

Spend Christmas  
with us!



## Park FREE

on 3 late night shopping evenings

Love Bedford has announced more good news on the parking front for Christmas in Bedford as part of its "Spend Christmas With Us" campaign.

Free late night shopping parking at three car parks in Bedford has been announced, thanks to Love Bedford and the Harpur Centre.

BedfordBID businesses are funding free late night shopping parking at two main multi-storey car parks: Lurke Street and River Street and the Harpur Shopping Centre is waiving charges at its underground car park at the same times.

**This free offer will run from 5.30 – 9pm on  
Wednesdays November 27th,  
December 4th and 11th.**

The first late night shopping event will coincide with the switching on of the Christmas lights in Bedford town centre and the annual riverside fireworks, in association with BedfordBID, at 7pm. Earlier that afternoon BedfordBID has arranged for Heart Radio Angels to be in town with the Moshi Monsters, and there will be a chance to win £500 of Love Bedford vouchers.

BedfordBID Director Christina Rowe said: "The deal is to encourage people to stay late shopping in the town – chain and main stores will be open, as will those independents who want to cash in on Christmas. Some shops will close at 8pm – but then customers will have time to get back to their cars before the free offer finishes at 9 pm.

## Plus a chance to win £500 Love Bedford vouchers

"BedfordBID previously financed a 'free after 3 pm' parking promotion. This year businesses told us free parking at the late night shopping sessions was what they wanted – so we have responded."

Earlier the Mayor of Bedford announced that on Saturdays visitors' first two hours of parking at council-owned car parks would be free from November 23rd.

Christina Rowe added: "We represent 575 levy-paying businesses and hear every day what they want to improve their trading conditions in the town centre.

"Parking is a regular topic of conversation and we hope that these free parking deals, set up in time for Christmas, will help at the busiest retail period of the year."

Late night shopping will continue in Bedford every night from December 16th – 20th but standard parking charges will apply. Check for changing details on [www.lovebedford.co.uk](http://www.lovebedford.co.uk) or [www.harpurcentre.co.uk](http://www.harpurcentre.co.uk)

"Sundays are a key shopping day for many people and in Bedford parking is free or just £1 all day all year round. Shops are open from 10 – 4pm approximately so we look forward to people shopping with us before, during and after Christmas," added Christina.

BedfordBID represents nearly 800 businesses in Bedford Town Centre, approximately 575 are levy payers - but all benefit from the activities of our Love Bedford brand. By supporting BedfordBID you are supporting your own trading environment and helping to attract new customers and investment into Bedford. Contact your team on (01234) 404500 or talk to one of the Bluecaps.

[www.lovebedford.co.uk](http://www.lovebedford.co.uk)



**BedfordBID**  
Business Improvement District  
Funded by Town Centre Businesses

# BedfordBID

the bottom line for business

Newsletter for Bedford Business Improvement District,  
funded by 575 Town Centre Businesses  
Issue Seven

## BIDs are the future says Government

Love Bedford has been applauded by the new Minister for High Streets for showing the way to the rest of the UK with its BID – Business Improvement District.

In announcing that BIDs are to be encouraged in all towns in the UK, Minister Brandon Lewis said that Bedford was an example of where businesses led the way in promoting and supporting their own trading environment.

When visiting Bedford as part of a national forum meeting on Monday October 14th, as the announcement was made nationally, Mr Lewis was filmed and photographed on Bedford Town Bridge

BedfordBID was one of only 12 towns which piloted the US-style business improvement districts in 2005. The then Labour Government and then local Labour MP Patrick Hall, a former town centre manager, and late Mayor Frank Branston pioneered the project. Now the coalition Government of Tory and LibDem MPs has backed BIDs.

Christina Rowe, Director of BedfordBID said: "Our BID has had to adapt to many changes since it was launched to keep abreast of what local businesses need to ensure that Bedford stays buoyant. There will always be more and different ways of doing things, but we hope that now we are well into our second term that the real benefit of businesses being in charge of their own town centre budget can be recognised.

