

Agenda Item	8
Report No	LA/18/24

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Lochaber Area Committee

Date: 27 August 2024

Report Title: Fort William Business Improvement District

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the Fort William Business Improvement District Steering Group's proposals to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for Fort William, as defined by the map at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The report also explains the Council's involvement and support provided.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. note the proposals for the establishment of a Business Improvement District in Fort William, and
 - ii. agree to recommend to full Council that it supports the Fort William BID Proposal when this is considered at the meeting of the Highland Council on 19 September 2024. This will be subject to Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirming that Highland Council has no cause to exercise its right of veto in respect of the establishment of the BID at its meeting on 22 August 2024.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – The costs of collecting the levy by Highland Council will be met by the BID from its levy income. There are limited implications for the Council in relation to its properties in the area as the BID proposal imposes the payment of the levy on the property occupier, unless it is vacant at which time the owner will become liable.
- 3.2 Legal – The process for the development of a BID and the statutory role of the Local Authority are prescribed in the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, Part 9 – Business Improvement Districts. The legislation gives the Council the Power of Veto over a BID proposal, requires the Council to consider a BID proposal within a prescribed period

and requires the Council to give notice whether it will veto the proposal and to set out its reasons why. Consideration of this report in respect of the Council's support for the BID and separately taking a decision on whether or not to use its right of veto will ensure the Council's compliance with the legislation.

3.3 Risk – No implications

3.4 Gaelic – No implications

3.5 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – No implications.

4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on 29 July 2024. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are positive impacts on poverty and socio-economic factors due to the BID proposal aiming creating a more thriving town centre and deliver a wider regenerative programme by improving the trading environment of the BID area.

4.3.3	Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening
	Equality	Children and Young People – <i>no impact</i> Children affected by disability – <i>no impact</i> Older adults – <i>no impact</i>
	Socio-economic	<i>Positive</i>
	Human Rights	<i>No impact</i>
	Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>No impact</i>
	Island and Mainland Rural	<i>No impact</i>
	Climate Change	<i>No impact</i>
	Data Rights	<i>No impact</i>

5. Background

5.1 A Business Improvement District (BID) is a business led initiative covering a defined area where businesses work together and invest collectively in local projects, services and improvements in their area. Any BID projects and improvements are new and additional to those provided by statutory authorities. Projects, services and

improvements delivered by a BID do not seek to replace services that are already provided by the Highland Council and other statutory bodies.

- 5.2 The Council has a formal role in relation to BIDs with regard to:
- Establishment of a BID – The Council scrutinises BID processes to ensure fairness to the businesses involved. This includes having a right of veto, which in the case of Highland Council, is delegated to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.
 - Ballot – The Council instructs the ballot of local businesses to determine whether the BID goes ahead. A majority of businesses are required to vote in favour, both in terms of rateable value and by number, subject to a minimum 25% turnout. This is led by the Council’s Election’s Team.
 - Service Provision / Added Value – It is fundamental to the role of a BID that it adds value to what businesses pay in Non-Domestic Rates by delivering additional services. This is evidenced by a Baseline Agreement between the Council and the BID which outlines the services already provided by the Council relevant to the services to be offered through the BID.
 - Levy Collection – The Council’s Revenue’s team undertakes this role for the BID. This is governed by an Operating Agreement which defines roles and responsibilities.
 - Right to vote – as a property owner the Council will have the right to vote in the BID ballot.

6. Fort William BID

6.1 Following interest from local businesses, the Fort William BID Steering Group was established in 2023 and appointed a BID Coordinator to lead on the development of the BID proposal. The Steering Group secured funding from Scottish Government to cover the costs of the BID Coordinator, the development of the BID proposal and the initial ballot costs. Since then, the Steering Group has defined the BID area as per the plan at Appendix 1 and organised business consultations, surveys and drop-in events which have informed the development of the BID proposal. Further details are available in the Fort William BID Proposal and Business Plan at Appendix 2.

6.2 The Fort William BID Mission Statement is “Fort William BID - Invest in a revitalised Fort William”

The objectives of the BID are: -

- To improve the economic opportunities for the businesses in the town centre
- To increase footfall in the quieter months
- To make the BID “cost neutral” for each business
- To address the issues of individual sectors
- To improve businesses relationships with each other, the local authority and the community
- To market the area to a local, regional, national and international audience
- To give businesses a strong, unified voice
- To support local voluntary groups whose aims align with the BID

6.3 If the BID ballot is successful it is proposed to establish the BID Management Company to operate from 1st December 2024. The BID will run for five years after which time, dependent on local support, it will seek renewal via another ballot. By applying 8 charging bands, determined by the rateable value of each business, plus an optional

opt-in membership fund, it is anticipated the BID levy will raise at least £185,600 per annum to support projects and initiatives, with further external funding to be sought as projects and opportunities arise. However, income is subject to change, especially noting current economic volatility.

- 6.4 The Senior Community Development Manager (West & Mid), Tourism and Investment Team Leader, Elections, and Revenues and Business Support teams have worked closely with the Fort William BID Steering Group throughout the process to ensure that the BID proposers have had all the appropriate support from the Council. A local elected Member has attended Steering Group meetings. Highland Council has also provided the Services Baseline Agreement and will run the ballot. If the BID goes ahead, Highland Council will arrange for the collection of the BID levy, for which the Council will charge a fee. This is replicated in the other BIDs across Highland.
- 6.5 Fort William BID submitted all the necessary documentation to Highland Council and the Scottish Government on 15th July 2024, it having been reviewed favourably by Scotland's Improvement Districts, the organisation that supports BIDs across Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government. The BID proposal and Business Plan are attached to this report. It is proposed to go to ballot on 21st November 2024 subject to the completion of the decision-making process outlined.

