



Background

Sunderland BID, active since 2014, aims to be a strong voice representing the businesses of the city centre. Priorities for the BID include:

- Putting Sunderland on the map
- A safer, greener, cleaner and more accessible city centre
- Invigorating the evening economy

Automated desk-based analysis of the BID's business plan suggested that it is currently actively engaged in place branding and that there are examples of heritage featuring within this. However, when asked, Sunderland BID felt that heritage was a lower priority within its current business plan.

Sunderland BID's role in place branding

Sunderland BID considers its interaction with place branding to be twofold:

- promoting Sunderland's place brand
- achieving greater place brand clarity

Sunderland's current brand is focussed more around people's contemporary experiences in the city and less around the history of the city.

The place brand for Sunderland is led by the Economic Leadership Board, of which Sunderland City Council is a key partner. There is no single strategic plan for place branding, although Sunderland Economic Leadership Board has ambitious plans to transform the local economy, labour market and wider perceptions of Sunderland, articulated in *Sunderland, Transforming Our City, The 3,6,9 Vision*. This brings together the work of a number of partners within the Leadership Board's vision for the city for the next nine years. The BID is represented on the Economic Leadership Board and are particularly involved in the 'vibrancy' section of *The 3,6,9 Vision*.

The BID's use of heritage in place branding

Heritage plays a growing part of the place brand (partly due to *The 3,6,9 Vision*). Some of the events being held or planned in the city under *The 3,6,9 Vision* banner highlight the history of the city, such as the Tall Ships events (2018) the Alice in Wonderland commemoration (2015), with the ultimate ambition being to be awarded the City of Culture status in 2021. The cultural quarter and the Sunnyside area being developed in the city centre is bringing heritage

buildings back into life.

The BID believes that heritage represents a key component of a successful and compelling place brand. However, the place brand and the heritage aspects should not merge into one activity; it is important that they retain strength as individual objectives.

Measuring the benefits of place branding

Sunderland BID use three key measures to measure the impact of activity; spend, footfall and dwell time. Qualitative aspects - such as perception, quality and feelings of safety - are also important, however these are more difficult to measure.

Challenges of using heritage in place branding

The BID recognises the value and importance of local heritage assets to Sunderland's place brand. However, BID levy payers are businesses that are typically tenants in commercial space whose primary desire is to increase turnover. These tenants see achieving increased footfall and spend as being the BID's contribution to this. The benefits of heritage are not always immediately clear to tenant businesses, though many recognise the value of high quality built heritage. Commercial property owners may be more likely to engage with heritage investments, but ultimately it is the rate paying tenants who are the BID's constituents.

Place branding activity is led by the Economic Leadership Board, of which Sunderland City Council is a key partner. The other partners involved in *The 3,6,9 Vision* vibrancy work are also involved in place branding (including Gentoo, Sunderland University, The Bridges, Sunderland Live, Sunderland AFC). The BID is involved in this activity but does not have autonomy over its development. Similarly, the BID has had an advisory and advocacy role in some heritage related activities in the city centre and would be keen to contribute more to these activities.



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