

AN ATTRACTIVE, VIBRANT CITY CENTRE

Inspiring a place powered by people,
pride, passion and productivity

ABERDEEN INSPIRED BUSINESS PLAN
2026 – 2031

ABERDEEN
inspired

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



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“Aberdeen Inspired has made a real difference to the city centre, especially during a period of significant change for Aberdeen.

Their collaborative, practical approach has helped bring businesses together and build confidence in the city. I’m pleased to support their new business plan and the positive role it sets out for Aberdeen Inspired in helping the city move forward over the next five years.”

SIR JIM MILNE, CBE, CHAIRMAN OF BALMORAL GROUP

FOREWORD

The challenges for our city centre keep coming thick and fast. As one hurdle is overcome, another barrier seems to be put in place. But it’s vital to keep moving forward, to keep believing in our city centre and in working to ensure it’s an attractive place to live, visit and do business.

Against the backdrop of significant construction works, bus gates and LEZ, continued competition from online retail and business rates increases, Aberdeen Inspired has steadfastly focused on what’s within our control.

We’ve facilitated and delivered projects and campaigns that enhance Aberdeen’s beating heart to the benefit of our levy payers and all who depend on a vibrant, attractive and safe city centre.

Our flagship projects such as Nuart Aberdeen, Aberdeen Restaurant Weeks, Shop Aberdeen and the Aberdeen Gift Card, as well as our involvement in the Tall Ships, the Christmas Village, Spectra and Aberdeen Comedy Festival have all delivered an increase in city centre footfall with tangible, measurable outcomes for levy payers.

As Aberdeen’s Business Improvement District (BID), Aberdeen Inspired harnesses the passion, pride and power of its levy payers to attract world-class events and to design and deliver initiatives that promote our city centre, helping to make it more attractive, safer and welcoming with a diverse range of culture, retail, hospitality and entertainment.

So much hinges on the success of our city centre – the attraction and retention of companies and the skilled people they need, the draw for visitors and citizens to boost the economy, the livelihoods of those in retail, leisure and hospitality and the enrichment of our communities.

In a period of uncertainty for Aberdeen’s economy, one thing remains certain – a vibrant, attractive, safe and connected city centre is more vital than ever.

And without Aberdeen Inspired that would be even more challenging to deliver.

This is why we need your vote as we embark on the statutory BID renewal process. A positive vote in the ballot is a vote for continued efforts, fresh ideas and new initiatives to restore confidence in our city centre.

Let’s work together to protect and increase the investment in our city centre, build momentum and provide a solid platform for a place powered by people, pride, passion and productivity.

Jeanette Forbes
Chair



A vibrant, attractive, safe and connected city centre is more vital than ever.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AS A BID, ABERDEEN INSPIRED IS REQUIRED TO BALLOT OUR LEVY PAYERS EVERY FIVE YEARS AND PART OF THE STATUTORY PROCESS INCLUDES THE PUBLICATION OF A NEW BUSINESS PLAN. THIS PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CRITICALLY REVIEW WHAT HAS BEEN DELIVERED AGAINST OUR KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TO UNDERTAKE EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION WITH LEVY PAYERS, GOVERNMENT AND OTHER PARTNERS.

This document sets out what we've achieved and what levy payers have told us they want to see delivered in the next BID period. We've consulted widely with all our stakeholders and had some compelling conversations with many of our levy payers. It's clear that there are very real challenges facing our city centre, many of which are outwith our control. But there's also a real desire to come together as a community, part of Team Aberdeen, to overcome these challenges and an appetite for greater ambition.

As a result, we have refined our priorities and delivery plans to meet the high expectations we've set for the next BID term. These revolve around place leadership to deliver an attractive and vibrant city centre that is safe, welcoming and connected and one which inspires us to talk up our city, not down.

At this juncture, it's worth a reminder of who we are and what we do.

