



Cameron Brewer, *pictured*, has a strong track record in local government, economic development and the BID programme in particular.

The former Newmarket Business Association CEO, city councillor and council official currently serves on the Rodney Local Board and runs his own communications consultancy.

He represents the local board in its dealings with the area's one and only BID – the seven township North West Country which was established just four years ago.

We invited Cameron to share his insights.

Councils' important role in economic development

What part(s) should local authorities play in local economic development?

Having been around local and central government for 20 years, this was once an area of political debate. It's not any longer. Today it's almost an expectation from businesses and residents alike. Just look at Christchurch City Council's recent financial commitment to building a new stadium!

I'm a great believer that local government's role in economic development is not to fund seminars or subsidise business, but rather create enduring things that the private sector for whatever reason won't or can't fund – things that will spark tangible economic activity. Developing and activating an area's waterfront edge for example has probably been the best example of council-led economic development in recent decades, whether it be Wellington, New Plymouth, or Auckland.

I've been a slower convert to councils financially supporting events – but I'm slowly coming around, and for areas like the North-West events bring new people to the area who we may not have ever seen otherwise, and once they've been out here they'll be back that's for sure.

For BIDs, destination marketing is a big part of the job – that is promoting the area as a whole and largely leaving member businesses to promote their products and services. Realistically, the BID is best placed to promote the area, otherwise who else will do it? You might get a passing mention from Tourism New Zealand once in a blue moon or two seconds in a regional commercial, but for anything more specific it will only be a BID that can best achieve that.

As the former Newmarket CEO you have a good working knowledge of the BID programme. How did the BID programme help Newmarket achieve its objectives?

The first time I saw a targeted commercial ratepayer-funded business association in action was in Whanganui. Compared to when I was at school there during the challenging economic days of the 1980s when it was a pretty dreary place, that city's mainstreet and centre then physically transformed which helped bring about a kind of renaissance where people are now moving to Whanganui for a better lifestyle! Thirty years ago, it was 'last one to leave turn out the lights!' But in the end a BID has been key to Whanganui's revival.

When I started out as BID manager in Newmarket, we had different challenges. It was 2005 and the economy and retail was roaring along, Newmarket had a great reputation but woeful infrastructure. For example, a wrecked 1909 train station, broken footpaths and street gardens that had been installed by the Newmarket Borough Council in the 1980s, very tired public places, and graffiti and security issues. We went about lobbying the Auckland City Council for investment which saw a multi-million dollar street upgrade and a revamped Lumsden Green. A new train station was built, CCTV cameras were installed and monitored from inside the Newmarket Police Station and graffiti was eradicated on a daily basis.





Phelan Pirrie

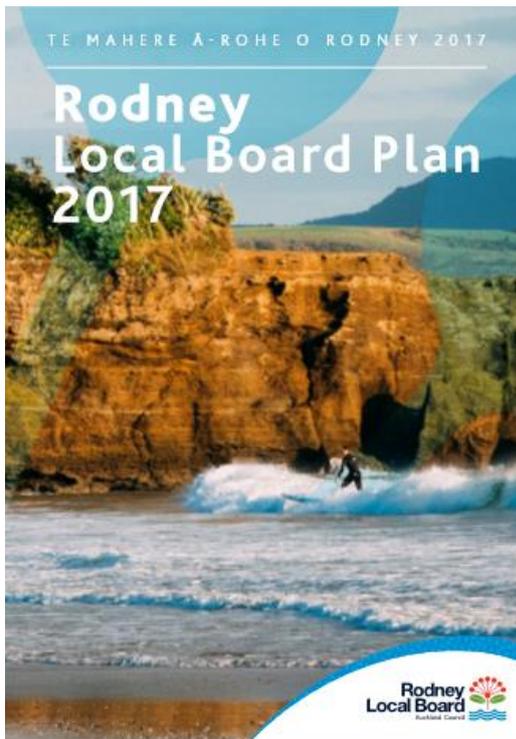


Tony Forlong

Any limitations, downsides to the BID programme?

Village politics is probably the only downside, but debate should always be embraced as it has the potential to make for a stronger organisation that is focused on its performance.

The early years of the North West Country BID were not easy, but it has a committed and representative board of local businesses and an outstanding new manager, Phelan Pirrie. Nobody has a better understanding of the challenges facing the area than he does, and no one is better equipped to actually help address them. Everyone at Auckland Council from the Mayor and CEO down knows and respects Phelan and so he will be an outstanding advocate and representative. Likewise, Tony Forlong is a great chairman and brings strong business acumen, community connections and a long association with the area.



Please complete this sentence: "The Rodney Local Board has commissioned a Rodney Economic Development Action Plan which we expect will. . .

. . . be met by implementing BIDs and letting businesses make the decision around their priorities.

Within the Rodney LB area, are there any areas which you feel would benefit from becoming a BID?

Warkworth has a strong and active business community and the area faces considerable growth, change and opportunity. It would probably be the most likely contender for a BID, but they have rejected two BID ballots now, and so that is not a priority for the Rodney Local Board at the moment.

Please describe your current role representing RLB in its relationship with the NWC BID.

Helping both entities achieve their objectives and, where possible, promote ongoing alignment.