

# Newsletter

ISSUE 3 | MARCH 2021

## 50% CUT TO 2021 LEVY INVOICES

**Strabane BID held their virtual AGM on Thursday, 28th January where re-elected Chair Kieran Kennedy confirmed that BID would issue a 50% COVID support reduction to this year's levy invoices for independent businesses.**

Mr Kennedy told attendees that the BID Board was acutely aware of the issues facing the local Strabane business community as a result of COVID-19 and, therefore, as a Board had taken the decision to issue a 50% COVID Support reduction on all independent levy invoices to issue for Year 5. He informed attendees that the Board felt it was a way to give back and recognise the difficulties local businesses continue to face.

There was a strong attendance at the virtual event which reflected on BID's activities in 2020 and plans for the year ahead.

As well as Kieran Kennedy being supported for Chair for another year, Michael Kelly was also reinstated as Vice-Chair and Kevin O'Connor, Derry City and Strabane District Council's Head of Business, was reinstated as Secretary. Deborah Deans was newly appointed as Treasurer of Strabane BID.

There was great interest expressed in joining the BID Board, with four new directors nominated who will bring added depth and experience to complement the already existing skill set.

During the AGM, Strabane Town Centre Development Manager Emma McGill delivered a presentation giving an overview of Strabane BID's activities and success in 2020 and also looked at the ambitious aspirations for the future.

*"Our main successes that we have taken away from 2020 were the engagement with businesses, support in accessing COVID recovery funding and information, the impact of the additional festive lighting and the record £50,400 InStrabane gift card sales we had throughout the year,"* explained Emma.

*"Looking ahead, BID's aspirations in 2021 are to build on those foundations laid down so far but we recognise that we are living in a challenging and changing environment, one in which we must be ready to react quickly to the changing needs of our business community."*

*"We want to redevelop our aims and objectives to ensure we are aiding, supporting and driving forward post-COVID recovery. We want to be listening to local businesses and acting to their benefit both in a local and national capacity."*

Strabane BID Chair Kieran Kennedy added: *"I think this past year more than any before we have seen the importance of the work of BID and that is a platform that we hope we can grow from as we now move through 2021."*



(top left)

**Kieran Kennedy**, Strabane BID Chair

(bottom left)

**Michael Kelly**, Strabane BID Vice-Chair

(top right)

**Kevin O'Connor**, Derry City and Strabane District Council's Head of Business and BID Company Secretary

(bottom right)

**Deborah Deans**, Strabane BID Treasurer

*"Despite the many unprecedented challenges that all of our local businesses faced throughout the past year we have managed to come through it with many positives to take and lessons learned that will only help as we move forward."*

*"We will continue to support local businesses in any way we can to keep Strabane town thriving. BID provides a strong collective voice to be heard in these challenging times so we would encourage businesses to work with us to achieve the full benefit of our work."*



# RENEWAL BALLOT

**STRABANE BID is now in the final year of its five year term so a renewal ballot will be held in autumn 2021.**

All traders and businesses in the town are being urged to get behind the ballot in a positive way in order to shape BID's future to be a relevant, representative and reactive body which acts as a driver for growth and delivers for all of Strabane.

A full member consultation will be conducted and all feedback will be taken into account to shape the new BID, with a new business plan for the town centre also due to be developed.

Kieran Kennedy, Strabane BID Chair, said: "This is a real opportunity to shape our future, expand our successes and represent our businesses' needs so we appeal to everyone with an interest in promoting Strabane to get involved and work with us. It is only with everyone on board that we can really see the bigger picture and make our town centre the very best it can be."

Stay tuned for more details about consultation, emerging priorities and voting. To ensure your voice is heard please make sure you've been added onto our contact database, see page 6 for details on how to join.

If you wish to contact us to arrange a one to one consultation please contact Emma McGill:  
[emma.mcgill@derrystrabane.com](mailto:emma.mcgill@derrystrabane.com)

# Meet the Town Centre Manager!



**STRABANE Town Centre Manager Emma McGill is fully in the swing of her new post, four months after being appointed.**

During that time she's been getting to know as many local business owners online as possible and building up her action plan for the year ahead including getting prepared for BID's renewal ballot which is due in the Autumn.