Led and funded by our levy payers, Aberdeen Inspired exists to enhance the business environment within the city centre by making it more welcoming, attractive, vibrant, diverse and safer for everyone and with the overall aim of increasing footfall and dwell time which leads to greater spend in our shops, bars, hotels, restaurants and entertainment outlets.

We are uniquely placed to bring influence, investment and initiatives to the city centre, that would otherwise not exist, for the benefit of levy payers and the wider region. As a vocal and unified force for the health and fortunes of our city centre, Aberdeen Inspired represents and champions our levy payers and all the small and micro businesses and organisations which make up the diversity, vibrancy and appeal of our city centre and provide jobs for hundreds of local people.

We may be a small organisation but our determination, drive and continued belief in our city centre, despite all the challenges at both local and national levels, drives us to deliver in a big way. This is, of course, only possible with the contributions from levy payers, the support of our indefatigable (and unpaid) Board of Directors and the

genuine collaborations we have brokered and nurtured with our partners, including Aberdeen City Council and Police Scotland.

The Tall Ships, Our Union Street, Spectra and the Christmas Village are some examples of partner projects which would not have happened without Aberdeen Inspired.

Then there are the projects and initiatives led and delivered by Aberdeen Inspired such as Nuart Aberdeen, Aberdeen Restaurant Weeks, Shop Aberdeen and the Aberdeen Gift Card. Not to mention the additional funding we have leveraged that would otherwise not have been available. In the last 15 years, Aberdeen Inspired has secured over £32.6 million into the city centre. This means that for every £1 you invest through your levy, over £2 is reinvested into the city centre, a return unmatched by any other BID.

Before casting your vote, I'd encourage you to read more about these success stories to appreciate what has been delivered and the positive impact it has made to our levy payers and other businesses in the city centre.

And when it comes to the ballot, please carefully consider the resources we will need to continue to make Aberdeen's city centre more attractive, vibrant, welcoming, safer and connected.

Adrian Watson
Chief Executive



In the last 15 years, Aberdeen Inspired has secured over £32.6 million into the city centre.



ABERDEEN
inspired
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

DELIVERED FOR YOU. MADE POSSIBLE WITH YOUR LEVY

£33m
boost to
the economy



Nuart Aberdeen

Scotland's national street art festival and one of the top six street art festivals in the world - attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors.



Aberdeen Restaurant Weeks
biggest and most successful in
Scotland injecting

£1m

into the economy every year



Tackling the 'tough stuff'

regenerating Union Street's upper floors and creating a joined-up retail strategy for the city centre.



Aberdeen Gift Card generated

£7.5m sales

the most successful
gift card in the UK



Shop Aberdeen -
has people falling
in love all over again
with shopping in the
city centre.



Aberdeen Inspired is the voice and tireless champion for you, our levy payers.

Delivered for Aberdeen

In the last five-year term of the BID, Aberdeen Inspired exceeded its objectives, delivering a raft of projects, initiatives and events to address the priorities under the specific themes of promoting our city centre, helping our levy payers and other city centre businesses and making our city centre more attractive, more welcoming and safer.

This success is even more remarkable given that, at the start of the previous term, Aberdeen was just emerging from the global pandemic with all of the challenges this presented and a deeply uncertain time for our levy payers.

Here are just some of the results delivered by Aberdeen Inspired and made possible by your levy.

World-class events

Aberdeen Inspired was instrumental in bringing the Tall Ships Races back to our shores in 2025 after an absence of almost 30 years. The event attracted more than half a million visits and generated a £33m economic boost to the city. The largest free family event in Europe that year and the largest festival in Scotland was fully aligned to our objective of increasing footfall in the city centre all year round by expanding our nationally and internationally award-winning events portfolio.

Our successful efforts to secure and support the European Pipe Band Championships in 2023 resulted in an ROI of £8.84 generated for every £1 spent.

We've also been closely involved in delivering Spectra, Scotland's festival of light, which is now the largest of its kind in the country, drawing tens of thousands into the city centre during winter.

