

2018
2019

ANNUAL REPORT

CONTENTS

Introductions	3
Investing in Arts and Culture to drive footfall and profile	4
Communicating with you	8
Making the most of summer	10
A destination for Christmas	12
Raising the profile of Kingston	14
Creating cost savings	16
Always here for you	17
Financial statement	18
The year ahead	19



INTRODUCTIONS



SAM EASTWOOD
Chairman, Kingston First,
Centre Director
- Bentall Centre

In my first year as Chair of Kingston First, it has been a privilege working alongside the team and collectively with the businesses and organisations of the town. We are grateful for the fantastic support received during the Renewal Ballot seeing a 65% turnout with 92% of those voting in favour and 90% voting in favour by rateable value.

This strong endorsement of the company from organisations both big and small, across all sectors is a testament to the excellent work of Kingston First and the integral role they have played in the town over the years.

On behalf of the Board, we are excited to continue working with you into the next decade and to collectively take on Kingston's future together.



KIRSTEN HENLY
Chief Executive,
Kingston First

Over the last year we have been looking at ways to communicate with you more often, keeping you updated with our work but also inviting your feedback and ideas to shape our future plans. We are keen to explore new arts and cultural experiences whilst celebrating the town's heritage, which has led to the introduction of a new on-street exhibition series as well as the complete refurbishment of Kingston's beloved 'tumbling telephone boxes'. The Keep it Kingston scheme continues to achieve great success, so much so, that following feedback from members and employees, we are in the process of developing an app to make the scheme even easier to use.

Finally, thank you to you as members for your year-round support and to our partners who have worked with us to deliver our projects and services. The team and I look forward to continue working with you to maintain the success of Kingston as a wonderful place to work, visit, live and study in.

2018/19 has been a busy year of achievements for Kingston First, culminating in the successful renewal ballot for our next term, 2020-24. Thank you for supporting us during the ballot process. The result gives us a solid mandate to deliver the plans outlined in our Renewal Proposal and we look forward to building on the projects and services that add value for our members, as well as exploring new and innovative ideas for the town.

INVESTING IN ARTS AND CULTURE TO DRIVE FOOTFALL AND PROFILE

RESTORING 'OUT OF ORDER'

Earlier this year, we coordinated and co-funded the complete refurbishment of Kingston's famous 'tumbling telephone boxes', restoring them to their former glory and providing a much-improved photo opportunity to be shared on social media.

With the sculpture celebrating its 30th anniversary in the town, we took the opportunity to invite the artwork's sculptor, David Mach RA to unveil the refurbished piece which helped generate over £44,600 in press coverage, including pieces in Evening Standard, The i and Londonist, as well as social coverage to audiences in excess of 3 million.

HELPED GENERATE OVER
£44,600
IN PRESS COVERAGE

SOCIAL COVERAGE TO
AUDIENCES IN EXCESS OF
3million.





KINGSTON CHILDREN'S LITERARY FESTIVAL

The Kingston Children's Literary Festival returned for a second year with an impressive line-up of famous authors and illustrators.

The festival was opened by Adam Hargreaves, best-known for writing and illustrating the Mr Men and Little Miss books since taking over from his father and Mr Men creator, Roger Hargreaves. This helped to drive the profile of the event, and the town centre, with many events sold out.

OF THE FAMILIES ATTENDING THE EVENTS:

15%
WERE NEW VISITORS TO KINGSTON

90%
SPENT TIME IN OTHER SHOPS AND PLACES OF INTEREST DURING THEIR VISIT

52%
ATE A MEAL IN THE TOWN CENTRE DURING THEIR VISIT

£88,000+
GENERATED IN PR VALUE FOR THE EVENT

'STREETS OF HISTORY' OUTDOOR EXHIBITIONS

In autumn 2018, we launched 'Streets of History', a new project to celebrate the rich heritage of the town and stimulate civic pride with a series of on-street mini exhibitions.

Our aim was to bring Kingston's history to life in an accessible way, whilst animating the streets that would drive positive consumer sentiment of the town.

