

Operations Report: September – October 2020

During what is an incredibly challenging time, the BID Board and Team are 100% committed to supporting Canterbury's business community. We are working harder than ever to ensure a coordinated local response to the COVID-19 crisis and recovery process, supporting the needs of the businesses now and adapting our work going forward. The BID levy continues to be invested to benefit all the businesses and organisations in the city centre through these challenging times, delivering projects and activities needed to help the city through this crisis. Below is a summary of this activity in September and October 2020.

RHSS grant to support recovery

Canterbury BID was awarded a £20,000 grant from the Reopening High Streets Safely (RHSS) fund for Canterbury city centre from the Council, focussed on providing business support for safe reopening and recovery. The project is running from September 2020 to March 2021 and enables us to spend more one to one time with businesses, helping everyone find the support they need.

Return of Students

We collaborated with the Universities, Unions, the Council, the Police to help welcome students back to the city in a safe way.

We participated in the following student-themed events:

- **Student Shopping Week** -working in partnership with Whitefriars to create an event which showcased businesses across the city, including offers, incentives and vouchers to encourage the students to explore the city which then linked in to the MyCanterbury platform.
- **Student Shopping Afternoon** -again, in partnership with Whitefriars helping launch a goody bag event where 500 bags containing samples, vouchers, BID shopping maps and treats from the city, promoted through the student unions and allocated online for collection from the team in Whitefriars Square.
- **Community Safety Hub** -we joined the Community Safety Team at their pop-up hub located outside McDonalds during Freshers Weeks to meet and greet the students as they headed out prior to the new 10pm curfew, promoting Canterbury's Purple Flag status as a safe city. Useful advice was given on how to stay safe, follow #litroutes, look out for others, plus reminders to be considerate to residents and to comply with the latest Covid guidelines.

City Centre Appearance

The **hanging flower baskets** lasted until early October, having been up since May to help the city look welcoming and friendly. **Christmas lights** will soon follow, with installation starting in early November and lights switched on in mid-November. We are extending the scheme to St Mary's De Castro Park at Castle Street, Guildhall Street and trees at Best Lane, Longmarket and by Fenwick.

Graffiti Removal

The BID continues close cooperation in tackling graffiti with the Council and where the local authorities cannot provide any further cleaning, we step in and remove those unsightly acts of vandalism. We paid for painting and removal of graffiti of Oxfam Bookshop and My Café (previously Poppies), Longmarket passageway and doorway of previously Debenhams store at Mercery Lane as well as previously Poundworld store. Our Ambassadors keep obtaining waivers and sending them directly to Graffiti Team at CCC so the cleaning can be done quickly.

Cleaning

As planned in previous months, we collaborated with a local contractor to commission and pay for street clean. Mercy Lane, Butchery Lane, Longmarket and Longmarket Square were jet washed as well as the windows of empty units of West Cornwall Pasty, Poundworld, BOHO Café cleaned.

The BID Team and BID Ambassadors took part in the **Great British September Clean**. We focused on litter picking and the removal of tags from lampposts, electrical boxes, benches and other street furniture across the city centre.

Awards

Purple Flag

Canterbury received Kent's only Purple Flag accreditation for the 9th year in a row. The Purple Flag standard is awarded by the Association of City and Town Management (ACTM) to town and city centres that offer an entertaining, diverse and safe night out. Similar to the Green Flag award for parks and the Blue Flag for beaches, the Purple Flag recognises locations that meet or surpass standards of excellence in managing the evening and night-time economy. It is a fantastic achievement for Canterbury city centre, and very well timed as we welcomed back students and shoppers after the stresses of the Covid lockdown.

Achieving this accreditation is a testament to the efforts of so many individuals, organisations and businesses who work hard every day to ensure people remain safe while they enjoy an evening and night out in Canterbury. The accreditation campaign was led and coordinated by the BID and includes representatives from Canterbury Christ Church University, Christ Church Student Union, the University of Kent, Kent Union, Canterbury City Council, District Watch, Kent Police, as well as security firms and owners and managers from various businesses across the city.

Canterbury in Bloom – Gold!

The 'Canterbury in Bloom Committee', co-ordinated by the BID, is formed of 20 local community groups, businesses and local authority members who work tirelessly to keep Canterbury's gardens, parks and streets flourishing throughout the year. The Britain in Bloom judges not only award merit for horticulture, they also look to see strong community engagement, reflected in the work undertaken year-round by the Canterbury in Bloom Committee, and all of the partners.

We were therefore delighted that Canterbury was awarded Gold in the South and South East in Bloom thanks to the amazing efforts of all involved, despite the judging being completed via a portfolio rather than in person. The accolade was then shared via social media, BID eNews and in the press.

