

# FORT WILLIAM BID

Business Plan 1st December 2024 – 30th November 2029



Let's not miss our chance - **Vote for the BID!**

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# Foreward

The Business Improvement District (BID) business plan for Fort William provides all the information required for eligible voters to decide through a confidential postal ballot if they want to establish a Fort William Business Improvement District. It gives the background to BIDs, reasons for the establishment of a BID and full details of the 5 year action plan that will be delivered when the BID is approved through ballot.

The business plan also sets out the investment levy costs to qualifying business properties included within the BID area boundary, rules of the ballot process, how the BID will be measured, will communicate with investment levy payers and how the BID will be governed and managed.

The voting period for the BID business plan commences on 10th October 2024 and closes at 5pm on Thursday 21st November 2024. The results of the ballot will be announced within 7 days.



# Chair's Welcome

I am delighted to present this proposal, which outlines your priorities and gives a taste of how we can improve and make Fort William better by working together.

A BID is where businesses, within a defined geographical area, vote to invest collectively in local improvements over and above those provided by statutory authorities. It is a partnership arrangement where the local business community and the statutory authorities work together on projects that will benefit the local economy and local businesses. Supporting Fort William BID is a great opportunity to work together and make the changes we all want. The cost to our businesses is low and through Fort William BID we can access external assistance and funding not available to individual businesses.

All the proposed improvements were ideas initially from you, which came out in our surveys and consultations. Every business in the area has had the opportunity to let us know what their priorities are.

By getting involved in the Fort William BID, we can work together to increase footfall, stimulate investment, enhance the reputation etc. of our town centre.

The purpose of the Fort William BID is to support our businesses, increase trade, improve our business environment etc. You can find more information on our website [www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk](http://www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk), or for more general or national information refer to Home – Scotland's Improvement Districts.

A notice of ballot will be sent to all eligible persons (those eligible to vote in the ballot) on or before 03/10/2024 and postal ballot packs will be posted out to those eligible to vote from Thursday 03/10/2024. Those eligible to vote will have at least 6 weeks to cast their vote before the ballot closes at 5pm on 21/11/2024. Ballot papers received after this date and time will be null and void and not be counted.

I have been involved in business in Fort William for several years and know a lot of the business people in the area.

**I would ask you all to vote YES so that we can work together to make Fort William better. Positive Thinking for Fort William Town Centre!**



"This BID is for all Sectors, not just tourism.  
After all, a rising tide lifts all boats"

**Archie MacDonald**

Chair – Fort William BID Steering Group

The Highland Soap Co. Limited

Inverloch Mains, North Road, Fort William,  
Scotland, PH33 6TQ

"Business" or variations of the word "business" are used throughout this document. The word "business" in this context refers to property owners or tenants and occupiers of properties who are liable to pay the non-domestic rate (NDR), whether they pay business rates or not. This includes all properties listed on the Scottish Assessors Association Portal (website) with a non-domestic rateable value, many of whom may be a charitable organisation, public sector organization, social enterprise or community group who may not consider themselves to be a business.

# BID's Top Business Benefits

- Help Fort William become a year round 'destination town' with cash grants for local events
- Mountainbike Championships, SSDT, The Ben Race, Lochaber Live, etc
- Make Fort William more attractive and welcoming by working with local groups on traffic matters and cash support for street improvements
- Support local businesses with cash grants for premises improvements and staff training
- Give Fort William businesses a strong unified voice Fort William, fighting above it's weight, attracting new investment
- Make it happen with a BID manager and team delivering the plan on budget and on time
- Support & work with local voluntary community groups following the Fort William Town Centre Action plan to avoid duplicating efforts
- Promote 'local trade' with local loyalty schemes, business directories and 'local business first' voucher scheme

The above will only happen if  
Fort William votes **yes** for the Fort William BID!





# What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

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A Business Improvement District (BID) is a geographically defined area, where businesses come together and agree to invest collectively in projects and services the businesses believe will improve their trading environment. BID projects are new and additional projects and services; they do not replace services that are already provided by The Highland Council and other statutory bodies.

BIDs are developed, managed and paid for by those who are liable to pay non-domestic rates (NDR) by means of a compulsory levy, which the eligible persons in the proposed BID area must vote in favour of before the BID can be established. Each eligible person liable to pay the BID levy will be able to vote on whether the BID goes ahead.

## Background to BIDs

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The first BID was established, approximately fifty-five years ago, in Bloor West Village, Toronto, Canada, by the district's business community. The district's businesses were increasingly coming under pressure from new enclosed shopping malls being developed outside their area, diverting shoppers away from the traditional shopping area. As a result, some businesses were forced to cease trading and the area began to look tired and neglected.

To stop the haemorrhage of deserting shoppers, local businesses fought back to revitalise the area. They successfully lobbied for legislation for all the businesses, in the proposed BID area, to pay a levy. The levy money was used to improve the physical appearance of the area, and then promote the district as a vibrant, attractive and safe place to work, shop and live. The strategy paid off and shoppers started to return to the district in large numbers.

The success of the Bloor West Village BID paved the way for future BIDs, not only in Toronto; but spreading throughout Canada, and the USA in the late 1960's and 1970's. Today there are well over 1800 successful BIDs worldwide.

An additional measure of BIDs success is in the renewal process. Most BIDs run

for a period of five years with the vast majority continuing, for consecutive terms, when they come up for renewal. Currently, there are 28 BIDs in their second or third BID terms equating to 50 successful renewal ballots demonstrating the businesses value the projects and services delivered by the BIDs.

