

# Living Lerwick Ltd

## Annual report 2023/24



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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 under the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 (part 9), except where specific exemptions as detailed in the BID proposal apply.

There are 37 BIDs across Scotland encouraging collaborative working practices 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 third year of Living Lerwick's third term – year 12 overall for the BID.

## 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

In 2023/24 Living Lerwick had 10 directors in total. One joined and stepped down with in the year, with the business moving out of the BID area – that was Julie Graham of Viking Energy Windfarm LLP.

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 Laurensen (Cee & Jays)  
 Louise Grains (Jamieson's of Shetland)  
 Ana Steibar (Refan Perfume Boutique Shetland)  
 Ross Manson from January 2024 (No. 88 Bar and Restaurant)

Shetland Islands Council appointed Liaison Officer, Neil Henderson, also attends meetings in an informal advisory capacity with no voting rights.

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

Period 1st September 2023 to 31st August 2024.

Full accounts are available to Living Lerwick members on request and filing accounts are available on the Living Lerwick website.

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Business Improvement District Levy receivable	£74,443	£71,691
Lerwick Community Council grants received	£1,000	£812
SIC core & other grant funding	£5000	£21,906
Miscellaneous income	£5,105	£4,050
National Lottery Community Fund	£0	£5,000
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£85,548</b>	<b>£103,459</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
More Attractive project	£30,872	£35,343
More Business Support project	£4,797	£3,295
More Footfall project	£18,846	£19,780
More Marketing project	£14,218	£16,602
Management and Administrative fees	£25,645	£18,115
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£94,378</b>	<b>£93,135</b>
<b>SURPLUS /DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>(£8,830)</b>	<b>£10,324</b>

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 2023/24 there were a total of 158 member businesses and a total of £74,443 in levy was billed. Despite this, only £56,462 was collected by Shetland Islands Council. This included £32,340 for the 23/24 year and £24,122 towards outstanding balances from previous years.

There usually is some level of shortfall, however this exceeded reasonable levels and discussions have been held with the senior officer in the finance section to address this and ensure collection procedures are implemented to ensure the BID is able to continue to operate.

Grant income was lower than previous years with £5000 core funding from SIC and £1000 from Lerwick Community Council for summer flowers.

Other income came from the Christmas grotto (largely donated to RNLI for their support), a donation of £800 from Viking Energy for summer trail prizes and a contribution towards the town centre Christmas tree from Shetland Islands Council.

### Expenditure

The accounts show an end of year deficit of £8,830. This does not take into account the significant shortfall in levy income and is largely due to increased costs in management and administration fees.

The majority of this is a significant increase in bad debt provision and sums written off due to non collection of levy. Other increased costs under this heading were accounting fees, rent costs for storage facilities and a small increase in staff costs.

Other expenditure was managed through the year to keep in line with budgets as much as possible.

Expenditure on all headings is higher than that originally forecast in the 2021-26 business plan due to increasing operating costs and service fees. Cashflow is managed to ensure there is no risk to operational capacity and budget planning for 2024/25 has been cautious in line with the decrease in levy collected. Expenditure on business support increased due to the time spent and activity relating to the Lanes Masterplan consultation and subsequent report response.



Lerwick town centre enjoyed another successful year in 2023-24, with the Living Lerwick team working hard all year round to keep it thriving as Shetland's main business hub.

The town looked fantastic thanks to summer flower baskets and bunting, while Christmas brought festive cheer with lights, a tree, the ever-popular parade, and Santa's grotto. We also worked with COPE to give Harrison Square a fresh look with new planting around the seating area.

Six themed trails throughout the year added extra fun for families and helped bring people into town, while our Spend at Da Street scheme continued to be a hit with shoppers and businesses, encouraging local spending.

Marketing the town centre remained a top priority, with strong growth on social media, regular promotions, new maps for food & drink and knitwear, and three short films showcasing the positive impact of local businesses. The website remains a key source of info, especially for job vacancies, and we keep in regular contact with businesses through newsletters and updates.

Behind the scenes, we worked closely with the Council on things like roadworks and planning, making sure any disruptions were minimised for local businesses. We also commissioned a parking survey at the swimming pool car park to help inform upcoming development plans and highlight its importance for shoppers. This confirmed how busy the area is and will hopefully be taken into account before plans are finalised.

Tourism gave the town a boost again over the summer months, especially with cruise ship visitors, and everything from flowers to unseen tasks like gutter cleaning helped create a positive first impression.

But we know that the most important people to businesses are the local customers who will support them all year round, and without whom Da Street could not survive. This is why it is so essential to keep coming to Da Street to shop to keep the area thriving and ensure that there is a beating heart for the community for generations to come.

Steve Mathieson  
Chair  
Tel:01595 743141



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. Around 25 hours of time per week is spent on BID work between two staff.

In addition to the main business plan headings, there is a significant amount of administrative work carried out to operate the BID. These activities included:

- Attending Lerwick Community Council meetings to represent member businesses
- Monitor national BID activities, participate in national surveys and liaise regularly with other BID managers to share information, activity ideas and good practice.
- Preparing and monitoring budgets, processing levy payment reports, processing all financial transactions, and preparing for end of year accounts.
- Preparation of annual report and arrangement of AGM.
- Preparation of funding applications, claims and reports as required.
- Review and feedback on local consultation matters

- Discussions and provision of information to SIC Planning officer in regard to updated town centre health check and conservation area character appraisal to be carried out in 2025.

