

The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee – 9 December 2013

Agenda Item	7
Report No	CIA/65/13

Inverness & Loch Ness Tourism Business Improvement District

Report by City Manager

Summary

This report outlines the importance of tourism to Inverness and Loch Ness and describes the proposals to create a Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) to develop tourism in the area.

It follows on from Report CIA/14/13 by the Director of Planning and Development to this Committee on 15 April 2013.

This activity contributes to delivering the “Working Together for The Highlands” commitment “Working with the Scottish Government, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and private sector partners, the Council will maximise the tourism potential of the Highland Area.”

The Committee is invited to endorse the TBID Business Plan and to agree to recommend to Council that support is given for the creation of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism Business Improvement District.

1. Introduction – Tourism in Inverness and Loch Ness

- 1.1 Tourism is identified as one of Scotland's key growth sectors in the Government's Economic Strategy and is one of the most important industries for the Highlands. Latest full year figures (2012) show overnight tourism in the wider Inverness, Loch Ness and Nairn area is worth £245m per annum.
- 1.2 The area already has some good examples of collaboration, notably around Loch Ness. Destination Loch Ness (DLN), established in 2006, is one of the most successful Destination Management Organisations in Scotland whose goal has been to improve the visitor experience at Loch Ness through 'on the ground' infrastructure improvements and by better marketing.
- 1.3 A Tourism Business Improvement District for the Inverness and Loch Ness area would, as well as improving integration, create a sustainable organisation to undertake tourism activity.
- 1.4 The Inverness City Ward Management Team, assisted by the Councils Tourism Co-ordinator, has been advising local Tourism Business Leaders on the development of a Tourism sector BID for the City and Landward Area. Inverness BID has also been assisting.

2. A Tourism BID for Inverness & Loch Ness

- 2.1 A Tourism Business Improvement District (Tourism BID) is a private sector-led initiative where businesses, within a clearly defined geographical area, work together, invest and collectively deliver projects over an agreed period (no more than 5 years) that will have an impact on their area. The money raised is ring-fenced for the use of the BID Company to deliver the projects and services as detailed in their Business Plan. A Tourism BID also ensures that everyone that benefits also contributes.
- 2.2 In the UK and Ireland there are currently 135 BIDs. In Scotland there are 19 established BIDs with a further 17 being developed. Of the 17 in development, 2 are Tourism BIDs and they are being developed for and for ***Inverness and Loch Ness*** and ***Lochaber***. The Highlands are therefore in the vanguard of Tourism BID development.
- 2.3 With a Tourism BID the focus will be on activities that increase tourism visits and spend. This could include area marketing and promotion but a Tourism BID can also improve the tourism environment of the area and the health of tourism businesses.
- 2.4 As with any other BID, Tourism BID projects do not replace statutory services that are already provided by the Council or other public bodies. However, local government, along with other agencies, play a major role in working alongside BIDs and a Tourism BID will need to enter into agreements with organisations such as the Highland Council, VisitScotland, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Canals to ensure all services the Tourism BID provides will be additional.
- 2.5 A Steering Group composed of Inverness and Loch Ness business members is currently undertaking the development work necessary for creating a Tourism BID for Inverness and Loch Ness. The Steering Group and its activities have been supported with funding from BIDs Scotland (the national organisation for BIDs in Scotland and delivering the Scottish Government's BID programme), the Highland Council and HIE.
- 2.6 Members of the Steering Group, along with the TBID project manager and TBID project administrator have consulted with businesses in the Tourism BID area through a business questionnaire, public events, presentations to business groups and through one to one meetings. Responses from these have been used in developing their draft business plan (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.7 Once the final business plan has been produced it will be put to a ballot involving all the eligible businesses in the proposed Tourism BID area. If the majority of those who vote cast a 'Yes' vote then all eligible businesses contribute towards it. A Tourism BID can only proceed if 1) there is a minimum 25% "turn out" by the total number of businesses eligible to vote, and 2) of those who vote, over 50% must vote in favour and they must represent more than 50% of the rateable value in the Tourism BID area.

- 2.8 The Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID Steering Group formally notified the Council on 4th October of their intention to go to ballot.
- 2.9 The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, Part 9 – Business Improvement Districts, gives the Council the Power of Veto over a BID proposal and the Council is required to consider a BID proposal within a prescribed period (70 days before the day of the ballot) and give notice that it is or is not going to veto the proposal. The circumstances when a local authority can exercise its veto are prescribed in the Act and the Business Improvement Districts (Scotland) Regulations 2007.
- 2.10 A report by the Director of Planning & Development was presented to the Planning, Environment and Development Committee on 6th November with the recommendation that the Council should not exercise its right to veto but this was qualified by agreeing a process by which any changes to the proposal would be considered. The Committee approved this recommendation.

3. Relationship with Inverness City Centre BID

- 3.1 It is important to note that the activities of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID are not intended to duplicate any of the work currently carried out by Inverness BID and indeed the Inverness City centre area is excluded from the Tourism BID area which ensures that businesses in the City Centre (who are members of the existing BID) do not pay two levies. The anticipated goals and objectives for the Tourism BID as set out in their Business Plan differ from those being delivered by Inverness BID, while the area which the Tourism BID will cover is also very much larger than that of the City Centre BID reflecting the fact that the majority of tourism businesses are located outside the City Centre.
- 3.2 However, there will be synergies with the work undertaken by Inverness BID and the possibility of undertaking joint initiatives. These could include joint marketing and PR activity or joint working on events where a Tourism BID could assist in getting greater support from tourism businesses for, or involvement in, events such as those that form part of the Inverness festivals programme. The Tourism BID will also explore with Inverness BID the possibility of sharing some resources.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 A report will be taken to Highland Council on 19 December 2013 seeking support for the creation of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism Business Improvement District.
- 4.2 The postal ballot will be issued to all businesses who would become levy payers and members of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID on 30th January 2014 with the final day of the ballot being on 13 March 2014.
- 4.3 If the ballot returns a Yes vote in terms of the conditions outlined at 2.7 above an Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID company will be formed in

readiness to start trading from 1 April 2014.

4.4 A further report will be taken to this committee after that date regarding the implementation of the Tourism BID Business Plan.

5. Implications

5.1 There are no known Resource; Legal; Equalities; Climate Change; Carbon Clever or Risk implications arising directly as a result of this report.