*"I'm delighted to be given this amazing chance to support the traders of Strabane"*

Emma, who previously worked as a rural development project officer with Derry City and Strabane District Council and as economic development officer with Moyle District Council as well as a spell with Invest Northern Ireland, is well equipped to tackle her new job with the necessary experience and expertise.

Emma said: "I have a strong background within the business community and my career to date has honed my skills in town development. In particular, I led and facilitated Ballycastle Town Partnership on the delivery of their strategic town development and action plan which gave me a keen insight into the challenges and opportunities a small town of predominantly independent traders may face.

*"I'm delighted to be given this amazing chance to support the traders of Strabane who have so much to offer. Strabane's greatest strength is its ability to be unique from some of the more anonymous bigger towns. Our local traders know both their business and their communities inside out, giving a standard of personal service and attention to detail that is unheard of in big chain stores.*

*"While we are living in unpredictable times, there will always be a place for face-to-face interaction between companies and their customers but in the meantime, so many have adapted admirably to moving online and offering delivery services.*

*"Since I took up post, I've been finding out from the BID members what they feel our priorities should be and I'm focusing on their needs and requirements for going forward. We are living in a challenging and ever-changing environment and my intention is to redevelop BID's*

*strategy to be more in line and reactive to business needs which is crucial at this time.*

*"I feel that BID has so much to offer businesses and I feel that, especially in these times, it is important to have a collective, strong and focused voice and approach. This is something that I passionately believe BID will be instrumental in providing going forward as we negotiate a post-Covid world and deal with the economic impact and fall-out of this pandemic.*

*"The phenomenal success of the InStrabane gift card sales for 2020 is a sign that so many people are ready and willing to work for Strabane's success and I am delighted to be part of a BID team determined to bring this to fruition!"*

**Emma can be contacted at:  
[emma.mcgill@derrystrabane.com](mailto:emma.mcgill@derrystrabane.com)**





# Annual InStrabane gift card sales exceed £50,000



**More than £50,000 worth of InStrabane gift cards were sold in 2020, exceeding expectations and returning significant funds back into the Strabane economy.**

The gift cards, which are part of Strabane BID, can be purchased in amounts ranging from £5 to £200. They can be spent in any of the 70 accepting businesses within Strabane, covering a wide range of business sectors from food and drink to health and beauty, and plenty more.

A total of £50,400 worth of cards were sold throughout 2020, and Strabane Town Centre Development Manager Emma McGill said it was fantastic to see so many people supporting the local economy at a crucial time for businesses in

Strabane.

*“Strabane BID are absolutely delighted with the final figure of the gift cards sold in 2020, it’s a tally that has certainly exceeded expectation and comes during a year that has presented so many unprecedented challenges for our local businesses within the town,” explained Emma.*

*“We can’t thank the public and corporate businesses enough who really stepped up and delivered for those local businesses. They embraced our ‘shop local’ message and certainly adopted Strabane BID’s motto to ‘put your money where your heart is’.*

*“Every penny spent on the gift cards is going to help businesses within Strabane and with so many*

*currently closed due to the NI Executive restrictions in place, it will be a massive boost to them to see people coming through the door and spending their gift cards when the time is right.*

Emma continued: *“This spend has the potential to make a really significant impact on the income of all of the businesses involved in the gift card scheme, so I would like to once again thank everyone who supported it in 2020, who purchased a gift card and who is helping to keep Strabane town thriving.”*

Kieran Kennedy, Chair of Strabane BID, added: *“Strabane BID are overwhelmed with the support that we received from the public in 2020 through the InStrabane gift cards.*

*“During one of the most unpredictable and stressful periods that many local businesses have probably ever faced, to know that there is £50,400 that has been and continues to be filtered back into our local economy is a massive lift.*

*“I know that it means a lot to our local businesses to have that support, and we sincerely hope that it’s a platform we can build off as we begin 2021 with renewed optimism and hope.”*

To purchase an InStrabane gift card, visit [www.instrabane.org](http://www.instrabane.org) or visit O’Neills Sportswear in Strabane. Cards can be sent to the purchaser or, alternatively, straight to the recipient.

## BID LISTENS AND GIVES BACK!

One of Strabane BID’s biggest roles is to listen to businesses and act on what we hear.

