



Background

BID Leamington was first established in 2008 and is currently in its second term with 500 levy-paying members, following its 5 year renewal in 2013. A key objective is to develop and enhance the Royal Leamington Spa brand, raising its profile and promoting it in a unique way.

BID Leamington's approach to place branding

The approach is all about the BID's Core Values - communicating Place, not just a strapline or marketing. Promoting a consistent Place Identity is key to the BID's role, rationale and strategy and to understand the latent energy or DNA of the Place, based on the sophisticated heritage of the town ('The Sublime, Regal Experience'). BID Leamington therefore has a central role in the communicating and realisation of the town centre 'story'.

At the heart of this branding of the town are key themes and a 'Big Idea' which are the strategic engine used to drive the expression of place. Themes include Joined & Accessible (transport links, compact/walkable town), Proud to be Different (independent nature, assets and spirit - including architecture/boulevards, mix of modern and niche/independent shops, important history), and the Power of Posh (past legacy, style, beautiful ambience).

The town does not rely on a single attraction, but a coming together of various elements and assets including heritage, that make up its sense of place. Authenticity of Place is important – the BID only uses genuine photos from the town which is seen as a vibrant and really different place at heart. The BID fosters collaboration and is the leading voice for the town. The BID's role also develops leverage with place making a strategic priority.

BID Leamington's use of heritage in place branding

In Leamington, heritage is a key ingredient of Place, whilst other place brands e.g. 'Silicon Spa' are less inclusive and effective. Heritage contributes to the town's welcome and overall experience of the place. Events and festivals are held in heritage and historic venues, e.g. Art in the Park, Spa Heritage, Leamington Carnival, Food & Drink Festival, Lantern Parade. In 2014, a Leamington Spa inspired garden was installed at the Chelsea Flower Show. £65,000 in funding was leveraged, with good news coverage and the garden

was returned to Leamington Spa. A current initiative and festival around health & wellbeing focuses on the town's parks & gardens.

Benefits of BID Leamington's heritage/place branding

The impact of the BID's activity is measured firstly through footfall measured via cameras, vacancy rates, car park usage and income and shopping centre usage/sales. Engagement with the BID and town centre promotion is also captured through website usage, social/media coverage, and enhanced sense of pride among local residents. Indirect impacts are also evident though investment/leverage and increased property values.

Heritage assets and images are key to the strategic planning, marketing, identity and as a location for staging events and the overall attraction of the town

Challenges and Opportunities of using heritage in place branding

One third of the town has been earmarked for development including the Pump Rooms and Town Hall (both Grade II listed), therefore there is a need to mobilise and campaign in order to conserve and resist commercial/residential development and retain access to this heritage (as in the case of renovated/reopened Bath Spa).

The BID has to respond to the needs of businesses/members, and to achieve greater recognition for the town and its offer. Ultimately, the BID aims to increase the number of shoppers (including local) and visitors, increase spend and dwell time, and promote the town as a place in which to invest and live, including students.



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