7. Decision making process

- 7.1 A report will be taken to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 22nd August 2024 and will offer a formal assessment of the Fort William BID proposal relative to the Council's right of veto in accordance with the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Business Improvement Districts (Scotland) Regulations 2007. Subject to Economy and Infrastructure Committee agreement, the Council will formally notify the BID Steering Group Chair and the Scottish Government that the Council will not use its right of veto in relation to the Fort William BID.
- 7.2 Independently, as per the Council's Scheme of Delegation, Lochaber Committee has power to recommend to full Council that it supports the Fort William BID Proposal when this is considered at the meeting of the Highland Council on 19 September 2024, subject to Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirming that Highland Council has no cause to exercise its separate right of veto.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 12th August 2024

Author: Dot Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager

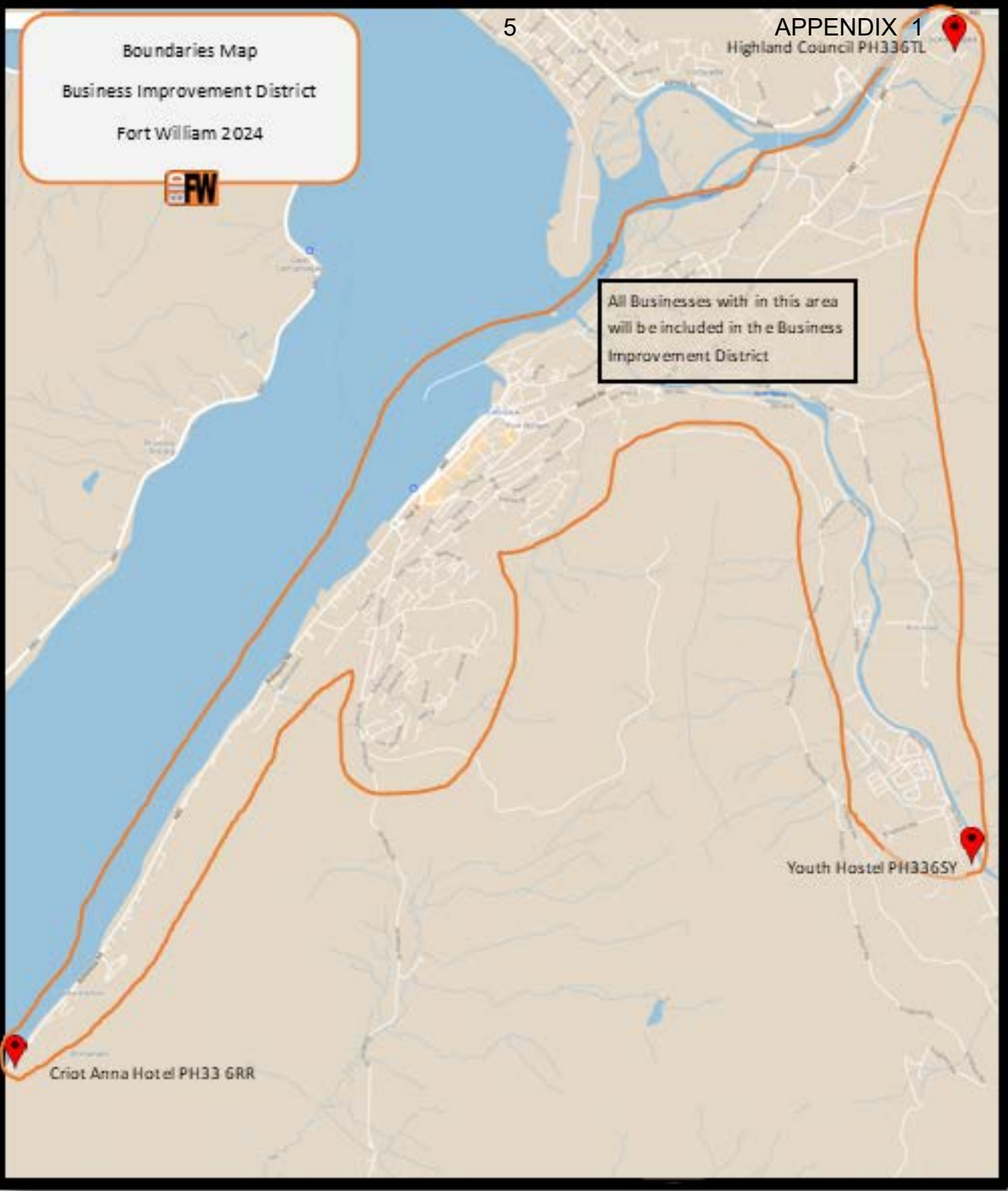
Appendices: Map of Fort William BID area

Fort William BID Proposal and Business Case

Boundaries Map
Business Improvement District
Fort William 2024



All Businesses with in this area
will be included in the Business
Improvement District



Criot Anna Hotel PH33 6RR

Youth Hostel PH336SY

APPENDIX 2i

FORT WILLIAM BID

**BID Area: Fort William Business Improvement District
Business Proposal (Initial Ballot)**

BID Term 01/12/2024 to 30/11/2029

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Business Proposal

BID Proposal Compliance with Legislation

In accordance with Business Improvement District (Scotland) legislation we acknowledge, as the BID Proposer, we must submit to The Highland Council and Scottish Ministers the following in respect of BID Proposals, Renewal Proposals and Alteration Proposals: -

1.0 A document, which demonstrates a cross section of at least 5% of the electorate, within the BID area supports the BID Proposals.

Please refer to Appendix 1 (Support for the BID) and Section 7.2 Business Survey on page 16 of this Proposal. Following the surveys of the businesses our canvassing confirmed the number of eligible persons (those eligible to vote in the ballot) 20.0% by number and 22.1% by rateable value were in favour of the BID.