BIDs can support regeneration, grow local economies, create local employment and create a cleaner, safer trading environment. A key element to their success is that the local businesses take ownership and responsibility for their trading environment, identifying the projects necessary to resolve common problems and issues, and overseeing their implementation, whilst also contributing to the future direction of the town and its future development.

BID legislation was passed in Scotland in 2006 with the Scottish Government funding 6 pilot projects in March 2006. The Scottish Government fully supports the development of BIDs in Scotland.

As at 12/06/2024 there are 35 fully operational BIDs in Scotland with a further 20 in development including our BID.

# Why does Fort William need a BID?

If we do nothing, then nothing will be done.

Fort William has experienced significant changes over recent years and, as with many towns throughout Scotland, now has considerable issues. Increased competition from developments and the internet and from surrounding business parks has led to new businesses locating elsewhere and a reduction in footfall.

Traffic management, litter, access issues etc. are a problem for many of our businesses. The continuing rise of energy costs is putting more pressure on businesses. The town centre requires a continued coordinated response from all businesses to address these problems.

The town centre has suffered from increased competition from supermarkets and the growth of online shopping.

After consultations with businesses from a range of sectors and geographic locations, it became clear there was commonality in the problems that they had. There was a desire to see Fort William prosper and a real appetite to embrace a new way forward and to change and make improvements.

There are many voluntary groups in the town centre and therefore there is no shortage of community spirit and can-do attitude! However, these groups can suffer from a lack of funds and dedicated staff time. The BID is the opposite of this. It can help local groups to achieve more with staff resources and access to funding.

There is a desire from a range of sectors to see the town centre improve its marketing activity. The BID would work alongside The Highland Council, Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, Visit Scotland, Business Gateway, Zero Waste Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Fort William Town Team, Fort William Festive Fund, Fort William Marina & Shoreline Community Interest Company, etc and other local groups to deliver an increase in visitor numbers, improved environment etc.

The BID provides a unique opportunity for local businesses across all sectors to continue to work together, invest collectively and undertake projects which can contribute positively to improving the economic viability of businesses in the town centre and securing investment in the town centre.

# The History of BIDs in Fort William

The Living Lochaber Tourism Business Improvement District (LLTBID) was strongly driven by Fort William Chamber of Commerce and the Outdoor Capital of the UK in 2013. A Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) is a business led initiative where businesses work together and invest collectively in local services and improvements in their business environment. The four main aims of the LLTBID were:

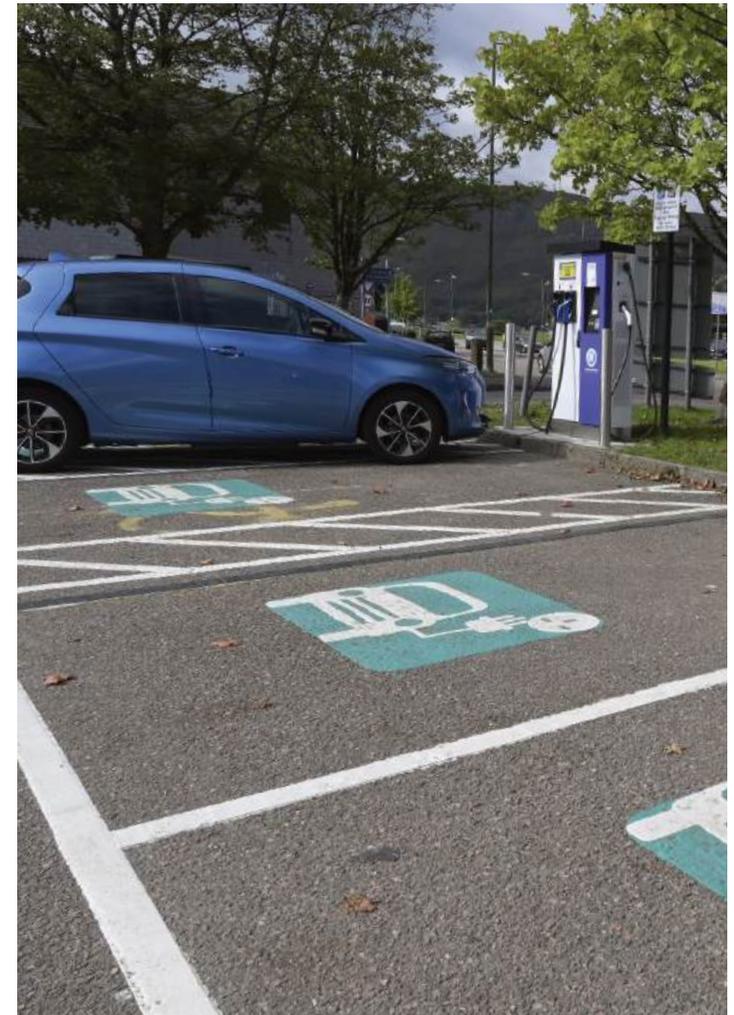
- Improvements to infrastructure
- Support and develop local events
- Strong, effective marketing
- Create a better environment for business

The LLTBID was not successful at the ballot on 12/12/2013. The Steering Committee feel that this is due to the size of the geographical area which brought little commonality between businesses across Lochaber.

