



**Windermere
& Bowness** | Chamber
of Trade

The minutes of a General Members Meeting held on the 2nd March 2010 at the Burnside Hotel, Kendal Road, Bowness-on-Windermere, commencing at 6:30pm.

Present:

Eve Blatchley (Hon. Member)
Tony Blaney (Fairfield Guest House)
Barry Butler (Chair)
Simon Everett (Simon Everett Opticians)
Adrian G Faulkner (AGF Business Services Ltd)

Paul Frain (Helen's Chocolates)
Bill Johnson (Hon Member)
Leigh Halatsch (WTC)
Robin Love (Ambleside PO)
Christopher Rishton (Lakes Architects)

Apologies:

Liz Blaney (Fairfield Guest House)
Clayton Butchers
Anthony Dean (Threshers – W'mere)
Tim Farron MP
Steve Holcroft (Steve Holcroft Photography)
Paul Liddell (Lakelovers)

PCSO Scot Livett
Michael Roberts (Millbeck)
Richard Rogers (The Old Pump House)
Penny Seeds (Manuka)
R Tonnet (La Galerie d'Art)

Opening Remarks:

Barry Butler (Chair), welcomed the assembled members.

Minutes:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd February 2010 were accepted as being a true record.

Matters Arising not covered by the Agenda:

There were no matters under this heading.

Report from the Committee Meeting:

The meeting was informed that the Committee had not met since the last General meeting.

Correspondence:

The Secretary informed the meeting that the Chamber of Trade had 3 new members since they last met:

1. The White House, Bowness,
2. The China Boat Restaurant, Bowness, and
3. Erica's Hair Salon, Windermere.

He then went onto inform the meeting of the new occupants in Quarry Rigg, Bowness.

Reports:

a. **Police**

The Secretary, at the request of PCSO Scott Livett, gave the meeting an update on what the Community Policing Team had been doing since the last meeting which included an update on the "Shop Watch Scheme", a Valentines Day Disco for the young people and the "Stronger Community" meeting in Ambleside.

b. **Treasurer:**

The Treasurer reported that there was 'nothing to report.'

c. **Membership Secretaries:**

No report.

d. **Community Safety Partnership**

No report.

e. **Business Improvement District:**

Tony Blaney reported on Paul Holdsworth's (PH) letter which had been circulated to the membership by the Secretary. He also reported that PH would be using The Hub as a means of finding out what businesses thought of BiD. Then he went onto outline the proposals to advertise the scheme.

Paul Frain expressed his 'pros' and 'con's' for the scheme saying that;

"The Bids scheme can be a great opportunity for towns and villages to unite and work together to make improvements by enhancing the defined geographical area. It ensures all qualifying businesses contribute to the scheme, in particularly the multinational organisations that have little to no interest in the local community other than commercial.

It provides funds that would not be realised through conventional tax raising methods, and best of all, the local Bids management together with the business community, have their say on how and what the money should be spent on.

It also provides a platform for towns and villages that have no trade organisation to represent the local business community as a reputable body that is able to negotiate with local and regional councils in order to facilitate change.

The first problem with Bids is the somewhat devious means of implementation. We are led to believe that in order for Bids to be approved, 50% of all business voters must be in favour. The facts are hidden in the small print and the actual rules state that if more than 50% of the voter's present support the Bids then it go ahead. The rules essentially are weighed in favour of those supporting the Bids, as they are the ones most likely to vote. All they have to do is turn up and providing the majority of Yes voters are Bid eligible rate payers then the deal is done without the vast majority of businesses even knowing what has just happened.

The scheme should be initiated then run by the business community. We should have a pressure group of dedicated local business owners eager to find ways to improve our town. Whatever the reasons why this is not happening, it is clear to see that the main driving force is coming from SLDT and Windermere Town Centre manager.

From experience I can tell you that we have already started going down the same road that Keswick did 4 years ago. They got the scheme introduced without a majority vote as a result of ignorance with most business owners. They started the Bids funding by employing 2 staff, paying for office space and equipment. Over 2 years went by without any benefits to the town. Then they had the big shake up. They got their heads together, sacked the original organisers and have been working tirelessly with a great team of 12 – 14 business owners. They all do their bit, but 3 – 4 members do the bulk of the work. They told me at a meeting in December that Bids had forced their business community to work together and liaise with the Town Council, Allerdale Borough Council, and the Tourist board to mention but a few. Keswick does not have a Chamber of Trade and this newly formed organisation was suddenly doing more than raise money. I explained why I was there and my concerns about a Windermere & Bowness Bids. They expressed their concern about external organisations running our scheme, and warned how easily the funds can be spent on administrative expenses.

We are all aware that we do need new Winter Lights; Bids would be the perfect tool to make this happen. This is just one example that will require continual funding, but more plans need to be determined first.

We also need to ascertain the responsibilities of SLDC, Highways Dept, etc to prevent any future wasted time trying to implement a scheme that is not under our remit.

*Bids can only work if business owners are prepared to give up their time and effort in making it work. It can be done, but the important message behind this letter is to impress on you to do it the right way **or not at all.***

To make it democratic and successful, you must first:

1). Discuss all the opportunities available to the area through Bids funding. Get at least a 2-year business plan proposal.

2) Liaise with SLDC to confirm their responsibilities.

*3) Communicate this proposal by post, email, C of T, local press etc so **all business owners** know what is going on.*

4) Assuming positive results work on a management team and get some assurances that they are prepared to give their time (unpaid) for a minimum period, say 12 months but it could be for 5 years. You will need the backing and support of at least 10 from Windermere and 10 from Bowness to ensure improvement schemes are not favouring one village more than the other.

