



## Meeting report - High Street Forum

Gameshow All-Stars, Orchard Square

10.00am to 11.30am, Wednesday, 22 May 2024

Standing call to action: Forum members are asked to amplify the message, raise the profile of the forum within your own networks and be an ambassador for the group to help attract, recruit and retain participants.

This month we were delighted to welcome 35 attendees to our May High Street Forum from businesses including: Bird Opticians, Business Sheffield, Changing Sheff, China Red, Cubana, Curzon Cinema, Gamestar All-stars, Hamilton Communications, Juno Books, Metrobank, Nat West, New River REIT, The Nottingham, The Old Shoe Bar, Opportunity Sheffield, Roxy Ballroom, Savills Barbershop, Smoke, Taylor Taylor Hairdressing, Virgin Money, South Yorkshire Police and Sheffield Local Area Committee.

Managed by Sheffield BID and chaired by BID Director Lee Appleton (New River's Centre Manager for The Moor), these meet ups take place frequently on a 6-weekly cycle.

## Discussion points covered in the meeting 22.05.24

### City centre milestones and emerging challenges

#### Opening remarks:

Sheffield BID (Diane Jarvis) provided an update on the latest city centre openings and developments, highlighting that some of this work is the culmination of a decade's worth of development work in Sheffield city centre. Highlights include:

- Radisson Blu - the opening date is confirmed as 10 June. The hotel has a restaurant and roof top bar (the original licence request for the outdoor bar to open until 1am was withdrawn).
- The independent barbershop Savills have relocated to their new Pinstone Street location in the Heart of the City development. They also have a new training academy at the premises.
- Leah's Yard is set to open this summer with several tenants already confirmed including:
  - Chocolatiers Bullion - opening a new craft chocolate café-bar.
  - Gravel Pit – specialising in pots, plants, and botanicals.
  - Hop Hideout – a micro bar and beer shop.
  - The well publicised opening of Pete McKee's gallery, relocating from Sharrow Vale, and
  - Independent bookstore La Biblioteka.
  - There has also been mention of a farm shop selling local produce.
- The opening of 'Europe's largest purpose-built food hall', Cambridge Street Collective, on 23 May 2024. The venue will open Mon-Thurs 8am-11pm; Fri/Sat 9am-1am and Sun 9am-10.30pm.
- There is also a planning application from the company behind Thor's Tipi for a new food, drink and live entertainment/music venue on the site of the demolished Mid City House. This is meanwhile use but likely to have some considerable longevity as there are currently no development plans for the site. If the application is successful, the venue will trade daily 11am to 11pm 364 days a year (except Christmas Day).

In the last 12 months there have been:

- 30+ business closures (30% hospitality, 43% retail)
- 80+ business openings (46% hospitality, 17% retail)

There are lots of positive things to shout about. Messages from the Council leadership are that the city centre is “on the up” and “we are reimagining the city centre”.

### **Discussion points**

What does the increasing number of food, drink and leisure facilities mean for the city centre and what is the impact on existing providers (e.g. Orchard Square, Leopold Square) as well as other sectors such as retail and the high street more generally?

Peter Sephton, chair of Changing Sheff, welcomed the latest developments and an increasing offer for city centre residents whilst highlighting the need to balance the needs of business with the needs of residents in the city centre residential zones.

Despite some concerns from existing businesses around ever-increasing competition, there was a general view that new arrivals are a welcome addition and that they strengthen the food and drink offer in the city centre, adding to the vibrancy and attractiveness of the place.

There was also a view that whilst being attractive to some groups, there is some potential for alienating other city centre visitors (such as shoppers) and it is important to get the balance right.

Further feedback highlighted potential saturation levels around food and drink – how long is this sustainable for and where is the additional uplift in visitors coming from to support sustainability in the expanding hospitality offer. A view was expressed that the city centre problems will not be solved with opening more foodhalls and there are more fundamental problems.