The first exhibition marked the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, highlighting Kingston's remarkable contribution to the war effort. Working with Kingston Museum and History Centre, alongside local historians, community organisations and funeral directors, FW Paine, we compiled a collection of stories, newspaper clippings and photos to share with the public.

The exhibition was well received amongst the public, and we'll be working on future exhibitions to drive awareness of our town's fascinating history.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOU

NEW FUNCTIONALITY ON THE KINGSTON FIRST WEBSITE

To offer new ways to support our members, we refreshed and added a number of different functions to the Kingston First website, including a jobs page for members to post staff vacancies, a meeting venues page to list spaces available for private hire, plus a dedicated space to keep up to date with council notifications regarding town centre roadworks and developments.

SECTOR FORUMS

In 2018 we introduced a number of dedicated sector forums to discuss the challenges faced by certain business areas.

We held a number of sessions for Independent Businesses of the town, the retail sector and food and beverage businesses, and coordinated sessions for business representatives to directly address their concerns with local MP Sir Ed Davey, Metropolitan Police and Kingston Council.



SHARING TOWN CENTRE DATA

Throughout the year, our monthly insight reports have given businesses a better understanding of how Kingston is performing across footfall, sales, car parking and crime figures.

To bolster our analysis going forward, this year we have installed an additional footfall counter that will help give a more holistic view of the town's pedestrian flow.



MAKING THE MOST OF SUMMER

ADDING SOME SUMMER COLOUR

With the aim of increasing dwell time in the town and improving consumer-sentiment, we invested heavily in dressing the town to bring some eye-catching colour and vibrancy to the streets.

We improved the space in Ancient Market Place with extra astroturf, deckchairs and picnic tables, giving the area a summer garden feel, and invested in new astroturf sections at Eagle Brewery Wharf to help make the area more welcoming and appealing.

Throughout the town we installed over 200 hanging baskets along with large floral planters, and for areas where real planting wasn't viable, we added colour through faux-flower garlands.

Adding further colour, we invested in high-level street dressing, banners and bunting, along with signage towers to help visitors navigate the town and promote the town-wide events and festivals.



200+
HANGING BASKETS WERE INSTALLED

178m²
ASTROTURF LAID

65,000
WHAT'S ON GUIDES HAND-DELIVERED TO LOCAL HOMES

48%
INCREASE IN WEBSITE VISITS TO INKINGSTON.CO.UK



“

Just came home from Kingston. It was wonderful to sit in Market Place and watch the tots playing in the fountains, surrounded by beautiful flowers

”

Val H. via Facebook

PROMOTING THE TOWN

To help raise Kingston's profile as a summer destination, we used our summer campaign to highlight the full variety of things to do in Kingston. This was communicated through advertising in local magazines, bus routes and outdoor poster sites across the local area and train stations, plus a 'What's On' booklet hand-delivered to local homes.

We installed a real hedge maze in Memorial Gardens, with the aim of encouraging use of the beautiful green space in the town centre, whilst offering families something unique and free to do, increasing their dwell time in the town.



A DESTINATION FOR CHRISTMAS

FESTIVE CHEER

Driving awareness and stimulating interest in Kingston is especially important during the Christmas period.

We invest in the Christmas lights, tree and decorations for the town, and we continue to build and improve the Christmas market which is now widely recognised as one of the best in London and helps stimulate coverage in press and across social media.



KINGSTON CHRISTMAS MARKET GENERATED
£222,866
IN PR VALUE

5,000+

IN ATTENDANCE TO SEE THE TOWN LIT UP FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON



65,000

CHRISTMAS GUIDES DELIVERED HIGHLIGHTING THE FESTIVE THINGS TO DO IN THE TOWN



CHRISTMAS MARKETING

To further spread the message about Kingston's Christmas offering, we advertised in local magazines, on local bus routes and poster sites, and hand-delivered 65,000 leaflets to local homes highlighting all the festive things to do in the town.

