



# ***Huntingdon First***

*A BID Huntingdon brand*

## **Annual Report 2021 - 2022**

**Opportunity, Investment, Excitement Ahead!**  
The Next Five Years



BID Huntingdon  
Business Plan 2017-2022



# Huntingdon First (BID)

## Summary of Annual Report

2021 – 2022

The 2017 – 2022 Business Plan can be found on our website [www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk](http://www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk) in which it details three project areas; Enhance, Promote and Support Huntingdon.

This summary of the Annual Report details the achievements for 2021 – 2022 (Sept to Sept)

### Huntingdon First

Huntingdon First is an independent, not-for-profit company controlled by the private sector. The Board of Directors consists of up to 20 volunteers who are elected from a cross-section of businesses. They run Huntingdon First and are responsible for delivery of the projects.

Huntingdon First is funded by a levy of 1.5% of the rateable value of each eligible business (those with a rateable value over £5,000) in the BID area (see below map)

The total income for Huntingdon First 2021 – 22 is £168,821 which included £3,563 from the promotional space and £3,999 from grants

Financial information can be found on page 12 of this report and in the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 30 September 2022.



## **Welcome**

Over the Last year BID Huntingdon has been working on securing the renewal of the BID whilst rolling out a new strategy aimed at delivering even greater value for its members and boosting the footfall in the town to make Huntingdon a better place to work, live, visit and enjoy.

Led by a new management team, BID Huntingdon has spent the last year building relationships and partnerships with key stakeholders across the town ensuring that by working collaboratively with the Town Council and the District Council that great things can be achieved.

Understandably the main focus of the past year has been securing the renewal of the BID which was achieved in September with a 96% yes vote. This result was due to the tireless work of the BID team and as Chairman of the Board I would like to thank them here for all their hard work and dedication.

The highlight of the year, despite the renewal success, was undoubtedly Dino Day in July. With the highest footfall ever recorded in the town the whole town came together to put on an incredible event for the people of Huntingdon. This event coupled with the inception and delivery of “Discover Huntingdon”, the Murals, the numerous successful markets and the continuing high level of business support through courses and one to one help means that 2021-2022 was a year of great success for BID Huntingdon.

My thanks go to all the Directors for their time, support and expertise and also to the BID Huntingdon team who have imagined and managed all of our projects through from conception to delivery with unprecedented success.

I look forward to another great year at BID Huntingdon, and all the exciting projects we have to come.

**Chair – Emma Proctor King**

## Timeline of Events 2021 – 2022

## October 2021

## Halloween Trail Competition

## Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article



## November 2021

## Vegan Market

## Christmas Lights Sponsorship

## Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

## Best Dressed Window Competition



## December 2021

## Naughty Elf Trail Competition

## Christmas Hamper Competition

## New BID Town Manager – Paul Sweeney – Appointed

## Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

## Christmas Saturday's Entertainment

Sue Wing and Jeannette Rowden Retired

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting



## January 2022

## Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

## The Resident Magazine Advertising Town Centre Businesses

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting

## February 2022

## Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

## Fit for February Town Trail Competition

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting





## **March 2022**

BID Deputy Manager – Mags Clark – Appointed

Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

Retail Crime & Community Forum

Spring Food Fayre event in conjunction with Huntingdonshire District Council

Personal Licence Training Course

Vegan Market

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting



## **April 2022**

Jubilee Bunting installed

Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting



## **May 2022**

Platinum Jubilee Town Trail

Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

Retail Crime & Community Forum

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting



## **June 2022**

Two First Aid Courses

Platinum Jubilee Town Trail

Mural Museum Opened on Literary Walk

Discover Huntingdon Mural painted at the entrance to Newton's Court

Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting

## **July 2022**

Dino-Day Town Event

New 5-year Business Plan/Huntingdon First Manifesto produced, printed, and distributed to 300 businesses

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting

Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article



## August 2022

BID Renewal Ballot Issued

Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting



## September 2022

BID Renewal Ballot Closed

Successful renewal of Huntingdon First, securing 96% YES vote with 46% Turnout

First Aid Course

Huntingdon First Hunts Post Article

HBAC / Pub Watch Meeting

Ten Town Centre information boards adopted from HDC, work began on converting to the new 'Discover Huntingdon' boards (due for completion Oct 2022)

New Discover Huntingdon postcards sent to print



## ENHANCE Huntingdon

Enhancing Huntingdon is our focus on delivering projects and services that improve the appearance of the trading environment, making it feel safer, more attractive, and more welcoming.

