

Chairman's Report to Windermere & Bowness Chamber of Trade
20th December 2012

The year started full of the hope that The Windermere & Bowness BID would be voted through at the end of January. Sadly it was not to be. We had a reasonable turn out for the vote, with a majority of the rate payers in favour, but a few people who held the balance of the value of the payable rates were not for it, so we have not been able to benefit from the advantages this scheme would undoubtedly given to the business community. I feel that this result has disadvantaged Windermere & Bowness considerably for the next five years, due to a lack of community spirit, enterprise and insular thinking.

Your committee gave itself tirelessly during the year before and it is regrettable that they have not had the accolade of success. Perhaps in the future others will be able resurrect the idea?

The year of 2012 has been less onerous on the committee. The Olympics took front seat with the promised hope that this would be the saviour of business this summer. The arrival of the Olympic flame brought us all together on the Glebe to see and join in with the celebrations with the Torch travelling down the lake on the Turn. There was a good turnout despite the very poor weather.

Subsequent to the Olympics, we had a survey sent out to the membership to find out about the positive results they may have had. Unfortunately the opposite was the result and this has been sent down to government for their consideration. A reply has been had from Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint, a copy of which is available on our web site for those with the energy to pursue this.

It must be noted that the Airshow was pulled due to the perceived threat of financial concerns, another setback for our area. This event had become an institution and a great fillip for the summer.

There was success for the gardeners amongst us; a Silver Medal in the Town category in the Britain in Bloom contest, the first time we have been entered in this, well done to those involved. Also a Gold in the Town category in Cumbria in Bloom and we won the South Lakeland District Council Trophy in the District Category, brilliant.

The year is now drawing to a close with Christmas nearly upon us. I find it sad to note that, as in previous years, the Winter Lights Committee is still finding it extremely difficult to raise the necessary funds to put on a great display of festive lighting. It goes without saying that had the BID been better supported we would have been the envy of all South Lakeland, with lighting and festivities properly funded by every business and at such a small price to each one, instead of thinking that there are others who will pay, why should those few always bail out the majority? We would all benefit.

To re-iterate my comments of last year, we must encourage more people and businesses to join our ranks so that we can continue to increase our voice within the community. Our membership of eightyish is about ten percent of the total business population. We are now a recognised body with opinions that carry weight with all the various bodies, we are continuously being asked to give our opinions and advice, so it must make sense to belong to this Chamber to promote the area and our businesses.