We also coordinated the Christmas lights switch on which continues to be a popular community event, with well over 5,000 in attendance to see the town lit up for the festive season.

PROVIDING A SAFE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

At the town's busiest time of year, we invested in a trial team of uniformed street patrol marshalls for the Christmas period to help deter shoplifting and tackle business crime.



RAISING THE PROFILE OF KINGSTON

OUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Visits to inkingston.co.uk continued to grow with an average of 10,600 visits per month, showing that the website is becoming the 'go-to' place to find out what's on and happening in Kingston.

Our social media channels are an important voice of Kingston, sharing town centre events and increasing awareness of the town. Across the year we invested in pop-up photo opportunities to encourage more social sharing which were popular and engaging for visitors to the town.



30%

INCREASE IN WEBSITE VISITS (YOY)



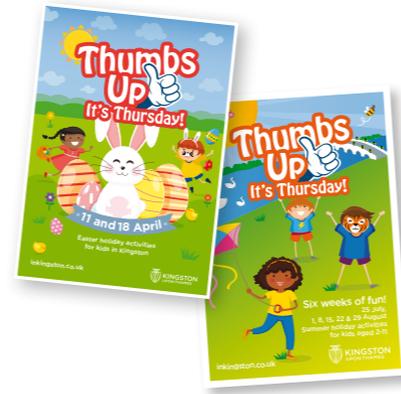
33%

INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA REACH (YOY)



17%

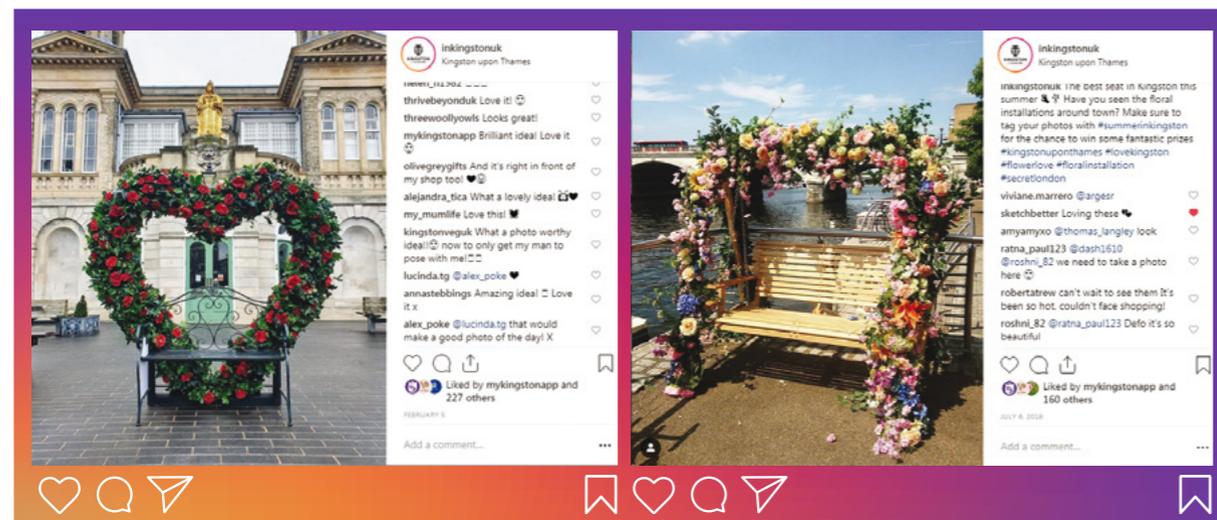
INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS (YOY)



THUMBS UP IT'S THURSDAY

Proven to drive new footfall directly into businesses, Kingston's popular Thumbs Up It's Thursday events continue to grow, with more and more businesses getting involved every school holiday.

During 2018, the highest-ever number of businesses took part, with over 35 venues regularly hosting activities and dining offers for children.



NEW SECTOR-SPECIFIC PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Over the year we launched two new campaigns specifically designed to shine a spotlight on the Independent Business and Evening Economy sectors.