2.0 Summary of the consultation the BID has undertaken with those eligible to vote.

The Fort William BID Steering Group oversaw the process of consultation with the businesses. The consultation took the form of hard copy surveys, meetings and events, telephone calls, e-mails, local newspaper reports, website, social media and one to one consultation.

Please refer to Appendix 2 (Details of Consultation) and Section 7.0 The Consultation Process on page 16 of this Proposal for a summary of the consultation.

3.0 The Proposed Business Plan

A copy of the BID Business Plan will be issued to all those eligible to vote in the ballot. Please refer to Appendix 3 (BID Business Plan).

4.0 The Financial Arrangements of the BID body.

Please refer to Section 13.2 Financial Management Arrangements on page 28 of this Proposal.

5.0 The Arrangements for periodically providing the LA and billing body with information on the finances of the BID body (i.e., after a successful ballot)

The BID finances will form an integral part of a monthly report issued to the BID Board of Directors. A representative will be requested from The Highland Council to sit on the BID Board and will automatically be provided with the BID finance details. It is also expected that regular finance meetings with The Highland Council will be held. An independent review of the BID finances will also take place through an independent examiner whilst year end accounts are being prepared.

6.0 The names and addresses of all those eligible to vote and a description (address) of each relevant property.

Please refer to Appendix 4 (Database).

7.0 A notice in writing requesting that the local authority hold the ballot.

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In accordance with legislation, please find attached the notice in writing “requesting the local authority to instruct the ballot holder to hold a BID ballot.”

Please refer to Appendix 5.

8.0 Provide the LA and billing body with such information as they shall reasonably require satisfying themselves the BID Proposer or BID body has enough funds to meet the costs of the BID ballot.

Fort William BID has agreed in their e-mail dated 16/04/2024 to The Highland Council to pay for the costs of the ballot. Please refer to Appendix 8.

9.0 A statement of the works or services to be provided, the name of the person responsible or body for the implementation (delivery) of these works and services and the status of such person/s; both on and after the date the BID Proposals come into effect.

Please refer to Appendix 3 (BID Business Plan) for the proposed works and services.

On a successful ballot outcome, a BID Company (a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee with no share capital) will be formed with directors elected from the eligible persons (the levy payers), limited to one eligible person from each eligible property. The directors will oversee and direct the delivery of all the projects and services. Additionally, they will also recruit staff to deliver the BID projects and services. For full details please refer to section 6.3 Management of the BID on page 15 of this Proposal.

10.0 A statement of existing baseline services provided by the local authority, police and other agencies.

Please refer to Appendix 6 (Council Baseline Services) and 6b (Scotland Police baseline services)

11.0 A precise description of the geographical area of the BID, including a map, which defines exactly the boundaries of the BID area.

Please refer to Section 5.1 The BID Map and Streets on page 13 of this Proposal for a GIS map and a list of streets and roadways in the BID area.

12.0 A statement providing details of any additional financial contributions, or additional actions for the purpose of enabling the projects specified in the BID Proposals, i.e., where a BID project is expected to cost £X and the proposed levy raises a smaller amount £Y then the BID Proposals must state how that funding gap £X - £Y s to be met and by whom.

The projects specified in the BID Proposal (Please refer to Section 13.3 Fort William BID Projected Income and Expenditure on page 29) have been identified and the levy calculated and apportioned to deliver the projects as defined in the Proposed Projects section of this Proposal.

It is expected that the BID will attract additional funding from other sources including the local authority however, this has not been allowed for at this stage.

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13.0 A statement of which aspects of the BID Proposals and or Business Plan may be altered without the need for an alteration ballot to be undertaken.

The BID Board of Directors 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.

Please refer to section 6.3 Management of the BID on page 15 of this Proposal for the statement.

14.0 A statement of the proposed start and end dates of the BID Arrangements and the term of the BID. The BID arrangements must commence no later than a year after the date of the statement.

Following a successful ballot on 21/11/2024 the Fort William BID will commence its activities on 01/12/2024. As the Fort William BID will be for a term of five years, it will cease its activities on 30/11/2029.

15.0 BID Proposals shall specify the apportionment of BID levy in respect of relevant properties and who will be liable to pay the levy: - proprietors, tenants, occupiers or if appropriate a specific business sector or sectors or businesses who will participate. It is advisable to include caps, thresholds, or other arrangements reflecting local circumstances or ability to pay.

The BID improvement levy will be paid by the occupier (the eligible person liable to pay the non-domestic rate), however, the property owner will be liable to pay the levy where a property is vacant on the day the levy invoice is issued and for all the period thereafter when the property is vacant.

Please refer to Section 9 The BID Levy on page 18 of this Proposal for full details of the BID Levy.

16.0 Confirmation the levy is to be calculated as a % of the RV or how the charge was arrived at.

It has been agreed by the BID Board, (please refer to the meeting minute dated 09/07/2024 (Appendix 9)) the levy rate will be a fee structure based on the rateable value of the property on the day of the ballot on 21/11/2024 and throughout the 5-year term of the BID.

Please also refer to Section 9 - The BID Levy on page 18 of this Proposal for full details of the BID Levy and how the charge was arrived at; and to Appendix 10 - Operating Agreement.

17.0 Confirmation the % levy or fee is to be calculated on the RV of the property on the date of the ballot or, if not, another date that is the date, which will be used to calculate the levy or fee over the term of the BID.

The fee structure is based on the rateable value of the property on the day of the ballot on 21/11/2024.

Please Refer to Section 9 The BID Levy on pages 18 to 20 of this Proposal for full details of the BID Levy.

18.0 The apportionment of the levy between proprietors, tenants and occupiers – providing the BID is including tenants and proprietors in its proposals.

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The occupier (the eligible person liable to pay the non-domestic rate) will be liable for the payment of the levy.

The BID Proposal does not include proprietors (property owners) except where the eligible property is vacant or empty when the property owner will be liable for the payment of the levy.