"We are glad that the new Minister has given BedfordBID a vote of confidence."

## CASH in on BID events

5th Avenue Salon owner Kerry Cash made sure her team made the most of the Love Fashion promotion by joining the Saturday market day event and offering free mini treatments to passers-by.

"I got 10 bookings from new clients from the event so it worked for us," said Kerry pictured below.



Under a BID businesses pay a legal levy, which is collected by the council, but passed to a Board of businesses to determine how it is spent for the benefit of all. BedfordBID brings in nearly £450,000 a year.

Joining the Minister in Bedford was Queen of Shops Mary Portas (pictured above) who applauded the innovative ways in which the volunteer Town Team had used the £51,000 they had been given as a "bonus for Bedford businesses".

Mary took a walkabout of the town centre meeting businesses who had benefited from the Town Team activities.

**A team effort saw the Love Food Fest promotion put 60+ businesses in the spotlight through our booklet of information, radio advertising, press coverage, leaflets, social media, three day festival and food trail. More photographs on page two.**



# AGM

New Board elected.  
Full list of names and details to be posted on  
[www.lovebedford.co.uk](http://www.lovebedford.co.uk)



Love Bedford staged a three-day food festival showcasing the culinary cultural variations available in town.

On the first of three days there was a street food market in St Paul's Square serving a wide selection of international dishes.

On the second day there were Taste Real Food-approved local producers such as The Beesness, Wobbly Bottom Cheese and Summerhill award-winning sausages.

On the final day the show moved into the Harpur Suite for a series of tastings and cooking demonstrations based around growing, eating and cooking.

BedfordBID Christina Rowe said: "This was a chance to show the world that we have great taste here in Bedford with restaurants and retailers selling a fabulous range of food."

Sue Miller Director of Taste Real Food added: "Supporting local producers is important to ensure a sustainable, and delicious, approach to eating and drinking."

In addition to the event at the Harpur Suite there was a Taste Real Food Cultural Food Trail which began at the Bedford Swan Hotel. The trail included 10 restaurants in town and from customer recommendations winners were announced.

*"This is a great idea and a wonderful way of exploring the varied cuisine of Bedford"*

*"Trail is a brilliant idea – really enjoyed it. All restaurants did well"*

*"Thank you for a very well organised event. We usually eat in the same 4 or 5 restaurants as we know the quality and price, after taking part in this tour we will certainly be revisiting our new favourites and will try to continue to broaden our culinary horizons"*

*"Great way to discover Bedford and its restaurants"*

*"Really enjoyed, the experience has introduced us to new restaurants we shall visit them all in time"*

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**LOVE BEDFORD  
LOVE  
FOOD AND  
DRINK**



## **The BedfordBID Company continues to strengthen its performance with the projects and services it provides plus additional support to businesses in the BID area :**



The Retail Radiolink and Exclusion Order Scheme has increased from 180 to 241 members. In June 2013 the scheme was accredited with a distinction in The Safer Business Awards from the Association of Business Crime Partnerships for crime prevention and reduction collaborations. Bluecaps continue to work and interact with members of the public, retailers, street traders, businesses, emergency services, council officials, special event promoters and participants, street cleansing and highways engineers.



Crime is down in Bedford Town Centre. Using data from Bedfordshire Police the figures published nationally in July show Bedfordshire's overall crime rate has fallen by 11% with other large reductions in offences such as burglary and violent crime. In 2012/13 Bedfordshire had a 16% reduction in anti social behaviour. *Source : Bedfordshire Police.*



Graffiti management continues to be a primarily Bluecap duty.



