

Greater Grassmarket BID team need you!

Over 300 business owners are being consulted on the Grassmarket's future and have been urged to complete the questionnaires delivered this week by the Greater Grassmarket Business Improvement District (BID) team.

All information collected from the questionnaires will form the basis of the BID Businesses Plan, which business owners will have the opportunity to vote on this autumn. A positive vote will see the Greater Grassmarket BID take forward the most popular improvements to the area, as chosen by local firms.

Business Improvement Districts (BID) are created where local businesses see the opportunity to invest collectively in order to help make local improvements. The likely levy for Grassmarket businesses will be around a few hundred pounds annually which would enable a significant planned investment for the historical Grassmarket area. Plus, as a world heritage site and critical tourist destination for the city, the Grassmarket is an ideal candidate for a successful long-term BID.

Linda McIntosh, Greater Grassmarket BID Project Manager, says: "BIDs are all about businesses having a greater say and making collective changes which will benefit not only the businesses but also their staff and customers, as well as people living in the area. I'm asking businesses in the Grassmarket area to take just a few minutes out of their busy day to complete the questionnaire because this is their chance to have their say and to help shape the area's future."

“In general bigger business will pay a higher levy than smaller ones as they should benefit more from the BID. The relatively small BID levy businesses are paying in Falkirk has managed to leverage in substantial additional funding to be spent on projects which benefit the businesses in the town centre. Falkirk is a great example of how BIDs work and obviously the businesses of Falkirk agree, as they recently voted in the renewal ballot to continue with the BID for another five years. I hope the businesses in the Grassmarket area follow Falkirk’s example by giving us their valuable input on the questionnaire.”

Linda is working closely with the Grassmarket Area Traders’ Association (GATA), which has already made a real difference to the area by organising major events, festivals and markets which have been promoted to both UK and international markets.



Fawns Reid, **GATA** Chair and owner of hat shop Fabhatrix in the Grassmarket, says: “Our most successful scheme to date has been a collective marketing project in which we raised matched funding from Visit Scotland, and a Greater Grassmarket BID would build on the success of this while taking it to another level.

“The Grassmarket is a major tourist and food and drink destination with a wealth of independent quirky shops and a successful BID would put the area firmly on the map for tourists and locals alike. It is hoped that we can plan a BID campaign over five years, and not just on a project by project basis every few months, to enable the BID to make a positive long-term impact.

“The BID could enable more creative and regular events to the

Grassmarket, which have worked well in the past. Additional regular marketing campaigns could also be implemented aimed at targeting not just inbound visitors to the city but also the Edinburgh residential market and outlying areas. Other activities could include environmental improvements making the Grassmarket a cleaner, greener and safer area.

“In addition improved access for pedestrians and vehicles as well as business support mechanisms could be introduced providing vital services and help for small businesses in the area. As with other BID success stories it is hoped that the savings Grassmarket businesses can make through group procurement for example makes this process cost-neutral in the longer term.”

Fawns and Linda are keen to hear from the wide range of businesses in the Grassmarket area, including retail, visitor destinations, pubs, hotels and restaurants among others, so that they are given as wide a picture as possible of what businesses actually want for their area. They will then create the BID Business Plan based on these views.

Fawns adds: “We realise that people will only support a BID if there is something very tangible in it for them, so I think it important to stress we are seeking ideas based on what every business wants. We also need to know if business owners would prefer to pay a higher levy, to enable more projects to be carried out, or a smaller levy for fewer projects.”

Businesses have a choice of filling in a paper copy or completing the questionnaire online at www.grassmarket.net and following the link to Survey Monkey. Or they can complete the questionnaire and drop it off with Fawns Reid at Fabhatrix, 13 Cowgatehead.