Our Christmas Village was voted the best festive attraction in Scotland in 2025 and the Aberdeen Comedy Festival, delivered with Aberdeen Performing Arts, attracted approximately 20,000 visitors to over 40 shows.



A united, vocal force for our city centre

As the single, credible voice for our city centre, we championed the issues that mattered to levy payers on the ground at local and national level.

Meaningful engagement with levy payers through our business networks and regular contact with local elected members, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Members of Parliament at Westminster, allowed us to lobby on the issues that affected our levy payers.

On the national stage we waved the flag for Aberdeen through our strategic positions on the most influential Scottish and UK place-making organisations, including being the National Chair for Scotland of the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) and director of Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP) and the prestigious High Streets UK group.

Shouting loudly and proudly

Taking every opportunity, we used our voice positively to shout loudly and proudly about the virtues of our city centre and the diverse offering of our levy payers.

Generating headlines in the traditional media, we delivered an advertising equivalent of around £2.4 million. Meanwhile on social media, our content was seen by almost 11 million people and over 400,000 people actively engaged with our posts.

The most successful local gift card in the UK

Around £7.5 million has been spent in our city centre through our Aberdeen Gift Card since it began in 2020.

The initiative, which encourages local spend by individuals and organisations, through the purchase of a single gift card, was expanded and extended to benefit more than 300 city centre businesses. The Aberdeen Gift Card is now the most successful of its kind in the UK, for the third consecutive year.



The biggest Restaurant Week in Scotland

Aberdeen Restaurant Week, now held twice a year, supports and showcases the hospitality sector by promoting special or themed foodie events and deals to increase business and attract a wider audience during traditionally “quiet” periods.

With a record-breaking 90 venues participating, generating a £1m annual boost to the economy, Aberdeen Restaurant Week is the largest initiative of its kind in Scotland.

A similar initiative was launched to provide specific support to our retail sector. Shop Aberdeen underlined that the city centre remained open for business during a challenging time by shining a light on the diverse range of retailers and their special offers.

These initiatives have inspired others such as the Aberdeen Beer Festival, Aberdeen Cocktail Week and the Big Belmont Bash, all of which Aberdeen Inspired has actively supported.



“Aberdeen Inspired understands the link between a strong cultural offer and successful city centres. Their work consistently reflects the interests of the city and the many businesses that depend on a vibrant and active centre. Their role in connecting cultural activity with wider place promotion and city centre initiatives is particularly valuable. This level of co-ordination and city-wide reach is not something individual organisations can achieve alone.

Their support of the Aberdeen Comedy Festival is a strong example of this impact. Through that partnership, we gain additional capacity to raise the profile of both the event and the city beyond Aberdeen, helping to attract visitors from the Central Belt and further afield. This broader reach directly supports hospitality, retail and the evening economy, while strengthening Aberdeen’s reputation as a cultural destination.”

SHARON BURGESS, CEO, ABERDEEN PERFORMING ARTS

In the Top Six of Street Art Festivals in the World

Nuart Aberdeen Street Art festival is the envy of the country and was recently ranked in the top six of street art festivals in the world by the Financial Times.

A vibrant street art festival that invites global artists to transform the city with stunning murals and installations, Nuart Aberdeen creates unique artwork that makes our city centre more attractive, increasing dwell-time and also creates a lasting cultural legacy that is enjoyed long after the festival has officially ended. Since its debut in 2017, Nuart has attracted tens of thousands of visitors to discover and wonder at the amazing artwork throughout the city centre.





“Aberdeen Inspired brings a clear, long-term vision for revitalising our city centre, supported by considerable, often unseen, work and collaborations behind the scenes. Continuing to drive progress, despite certain constraints outwith their control, there is a genuine commitment to delivering meaningful change. Transformation will not happen overnight, but strategic direction and consistent effort gives confidence in what can be achieved over the next five years. We’re happy to pay our BID levy because we see the value, dedication and momentum Aberdeen Inspired brings to the city.”

