

What's inside?

Front Page

National growth for Our Town You ain't seen nothing yet...

Inside Pages

Bedford's café society Easy Come Easy Go Open for Business Small is Beautiful Be Safe, Be Smiling Come Around to Our Town

The Bigger Picture

Back Page

Your top team Media Moments



National growth for Our Town

Bedford continues to grow in stature on the national stage - vital to maintain big business interest and investment in the town.

One great example of national investment is the town centre redevelopment which will see the end of the old bus station and in its place a bright new gateway to the town. Long, long overdue, the project represents the faith of St Modwens in being able to fill retail and leisure space with customer-attracting outlets and a cinema. And more customers means more potential business for all of us.

BedfordBID is celebrating its first year "in business" and is bucking the national trend facing High Streets. Where other town centres are losing customers to the internet and retail parks, the number of visitors to Bedford increased by 4,000 per week since BedfordBID went into action.

"People are recognising that Bedford is a pleasant place to shop and eat," said Executive Director

"Our next target is to ensure that people recognise it is a good environment in which to work or do business - making it easier for companies to employ quality staff and for property owners to find tenants for shops and offices.

"The sum of all these parts is greater than the whole - Bedford will increasingly be seen as a desirable and developing place to be. We are leading the way with the BedfordBID and showing that a "can do" attitude will make things work."

You ain't seen nothing yet...

The BedfordBID is a pioneer - the first county town to set up the deal under which local businesses voted to pay an extra levy, which raises £500,000 per year, to be spent on activities agreed by businesses. This is quite separate from taxes which go to the local authority or Government it is a pot which the businesses, through a board of directors, spend as they see fit.

"We have been learning as we go along - we have no route map to follow from others - in fact others are watching our progress with interest - not just in the UK but from overseas.

*But thanks to the support of local companies - who know what it takes to boost trade as they are in the front-line every day - we have achieved a great deal through a whole range of exciting initiatives and programmes."

More to come - a summer season of arts and entertainment in Lime Street, a new booth for Bluecaps near the Harpur Shopping Centre, more advertising encouraging people to "Come Around to Our Town" and more ways to make transport into town easier - a 25% discount on the buses from until September 10th and The Mayor declaring the multi-storey car parks open on August Bank Holiday (these are normally closed on Bank Holidays in Bedford).

Key performance indicators and financial information can be found on the leaflet with this newsletter.

Open for Business

BedfordBID has Mayor Frank Branston and Board member Michael R. Peters to thank for making sure the message: 'Bedford is open for

The multi-storey car parks are usually closed on bank holidays - giving some people the impression that the whole town is shut. So for the first time, these will all be open on August 28. We hope that if successful the Bedford Borough Council will be persuaded to keep them open on yet more bank holidays.

Said Michael: "The businesses served by the Queen Street multi-storey have a louder voice already thanks to BedfordBID and this time the council heard us."

Small is Beautiful

Making a virtue of the fact that Bedford is NOT Milton Keynes, it has lovely locations to lunch and hundreds of different places to shop is part of ethos of BedfordBID.

Pulling together the buying power of many means that BedfordBID can offer training and services specially designed for the smaller business for instance training courses which have already proved a hit. If you have any ideas about how you and your neighbours could benefit from the "group" approach let us know.

In the meantime we continue to work towards attracting independent traders to the town to help maintain the individuality of Bedford's High and side streets.

Be Safe, Be Smiling

Latest figures show shop theft is down 35% in the town centre thanks to the teamwork of police, Bluecaps and the Business RadioLink scheme, the latter continues to develop offering workshops on fraud and data laws. The radio network run for pubs and clubs through Bedsafe is also expected to be co-ordinated now by BedfordBID .

Come Around to Our Town

Easter Egg Hunt - proved popular and nearly 600 entries were received to the competition which was won by Isabel Lovitt aged 7.

Lime Street in the Limelight - this promotion, match-funded by Art and Business, is based in an often overlooked part of town but should bring benefits to all. Lively street performers and unusual artists should make Bedford a more interesting place to visit.

Respect Your Elders - a large part of our customer base are those over 60 who have time to enjoy all that Bedford has to offer. Dragon restaurant brought a Chinese tradition to the town with a free meal for those over 60 - vouchers were given away by Bluecaps. The event was a great success with Bedford's best known pensioner Mayor Frank Branston popping in to say hello.

The World in Bedford - our Italian members are still celebrating their nation's winin the World Cup. This promotion recognised the multi-ethnicity of Bedford by "booking" anyone wearing a national football shirt. The matches may have led to a lack of male shoppers in the town, but the free cuppa or coffee promotion at least gave those not interested in soccer an incentive to

come into town.

Bedford River Festival - Bluecaps continued to offer great service to traders by collecting up items for goodies bags to be given away to 250,000 who turned out on July 15th and 16th to see the best that Bedford has to offer. A great marketing opportunity for the town.





