

## Introduction

The Saffron Walden business community has demonstrated so much resilience through a very difficult two years, and we are privileged to be part of this community. The Covid19 pandemic has been like a tornado disrupting all aspects of our lives, but now we are all adjusting to a new normal.

Business commentators nationally, report a better-than-expected 2021 Christmas trading period but not quite up to pre-pandemic levels yet. The current economic pressures of rising inflation, higher interest rates and tax changes are squeezing household budgets, but it is reported that consumer spending is due to increase over the next 12 months. There are opportunities for growth in our town in the light of this.

*"All the BID team have been fantastic the last 14 months; new concepts and really helping us through awful times, thank you."*

Now there is greater awareness of the importance of supporting what's available locally. A lot of media attention has been given to this with an emphasis on supporting 'local' and 'community'. Over two thirds of our businesses are classified as 'independent' which creates a great platform for us build on and see good growth in our local economy.

Hybrid working is here to stay. Rather than commuting to London or other major centres, residents are spending more time in town during the week, not just at the weekend. We have identified this opportunity, and our Love Saffron Walden campaign has focused on reminding everyone what we love about our town. We have grown our social media presence resulting in increased engagement from businesses and customers. Saffron Walden is 'on the map' with over 40 media stories including on BBC Look East, ITV Anglia, BBC Essex and Heart FM as well as presence in the local papers almost every week.

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated how working with local government, local agencies and businesses has been vital. Our relationship with our local councils has enabled us to access extra funding to further boost our efforts in welcoming residents and visitors back to the town centre. It has also enabled us to provide Covid-19 grant application support and help to expedite access to funds.

Our thanks to the business community for taking in part all the activity this year; engaging in conversation, putting forward ideas and supporting the BID team. We have proved this year that we can achieve more together to help the town thrive. Our thanks to the volunteer director and Ops team. Thanks and farewell to three directors stepping down this year; Ian Hudson, Lisa Corden and Alex Ibryam. We welcome two new directors to the team; Joseph Imrie and Andrew Wilcocks. As we enter the penultimate year of our 5-year term as a Business Improvement District, we are looking forward to 2022 and beyond.

*"You're doing a great job & have my full support."*

*"Thank you for your ongoing hard work."*



*Ad Campaign: "Thank you ... all coverage is beneficial, especially at this time of year."*

## Social media and press coverage from February 2021 to date

We have grown our social media presence with help from local specialist Mandy Weetch. The focus this year has been to promote BID members and those who are active on social media. We have posted over 300 pieces of content. One in three posts promoted our members. Across all three main platforms, we have a combined audience of almost 4.5k followers.

**f 74% increase to 1.8k**

**@ 206% increase to 2.3k**

**🐦 95% increase to 364 followers**

We've secured more than 40 pieces of quality regional and national and local press coverage having been featured on BBC Look East, ITV Anglia, BBC Radio Essex, LBC and Heart Radio and in the local newspapers reaching tens of thousands of listeners, viewers and readers in the region.



## What we have achieved together in 2021

### Building community:

Over the past two years of pandemic, the SWBID has focused on working with our town centre businesses get through the challenges

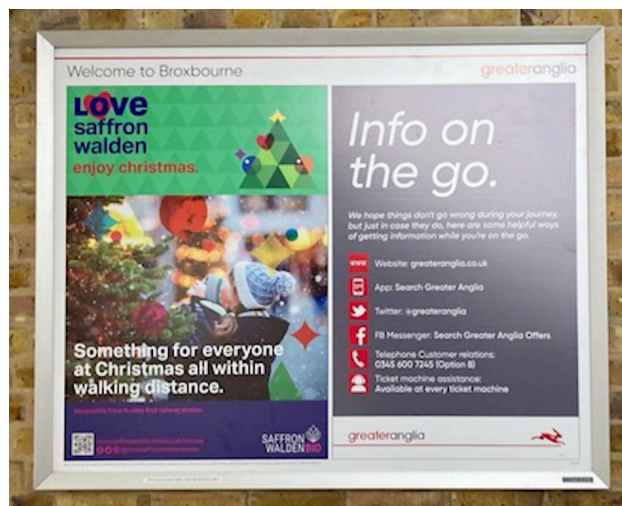
it has brought us. Together we have built a stronger sense of community. There has been more interaction between businesses than previously; a greater awareness of who is who and more support in solving day to day problems.

**Support for access to Government grants:** As a result of our strong links with UDC, the BID has provided Covid-19 grant application support and help to expedite access to funds. Many businesses have told us how useful it was that the SWBID was able to help in this way.