# How does Fort William benefit from a BID?

All businesses in Fort William benefit from the projects and services the BID aims to deliver:

- Support for existing groups and organisations
- An improved customer perception of accessibility and parking availability
- Improved customer knowledge of goods and services in the town centre
- Increased marketing to local, regional, national and global customers
- Access to funding to reduce property improvement costs
- Cost reduction through collective investment and joint promotion
- An increased number of visitors to the town centre
- Access to funding and support not available to individuals or businesses
- A local voice for businesses – business opinions included in local policy and local developments
- Better trained staff to improve customer service
- Increased B2B sales opportunities
- Increased networking opportunities
- Improved signage
- Increased use of technology to solve local problems
- Projects to increase shop diversity and lower vacant unit rates
- A continued safe trading environment with increased sense of security and less stock loss



# Local Authority Support

A BID is a business led regeneration strategy but contributes to the wider regeneration aspirations of the public sector and the local community. It is essential to have the support of the local authority and access to its expertise throughout the development of the BID.

The Highland Council have been supportive of the development of the BID with 1 elected member attending steering group meetings and support given by 2 council officers.

A crucial element of the BID is to establish a Baseline Service Agreement (an agreement on which services are already provided to the area by The Highland Council), to ensure any project or service provided by the BID is additional to the statutory services the local authority already provides.

The Highland Council shall (under section 41 of the Representation of people Act 1983 and The Business Improvement Districts (Scotland) Regulations 2007) undertake and manage the postal ballot.

## The BID area

The BID area is generally focused on the Fort William area with the main aim of uniting businesses within the immediate town centre but also maximize the business benefits of working and sharing with businesses on the edge of town that directly link and are part of the economic success of the area. Through one-to-one consultations, it became clear that there were common issues crossing different sectors.

The BID team have calculated that this equates to circa 345 properties, the eligible person of which will be entitled to vote on 21/11/2024. Following a successful ballot all eligible persons within the BID area will be required to pay the BID levy.

# The BID streets

The following streets were chosen to be included in the BID area as consultations with businesses in this area highlighted several common issues of concern that could be addressed by a BID:

Achintee	Perth Place	Fraser Square	High Street	Montrose Avenue	Station Square
Achintore Road	Bruce Place	Glen Nevis	Inverloch Court	Monzie Square	Town Pier
Alma Road	Camachd Crescent	Glen Nevis Business Park	Locheil Road	Moray Place	Tulloch Place
An Aird	Cameron Square	Glen Nevis Place	Lochy Bridge	Nevis Bridge	Union Road
Argyll Road	Carmichael Way	Glenloch Road	Lochy Crescent	Nevis Road	Viewforth Place
Bank Street	Connochie Road	Gordon Square	Lundavra Crescent	North Road	Young Place
Battlefield Crescent	Croft Road	Grange Road	Lundavra Road	The Parade	The Parade
Belford Road	Dudley Road	Grange Terrace	Lundy Gardens	Ross Place	
Ben Nevis Drive	Fassifern Road	Heathercroft Road	Middle Street	Seaview Terrace	

## The BID map

The BID area will be from the Croit Anna Hotel PH33 6RR, along to the Council Yard PH33 6TL. Only on the A82 side of the Loch and south of the River Lochy. Here is a detailed map of the area.

There are circa 510 properties located in the BID area this equates to 345 properties, the eligible person of which will be entitled to vote on 21/11/2024.



# Local Consultation

The overall aim of the consultation was to assess opinions on ways to enhance and improve the BID area and give more incentive to visit and invest in the town centre. The results of these surveys and consultations have been combined and form the basis of the Business Plan and BID Proposal.

Businesses have been engaged through a cross-section of the following media:

- Post
- Open public meetings
- Newspaper articles
- Emails
- Hand delivered survey
- One-to-one visits
- Telephone calls
- Nevis Radio interview
- On the Fort William BID Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/219187561256061>
- On the website [www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk](http://www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk)

**March 2023** – Mark Gibbings of the Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, witnessed by Frazer Coupland, applied for a BID Seedcorn Grant 15/03/23.

**April 2023** – Meeting chaired by Archie MacDonald (Director, The Highland Soap Company), Bill Harvey (Scotland’s Business Improvement Districts), Phil Prentice (Scotland’s Towns Partnerships), Frazer Coupland (CEO, Lochaber Chamber of Commerce), Angus MacDonald (Business Owner in Fort William) on 18/4/23.

**May 2023** – Archie MacDonald then went and saw several senior business people in the area to get feedback on the suggestion that a BID was launched. In conjunction with their views as well as Angus MacDonald and Frazer Coupland, he asked people to join a steering committee. He was looking for people well-respected locally with acumen, a record of wanting to invest in the town and people from different sectors of the economy.

**October 2023** – The Steering Group started looking for someone to be the BID Manager. Advertisements were placed in local publications and online, as well as asking for suggestions. The very well regarded and capable Mark MacLean was then hired.

**March 2024** – 550 Hard copy questionnaires sent out to all businesses in the BID area on 27/03/2024.

**April 2024** – An interactive online survey was posted on the website [www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk](http://www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk) and Facebook page [www.facebook.com/groups/219187561256061](https://www.facebook.com/groups/219187561256061) on 11/04/24. This has resulted in 56 surveys being completed in this way. Not all respondents were in the BID area but 38 (27 online and 11 hard copy) were in the BID area raising the return rate to 11.0%.

**March & April 2024** – Three business information sessions were held by the BID Steering Group as follows:

- On 26/03/24 at The Highland Cinema
- On 29/03/24 at The Highland Soap Company
- On 15/04/24 at The Highland Book Shop

Further meetings were held by the BID Project Manager and Chair of the Fort William BID Steering Group as follows:

- On 19/03/24 – with the Fort William, Inverlochy and Torlundy Community Council
- On 17/04/24 – with Lochaber Rotary Club
- The BID Project Manager also arranged a meeting with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce on 20/02/2024
- Members of the BID steering group attended the AGM of the Lochaber Housing Association on 22/08/2024 and presented the information regarding the BID for fort william.

