

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What is a BID?

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a defined geographical area within which the businesses vote to invest collectively in local improvements to enhance their trading environment. The mechanism for developing and operating a BID are governed by the BID Regulations 2004 which are part of the Local Government Act 2003.

The BID Business plan identifies key objectives to be addressed, with the BID team and businesses delivering projects against action plans to fulfil these objectives. BID's are business led with the Board and Committees consisting of volunteers from BID Businesses.

A key aspect of a BID is to ensure that anything delivered by the BID to the area is additional to any services provided by public bodies. As part of the development of the BID Proposal and Business Plan, baseline statements are drawn up with the councils and the police identifying the services they agree to provide during the life of the BID. Establishing close working relationships with the councils, police authority and other recognised agencies also means that the needs of the local business community can be better understood and acted upon.

There are over 315 established BIDs in the UK operating on a five year term. Towards the end of each term, a BID can be renewed by proposing a new Business Plan which businesses vote on to confirm whether they would like the BID to continue.

How is the BID funded?

The delivery of the BID business plan is funded by businesses in the BID area and aims to be both fair and transparent. As a result of the majority of businesses voting in favour of the business plan in 2014, all businesses in the area with a rateable value of £5,000 and above have been subject to the BID levy. This method of funding overcomes any problem of a few businesses paying for improvements that benefit the many.

Over the last five years the Luton BID has generated over £2 million in levy collection and additional funding and in-kind support which has been used to undertake the projects and activities identified by you, the businesses, as part of the BID Business Plan.

Who manages the BID?

The Luton BID Limited (the Company for Luton BID), is a not for profit company limited by guarantee. It has its own board made up of a cross-section of businesses from the BID area who volunteer their time free of charge. The Board is responsible for ensuring that BID projects and activities are undertaken in accordance with the BID Business Plan and that activities contribute towards the achievement of the overall vision.

The Luton BID has a dedicated Project Manager who applies his skills in the delivery of the projects identified by the businesses each year in accordance with the BID Proposal and Business Plan.

What are the BID's vision and objectives?

In short, this is for you, the Luton businesses, to decide. The vision for 2015–20 was to make Luton town centre a safer, more pleasant and, above all, more vibrant place to shop, eat, drink and do business.

As part of the renewal process we now need to establish the vision and objectives for the next five years. This will be done in the form of interviews, business workshops, and surveys. The findings from these will be used to form the basis of the BID Business Plan for the next five years and on which businesses will be voting early next year. This is your opportunity to have a say in helping to identify the key issues and opportunities which businesses want to tackle or take advantage of over the course of 2020–2025.

Luton Business Improvement District

How can I be sure my levy is spent appropriately?

Subject to a successful renewal ballot, the BID will deliver the changes, improvements and projects over the next five years (2020–2025) which form the Business Plan. The responsibility for ensuring that the BID adheres to the Business Plan as well as remaining financially accountable is that of the Luton BID Board.

It is also important to remember that the BID does not exist to replace the services provided by Luton Borough Council and other public bodies. Money generated through the BID is used for the improvements voted for by the businesses in the BID area and to deliver services which would not have happened without the BID.

How will this benefit my business?

The benefits of being part of an award-winning BID are numerous but may include some or all of the following:

- Delivery of practical projects and activities across a range of objectives identified and driven by Luton businesses
- Being part of a mechanism to bring businesses together and act as a collective voice
- Having involvement and a focus on encouraging growth, development and investment in the area
- Benefitting from increasingly effective working relationships between the BID, Luton businesses and partners, including Luton Borough Council
- Leveraging-in of funding and in-kind support in addition to the BID levy and which contributes to projects and activities in the BID area
- A focus on the delivery of measurable improvements to benefit all businesses.

How does a BID Renewal Ballot work?

Under the BID regulations the renewal ballot is administered by the legal and democratic services department at Luton Borough Council. In order for the proposals set out in the BID Business Plan to go ahead, more than 50% of business ratepayers who vote have

to vote 'YES'. In addition, those in favour also have to represent more than 50% of the combined rateable values of those who vote. If these two criteria are met, the BID is activated for the next five years and all businesses in the area will be required to pay the BID levy in accordance with the levy criteria.

Who decides and when?

The new BID Business Plan will be voted on in October 2019 by levy-paying businesses in the Luton.

The renewal ballot is your opportunity to create and vote 'YES' for a new business plan consisting of projects and activities which will maintain and continue to develop the Luton as a great destination and a great place to do business. If you would like the Luton BID to continue it is vitally important that you vote 'YES' so that your view is registered in the ballot.

What happens if I don't vote or vote 'no'?

If you do not vote you will not have a say in whether the Luton BID continues for a second term. If you vote 'no' you are declaring that you do not wish the Luton BID and its associated projects and activities to continue.

However, if the BID vote is successful you will be part of that BID for the next five years regardless of whether you did not vote or voted no.

What happens if the BID is not renewed?

The Luton BID has developed significantly over the last five years. Many of the improvements, activities and services seen in the town would not have been possible without businesses coming together under the auspices of the BID to drive positive change and create an environment which is not only attractive to visitors but is an excellent place to do business.

If businesses vote not to continue for a second term, the BID will cease operations as of 31st December 2019. All projects and activities delivered by the BID to support businesses and continue the development of Luton will stop and the town centre businesses will lose their collective voice within town groups and partnerships.