### Town Rangers

Since January 2013, the Town Rangers have been working within the town making a significant difference in the Huntingdon First area. This has continually been a successful project and they are now an integral part of the day-to-day running of the town. Thanks go to all the Rangers for their commitment to the role when faced with a wide variety of significant challenges on the streets of Huntingdon.

The Rangers cover the hours of 09.00 to 17.00 Monday to Saturday and are now an established part of the wider town team with the Police, CCTV, HBAC, store security and the businesses.

Each Ranger undergoes several weeks of training covering licensing laws, health & safety and reporting procedures. Add to that dealing with first aid incidents and there's more to our Rangers than you think.

As the ambassadors of Huntingdon, they offer help and assistance to its many visitors; from giving directions and helping people find their cars, administering first aid to re-uniting lost children with anxious parents.

The Town Rangers deal with all manner of incidents daily and are also key to reporting in issues to Huntingdonshire District Council and Highways regarding street and building issues. The main focus of their role covers business visits within the Huntingdon First area and tourist information and directions to the general public. Other issues that they deal with daily and weekly basis include, lost children, reporting graffiti and fly tipping to relevant authorities, administering first aid as a first response and liaising with HBAC around anti-social behaviour, shoplifting, rough sleepers.

### HBAC

Huntingdonshire Businesses Against Crime, established in 2004 aims to reduce members losses and thereby contribute to the economic viability and prosperity of the area. Huntingdon First supported over 70 businesses by offering FREE membership to the HBAC scheme with the aim of making Huntingdon a safer place.

### Bunting

The bright rainbow bunting was replaced in April with purple and white Platinum Jubilee bunting in honour of Her Majesty the Queen's 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee.



## **PROMOTE Huntingdon**

Promoting Huntingdon focusses on developing and delivering projects and services that market and promote the town centre with a range of events and activities based on shopper and visitor behaviour research.

### **Huntingdon First – A BID Huntingdon brand**

Marketing Huntingdon as a destination had always been a key project for Huntingdon First. The name 'Huntingdon First' has been used in marketing communications including the website and social media channels, as well as publicising events throughout the town. During the first part of 2022 we have begun to introduce our new external branding with 'Discover Huntingdon' a brand designed to facilitate visitors and re-engaging our local communities with the call to arms 'Rediscover Huntingdon'.

### **Marketing & PR**

Regular press releases were issued throughout the year on a variety of topics achieving a high uptake with local press. Coupled with regular articles and advertisements in the Hunts Post, and interviews with both BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon Community Radio which have all aided the promotion of Huntingdon. Part of Huntingdonshire District Council's re-opening of the High Streets following the Covid Pandemic included access to funding through the 'Welcome Back Fund' which was used to install the Mural Museums and also paid for the Spring Food Fayre that saw incredibly high footfall on the market square for a day of food and live entertainment.

### **Email Newsletter**

A monthly email newsletter is sent to all subscribers (270) full of news, events and offers. People can sign up to the newsletter through our website.

### **Huntingdon First Website / Facebook**

Visitors to Huntingdon regularly use Huntingdon First's website as one of the first ports of call to find information on all things Huntingdon. Since its launch in July 2013, the website has grown with the content being regularly updated to include offers, news, events, history and a comprehensive town centre business directory, which is an extremely popular function and beneficial to businesses and visitors and of particular benefit providing up to date business information and opening times. With over 105,000 visits this year our website is one of the key tools to promoting businesses and services within the town. 2021 – 2022 has seen our Facebook audience double in size now reaching almost 3,000 followers, no doubt helped by the Dino-Day event in July 2022 that saw one single marketing post reach over 47,000 unique users.

### **Huntingdon Postcards**

Postcards depicting well known sights in Huntingdon produced by Huntingdon First were available and located in strategic locations around town for sale by donation. 2022 will see the introduction of a new 'Discover Huntingdon' five card pack of postcards depicting photos 'that a regular tourist couldn't take' and will be on sale by the end of the year.