Please Refer to Section 9 The BID Levy on pages 18 to 20 of this Proposal for full details of the BID Levy.

19.0 A statement as to how the steering group arrived at who will pay the levy, the percentage levy and how the levy will be split between proprietors, tenants and occupiers.

The BID Steering Group set the levy fee; the streets included in the BID and voted on who will pay the levy. A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 09/07/2024 at which this was decided and is attached as Appendix 9a. The geographic boundary is based on the Fort William area. The levy amount is based on the amount required to carry out the projects in the business plan and discussions with businesses on what they believe is reasonable. The levy will be paid by the occupier (the eligible person liable to pay the non-domestic rate).

The decision to adopt the levy table and BID area was taken with the agreement of all the members of the Steering Group. Please refer to Appendix 9b (Steering Group Minutes dated 12/07/2024) and Appendix 7 (Steering Group Agreement.)

Please also refer to Section 9 The BID levy on page 18 of this Proposal for full details of the BID Levy.

20.0 Whether any future re-assessment of RV of the property by the Rates Assessor will or will not be taken into account in the calculation of the levy

It has been agreed by the BID Steering Group, the levy will be calculated on the Rateable Value of the properties in the BID area on the day of the ballot and will not change during the 5-year term unless there is a property rates revaluation in which case the levy will be re-calculated and based on adjusted property rateable values.

21.0 A statement on why groups or individual businesses are exempt or receive a levy discount

Please refer to Section 9.2 Exclusions on page 19 of this Proposal for full details of all exemptions to the levy. The steering group agreed (please refer to Appendix 7 Steering Group Agreement and Steering Group Minutes Appendix 9a and 9b)) the properties exempted would receive no benefit from the BID projects and services.

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

22.0 A statement on whether the levy will be index linked.

The BID levy will be index linked and tied to the RPI on the date of the issue of the levy invoices, but subject to the agreement of the Board of Directors on an annual basis. Any increase in levy will be at a rate annually of not more than a maximum of 4.0% on the previous year's BID levy.

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23.0 A statement on whether any of the costs incurred in developing the BID Proposals, holding of the ballot or implementing the BID arrangements are to be recovered through the BID levy.

None of the above costs will be recovered through the BID levy.

24.0 The constitution of the BID Company to be formed and its legal status. A statement on who will administer the BID, details regarding the BID board and the BID body and those who drew up BID Proposals and Business Plan.

Please refer to section 6.3 Management of the BID on page 15 of this proposal for details on how the future BID Company will be formed and administered.

The BID Company will be a not-for-profit limited liability company i.e. A Company Limited by Guarantee and Not Having a Share Capital and will be administered by the Board of Directors who will be drawn from the eligible persons (those liable to pay the levy) but restricted to one eligible person per eligible property. Nominations of directors from outside of 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 projects and services will be delivered by the BID team recruited by the Board of Directors. For full details please refer to Section 6.3 Management of the BID on page 15 of this Proposal document. Sarah Kennedy FMAAT FCCA of Nevis Accountancy Services Limited prepared the Fort William BID Proposal and Business Plan with the help of Mark MacLean, BID Project Manager, in full consultation and support from the Fort William BID Steering Group.

25.0 The methodology for BID levy payers to nominate themselves or others to the BID Board of Directors and the proposed make-up of the BID Board.

Every eligible person, who is liable to pay the levy, will have the opportunity to nominate themselves or someone else from within the BID area to be elected to the new Company Board. Directors will be limited to one eligible person per eligible property. Nominations of directors from outside of 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.

Please refer to section 6.3 Management of the BID on page 15 of this Proposal for full details on how levy payers can participate on the future Fort William BID Company Board of Directors.

26.0 A statement on how the BID Proposals will be publicised prior to the ballot.

The BID Proposer will send a copy of the BID Business Plan to all persons eligible to vote on the BID Proposals. Should any eligible person require a copy of the BID Proposal, a copy will be provided on request. The Business Plan will also feature prominently on the Fort William BID website at: - www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk

“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

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be a charitable organisation, public sector organization, social enterprise or community group who may not consider themselves to be a business.

1.0 Foreword by BID Steering Group Chair

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, 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 the 10/10/2024 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!

Archie MacDonald
Chair – Fort William BID Steering Group
The Highland Soap Co. Limited
Inverlochy Mains, North Road, Fort William, Scotland, PH33 6TQ

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2.0 Executive Summary

2.1 Mission Statement of the Fort William BID

Fort William BID – Invest in a revitalised Fort William.

2.2 Aims and Objectives of the Fort William BID

The principal aim of the BID is to deliver projects and services that will improve the trading environment of the BID area to benefit businesses, their customers and visitors.

The objectives of the BID are: -

- To improve the economic opportunities for the businesses in the town centre
- To increase footfall in the quieter months
- To make the BID “cost neutral” for each business
- To address the issues of individual sectors
- To improve businesses relationships with each other, the local authority and the community
- To market the area to a local, regional, national and international audience
- To give businesses a strong, unified voice
- To support local voluntary groups whose aims align with the BID

2.3 Key Findings

The BID Steering Group has overseen considerable research to discover what the businesses of Fort William would like a BID to deliver. The research established the need for a BID and confirms that the following key aspects have been completed to deliver a successful ballot and a successful BID.

- Local need for a BID is strongly identified.
- The BID area is logical and clearly defined.
- Support of the Local Authority at both officer and political level.
- Support of Police Scotland.
- Support of Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, Fort William Town Team, The Highland Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the FW2040 Board.
- The BID levy is sufficient to deliver the projects in the business plan.

3.0 Introduction

3.1 What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

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

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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.

3.2 Background to BIDs

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.

4.0 Fort William Position

4.1 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.

Business Proposal

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 Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, Visit Scotland, Business Gateway, Zero Waste Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Fort William Town Team, Fort William Festive Fund, 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.