- Engagement with public training and information sessions on Local Place Planning – with a view to ensuring a suitable place plan can be developed for Lerwick town centre, ensuring customers and business access and use requirements are properly considered in any future development.

- Checking BID Proposal and legislation regarding appointing voluntary members from outwith BID geographical boundary. Directors approved in principle to consider this on an individual basis.

- Attending 'guarding, signing and lighting' training to safely deploy road closure signage during events.



### Website

The website is updated on a regular basis, with current information about jobs, available properties and addition of member business blogs and news stories. We also commissioned new photography within businesses this year to refresh some pages. Engagement continues to be good, with 27,601 users sessions this year. Popular pages remain consistent in terms of visits:

- Home page: 4,564 views
- Business Director: 3,666 views
- Jobs page: 2,506 views
- Vacant Properties page: 1,256 views

### Advertising, Print and Media

Online advertising with local agencies continues all year round, with updated adverts and links provided to promote specific events or activities, and the business directory promoting the Buy Local message in between. The team liaise with the local media, providing responses to enquiries and interviews as requested providing positive messaging about the town centre.

A printed postcard was produced with a map of all food and drink businesses in the town centre. This proved popular and was distributed from various businesses.

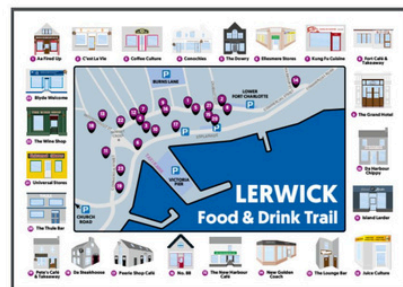
An informal map of knitwear retailers was also produced on request to satisfy regular customer enquiries. A new banner was produced promoting career opportunities in the town centre, and displayed when the team attended the DYW careers fair.

### Social Media

Member posts continue to be shared on a daily basis. Original content is created and added when available. Facebook continues to be a valuable tool with an additional 797 followers this year, taking the total to 6786. The total recorded reach was 196.5k, with 34.1k interactions. Instagram is less successful, though continues to be used. Follower numbers remained mostly static with a reach of only 3.2k and 31 interactions. The majority of this activity was in relation to the video content released.

### Digital Audit

A Digital audit of our online presence was arranged through Business Gateway. This included an overview of website and social media channels. Updates and changes were made in response to recommendations, including branding and information link updates. The unused Twitter account was deleted. Additional video and original social media content was created, re-using content from member posts in a fresh post, and interaction levels monitored – increased engagement levels were noted and this practice continues.



### Summer Scheme

Lerwick town centre looked resplendent once again with the addition of summer bunting and floral arrangements. Long term partners, Frakafeld Garden Centre provided a stunning array of plants to fill 67 full or half wall baskets, 16 window boxes and 33 free standing planters. The flowers lasted well into September, with care and maintenance provided by contractor, Neil Francis.

Working again with participants from Shetland Garden Co, the parklet at Harrison Square was planted with a mix of bright flowers, herbs and Shetland oats – leading to a commendation award in the Lerwick Community Council Garden Competition.

Gutter cleaning equipment was purchased and will be used in a rolling programme to keep gutters in the area clear.

### Christmas Lighting

A new contractor was engaged to install and manage the Christmas lights in 2023. Following removal of the lights a review was carried out into new connection systems as regular faults and trips has led to a need for a revised connection system for next year.

Additional new lighting has been identified and purchased for the lamp posts along the Esplanade, to be deployed in winter 2024.

The Market Cross Christmas tree was procured and installed, providing the welcome focal point in the town centre.

### Roadworks

The team held discussions with the Shetland Islands Council Roads team in regard to planned road works and closure of Commercial Street during the busy summer season. Following engagement with members and feedback to the Roads department, the works were delayed to September. (however were not then carried out at all)

### Lanes Masterplan Survey

A survey brief was prepared to monitor usage of the Hillhead car park. Groups and individuals were engaged to carry out a manual count over two weeks. The team prepared a map of the car park and checked the stated parking space numbers against the Council Consultants figure. An initial count was carried out – confirming that the car park is already overstated capacity regularly and has a high usage rate, meaning any reduction in parking will have a detrimental affect on access to the area. A follow up count and report to council is planned.





### Member Communications

The team prepared and issued quarterly email newsletter to members with relevant information, in addition to ongoing daily communications. There were over 700 direct individual contacts by email, telephone or in person visit with members over the year and weekly update group emails through the summer with cruise updates. This is welcomed by many businesses to keep track of the 134 cruise ships and 138,537 passengers which arrived in Lerwick through the year.

Additional group emails are issued regularly to sector groups requesting seasonal opening times, marketing information or requesting participation in events and activities.