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to:-

- i. endorse the Tourism BID Business Plan; and
- ii. agree to recommend to Council that support is given for the creation of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism Business Improvement District.

Designation: City Manager

Date: 12 November 2013

Authors: Colin Simpson, Tourism Co-ordinator, Planning & Development Service
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Background Papers: Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID draft Business Plan



**Inverness and Loch Ness
Tourism Business Improvement District
(Tourism BID)**

Business Plan (Draft)

April 1st 2014

March 31st 2019

www.LNITBID.co.uk

Background

Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID was formed in the belief that Inverness and Loch Ness are not two tourism destinations, but one, and that by working together we have the opportunity to maximise the strengths of both for the long term benefit of tourism in the area.

The Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID Steering Group was formed to develop the Tourism BID and oversee the transition into a new company following a successful ballot, at which stage a Board of Directors will be appointed. A YES vote will ensure that Inverness and Loch Ness work together as one tourism destination.

The Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID Steering Group

Name	Business	Sector
Graeme Ambrose	Hazelgrove Cottage, Inverfarigaig	Self-catering
Elizabeth Mackintosh	Achmony Holiday Chalets, Drumnadrochit	Self-catering
Nicol Manson	The Waterside Hotel, Inverness	Hotel,
Dorothy MacLean	The Thistle Hotel, Inverness	Hotel,
Mike Dunthorne	Boots n Paddles, Kirkhill	Activity Provider
Victoria Erasmus	Glen Mhor Hotel, Inverness	Hotel
Rosie Wylie	Historic Scotland,	Visitor Attraction
Russell Thomson/ Keith Mackie	Scottish Canals,	Scottish Canals,
Bob Kenyon	St Ann's Guest House, Inverness	Guest House
Marina Huggett	Tourism Excellency Consultancy, Tourism Training, Inverness	Tourism Training,
Claire Christie	Morag's Lodge, Fort Augustus	Hostel
Garry Sutherland	Highland Free Spirits, Loch Ness	Cruise Provider
James Martin	Inverness Leisure , Inverness	Leisure Provider
Lynda Johnston	Highlands and Islands Airport Ltd	Transport
Graeme Prest	Forestry Commission, Scotland	Forestry Commission, Scotland

Foreword from the Steering Group of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID

We are delighted to present the Business Plan for Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism Business Improvement District (BID). The Tourism BID is led by tourism businesses for tourism businesses and delivers a financially sustainable model which, in partnership with statutory authorities, will drive forward tourism in the area for years to come, raising the quality of visitor experience and growing the value of tourism to the local economy. The Tourism BID will fund and deliver projects and activities that are at the core of tourism development - marketing, business development, improvements in the tourism infrastructure as well as supporting new and existing sustainable events and festivals and advocating on local issues that matter to tourism businesses.

The Tourism BID being proposed for Inverness and Loch Ness (excluding the Inverness City Centre BID area) represents an exciting opportunity for the area because it will for the first time capitalise on the benefits of Inverness and Loch Ness working together as one destination. For a number of years Loch Ness has had the benefit of Destination Loch Ness, one of the most successful Destination Management Organisations in Scotland, who have worked hard to market and promote the area and improve the tourism infrastructure. But, the success of Loch Ness is inextricably linked to that of Inverness and equally the success of Inverness depends on Loch Ness which is why a successful Tourism BID will lead to the dissolution of DLN and the establishment of a new organisation.

This really is an exciting opportunity for Inverness & Loch Ness and we hope very much that tourism businesses that will be part of a successful Tourism BID will see it in this light and vote in favour of establishing the Tourism BID at the ballot, the result of which will be known on March 14th 2014

You can find more information on our website www.LNITBID.co.uk, or for more general or national information refer to www.bids-scotland.com. The ballot papers will be posted out to all businesses on 30th January 2014 and you will have six weeks to cast your vote before the ballot closes at 5pm on 13th March 2014.

The Steering Group,

Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID

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What is a Business Improvement District?

A Business Improvement District (BID)* or, as in the instance of Inverness and Loch Ness, a Tourism Business Improvement District (Tourism BID), is defined as a private-sector led initiative where businesses, within a clearly defined geographical area, work together, invest and collectively deliver projects that will make an impact on their area over an agreed period (no more than 5 years). The money raised is ring-fenced for the use of the Tourism BID Company to deliver the projects and services as detailed in the Business Plan. A Tourism BID for Inverness and Loch Ness also ensures that everyone that benefits will also contribute to the success of the initiative.

Over the past few years, the popularity of BIDs in the UK has grown at a phenomenal rate. In the UK and Ireland there are currently 163 BIDs. In Scotland there are 20 established BIDs with a further 20 being developed. The Tourism BID for Inverness and Loch Ness is one of only two Tourism BIDs presently being developed, and is therefore leading the way in what is possible if tourism businesses come together in a spirit of collaboration to drive improvements in their destination which will benefit their businesses.

*For more information on BIDs see <http://www.bids-scotland.com/>

Who is included and who is not in the Tourism BID?

There are 363 businesses included in the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID. Aside from whether-or-not a business is in the designated geographical area covered by the Tourism BID (see next section) there are two other criteria that determine who is in and who is not. The first is that only businesses, as detailed on the Highland Council Valuation Roll by the local Assessor, in the sectors listed in the table below are included. (The only exceptions to this are public sector bodies offering tourism services in premises not categorised in any of these sectors, who are also included.)

