

Introduction

Saffron Walden businesses have been doing their utmost in the past year to address the triple challenges of escalating costs, changing shopping habits and the cost-of-living crisis.

This is in the context of a year when we have seen three Prime Ministers and four Chancellors, two budgets alongside a Global energy crisis. Nationally, many businesses have shut down and town centres have emptied. In contrast, in Saffron Walden we have welcomed many new businesses in the past year and we congratulate the many others that have extended their range of services, products, or premises.

As a Business Improvement District (BID), we have focused on the key priorities of putting our town on the map and promoting the town as a shopping destination as well as a place to come and have an enjoyable experience. 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 again this year that we can achieve more together to help the town thrive.

The successful **Window on Walden** event brought businesses together in the Market Square with local attractions and places of interest. We showcased much of what our lovely town has to offer. In the Spring, we joined in the Jubilee celebrations with our **Right Royal Trail** and a record number of businesses around town took part.

With our **Love Saffron Walden** campaign, we continued promoting and profiling all types of business in town. In the run up to Christmas, we promoted our town's businesses with a **Festive Evening Event** dedicated to shopping.

By popular demand, we ran our second **Saffron Walden Santa's Grotto** that brought many visitors from Cambs, Herts and Essex and beyond into the town.

We ran two polls asking if members were interested in a renewal ballot for a second term, as we are in the final year of our 5-year term as a BID. The answer was 'YES' from the majority of respondents in both polls. To that end, we are preparing a Business Plan for consultation and your vote for a new 5-year term in June. All levy payers will be asked to take part in the consultation and feedback.

And finally, thanks to the volunteer directors and operations team. Louise Scutt-Richter has stepped down as SWBID manager. We are sad to see her leave as she has been such an integral part of the BID. We appreciate all her hard work and commitment to the town. We are delighted to welcome Lisa Cleaver who joins the team as our new BID manager in February.

Also, our thanks and farewell to three directors stepping down this year; Joseph Imrie of Bare Beauty and Andrew Wilcocks of Adnams and Mike Riccio of Casa Luxe. We welcome new directors to the team; Karen Oakley from Sage & Saffron and Sarah Dickinson from Waitrose.

If you are the owner or manager of a town centre business and would like to stand for election, please contact me.

We have achieved a huge amount together through some of the most difficult times. There is much still do, and the future is unknown. The best way to predict the future is to help shape it. **We welcome you to join the team!**

Shara Vickers, Chair

What we have achieved together this year

WINDOW ON WALDEN - MARCH

By popular demand, we ran our second pop-up market 'Window on Walden' in March. Several new businesses that had opened during the pandemic joined in as well as some of our established town centre businesses.

Over 30 businesses and organisations took part including Saffron Hall, Saffron Screen and Audley End Miniature Railway. We invited local Storyteller Janina Vigurs and Calamity Clown to keep the little ones entertained, leaving the grown-ups free to chat or wander around the stalls.





Encouraging people to spend time in the town and give them an enjoyable experience.

We ran a teaser campaign on social media promoting businesses taking part, showing what they were planning to have on their stalls. Shoppers were included in our 'Love Saffron Walden' campaign with vox-pops of why they love our town.

It was great to have the support of SWTC with planning and logistics, and contribution from UDC's 'Welcome Back Funding' grant.

"It was lovely to see the market square buzzing again there was a real community feel with everyone working together despite the weather!" Julie Redfern SWBID Co-Chair

RIGHT ROYAL SUCCESS - MAY

As part of the Queen's 70th Jubilee celebrations in Spring 2022, we ran the Right Royal Trail taking participants around the businesses to encourage them to find what the town has to offer. A record 72 businesses took part hosting a royal clue in their window. There was a prize draw for entries finding the most clues and winners of all ages received a voucher to spend in any local business.

Through advertising the event in local papers, leaflet and via social media, we attracted participants from Saffron Walden as well as nearby villages from Newport to Royston, Finchingfield and beyond.



"We had a wealth of positive feedback from adults and children who had enjoyed not only being out and about in the fresh air with family and friends, but also having their attention drawn to businesses that might otherwise not have been on their usual route around Saffron Walden." Rachel at the Tourist Information Centre

LOVE SAFFRON WALDEN CAMPAIGN

This provides consistent branding for all our activity from advertising, social media, events and promotional material. Eat and Drink, Shop and Enjoy are headings used alongside the taglines promoting what the town has to offer. In the past 12 months, businesses have had the opportunity to participate in the Love Saffron Walden picture gallery on social media.

Putting Saffron Walden on the map and promoting the town as a shopping destination.



Current social media follows and reach

We take every opportunity to support and promote all members of our business community with 260 Grid Posts, 79 Reels and 1384 stories and hundreds of posts throughout the year.