### ShopSafe App

Following increases in reported anti social behaviour issues and shoplifting incidents, the team met with a representative of Police Scotland who recommended considering an information sharing app such as ShopSafe. Work has begun to roll this out to members in line with the required data protection regulations.

### SIC Lanes Masterplan

There has been extensive communication with and from members regarding the Lanes Masterplan proposal, published following the public consultation. Many members felt their input was widely ignored and the decision by the Development Committee to agree to the option removing the highest level of parking will be significantly detrimental to town centre.

A survey was prepared and issued to members in regard to the Lanes Masterplan option report and subsequent approval by councillors. This was followed up with emails, calls and visits to maximise response to survey and a full report will be brought to the attention of council officials with the results of this survey and the car park monitoring survey.

### Other

Other enquiries and support requests included:

- Responding to damage caused to property due to high winds.
- Liaising with SIC cleansing staff on litter issues.
- Regular enquiries from business owners looking for suitable properties to rent or buy in town centre – providing them with information regarding footfall, available properties and offering support.
- Investigating opportunities for islands deal funding and initiatives but nothing directly applicable to town centre.
- Access difficulties caused by scaffolding left in place beyond permit date.
- Reporting dangerous wiring complaint to BT.
- Anti social behaviour issues around Irvine Place and discussing solutions with businesses and access / antisocial behaviour representatives from SIC.
- Multiple complaints from member businesses regarding street vendor parking illegally and obstructing access.

### Scotland Loves Local

Living Lerwick engaged with the national Scotland Loves Local campaign, encouraging shoppers to sign the 'Love Local' pledge. MSP's Beatrice Wishart and Arianna Burgess also signed the pledge and visited local businesses to find out about their current issues and concerns.

This national campaign, co-ordinated by Scotland's Towns Partnership, engaged with MSPs all across Scotland to share the shop local message.



Celebrating Success: 4 Inspiring Local Businesses in Lerwick Town Centre

### Local Business Video Project

A video project inspired by ideas from young filmmakers was completed after being started last year. The three individual pieces focussed on different aspects of the town centre – long standing successful businesses; new start businesses making a positive impact on the area and the many different ways in which staff, customers and visitors can access the town centre – whether by land, sea, motor or human power. These were well received and had a combined reach of 6300 on social media.



**Lerwick Town Centre Business Directory**  
Over 150 small business owners serving our local community  
Search goods and services available now on your doorstep

Live Local, Love Local



**Christmas and New Year Opening Times**  
Lerwick town centre shops and business opening hours over the festive period are updated regularly on the Living Lerwick website - click here to view.  
[www.livinglerwick.co.uk](http://www.livinglerwick.co.uk)





**Scotland Loves Local Week 26th Aug-1st Sept**  
Sign the Scotland Loves Local Pledge  
[Click here for more details](#)



Examples of year-round online ads with local agencies





### Christmas Parade

The popular Christmas parade was arranged, with excited crowds gathering to welcome Santa ashore at Victoria Pier from the Lerwick Lifeboat. The RNLI, Lerwick Port Authority, Up Helly Aa committee, and Police Scotland Young Volunteers provided excellent logistical support. While the volunteer traffic stewards, marshals and parade participants made it a very special day for all who attended. Santa's Grotto, held the following two weekends saw 361 children visit Santa, supported by the RNLI fundraising team. Income from the grotto was donated to Lerwick RNLI.



### Trails

Trails were planned in advance, with positive participation from businesses. Over the year, six trails attracted 367 participants, with the summer trail being particularly popular with higher value prizes for taking part, courtesy of Viking Energy Windfarm funding

### Footfall Monitoring

Research was conducted into footfall counter options as the existing system was withdrawn by the supplier in January 2024 due to connection issues with 3G. Following discussion with other BIDs recommendations, the HUQ system was trialled for one year. This is a GPS based system which conducted footfall monitoring through mobile phone data. This did not perform as expected and data was questioned with the supplier. The area appeared to be too small for accurate monitoring purposes. Additional data was provided, based on MasterCard spend data, which provided interesting statistics, though not comprehensive and not indicating levels of footfall. Most statistical based footfall systems appear to require good 4G internet connection for outdoors, or are indoor based, meaning an alternative has not yet been identified.



### Spend at da Street

The Spend at da Street scheme continues to be well used, with 42 town centre businesses participating in the scheme. Three additional winners were chosen in September in celebration of Scotland Love's Local Week, and the usual bumper prize package of £175 worth of vouchers were issued to six lucky winners in December. Every other month gave away a £50 voucher to one lucky winner.



### Increased Footfall in Summer

Feedback from businesses has indicated that the summer season continues to be increasingly busy with some struggling to meet demand for capacity – particularly hospitality businesses. An apparent shortage of staff within the sector is also compounding the problem. Retail businesses have noted an increase in shoplifting, with some having to invest in security equipment. The ShopSafe scheme has now been implemented.

### Other

The team investigated funding and possible locations for bicycle storage and maintenance stations. No suitable site was identified unfortunately.

Discussion was held with organisers of Shetland Fiddle Week to identify ways to involve town centre locations in the festival.

Planning ahead, members were contacted and invited to participate in a craft/activity weekend during the October holidays.