### **Town Centre Guide to Shops & Services**

The folded pocket size town centre map, which incorporates the car parking options and guide to shops and services in one easy to read map, is available from various outlets in the town centre, from the Town Rangers and at [www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk](http://www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk). There are also ten wall-mounted Guide to Shops and Services signs in and around the town centre, including signs at the Railway Station and Bus Station.

### **Events**

Events continue to be a real strength for Huntingdon First, although limited toward the end of 2021 with the effects of Covid 19, 2022 has seen its share of town events. Most notably DINO DAY which saw the highest recorded footfall for the town since records began. A staggering 40,000+ people attended the event throughout the day that spanned the entire town centre with maps acting as guides as to where to participate in activities at key points. Displays and performances from Dinosaurs were accompanied by a town trail, a MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) display,



a genuine woolly mammoth bone! Dino-digs, fun charity games and much more was on offer. Attracting not just our local community but opening Huntingdon as a visitor's destination like never before.

## Halloween Trail

During October half term week 2021, we held a Halloween themed trail for the chance to win £50 to spend in a Huntingdon Independent business and a bonus pot of treats. The trail included 12 local businesses and encouraged participants to visit various parts of the town to highlight some of the amazing businesses we have in our town.

## Christmas Lights 2021

Installation of the Christmas lights are jointly funded by Huntingdon First, Huntingdon Town Council and ChurchManor Estates. These colourful lights bring some Christmas joy to shoppers in the town over the festive period, kicking off with the big 'switch on' in November accompanied by the now annual Christmas weekend market.

## Christmas Saturdays

On the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas Huntingdon First arranged additional activities and entertainment to create some festive cheer. These included music, stilt walkers and balloon modelling in addition to a Naughty Elf trail and a Christmas Hamper competition. The hamper contained everything for Christmas, from gifts to treats, all bought from Huntingdon stores proving that you can really shop local for Christmas!

## Support for Town Events

Throughout the year Huntingdon First has supported other local events, organisations and businesses with marketing, promotion, advice, and support. Events or news are promoted where possible on Huntingdon First website and Facebook. Examples include events at Huntingdon Commemoration Hall, HDC Markets, Huntingdon Carnival, Huntingdon Gala and The Cromwell Museum.

## BID Bear

BID Bear the Huntingdon First mascot has proved to be a great attraction and brought smiles to many faces at town events where BID Bear handed out stickers saying, 'I met BID Bear'.

BID Bear made appearances to support the Christmas Saturdays and the Shop Safely Campaign and makes an appearance at all Huntingdon First events.



## **SUPPORT Huntingdon**

**Supporting Huntingdon strives to support businesses to trade effectively and efficiently by reducing costs, providing advice and training and learning from each other's experiences.**

### **FREE Training**

Ongoing training courses for BID levy paying businesses is an integral part of Huntingdon First and the support it offers the town. In the last 12 months we have successfully provided THREE First Aid at Work Courses seeing over 30 candidates successfully pass, meaning more and more of our town is covered by first aid trained individuals. We have also introduced two new training courses this year starting with the Personal Licence Training Course that we ran in collaboration with HBAC to support our Night Economy teams with training their alcohol serving staff to industry and legal requirements. Another new course for 2022 was the Lone Worker training, in association with the Suzy Lamplugh Foundation. Lone Working is becoming more and more common place within our businesses due to home working, reductions in staffing hours and staff availability, we believe that offering this vital training ensures that Huntingdon remains a safe place to live, work and play. These CPD courses are all offered FREE to BID levy payers, saving our businesses money whilst ensuring their staff are being trained to high standard.

### **Business Communication & Support**

Essential information, which may be of use to Huntingdon First businesses, is distributed by Huntingdon First on a regular basis via letters, flyers, newsletters, and emails.

We help businesses in as many areas as we possibly can. From fly tipping to anti-social behaviour, the team will advise and inform on all aspects.

Our vast range of contacts means we usually know who to contact to obtain the relevant information and advice.