The introduction of an annual calendar of events and a multi-media regional advertising campaign is reflected in the half year analysis of foot flow in Bedford which is on par with the national average but significantly higher than other towns in the eastern region. Bedford +1.07% compared to -2.37% in the East. *Source : Springboard Foot Flow System.*



Over 250 businesses are now redeeming vouchers on the Love Bedford scheme. Redemption rate is 91% and over £590k of vouchers have been issued resulting in revenues to go straight back into local businesses.



The appetite for the Love Bedford monthly rewards has grown from 1,200 to over 1,700 reward card customers receiving monthly emails about the instant offers.



On-line promotions have cultivated a database which BedfordBID uses to generate frequency and loyalty to the town's businesses.



Dedicated practical support for small and independent businesses through BedfordBID's partnership with Utilitrack has resulted in the signing of new utilities contracts, providing savings from £360 to around £1,000. All businesses have now been contacted and there is a follow up plan in place to recontact, when the time is right, for other reviews. BedfordBID will be supporting further claims for Small Business Rates relief.



Year on year, visits to the BedfordBID Love Bedford website [www.lovebedford.co.uk](http://www.lovebedford.co.uk) have grown to over 500,000. Next to the homepage, the directory is the most popular page on the site. Followers on Twitter have grown to 2,500+ and Facebook likes have increased to 400+. New website to be launched pre Christmas 2013.



The free Bedford Town Guide App, which is available across both the Apple and Andriod platforms promotes the town, encourages visitors and provides an interactive and invaluable source of information for both visitors and locals alike. A new illustrative map of the town is also available for those who prefer hard copies, these are available from Bluecaps, the Tourist Information Centre, the library and other customer 'stopping' points.







BedfordBID supported the national coach tour operators event

Big names like BHS join town centre events

Dinosaur trail a roaring success

Independents like Michael R. Peters get involved

Big Business leader joined Love Busking event

## Be Safe Be Smiling

BedfordBID Retail RadioLink (& Exclusion Order) has again been recognised in the Safer Business Awards as a successful scheme between the BID, police, CCTV and businesses. The BID runs the scheme and the radiolink system which keeps businesses in touch, night and day, and customers safe.

In addition the BID finances the night time Taxi Marshalling and has sponsored the annual Best Bar None scheme to ensure pubs and clubs are safe venues for visitors.

During the day Bluecaps monitor any incidents of graffiti and anti-social behaviour such as bike riding on pavements, begging and make sure they are reported to the responsible or relevant authority such as the council or police.

"We want our visitors to comment on what is good about the town not about negative issues," said Director Christina Rowe,

"But we do NOT expect our businesses to pay for what we believe should be financed through Business Rates or local police rates. We have made it clear that the suggestion of an additional night-time levy is totally unacceptable to those businesses who already contribute to the BID."

## Coming around to our town, again and again

BedfordBID is not the council and cannot set parking charges but it can guide visitors to the best deals in town. Via the website, the App, the map, social media, print and radio advertising, BedfordBID beckons people into town and directs them to the best deals. The summer showcase at the end of July saw the Love Bedford-sponsored BedFringe combine with the High Street family fun day and the BID busking event to draw 1,000s of new visitors into town. Those businesses that joined in these activities report winning new customers.



## Customer Service – a winner

The mystery shopper campaign launched by BedfordBID saw nearly 30 businesses of all types volunteer to be under the spotlight. Businesses came up trumps, with some now making themselves better still thanks to feedback. Questions were asked about why the Tourist Information Centre in St Paul's Square seemed to be encouraging people to "leave town" and the old Bus Station was criticised. But both are in line for a change as the council has pledged a multi-million make over of the bus station which will include a new travel and tourism shop.

## Not just retail and restaurants

Bedford College, one of the largest employers in town and a major levy payer supports BedfordBID. Other major levy payers include the Bedford School, and Bedford Borough Council. They may not appear to benefit from the retail campaigns – but they do benefit from the perception that Bedford is a vibrant town, a good place to live, to send children to school and to work, or set up business.



BedfordBID has supported two cinema sensations which have brought people into the town centre.