The questionnaire consultation was supported by one-to-one consultation with a further 79 businesses (22.9% of the businesses eligible to vote).

# What You Told Us

Business consultation and involvement has taken place over the last 15 months in a number of ways. This added to what was already known from previous consultations that have taken place with businesses over the last few years (more notably the Fort William Town Centre Action Plan in August 2015). It was recognised within the plan that businesses had a role to play in delivery of a number of actions. At these meetings the businesses present agreed to pursue the possibility of a BID as how they would be delivered.

- High Street improvement
- Make high street look more inviting
- Better transport infrastructure
- Create vibrant trading environment
- Live music, pipe band etc monthly for tourist knowledge & support.
- Improve ugly facades and shops
- Reduce council rates to fill empty properties and give businesses a chance to recover after the financial burdens of lock down
- Slowing down A82 and having green space out into the Loch to encourage folk to stop and visit
- Digitally sent out events
- Have a committee to decide what the best businesses would be. I.e Dunkeld do this.
- Make more of Loch Linnhe (firework display?)
- Locals need to be encouraged to buy locally, not buy on line or go further afield.
- Regular shuttle buses into town from outskirts
- The A82 is an eyesore, reduce to one lane like Oban seafront and reduce to 30mph if not 20mph
- Improve litter services
- Improve Fort William town as a destination, rather than a passing through town.
- Our shorefront is absolutely wasted
- New activity centres with local activity companies
- More housing for staff
- Longer season, better infrastructure, improved facilities
- Financial incentives for new businesses eg grants
- Longer season, better infrastructure, improved facilities
- Reduce rents
- More events in the town

# Are the things in the business plan not paid for through business rates?

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No, the BID activities are in addition to services currently provided by The Highland Council and Police Scotland. It is important that the activity of the BID represents added value beyond the statutory and non-statutory services provided in the BID area.

The BID has a written 'Baseline Agreement' with The Highland Council which details the statutory and non-statutory services that will continue to be delivered during the 5 year term of the BID.

The baseline services agreement gives an assurance to business owners that the levy payment will be used for additional projects which they voted on in the BID ballot and NOT to pay for the following services:

The services already provided by The Highland Council:

- Roads Maintenance – Carriageway, Footway Repair and Maintenance – Winter Maintenance
- Cleansing – Refuse Collection, Recycling (Kerbside), Street Cleansing, Public Toilet, Environmental Wardens
- Commercial Waste – collection and recycling
- Grounds Maintenance – Open Space Maintenance – Playing Fields – Parks
- Public Conveniences
- Street Furniture and signage – Street Furniture, Signage, Bus Shelters
- Flood Risk Management
- Traffic / Car Parking – Traffic Management, Traffic Lights, On-Street and Off-Street Parking
- Lighting – Street Lighting
- Winter Maintenance
- Community Safety – Licensing and Permits (street traders, public entertainment, etc.), Food Safety, Trading Standards Environmental Health
- Policy and Strategies – Conservation Issues, Biodiversity
- Planning – Development Management
- Economic Development – Business Gateway
- Library Services
- Pier – Management and Maintenance

# The services already provided by Police Scotland:

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- 24/7 Policing response
- Dedicated policing during peak times
- Enhanced policing levels during special events
- Operation and control of CCTV system
- Liaison with partner agencies and other groups
- Crime prevention – advice

## Who will pay the levy?

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A BID levy is an equitable and fair way of funding additional projects and services, which the local authority and other statutory bodies are not required to provide. There are approximately 345 commercial properties in the BID area which will generate a BID investment levy income of approximately £180,600 per annum and an estimated total levy income of £978,186 over 5 years (assuming an RPI of 4% each year).

It has been agreed by the BID Steering Group that:

The BID has a written 'Baseline Agreement' with The Highland Council which details the statutory and non-statutory services that will continue to be delivered during the 5 year term of the BID.

The baseline services agreement gives an assurance to business owners that the levy payment will be used for additional projects which they voted on in the BID ballot and NOT to pay for the following services:

The services already provided by The Highland Council:

- The levy structure will be based on a banded system, fixed on the rateable value (RV) of the property on the day of the ballot 21/11/2024 and remain the same throughout the 5-year term of the BID unless there is a non-domestic rates revaluation during the BID term.
- There will be an increase in the levy during the BID term should there be a non-domestic rateable revaluation occurring during the BID term.
- The BID levy will be index-linked to the RPI to take account of inflation not more than a maximum of 4.0% so that those liable to pay the levy can budget accordingly for the full five-year term.
- The BID levy will be paid by the property occupier – the person liable to pay the non-domestic rate.
- All eligible occupiers (of eligible properties) i.e., the eligible person liable to pay the non-domestic rate that are listed on the Local Assessors Valuation Roll on the ballot date will be liable to pay the levy.

- The levy payments are not linked to what businesses actually pay in rates but are based on the rateable value of the property.
- The levy must be paid in one payment within 28 days from the date of the levy invoice as arranged with The Highland Council billing body.
- If there is a change, in occupier to a property, until a new occupier is found, the property owner will be responsible for paying the levy.
- Any new commercial development, subdivision of existing properties or merging of properties or new business with a non-domestic rateable valuation coming into the area during the 5-year term of the business improvement district will be liable for the BID Improvement Levy.
- If a property is vacant on the day the levy invoice is issued or any subsequent vacant periods, the property owner will be liable to pay the levy.
- Self-catering holiday accommodation which is not the sole or main residence of any person and which is available (or intended to be available) for letting on a commercial basis, with profit in mind, for short periods totalling more than 140 days in the financial year remain liable for non-domestic rates for the whole year and will be included and liable to pay the levy.
- The levy will apply to properties with a rateable value of £3,000 and above. Levy bandings will be applied with a maximum banding at £180,000 and above.
- The BID will honour any reduction in rateable values that occur as a result of a successful appeal with the Assessor in the intervening period between the ballot date and the next revaluation (1 April 2026).

