

# **Minehead ETCRF Steering Group Meeting 1**

## Meeting held 26th November 2020 via Zoom

**Present**

Julian Abrahams JA Steering Group Chair

Andrew Hopkins AJH BID Manager

Richard Robbins RR Project Officer

Mandy Chilcott MC BID Director

Andy Hadley AH Advisor

Jon Lee JL BID Director

Graham Sizer GS BID Chair

Sally Turner ST Advisor

**Apologies**

Sam Rawle SR Advisor

Lisa Redston LR Advisor

# Welcome and Introductions

JA welcomed everyone attending the meeting. ST was introduced to MC and JL

# Overview of the Emergency High Street Indicative Plan

JA said there would be scope to amend the indicative plan if it was felt necessary and invited views on the current plan.

MC mentioned that Blue Flag status and Britain in Bloom had already been mentioned and asked if they were still part of the indicative plan. AJH replied that this is indicative at present. Projects will come before the steering group and, if approved, that will be when they become definite proposals. He commented that there is a strong desire for the Britain in Bloom project to go forward but that it would be dependent on finding someone to drive it. A formal proposal will be brought to the steering group so that it can be discussed.

JA said projects to be considered need to be within the framework set out in the plan, which he feels is wide-ranging and gives the steering group scope to consider a wide area and lots of topics. AJH added if there was a variance from it, then he would need to refer to Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and it would require sign-off by Cllr Marcus Kravis, the responsible portfolio holder.

*AH declared an interest: one of the items in the indicative plan is Dressing empty shop units to encourage their re-letting” and one of the units in Minehead is his.*

# Strategic targeting for results

JA emphasised the need to strategically target proposals to aim to get results quickly.

Businesses are struggling and there is a difficult three to six months period coming up, with the possibility for a further period of lock-down to come. It is important to demonstrate to businesses that BID and the Councils are doing everything possible to assist them.

# Projects under consideration so far

Three projects have been put forward for consideration and a Project Procurement Sheet for each had been prepared and circulated prior to the meeting. JA explained that it is intended that the Project Procurement Sheet would follow and record the progress of each project to fulfilment and is designed to track progress and help with accounting for the costs.

## **Proposal 1**

### Visitor Guide for Minehead in 2021 (Marketing theme)

### Proposer: Giles Adams (GA)

AJH reported that he approached Giles Adams about commissioning a visitor guide which, in conjunction with other proposals, will form part of Minehead’s marketing collateral for the promotion of the town to a wider market.

*AJH declared an interest: he is also a Director of Visit Somerset and has worked with GA in the past and has previously commissioned a visitor guide for Taunton from him. GA also publishes the Visit Somerset visitor guide.*

The proposal contains indicative prices for a selection of options (number of pages and size of print run) and include a cost for distribution to ensure they reach a wide audience away from Minehead. AJH invited comments and questions.

JL asked what the timescale would be for production and distribution – Easter onwards? AJH said that a large proportion for the print run would be destined for distribution outside Minehead, based on research done by Visit Exmoor into where our area’s best client bases are.

ST commented that in the Visitor Information Centre, people do still like to pick up leaflets and brochures to help plan their visits. Suggested also, if possible, that it should be available sooner than Easter, i.e. early in the New Year, so that promotion could start nearer the beginning of 2021.

AJH said one challenge is the quality of the photographs we have to use. However, the digital version could be available sooner than the printed version.

MC suggested cooperation with West Somerset Railway, both on their website and by having brochures on the trains. She also suggested that the print quantity should be at the higher end of the range so they could be shard in a variety of ways.

GS raised the question of advertising to reduce costs and suggested a larger print run of a calendar proof publication so the supplies could be used beyond 2021.

JA asked whether it was thought that advertising should be sought – AJH’s response was that in normal times that would be desirable, but at reset it was more important to get the document produced without delay. For this, he suggested it should be advertising -free.

AH questioned whether working with Visit Exmoor might mean the output would be Exmoor-biased in terms of who they normally try to target. AJH said that following changes in those involved with Visit Exmoor, the attitude to Minehead is much more positive and it is seen as vital to the area’s attraction.

JA summarised that he felt what had arisen out of the discussion was the need for a larger print run, with big distribution outside the Minehead area, some available for distribution in Minehead, and with a digital version.

