- **Applause for the NHS.** To show of support and thanks to all the NHS workers across the UK who put their own lives on the line to support the nation by letting a round of applause ring out around the UK every Thursday at 8pm.
- **YourLocal.Delivery, a new FREE website solution launched by Digitalbeans,** a leading digital agency based in Canterbury. The site was set up to help local businesses impacted by the Covid-19 situation deliver their goods directly to customers at home.
- **'Cene magazine offering FREE advertising opportunities to local businesses** in a one-off Online Special Edition of 'cene magazine.
- **A chance to appear in the newly-launched Visit Kent webpage** with information and advice to support tourism businesses, including transport, sector representation and monitoring, financial support, consumer messaging and the Kent Big Weekend.
- **To participate in a short survey to help South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)** understand the real impact of Coronavirus on the business community. Results will then be used to inform government thinking and their next steps.
- **Kent Police produced a guide to securing building premises** designed to help protect remote businesses or those that may be deemed to contain items of high value or demand, or have plant, tools or vehicles on site, which could make them a target for thieves.
- **Opportunities for local businesses to add their information to the recently launched Produced in Kent's [helpkentbuylocal.co.uk](http://helpkentbuylocal.co.uk) website** (created by YourLocal.Delivery!) so that customers can find them and place orders for locally produced food and drink.
- **Important NEW survey about the impact of COVID-19 requiring local businesses to give their feedback.** The survey, created by Manchester Metropolitan University, on behalf of the Government's High Street Task Force and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government will help Government plan their support packages.
- **Free help and advice to the business community given by The University of Kent.** The business innovation and gateway team offered to delegate business-related questions to an appropriate academic with expertise in the related field who would look at ways to support.
- **Calling all cricket fans!** The second session of the interactive online Spitfire Sessions from Kent Cricket, would be taking place with Kent legends Geraint Jones, James Tredwell and Martin Saggars on the panel. The panel would be answering questions put to them by Kent Cricket supporters and stakeholders, in a forum open to all.

## **We thanked:**

- **Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) for hosting 'Green High Street 2050: A Climate Emergency'** at The Crystal in East London. The event brought together 130 delegates including environmentalists, sustainability professionals and others for a motivational day of idea sharing.
- **All local businesses who shared their stories and experiences with us during the lockdown period** - whether on a webinar, a sector group meeting or individually by email or over the phone.

## March in Review



### Tuesday 3 March

Lisa, Rachel and Julia from the BID team attended the ATCM place management conference - Green High Street to hear about environmental and sustainability ideas for the High Street, and inspirational case studies from those who have implemented the ideas.



### Wednesday 4 March

Lisa and Rachel joined names from the Kent cricketing family past and present at Canterbury Cathedral to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Year of Kent County Cricket Ground at its Thanksgiving Service. Prayers were led by Kent Cricket's President for 2020, Vice Admiral Sir Tim Lawrence and the Dean of Canterbury Robert Willis.



### International Women's Day

### Friday 6 March

The BID team celebrated International Women's Day with a special pop-up breakfast event held at the Westgate Hall. Inspirational speakers included Paula Spencer, Chief Executive of Thanington Resource Centre and our very own BID Chief Executive Lisa Carlson, who spoke of their challenges and successes.



### Monday 9 March

Lisa, Julia and Team and BID Ambassador Simon Jackson attended the Canterbury Community Safety Partnership Event annual meeting held at the Kent County Cricket Ground, where partners and local organisations came together and review current strategic assessment information and the identified current themes of community safety.



### Tuesday 10 March

Lisa attended a District Watch meeting at their headquarters in St Margarets street to discuss how it has helped in the fight against crime in the city together with where the scheme fits into the city's future plans .



### Tuesday 10 March

Lisa attended a Canterbury Climate Action Partnership (CCAP) Board meeting held at Canterbury Christ Church University. CCAP is a community group of organisations, institutions and local government bodies, partnered discuss plans for climate action in the Canterbury District.