During Independent Retailers Month in July, we launched a directory listing all of the independent shops, cafes and restaurants in the town which was given away along with a uniquely-designed tote bag. We also held a small pop-up market, giving independent retailers the opportunity to showcase their products and services to potential new customers. Following the success of the initial giveaway, we followed up with a new, updated directory and bag giveaway for Small Business Saturday in December.

In February this year we launched 'Kingston After Dark', a marketing campaign to highlight the great range of bars, restaurants and leisure activities on offer in Kingston to help drive evening footfall.



20,000

LEAFLETS DISTRIBUTED



45%

INCREASE ON WEBSITE VISITS*



115%

INCREASE ON SOCIAL REACH*



*VS SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR



The Kingston After Dark campaign was a great initiative for driving awareness and custom. We ran a series of Monday night events and everyone loved it! All attendees were locals who learnt about it from the Kingston After Dark leaflets. Amazing stuff!



Libby Andrews, Pho

GENERATING PR AND PROFILE

To further help drive awareness for Kingston, generating PR coverage remains central to our marketing strategy. Over the year we targeted our efforts to drive coverage in high reach and high circulation titles, both on and offline.

Examples of titles in which we gained coverage and showcased the town through include, Metro online, Sunday Times Culture magazine, Fabulous Magazine, Conde Nast Traveller, TimeOut magazine and The Times Online.



£336,740

TOTAL PR VALUE, UP 64% ON PREVIOUS YEAR

CREATING COST SAVINGS

FREE RECYCLING AND DISCOUNTED TRADE WASTE

One of our most-popular services, the free recycling service operated through First Mile continues to be valuable for many of our members, with over 200 businesses taking advantage of the scheme.

Thanks to your help, we have worked to make the scheme more efficient, reducing the number of plastic recycling sacks being wasted and introduced easier-to-use cardboard stickers instead of tape.



We have been using and benefiting from the free recycling service for a number of years. The service is easy to use, saves us money and also means that as a business we are helping the environment. I would have no hesitation in recommending it to other businesses in the town centre.

*Petar Blazevic,
Local Hero Kingston*



We have benefited from training staff members on courses ranging from Fire Marshall Training, Emergency First Aid at Work, Conflict Management, Social Media and Employment Law. The sessions are well organised and certificated where necessary. As a business we are always looking to enhance our staff's knowledge and development – the Kingston First training courses are of great value to us.

Hyejin Moon, Kokoro



CAR PARKING

Alongside the Keep It Kingston scheme, we saw an increase in members taking advantage of the reduced car parking rates that we have negotiated with NCP, with over 290 employees now enjoying the discounted tariff.

WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

Following business and employee feedback, we grew our programme of free workshops and courses in 2018, increasing the frequency of popular sessions and introducing new topics based on members' feedback. The events provide free training for local employees, giving them the chance to improve skills and gain necessary workplace certifications while at the same time, networking with other local businesses.

261

EMPLOYEES ATTENDED SESSIONS

108

BUSINESSES USED THE FREE TRAINING SESSIONS

55%

INCREASE IN PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

KEEP IT KINGSTON

Since its launch in 2017, the Keep it Kingston discount card continued to grow, offering a platform for members to promote their products and services, as well as providing a useful benefit scheme for employees of the town.



11,300+

VISITS TO THE KEEP IT KINGSTON WEBSITE PER MONTH



12,143

CARDS DISTRIBUTED ACROSS

466 BUSINESSES

ALWAYS HERE FOR YOU

AWARDS FOR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

We continued our sponsorship and organisation of the Kingston Business Excellence Awards which recognises the great work of companies across the borough in a broad range of categories. In 2018, 23 Kingston First members were shortlisted for awards, all benefitting from the prestige and improved awareness that comes with being selected as a finalist.