*"Hanging Baskets ... "this is very kind of you! It will be lovely to add a pop of colour to the Rose and Crown Walk."*

*"Yellow Brick Road "we'd love to take part again... sounds like it could be fun , good idea."*





*"Thank you Saffron BID for the various events which you put on during the past months, and for your involvement in keeping the town safe during the pandemic. In particular, I really enjoyed doing the Wizard of Oz window spotting activity with my grandchildren. Any events/activities like this arranged during the school holidays are most welcome."*



**Promoting our businesses:** Through our Love Saffron Walden campaign across all media, we have reached thousands in our target audience. More than 40 stories were placed in local and national papers in the past year, mentioning many of our businesses. Our advertising campaign included over 60 adverts in local and regional papers and online. Across our main social media channels, we have posted over 300 pieces of content and have more than doubled our followers to c4.5k.

**Activities to help keep the town centre vibrant:** We have led nearly 20 projects in addition to marketing and communication in the past year. More than two thirds of our business community have taken part.

**Lobbying ECC, UDC, SWTC:** Our relationship with all three councils has enabled us to access extra funding to further boost our efforts in welcoming residents and visitors back to the town centre. We have also represented the business communities' needs regarding the Government Covid measures to make the town centre feel safe to visit and shop.

## Our plans for 2022 - 2023

Following the 2022 AGM on February 10, our new board of directors and operating team will roll out plans for 2022 and beyond. As the SWBID team, we are excited about what we can achieve together in the coming months. This includes developing the following ideas as a start.

- 1 Running a Window on Walden event to celebrate all that our town has to offer. This includes; a vibrant independent and local business community, our historical sites, art and music as well as leisure activities.
- 2 Valentines and Mothers' Day promotions,
- 3 An Easter Trail with prizes.
- 4 Arranging spring flower baskets/tubs for town centre businesses.
- 5 Building on our LOVE SAFFRON WALDEN theme to encourage a return to our brilliant businesses and town centre. All our marketing and promo campaigns will drive local spend and support independent business initiatives.
- 6 Developing our cooperation with councils (EEC, UDC and SWTC) and other SW organisations to work together to make our town a great place to visit, enjoy and spend time and money and organising lamp post flags to attract visitors on approaches to Saffron Walden.
- 7 More involvement in planned town centre activities. For example; SWTC-organised Queen's Jubilee events in June, the Heritage Development Group Saffron Day in October and many more.
- 8 Working with UDC to create and roll out a 'Loyal Local' program to drive local spend.
- 9 Setting up forums to strengthen the non-retail business community.
- 10 Second term consultation and BID business planning for ballot in 2023.

We are very excited to be working for our levy payers to deliver another great program this year. There are many other great ideas BID members have mentioned that the BID team can look into. With our new directors on board, we want to continue raising the profile of Saffron Walden as a destination in our region highlighting that it's an enjoyable place and well worth spending time (and money) here. We are committed to our original mandate to attract, engage and support a thriving business community. The message to residents and to visitors is even more important now in 2022 than ever, to encourage footfall and spend in our town.

**Media: "Thanks for sharing the BBC interview - all good coverage for our beautiful town with amazing independents to boot."**

## The BID Team



**Shara Vickers**  
Chair - Tela Ltd



**Julie Redfern**  
Vice Chair -  
Beauty Box



**Ian Hudson**  
Oshé (stepping  
down in 2022)



**Alex Ibryam**  
The Trawlerman  
Fish Bar (stepping  
down in 2022)



**Lisa Corden**  
Me & Mrs Jones  
(stepping down in  
2022)



**Anna Wilkinson**  
Administrative  
Assistant



**Louise Scutt-  
Richter**  
BID Manager



**Mike Riccio**  
M Riccio



**Claire Hunnable**  
Saffron Building  
Society



**Jonathan Waters**  
Waitrose



**James de Vries**  
Councillor

## About Saffron Walden BID

Saffron Walden Business Improvement District is a local democratically elected not-for-profit limited company established in 2018. It is run by a board of volunteer directors that represent town centre businesses working with locally based outsourced service providers for project management, design, marketing and social media. Its aim is to deliver specific initiatives that help the town's business community based on the agreed business plan. It is funded by a levy paid by its members and runs for a five-year term.

W: [saffronwaldenbid.co.uk](http://saffronwaldenbid.co.uk), @lovesaffronwaldenessex

E: [louise@saffronwaldenbid.co.uk](mailto:louise@saffronwaldenbid.co.uk) or [anna@saffronwaldenbid.co.uk](mailto:anna@saffronwaldenbid.co.uk)

Office: 9 Market Row, Saffron Walden CB10 1HB Co Reg: 11643749