

## **To whom it may concern – Weymouth Town Council**

As we look towards the future, I wanted to highlight the importance of We are Weymouth to the town, and the importance of Weymouth Town council voting YES for the BID to continue in the coming ballot.

It has been a challenging time for business and the council in the last few years, and certainly I could not have predicted the unprecedented challenges that lay ahead when I became CEO of We are Weymouth over two years ago. The only way forward was to think ever more creatively about how to support business through the pandemic to ensure that visitors returned in greater numbers to an even better Weymouth afterwards. Together, with our joint initiatives and investment in the town we have proved that we can make a difference.

Some of the **joint** projects which would not have gone ahead without BID involvement and funding were the Arts mural trail and the Dusk 'til dark September illumination (puppets and fish) plus our instigation of Britain in Bloom and the Weymouth Tourism forum out of which emerged the Weymouth Information Shop. These joint projects and events have proved highly successful and are now an expectation in the town, loved by visitors and the local community alike.

Some of the projects we were the key sponsor for, creating out-of-season footfall for the town, were the National Volleyball Championships, the Motocross, Fayre in the square, the Wessex folk festival and of course the hugely successful Pirate weekend. Organizers of these events inform us that they would not have gone ahead or have been forced to be much smaller without the BID support.

We worked hard on marketing the town in national publications by committing to three campaigns a year and finding new ways to present the town, ensuring a different demographic of customer 'found' Weymouth for the first time and then stayed here through ensuring the 'what's on' guide on our website and our social media was kept up-to-date and exciting.

Our events and journalist visits have drawn national attention to Weymouth through features in the Sunday Mirror, the i Newspaper, The Sun, the Guardian, ITV's This morning and the Good Food guide with 400 publications putting Weymouth firmly on the map. Our dinosaur event (only 2 weeks ago) received coverage twice in The Sun Newspaper, Great Escapes, The Sunday mirror, Dorset Echo and was featured on BBC news and nationally on CBBC, which has 300,000 viewers.

Did you know that in 2022 alone we reached over 43million in both printed and online media! I'm sure everyone has felt the benefits.

Through the BID's initiatives we have worked to draw in thousands of additional guests, extending the season and ensuring we are not a 'ghost-town' out-of-season. Thank goodness for all those pirates, steam punkers, dinosaurs & elves, not to mention the BID Rangers who keep everyone safer and improve the perspective of Weymouth as a desirable place to visit and stay!

As well as enjoying the beautiful beaches and gardens maintained by Weymouth Town Council; through our initiatives, visitors and locals enjoyed a town bedecked with flowers and cheerful bunting, graffiti removal and shop wrappings as well as heritage slabs spanning the entire BID geography. Combine this with a diverse programme of events, the feedback has been that if the BID does not exist it would be detrimental to the future of Weymouth.

None of these projects, marketing and events happened by accident. All were organised, supported, and promoted through We are Weymouth and the levy you and the rest of the business community pay. If this success is to continue, it's more important than ever that the work of We are Weymouth is allowed to carry on.

With budget cuts and rising costs, Weymouth needs to continue to push forward and work hard to drive customers to the town, delivering even more interesting events, initiatives, and improvements in the coming years.

**But this can only happen if a YES vote is returned.**

We know that the council has so many other competing priorities at this difficult time but if we don't secure a YES vote, then unless someone else fills the void, there will be no flowers, bunting, Christmas events, rangers, elves, pirates or dinosaurs, no maps, no dusk 'til dark, no business support and certainly no national or local marketing for Weymouth.

We value your support.

**Dawn Rondeau**

Chief Operations Officer

We are Weymouth is the legal name for Weymouth Business Improvement District (BID)