



DUNDALK HAS BENEFITTED FROM SCHEME

New Mayor says **BIDS** can help town's retailers

Alison COMYN

DROGHEDA Borough Council has committed itself to supporting a **BIDS** schemes should local traders make a genuine effort to set it up in the town.

BIDS is a **Business Improvement District** Scheme, in partnership with local businesses and local authorities, which has been running successfully in Dundalk and Dublin for a number of years.

The scheme requires a further investment from local traders, and centres around a heavy marketing and communications plan to promote the town centre, running initiatives to create an inviting, safe and secure place to shop.

'Such a scheme, already in operation in the town of Dundalk, is located in the main square of the town, and is understood to be making considerable progress with issues of concern to existing businesses and in respect of new business generation,' points out new Mayor Cllr Kevin Callan, as he called for a

briefing in the process of establishing **BIDS** in Drogheda.

Dundalk's Town Centre Commercial Manager Andrew Mawhinney will shortly come to the end of his two-year tenure, and says he is more than willing to visit Drogheda, with a view to getting a scheme off the ground here.

'I was in Drogheda as a guest of the chamber two years ago, and there seemed to be a fair bit of interest then, but if traders and officials want me to speak again, and assist in any way to get this off the ground, I am more than willing to help,' he told the Drogheda Independent.

'It took 1,500 ratepayers to get this scheme going in Dundalk, so it does take a bit of commitment, but the benefits are we did get shutters up here, and we have devised inventive schemes like the Nice One gift card for town centre businesses.'

Andrew feels that if it is not possible for Drogheda to support its own **BIDS**, than amalga-

mating into a joint 'Louth **BIDS** would be advantageous to both towns.

'I feel very strongly that we should look at a County **BIDS**, as Newry is as much a threat to Drogheda as it is to Dundalk,' he says.

BIDS gives you the mechanism to survive, and our scheme in Dundalk is up at the end of December, and Market Square is being renovated so that will give an added boost.'

The role of the TCCM Office, paid for by **BIDS** is to supply potential investors with relevant market research to help them to identify business opportunities in the town or city, to work as a conduit in progressing the remodelling of the public space in the town centre, to attract people to the shopping and social scene of the town centre, to increase traffic and customer retention, to provide a discount/loyalty scheme, to brand the town centre, and to create a competitive environment to attract investment.

Dublin City BID

Business Improvement District - the first **BID** scheme in Ireland - has been in operation since March 2008 and has a five-year renewable mandate to develop and promote the economic advancement of **Dublin city** centre.

They work with the 2,000 businesses in their area to create 'an attractive, welcoming, vibrant and economically successful space in **Dublin city** centre'.

The concept of **BIDS** originated in northern America and **BIDS** have been in existence in the UK since 2003 with an estimated 1,000 **BIDS** now in the US and over 100 in the UK.

'Where **BIDS** differs from other schemes, like putting up Christmas lights etc, is that everyone pays the same, so the same few aren't left footing the bill each time,' adds Andrew.

'Our scheme is established, and I don't see why it couldn't be extended to Drogheda, so if someone there gets the ball rolling, I for one will be glad to help.'



Andrew Mawhinney, Dundalk's new Town Centre Commercial Manager says Drogheda should examine **BIDS** opportunity.