Airport	Harbour
Bowling Alley	Heritage Centre
Bunkhouse	Hostel
Caravan Park	Hotel
Caravan Site	Ice Rink
Caravan and Camping Site	Inn
Castle and Visitor Centre	Marina
Castle	Outdoor Centre
Chalets	Public House and Restaurant
Cinema	Restaurant
Distillery	Swimming Baths
Exclusive Use	Self Catering
Garden Centre	Theatre
Golf Club and Clubhouse	Tourist Information Centre
Golf Course	Visitor Centre
Guest House	Youth Hostel

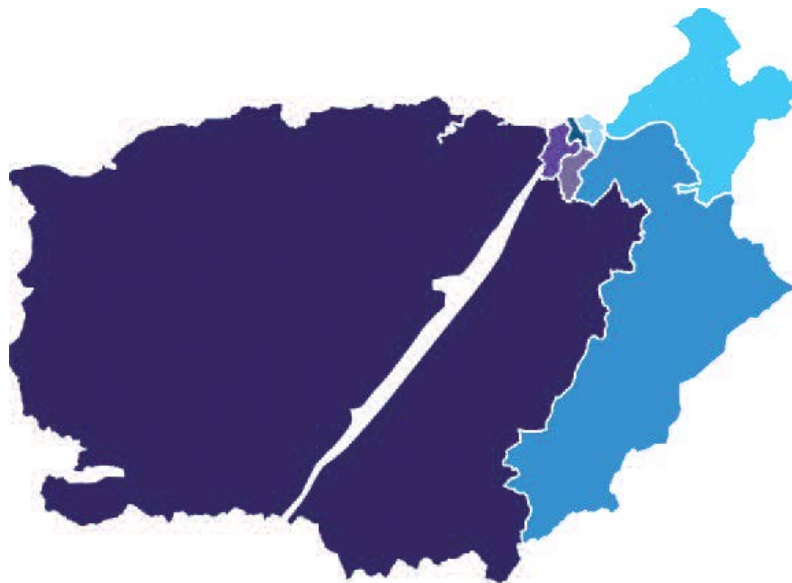
The other basis for inclusion is that only businesses with a non-domestic rateable value of £2,000 or above are included. This means that businesses without a non-domestic rateable value or those which are below the £2,000 threshold are exempt from paying the levy. However, they can if they so wish 'Opt-In' by paying an annual fee and become a non-levy paying stakeholder.

Only businesses included in the Tourism BID are liable to pay the levy, vote on the Business Plan and therefore whether-or-not to agree to the establishment of a Tourism BID company to deliver the Business Plan.

What area will the Tourism BID cover?

The Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID will encompass the geographical area that is covered by Highland Council Wards 13 (Aird & Loch Ness), 14 (Inverness West), 16 (Inverness Ness-Side), 17 (Inverness Millburn), 18 (Culloden and Ardersier) and 20 (Inverness South).

Ward 15 (Inverness Central – excluding the area already covered by Inverness City Centre BID will also be included. It is important to emphasise that businesses who are members of the Inverness BID will not pay two levies.



Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID area comprising of:

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Abriachan | Croy | Foyers | Lewiston |
| Ardersier | Culloden | Glenmoriston | Lochend |
| Balloch | Culloden Moor | Gollanfield | Lochgarthside |
| Balnain | Dalchreichart | Inchmore | Milton of Leys |
| Beauly | Dalcross | Inshes Wood | Moy |
| Blairbeg | Daviot | Inverarnie | Newlands |
| Bunchrew | Dochfour | Inverfarigaig | Piperhill |
| Bunloit | Dochgarroch | Invermoriston | Slachbuie |
| Cannich | Dores | Inverness | Smithton |
| Cawdor | Drumnadrochit | Kilmorack | Tomatin |
| Clachnaharry | Dundreggan | Kiltarlity | Westhill |
| Clephanton | Errogie | Kinmylies | Whitebridge |
| Cradlehall | Farr | Kirkhill | |
| Croachy | Fort Augustus | Lentran | |

Why does Inverness and Loch Ness need a Tourism BID?

Tourism is identified as one of Scotland's key growth sectors in the Government's Economic Strategy and is one of the most important industries for the Highlands. Latest full year figures (2012) show overnight tourism in the wider Inverness, Loch Ness and Nairn area is worth £245m per annum. More detailed figures for the City of Inverness show revenue to the city of over £133m with a fifth of this being indirect spend which benefits other sectors throughout the supply chain.

Tourism is an industry involving many players from both the public and private sectors and businesses of all sizes. 2012 saw the launch of a new National Tourism Strategy led and developed by the tourism industry which recognised that if we are really to improve tourism it needs collaboration across the industry. It is also a sector that has shown some degree of resilience through the UK economic recession. It supports other sectors and plays a part in increasing the profile of Inverness which in turn enhances the city's position as one of Scotland's 7 cities and helps attract inward investment.

Since 2006 Destination Loch Ness (DLN) has worked successfully to more effectively market and promote Loch Ness, improve the tourism infrastructure and encourage business development. However, due to lack of resource it has always been limited in what it can achieve. On the other hand, Inverness city has the resource but has never had a similar organisation covering all tourism sectors. Instead a number of sectoral groups exist – for example, Inverness Hotels, Inverness District B&B Association and Inverness Guest House Association which although effective in their own right, operate in isolation. As a result neither Loch Ness nor Inverness has been able to maximise their tourism potential. The synergy created by working together as one destination and drawing on the strengths of Inverness and Loch Ness, will change this. It will result in a destination much more able to compete with other tourism destinations elsewhere in Scotland and the UK as a whole. Indeed, it is our belief that the Tourism BID has the potential to create one of the most attractive places to visit in the UK outside of Edinburgh and London. The iconic attraction of Loch Ness coupled with the vibrant social and cultural centre of Inverness, the only city in the Highlands, is a powerful combination made all the greater by the fact that it is surrounded by the 'great outdoors'. We know from research that the Highlands are very high on any visitor journey to Scotland and by establishing the Tourism BID for Inverness and Loch Ness we will create one sustainable organisation which will grow the value of tourism to local businesses and the local economy.

What happens if there is no Tourism BID?

With the Tourism BID we have the opportunity to invest in excess of £1 million with a potential to lever more from other sources over the next 5 years in targeted projects and activities that will improve our tourism industry. Without the establishment of a Tourism BID and the combined investment by the private sector and public sector in the development of tourism, Inverness and Loch Ness will fail to compete effectively with other destinations both in Scotland, elsewhere in the UK and internationally and as a result tourism businesses will be unable to fully maximise their potential.

What happens if there is no Tourism BID? (cont'd)

- We will lose a great opportunity to market and promote Inverness and Loch Ness as one Destination
- There will be no dedicated resource working in partnership with other organisations to increase conference and business tourism for Inverness and Loch Ness
- There will be less promotion and support of existing and new sustainable events
- There will be lost opportunity of investment in the tourism infrastructure
- There will be no continuation and development of the Loch Ness business and community extranet, Nesslink, to include Inverness
- There will be less opportunities for business development
- There will be no single unified voice representing the interests of all tourism businesses

What can the Tourism BID do for my business?