### Thursday 12 March

Lisa and Rachel both attended Loake's Breakfast Networking event to show their support for the Cathedral Quarter business community



### Wednesday 18 March

The BID Marketing and Events sub-committee held a virtual meeting to discuss supporting and promoting the businesses of Canterbury, looking at adaptive strategies, re-skilling and engagement with the local community.



### Wednesday 25 March

The BID team hosted a free Business Rates/Business Support Webinar for levy payers which included a presentation from the Business Rates team at Canterbury City Council on the COVID-19 business rates relief and grants and important information on accessing financial support during the crisis. BID businesses were able to ask Sadie Furner of Civica questions about business rates and the latest business support packages put in place

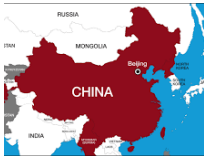




**Monday 30 March**

The BID hosted its seasonal Hotelier Meeting, this time online via Zoom to ensure the safety of attendees. This was attended by accommodation providers who were able to discuss the unfolding Coronavirus pandemic, the issues this was presenting and offer each other support and advice.

**April in Review**



**Friday 3 April**

Lisa attended the “Lessons from China” webinar hosted by the CBI where she heard discussions about what the UK learn from the Chinese experience of COVID-19. What have been the supply chain challenges in China and the rest of the world and, looking at the bigger picture, what has been the international response to the crisis and what more can be done?



**Friday 3 April**

Lisa attended an online conference entitled “Free Digital Support for Businesses in Kent” presented by Ben Pearce from digitalbeans and Floortje Hoette from Produced in Kent. The focus was on the #HelpKentBuyLocal initiative and how food and drink businesses in Kent can get free listings on the HelpKentBuyLocal\_website to encourage sales during the challenging times.



**Tuesday 7 April**

The BID's first free training session of April “Legal Guidance with Girlings Solicitors” was held for BID businesses. The session was presented by David Redgate (Commercial Property Law Specialist) and David Morgan (Employment Law Specialist) from Girlings Solicitors where topics included furlough leave, redundancy, layoffs, rent relief, lease reviews, building insurance and break clauses.



**Tuesday 7 April**

Rachel hosted the Canterbury Culture Meeting where representatives of the city’s arts, culture and events communities came together to discuss what cultural events are still happening and how they can best be shared. Also what can be done collectively to support the local arts and culture industry



**Thursday 16 April**

The BID’s second free training session in April “Making the Most of Digital Marketing” was hosted online and presented by Pip and Ben from digitalbeans. They showed BID businesses how to overcome the common obstacles businesses are facing online and how to overcome them, whilst also introducing them to the hottest 2020 digital trends to keep them ahead of their competitors.



**Tuesday 28 April**

The BID’s third free training session of the month “The Financial Climate and how it affects you” was presented Simon Ludden, Managing Director of Tarvos Wealth. He gave BID businesses a valuable insight into today’s financial climate, including the economic impact on savings and pensions and ISA’s. He also discussed what this means for mortgages and loans-plus how are companies could be impacted.



**Wednesday 29 April**

Lisa attended an online forum entitled “Re-opening our Town and City Centres” hosted by Canterbury City Council’s Visit Canterbury and events planning teams. Here strategies and systems were discussed at length in order to have plans in place for when government guidance allows non-essential business restrictions to be eased.

## **Dates for your diary:**

### **BID Training**

**Weds 6 May, 9-10am:** Creating Video Content for Social Media Marketing (**Webinar via Zoom**)

### **Year ahead in Canterbury**

- **31 July – 2 Aug:** City Feast
- **End of Sept:** Canterbury Food and Drink Festival 2020, Dane John Gardens
- **17-31 Oct:** Canterbury Festival

**Events in Canterbury\_**– see the **BID's Annual Calendar of Events on the website for more:**

canterburybid.co.uk/events

## **Council Meetings**

The calendar of upcoming Council meetings can be found [here](#). The agendas for these meetings are published a week in advance on the Canterbury City Council website. The venue is usually The Guildhall, St Peter's Place, Canterbury (in The Westgate Gardens, near Tower House):