Many traders in the town had long felt that car parking charges were off-putting to the public who may otherwise wish to shop locally so BID lobbied hard to introduce free car parking during the weekend before Christmas, the busiest shopping period of the year.

BID was also able to give back to local businesses in 2020 through competitions and campaigns, with the 12 days of Christmas and shop window campaigns directing a whopping £5,000 back into the Strabane economy alone.

These are just some of the ways BID can help make Strabane a better place to shop and do business for all by delivering for its members.

To find out more, contact: [emma.mcgill@derrystrabane.com](mailto:emma.mcgill@derrystrabane.com)



# Council's Covid Confidence Reassurance Mark

## to help bring business back to our town centre



Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Cllr Brian Tierney, pictured with Michael Kelly, Strabane BID Deputy Chair, and Bejeweled At Soul proprietor, Ursula O'Neill at the Strabane launch of the COVID Reassurance Mark.

**STRABANE BID members can take advantage of a COVID Reassurance Mark aimed at supporting local businesses and re-instilling confidence among the public to return to town centres and support the local economy.**

Businesses across the Council area will be encouraged to take part in the self-declaration process, upon successful completion they can display the COVID Reassurance Mark on their premises. It's primarily focused on boosting customer confidence by demonstrating that the businesses local people are visiting are taking proactive steps to keep their customers and staff safe.

Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Councillor Brian Tierney, said it was a really positive development and something that would support businesses in communicating to their staff and customers that Covid secure measures are in place via a risk assessment process.

Acknowledging the challenges faced by local businesses across Derry and Strabane, Mayor Tierney said the new COVID Reassurance Mark would hopefully assist them with their recovery plans.

He said: "We are very conscious of the fact that the last few months have been extremely difficult for all businesses across all sectors in our Council area. The challenges around the pandemic have had a huge impact on everyone and by setting up this initiative, Council has recognised the importance of supporting businesses in their efforts to adapt and adhere to

*"We are very conscious of the fact that the last few months have been extremely difficult for all businesses across all sectors in our Council area"*

current guidance.

"We firmly believe that the COVID Reassurance Mark will help instil a sense of confidence in the public that our businesses have risk assessed measures in place when they visit our retail and hospitality venues as these businesses reopen. The initiative also demonstrates the importance of Council working in partnership with the business community to restore and revitalise

our city and town centres after such a difficult and challenging period. It is important we look forward in a positive manner and do all we can to support each other and showcase our resilience, strength and determination."

Seamus Donaghy, Head of Health and Community Wellbeing with Derry City and Strabane District Council, said: "Our local businesses have responded very positively to the Government regulations and guidelines and this scheme will help acknowledge their efforts. The scheme involves a five-step self-declaration of measures that businesses have taken in order to achieve the COVID Reassurance Mark including a risk assessment that comprises important elements such as cleaning, hand sanitising, social distancing, respiratory hygiene and employee health.

"Once businesses are satisfied they have met the criteria outlined in the self-declaration they can apply online to Council to display our Derry City and Strabane District Council Covid Reassurance Mark on their premises. The self-declaration process has been developed in co-operation with our Environment Health officer team."

A key element of the scheme will be a bespoke marketing and PR campaign around building awareness of the COVID Reassurance Mark to encourage businesses to sign up and to the wider public to look for the Mark when out shopping or socialising.

**For more information and details of how to apply <http://www.derrystrabane.com/Business/Covidreassurance>**



# Christmas windows added warmth to festive season



Strabane Light-up Gift Boxes at The Alley Theatre



Houston Homewares (Winner)

**A DOZEN local businesses entered into the spirit of the season with the Strabane BID Christmas window-dressing competition at the end of last year.**

It proved enormously popular with members of the public who welcomed the warmth it brought to the town centre, with the participating businesses pulling out all the stops with the festive decorations, dressing their windows in bounds of red, green and gold tinsel, glitter and stars, with a few appearances from Santa Claus as well.

**Following an online vote, Houston Homewares claimed top spot, winning the £1,000 first prize, followed by Floral Bliss who won £500, and Classic Beauty in third, winning £250.**

The competition was set up by Strabane BID in November to engage with local traders and the public in order to create a festive atmosphere in the town centre.

