

### **Minehead BID steps up a gear.**

Projects costing more than £24,000 have already been approved as part of a campaign to raise Minehead's profile as a holiday destination.

And directors of Minehead BID – the company behind the facelift plans – say they are delighted with the local response to their initial proposals.

The company now numbers 245 members drawn from local businesses. It was set up last year in an effort to increase footfall in the high street and the 2019 holiday season will see a significantly expanded attractions programme forming a key element of the campaign.

Organisers will be making the most of May Day, which falls in midweek this year, building on Minehead's distinction of being one of only a handful of towns in the country to carry on a hobby horse tradition.

While the horse makes its usual tour of the town Wellington Square will host an event featuring Morris Men and maypole dancing.

BID co-director Debbie Sawatzki, from Lovely Boutique said the entertainment would also feature a shanty band.

“We want to add a bit of colour and fun to an established tradition and hopefully help people understand and appreciate what an important element of our cultural heritage the hobby horse is,” she said.

May Bank holiday will also see a troupe of Steam Punk enthusiasts descending on the town, with performances scheduled at the Regal theatre. Stalls and exhibitions will also be featured within the Old Hospital and on the forecourt. Street performers will add to the fun.

Permanent improvements to the resort will include new flower beds on the sea front while the floral theme will continue through the town with another new BID initiative. Dozens of new flower baskets will

complement existing displays. Park Street and Friday Street will be the main focus in year one, with more planned over the next four years.

Minehead's primary schools are adopting flower tubs in and around Wellington Square. BID hopes it will resurrect interest in Minehead re-entering the annual Britain in Bloom competition after a break of several years. To compliment this a Minehead museum presentation on the 10-year story of the town's journey up the Britain in Bloom ladder is being celebrated at the Beach Hotel on April 23.

Overseeing the BID programme is its new professional manager Andrew Hopkins, who brings a wealth of experience in event and town centre management and tourism delivery to the job.

He says he is hugely impressed by the level of enthusiasm being shown by the town's traders.

"The Christmas lights switch-on was an example of what can be achieved when a community puts its mind to something. The fact we have now been able to enlarge our total £100K budget with more than £15,000 of extra match funding is a really positive development," he said.

"We can't achieve everything in year one, but all the time we are creating friendships and linking with partners to make our money go further.

"The BID programme has all the early signs of being a genuinely transformational project."

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