4.2 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:

1. Improvements to infrastructure
2. Support and develop local events
3. Strong, effective marketing
4. 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.

4.3 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

Business Proposal

- 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

4.4 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.

5.0 The BID Area

The BID area is generally focused on the Fort William 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.

5.1 The BID Map and Streets

Why was this area chosen?

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	Connochie Road	Hillside Estate	North Road
Achintore Road	Croft Road	Inverlochry Court	Parade
Alma Road	Dudley Road	Locheil Road	Ross Place

Business Proposal

An Aird	Earl of Inverness Road	Lochy Bridge	Seaview Terrace
Argyll Road	Fassifern Road	Lochy Crescent	Station Square
Bank Street	Fraser Square	Lundavra Crescent	Town Pier
Battlefield Crescent	Glen Nevis	Lundavra Road	Tulloch Place
Belford Road	Glen Nevis Business Park	Lundy Gardens	Union Road
Ben Nevis Drive	Glen Nevis Place	Melantee	Viewforth Place
Ben View	Glenloch Road	Middle Street	Young Place
Bruce Place	Gordon Square	Montrose Avenue	
Camanachd Crescent	Grange Road	Monzie Square	
Cameron Square	Grange Terrace	Moray Place	
Carmichael Way	Heathercroft Road	Nevis Bridge	
Claggan Road	High Street	Nevis Road	



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.

6.0 BID Management

6.1 BID Development Staff

The Project Manager for the BID is Mark MacLean and is accountable to the BID Steering Group.

6.2 BID Development Steering Group

Business Proposal

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:

Name	Sector	Name	Sector
Archie Macdonald	Retail	Angus MacDonald	Business
Carmen Beale	Hospitality	Rosemary MacPhee	Legal
Jane MacDonald	Business	Norrie MacLean	Hospitality
Donald Daly	Commercial		

6.3 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, 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

Business Proposal

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.

7.0 The Consultation Process

7.1 Introduction

The initial BID consultation was undertaken with a cross section of businesses in the form of one-to-one interviews and this led to the creation of a bespoke town centre questionnaire, which was distributed to all businesses in the BID area.

Of the 550 hard copy questionnaires distributed only 16 (which is a very disappointing 2.9% return rate) were returned. The businesses were also given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire on-line and this has resulted in 56 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%. The questionnaire consultation was supported by one-to-one consultation with 79 (22.9%) of businesses.

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 received e-mails, telephone calls and one-to-one visits throughout the BID development process to keep them informed of progress. There have been articles in the local press (Lochaber Times) and on Nevis Radio – our local radio station. The website www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk has been kept fully updated with information throughout the development of the BID. Full details of the consultation are shown at Appendix 2.

A number of business information sessions were held by the BID Steering Group on 26/03/24, 29/03/24 & 15/04/24. All businesses in the town centre received an invite to the launch, where the project co-ordinator and the Chair of the BID Steering Group presented on the BID and took question. All businesses **within the BID area** were invited to attend these sessions.

As the ballot date approaches it is planned to visit as many businesses as possible to discuss the proposed projects and services the businesses have indicated they would like the BID to deliver.

Full details of the consultation are contained in Appendix 2.

7.2 Business Survey

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The survey questionnaires were hand delivered where possible, if not, posted to the property within the proposed BID area on the 27/03/2024. The businesses were also given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire on-line. It is found on the website www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk and the Facebook page found at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/219187561256061>. The purpose of the questionnaire survey was to consult with the businesses within the BID area and determine their issues and concerns. The survey also sought to establish views and opinions on specific identified issues relating to the area.

The Steering Group considered the responses from the one-to-one consultations, questionnaire survey and public meetings as being sufficient to decide on the projects and services proposed in the business plan.

BID legislation requires that before a ballot can take place, a minimum of 5% of those eligible to vote must indicate that they are in favour of a BID. The results of the consultations (both one-to-one and questionnaire survey) indicate that 69 eligible persons (20%) are in favour of the BID. In terms of rateable value this equates to 22.1%.

Please refer to Appendix 1 (Support for the BID) for a list of the eligible persons who have indicated their support for a BID.

7.3 The Key Findings

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

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

8.0 Proposed Improvements

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.

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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.

The projects will be based on the following themes, individual projects and services are detailed in the Business Plan.

- 1 **Shopping locally** – work with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce to implement a Love Lochaber scheme. Promote ‘local trade’ with local loyalty schemes, create a local business directory to promote local trade and ‘local business first’ voucher scheme. Work with Lochaber Times and Lochaber Life to advertise local businesses and print a more detailed orientation map. Investigate a Staff Loyalty Scheme offering loyalty discounts/offers to local staff.
- 2 **Recruitment** - Work with UHI North, West and Hebrides, Developing the Young Workforce, the Job Centre, Citizen’s Advice to identify how we can increase the pool of local talent to provide good staff to local businesses.
- 3 **Investment** - Work with The Highland Council, Scottish Government, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, MSPs, our local MP and other public bodies to see how we can ensure that Fort William and Lochaber receives it’s fair share of infrastructure investment.
- 4 **Attractiveness** - Work with The Highland Council and owners of the properties to identify ways that the back of the town can be improved visually to the passing traffic on the A82. Consider the implementation of a Property Improvement Grant that owners can apply to. Working with local groups on traffic matters and provide cash support for street improvements. Consider the planting of trees along the A82 bypass to make it more aesthetically pleasing.
- 5 **Events** - Work with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce or an umbrella group and identify events that are being held such as Scottish Six Days Trials, UCI Downhill Mountainbike Championships, Lochaber Live, The Mountain Festival, Ben Race, Lochaber Live, etc to see how these can be replicated to encourage people into the town. Identify spill-off events to be held in the Parade and Cameron Square to encourage people to come into the town centre. Provide cash grants for local events through BID Events Support Grant Scheme. Connect town centre & big local attractions with promotions and transport in partnership with local bus company Shiel Buses between town centre, Aonach Mor, Glenfinnan Viaduct, Glencoe etc. Review the potential of the existing Street Market and how it can be improved. Investigate BID led Food & Drink Week, Annual Arts Festival featuring local artists in partnership with existing galleries and businesses such as Gallery in the Fort and Gallery in Glen Nevis and Annual Science Festival featuring the STEM centre. Investigate options for greater use of King George V Park and reinstate the Lochaber Highland Games, 10 under the Ben, tri-athlon, promoting shinty matches, promoting football matches, etc.
- 6 **Access** - Carry out lobbying for A82 improvements with local MSPs, MP, Transport Scotland, BEAR Scotland, FW2040, etc. Request to be informed when any roadworks are being planned in the area.