DEEP CLEANING OF TOWN CENTRE STREETS

We invest in the deep cleaning of the town centre pavements twice a year, and in 2018, increased the footprint of the deep clean by 10,000m². Additionally, our electric-powered Ranger Response vehicle continues to allow us to respond more rapidly to day-to-day concerns which was especially useful in the long, dry summer of 2018 when dirt and grease accumulated on the pavements and was particularly unsightly.

MAINTAINING SAFETY

We continued to work in partnership with the local authority, local businesses and Metropolitan Police across a number of initiatives to ensure that Kingston remains a safe and welcoming place to live, work, shop and enjoy leisure time. In 2018, this included initiatives to help reduce the number of homeless people sleeping on private property.

Our town link radio system continues to provide comfort to employees and businesses in the town, enabling them to share information about crime and anti-social behaviour quickly and effectively.



ATTRACTIVE PLACES AND SPACES

We continue to look at ways of dressing the town through added greenery, planting and temporary installations. Over the year we have worked with volunteer groups from a number of our businesses to replant flower beds with species specifically chosen to maximise sustainability and pollution reduction.



COORDINATED

4 days

OF CLEANING PROJECTS WITH VOLUNTEERS TO REMOVE WASTE, PERFORM WEEDING AND OTHER GENERAL MAINTENANCE TASKS



108,000

SQUARE METRES PAVEMENT DEEP CLEANED

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME		NOTES
Levy	£918,571	1
Other funding and contributions	£185,328	2
Transferred services income	£445,847	3
Total	£1,549,746	
EXPENDITURE		
Enhancing Kingston	£379,770	
Marketing Kingston	£418,110	
Supporting Kingston	£247,758	
Transferred services Costs	£389,540	4
Overheads and operating costs	£227,912	5
Total	£1,663,090	
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year 2018-19 (after tax)	-£113,344	
Net surplus brought forward from 2017-18	£454,254	
Net surplus carried forward into 2019-20	£340,910	6

Notes

The financial statement covers the period of 12 months from April 2018 to March 2019 inclusive. Full audited accounts are available at the Company's Annual Meeting held in July and on the Kingston First website.

- 1 Levy collection rate of 98%
- 2 Includes grants, sponsorship and project contributions
- 3 Includes income related to the running of the Ancient Market Place, Monday Markets and commercial space management
- 4 Costs of running and servicing the Ancient Market Place, Monday Markets and commercial spaces
- 5 Overheads at 15% of total income
- 6 Surplus is carried forward for the projects and services detailed in the business plan

Kingston First's voluntary board of directors represent sectors from across the town's business community. They are responsible for the financial oversight of the company and oversee the delivery of the business plan. You can find out details about the board and the Kingston First team on our website.

THE YEAR AHEAD

A NEW APP FOR KEEP IT KINGSTON

Following feedback from members and users, we are investing in a new smartphone app for the Keep it Kingston scheme which is due to launch in autumn of this year. The app will make it much easier for customers to find and discover offers, and will provide a new virtual card on the app itself, rather than customers needing to carry and present a physical plastic card. We look forward to sharing new detail with you in the coming months on this exciting project.



RIVER FESTIVAL AND HALLOWEEN

To continue the summer activity into September, we will be building on our River Festival in association with Totally Thames, drawing on our unique riverside location to provide cultural and entertaining experiences to help drive footfall and raise the profile of the town. Events will include street theatre, the Kingston Korea Festival to include river-themed dance entertainment and an exhibition showcasing the winners of a summer photography competition.

In October, we will be leveraging the increasingly-popular Halloween period with even more engaging events and activities.

IMPROVING TOWN CENTRE WAYFINDING

Enhancing navigation across the town centre is a priority among business sectors. Earlier this year, we worked with the Council and commissioned an expert agency to provide us with ideas and concepts for improving routes between the train station, town centre and riverside. We will start delivering their ideas in the coming year.



OUR NEW BUSINESS PLAN 2020-24

We will be preparing to start delivering against our new business plan for our new five year term and exploring the exciting new ideas within it. If you'd like to get involved in our work, please do contact us to discuss further.

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