LORNA COUTTS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ASPC



“Aberdeen Inspired do great work behind the scenes and on the streets – the events they organise and enable bring thousands of people into our city for the benefit of local businesses and the broader community. The list of initiatives to improve our city centre, attract footfall and extend dwell-time is impressive; from Nuart Aberdeen, which has produced a stunning collection of world class street art, to the Tall Ships, Restaurant Weeks and Shop Aberdeen. None of these would have happened without Aberdeen Inspired.”

BOB KEILLER, OUR UNION STREET

Letters, Suspended Signs and Brollies add splashes of colour

The iconic ABERDEEN letters, which are illuminated and can be mobilised throughout the city centre for key events, currently stand proudly in Union Terrace Gardens. Highly instagrammable, the letters attract residents and visitors alike for photos and selfies, promoting their visit and the city.

Down at Shiprow, among other locations and outside offices, the Umbrella Project, in partnership with the ADHD Foundation, encouraged people to look up and admire the bright coloured installations while raising awareness of neurodiversity.

Our award-winning Suspended Signage lighting programme, with funding from the Scottish Government Town Centre Fund, literally shone a light on key locations within the city centre and enhanced our way-showing totems, helping to make Aberdeen a more pedestrian-friendly city.



Waving the Purple Flag for a safer city

Aberdeen Inspired took the lead on reconvening the City Centre Safety Partnership and on working with all partners, including Police Scotland, to make our city centre safer.

As a result of joined-up efforts, Aberdeen has secured its 12th consecutive Purple Flag accreditation, the only city in Scotland to hold this accolade which is awarded to cities that demonstrate vibrant and safe night-time economies.



Re-energising Union Street

The focused, community-led organisation, Our Union Street, was the direct outcome of our Emergency Summit to tackle the specific challenges facing our high street.

As one of the key funders, we work together to support the reinvigoration and reinvention of our main street, helping to fill vacant units and attract more and diverse businesses and people onto the Granite Mile.

Award-winning greening strategy

Our award-winning greening strategy has brought previously unloved spaces in the city centre to life with parklets and floral hanging baskets which not only transform our urban realm but encourage people to dwell longer.

Working with Aberdeen City Council and other partners, we secured national funding through, initially, the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS), and more recently from the Heritage and Place Programme to extend the projects.



Working for you

Aberdeen Inspired's board of non-executive directors provide governance and support to the executive team. Chaired by Jeanette Forbes, the board is made up of levy payers representing all sectors within the city centre; retail, hospitality, leisure, transport and professional services. Their ideas, expertise, encouragement and time, which are all given freely, ensures that our small organisation is well informed, well placed, well connected and better equipped to deliver.

Representatives from key partners in the public and third sectors also attend board meetings to allow for genuine collaboration among all those with a stake in our city centre.



Dr Jeanette Forbes OBE

CHAIR
SECTOR: TECHNOLOGY AND HOSPITALITY
A multi award-winning entrepreneur, Jeanette is founding CEO of PCL Group, a global provider of managed IT and cyber security services. Passionate about Aberdeen, her commitment to the city centre led her into hospitality with Grape & Grain and Mediterranean.



Duncan Cameron
MANAGING DIRECTOR, FIRSTBUS SCOTLAND
SECTOR: TRANSPORT

Born and raised in Aberdeen with experience in the haulage sector, Duncan was appointed as managing director of First Bus Scotland in 2021. He is responsible for over 2,000 employees delivering 95 million passenger journeys every year which underpin economic activity across towns and cities.



Elaine Farquharson-Black
BRODIES LLP
SECTOR: PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

A proud Aberdonian and accredited specialist in planning law, Elaine has a keen interest in place-making and the built environment with a shared vision for making Aberdeen city centre an attractive place in which to live, work and relax.