In August @BedfordWreels cycle cinema staged four shows near the Castle Quay to ever-increasing audiences who took advantage of the good weather to sit outside, picnic and watch a free film. We have the technology, so if you have an idea for a cycle cinema show somewhere in town, then let us know.



In September the all new Bedford Film Festival was launched [www.bedford-filmfestival.org](http://www.bedford-filmfestival.org) which staged a weekend of events at Bedford College, a big BID supporter, and within The Higgins Bedford.

Said Christina Rowe, Director of BedfordBID: "An important role for us is to help those who have great ideas and are giving up their spare time to support Bedford businesses through activities which bring people into town from far and wide."



## Get On Board!



Bookings for the boat can be made at [www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk](http://www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk)

BedfordBID has been encouraging its 575 town centre levy-paying businesses to get "on board" with the tourist potential of the John Bunyan Boat.

Since being launched this summer, the community boat has already brought over 3,000 visitors into the town centre to take cruises or charter trips up and down the River Great Ouse.

Day trippers will have been given Love Bedford My Perfect Day canvas bags, complete with special offers from town centre businesses.

BID Director Christina Rowe said that the organisation had donated £5,000 towards the building of the boat and now

wanted businesses to "get on board" with helping to encourage visitors to take a walk into town.

"We created a regional advertising campaign on the theme of My Perfect Day encouraging people to visit Bedford," said Christina.

Graham Mabbutt, Chair of the B-MK Waterway Trust which runs the boat said: "We have had generous financial support from many organisations, but this sort of promotional activity by the BID and its businesses is invaluable. We are all volunteers and welcome the expert marketing which the BID brings to the town being used to support the John Bunyan Boat."



# Why Businesses SAY YES to BedfordBID

We launched the Customer Service Campaign with Richard Fuller MP and Chair Kevin Kavanagh - more than 30 businesses volunteered to be assessed by a secret shopper. Result : improvements in all and setting the standard for others to reach.

Nominated a leading independent business for the T&C Business Rising Stars Award. Michael R. Peters is through to finals giving a Love Bedford Love Great Service statement.

Enabling Best Bar None campaign and financing associated training for bars and clubs to ensure our night time economy is safe and successful. Continued sponsorship of the Taxi Marshals.

On-going management of Retail Radio Link/Exclusion zone service which involves 200 businesses and contributes to customer safety by linking with police and CCTV. Lobbying for more bobbies on the beat and resolution of cyclists in pedestrianised areas. Result - Safer Town Centre Award.

Publicised Oxjam events in local venues to spread the musical word to wider audiences.

Love Poetry - Popular event with parents and young people (pictured left at Bedford Central Library), as was the Bedford Film Festival and Cycle Cinema.

Love Food Festival highlighted 60 businesses and created three days of high profile activity.

Steered Portas Town Team to positive action and publicity - most recently overseeing start-up grants to two High Street businesses : TV Bedfordshire and Adrian Bullers Photography who both have leases on premises.

Managed effective lobbying about Bedford with visiting Ministers and Shadow politicians including : Vicky Ford MEP who went walkabout with MP Richard Fuller. Yvette Cooper, Shadow Secretary of State who met with businesses. Police and Crime Commissioner Olly Martins - expressing our opposition to a night time levy where BID exists.

BedfordBID has prided itself in actively supporting small and independent businesses. This theme has been developed through the introduction of a number of promotional trails i.e. Easter Egg, Time Trail, dinosaurs and food - all of which have resulted in a greater awareness of the town's businesses in both retail and office sectors.

Tourism bags for visitors on the John Bunyan Boat - contents from various town centre businesses. Multiple publicity with TV Beds, local and national media.

Directing traffic to free and lowest cost car parking via regularly updated Love Bedford Parking Guide.

Promoting BedFringe, Love Bedford Busking and supporting the Borough Council's Heritage-related BIG High Street Showcase. Bluecaps critical here as messengers and meeters/greeters.