Bedford's café society

We welcome Kevin Kavanagh as a Director of BedfordBID. He joins 12 others and Executive Director Mo Aswat and Company Secretary Christine Barker on the Board.

Many local people will know Kevin, owner of Frescoes Coffee house in Mill Street, where for the last 4 years he has offered customers a delicious taste of café society in Bedford.

He says "I always wanted to have my own business and at Frescoes have brought together my passion for food, coffee, wine and music. This creates an ambience where people can enjoy good food and conversation with background or live music to set the scene."

Before moving to Bedford, Kevin worked with one of the world's largest retailers and gained knowledge of how the retail sector works in towns and cities worldwide. He is keen to see Bedford continue to improve and delighted to be working with the BedfordBID as it leads the way.

"BedfordBID has a big influence on the town through the expertise of business people who want to raise the profile of the town for the benefit of businesses and those who come to shop and visit our town," says Kevin, "Bedford has such a lot to offer with a friendly, safe atmosphere at street level. It's difficult to find everything you need when you visit a new town and visitors could easily miss the beauty of Bedford if making a whistle-stop visit. This is where activities like the Bluecaps are such an essential part of the visitor experience."



Stagecoach

Easy Come Easy Go

BedfordBID is helping to boost trade in Bedford - while at the same time helping to solve traffic problems.

A new promotion funded by businesses in Bedford via the Business Improvement District organisation means it is cheaper to go On the Buses until September 10th.

In conjunction with Stagecoach, a 25% discount is being offered EVERY DAY to those who would normally pay £2.70 for a dayrider (day pass) to go into town. "IT" Passes are being delivered to homes with local newspapers - or people can visit the travel shop in the bus station to collect one.

To further encourage people to "Come Around to Our Town" the "IT" pass will entitle people to discounts in certain shops and restaurants during the promotion. Each of the six weeks will have a different theme and the discounts and outlets will reflect this; week one is fashion!

Said Executive Director Mo Aswat: "In the first year of the BedfordBID we have experimented with a number of ways of making it 'Easy Come Easy Go' for people

travelling into town - the most successful was the week-long arrangement to fund free travel on the Park and Ride buses from Elstow. So we have decided to see if this type of promotion will work on the regular buses in partnership with Stagecoach through Bedford "IT" card.

"If we can make it more attractive for people to come into town on public transport then that helps businesses and cuts back. on traffic problems. For £2 people can travel into Bedford and stay all day. This is another way in which BedfordBID can lead by cutting the cost of coming into the town centre.

"This is being funded by businesses in Bedford through the levy they pay to the BedfordBID - we hope shoppers and visitors will match their belief in Bedford by getting on the buses!

James Freeman, Managing Director for Stagecoach East said "This is a great opportunity for the people of Bedford to save money using the bus, and at the same time make some great savings in the shops around the town. If the 'TT' promotion is successful we hope to run it again in the lead up to Christmas.

The Bigger Picture

BedfordBID was represented recently at a Tourism Task Force part of the Mayor's Olympic BOOST group which is designed to make sure Bedford gets its fair share of the funding and commercial windfalls from 2012.

The latest national award comes from the Association of Town Centre Management and was presented to Executive Director Mo Aswat at Pall Mall in London by Sir John Egan President of the CBI. This illustrates how BedfordBID is leading the way. Such is the significance of the way the BedfordBID has been formed and funded that Mo Aswat was asked to speak at the Institute of Economic Affairs - among the attendees were leading MPs, Lords and the Adam Smith Institute.

Your top team

The busy BedfordBID team has been enhanced with the arrival of Samantha Faircloth whose primary role will be to look after the Bluecaps as part of the new in house service.

- not to mention the thousands of customers who come to the town.



The Annual Report

is now available for

all members of the

BedfordBID - if you

want yours or just

want to know more

- call the BedfordBID

office FREE on

0800 013 0339

Media Moments

It was no accident that Chancellor Gordon Brown decided to visit Bedford College - in educational circles this BedfordBID member has a national reputation for producing the sort of youngsters the country needs to support business and industry.

Mr Brown was followed by a media circus which swept through the College and off again - but put the spotlight firmly on the town. Both regional TV stations covered the event with one giving coverage to market and shop traders and the beautiful riverside location publicity you can't buy.

TV and Radio crews also turned their attention to Bedford as supporters of Italy flew the flag and blew their horns during their team's progress through the World Cup. Bedford is well known as a source of stories about our "Italian Connections" and Bedford's 96.9 Chiltern FM interviews were broadcast nationally.

M & S and the arrival of the Per Una range in Bedford reflected the improved esteem in which this key national retailer regards the town. The launch of the fashion range resulted in valuable media coverage.

If YOUR business has a PR story which will help promote Bedford then let us know we may be able to help "turn up the volume."

0800 013 0339

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