Business Proposal

9.0 The BID Levy

9.1 Who will pay the levy?

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 510 commercial properties in the BID area which equates to circa 345 properties, the eligible person of which will be entitled to vote on 21/11/2024. This 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 4.0% each year).

It has been agreed by the BID Steering Group that: -

- 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 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 either in one payment within 28 days from the date of the levy invoice or in 10 instalments by arrangement 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.

Business Proposal

- 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 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.

9.2 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, details of which are given in the BID Business Plan.

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 exemption from the levy on the basis that their work is vital for the community.

9.3 The Levy Table

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.

Business Proposal

- 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.

9.4 Collection of the BID Levy

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.

9.5 Enforcement

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.

10.0 The Voting Process

10.1 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.

10.2 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.

Business Proposal

- 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.

10.3 BID Ballot Timetable

Item	B-n	Procedure	Time	Date	Comments
1	B-196	Last day for notice of intention to put BID proposals to ballot to the billing body and Scottish Ministers	Regulation 4 At least 196 days before the date of ballot in accordance with regulation 4.	By 09/05/24	Done 14/12/23
2	B-126	BID Review by Scotland’s Improvement Districts (SIDs).	BID proposals reviewed and agreement reached as to whether a positive ballot	By 18/07/24	

Business Proposal

			result is achievable. If not achievable, then the BID should not go to ballot.		
3	B-98	Last day for the submission of the BID proposal to the local authority, billing body and Scottish Ministers.	Regulation 5 (2) (a) (i) This would give the local authority at least 28 days to consider proposals before deciding whether to exercise their veto 70 days before the day of ballot.	By 15/08/24	
4	B-98	At least 98 days after item 1 the BID Proposer requests local authority to instruct ballot holder to hold ballot.	Regulation 5 (2) (a) (ii) and (b)	By 15/08/24	
4	B- 70	Local authority to confirm, to the BID proposers and Scottish Ministers if it is or is not vetoing the BID proposals.	Regulation 14 (1) For the purposes of section 42(2) of the 2006 Act, the prescribed period is 70 days prior to the day of the ballot.	By 12/09/24	
6	B-56	The local authority instructs the ballot holder to hold BID ballot.	Regulation 6 To allow time to put in place ballot arrangements, before issuing ballot papers (at least 42 days before day of ballot), it is recommended that the instruction should be made at least 56 days before the ballot date.	By 26/09/24	
	B-42	Ballot holder puts in place arrangements to hold BID ballot.	Regulation 8 and Schedule 2 <u>On receiving instruction under Regulation 6 to hold ballot</u> the ballot holder puts in place the <u>formal arrangements</u> to hold ballot, including: - Securing the ballot date, publishing	By 10/10/24	

Business Proposal

			notice of ballot, and preparing list of persons entitled to vote.		
7	B-42	Publication of notice of ballot (by ballot holder). Issue of ballot papers. Spoilt ballot papers.	Schedule 2, para. 3a The ballot holder shall at least 42 days before the day of ballot, publish the notice of ballot. Schedule 2, para. 3 42 days before ballot date. Schedule 2, para. 11 Spoilt ballot papers may be replaced at any time from the issue of ballot papers.	By 10/10/24 By 10/10/24 From 10/10/24	
8	B-42	Last day for postponing the day of the ballot by up to 15 days.	Schedule 2, para. 2 (2) - No later than 42 days before the day of the ballot, the ballot holder may postpone the day of the ballot by up to 15 working days.	By 5pm on 10/10/24	
9	B-10	Last day for the appointment of a proxy.	Schedule 2, para. 5 (5) An application to appoint a proxy shall be refused for the purposes of a particular ballot if the ballot holder receives it after 5 p.m. on the tenth day before the day of the ballot.	By 5pm on 11/11/24	
10	B-7	First day for the request for issue of replacement of LOST ballot paper.	Schedule 2, para. 12 Where a voter has not received their ballot paper by the seventh working day before the day of the ballot, that voter may apply (whether or not in person) to the ballot holder for a replacement ballot paper.	From 12/11/24	

Business Proposal

11	B-5	Last day for cancellation of proxy.	Schedule 2, para. 5 (10) A notice under sub-paragraph (9) by a person entitled to vote cancelling a proxy's appointment shall be disregarded for the purposes of a ballot if the ballot holder receives it after 5 p.m. on the fifth day before the date of the poll at that election.	By 5pm on 16/11/24	
12	B	<u>Ballot Day</u>	Schedule 2, para. 2 N.B. The time-period in which a ballot can be secured in relation to the date the ballot holder published the "notice of ballot" is detailed under Schedule 2, paragraph 2 – (1) (c) "at least 42 days after, but no more than 90 days after, the date on which the ballot holder published the notice required by paragraph 3 (a)." (See also Item 7).	21/11/24	
13	B+1	The Count	Schedule 2, paras. 14-16 As soon as practicable after the day of the ballot, the ballot holder shall make arrangements for counting the votes cast on such of the ballot papers as have been duly returned (in accordance with paragraph 13) and record the number counted.	By 22/11/24	
14		Declaration of results.	Schedule 2, para 17 (2) The ballot holder, having made the certification under subparagraph (1) Shall:		