Love Fashion designer/label booklet and links with Harpur Centre and students at Bedford College. With hair and beauty businesses taking part in live Saturday event.

Bluecaps eyes on the street - logging graffiti and bringing it to the attention of council clean-up teams.

Clearing House for Communications for all above plus PR support for Comic Convention - Sports Traider - Marconi Lecture - McDonalds clean up - Michael R Peters £1 parking refund - Bedford School Theatre - Bedford College.

Bedford Town Guide App + Love Bedford website constantly updated with information.

Throughout year : Heart radio airtime promoting campaigns and business sectors to regional audience. Financed "all for one" by BedfordBID.



## National spotlight on town and on BID



Bedford has been in the news nationally and regionally. Most recently with Mary Portas in town together with a national forum to highlight all the great work being done in Bedford.

BIDs are now being encouraged by the Government and they are looking to Bedford as an example of how businesses are taking control of town centres. From the new TV Bedfordshire, to Anglia ITV and the BBC, BedfordBID can be seen defending our town centre. The Portas bonus money of £51,000 has been used to complement improvements on the High Street being made by the council via the THI which has

seen buildings at the St Peter's end being refurbished inside and out.

As the general election looms, politicians of all parties have been to town talking about employment, business and town centres regeneration. BedfordBID can point to examples of where businesses and our partners are delivering new opportunities.

The internet is an asset to businesses if approached correctly. The BID website has more hits from shoppers than any other in town and the Love Bedford App sees more town centre businesses signing up every week.

## Customers led to your door

The popular BedfordBID trail promotions link with local schools and motivate families to go "walkabout" around a wide range of independents - often encouraging them to visit these outlets for the first time. The latest Walking with Dinosaurs was a roaring success and the BID plans more of these in the future. They are only possible thanks to the hard work of our Bluecaps visiting businesses time and again.

## BID means Business

Businesses benefit from being part of the BID by staying in control of the funds raised locally and spent locally on activity to support the town centre.

While a typical independent business will pay a few hundred pounds a year in the annual BID levy (compared to thousands in Business Rates) the big property owners pay much, much more into the BID pot meaning they are supporting, even subsidising, promotional activity for the independents.

The money all goes is managed by a Board of volunteers, including representatives of independents and large non-retail businesses (unlike Business Rates which go to Central Government and only a proportion comes back into the town centre via the council).

Bedford was one of the first towns to vote Yes to a Bedford BID, now others are being encouraged by the coalition Government across the UK. Introduced by a Labour Government, BIDs are clearly now seen as the way ahead by all.

## Winning Window Display



BedfordBID encouraged businesses to take part in the Window Dressing competition to brighten up Bedford. While the BID-led Bedford Portas team donated money to finance training classes in window dressing, BedfordBID Bluecaps chased up businesses to get involved.

Overall winner was **The Art Centre & Gallery** on Howard Street with its fantastic summer theme display. In the Independent Retailer section **Boutique Planet** and **Charisma**, both located in The Arcade, were selected.

Further awards as voted by the public went to:

Charity Store - **The ReUse Centre** which used donated goods to create a display.

Chain Store/Franchise - **Debenhams**.

Having carried out a mystery shopper exercise, managers from BHS and Debenhams made Boutique Planet their experts' choice. Finally, the Bedford Portas Town Team voted Michael R. Peters, on The Broadway, the 'Most Improved' window.

## BID means Business

In response to requests from non-retail businesses we are planning a series of office / service / business to business events next year. Please contact Director Christina Rowe for more information.

Our Business Directory on the website is the most sought after by visitors - which means they are looking for your company. Help us to spread your good news and offers on-line.

Where does the money go? A typical medium sized business premises on the edge of town may pay thousands a year in rates and hundreds in a BID levy. You can see what we do with your levy locally. Business Rates go to Central Government for redistribution. BIDs are being promoted as THE answer to businesses taking control of town centres.