## Exclusions

The BID Steering Group decided to exclude premises that have a rateable value of under £3,000. These premises can pay a voluntary levy and become an “associate member” should they wish.

The Steering Group decided that there is no benefit from being part of the BID to the following categories of property and therefore are exempt from paying the levy i.e., Ad-spaces, Nursing Homes, Non-Retail Charities, Places of Worship, Health Care Centres, ATM's, Food Banks, War Veterans Associations and Sea Cadets.

The Nevis Centre (run by Linnhe Leisure Limited) was given an exemption from the levy on the basis that their service is vital to the community.

# What will it cost?

Rateable Value (RV)	Each Week	Each Month	Annual Levy	No of Businesses	Total
0 to 2,999	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary		£0.00
3,000 to 8,399	£3.85	£16.67	£200.00	116	£23,200.00
8,400 to 13,399	£6.41	£27.78	£333.33	58	£19,333.14
13,400 to 39,999	£9.74	£42.22	£506.67	104	£52,693.68
40,000 to 65,999	£13.59	£58.89	£706.67	32	£22,613.44
66,000 to 99,999	£22.82	£98.89	£1,186.67	12	£14,240.04
100,000 to 179,999	£26.41	£114.44	£1,373.33	13	£17,853.29
180,000 +	£58.97	£255.56	£3,066.67	10	£30,666.70
					£180,600.29

The BID Steering Group decided to use a fee structure, as detailed above, to calculate the levy fee. The reasons behind this are as follows:

- The levy payments add up to the amount required to deliver the business plan.
- A banding system was chosen as it represents a simple and easy way for businesses to identify their levy payment, provides for ease of collection and represents a fair and reasonable methodology. Everybody benefits therefore everybody pays.
- A minimum payment of £200.00 (£3.85 per week or less than one cup of coffee per week) is believed to be affordable for the smallest businesses as they will have the opportunity to benefit from cost reduction projects and the Property Improvement Grant.

# What the BID will do

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From the surveys it was determined that businesses would like the BID to:

- Encourage shopping locally
- Improve the availability of good staff
- Work with public bodies to ensure we receive our fair share of infrastructure investment
- Improve the attractiveness of the back of the town from the A82
- Create more events to bring locals into the town centre
- Make the A82 fit for purpose

We believe that the best way to achieve lasting and sustainable change, and best value for money, is by working in partnership, so where appropriate we will work strategically with: Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, Visit Scotland, Police Scotland, Scot rail, Fort William Town Team, Fort William Festive Fund, Community Groups, Lochaber High School, UHI North, West and Hebrides, Fort William Marina & Shoreline CIC and many others.

The proposed projects will be progressed over the five-year period of the BID. Some projects will be provided on an annual basis while others are one-off projects. The time frame for delivering the projects will be decided by the Board of Directors within the agreed budget.

The detailed projects costs are estimates only. The actual cost of the projects will depend on a variety of factors and will not be definitive until competitive tenders have been submitted where necessary. Some of the projects may be subject to planning permission and other statutory approval.

## Encourage shopping locally

Projects/Activities	Measurement	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce to implement a Love Lochaber scheme</li> <li>■ Work with Lochaber Life / Lochaber Times to create a "Buy Local" business directory to promote local trade</li> <li>■ Consider ways to promote 'local trade' such as with a local loyalty scheme or 'local business first' voucher scheme</li> <li>■ Print a more detailed orientation map to enable visitors/locals to see what is available in the BID area</li> <li>■ Investigate a Staff Loyalty Scheme offering loyalty discounts/offers to local staff.</li> <li>■ Development of information points in town and in satellite locations</li> <li>■ Provide free internet access throughout the town</li> <li>■ Extend the FWTT Heritage Trail (consider more bronze statues) and find a good way to encourage folk to travel around the outside of Morrisons to get to the Old Fort so they don't have to walk over the busy road</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Implementation of Love Lochaber scheme</li> <li>■ Delivery of local business directory</li> <li>■ Production of map already issued by Lochaber Times but focussing on local businesses and interesting locations in the BID area</li> <li>■ Implementation of local loyalty scheme / voucher /Staff Loyalty Scheme</li> <li>■ 6 x Information Points across Fort William</li> <li>■ 90% of Fort William businesses listed in directory and circulated to all businesses</li> <li>■ 50% of Fort William businesses signed up to scheme and saving their levy costs</li> <li>■ Number of users using the internet facility</li> <li>■ Number of folk walking the Heritage Trail to sites of interest in the town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Create a strong unified brand behind which marketing efforts and campaigns can be developed</li> <li>■ It will help encourage people both within and without the BID area to spend in our town</li> <li>■ Higher turnover in shops and more trade from local businesses</li> <li>■ Better knowledge of customers and measurement of BID</li> <li>■ Encourage spend outside the busy summer period</li> <li>■ Increase knowledge of what is going on and where for locals and visitors alike</li> <li>■ Better customer service information available across town</li> <li>■ More local trade between local businesses</li> <li>■ Staff benefit and more local trade and better knowledge of other businesses</li> <li>■ Saving local businesses money</li> <li>■ Increased revenues across all sectors and building customer loyalty</li> <li>■ Providing internet and Heritage Trail will encourage dwell time in the town</li> </ul>