By working together as one destination the Tourism BID will be able to:

- Increase visitor numbers
- Increase length of stay
- Increase visitor spend
- Help sustainability of tourism businesses
- Create jobs
- Improve the visitor experience

To achieve these goals, the Tourism BID will deliver the following objectives:-

- Improved destination marketing locally and nationally.
- Attract more conferences and business tourism to the area all year round
- Promote and support existing and new sustainable events and festivals
- Improvements in tourism infrastructure including the physical surroundings, facilities and services
- Business development through a range of activities and business opportunities
- A strong lobbying voice on local and national tourism issues that matter to local businesses

How do we know that this is what businesses want?

A key part of developing the proposed Tourism BID Business Plan for Inverness and Loch Ness involved consulting extensively with the tourism businesses. In April 2013, 798 questionnaires were sent out to all tourism businesses (including those below the £2,000 non-domestic rate threshold) within the proposed Tourism BID area and we were pleased to receive 165 responses. Of the 165 responses 40% were from businesses that are above the threshold. Of this 40%, 83% said that they were in favour of the Tourism BID, 10% said maybe, 1% no and there was no response from 6%. The responses from all 165 questionnaires returned were analysed and the findings were set out in the Summary Document which was sent out to all businesses. The Summary Document outlined what issues were important to businesses and the full results are available at www.LNITBID.co.uk

We have also spoken face to face with *128 businesses and held a number of open meetings. The results from both questionnaire and consultations provided additional information to help us develop the goals and objectives contained within this Tourism BID Business Plan and also

established the need for the Tourism BID with *82 of those interviewed face to face indicating they were in favour and very likely to vote yes, *41 saying maybe and only *5 saying no.

*These figures will be updated for the final version of the plan

How will the Tourism BID work with the local authority and other public agencies?

The Tourism BID projects and activities do not replace statutory services that are already provided by Highland Council and other public bodies. However, the Council along with other agencies will play a major role in working alongside the Tourism BID and the Tourism BID has agreed baseline service agreements with the following organisations to ensure business owners that the levy payment will be used for **additional** projects which the businesses voted for in the Tourism BID ballot. Additionally, baseline agreements avoid the risk that public agencies including Highland Council will reduce its current statutory level of service to the Tourism BID area following a successful ballot

The Highland Council	Forestry Commission, Scotland	Scottish Canals	HIE
Historic Scotland	Scottish Natural Heritage	VisitScotland	

How will the Tourism BID work with Inverness BID?

It is important to emphasise that the Tourism BID will not duplicate any of the work currently carried out by Inverness BID, nor will any businesses in the city centre (who are members of the Inverness BID) pay two levies. The anticipated goals and objectives for the Tourism BID, as set out in this Business Plan, differ from those being delivered by Inverness BID. The area which the Tourism BID will cover is also very much larger than that of Inverness BID reflecting the fact that the majority of tourism businesses are located outside the city centre.

However, there are synergies with the some of the work undertaken by Inverness BID and there is therefore the possibility to undertake joint initiatives which will not only be more cost effective but also deliver greater benefit to all businesses. These could include joint marketing and PR activity or events where the Tourism BID could bring greater tourism support for or involvement in, events such as those already covered by Inverness city centre BID and those that form part of the Inverness Festivals programme.

The Tourism BID will also explore with Inverness BID the possibility of sharing resources such as office space and administration thus reducing the organisational costs of both.

Objectives and Projects

Based on the feedback from the Questionnaire and extensive consultation with the tourism businesses, six key objectives and associated projects have been identified. These are outlined below.

Objective 1: The Marketing and Promotion of Inverness and Loch Ness as one destination

Project	Activity	Measurement of success	Benefit to Business
Online marketing	<p>Branding of Inverness and Loch Ness as one destination and creation of a new portal website</p> <p>Production of promotional video for Inverness and Loch Ness</p> <p>Social media development, maximising use of all appropriate channels on daily basis</p> <p>E mail marketing which builds on the existing database of DLN, to introduce a planned and consistent e mail marketing campaign which provides incentives to visit the area in the shoulder and winter months</p>	<p>Online web statistics including unique visits to website, 'click throughs' to T BID business websites</p> <p>Online web and social media statistics</p> <p>Social media stats including number of facebook 'likes', number of blogs and 'tweets'</p> <p>Online web stats including number of e mail bulletins that are opened by recipients</p>	<p>Increased bookings, increased number of visitors, potential increased length of stay and level of spend</p> <p>Increased bookings, increased number of visitors, potential increased length of stay and level of spend</p> <p>Increased bookings, increased number of visitors, potential increased length of stay and level of spend</p> <p>Increased bookings, increased number of visitors in the shoulder and winter months</p>
Work in partnership with VisitScotland to maximise benefit from the 'themed years' and regional/national events	Specific , targeted marketing using combination of online activity, PR channels and traditional marketing tools such as attendance at consumer and trade shows	Including, online web stats, social media stats, press releases, media visits, items in targeted media,	Increased bookings, Increased number of visitors, increased length of stay, increased level of spend
'What's On' in Inverness & Loch Ness	Building on the success of DLN extranet 'Nesslink', produce online weekly 'What's on Guide' together with map of key attractions for businesses to print out for visitors.	Number of businesses who print out Map/What's On Guide	Improvement in visitor experience, more business and greater spend for restaurants, visitor attractions activity providers
Work with Inverness Airport to promote route development	Online promotion of key routes for incoming and outgoing traffic and other marketing initiatives in partnership with HIAL	Success of Inverness Airport in developing and maintaining new routes	Increased number of visitors to Inverness and Loch Ness
Photographic library	This activity will build on the photographic library already undertaken by DLN and Inverness Marketing Group	Resource of high quality stock images of all the T BID area	A marketing resource available to all businesses and local

			tourism organisations
'The Islands', Inverness	Producing marketing material to promote 'The Islands' in Inverness, and the surrounding leisure and visitor attractions which are particularly important to visitors for the 'wet weather' facilities that they provide	Feedback from the attractions and nearby businesses	Improvement in visitor experience, more business and greater spend for restaurants, visitor and leisure attractions.
Research	Conduct on- going market research to enable the Tourism BID to target marketing at key sectors and provide evidence of economic impact	Reports for businesses	Increase bookings, increased number of visitors and will provides useful information on which businesses can base their own marketing activity
Work with local tourism groups	Market and promote local events, share research data, promote local areas at trade/consumer events and if wish, work with on local initiatives	Level of engagement with local tourism groups	Shares benefit of increased marketing and promotion at local level

