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Wakefield BID 13042016

Businesses identify key projects for the city

Businesses from across Wakefield City Centre attended a series of workshops last week organised by the Wakefield City Centre Partnership to discuss their ideas for the future of the city centre and projects they would like to implement.

‘This forms part of the consultation of businesses across the city centre to gather views on projects which they would like to see in a Business Improvement District (BID) business plan,’ said David Owens, of Beer Exchange and Chair of the Wakefield City Centre Partnership’s BID Steering Group which is leading this project. ‘This is an important part of the development of the plan together with the surveys and interviews being held on a one-to-one basis with businesses, which explore their thoughts in more detail’ continued David.

The workshops, led by the specialist BID consultants Partnerships for better business Ltd, explored business’s thoughts on the future of Wakefield exploring issues and practical solutions.

Dan Conboys from Statement, an eCommerce and marketing agency and a member of the Wakefield City Centre Partnership said, ‘There were really lively discussions and one of the key themes to emerge from the workshops was about how to improve access around the city centre itself and make it easier to walk from one part of the city to another. The investment in new railway stations is great but the walk from them to other parts of the city is not great and poorly signed’ Dan continued, ‘Other topics discussed included improved coordination of the marketing and promotion of the city centre and to have more events happening on a regular basis’.

Business ideas from the workshops will be combined with the findings from the interviews and surveys to identify projects for the business plan. There will be a further series of workshops later in the year when businesses will consider the amount of levy they will pay and how this money will be allocated to the projects identified in the plan.

‘It will be important to ensure that all businesses benefit from the plan and consider it worth paying the levy so that they vote yes in the BID ballot early next year, said David Owens. ‘If you have not yet met with a member of the BID team to discuss your future business needs, please contact them as soon as possible to arrange a meeting. If the BID does go ahead, a BID Company will be formed by the businesses who will then be responsible for ensuring that the improvements are implemented fairly, thus

helping to ensure the town's businesses have more profile and the town becomes economically stronger.' added David.

Notes for Editors:

- BIDs are part of the government's long-term strategy, along with 'Town Teams' and the Mary Portas Review to encourage partnership working between a Local Authority and the business community.
- BIDs are an investment in the local trading environment through the provision of added value services
- BIDs are funded by local businesses through a levy on their rates bill, therefore all beneficiaries pay.
- They see improvements to business profitability and turnover which would not have happened without a BID.
- Businesses will identify the area and the issues and put together a proposal which should include delivery guarantees, performance indicators and management structure.
- The plan voted for has a lifespan of 5 years and further proposals will have to be reaffirmed through a further vote.
- There are now over 220 BID's across the country, which have average of 70% of the businesses voting in favour.
- There are two criteria which have to be achieved for the vote to be successful: more than 50% of the number of businesses who vote have to say yes and more than 50% of the rateable value of the businesses who vote have to say yes.

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