Franklin Martins
GENERAL MANAGER, IBIS HOTEL ABERDEEN
SECTOR: HOSPITALITY

An international hospitality executive for over 20 years across luxury and economy hotel operations, Franklin has experience in the Middle East and UK markets with a proven ability to deliver results in fast-paced, competitive environments.



Derren McRae
CO-FOUNDER, THE MCGINTY'S GROUP
SECTOR: HOSPITALITY

With a background in commercial property, Derren represents The McGinty's Group, a leading hospitality group with a range of venues across the North-east. It will operate "Flint", the new market development when it opens in 2027.



Gavin Paterson
GENERAL MANAGER, ABERDEEN DOUGLAS HOTEL
SECTOR: HOSPITALITY

With over 30 years in the hotel industry in Aberdeen with corporate brand hotels and now with an independent operator, Gavin has expertise in revenue management, sales & marketing, operations, personnel and branding.



Jason Stewart
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, ABERDEEN & GRAMPIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
SECTOR: BUSINESS

Jason leads the membership and commercial functions of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce which exists to support the interests of its 1,350+ member organisations, and generate the best possible conditions for businesses operating in North East Scotland.



Adrian Watson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

With a passion for and commitment to the city centre, Adrian has led Aberdeen Inspired since 2016, following 30 years' service in the police. He is National Chair for Scotland of the Association of Town & City Management and an Executive Director of Scotland's Towns Partnership.



Dominique Dawson
DIRECTOR, FINNIES THE JEWELLERS
SECTOR: RETAIL

Representing the third generation of the family-owned jeweller, Dominique is a qualified gemologist with an economics degree from the University of Aberdeen. Prior to joining Finnie's, she was manager for Chanel's fine jewellery boutique in Harrods.



Ryan Manson
CENTRE DIRECTOR, UNION SQUARE
SECTOR: RETAIL

Ryan represents Union Square, where he has overall responsibility for ensuring the delivery of a first-class retail and leisure destination that excites shoppers, continues to attract great brands and delivers positive impacts economically, socially and environmentally.



Amanda McCulloch
CEO, TMM RECRUITMENT LTD
SECTOR: PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

A recognised authority on financial resourcing, Amanda leads the award-winning specialist recruitment agency, TMM Recruitment and TMM Executive, an executive search and fractional leader service focused on the appointment of finance, operations and non-executive directors.



Zoe Ogilvie
CONSULTANT, BIG PARTNERSHIP
SECTOR: PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

A highly regarded public relations practitioner with over 30 years' experience in PR and communications in the UK and overseas, Zoe is a consultant to marketing communications agency, Big Partnership, which she helped found and grow in Aberdeen.



John Raine
CORPORATE RELATIONS, SHELL
SECTOR: ENERGY

With extensive experience across Shell's corporate relations organisation, combining complex project leadership, structured analysis, strategic communication, and stakeholder engagement, John has delivered programmes that create measurable social and economic value.



Sarah Stewart
JUNIPERS
SECTOR: RETAIL

A solicitor with over 18 years' experience in commercial property and now working as Legal Counsel for Elsieck Development Company, Sarah supports her husband in running the family business, Juniper, which was established in the city centre 53 years ago.

The Next Five Years

OUR STRATEGIC THEMES AND PRIORITIES

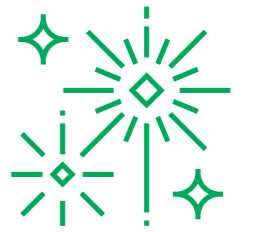
Following extensive consultation with, primarily, our levy payers but also all our partners and those with a stake in our city centre, Aberdeen Inspired has refined our strategic themes and priorities for the next five years.

From previous terms, we've learnt the importance of early, visible interventions to maintain confidence and the clear need for flexibility in responding to economic shocks and changing patterns of city centre use.

Our overriding ambition is to build on the momentum of the last five years with increased emphasis on targeted support, data led decision making and measurable outcomes to deliver a more attractive and vibrant city centre – one that is powered by people, pride, passion and productivity.

