

**PLYMOUTH CITY CENTRE COMPANY
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
AMBASSADORS CONFERENCE**

**7TH OCTOBER 2005
THEATRE ROYAL, PLYMOUTH**

**FEEDBACK FROM TABLE 1 - PROMOTION / MARKETING
Facilitated by Deborah Clark, Deborah Clark & Associates**

1 Key Marketing / Promotion Achievements

- Market research findings (for Wimbledon and Flavour Fest events) suggest that BID promotion and advertising activity to-date has successfully attracted more people to the City Centre for major BID events.

2 City Centre Events

- Flavour Fest: Event was sufficiently distinctive to act as a reason to visit.
- Wimbledon: Added value, although was not necessarily the reason why visitors came to the City Centre. However, visitors had a positive experience / intended to re-visit.
- Markets: The French markets are good and pull in the crowds, but we need to look at impact on existing City Centre businesses and spread locations across City Centre.
- Christmas: Vitally important that Christmas is well promoted, but also need to prepare a PR calendar for the whole year, and link City Centre with wider City events.
- To maximise impact and attract more sponsorship, major BID events need to be pre-planned and promoted at least 3 months in advance.

3 Advertising & Media Coverage

- Need to ensure that whole of Plymouth is promoted strategically, as there is increasing competition from the internet, catalogues etc.
- Need research to understand better why shoppers come/do not come to the City Centre.

4 Considerations for 2006 / 2007

- Suggested a presentation event for those that sell marketing (TV, newspapers, radio, etc) to discuss target audiences and schedules.
- A marketing spend should be made available and spread out throughout the year.

5 Drake Circus

- There are major benefits to the Drake Circus development, as it will attract a wide range of visitors. Need a strong partnership between the BID and Drake Circus to ensure a joint approach to City Centre marketing.

6 Other Ideas

- Link City Centre to tourism market, including Barbican, Theatre Royal and local hotels.
- Explore potential for a new 'Fashion week' event (start of season).

FEEDBACK FROM TABLE 2 – BID Projects 2006 / 2007
Facilitated by Peter Strawbridge, Devon & Cornwall Police

1 Reflection

- Cleansing: Good, positive, visible - good experience of rapid response to call out.
- Wardens: Disappointed at limited powers - concern at whether frustration at lack of enforcement powers will hamper retention.
- Floral displays: All very nice but they need to be better maintained once in place.
- Hotline: One bad experience near its inception - several positive ones more recently.
- Events: Yes, positive and to be encouraged - good for City Centre image.

2 Do all planned 2006/07 projects remain relevant?

- After consideration, yes, without exception.

3 Maximising the Impact of BID Projects

• Clean Team:

- ❖ Power sprays awaited and their impact much needed to wash away detritus.
- ❖ Important to clean up glass.
- ❖ What about a collaborative push to encourage owners of premises to get the public faces of buildings looking clean and trim e.g. cleaning grimed stone, maintaining facades etc? One grotty frontage can drag down the visual impact of a whole stretch.

• Larger Bins: No comment.

• Graffiti:

- ❖ Why can't it be removed from any City Centre location – third party property?
- ❖ Negative impact on public scene graffiti is irrespective of whose place it's on.
- ❖ Why not canvass all property owners in the City Centre domain to get individual written authorities on file in advance in the event of graffiti – so that the team can zap it immediately wherever it is in the public areas of the city centre.

• Wardens:

- ❖ Need enforcement powers.
- ❖ Need to give info to members on wardens and what is happening, including update on powers/accreditation progress.
- ❖ Canvass both wardens and the businesses with a list of the powers that wardens may apply for when accredited, so those most seen as needed are sought.
- ❖ Need clear communication of the role of the wardens.
- ❖ Use the fact that Plymouth boasts city centre wardens as a plus for marketing city centre shopping – including in the Christmas campaign.
- ❖ Early sharing of details of Wardens' operating hours over the Christmas period.
- ❖ Continuity and familiarity vital – getting to know wardens by name is a big plus for the members. Comfortable to stick with wardens – wary as to whether there would be the same degree of continuity and control if they became Police Community Safety Officers.

