

Chairperson Report for Visit Kelso AGM - May 2021

Firstly, I, as chair of Visit Kelso would like to thank our members old and new for their continued support throughout the last two years.

I would also like to apologise for not having an AGM last year but I hope you agree that it was unprecedented times and we were unsure of protocols.

During the year 2019 Visit Kelso gained 18 New Members, and in 2020 we gained another 14.

Sadly across the 2 years we have lost 24 members mainly through the businesses closing or uncertainty from covid (6 in 2019 and 18 in 2020) which means that overall there was a net gain of 8 new members overall.

As part of the benefit of joining the new members are recognised in the newsletter and are contacted for a facebook post to announce their membership.

In 2019 Visit Kelso organised the hanging baskets around town, liaising with the nursery, collecting the funds, and the hanging and removal of 78 floral display baskets. Sadly due to the pandemic it was decided not to approach businesses last year, and in my opinion the town didn't look as vibrant as it usually does over the summer months.

On Sunday 8 September 2019 the Ovo Tour of Britain started & finished in Kelso. Visit Kelso teamed up with Live Borders to provide entertainment next to the Square. We ran a bike decorating competition and ran a best dressed window competition which was won by Clothworks, second place going to Tweed Podiatry and third to Evie Jane Fabrics. Each winner was given the prize of an advert in Kelso life and a free membership listing for 2020.

Throughout both years we have organised Christmas Window displays these have been won by Swan's shoe shop in 2019 and Flowers by Mackenzie in 2020.

To run alongside the Christmas windows we run specific Facebook campaigns for the month of December. In 2019 it was linked to the Elf on the Shelf and businesses had great fun photographing the Naughty Elf to share on our facebook page.

In 2020 we ran an Advent Calendar style campaign where clues had been hidden around town each day in December, which, when found could be redeemed at the VK member's business. This proved to be very popular with members of the public scouting for the leaflets every day until Christmas Eve.

The biggest news (apart from the pandemic in 2020) was the Great British High Street award ceremony which took place in Edinburgh in January 2020. We submitted an application in the summer of 2019 for the Square to be recognised as Best Rising Star, we were shortlisted along with 27 other towns across the United Kingdom 7 of which were in Scotland. Each nation acknowledged a rising star, and these 4 were then further marked for an overall winner, leading to Kelso beating Yarm, Caernarfon and Newry. With this win we received a cash prize which, so far has been used to

improve the website. We have earmarked the remaining money for future projects to help promote the town and district. Sadly with the pandemic and enforced lockdowns the future projects have not progressed as quickly as we would have liked.

During all this time, especially during the lockdowns and easing of restrictions we have worked hard all through both major lockdowns promoting the town and district.

In October 2020 we made a successful application for the Towns Bids Resilience Funding. This funding is to be used to encourage people onto the High Street and support local businesses. Fearful of another lockdown we made the decision not to spend the money in last year we have earmarked this for a campaign which will run in the summer of 2021.

Finally I would like to say a huge thank you to all the committee members who work so hard in trying to keep Kelso as the Number one High Street in the United Kingdom.