STRATEGIC THEME 1

An Attractive and Vibrant City Centre



PRIORITIES:

Securing world-class events, making existing events even better, driving footfall and new business, greening and brightening our city centre and its buildings.

In achieving these, we will:

- Continue to work closely with Aberdeen City Council, Port of Aberdeen and other partners to put forward a compelling bid to bring back the **Tall Ships Races** during this BID period.
- Work closely with partners to maximise the economic benefits for the city centre of the **World Rally Championship** in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire over a three-year period from 2027.
- Make our existing events portfolio more vibrant and appealing to all. This includes **expanding our Christmas Village footprint** to include many more local businesses, greater promotion and marketing around the globally acclaimed **Nuart Aberdeen** street art festival, working closely with Aberdeen Performing Arts to **grow the Aberdeen Comedy Festival** to increase the number of city centre venues that take part and rival similar festivals in Edinburgh and Glasgow.
- Augment our twice yearly, award winning, **Aberdeen Restaurant Weeks** which bring in over a million pounds a year to our city centre economy.
- Boost our retail sector specific **Shop Aberdeen** initiative, extolling the virtues of both local independents and our national retailers.
- Secure local and national funding to further **green** the city centre with a programme including additional **floral hanging baskets** to be rolled out, at no cost to levy payers.
- Set up a **cleaning and graffiti hit squad** to prioritise work on ridding our city centre of unsightly, illegal graffiti with Aberdeen City Council and other partners.
- **Clean more of our iconic granite buildings** on Union Street and the wider BID area. Options with partners have already been explored and will be progressed at speed.



STRATEGIC THEME 2



Safer, Welcoming and Connected

PRIORITIES:

Making our streets safer, more welcoming and inclusive, day and night, with a city centre that is easier to access, get around and get home from.

In achieving these, we will:

- Play a leading role in retaining the **Purple Flag** accreditation which ensures we have a safe environment which, in particular, **supports our evening and night-time economies**. We are the only city in Scotland to hold Purple Flag.
- Set up a **street ambassador programme** with Aberdeen City Council. Due to go live in spring 2026, this will provide a warm welcome to visitors to the city.
- **Tackle youth and anti-social and other unsafe activity** on our streets. Working with Aberdeen City Council, we will continue to develop our youth diversionary activity including the welcome addition of **two city centre youth workers** to engage with young people in the city centre.
- **Animate and draw attention** to landmark architecture and other structures with a **creative lighting** and video imaging strategy in the city centre that includes repeating eye-catching festive illuminations, such as 2025's Brewed Bright – sponsored by Costa Coffee.
- Extend our **suspended signage programme** as part of a city centre-wide creative lighting strategy that has already been agreed by Aberdeen City Council.
- **Promote greater inclusion** by continuing the **ADHD Umbrella Project** and working with Alzheimer's Scotland to reinforce our city centre as a **Dementia Friendly** place, building on the Trinity Centre becoming the first shopping centre in North-east Scotland to be recognised as dementia friendly.
- **Increase** the number of **defibrillators** located across key locations in the BID footprint in partnership with St John Ambulance Scotland.
- Roll out of the next generation of over **70 Wayshowing Totems** across the wider city centre and surrounding area in partnership with Aberdeen City Council.
- Influence the **improvement of night bus services and increase the provision of taxis** so people can get safely and easily into and home from the city centre.

- **Improve visitor connectivity** between the city centre and the P&J Live Arena and Conference Centre, to the benefit of both.
- Seek to **strengthen the provision of transport services** to and from the city centre by working closely with the rail companies and the airport.
- Continue to work with partners in developing the **Aberdeen Adventurer Tourist Bus** strategy and support the ever growing cruise market in the city.
- Enhance our evening and night-time economy through our **Alive After Five** initiative which encourages residents to eat, shop, drink and discover the city centre after 5pm, linked with the incentive of a **free parking pilot**.