Footfall

Eat Out to Help Out, staycationers and those working from home contributed to growing footfall in Canterbury in July, August and continuing the trend in September. Footfall was only 10% down in August, compared to a national average of 30% down. This reduced slightly in late September / early October, but Canterbury was again bucking the trend with footfall only 23% down in October compared to 40% nationally. We are continuing to monitor footfall in the city centre and have logged all the reports, including monthly summaries on our BID website

Sales Performance Monitoring

We monitor various aspect of city performance like footfall, vacancy rates, tourism, and sales trends. During the first lockdown it was not viable to collect sales data as the businesses were closed however since August we are monitoring it very closely and working with business owners again to increase the number of sales

data we have on the city centre. We now have 62 businesses reporting sales data which is anonymised and reported as month on month, and year on year, change.

Ambassadors:

Attending various meetings run by CCC is part of Ambassadors role, where they report and discuss any issues in the city centre and get updates on the ongoing ones, particularly with the Community Safety Unit, which includes representatives from the Council and the Police,

Climate Change

Canterbury BID is part of **The Canterbury Climate Action Partnership (CCAP)**, a group that includes representatives from other local civic society groups, our three universities, business, residents' associations, faith groups, youth groups, Greenpeace and many others, whose objective is to mobilise action towards a more sustainable future; especially to achieve a zero carbon district by 2030. The BID also sits on the Council's **Climate Change Partnership Board** whose purpose is to bring together large organisations and institutions in the Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay district for collective work on the district Climate Action Plan.

Marketing and Communications

Canterbury Gift Card

We are looking forward to the launch of the Canterbury Gift Card, designed to keep money circulating in the local economy. It is a pre-loaded Mastercard and there is no additional charge for businesses to be involved. The only cost to the merchant is the usual cost of accepting a Mastercard payment. The cards make brilliant birthday and Christmas presents, corporate rewards and prizes. They also make a great 'Welcome to Canterbury' gift. So far, over 90 businesses are signed up (including independents and nationals), representing 25% of Canterbury's eligible businesses, and more are signing up every day.

Christmas

Never has there been a more important year to make our city centre look sparkly, festive and welcoming. Therefore 2020 Christmas preparations came together in September/October with the BID's Christmas Committee working hard on planning activities to keep the sparkle in the city this Christmas and a county-wide marketing campaign. We collaborated with Visit Canterbury, Whitefriars, The Marlowe, Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury Christ Church University Projects in the pipeline include:

- **The Canterbury Gift Card**
- **5 miles of Christmas lights (from mid Nov)**
- **Annual Christmas Window Celebration**
- **Rupert the Bear Centenary Exhibition**
- **Christmas Selfie Trail (using window vinyls)**
- **Christmas stalls in Whitefriars, St Georges Street and Guildhall Street**
- **Socially distanced Santa's Grotto**
- **Pop up indoor Christmas makers markets**
- **2 x Christmas Pantomimes**

BID Board Nominations

October saw the launch of the BID Board nomination process where we invite any levy-paying business or organisations in the BID area to nominate themselves to serve on the Board until the end of the BID term (September 2024). Existing Board members are also invited to reapply for their positions.

We were delighted to receive a very enthusiastic response from the business community with 23 nominations which will be put out for election by BID levy payers as soon as it is safe to do so.

Levy Bills

BID levy bills were sent out on 23 October. The BID levy is unlike business rates which are covered in part by national government rates relief measures. BID legislation (BID Regulations Act 2004 and Local Government Act 2003) is clear that we must continue to bill. In line with that legislation and our BID Levy Rules, we are not permitted to discount the levy and the levy bills have to be issued. We understand the difficulty for many to provide payment at this time, and encourage anyone who anticipates problems with payment to contact Canterbury City Council, who are responsible for the administration and collection of the BID levy. They are available to help and advise and are always happy to talk to businesses facing hardship: 01227 862 316 or businessrates@canterbury.gov.uk. They are very understanding of how businesses have been financially impacted by the pandemic, and, as a team that is based in the area, they are especially in touch with the issues facing Canterbury businesses. FAQs and a report on how the levy is invested is available on the BID website.

To further support businesses during this time, the BID Board decided not to apply the annual discretionary inflationary increase this year and promotion on the BID's MyCanterbury platform is now free to all levy payers.

Canterbury City Council Updates:

Canterbury City Council updates have been a regular feature of our B2B newsletter for a while, helping businesses benefit from key information which may not necessarily reach them otherwise. During September and October we shared the following important information from CCC:

- **Canterbury City Council's newest recruit** Nicole Holt, the new Environmental Enforcement Graffiti Officer. In addition how they are offering **£500 cash reward for information on graffiti taggers** to help Canterbury crack down on unsightly graffiti.
- **Pavement license applications**, now open to application from local businesses under the new legislation.
- **The Local Plan Consultation**
- **The Council's security bollard system, at the time scheduled to come into operation on Monday 26 October**, followed by the announcement that it would be delayed by 2 weeks to allow for a phased introduction.