	Followers	Reach	Page/Profile Visits
Instagram	2,730 Up 20%	40,449 Paid - 281,537	2,991
Facebook	1943 Up 10%	75,334 Paid - 582,227	4,673

MARKETING AND PROMOTION ACTIVITY

We use a multi-channel approach to reach the people we want to invite to Saffron Walden. Social media plays a key role, and we make sure we reach others using print media, posters and leaflets as well as banners and vinyls.

Our aim is to get as much engagement as possible from potential visitors and shoppers in our target area and demographic.

For **our social media channels**, we used high quality video content involving several businesses

participating in our planned activity. This year, website traffic was the highest it has been year on year; and engagement on social media boosted likes and follows were more than we've had.

In print and other media, advertising and editorial has been secured in the Walden Local, The Reporter, regional online publications and on regional radio stations. Banners and leaflets have been distributed at key locations around the town.

CHRISTMAS 2022

We added Christmas lighting to Jubilee Gardens and Market Walk as well as Rose & Crown and the Cockpit to augment town centre lighting provided by the SWTC. Based on feedback in our member survey 'Have your say' last summer we focused on two events.

The **Festive Evening Event** saw more than 35 shops open into the evening to boost trade. Many ran special promotions and had festive treats on offer to shoppers taking advantage of the extended hours. Several businesses reported that it was a good evening for sales, and shoppers enjoyed the festive feel in the town.

It is hoped this can be repeated at Christmas time again, but maybe open later one evening a week for a few weeks in December.

Over 740 families bought tickets for **Saffron Walden Santa's Grotto**. We estimate this brought over 2000 visitors to the town based on the number of children and the relatives with them at the Grotto. According to booking information, they came from Cambridge, Hertfordshire, Essex and London as well as a large proportion from Saffron Walden. They then went on to shop or have something to eat or drink locally.

We promoted businesses in many ways to encourage visitors to shop in town.



"It was nice to see a good number of people out on Thursday for the Festive Evening Event. We had a busy evening as people were taking advantage of Christmas shopping without their children." Catherine Radley, Owner of Toy Box

- We created a web page and posted a special offer for Grotto Ticket Holders. This was promoted on all media and on the email to all ticket holders.
- Hard copy postcards with details were handed to every family visiting the Grotto.
- Participating businesses were listed in Walden Local Wrap.
- Full-sized screen playing videos filmed in the promo using AEMR characters.

FINANCE SUMMARY 2022 – 2023

The SWBID spent £84,000 on project delivery, an increase of 12% from last year's spend of £74,000.

We were able to spend more as the COVID council levy reduction had ended and we received a larger collection than the previous year when the reduction was in place.

Major projects included Window on Walden, Right Royal Trail, Love Saffron Walden campaign and Christmas Lighting and the Grotto.

Increased spending was spread across multiple projects and activities across a variety of platforms to get as much coverage as possible for our businesses in the town.

Offline advertising and marketing spend increased 25% from £20,000 in the previous year to £25,000. This includes publications such as the Walden Local, Reporter, Cambridge Edition as well as five physical locations including Cambridge and Tottenham Hale, Bishops Stortford, Chelmsford and Broxbourne railways stations.

Online advertising and promotional spend was also increased by 16.5% from £11,700 to £14,000 and was primarily spent with online publications as well as Facebook and Instagram promotional tools.

Our PR spend for the year was similar to the previous year at a total cost of £11,000.

OUR PLANS FOR 2023 AND BEYOND

We are excited about what we can continue to achieve as a strong town centre business community in Saffron Walden. We have proved over the past 4-5 years that the Saffron Walden business community is resilient and successful. We have achieved a lot together.

From our recent polls, the BID team is delighted to see the positivity towards a possible second term for a BID in Saffron Walden. So, over the next few weeks the team will come and see you to discuss new proposals for a second term based on the fresh ideas and input from all parts of the business community.

All levy payers will be asked to take part in the consultation and feedback ideas and

suggestions for events and initiatives that you think would help your business sector and the town to thrive.

All these ideas will be collated to create a Business Plan proposal for the BID to run for a second 5-year term. Every levy payer will have an opportunity to vote on this by Postal Ballot in June.

Looking ahead to 2023 and beyond, we are confident that our beautiful and historic market town will be reinvigorated as we continue to share ideas, work together, and support each other.

So, get your thinking caps on to help drive Saffron Walden and all the businesses in it to have a great 2023 and beyond.

The BID Team

Shara Vickers Chair - Tela Ltd, **Julie Redfern** Vice Chair - Beauty Box, **Claire Hunnoble** - Saffron Building Society, Cllr **James deVries** - Councillor Saffron Walden Town Council, **Karen Oakley** - Sage & Saffron, **Sarah Dickinson** - Waitrose, **Mike Riccio** - Casa Luxe, **Joseph Imrie** - Bare Beauty (Claire, Mike & Joseph are stepping down in 2023).

Louise Scutt-Richter (stepping down as BID manager), **Lisa Cleaver** New SWBID Manager from Feb 2023

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.

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