

CRIEFF SUCCEEDS BID
Levy Payers' Meeting
Strathearn Artspace
Wednesday, 1st November 2017
Q&A Session

Q: Alastair Gourlay, Gourlay Butchers. Over the last two years, I've paid a levy of £2,000. I'm just about to pay another £1,000. What have I got for my money? We were misled from the start – we were told that PKC would provide additional funding in Year 1, amounting to £35k. That was withdrawn. If PKC aren't paying, why should we? BID's not happening.

A: Graham Donaldson, BID Chairman. PKC are also major levy payers, paying on the Schools, their office premises, other premises owned by them throughout the town. Yes, the £35k failed to materialise, but last year they provided additional funding of £12k, and this year, we believe they will give us an additional £20k.

Comment: Ailsa Campbell, Campbell's Bakery. If you think it's not happening, come on board and make it happen.

Graham Donaldson. The presentation tonight has covered many positives – a proactive and successful marketing programme; BID's tenancy of the Town Hall, renovated at very considerable cost by PKC; the Big Event. All these have taken time to develop, but we are now ready to deliver.

Bob Anderson, The Tower. There are lots of wee things we can all do for ourselves. It's worrying to hear this negativity.

Q: Bobby Salmond, Houseproud. As levy payers, we should automatically be members of the BID Company – our payment should validate our membership.

A: Graham Donaldson/Neil Combe, BID Manager. Membership is open to all levy payers, but is not automatic. Under Company Law, individuals are required to apply for membership. All that's needed is to sign an application form. These rules are not of BID's making – the process is set out under Company legislation. Membership confers voting rights at the Company's AGM or any EGM. The chief business of the AGM is to approve the Annual Accounts.

Q: Bobby Salmond. Why are the Accounts not available tonight? All we have is an abbreviated statement.

A: GD/NC. Tonight's meeting is not the AGM. That will be at the end of the month, when the full Accounts will be available.

Jim MacEwan, Finlaysons Accountants. As stated, the full Accounts will be available for scrutiny and question by the Members at the AGM. The present document is simply to inform the meeting about the Company's trading.

Q: Kate Clements, Blythswood Charity Shop. Our shop is run entirely by volunteers. The annual levy of £275 has to be found from the funds we generate for the Blythswood charity. We are not like the Cancer shops or other nation-wide professionally run "charity shops" with huge resources and management budgets. BID makes no allowance for community service.

A: GD. Yes, I have some sympathy for your view. However, the BID levy is payable for all business-rated premises with a rateable value of more than £1,000. Your shop falls into

that category. There are ways to claw back your contribution – you could apply for a Business Improvement Grant to improve the premises or provide staff training.

Response dismissed by KC and colleague Nan Wilson.

Comment: KC. BID is based on a very complicated bureaucracy. Other small businesses in the town are struggling.

GD. Our hands are tied. The threshold of a business-rateable value of £1,000 applies across the board. If BID is returned for a second term, we could look at the issue again.

Bobby Salmond. Allowance should have been made for special cases. Why can't there be a change?

GD. We do understand the difference between Blythswood and Cancer Research, but our hands are tied.

Q: Tom McKiddie, TMACS. Why are the bus tours not coming to the town? And when the occasional bus comes, why is it left parked in the Square? Who is responsible for handling the arrangements for tours?

A (at GD's suggestion): Stuart McLaren, Crieff Visitor Centre. There are two main companies involved. Contact is made direct and with the drivers.

Comment: Sophie Banks, Wee Beasties. We have registered an official complaint.

Ian Johnston, Johnston Media. The town is missing out. Parking is the issue.

GD. We are talking to the coach companies.

Councillor Rhona Brock, PKC. Bus parking could be available at the Primary School out of school hours – e.g., at weekends or during the holidays. Parking should not be seen as the issue.

Q: Sophie Banks. Is the website open to everyone?

A: NC. The website is open to all businesses who have paid their levy. It's up to the businesses to make full use of the site, which provides a great opportunity to promote, advertise and inform. It's not open to businesses who have withheld their levy, for obvious reasons.

Q: Alice Penney, Boyds. How many businesses have refused to pay, and are they pursued for non-payment?

A: NC. There are 350 distinct properties on which payment is due. There are fewer than 20 non-payers, and they are pursued.

GD. The problem is that it is not economic to take non-payment for a relatively small sum to the Small Claims Court. We do not sanction write-offs, and are working with PKC to carry forward non-payment so that an accumulated total makes legal action viable.

Q: Gordon Petrie, Gordon Motors. What benefit does BID bring to non-retail levy-payers?

Comment: Tom McKiddie. The levy is charged on a store. Why?

A: NC. The levy is based on rateable value and applies across the board. The whole purpose of BID is to improve the local economy. With a thriving local economy, all businesses whether retail or otherwise will benefit.

Q: Sarah Roseweir, J&R Auto Services and J&R Storage. PKC use a combined rateable value to assess liability for businesses with dispersed sites, but this doesn't apply to the levy. Why?

Comment: Gordon Petrie. Other BIDs don't apply separate charges to each property. Why is Crieff different?

A: GD. We can't change the rules mid-term. If BID goes to a second term, we could look at this again.

Comment: Tom McKiddie. A blanket ruling that the levy is paid on individual properties is unfair.

A: GD. We can't cherry-pick on rateable value. The bottom line is that if BID prospers, the town prospers.

Q: Sarah-Jane Bell, Pavilion Café. We are recent traders. Why are we not on the website?

A: NC. As we become aware of any new business, they are added to the website. Will check if the Pavilion Café is on. We would encourage all businesses to take full advantage of the opportunities on offer and manage their own page and listing.

Q: Nan Wilson, Blythswood. Why is there no communication from BID with the businesses? No-one from BID has ever been to our shop.

Comment: Tricia Fox, VOLPA. NC can't make time to visit every business – his door is always open.

A: NC. We communicate with all businesses on a regular basis with updates on activities and information on business initiatives which may be of interest. Any particular issues can always be raised directly with me or with any Board members.

Q: Sophie Banks. Why doesn't BID do something to tidy up the vacant shops, just to make the town look better?

A: GD. Yes, that's an issue we've considered. Unfortunately, it's not always possible to get agents and owners to co-operate.

Conclusion. GD thanked everyone for attending. It had been a constructive and helpful meeting, and he was grateful for the interest shown.

The Meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.