## ***Improve the availability of good staff***

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<b>Projects/Activities</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work with UHI North, West and Hebrides to identify training offered to local businesses</li> <li>■ Liaise with the Developing the Young Workforce team to highlight gaps in the market and requirements from employers and then match students with vacancies</li> <li>■ Liaise with the Job Centre and Citizen's Advice Bureau to identify ways of bringing people back into work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in numbers of students on specific courses</li> <li>■ Presentations at schools and events</li> <li>■ Meetings with Job Centre and Citizen's Advice Bureau</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase the pool of local talent</li> <li>■ Providing good trained staff to local businesses</li> <li>■ Keeping local young people in the area</li> <li>• Giving locals the opportunity to learn and increase their capabilities</li> <li>■ Bringing people back into work</li> </ul>

## ***Work with public bodies to ensure we receive our fair share of infrastructure investment***

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<b>Projects/Activities</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work with The Highland Council, Scottish Government, Highlands &amp; Islands Enterprise, MSPs, our local MP and other public bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Meetings with public bodies and public servants to highlight investment issues in the BID area and ask for support to rectify them</li> <li>■ Keep on top of The Highland Council, Police Scotland and other bodies to ensure they are delivering the statutory services they are legally obliged to provide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fort William and Lochaber receives it's fair share of infrastructure investment</li> <li>■ Statutory services are delivered for the public good</li> <li>■ Good relationship with the authorities will benefit the area as things will get done</li> </ul>

## Improve the attractiveness of the back of the town from the A82

Projects/Activities	Measurement	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work with The Highland Council and owners of properties</li> <li>■ Implementation of a Property Improvement Grant</li> <li>■ Working with local groups and Transport Scotland on traffic matters</li> <li>■ Provide cash support for street improvements</li> <li>■ Work with Transport Scotland to identify locations to plant trees along the A82</li> <li>■ Increase seating along the waterfront</li> <li>■ Annual Cleaner Fort William plan and implementation between THC, FWTT and BID to identify specific areas/places to tidy up &amp; make good for summer</li> <li>■ Support local groups such as FWTT, FOOF, FWMSCIC, FWFF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Numbers of applications for the Property Improvement Grant</li> <li>■ Using the BID social media platforms to give up to date information regarding traffic matters such as roadworks, accidents etc</li> <li>■ Numbers of applications for the street improvements fund</li> <li>■ Planting of trees along A82</li> <li>■ More seats along the waterfront</li> <li>■ Number of business identified eyesores are tidied up</li> <li>■ More flower displays and new lights added to range each year</li> <li>■ Turnout and better Christmas Lights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Back of Fort William being improved visually to the passing traffic on the A82</li> <li>■ Reducing the traffic issues experienced in the BID area</li> <li>■ Increase the awareness of traffic problems</li> <li>■ Improved look of the High Street</li> <li>■ A more aesthetically pleasing A82</li> <li>■ Providing seating will encourage folk to spend longer in the town</li> <li>■ Significantly enhanced look to Fort William working under a</li> <li>■ co-ordinated and financed plan</li> </ul>

## Create more events to bring locals into the town centre

Projects/Activities	Measurement	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce or an umbrella group and identify events that are being held</li> <li>■ Promote a year round programme of events</li> <li>■ Provide grant support to new and regular events</li> <li>■ Fort William Events Support grant Scheme supporting locally led events and BID led events</li> <li>■ Supporting an Annual Arts Festival with local business such as Gallery in the Fort</li> <li>■ Create a partnership with Shiel Buses to improve connections between the town centre and local attractions</li> <li>■ Review the potential of the existing Street Market</li> <li>■ Investigate BID led Food &amp; Drink Week</li> <li>■ Investigate options for greater use of King George V Park</li> <li>■ Annual Science Festival featuring the STEM centre</li> <li>■ Reinstate events such as the Lochaber Highland Games, 10 under the Ben, tri-athlon</li> <li>■ Promotion of shinty matches and football matches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identify how these events can be replicated to encourage people into the town in off season</li> <li>■ Identify spill-off events to be held in the Parade and Cameron Square when big events happening elsewhere in Lochaber</li> <li>■ Local events receiving funding support</li> <li>■ New product in place with town centre businesses working in close co-operation with the key destination businesses around Fort William</li> <li>■ Increase in attendance at supported events</li> <li>■ More bus links to events and town centre and local attractions such as Aonach Mor, Glenfinnan Viaduct, Glencoe etc</li> <li>■ Number of applications to reinstate events or create new ones</li> <li>■ Increased use of Cameron Square – the public entertainment space in Fort William</li> <li>■ Headcount take up of offers and bus passenger numbers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More footfall in shoulder / winter months</li> <li>■ More co-ordinated approach to event development and more events around the year</li> <li>■ Events take place with strengthening organiser groups, increased attendance and awareness of events</li> <li>■ Reputation of Fort William as a town where there is always something going on</li> <li>■ Wider spread of business across the year</li> <li>■ Better transport connections with local attractions and events</li> <li>■ More events going on to attract people into the town</li> <li>■ Connect outer big businesses with town centre businesses and increase spend</li> </ul>

## ***Make the A82 fit for purpose***

<b>Projects/Activities</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carry out lobbying for A82 improvements with local MSPs, MP, Transport Scotland, BEAR Scotland, FW2040, etc</li> <li>■ Identifying improvements to the A82 within the BID area and pushing for them to be carried out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Being informed when any roadworks are being planned in the area</li> <li>■ Improvements being actioned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased information regarding proposed roadworks for locals and visitors alike</li> <li>■ Improved transport and access through the BID area</li> </ul>

## **Measuring the Success of the BID**

Throughout the lifetime of the BID, all work on the BID projects will be monitored to ensure the projects proposed in the BID Business Plan achieve a high level of impact and are progressing to the satisfaction of the businesses that voted for the BID.

