

Bath and North East Somerset Cabinet – Tuesday 20th July 2021

In the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Bath

Statement of Support, Agenda Item 12 – acceptance of WECA Funding

Lindsay Holdoway, Managing Director, HPH Commercial Property,

6 Kingsmead Square, Bath BA1 2AB

Chair, Councillors, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Lindsay Holdoway and I am speaking in my capacity as managing director of HPH Ltd, a locally based commercial property company with several properties in Bath, including 4 – 11 Kingsmead Square (South Terrace) where we also have our office.

I am speaking in support of the proposal to accept funding from the West of England Investment Fund's 'Love our High Street' programme.

As a company we have worked with Bath City Council and subsequently B&NES, first in the rebuilding and restoration of Nos. 4 – 11 Kingsmead Square in 1976 and then in 1995 when we worked with the Council in partnership on a public realm improvement scheme with funding contributions from both HPH and St Johns which created the current physical layout and design of Kingsmead Square.

Working with the Kingsmead traders' association we have provided funding for the installation of decorative lighting in the main tree, annual floral displays around the Square area and last year, seasonal lighting decorations over the Christmas period which we hope to continue.

We have always seen the strength of acting in partnership to promote quality in design and activation of use of the public realm in city centres. The current scheme of road closure between 10am – 10pm coupled with the increased use of pavement areas for hospitality businesses, the addition of the parklets, and repositioned cycle parking has been very successful. It is now a destination location for food and drink and in the Covid environment where social distancing and outside facilities are at a premium it has provided a vital amenity for the City.

The changes to the Use Classes Order, enabling easier and quicker changes of use within the new E Class have also played a part as, for example, it enables an office – previously B1, to become a restaurant – previously A3. Working with the Council's licensing team, our ground floor occupiers have been able to increase capacity and widen the offer available which has been repeated around the Square with the support of very pro-active Council officers in the project team.

The success of the current scheme can be measured in terms of increased footfall and lack of vacancy – there are currently no empty units and commercial agents advise new retail or hospitality businesses looking for space in the City now frequently specify the Kingsmead area. There has been a clear, demonstrable, economic impact but as, or more importantly, a very significant social impact, in the creation of a lively and vibrant environment, a space for people to enjoy. In turn this has largely overcome the long term issues of public disorder and unlawful activity that had proven so hard to tackle and had blighted the Square over many years and strengthened the engagement of the business and wider community.

We very much hope the existing scheme will become permanent and possibly lead to full pedestrianization in due course. We receive constant positive feedback in regard to the recent improvements in the Square and its impact on surrounding areas.

In common with every city and town centre in the UK, Bath faces great challenges in a very dynamic period of economic and social change. I consider public realm improvement has a key role to play, in tandem with imaginative estate management and town planning, to create opportunity for new uses and to enhance the diversity and range of offer to revitalize our high streets.

I very much hope you will accept the WECA funding and for our part HPH have committed part funding if the project proceeds.

Thank you.

Lindsay Holdoway