Business Proposal

	B+1		(a) forthwith make a declaration of the matters so certified; and	From 22/11/24	
	B+8		(b) Give public notice of the matters so certified as soon as practicable and within 7 days after the counting of the votes.	By 29/11/24	

11.0 Public Sector BID Involvement

11.1 Baseline Services

A baseline service agreement ensures the BID does not use the levy money to duplicate any services provided by The Highland Council. The services directly delivered by the BID are additional to any statutory services. The baseline services agreement gives an assurance to businesses that the levy payment will only be used for **additional** projects which they voted on in the BID ballot. Additionally, a baseline agreement avoids the risk that public agencies including The Highland Council will not reduce its statutory level of service to the BID area following a successful ballot.

For a full and detailed list of services provided in the BID area by The Highland Council, please refer to Appendix 6 Council Baseline information and Baseline Agreement.

The services already provided by The Highland Council

The Highland Council provides the following services (both statutory and discretionary) within the BID area: -

- **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

Business Proposal

- **Library Services**
- **Pier** – Management and maintenance

The services already provided by Police Scotland: (Appendix 6b)

- 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

12.0 Measuring Success

12.1 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.

12.2 Marketing, Communications and Social Media

Business Proposal

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.

13.0 Finances

13.1 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.

13.2 Financial Management Arrangements

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.

Business Proposal

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.

13.3 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	£5,849	£27,081
INCOME TOTAL	£185,600	£193,024	£200,744	£208,774	£217,125	£1005,267
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
TOTAL	£185,600	£193,024	£200,744	£208,774	£217,126	£1,005,268

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.

14.0 Contact Information

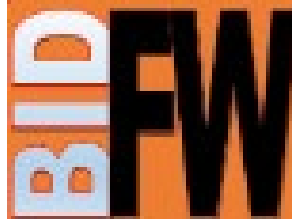
If you would like more information, please visit our website www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk or contact the Project Manager by telephone, e-mail or make an appointment to see them.

Mark MacLean
BID Project Manager

Telephone: 07804 484650

E-mail: mark@bidfortwilliam.co.uk

Address: MacLean House, Belford Road, Fort William, PH33 6BT



FORT WILLIAM BID

Business Plan

1st December 2024 – 30th November 2029

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

Fort William BID – Invest in a revitalised Fort William

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Foreword

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 , 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!

Archie MacDonald
Chair – Fort William BID Steering Group
The Highland Soap Co. Limited
Inverlochy 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

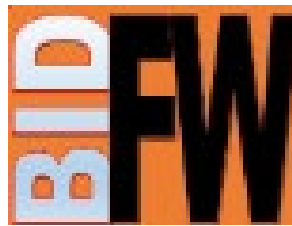
Working with local businesses and the community, the principle aim of Fort William BID is for Fort William to become a vibrant town centre and reinvent itself as an all year round cultural, leisure and retail place to visit. Our three focuses on Town Centre Environment, Marketing and Promotion and Business Environment generate the following benefits for Fort William's businesses:

Make Fort William more attractive and welcoming by working with local groups on traffic matters and cash support for street improvements

Help Fort William become a year round 'destination town' with cash grants for local events

Connect town centre and big local attractions with promotion and transport between town centre UCI Downhill Mountainbike Championships, SSDT, Lochaber Live, The Ben Race, Lochaber Live, etc

Support local businesses with cash grants for premises improvements and staff training



Make it happen with a BID manager and team delivering the plan on budget and on time

Give Fort William businesses a strong unified voice Fort William, fighting above it's weight, attracting new investment

Support local businesses with cash grants for premises improvements

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)?

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

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 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:

1. Improvements to infrastructure
2. Support and develop local events
3. Strong, effective marketing
4. 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	Connochie Road	Hillside Estate	North Road
Achintore Road	Croft Road	Inverlochy Court	Parade
Alma Road	Dudley Road	Locheil Road	Ross Place
An Aird	Earl of Inverness Road	Lochy Bridge	Seaview Terrace
Argyll Road	Fassifern Road	Lochy Crescent	Station Square
Bank Street	Fraser Square	Lundavra Crescent	Town Pier
Battlefield Crescent	Glen Nevis	Lundavra Road	Tulloch Place
Belford Road	Glen Nevis Business Park	Lundy Gardens	Union Road
Ben Nevis Drive	Glen Nevis Place	Melantee	Viewforth Place
Ben View	Glenlochy Road	Middle Street	Young Place
Bruce Place	Gordon Square	Montrose Avenue	
Camanachd Crescent	Grange Road	Monzie Square	
Cameron Square	Grange Terrace	Moray Place	
Carmichael Way	Heathercroft Road	Nevis Bridge	
Claggan Road	High Street	Nevis Road	

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

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 and Councillor) 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 with just 16 returned (a 2.9% return rate).

April 2024 - An interactive online survey was posted on the website www.bidfortwilliam.co.uk and Facebook page 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:

1. On 26/03/24 at The Highland Cinema
2. On 29/03/24 at The Highland Soap Company
3. 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:

4. On 19/03/24 – with the Fort William, Inverlochy and Torlundy Community Council
5. On 17/04/24 – with Lochaber Rotary Club
6. The BID Project Manager also arranged a meeting with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce on 20/02/2024

Future meetings:

7. The BID Project Manager and Chair of the Fort William BID Steering Group will also be attending the AGM of Lochaber Housing Association on 22/08/2024 and presenting all about the BID to their members and attendees.

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.

The main mechanism for the BID action plan input was the business questionnaire specifically for businesses within the proposed BID area and distributed to all businesses.