• Safer Car Parks:

- ❖ Secured Car Park status useful as it can be advertised and is a plus point to attract people and reassure.
- ❖ Pay on exit has attraction, as you can't size up which vehicle is going to be there for a long time – to help plan and reduce risk of car crime.
- ❖ Need holistic look at car parks – some are a disgrace and utterly off putting.
- ❖ Disabled access? Lifts need to be in working order.
- ❖ Not child friendly.
- ❖ Dingy, dirty and smelly – can't the Cleaning Team keep the car parks clean too?

- ❖ Security fears – how about ‘help points’ in car parks e.g. by the payment machines?
- ❖ How about brighten up car parks with displays of information about city centre and its facilities, businesses and events – perhaps leaflet points too.

CCTV & Lighting:

- ❖ CCTV seen as a very important crime prevention measure.

Floral Displays:

- ❖ Liked, but felt needed to be better maintained than this time round if they are to be retained.

Public Squares:

- ❖ Support to hold back on using the BID money until it can be brought to bear to attract significant external match funding to get vastly greater bang for bucks in a couple of years.

Cruise / Railway Promotion:

- ❖ Felt important and worthwhile to have something at the railway station to promote and inform about what’s on offer in the city centre – shopping, events and amenities to attract punters. Could take the form of fixed display boards and also leafleting.
- ❖ How about targeting the volume train travellers e.g. for football matches with leaflets promoting what’s on offer in the City Centre. Not all football fans are rough – they have families and wallets too.
- ❖ People who get off cruise ships at Plymouth need something in their hand that invites and informs as to what there is to do to use their limited time to best effect.
- ❖ Focused personal touch ‘meet and greet’ important for both cruise and train.
- ❖ Shoppers bus – selective fare subsidy on buses for shoppers seen as the desirable spend here.

Promotion / Marketing of Events:

- ❖ More needs to be done to market events - boards in city centre.
- ❖ Drive by information for motorists – note impact of Argyll’s signboard by the road, advertising features, dates and ticket prices etc.
- ❖ Leaflets.
- ❖ More positive media coverage?
- ❖ A City Centre newspaper for good news and promotions.

FEEDBACK FROM TABLE 3 – CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Facilitated by Andy Hirshman, Plymouth Goldsmiths

1 Car Parking

- Generally give a very poor first impression to City Centre. Cleansing, hygiene, signage and access need to be improved ASAP; along with the introduction of pay on exit to increase customer dwell time.

2 Public Transport

- All had varied views on this, although it was agreed that the experience of public transport needs to be improved from moment shopper leaves their home. Bus timetables to be made available from City Centre kiosk.

3 Community Safety

- Generally the Wardens have delivered a major improvement, although the youths that gather in Armada Way can be intimidating for some members of the public.
- The Wardens presence is very visible, although they need more enforcement powers.

4 Cleansing

- The BID has delivered an area of outstanding and visible cleansing improvement.

5 In Store Customer Service

- Generally considered customer care/service to be good (unbiased retailer view?).

6 Street Signage

- Pedestrian signage needs improving, as it is generally poor. The BID Business Plan has allocated £100k to tackle this, in partnership with the Council, during 2007/08.

7 Events

- All agreed that the events are good, with immediate impact and certainly draw in the visitors.

8 Competitive External Factors

- Drake Circus will provide a bigger boost and will pull people in from all areas. It was agreed that everyone should work together to maximise this.

9 In Town Transportation

- Plymouth is a big city so the need for in-town transportation e.g. land train should be addressed.

10 Crèche

- A permanent crèche would be advantageous.

11 Bad Press

- Negative press regarding the Christmas shopping experience needs to be looked at.