The BID Board of Directors will monitor and oversee the efficient delivery of the BID projects.

The BID will undergo an independent evaluation and or Assessment and Accreditation Interim Review (AAIR) of its activities at the halfway point and towards the end of the first term. The AAIR:

- Is a bespoke review which recognises and accords with the Scottish BIDs legislation and the public and private sector environment in Scotland
- Gives confidence to businesses and the Board of Directors that the practices of the BID Company are robust and accord with good practice and
- Supplies an audit trail to support any future evaluation of the BID Company.

In developing the AAIR, a consultation was undertaken with,

- Key stakeholders and organisations
- Key UK national businesses
- The Scottish Retail Consortium; and reviewed existing assessment and accreditation frameworks, including existing documents used to assess BID Proposals in the UK, to identify key lessons.

The AAIR is recommended by Scotland's Improvement Districts (SIDs) as good practice and is included as one of the good practice elements of any Scottish BID Proposal and BID Business Plan.

## **Estimated Income and Expenditure**

There are circa 345 eligible properties located within the BID area (this figure may change as businesses move, expand or close). The BID levy income is calculated to be approximately £180,600.00 per annum.

Current Scottish collection rates for the BID levy are reported to be standing at 95%. With this in mind, an amount has been set aside in the budget under 'contingency' to allow for any bad debt.

The improvement levy will make it easier to obtain other sources of funding for specific projects and these opportunities will be pursued. The BID aims to attract other investment, sponsorship and trading income to increase the amount available to spend on your projects as they develop. Funds will be sought from but not restricted to Community Regeneration Fund, Visit Scotland, LEADER, HIE, The BIG Lottery and Zero Waste Scotland.

As the BID progresses, more income will be attracted, and this will be invested in improving the town centre for the benefit of the businesses and local community.





# Fort William BID Projected Income and Expenditure

Income	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	TOTAL
BID LEVY	£180,600	£187,824	£195,336	£203,150	£211,276	£978,186
OPT-IN MEMBERSHIP FUNDING	£5,000	£5,200	£5,408	£5,624	£5,850	£27,081
<b>INCOME TOTAL</b>	<b>£185,600</b>	<b>£193,024</b>	<b>£200,744</b>	<b>£208,774</b>	<b>£217,126</b>	<b>£1005,268</b>
EXPENDITURE	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	TOTAL
SHOPPING LOCALLY	£15,000	£15,600	£16,224	£16,873	£17,548	£81,245
RECRUITMENT	£2,000	£2,080	£2,163	£2,250	£2,340	£10,833
INVESTMENT	£5,000	£5,200	£5,408	£5,624	£5,849	£27,081
ATTRACTIVENESS	£60,000	£62,400	£64,896	£67,492	£70,192	£324,980
EVENTS	£35,000	£36,400	£37,856	£39,370	£40,945	£189,571
ACCESS	£3,000	£3,120	£3,245	£3,375	£3,510	£16,250
MANAGEMENT	£58,179	£60,506	£62,926	£65,443	£68,061	£315,115
CONTINGENCY	£7,421	£7,718	£8,026	£8,347	£8,681	£40,193
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£185,600</b>	<b>£193,024</b>	<b>£200,744</b>	<b>£208,774</b>	<b>£217,126</b>	<b>£1,005,268</b>

The Opt-in Membership Funding is currently not secured or committed by others. Therefore, in the event any or all of this funding is not realised then the scope of some of the projects outlined will be adjusted correspondingly, to ensure that they remain within budget.

# **Financial Management Arrangements**

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Once the BID is operational, any variations within budgets will be reported to the BID Board of Directors.

The Board will agree on an annual basis how funds for subsequent years will be allocated. This will be based on business feedback during the previous year and the priorities for the coming year, which allows the BID the flexibility to respond to changing business needs and requirements.

The Highland Council will collect the levy payments on behalf of the BID and will retain these funds in a separate account until the BID Board calls these funds down. The BID Board will manage the levy funds that are collected by the Council. This arrangement will ensure that projects are delivered, and any financial liabilities of the BID are transparent.

## **Collection of the BID Levy**

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The Highland Council will collect the investment levy on behalf of the BID, as this will be an efficient, safe and cost-effective method of collection. The Highland Council will lodge the levy within a BID Revenue Account. The BID levy can only be drawn down by the Board of Directors of the BID to allow the delivery of the business plan.

The BID Revenue Account and levy cannot be accessed by The Highland Council nor can it be used by the Council as an additional source of income.

## **Enforcement**

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In the event of any non-payment of the BID improvement levy, it will be strongly pursued by The Highland Council (as the billing body) using the recovery powers available to the Council to ensure complete fairness to all the businesses that have paid. The Highland Council will be entitled to charge an additional fee to the levy amount to meet any additional costs incurred in the recovery of the levy.

# The Voting Process

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## ***Pre-Ballot***

The BID Proposer must submit, at least 98 days in advance of the ballot date, the BID Proposals to the Local Authority, the Scottish Ministers and the billing body along with a letter detailing their intention to put the BID Proposals to ballot. Under legislation the prescribed local authority BID Proposal veto period, is 70 days prior to the day of the ballot. The local authority is required, under legislation, to notify the BID proposers and the Scottish Government, in writing, if the authority is or is not vetoing the BID proposals. A 'Notice of Ballot' will be issued at least 42 days before the day of ballot. The BID Proposer will make available a copy of the BID Proposal to any person, who is eligible to vote on the BID Proposals, who requests a copy.