MyCanterbury

The MyCanterbury online platform continued to provide 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. In September and October, 14 emails were sent to over 8,000 people each, with an average open rate of 23%. We also have a very active Instagram and Facebook page available to promote Canterbury and its business community.

We congratulated:

- **Kent Cricket and partner** Shepherd Neame who joined together to bring members and supporters the next best alternative - live streaming at the Bishop's Finger pub in St Dunstons.
- **Canterbury's hospitality industry** as according to official data the city topped the charts as the town or city where the most Eat Out to Help Out meals were eaten during August with a whopping 114,000 meals claimed totalling £726,000 worth of discount.
- **Canterbury City Council and Friends of The Westgate Gardens** and the hard-working teams who involved who steered the park to win **Green Flag** status for 2020-21.
- **Canterbury** for winning international recognition as a "*city filled with picturesque historical buildings that will make a compelling setting for any film*" after being chosen as the location for new Bollywood film Paan Ch Madhaani.

- **Alexandra Gordon, partner at Canterbury law firm Brachers**, who was appointed president of the Kent Law Society (KLS).
- **The Foundry Brew Pub and The Unicorn** who both won praise in the Good Beer Guide 2021 - the Campaign for Real Ale's guide to the country's very best pubs.
- **The Westgate Hall** for reopening its doors to visitors in a very Covid-secure way -and offering the return of its popular market.

We welcomed:

- **The following new businesses to Canterbury:**
 - Platform Art in St Dunstons
 - Rock Paper Scissors in Stour Street
 - iCrack in Rose Lane
 - Skechers in Whitefriars Square
- **Canterbury's very first Drive-in Cinema** coordinated by the City Feast team and providing visitors an exciting array of films and food served directly to cars.
- **The new makeover of Tulip** restaurant at the bottom of the High Street, now re-branded as Mezze Bar and Grill.
- **The award-winning Ambrette's** reopening of its dine-in restaurant in Beer Cart Lane.
- **The Westgate Towers Museum and Viewpoint** who reopened its doors to the public at the beginning of October
- **The hard-working team at homeless charity Catching Lives** who reopened their bookshop on Palace Street.

We promoted:

- **The Best Small Shop of 2020 competition** which celebrates the commitment and creativity of entrepreneurial independent retailers on the UK's High Street
- **The "Accommodation Insights: Using Data on the Road to Recovery"** which shared important national and regional performance insights and trends.
- The opportunity to get involved in **Visit Britain's new autumn domestic campaign** - Escape the Everyday
- The latest results from **Visit England's COVID-19 Consumer Tracker**
- **Heritage Open Day events**, put on across the country to celebrate the UK's history and culture, and of which the BID's very own Medieval Pageant was part of.
- **Visit Kent's relaunch of their monthly business survey** which gathers the latest visitor footfall and insights.
- **Marlowe Theatre** for announcing it will be presenting a special Christmas pantomime production "**Nurse Nellie Saves Panto**" to a socially distanced audience in December.
- **The King's School's Malthouse Theatre** for also putting on a special Covid-secure performance of Beauty and the Beast.
- The new Halloween experience **The Black Dog Mystery Trail at the Beaney**
- **A high-profile petition** calling for a much-needed permanent Minister for Hospitality.
- **Kent's biggest Arts Festival the Canterbury Festival**, one of the very few festivals to go ahead who's two-week extravaganza of music, comedy, art, performance, talks, family events, science and more launched in October.
- **The HeArt of the City Arts Trail**, a collaboration of community groups, charities, schools, colleges, universities and artists with the Canterbury Festival celebrating creativity and highlighting the important role it plays in health and wellbeing.
- **Canterbury's kick-back at the 10pm curfew** restrictions with a flurry of newly-launched Brunches at bars and café's in the city centre.

- **The Get Safe Online** campaign in partnership with the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) with its Code of Advice to help consumers and businesses stay secure on the internet.
- Canterbury's biggest vintage sale **Worth the Weight Vintage Market** which was hosted at the Westgate Hall.
- **Canterbury Cathedral's daily online services** plus the Cathedral's clergy who created a range of other online video content, including the Dean of Canterbury's readings of classic tales.
- **Canterbury's Halloween offerings over the October Half Term:**
 - The new spooky experience The Black Dog Mystery Trail at the Beaney
 - Haunted river boat tours with the Canterbury Punting Company
 - Halloween drag performance by Donna Trump at Glitterbomb at the Tokyo Tearooms
 - The Falstaff's Spooky Afternoon Tea
- **Burgate-based recruitment consultant HR-GO's** series of excellent blogs giving handy tips on subjects like Does your Team have Zoom Fatigue and more
- **Christmas at Whitefriars** with its small selection of Christmas inspired retail huts plus Festive Pop-Up and Santa's Grotto in the former Monsoon and Accessorize units.
- The return of the **Westgate Hall's Christmas Makers Market**
- The much-anticipated **Rupert Bear Centenary Exhibition at The Beaney**