

Living Lerwick Ltd

Annual report 2022/23



Living Lerwick Ltd
info@livinglerwick.co.uk
www.livinglerwick.co.uk
T:07379 765 020



@livinglerwick



/livinglerwick



Living Lerwick Ltd manages the Lerwick town centre Business Improvement District which operates to improve the physical, trading and community conditions in the area. Members voted to renew the BID in August 2021 with a 74% 'Yes' vote. All business properties in the BID area which are listed with the Scottish Assessors Valuation Role for non domestic rates are automatically members of Living Lerwick, unless specific exemptions as detailed in the BID proposal apply. There are over 40 BIDs across Scotland encouraging collaborative working practices over wider community areas in the public, private and third sectors. Most are area based, but themed groups such as tourism or food and drink BIDs are also now operating. These all focus on supporting and improving conditions for businesses. This report is a summary of the second year of Living Lerwick's third term – year eleven overall for the BID.

Living Lerwick project work is managed on behalf of the board of directors by Emma Miller of Réalta Events Management, which is also a member business. In 2022/23 Living Lerwick had 11 directors in total. Three stepped down during the year. These were James and Gemma Tonge and Leanne Laurenson. Current directors are as follows: Steve Mathieson, Chair (Visit Scotland) Edna Irvine, Vice Chair (Smith & Robertson) David Coe (Ninian) Stewart Jamieson (Harry's) Ben Mullay (The Camera Centre) Michael Laurenson (Cee & Jays) Louise Grains, from June 2023 (Jamieson's of Shetland) Ana Steibar, from June 2023 (Refan Perfume Boutique Shetland) Shetland Islands Councillor Neil Pearson and local authority appointed Liaison Officer, Neil Henderson, also both attend meetings in an informal advisory capacity with no voting rights.

Living Lerwick Business Plan

The Living Lerwick Business Plan sets out the areas of work that the project management team work towards. The following priority areas were identified by member businesses prior to the renewal ballot in 2021:

- More footfall to the town centre
- More marketing of town centre businesses and activities
- Increasing access options for the town centre
- Activities to make the town centre more attractive
- Providing business support to town centre businesses

Period 1st September 2022 to 31st August 2023. Full accounts are available to Living Lerwick members on request and filing accounts are available on the Living Lerwick website.

| Income | 2022/23 | 2021/22 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Business Improvement District Levy receivable | £71,691 | £72,631 |
| Lerwick Community Council grants received | £812 | £2,000 |
| SIC core funding and other grants | £521,906 | £5,000 |
| Miscellaneous income | £4,050 | £1,442 |
| Covid Resilience grant income | £ - | £11,790 |
| Scotland Loves Local Funding | £ - | £9,404 |
| National Lottery Funding | £5,000 | - |
| Total Income | £103,459 | £102,267 |
| Expenditure | 2022/23 | 2021/22 |
| More Attractive project | £35,343 | £22,575 |
| More Business Support project | £3,295 | £2,413 |
| More Footfall project | £19,780 | £27,060 |
| More Marketing project | £16,602 | £13,790 |
| Management and Administrative fees | £18,115 | £17,989 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | £93,135 | £83,827 |
| SURPLUS /DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR | £10,324 | £18,440 |

Living Lerwick is a 'not for profit' company and all surplus funds will be invested in project expenditure going forward. With uncertainty as to how much levy income will be collected each year, expenditure is carefully managed to ensure adequate cashflow.

Income

All members within the BID area are legally required to pay the Business Improvement District levy, based on the non-domestic rateable value of their property. This income is the main source of funding to pay for the work done by Living Lerwick and collection is managed by Shetland Islands Council. In 2022/23 there were 157 member businesses and a total of £75,325 of levy was billed – including a 20% discount for new businesses in their first year.

A total of £71,691 was collected, with around £16,000 of this relating to outstanding amounts from previous years.

Grant funding income this year included the usual £5000 BID management grant from Shetland Islands Council and additional grant funding towards the Tall Ships Redd Up and a promotional filming project still to be completed at the year end. A grant of £5000 from the National Lottery was used to purchase new tables and chairs for events, as well as contributing towards running a music marquee on Commercial Street during the Tall Ships Races.

Other income was generated by the Christmas grotto.