FEEDBACK FROM TABLE 4 – BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Facilitated by Kate Baber, The Computer Shop @ Integrem

1 Communications

- Website and email, mail (i.e. post) and face to face:
Need to combine all forms of communication, but key issue is to ensure that PCCC have the correct name of the person to contact locally.
Concern raised that perhaps a central HQ person is being written to, rather than someone locally (two on the table had little information at all about the City Centre Company and wondered if it had been sent to the BID voter).
One company was unable to log onto City Centre website.
Businesses should invest in email and internet, so that PCCC can communicate with members electronically: more reliable/speedy and less costly/time-consuming.

2 Meetings

- People still seem not to know when monthly major retailers & independents meetings are held and where. Concerns raised about who knows when they are being held – need to circulate dates and times a year ahead (perhaps four times a year as a reminder!).
- Need also to minute the meetings and circulate a summary together with action points to ensure accountability.
- Would like to see regular meetings like this one – for general information, feedback and motivation and to keep everyone on message.

3 Checkout

- Now primarily an internal document, perhaps it no longer needs to be so glossy?
- The Checkout information should also be made accessible from the website.
- If circulated by email, remember that not everyone is on broadband. Possibly use email/mail to inform them that they should look at the website.

4 City Centre Offers Card

- Independents keen to develop this as a way to promote the city centre.
- Must also emphasise customer service – so perhaps need to set up a mystery shopping programme and/or customer service training/recognition scheme.

5 Posters in Windows and Flyers in Shops

- All seemed keen to be included in more publicity. Again, must ensure that they are either hand delivered or sent to the right person who has the authority to put them up!

6 Managing the Herald

- Business involvement includes our local media. With help from Deborah Clark & Associates group hoped that the negative headlines could be avoided in future.
- Need to be realistic, but also to make sure that the right side of the story gets the headlines.

7 Main Actions

- Need to ensure more accountability and clarity in communications – both ways.

FEEDBACK FROM TABLE 5 – LEADERSHIP & STRATEGY

Facilitated by Paul Barnard, Plymouth City Council

1 Drake Circus

- This development should have a positive impact as it firmly establishes Plymouth as the regional shopping centre. It will help capture the £400m currently lost per annum to competitors. Despite Drake Circus, we must keep up the competitive pressure on Exeter, Internet, out of town supermarkets, etc. Need to keep refreshing the City Centre with new development, such as a better version of the Colin Campbell Court scheme (than is currently proposed) and new residential schemes.

2 Retail strategy

- Need to attract wider range of quality shops, so need a post-Drake Circus strategy for inward investment. What constitutes "improvement" of the City Centre? We thought better trading conditions, so we need to keep attracting new retailers that will in turn attract the "marginal" shopper who has a choice of shopping in Exeter, Truro or Plymouth.
Need to re-gear freeholds and attract more upmarket developments over time.
Shop standards need to be improved with regards service customers receive.
May need to review and extend shops opening hours where necessary.

3 Public transport

Major improvements planned through the Local Transport Plan.

4 Access, Car Parks and Toilets

- Major improvements to the City Centre car parks and toilets are needed.
Some concern expressed at plans to remove carriageways (Plymouth Vision), which if not managed could impact negatively on trading conditions.
Debated whether to privatise the car parks so that new investment could be generated to improve them.

5 Residential

Need to intensify residential development in City Centre.

6 Pannier Markets

- The role of the Pannier Market within the City Centre needs to be clarified.

7 Co-ordination

- Company could assist Council to develop strategies for the next few years, as City Centre is organic and continually evolving.
- Plymouth is changing and will continue to be developed to become more upmarket. Company could help attract match funding for Plymouth Vision public space improvements in the City Centre.

8 Advocacy

- Plymouth City Centre Company has a strong mandate, can advocate on behalf of BID Area members and is in a unique position to be able to influence the key decision makers, especially PCC, on the above issues. Perhaps Company should set up 'task and finish' groups to look at issues in detail, come to conclusions, assemble its allies, and then lobby hard!