**The meeting agreed and JA said that he, AJH and RR would take it forward and report back.**

## **Proposal 2**

### Blue Flag status for Minehead Beach (Public Realm theme)

### Proposer: Jim Whittaker (JW)

JA said he felt this is an exciting project, while recognising that it will be a big challenge. He invited comments.

ST said having looked at the SW map of blue flagged-beaches, there is nowhere on the south side of the channel east of Barnstaple – that in itself would make Minehead stand out in a positive way. There was wide agreement.

AH said this has been an aspiration since the start of the Minehead BID so extra funding to help it progress would be good.

JA summarised – to take this forward to the next stage (actioning Stage 1 – Scope in the Project Procurement Sheet) would cost £3,570.

MC questioned whether it would be JW organising the project. JA said it was too early to think about that as this was the scoping phase. AJH added that there are other parallel ideas (e.g. Plastic Free Minehead) and he feels that getting SWT buy-in will be vital as they are crucial to beach management in our area.

AH commented that Butlins have a great interest in the Minehead seafront and it would be important and helpful to gain the support of Julian Highfield. MC pointed out there is a history of co-operation between Butlins, SWT and Minehead Town Council, with all three contributing to the purchase of the beach cleaning equipment.

**It was agreed by all that this should go forward.**

## **Proposal 3**

### Marketing Campaign for Minehead (Marketing theme)

### Proposer: Visit Exmoor

AJH explained there is funding from Exmoor NP and Visit England to support a marketing campaign as part of the joint recovery plan and it is being co-ordinated by Cally Elston of Visit Exmoor who has done a great deal of research and arrived at a list of appropriate publications to advertise in.

One strand, the Countryfile Magazine, has already started.

This would be a contribution to the overall campaign with Cally pulling everything together and AJH signing off the Minehead element and providing editorial copy and photography.

GS felt that this should be adopted, using the expertise of another organisation is a bonus. JA agreed that it would be good that it is something already being done and run by a co-ordinator. ST commented that it mentioned walking publications and that it has been noticed in the Visitor Information Centre and via the Mineheadbay website that there has been an upturn in interest in walking generally during the last 12 months. JL said he strongly supported promoting Minehead as a walking destination, benefitting shops and accommodation providers.

**It was agreed by all that this should proceed.**

# Communications

JA emphasised we need to reach the business community in as many ways as possible to encourage involvement and seek ideas for ways the Fund can be used to help them.

RR is developing an ETCRF section on the website and we will be using Mailchimp to do E-Newsletters specifically for matters relating to ETCRF. There should also be a printed version of newsletter for those not using IT so much.

MC said the development of video meetings using platforms such as Zoom over the past 9-10 months has maybe led to the possibility of holding online live Q&A sessions and inviting people to drop in for discussions and updates. It would demonstrate a desire to encourage communication.

JL commented that what has been discussed with these proposals was largely geared for 2021 – could there be a press campaign in the coming weeks that boosted activity in the town from next week when many businesses would be re-opening: retail open and Christmas shopping can be done locally.

AJH responded that BID has already commissioned such a campaign with the West Somerset Free Press – he has booked one of the frontpage advertising slots for the next three weeks, up to Christmas. Advertising with the Gazette has been investigated and the cost was felt to be prohibitive. He also commented that there has been some nervousness about advertising too far afield which might encourage visitors from further away and crowding.

JA said it would be helpful to encourage retailers to come together to propose actions that could be taken quickly. He suggested meeting or talking with JL outside the meeting to try to identify some actions which JL agreed to.

AJH mentioned free parking – some was funded last year by BID and JA agreed that this year the ETCRF could be used instead, for immediate benefit to the retailers. MC suggested that the parking issue should be clarified – it would be good for it to start from next week when shops re-open.

MC also suggested that any advertising should strongly push the Covid safety measures, alongside the commercial message.

JA said he and AJH would look into the parking costs and MC suggested SWT are contacted with an offer for ETCRF to cover the cost for the weekend of 5th and 6th December and then see what might be offered by SWAT for the following weekends. **JA agreed and said he and AJH would report back.**

# Date of the next meeting

JA is intending that the steering group meet every two weeks but in the light of businesses re-opening next week and the proximity to Christmas it was agreed that the next meeting will be:

**Thursday 3rd December at 6pm**