Expenditure

Expenditure on activities to make the town centre more attractive were considerably higher this year with the ‘Redd Up’ project delivered prior to the Tall Ships Races.

The spend on footfall was lower, also due to the event, as no high licence fees or band costs were incurred for a summer spree - with other activities taking place to drive footfall to the town centre area.

Marketing costs were up slightly as was spend on business support services.

Management costs were slightly down, but an increase in bad debt provision resulted in administrative costs overall being slightly higher than the previous year.

The surplus funds in this year’s accounts will be allocated towards the cost of new gutter cleaning and flower watering equipment as the company’s previous contractor is no longer providing this service. Other projects are also being considered.



2022-23 has been another busy and successful year for Lerwick and for the Living Lerwick team. Our digital activity continues to attract a growing number of followers and when combined with our other marketing initiatives helps to shine a strong spotlight on the goods and services offered by our members.

The “Spend at da Street” loyalty scheme has gone from strength to strength and our window trails are extremely popular with both bairns and adults.

The Christmas Parade and associated activities such as Santa’s Grotto brought hundreds of folk into the town centre to join in the festivities while a special trail helped mark the coronation of His Royal Highness King Charles.

Possibly the biggest event for Lerwick in 2023 was the arrival of the Tall Ships, and the entertainment provided by Living Lerwick ensured that the crowds were flooding into da Street as well as along the Esplanade.

Our team has been particularly busy this year keeping in touch with member businesses and providing them with useful, up to date information on subjects as diverse as cruise ship visits and energy saving funding.

Da Street itself has had a lot of attention, with successful funding bids meaning that we have been able to help spruce up a number of business frontages as well as keeping the area looking at its best with flowers, bunting and Christmas lights.

Town centre’s across the country face significant ongoing challenges and Lerwick is no different, though I would say that in comparison to many of those other centres we are extremely lucky to have such an attractive and vibrant area at the heart of our town.

Organic change is an ongoing process and of course we will always see some businesses closing and other starting, but we are very fortunate in Lerwick in that we normally have more enquiries from businesses wanting to locate here than we have available property.

Every business in Lerwick town centre requires the support of both locals and visitors, and Living Lerwick will continue to ensure that our members are able to flourish in an environment that is pleasurable to both work in and to visit as a customer.

Steve Mathieson
Chair
September 2023
Tel:01595 743141

Social Media

Sharing member posts and adding original content to Facebook remains the significant majority of Living Lerwick's social media engagement. Throughout the year Facebook followers increased by over 600 to 5989. Overall reach for the page increased by 768% to 313,600 with 41,100 content interactions. Instagram followers increased slightly to 2069 and more proactive content development is identified as required here.

Other Marketing activity

- New food and drink postcard promoting hospitality businesses
- Updated town centre window map with new business details
- Information leaflet produced and distributed to cruise passengers
- New photography bank of businesses for web and other use
- Ongoing blog posts for businesses – focussing on new businesses
- Promotion and encouragement for businesses to increase trading hours to capture the Shetland Wool Week visitor audience
- Paid print, online and radio advertising of events and activities.



Website

The online business directory continues to be well used on the website and is updated regularly along with news stories, events and details of vacant properties and jobs available.

Unique website users decreased slightly to 17,157 over the year with 21,861 individual sessions.

The most visited pages were:

- Home page (4798)
- Jobs (2171)
- Virtual High Street (2039)
- Vacant Properties (1939)
- Business Directory (1868)

Christmas Promotion

Our Christmas marketing activity included the development of a new Gift Guide service which presented details of affordable gift options through the website and social media channels with businesses providing images and options for £20 price point gifts.

We continued to promote the opening times for businesses with regular updates during November and December and produced a well received animated Christmas video with Keiba Film. The heartwarming film had over 11,000 views on social media.

We have also been working with Keiba Film to develop a series of short promotional videos focussing on different aspects the town centre – these will be released in 2024.

With so many additional visitors expected to Lerwick town centre in the summer between record cruise numbers and the Tall Ships Races, the Living Lerwick team secured funding from Shetland Islands Council for a summer Redd Up project.

This enabled an assessment of minor repairs and maintenance issues to building frontages and public spaces and resulted in work being carried out to improve 28 properties and two social spaces. This included painting works, power washing, window repairs and planter repairs.