The Chair (Lee) felt that the ongoing developments would encourage a return of some high street retail names and we may see the return of some brands that had already left the city. Some retailers are already looking at where they could position themselves in the evolving city centre.

The issue was raised about the city’s cultural offer in the city centre to support some of the growth in other areas. Forum attendees were encouraged to participate in the development of the city’s new cultural strategy (link to online survey: [https://haveyoursay.sheffield.gov.uk/culture-strategy?tool=survey\\_tool&tool\\_id=culture-strategy-survey#tool\\_tab](https://haveyoursay.sheffield.gov.uk/culture-strategy?tool=survey_tool&tool_id=culture-strategy-survey#tool_tab))

There was consensus that anti-social behaviour still needs a sustainable effort to reduce/eliminate issues – still a need to get the basics right.

An additional question was raised around the proposal from the owners of Thor’s Tipi and whether Thor’s would also be back in the Peace Gardens this Christmas. The venue is a separate from the Thor’s Tipi brand and it has been several years since Thor’s were last in Sheffield. No-one is aware of any plans to return.

## Summer in the city – events and festivals

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An update on the summer events programme was provided by Sheffield BID (Richard Pilgrim):

### Sheffield Food Festival

 25-27 May  Peace Gardens

### Crossed Wires (pod cast festival)

 31 May – 2 June  Multiple venues

### Sheffield DocFest

 12-17 June  Multiple venues

### FanCity Sheffield (Euros)

 14 June – 14 July  Devonshire Green

### Migration Matters Festival

 14-22 June  Multiple venues


### Pinknic

 13 July  Peace Gardens

### Sheffield Grand Prix

 17 July  Peace Gardens

### Sheffield by the Seaside

 25 July – 26 August  Peace Gardens

### The Fringe at Tramlines\*

 26-28 July  Multiple venues

### Sheffield Bricktropolis\*

 3-18 August  Multiple venues

\*Sheffield BID events.

Armed Forces/Veterans Day on 22 June was also raised as being a key event in the calendar that businesses should be aware of.

Mike from the Old Shoe Bar also highlighted a city-wide upmarket Wine Festival his venue is involved in - 26-30 June.

The Kelham Pride event was also discussed. There is the potential for this to grow and it could expand to the city centre. From next year, the access routes to Kelham (cycling, walking) will be much improved through the current “Connecting Sheffield” scheme that is underway.

A question was raised around the different demographics for each of the city centre events and whether data on this was available. Sheffield BID agreed to take this as an action.

More generally the BID promotes all city centre events as part of a wider seasonal/retail digital media campaign. The BID works with local businesses to provide wraparound featured content for visitors through offers and promotions from businesses which are specific to particular events. This is hosted on [www.sheffieldcitycentre.com](http://www.sheffieldcitycentre.com) supported by boosted social media posts.

To get involved businesses can email [enquiries@sheffieldbid.com](mailto:enquiries@sheffieldbid.com) (for the BID’s own events but also for signposting/introductions to external event organisers where appropriate).

A separate question was asked around the policing of events. Does this increase around the events calendar. SYP confirmed the levels of policing are based to a degree on the likelihood for any additional need for a heightened police presence (such as World Snooker). Decisions are driven by the risk assessment on each individual activity and are also subject to resources available.

## **Hot topic discussion – what to do about “graffiti” – art or vandalism**

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Sheffield BID (Richard Pilgrim) gave an overview of recent works around graffiti removal, the work of the city centre partnership (incorporating the Council, Sheffield BID, SYP and Restorative Justice services) and the placement of new /refreshed urban art e.g. at Holy Green and at Fagan’s (Pete McKee’s The Snog).

There have also been several positive outcomes delivered through SYP who have a dedicated officer working on the problem.

### **Discussion points**

Graffiti is a particular issue in Sheffield city centre. There was discussion around the extent of the impact on businesses – do we “see” it or are we just so used to it that it’s (unintentionally) accepted. Does this depend on whether a business has been a victim itself? Does it depend on the location? – are we more offended when it’s in a high-profile location.

