

Report to the Cowal and Bute Community Planning Group.

From The isle of Bute Business improvement District (BID)

On Thursday 9th September 2021 the businesses of the isle of Bute voted YES to the creation of a bid. It was a tough and protracted process through covid and with some a number of objectors not only objecting to the BID but placing some vitreous and sometimes libelous comments on social media. However, the ballot was a success 115 voting in favour and 75 against. Close, but the success created history in that the IOBB is the first all island to create a BID! Consider some 62 self-catering businesses are owned by individuals living off island.

The journey ahead will be a challenge but an exciting one. The board (a strong one) was formed and took up post on Thursday 1st October. The Bid manager however was not in place until the 5th of January.

Prior to the formation of the BID as a legal entity the steering group had delivered a great success with the provision of an Alfresco area on Montague Street and Guildford Square. The alfresco was nominated and shortlisted as a finalist for the. The outcome was it was the runner up.

The alfresco was created form Scottish Government funds for covid recovery through the Scottish towns partnership. The creation of the alfresco allowed people to continue to meet and enjoy food and drink (no alcohol) outdoors during a period of restriction. The facility saved se veral eateries form closing and helped retain a number of full time and part time jobs. During July August and September, the public were treated to a variety of music and dancing both Scottish and Irish. A great success.

The BID provided a Halloween party on the amphitheater are providing a fantastic afternoon of entertainment for the children and parent. The Canopy provide by the authority made an ideal centre piece for new and much brighter Christmas lights display celebrated with a switch on supported by music and performances by local children from the nursery school and dancers. On two Saturdays prior to Christmas local small traders participated in a Christmas market. All proving to be very successful. The intention is to do it all again this year. However, the BID will not be totally event focused and plans are underway to roll out a number of initiatives to help increase visitors to the island increasing footfall, encouraging a more standard trading day and week and of course working with the local authority team to clean up the island in readiness for the new season and, maintain it.