The details on the results of this research are given below:



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

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 - to follow

The services already provided by Police Scotland:

- 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?

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 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?

The Levy Table

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

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

1. Encourage shopping locally
2. Improve the availability of good staff
3. Work with public bodies to ensure we receive our fair share of infrastructure investment
4. Improve the attractiveness of the back of the town from the A82
5. Create more events to bring locals into the town centre
6. 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.

1. Encourage shopping locally

Projects/Activities	Measurement	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce to implement a Love Lochaber scheme • Work with Lochaber Life / Lochaber Times to create a “Buy Local” business directory to promote local trade • Consider ways to promote ‘local trade’ such as with a local loyalty scheme or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Love Lochaber scheme • Delivery of local business directory • Production of map already issued by Lochaber Times but focussing on local businesses and interesting locations in the BID area • Implementation of local loyalty scheme / voucher /Staff Loyalty Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a strong unified brand behind which marketing efforts and campaigns can be developed • It will help encourage people both within and without the BID area to spend in our town • Higher turnover in shops and more trade from local businesses • Better knowledge of customers and measurement of BID

<p>‘local business first’ voucher scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print a more detailed orientation map to enable visitors/locals to see what is available in the BID area • Investigate a Staff Loyalty Scheme offering loyalty discounts/offers to local staff. • Development of information points in town and in satellite locations • Provide free internet access throughout the town • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 x Information Points across Fort William • 90% of Fort William businesses listed in directory and circulated to all Businesses • 50% of Fort William businesses signed up to scheme and saving their levy costs • Number of users using the internet facility • Number of folk walking the Heritage Trail to sites of interest in the town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage spend outside the busy summer period • Increase knowledge of what is going on and where for locals and visitors alike • Better customer service information available across town • More local trade between local businesses • Staff benefit and more local trade and better knowledge of other businesses • Saving local businesses money • Increased revenues across all sectors and building customer loyalty • Providing internet and Heritage Trail will encourage dwell time in the town
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2 Improve the availability of good staff

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

<p>then match students with vacancies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the Job Centre and Citizen's Advice Bureau to identify ways of bringing people back into work 		
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3. Work with public bodies to ensure we receive our fair share of infrastructure investment

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

4. Improve the attractiveness of the back of the town from the A82

Projects/Activities	Measurement	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with The Highland Council and owners of properties • Implementation of a Property Improvement Grant • Working with local groups and Transport Scotland on traffic matters • Provide cash support for street improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of applications for the Property Improvement Grant • Using the BID social media platforms to give up to date information regarding traffic matters such as roadworks, accidents etc • Numbers of applications for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back of Fort William being improved visually to the passing traffic on the A82 • Reducing the traffic issues experienced in the BID area • Increase the awareness of traffic problems • Improved look of the High Street • A more aesthetically pleasing A82

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Transport Scotland to identify locations to plant trees along the A82 • Increase seating along the waterfront • Annual Cleaner Fort William plan and implementation between THC, FWTT and BID to identify specific areas/places to tidy up & make good for summer • Support local groups such as FWTT, FOOF, FWMSCIC, FWFF 	<p>street improvements fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting of trees along A82 • More seats along the waterfront • Number of business identified eyesores are tidied up • More flower displays and new lights added to range each year • Turnout and better Christmas Lights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing seating will encourage folk to spend longer in the town • Significantly enhanced look to Fort William working under a co-ordinated and financed plan
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5. Create more events to bring locals into the town centre

Projects/Activities	Measurement	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce or an umbrella group and identify events that are being held • Promote a year round programme of events • Provide grant support to new and regular events • Fort William Events Support grant Scheme supporting locally led events and BID led events • Supporting an Annual Arts Festival with local business such as Gallery in the Fort • Create a partnership with Shiel Buses to improve connections between the town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify how these events can be replicated to encourage people into the town in off season • Identify spill-off events to be held in the Parade and Cameron Square when big events happening elsewhere in Lochaber • Local events receiving funding support • New product in place with town centre businesses working in close co-operation with the key destination businesses around Fort William 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More footfall in shoulder / winter months • More co-ordinated approach to event development and more events around the year • Events take place with strengthening organiser groups, increased attendance and awareness of events • Reputation of Fort William as a town where there is always something going on • Wider spread of business across the year • Better transport connections with local attractions and events

<p>centre and local attractions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the potential of the existing Street Market • Investigate BID led Food & Drink Week • Investigate options for greater use of King George V Park • Annual Arts Festival featuring local artists in partnership with existing galleries and businesses such as Gallery in the Fort and Gallery in Glen Nevis • Annual Science Festival featuring the STEM centre • Reinstate events such as the Lochaber Highland Games, 10 under the Ben, triathlon • Promotion of shinty matches and football matches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in attendance at supported events • More bus links to events and town centre and local attractions such as Aonach Mor, Glenfinnan Viaduct, Glencoe etc • Number of applications to reinstate events or create new ones • Increased use of Cameron Square – the public entertainment space in Fort William • Headcount take up of offers and bus passenger numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More events going on to attract people into the town • Connect outer big businesses with town centre businesses and increase spend
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6. Make the A82 fit for purpose

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

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	£5,849	£27,081
INCOME TOTAL	£185,600	£193,024	£200,744	£208,774	£217,126	£1005,268
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
TOTAL	£185,600	£193,024	£200,744	£208,774	£217,126	£1,005,268

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

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

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

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

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

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:

Name	Sector	Name	Sector
Archie Macdonald	Retail	Angus MacDonald	Business
Carmen Beale	Hospitality	Rosemary MacPhee	Legal
Jane MacDonald	Business	Norrie MacLean	Hospitality
Donald Daly	Commercial		

Contact Information

If you would like more information, please visit our website 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

Telephone: 07804 484650

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Address: MacLean House, Belford Road, Fort William, PH33 6BT

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