The question was raised about approaches to managing graffiti in other cities. Andy Male from the Local Area Committee confirmed that the Council is developing a city-wide strategy to managing the issue and this includes comparison and learning from other areas.

There was recognition that ‘official’ street art could be part of the solution, rather than an issue. Street art on side streets such as Chapel Walk would benefit independent businesses. Graffiti vandalism sets a scene of desperation that drives even greater levels of abuse from taggers.

The recent installation of artwork at Holy Green also highlights what can be achieved when there is access to appropriate and permissible space.

The residents’ association Changing Sheff had previously meet with some local graffiti artists and had put a proposal forward to the Council (18 months ago) for “permissible places” to be identified for those who want to express themselves through tagging and recognition. This could include a QR code on specific tags – and provide such recognition in a more meaningful way.

There was consensus that mindless tagging is not “street art” and there are some surfaces (such as etched glass) where it is almost impossible to remove, so the cost of such vandalism is significant.

Some evidence suggests that the type of person most likely to tag is male, aged 20-25 years, and in employment!

All businesses were urged to report graffiti, however it was noted that you can only report it on your own building to the police, although other types of report can be made to Sheffield BID who are building a body of evidence (and which the police have recently reviewed in a case involving a specific tagger).

A question was asked about the consequences and punishment for tagging? Are any fines at a level that will deter people from reoffending? SYP confirmed this depends on the individual circumstances – first time offence, multiple offences etc – age of the person responsible. Cautions, fines and restorative justice will be considered by the court.

## Business health check

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### Comments made

Whilst reporting a slight dip of 3.1% (60k visitors) compared to last year, The Moor is optimistic and positive towards the annual figures being comparable to last year. Trade has been bumpy but the summer season should turn this around. Lee (Appleton) highlighted the recent 999 Emergency Services Day which received 30k visitors on-the-day and a 30-35% uplift in footfall for a one-day activity, echoing the view that a vibrant events calendar will bring people into the city centre and encourage them to explore elsewhere.

For businesses near Fargate (including Chapel Walk), the impact from the Future High Streets Fund works continues, with one reporting a fall of between 25-50% year-on-year.

Although impacted by the Fargate works, footfall and spend is good at Orchard Square and still reasonably buoyant.

There were mixed experiences as to whether the Snooker championships had benefited businesses.

Other examples from the food and drink sector highlighted the changing week, with Fridays being noticeably impacted by the continuation of work-from-home practices, the impact of the cost-of-living and a change in socialising behaviours created by COVID. However, other days had performed well (Tuesdays, Wednesdays), with Saturdays particularly highlighted.

The Moor will be benchmarking the impact of the opening of the Cambridge Street Collective to see what effect it has on trade (flash in the pan v longer term impact).

Lee emphasised that there is still a place for physical retail, and it accounts for 70% of spend nationally. It will always have a place on the high street, but higher value spend is needed, not low-level transactional retail. The Moor has interest from two national brands (one of whom had already left the city centre, now looking to return). Lee also mentioned that the owner of the Debenhams building is now in receivership. New River owns the freehold.

Alan Ball from Business Sheffield said there are a number of businesses looking to open second premises which shows a level of confidence in the market. The meanwhile use scheme ReNew will also shortly commence a further round of funding to encourage meanwhile tenancy of some of the vacant units around Chapel Walk/Fargate (as part of the Future High Streets Fund work).

### Any other business

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**Public Spaces Protection Order.** Consultation is being assessed and a report will go to the Council's Community, Parks and Leisure committee in September with recommendations on a decision.

**Conflict Management & Personal Safety Training.** Sheffield BID is running a series of training sessions for frontline staff. Anyone from the High Streets Forum interested in attending can get in touch with [enquiries@sheffieldbid.com](mailto:enquiries@sheffieldbid.com).

### Future meetings / dates for the diary

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A date for the next High Street Forum will be communicated soon.