Objective 2: Attract more conferences and business tourism all year round

We will recruit a person, (initially on a part time contract but if justified, moving to full time dependent on budget), to work with partner organisations to attract more conferences and business tourism. This person will undertake the following:

Project	Activity	Measurement of Success	Benefit to Business
Market Inverness and Loch Ness as a conference and business tourism destination	<p>Research and compile summary of present offer in area. Develop a client database.</p> <p>Work in partnership with VisitScotland and other key organisations to ensure a dedicated Inverness presence at national and international events at which to promote the area for conferences and business tourism</p> <p>Work in partnership with key organisations and individuals to maximise potential conference opportunities and contacts</p> <p>Host familiarisation visits to promote the area to potential client groups</p>	<p>Increase in number of enquiries relating to business tourism.</p> <p>Inverness businesses have a similar level of representation at events as other Scottish cities.</p> <p>More conferences attracted to the area</p>	<p>Higher levels of occupancy, particularly in shoulder months.</p> <p>Increased spend in area for potentially all tourism sectors.</p> <p>A more proactive and co-ordinated approach to maximising potential from business tourism.</p> <p>Opportunities to maximise repeat business from future leisure visits by conference delegates.</p>

Objective 3: Promote and support existing and new sustainable events and festivals

Project	Activity	Measurement of Success	Benefit to Business
New sustainable events/festivals	Work with Highland Council, Event Scotland and other partners including event/festival providers to support and expand the range of new sustainable cultural, music and sporting events in and around Inverness and Loch Ness area.	Success in attracting new sustainable events	Increased bookings and increased number of visitors particularly in shoulder months, with increased spend in area over event/festival period
Promotion of new and existing events/festivals	Work with Highland Council and event/festival providers to promote events/festivals to as wide an audience as possible through online, and PR activity	Online statistics, new PR coverage of events, numbers of persons who enter 'participant' events	Increased bookings and increased number of visitors particularly in shoulder months, with increased spend in area over event period
Online booking of events/festivals	Expand and develop existing event ticket booking system, developed by DLN to incorporate more events /festivals	Tickets booked through the Tourism BID to events/festivals	Improved visitor experience as will be able to book event and accommodation etc. all through one website
Make available Tourism BID event booking system to businesses	Promote event booking system to members and assist if required with incorporating in to their own websites	Number of businesses who incorporate system in to their own websites	Improved visitor experience of business website,

Objective 4: Work with partners to improve the tourism infrastructure

Project	Activity	Measurement of success	Benefit to business
To improve the attractiveness of key viewpoints on the south side of Loch Ness through landscaping and improvements in access for people to the shores of the loch	There are five viewpoints that require action. In partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) we will clear dense overgrown vegetation, improve paths down to the shores, put in interpretation and picnic furniture'. We will also in partnership with FCS put in place a maintenance schedule	Increased usage of the viewpoints by visitors	Improvement in the visitor experience, not only from those accessing the shore by land but also from canoeists following the Great Glen Canoe Trail. It may also encourage visitors to stay longer in the area and spend more
To improve the visibility of Loch Ness on the north side along the A82 at selected 'safe' viewpoints	To be delivered in partnership with landowners, FCS and other key partners. Will involve detailed planning before felling and extracting trees around the selected viewpoints	Level of usage of cleared viewpoints by visitors	Improvement of the visitor experience encouraging visitors to stay longer in the area and spend more

Completion of the South Loch Ness Trail (SLNT) between Fort Augustus and Loch Tarff which in turn will create a circular trail around Loch Ness.	A major and complex project, this will be delivered in partnership with the landowner, Highland Council and a number of other partners. It involves creation of new trail over a distance of approximately 8km	Level of usage by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Number of users completing the SLNT as part of the 'circular trail' around Loch Ness taking in part of the Great Glen Way	Of the three infrastructure projects this has the greatest potential to deliver not only improvement in the visitor experience but also increased number of visitors, increased bookings, increased spend, increased length of stay in both Inverness and the Loch Ness area and create jobs
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Objective 5: Helping to grow your business

Project	Activity	Measurement of Success	Benefit to business
Use collective bargaining power of BIDs Scotland to offer costs savings to businesses	Working with businesses to maximise potential savings	Number of businesses benefiting	Reduced costs, improved margins
Provide opportunities for businesses to minimise their carbon footprint	Working with a locally based provider, the Tourism BID Accommodation Carbon Project will offer businesses the opportunity to benefit from this emerging issue	Number of businesses who take up the opportunity	Minimise carbon footprint, reduced costs, improved margins
Provide opportunities for businesses to participate in the World Host Programme	Enhancing customer skills and behaviours, the Tourism BID will be able to offer this to businesses at substantial discount	Number of businesses who take up the opportunity	Improved visitor experience Better trained staff Better work practises More competitive
Provide opportunities for businesses to learn from each other and guest speakers	The Tourism BID will organise a minimum of four networking opportunities per year at different venues throughout the Tourism BID area	Number of businesses who attend these events and feedback received	
Provide opportunities to participate in workshops on topics that will help them grow their business	The Tourism BID working with key partners will invite 'experts in their area' to lead on workshops/seminars that the businesses want	Number of businesses who attend these events and feedback received	
Extend business content of Nesslink	The Tourism BID will expand the 'member area' of Nesslink to include opportunities to share experiences and knowledge, keep up to date with research and 'What's Going on' in the industry	Number of businesses who use this extranet facility	

Market Research	Cascade down Market Research to businesses	Number of businesses who indicate have taken or used research	More competitive Increased bookings Increased level of spend
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Objective 6: A strong voice for Inverness and Loch Ness

There is a real need for Inverness and Loch Ness to have one strong voice to lobby on local and national issues that are of concern to tourism businesses. The Tourism BID will be this voice. At a local level the feedback from the questionnaire and one to one consultations has highlighted that you feel strongly on issues such as car parking in Inverness, a lack of public transport to and from tourism attractions and key tourism facilities on the periphery and out with the environs of Inverness, and on the issue of the present use of Inverness Castle. At a national level, dualling of the A9 and A96, better rail transport and better broadband. We will in tandem with partner organisations such as Inverness City Centre BID and the Chamber of Commerce pursue the case for change, change that will help to make businesses stronger and Inverness and Loch Ness as a destination more competitive nationally and internationally.