Photos of each shop window were published on Facebook, and the public voted for their winners. This was combined with a Christmas selfie competition, where members of the public could take a selfie outside their favourite Christmas window.



Floral Bliss (2nd Place)



Classic Beauty (3rd Place)

Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Cllr Brian Tierney, said the initiative was a fun and light-hearted way to bring some Christmas spirit to the streets of Strabane over December.

*“Although in essence this was a competition, really this was about lifting spirits in the lead up to Christmas and spreading some festive joy.*

*“The team at Strabane BID were aware that 2020 in particular was a massive challenge for local businesses and so they came up with this idea to try and lift morale, to bring people into the town centre and to give something back to those traders who have worked so hard despite all the obstacles thrown their way,”* said Mayor Tierney.

*“By taking part in the competition, those local businesses helped to create a fantastic Christmas trail*

*throughout the town, sparking joy for passers-by, both children and adults alike, and generally creating an atmosphere that allowed us all to forget about everything we faced in 2020 and just embrace the Christmas spirit.*

*“I want to congratulate our winners Houston Homewares, as well as Floral Bliss and Classic Beauty, and every single business who took part.”*

The windows were part of a wider programme throughout the Christmas period to bring shoppers added attractions, including lighting up sites with ‘gift boxes’ and playing Christmas music throughout the town centre.

Both the illuminations and music brought an extra element of magic to the festive season and drew visitors to the town to see the spectacle.

# BID Welcomes City Deal Investment of £76m for Strabane

There are exciting times ahead for Strabane as the Heads of Terms Agreement for the City Deal and Inclusive Future Fund were signed on 24th February.

Strabane BID welcomes the significant investment of £76m in the town of Strabane which, along with the additional investment in Derry, marks the single largest ever Government investment in the region.

The proposals include a total transformation and regeneration of the Strabane Canal Basin site to create a leisure centre, health hub, higher & further education campus, an innovation centre & civic building with incubation units and a pedestrian footpath that will link all these key services to Strabane Town centre.

Chair of Strabane BID, Kieran Kennedy, said *"This represents a phenomenal opportunity for our business community in Strabane.*



*The investment will see our town centre completely re-energised, increased services and footfall on our high streets and provide an opportunity for business growth and prosperity. We look forward to seeing these projects come to life in our town.*

Emma McGill, Strabane Town Centre Development Manager added, *"This is a truly momentous*

*day for the people and businesses of Strabane which will see much needed investment in the area. This has the ability to transform our town, to make our town centre a hub of connectivity, vibrancy and a place for our businesses to flourish".*

**For more information on the Derry~Londonderry Strabane City Deal, visit [www.derrystrabane.com/citydeal](http://www.derrystrabane.com/citydeal)**

## Get in touch to give permission to be added to new database

Strabane BID is currently updating its database to help us communicate better with businesses. One of the easiest ways to keep in touch is via email so we would encourage everyone to pass on your contact details so we can make sure we are getting the latest important information out to you at the earliest opportunity. This could include funding opportunities, government advice, business support opportunities and consultation information.

You'll also receive our E-zine to keep you up-to-date with all the latest news from Strabane BID.

In accordance with GDPR, we need your permission to add you to our database, even if you have previously been on it, so please get in touch as soon as possible to allow us to add your email address

and telephone number. Please read the information below and if you wish to be added please email [info@bidinstrabane.com](mailto:info@bidinstrabane.com) stating clearly that you want to be added and provide the following information so that we can contact you going forward:

**Name, business name, business address, email address and telephone number.**

Please note that we will hold this personal information on an internal database to communicate information in relation to Strabane BID and for the benefit of businesses within the BID boundary. This information may include some or all of the following: name, business/organisation name, address, email address, telephone number.

- We only use your information

for the purpose of Strabane BID and communicating information to businesses and for no other purpose.

- We will not share your information with any other party without your prior consent.
- We will dispose of your personal information when we no longer require it and in line with the Council's agreed Retention and Disposal Schedule.

You can ask us at any stage to remove your information from our database. Just write to us or email us at [info@bidinstrabane.com](mailto:info@bidinstrabane.com) and we will remove your information and will no longer contact you. This means that you would not be notified of any business support information, events or funding opportunities in relation to Strabane BID.