

Connected Canterbury: Unlocking the Tales of England Letter of Support from Canterbury Business Improvement District

29 June 2022

Canterbury BID supports Canterbury City Council's application to the Levelling Up fund that will see much-needed investment into local infrastructure that will have a demonstrable impact on the lives of the people who work, live, visit and study here. This funding will support the city's vision to position Canterbury as a world class cultural heritage destination, making the most of the assets we already have and enabling us to tell new stories about the city's past, present and future in order to benefit the widest possible audience.

This vision was laid out in the city's second Destination Management Plan (DMP), launched in 2018, which recommended that the city needed to invest in telling fresh stories, growing the overnight market, delivering a distinctive brand, increasing day visitor spend all of which would add to a sustainable trading environment for the business community and a welcoming and accessible place for everyone. The DMP gave evidence for the need to join up our offering, regenerate our cultural, heritage and civic assets, improve our connectivity and infrastructure.

More recently, the Council has declared a climate emergency, set targets for reducing carbon emissions, and developed a multi-stakeholder Climate Change Partnership Board. There is also a community-led Biodiversity Networking and a county-wide Pollinator Action Plan. The need to improve transport and green the urban environment is clear.

The Levelling Up fund presents us with an opportunity to protect the city by investing in sustainable infrastructure and projects that meet the vision laid out in the DMP and are also required by the climate crisis, so that this World Heritage city can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Having been hit by both Covid and declining local authority budgets, we need investment now more than ever. Without investing in sustainable urban infrastructure, our ability to tell the city's culture and heritage stories will suffer – indeed, have been suffering – and we will not be able to bring in the additional investment that we desperately need.

For example,

- Restoration of heritage spaces, including the Dane John Gardens, the area around the Westgate Towers and the Clock Tower, will ensure those spaces can be used by locals and visitors alike, in a sustainable way.
- The restoration of Canterbury Castle will be key to ensuring we have enough experiences to keep our visitors in the city. Businesses in the castle area are keen to support this investment as a new quarter is currently being created for that part of the city (The Castle Quarter) and they will be producing excellent trails and activities.

- Similarly, the restoration of the Poor Priest's Hospital will enable the space to be used for generations to come – and its current use by the Marlowe is bringing heritage to life for young people, through exhibition space, youth company creative classes and schools workshops.
- For our cultural institutions, having event infrastructure in place (sustainable power supplies, wifi, and projects to green the urban environment) will assist in the creation of new and exciting city centre events and in the creation of spaces that people want to be. We know that Canterbury benefits from beautiful medieval streets, but lack of a civic square means larger events are difficult to position. The Canterbury Culture group includes 38 representatives from the cultural sector, who could support and provide data to drive this investment forward.
- The BID also represents Canterbury in Bloom which is an umbrella for over 20 community groups across the city. In 2018 we hosted a Green Heritage conference where the push for pollinator projects and city centre greening was the main theme. We supported Canterbury's first Climate Action Week 2021 where it was clear that Canterbury needs to commit to green investment immediately. The Levelling Up project could help ensure that greening and pollinator focused planting is a priority in our urban city. Adding infrastructure now, will ensure that by 2030 we are supporting the council's net zero target with urban greening.
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We fully support the aim of this bid to revitalise economic and cultural engagement in Canterbury which will have a visible impact on the people and communities who visit the city. We also believe, based on evidence gathered through recent strategies and consultations (eg, the 2018 DMP and more recent Business Barometers from Visit Kent), that this Levelling Up funding will enable both green and economic sustainability.

Sincerely,



Lisa Carlson
Chief Executive
Canterbury Business Improvement District