The Measures of Success of the Tourism BID projects will be monitored throughout the lifetime of the Tourism BID, to ensure the projects proposed in the Business Plan are achieving a high level of impact, and progressing to the satisfaction of the businesses that voted for the Tourism BID. In addition there will be a mid-term review of projects.

Objectives and Projects - More detail

To help you picture the potential, further details and background on some of the projects are provided.

Online Marketing:

Online marketing is one of the key projects of the Tourism BID. Feedback from the questionnaire clearly highlighted just how important to businesses it is with 93.9% of respondents rating is either ‘important’ or very ‘very important’. So just what will the Tourism BID do? As outlined above, one of the key activities will be to brand Inverness and Loch Ness as one destination and create a new portal website. This is a major activity and it is likely that it will take in to Year 2 to complete. In the meantime the DLN website www.visitlochness.com will be adapted to incorporate content from Inverness and its surrounds. When the portal site is complete the DLN website will close down.

All online activity will target audience segments in Scotland, England and the rest of the UK who are ‘warm’ (please see www.visitscotland.org/research_and_statistics/) to taking holidays in Scotland. This will mean there will be a strong focus on maximising the assets of our natural environment through promotion of outdoor activities such as cycling, walking and canoeing which are already core strengths of the area’s attractiveness. However, equally important to all our marketing activity, not just online, will be promotion of activities that help to increase visitor numbers and spend throughout the year – 96.3% of respondents to the Questionnaire rated this as ‘important’ or ‘very important’

The online activity will also ensure that all geographical areas that are part of the Tourism BID receive have the same opportunities to benefit from it whether it be, for example, through facebook, blogs or the website.

Working in partnership with VisitScotland:

The Tourism BID will work in partnership with VisitScotland to maximise the benefits to Inverness and Loch Ness of major national and regional events

However, as outlined under the section on Income and Expenditure, the Tourism BID also expects to access funding from the VisitScotland Growth Fund, to enable Inverness and Loch Ness to maximise the benefits of the 'themed years'.

The 'themed years' have been borne out of the success of the first Year of Homecoming in 2009 and the success of subsequent 'Years' from 2010 to 2013 which focused on a specific theme to celebrate some of Scotland's greatest tourism assets. Next year, 2014 has been designated, once again, Year of Homecoming and will be followed in 2015 by the Year of Scotland's Food and Drink, 2016 Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design, 2017 Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology and 2018 Scotland's Year of Young People.

Attracting more conferences and business tourism all year round:

Scotland's business tourism industry is worth more than £1.9 billion to the country's economy, according to a recent report commissioned by the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Foundation. It confirms just how important a sector it is and it's not just the large hotels and conference centres that benefit from it. Benefit is spread across all sectors from restaurants to B&Bs and visitor attractions with conference delegates often bringing family and choosing to stay on for a few days after a conference to experience the area. Alternatively many will return for a holiday with family after the event.

Much good work has already been achieved by key organisations such as VisitScotland, HIE and Highland Council, Inverness Hotels Association and Eden Court Theatre in bringing conferences and business tourism to the area but much more can be achieved. VisitScotland's Business Tourism Unit currently attend events such as Confex and the Meetings show in London and host the annual "Scotland Means Business" event for conference organisers. Scotland's other cities regularly attend these as partners but until now Inverness has not had a business group to coordinate this kind of presence. With a dedicated person working on behalf of the private sector, the above organisations and others such as UHI and the golf sector which attracts large corporate business, promotion of Inverness can be significantly enhanced.

Promote and support existing and new sustainable events and festivals

Events and festivals are very often the reason for people visiting a destination. Inverness and Loch Ness already has many great events such as the Baxter's Loch Ness Marathon, Rockness, Belladrum and Inverness Highland Games at one end of the spectrum to Man versus Horse and the Loch Ness Beer Festival at the other. The area also attracts major music concerts on a regular basis and all this has been achieved by the hard work of local organisations and individuals. However, feedback from the questionnaire said that you wanted to see greater support for events and festivals, that

attracting new events and festivals was important and also establishing a well-publicised year round Events Calendar.

This can be achieved through greater collaboration which is why the Tourism BID will focus on working with partners to support and expand the range of new sustainable events (i.e. events that are not 'one offs'.) that will bring benefit to the area and to businesses year after year. At the same time through the power of the Tourism BID online strategy, and PR we will not only promote new sustainable events, but all events and festivals whatever their size and wherever they are happening in the Tourism BID area. We recognise that while the big events and festivals are the ones that grab the headlines, a music concert in the local hall can be equally important to local accommodation providers and restaurants!

We will also expand the DLN online event booking system which will transfer to the Tourism BID when DLN ceases trading. While the prime focus will be on incorporating this in to the portal website so that visitors can book their accommodation and event tickets all at the same time, the Tourism BID will also be able to assist businesses to set it up quickly in their own website at no cost. An example can be seen at www.Visitsouthlochness.com

Work with partners to improve the tourism infrastructure:

1. Improving the visibility of Loch Ness on the north side along the A82 at selected 'safe' viewpoints

For many years now local people and visitors have commented on the fact that travelling up Loch Ness to Inverness the loch is barely visible from the road. For visitors this is a disappointing experience of the area before they have even arrived at their destination. The reason why it has not been tackled before is because it is a complex project that requires the co-operation of landowners and multi agencies such as Transport Scotland and the Police. However, with Forestry Commission Scotland committed to felling and making safe the hillsides above the A82 as part of a 10 -15 year project, there is a 'one off' opportunity to work with them, tapping in to and utilising their skills and relationships with other key organisations, to make this happen. It will require much planning which is why the estimated cost to the Tourism BID is spread primarily across years 3, 4 and 5, but it is a realistic project which will do much to improve the visitor experience. The estimated costs are for a contract to improve all 12 viewpoints down the loch side.