Particularly beneficial during Covid-19 was our detailed business database used to aid distribution of important information. The effect on businesses due to the pandemic resulted in communication and support taking on an even greater significance this year particularly in providing information on grants available and helping those businesses who had questions or difficulties regarding accessing the grants.

### **Business Email Newsletter**

A regular email newsletter is distributed to all businesses. It features important news about Huntingdon First - organised events and is directed at helping businesses to understand how the Huntingdon First team can assist in various areas such as First Aid, social media training, renting of promotional space and events. Information on a variety of business-related topics are included, such as how to contact the Rangers.

### **FREE Delivery of Promotional Material within the Huntingdon First area**

Throughout the year, flyers and promotional material have been distributed for Huntingdon First businesses by the Town Rangers to other town centre businesses and also handed out to shoppers and visitors.

### **FREE Promotional Space**

There are two areas available for promotional space in Huntingdon: The Market Square and St Germain Walk.

If you would like to use this space to promote your business, please contact the Huntingdon First office. BID levy paying businesses can use this space for free and the space is also used to generate income from third parties, bringing colour and movement to the streets.

### **'Springboard' Footfall Counter**

Since 2014 a 24/7 footfall counter has been installed in the High Street. In May 2019 new count lines were introduced giving a more accurate reflection of footfall within the defined area at the crossroads of the High Street, St Benedict's Court and Chequers Court. A detailed report is received weekly and monthly showing daily statistics and information including the weather. Weekly footfall reports are available to BID levy paying businesses by email



and monthly reports can be viewed on the Huntingdon First website: [www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk/bid-huntingdon/what-do-we-do/business-support/footfall-information](http://www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk/bid-huntingdon/what-do-we-do/business-support/footfall-information)

## Vacancy Rate

Each month a list of vacant retail units is updated and available to Huntingdon First businesses and any business or entrepreneur who may enquire about the opportunities of starting a business in the town centre. Huntingdon takes part in the Springboard vacancy rate survey and in the current report Huntingdon was 10.6% against a U.K vacancy rate of 10.9%. A great result for Huntingdon being below the national average. Almost 50% of our current vacant units (10 out of 21) occupy space within St Benedict's Court, with the sale on this area now complete, we hope to see a marked change in the vacancy rate going forward. It is worth noting that two of our units were recently renovated into two smaller units, with one per unit filled, meaning although we gained two businesses, we also gained two further vacant units in the town. The national town centre vacancy rate of 10.9% is an improvement on the 11.7% seen at this point last year, though a way from the benchmark low of 8.7% in 2016. The East of England continues to see the lowest rate of vacant units in the UK.



## Company Information

### Financial Summary 2021 - 2022

#### Income

BID Levy Contributions	£ 161,259
Other income (Including Gov grants & promotional space)	£ 7,562
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 168,821</b>

#### Expenditure

**£191,785**

Full details of the end of year financial accounts are available at [www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk](http://www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk)

### Huntingdon First Directors 2020 - 2021

Emma Proctor-King	Chair	ChurchManor Estates
Jon Kerby	Vice Chair	Cambridge Interiors
Steve Cox		Premier Travel
Celia Barden		Hunts Shopmobility
Julian De Havilland		The Barbers Den
Sarah Hemingway		JD Wetherspoon – Sandford House
Robert Walker		TK Maxx
Carmen Winstanley		Molbys
Jordan Mason		Don't Panic Pizza
Cllr Tom Sanderson		Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Chris Doyle		Huntingdon Town Council
Cllr Sam Wakeford		Huntingdonshire District Council.

### Huntingdon First Guests

Natasha Pierson	Huntingdon Town Council
Hannah Hancock	HBAC (Huntingdonshire Businesses Against Crime)

### Huntingdon First Team 2020 - 2021

Paul Sweeney	Huntingdon First Town Manager
Mags Clark	Huntingdon First Deputy Town Manager & Project Co-ordinator
Sharon	Town Ranger
Joanne	Town Ranger
Jeannette Rowden	BID Consultant
Mark Ellis	Company Secretary



**If you would like more information about the projects that Huntingdon First is undertaking, please see 'Huntingdon People Places Purpose' Business Plan at [www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk](http://www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk) or for ways in which you could get involved, please contact the Huntingdon First team:**

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