The summer planting scheme was extended to cover the seating area owned by Shetland Islands Council at Harrison Square. Funding was received from Lerwick Community Council and Living Lerwick arranged for Shetland Garden Co. to plant flowers in the space.

Bespoke Tall Ships Races bunting was installed for the summer to mark the event.

Unfortunately there were a number of issues of vandalism and anti-social behaviour reported during the year and the team responded to this by offering support to members and liaising with the police and local authority as appropriate.

Christmas Decorations

The Christmas tree at the Market Cross was once again brought to Lerwick with the assistance of Northwards and Serco NorthLink and erected with the help of Shetland Islands Council Roads Service.

Additional lights were added this year to Bank Lane, however weather and vandalism resulted in damage, so alternatives will be sought for future.

Increased Access

There are limited opportunities for Living Lerwick to make progress in this area with no statutory powers on parking or vehicle access. The team continue to liaise with the local authority in regard to suitable timing for street closures for road works. Additional facilities for bicycles were investigated including options for cycle storage units and a bike maintenance station. No suitable location has yet been identified and work will continue on this.



Member Support

There were almost 600 direct contacts with individual businesses from the Living Lerwick Team during the year, with a variety of visits, phone calls and emails. There were 50 group emails sent to all members, or groups of members with useful information or requesting details of opening times or participation in events etc.

Regular emails were sent with details of cruise ship visits, which reached 129 vessels this year, with around 142,000 passengers – a record for Shetland.

Some general topics of assistance through the year were:

- The Business Transition Fund
- Anti-Social behaviour complaints, including noise and litter
- Advice on sustainable practices and energy saving funding

All new businesses were contacted with welcome packs and an invitation to meet with the team. New businesses continue to received 25% discount on their BID levy for the first year in the area.



Promotion of Jobs and Properties

The website was regularly updated with details of jobs available in the town centre and the team kept in touch with those recruiting to ensure this was current.

Vacant properties were also actively promoted where these were made available by the building owner for lease. Living Lerwick continue to try to address the public misconception that an empty property is a vacant property – several empty properties are either under refurbishment or are not available for let through the choice of the property owner.



Spend at da Street

The local loyalty scheme has continued to be well used, with the number of entries up by 500 over the year. One winner per month received a £50 gift card for a town centre business of their choice and in December the bumper draw awarded six lucky winners voucher packages worth £175 each – donated by participating businesses.

Trails

A number of window trails and character hunts were offered with excellent take up from member businesses participating. These included a Trow Hunt, a Halloween cat trail, the Christmas Elf hunt and a Viking expedition.

Regular trails such as the Easter trail and Shetland Pride trail were joined by extra events this year to mark the King's Coronation and the arrival of the Tall Ships Races to Lerwick. There were 443 returned trail sheets, with many more handed out.

Another addition to the trail schedule this year was the inclusion of a Shetland Pony trail specifically aimed at Cruise Passengers to encourage browsing in shops.



Christmas

The lead up to Christmas is always a very special time on Commercial Street. The weather provided perfect conditions for Santa to come ashore with Lerwick's RNLI crew and meet the hundreds of children lined up along Victoria Pier and throughout the town centre. The volunteers from the RNLI also assisted with the welcome return of the Grotto where nearly 300 bairns had the chance to receive a gift from Santa. New interactive photo-opp boards were also provided at the Market Cross, with funding supplied by SSE Renewables.



Tall Ships Races

The Tall Ships races returning to Lerwick marked the biggest event the town has seen since they were last here in 2011.

Thousands of people flocked to the town centre on a daily basis to see the ships, hear the live music and enjoy the atmosphere. A dedicated music marquee was in place at the south end of Commercial Street over the four days, furnished with new tables and chairs provided with funding from the National Lottery Awards for All Scheme.

Living Lerwick also arranged for Captain Jack Sparrow and Mr Gibbs to attend the event. The incredible look-a-like characters spent time visiting businesses along Commercial Street as well as on the event sites to the delight of many.



Other

Living Lerwick again supported the local Pride March with plans for the parade and the window trail.

The National 'Make Music Day' was promoted to businesses and while there was limited uptake, this is an initiative which may grow in future.