2. Completion of the South Loch Ness Trail between Fort Augustus and Loch Tarff

This is a major infrastructure project which has potential to deliver major long term economic impact to the tourism industry of Inverness and the Loch Ness area and surrounds both directly and indirectly. It will encourage more potential visitors to see the whole area as 'an outdoor destination' and to experience not only the '360 degree' circular trail route around Loch Ness but also other new trails in the area such as the Affric Kintail Way and or participate in other outdoor activities.

The Tourism BID will when DLN ceases trading, take over and maintain the South Loch Ness Trail as it exists at present stretching from Inverness down to Loch Tarff, and work with the landowner, Highland Council and other key organisations to complete the section from Loch Tarff down to Fort Augustus thus completing the '360 degree' trail around Loch Ness. The iconic nature of Loch Ness

offers great potential to make this trail one of Scotland's top long distance routes in the next few years attracting additional visitors with the sole purpose of walking the route.

The section to be completed is across difficult terrain but there has already been considerable negotiation and work by Highland Council in particular, to ensure that the project can be delivered but at the same time the Tourism BID has a key part to play in the construction of the trail and will be responsible for maintaining and promoting it.

Funding for the construction phase of this project has however, not been included in the table of Income and Expenditure as 1) The Tourism BID aims to access the bulk of its funding for this project from the new Leader Programme 2014-2020 and other sources 2) It is not yet clear what construction will be undertaken by other interested parties. However, it is realistic to expect that it will be delivered within 5 years and the Tourism BID has set aside funds for the planning stage.

Helping to grow your business – using the collective power of BIDs Scotland

More for Business (MfB) is a business benefits package provided by BIDs Scotland. They have negotiated great national procurement deals on behalf of the 7,500 businesses that are included in BIDs throughout Scotland. Discounted services include the following:

Electricity, gas and water	Phone and broadband
Postal services	Smartphone technology
Insurance	Video production
Waste management	Credit card merchant Services fees

Taking advantage of these will enable businesses to offset the cost of the levy. To quote Budget Backpackers who are part of Edinburgh Grassmarket BID, 'I saved over £2,400 on our annual water bill and I already considered us to be on a good deal'

In addition to these national deals, the Tourism BID will also actively encourage and assist local suppliers to offer group purchase discounts to Tourism BID members thus ensuring that local money is kept in the local area.

The Board of the Tourism BID will take all steps necessary to minimise any risk associated with delivering projects by only using reputable contractors.

Income and Expenditure

Income	Year1	Year2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Levy	£170,000	£170,000	£170,000	£170,000	£170,000	£850,000
*FCS	£10,000	£10,000				£20,000
*Common Good Fund	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£100,000
*Highland Council	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£100,000
*VisitScotland	£20,000	£20,000		£20,000		£60,000
Total	£240,000	£240,000	£210,000	£230,000	£210,000	£1,130,000
Expenditure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Marketing and Promotion	£78,000	£78,000	£64,000	£70,000	£64,000	£354,000
Conference and Business Tourism	£48,000	£48,000	£40,000	£48,000	£40,000	£224,000
Events	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£50,000
Infrastructure	£22,000	£22,000	£23,000	£ 23,000	£23,000	£113,000
Business Development	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£50,000
Management & Operational costs	£60,000	£60,000	£52,500	£57,500	£52,500	£282,500
Contingency	£12,000	£12,000	£10,500	£11,500	£10,500	£56,500
Total	£240,000	£240,000	£210,000	£230,000	£210,000	£1,130,000

The estimated levy income for the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID is based on full payment of levy every year. In case a 100% collection rate is not achieved, 5% contingency budget has been included. All of the contingency budget will be spent on your projects if more than 95% of the levy is collected.

Once the Tourism BID is operational, any variations within budgets will be reported to the Board of Directors for agreement. 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 identified in the Business Plan for the coming years, which allows the Tourism BID the flexibility to respond to changing business needs and requirements. Funds will be set aside for the renewal Ballot in Year 5. The Tourism BID Board will have the authority to make relevant variations without the need for an alteration ballot.

*Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) has agreed to fund £10K in Year 1 and £10K in Year 2 towards the viewpoint project on the south side of Loch Ness (see Projects under Objective 4) and would hope to continue support thereafter. FCS will also provide the required on the ground labour to complete this project.

*Common Good Funding: Highland Council members endorsed the development of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID at a meeting of the City Committee in April 2013. The Council are therefore fully committed to supporting the projects and activities of the Tourism BID and will look favourably on funding applications to the Common Good Fund up to the sum of £20,000 provided the applications meet all the required criteria including most importantly, evidence of direct benefit

to the city of Inverness. ***It is expected that subject to budgetary process and submission of satisfactory evidence of performance and impacts, that this funding will continue for the duration of the Tourism BID***

*Highland Council Funding: As noted in the paragraph above, support by Highland Council for the Tourism BID was endorsed in April 2013 and the Council are therefore fully committed to supporting the projects and activities of the Tourism BID and will look favourably on funding applications to appropriate Highland Council funds up to the sum of £20,000 provided the applications meet all the required criteria. ***It is expected that, subject to budgetary process and submission of satisfactory evidence of performance and impact, this funding will continue for the duration of the Tourism BID.*** Highland Council will also provide support in kind through managing the ballot process and collection of the levy throughout the duration of the Tourism BID.

*VisitScotland Funding: This funding is dependent upon a successful application by the Tourism BID to the VisitScotland Growth Fund. There is no guarantee of Growth Funding support. In 2014 VisitScotland have themed the year 'Year of Homecoming' and the application activity will reflect this theme. ***Future applications will also aim to maximise the benefit to Inverness and Loch Ness of subsequent VisitScotland 'themed' years.***

Applications for additional grant funding will also be made to the new LEADER programme, Highland Council Ward Funds, Business Gateway and HIE. The Tourism BID organisation will also seek funding opportunities from the VisitScotland Conference Bid Fund, renewable energy benefit funds and work in partnership with organisations such as FCS, Scottish Canals, SNH and Historic Scotland to maximise any joint funding opportunities and or 'in kind' support that will benefit to tourism in and around Inverness and Loch Ness.

It is also expected that up to a further £10,000 could be available each year from fees received from businesses not included in the Tourism BID. For example, we would expect many existing DLN members below the threshold to "Opt In" and receive the benefits currently available from DLN membership. Many businesses such as activity operators or tour operators who have no premises are also expected to participate so as to receive the package of benefits on offer. Annual fees for businesses that fall in to the category of 'Opt In' will range from £160 through to an upper limit of £3,000, the same as for levy paying members as outlined in the table below.