## ***The Ballot***

- Ballot papers will be posted to the eligible person responsible for casting a vote within their business at least 42 days before the day ballot. In the case of national companies, the responsibility for voting may lie with head office.
- Prior to or on the date the ballot papers are issued the BID Proposer will provide to all those eligible to vote in the ballot, with a copy of the BID Business Plan.
- The BID ballot is a confidential postal ballot conducted by The Highland Council on behalf of Fort William BID and in accordance with Scottish BID legislation.
- Where an eligible property is vacant the voting papers will be sent to the property owner.
- In Fort William BID case, voting papers will be issued no later than 10/10/2024.
- The last date for all ballot papers to be returned is 5pm on 21/11/2024. Papers received after this date and time will be deemed null and void and not be counted.
- Voting papers are easy to complete, simply place a cross on either "yes" or "no" to the question "are you in favour of a BID?" The ballot paper must then be signed by the person eligible to vote and returned in the pre-paid envelope.
- Some eligible persons may receive more than one ballot paper. Each ballot paper should be completed, signed and returned in its pre-paid envelope.
- For the ballot to be successful there must be a minimum turnout of 25% (the headcount) by number of eligible persons and by combined rateable value; and of those who turnout, the majority must vote in favour by number and rateable value.
- All eligible persons (i.e., those persons liable to pay non-domestic rates) will have one vote or where a person is liable for non-domestic rates for more than one property, that individual shall be eligible to cast more than one vote however they will be required to pay the levy for each of the properties that they occupy.
- The ballot papers will be counted on 22/11/2024 and the results announced by The Highland Council within one week.
- Following a successful ballot, the BID will commence on 01/12/2024 and will run for a period of five years until 30/11/2029.

# Management of the BID

Following a successful ballot, the management and operation of the BID will be transferred to a not-for-profit limited liability company i.e. A Company Limited by Guarantee and Not Having a Share Capital which will operate from 01/12/2024.

The Company will be managed by the BID Steering Group until a Board of Directors is elected, but for no longer than three months after the ballot date. The Company will operate in an open and transparent way, answerable to the businesses in the area. The Board of Directors will ensure that a Code of Conduct (including a Register of Interests) and Management and Governance will be created and agreed as policy by the Directors. There will be a detailed set of protocols (the Operating Agreement) which will cover, as well as other items, the billing, collection and transfer of the levy to the BID Company.

A Board of Directors will be established, consisting of up to 12 directors. Every eligible person that pays the levy will have the opportunity to nominate themselves or someone else from within the BID area to be elected to the Company Board but limited to one eligible person from each eligible property. The new Company will be run by the businesses for the businesses. This Board will be responsible for all decisions relating to staff, contracts, the delivery of the approved business plan and other activities generated by the BID.

Nominations of directors, non-voting representatives or advisors from outside the BID, who do not pay the levy and who may or may not represent those making voluntary or other financial contributions toward the BID, will be strictly at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors will recruit 1 part-time BID manager and 1 full-time communications and administrative assistant to ensure the efficient delivery of the projects and effective communications with the levy payers.

The Board will be representative of the businesses and stakeholders in the area. The Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer will be elected from the directors of the Board. The Board will include 1 representative from The Highland Council. Other non-voting members or local groups may be co-opted onto the Board at the Board's discretion.

The BID Company Board will have the authority to adapt or alter the projects and services from year to year to reflect any change in economic circumstances or any new opportunities that may arise. This will be in the best interests of the levy payers and without recourse to an alteration ballot.

Additionally, the BID Company Board reserve the right to consider creating a charitable arm of the company to enable it to secure additional funding, which can only be sourced with charitable status.

# Marketing, Communications and Social Media

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To ensure openness and transparency in the management of the BID company, following a successful ballot, the Steering Group have agreed the BID Business Plan should include, but not limited to; – one to one business engagement, business briefings, social media engagement, newsletters (for those businesses preferring hard copy information or with no access to IT), press releases, business forums, business networking meetings etc.

Additionally, the following information is to be displayed on the Fort William BID website:

- The current BID business plan
- The annual accounts
- The BID ballot result
- The contact details for the BID manager and other staff members
- The names of BID board members and either the name of their business or the sector they represent
- BID board governance structure with specific reference to how decisions are agreed and actioned
- Details of director meetings the agenda and minutes – abridged where necessary
- The methods levy payers can provide feedback to the BID e.g., AGM and/or other regular meetings
- An annual report detailing the BIDs the projects/services/initiatives delivered and the cost of each; and the Fort William BID achievements and the value the BID provides to levy papers

# BID Development Steering Group

The BID Steering Group is made up from a cross section of the business community in the area and includes one locally elected councillor. The Steering Group provides direction to the development of the BID and BID development staff. Advice is also given by 2 Council officers. Ultimately all key decisions relating to the developing BID have been taken by the BID Steering Group, who are as follows:



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## Contact Information

If you would like more information, please visit our website [www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk](http://www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk) or contact the Project Manager by telephone, e-mail or make an appointment to see them.



### Mark MacLean

BID Project Manager

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# Fort William succeeds if you vote

# YES



## Key dates:

Postal ballot opens 3rd October 2024  
Postal ballot closes 21st November 2024

## Let's not miss our chance – Vote for the BID

# FORT WILLIAM BID

Business Plan 1st December 2024 – 30th November 2029