5) Only allow this scheme to go to the vote once **all business rate payers** have been informed in writing giving them at least **8 weeks notice** and the opportunity to vote by post.

Without all the above points being followed I cannot see a successful outcome and for this reason cannot support the Bids scheme”.

The Secretary read out an email he had received from a member. The email is reproduced in its entirety below:

Dear All,

I'm really disturbed by many of the 'red flags' I've found in the small print of the BID information, and I have to support Paul Frain's opposition to the idea.

Tony's statement that '50% of business rate payers, together with 50% of the rateable value' need to agree to a BiD is misleading. In fact, this 50% only applies to those that bother to vote, rather than 50% of all businesses eligible.

Given that all eligible businesses would subsequently have their rates raised by law, this seems highly unfair.

Even more worryingly, the small print says:

“There is no minimum turnout threshold” for the ballot.

(Source: britishbids.info, the national membership organisation for the BID industry)

If, as I suspect would happen, a large number of businesses ignored the vote because they didn't understand its implications, or simply didn't have to time to read and digest the copious amount of small print, then an increase in their business rates could simply be imposed by a very small group of people in favour, which could be a very divisive event in our small community - far outweighing any likely benefits it might bring.

Regards
Steve

Steve Holcroft Photography

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Barry Butler reported that he had been speaking with the Skipton Chamber of Trade regarding BiDs and they stated that their BiDs Management Committee was made up of 'retired businessmen.'

f. **Windermere & Bowness Winter Lights Group:**

No Report.

g. **Windermere Town Twinning Association:**

Eve Blatchley reported that the Town Twinning AGM would be held on March 17th at the Burnside Hotel at 7:30pm. All members are welcome to attend. She went on to outline the events planned for the forthcoming year.

h. **Windermere Catchment Restoration Programme:**

The Secretary stood in for Simon Everett who was unable to attend the “Lake District Still Waters Partnership” Annual Liaison Meeting. He reported that the morning session was taken up with a number of presentations from government and local organisations that have a vested interest in the project. The salient points mentioned were:

- Water Standards, regarding still waters, in the Lakes for 2009:
 - 3% - Bad
 - 5% - Poor
 - 65% - Moderate
 - 24% - Good
 - 3% - High
- That United Utilities had committed £1.4 billion on future investment

- Environment Agency had applied for £1.5m Lottery funding for the Landscape Partnership.

The afternoon was taken up with a workshop whose topic was “River Basin Plans – perspectives and priorities.” The findings of which will be circulated at a future date.

The Secretary was thanked for his attendance.

- i. **Windermere Waterfront Project:**
Barry Butler reported that all the information was now on the Chamber’s website.
- j. **Windermere Air Show/Glebe Trading:**
Leith Halatsch reported that the Town Council had given financial support to this event with the proviso that it be used to facilitate extra toilets. Barry Butler reported that the queries raised over the tendering process for catering facilities on the Glebe had been addressed.
- k. **On Street Car Parking Charges:**
It was reported that Cumbria County Council had dropped their proposals to charge for ‘on street parking.’
- l. **Snow/Gritting:**
Barry Butler reported that he had received a letter from Tim Farron MP, who in turn had received it from the Minister of State, regarding the clearance of snow from the front of business premises. This letter is on the website.
- m. **Tourist Information Centers:**
It was reported that Barry Butler had not received a reply from SLDC over this matter. He would follow this up before the April meeting.
- n. **United Utilities Storage Tank:**
No further update to hand.
- o. **Business Maps/Guides for Windermere and Bowness:**
In the absence of Richard Rogers, Barry Butler updated the meeting on the progress being made. It was reported that the map would be larger than first envisaged and as a consequence the number of businesses on the map would have to be reduced. Costings were discussed.
- p. **Local Development Framework:**
No report.
- q. **Windermere Community Action Plan:**
Leith Hallatsch made a brief report to the meeting pointing out the ‘green issues’ being discussed within the plan.
- r. **Cumbria In Bloom:**
Adrian Faulkner, in his capacity as an Executive Committee Member of Cumbria In Bloom reported that as this year was the 25th Anniversary of Cumbria In Bloom, there is to be a seminar at Rydal Hall, Ambleside, to which the county’s dignitaries are being invited together with current, future and past entrants.
- s. **Talk Toilets:**
The Secretary reported that he had attended a meeting with Vision 21 and SLDC regarding the way forward for upkeep of the public conveniences within the Parish. He pointed out that there were 4 options on the table:
 - a. Handover to Town and Parish Councils,
 - b. The running by Private Companies,
 - c. Community Scheme – pubs, clubs, cafes, shops etc, and
 - d. Pay-to-Use Scheme.

He pointed out that SLDC needed to save a significant amount of the £790,000 annual public toilet budget. He pointed out the Public Consultation process ends on the 5th April and handed out hard copies of the questionnaire pointing out that further copies could be obtained from him or go online to www.southlakeland.gov.uk/talktoilets
- t. **Street Signs:**
It was reported that the Town council and Cumbria county Council were looking to have a ‘clean up’ of the road signs within the Parish. It was noted that the Lakes Hospitality Association had taken this initiative sometime ago but to no avail.

Business in Adjoining Parishes

Robin Love from Ambleside reported that Costa Coffee had opened and that Threshers had changed hands to become Mountain Factor.

Website Statistics:

The Secretary, in his capacity of webmaster of the Chambers website, informed the meeting that for the 2 months to February 2010 there had been over 131,500 world wide 'hits' on the site and gave a brief outline of where these had originated.

AOB:

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Dates of Future Meetings:

2010
13th Apl
4th May

Adrian G Faulkner - Secretary, Windermere & Bowness Chamber of Trade.
DMS. FCMI., CLP.