What will it cost me as a levy payer?

The levy will be paid by the occupiers (as the eligible persons) only, with the exception of vacant premises when the property owner will be liable for the levy payment. Also, any new commercial development, sub division of existing properties or merging of properties or new business with a non-domestic rateable valuation of £2,000 or more coming into the Tourism BID area during the 5-year term of the Tourism BID will be liable for the Tourism BID levy. In this instance, if the property is empty on the date the levy is issued, the property owner will be liable for the full levy amount until such time as the property is occupied.

A banded scale of levy fees have been agreed by the BID Steering Group as an equitable way of ensuring all businesses including those owning multiple properties, participate in and contribute to

the Tourism BID. It has been agreed by the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID Steering Group that the levy fees are based on the rateable value (RV) of the properties in the Tourism BID area at the time of the Ballot (13th March 2014), and will not change during the 5 year term of the Tourism BID. Even after the re-valuation in 2017, the levy will remain at the 2012 rate until the BID term ends in March 2019. The only instance when a change will be made to a levy fee will be as a result of a revaluation, due to a successful appeal, to the Assessor's office by an individual business. The levy fees are set out in the table below. It is expected that the levy fees will generate an income of approximately £170,000 a year for the Tourism BID.

The Tourism BID levy is a fair and equitable way to fund additional projects and services that businesses in the area would like to have, and which the public sector is not required to provide. Following a successful ballot the levy will be mandatory for all eligible businesses in the Tourism BID area that are listed on the Highland Council Valuation Roll by the Scottish Assessors on the ballot date and will liable for the levy for the duration of the BID.

The levy fees range from £160 to £3,000 per year. Your levy is based on the cost of delivering the projects and services, as identified by businesses during the consultation process, which will maximise the tourism potential of Inverness and Loch Ness working together as one destination.

Rateable value	Total Annual levy	Cost per week
£2,000 - £3,999	£160	£3.08
£4,000 - £9,999	£220	£4.23
£10,000 - £19,999	£350	£6.73
£20,000 - £29,999	£450	£8.65
£30,000 - £49,999	£650	£12.50
£50,000 - £79,999	£800	£15.38
£80,000 - £99,999	£1,100	£21.15
£100,000 - £140,999	£2,000	£38.47
£150,000 - £199,999	£2,500	£48.08
£200,000 +	£3,000	£57.69

Collection of the levy

The levy will be collected by Highland Council under the terms of the Operating Agreement with the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID company. This agreement is available on www.LNITBID.co.uk or you can request a printed copy. The invoices will be sent out from the 1st April each year and will be payable in a single payment with the payment due 28 days from the date of invoice. In the event of any non-payment of the levy, it will be strongly pursued by Highland Council to ensure complete fairness to all the businesses that have paid. A fee will be charged to meet any additional costs incurred in the recovery of the levy.

The Ballot

From 30th January to 13th March 2014 each eligible business will be asked to cast their vote for the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID in a formal, confidential ballot. Highland Council is responsible for managing the ballot to ensure it is done fairly. All eligible voters will have one vote or where an eligible voter has more than one business that individual shall be eligible to cast more than one vote but they will be required to pay the levy for each of the properties that they occupy. A ballot paper (together with a copy of the Business Plan) will be sent to each eligible business, to be completed by placing a cross in either a 'YES' or 'NO' box, as response to the question 'Are you in favour of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID proposals?' The ballot paper should be signed by the person named on the ballot paper and returned in the pre-addressed postage-paid envelope by 5pm on Thursday 13th March 2014. If a business has more than one rateable property it will receive a ballot paper for each property. Each paper counts as one vote. It is important that EVERY paper received is completed and returned. Where the property is vacant the ballot paper will be sent to the owner of the property as the eligible person entitled to vote.

The Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID will only proceed if the following criteria are met:

1. A minimum 25% turnout by 'headcount' is achieved
2. Of the votes received, a numerical majority of the eligible properties voting in the ballot must vote in favour
3. Those voting in favour must represent a majority by rateable value of the rateable properties exercising their vote

The ballot result will be announced on March 14th 2014. If the ballot is successful, the Tourism BID will commence on the 1st April 2014 and will operate for a period of five years until the 31st March 2019. A renewal ballot will be conducted and completed prior to the five year term being up.

How will we communicate with levy payers and stakeholders?

Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID will keep levy payers and stakeholders informed of progress. The table below illustrates how and when we will communicate.

Communication method	Jan.	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec
Website												
Newsletter												
Networking events												
AGM												
Management team												

Governance and Management

Following a successful ballot Destination Loch Ness will cease trading and the Tourism BID organisation for Inverness and Loch Ness will be set up and registered as a not –for-profit limited company with the primary responsibility of delivering the projects outlined in the Business Plan.

Members of the Tourism BID Steering Group will act as a ‘Shadow Board’ for the initial period following the ballot to ensure that there is minimal delay in implementing the Business Plan. A new Board will then be elected within 3 months of the successful ballot. The Board will reflect the tourism sectors covered by Tourism BID. Only levy payers will have the right to nominate Directors. However, there will also be scope to nominate two geographical area directors to represent the interests of ‘opt in’ members. There will be a maximum of 12 positions on the board all of which will be voluntary and unpaid. Highland Council will be invited to provide an advisory role through at least one council representative but will automatically be provided with the Financial Report. (It is also expected that regular finance meetings with Highland Council will take place and an annual audit of the Tourism BID finances will also take place through an independent Auditor). If the company does not receive enough nominations to the Board, directors can be co-opted to fill the vacant positions. The company will also reserve the right to work with representatives from other levy paying businesses who can offer the Tourism BID specialist expertise where appropriate.

The day-to-day management of the Tourism BID and responsibility for delivering projects will lie with the Manager of the Tourism BID with support from other key staff although ultimate responsibility will rest with the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors will reserve the right to consider creating a charitable arm of the company to enable it to secure additional funding that can only be sourced with charitable status.

The Board will adopt best practice in its procedures and be open and transparent in its operations.

**For further information on any matters contained within this Business Plan please contact:
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