STRATEGIC THEME 3



Talking up our City Centre

PRIORITIES:

Remain a strong and steadfast voice for our city centre businesses locally and nationally, promoting the city centre at every opportunity and inspiring a renewed sense of civic pride.

In achieving these, we will:

- Continue to be a **strong and steadfastly positive voice** for our city centre, inspiring a renewed sense of civic pride and championing our levy payers.
- Be a **driving force for and an advocate** of the 'Team Aberdeen' approach, relentlessly pushing the many positives of our safe and welcoming city centre.
- Explore new ideas and fresh campaigns to drown out the negative noise and **amplify the positive steps** being made to revitalise our city centre.
- **Actively participate** in business forums, including Visit Aberdeenshire and Event 365, to find new ways of increasing visitors to the city.
- **Increase our digital footprint** to ensure even more people, from far and wide, are engaging with content that promotes the city centre.
- Generate **positive headlines** in the local, national and international media at every opportunity, leveraging the credibility and in-house expertise we've built up.
- Win more national awards, not for vanity but to **underline our strategic intent**, validate the efforts of 'Team Aberdeen' and highlight our position as a leading BID in the UK and Ireland which **stamps our leadership and authority** on city centre revitalisation and helps secure additional funding.





Place Leadership

PRIORITIES:

Providing leadership for our city centre to create a real sense of place, galvanising businesses to help shape its future, securing investment and developing retail and property strategies.

In achieving these, we will:

- Provide **leadership** on the city centre with a **single, credible** voice that promotes the city centre, and **inspires a real sense of place** – a destination that is recognised as aspirational and vibrant.
- Shape and influence the **delivery of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-36 and the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan** and re-emphasise, at every turn, that we must build from the ‘heart of the city out’ to establish Aberdeen’s place as **the** regional city of the North-east.
- **Secure** further local and national funding to allow us to **lead in place making** initiatives and strategies that will **increase footfall** and, with that, **increase spend** in our city centre.
- **Use our executive positions** in both Scottish and UK wide place-making organisations to **influence and obtain national exposure** for our city centre businesses.
- Deliver an **evidence-based retail and property strategy**. With UK Government funding, we are already working with a leading, national retail strategist to develop a strategy – part of which will involve taking a ‘Team Aberdeen’ approach to attracting retailers and property developers.
- Continue to support the **Our Union Street** organisation in its endeavours to **fill the vacant premises** on our high street.
- Work with partners to **fill the upper floors** on Union Street through a clear strategy, which is already in development and celebrated UK wide.
- Through **effective representation and advocacy** on issues including rates, transport, safety and regeneration, we will continue to champion the many hundreds of levy paying businesses in our city centre, and **lobby decision-makers** on the local and national issues that affect them.
- **Tirelessly strive** to demand **Business Rates reform** to bring much needed relief to the majority of our levy payers.
- Through our highly-regarded business networks, we will continue to **engage meaningfully** with our levy payers on a regular basis.
- We’re proud that Aberdeen Inspired is a **Scottish pilot** for the **National BID Accreditation**, supporting our commitment to openness and strong governance.
- Continue to embrace the opportunities presented by the **Aberdeen Gift Card** in bringing millions of pounds worth of investment into the city centre over the next five years.



“Aberdeen Inspired has taken the Town & City Gift Card programme to new levels, delivering millions in additional spend for local businesses and establishing the Aberdeen Gift Card as the top-selling city card in the UK. By embracing new technology and engaging stakeholders, they have pioneered best practices that are now being shared across the country and internationally.”

COLIN MUNRO, MANAGING DIRECTOR, MICONEX



“The Tall Ships is a world-class event, and Aberdeen Inspired played a key role in securing it for Aberdeen and working in close partnership with the Port of Aberdeen and Aberdeen City Council to deliver it.

Through their collaborative efforts, Aberdeen Inspired has also helped grow the visitor economy through the cruise market in Aberdeen and, more generally, has delivered much to increase the overall vibrancy of the city centre.”

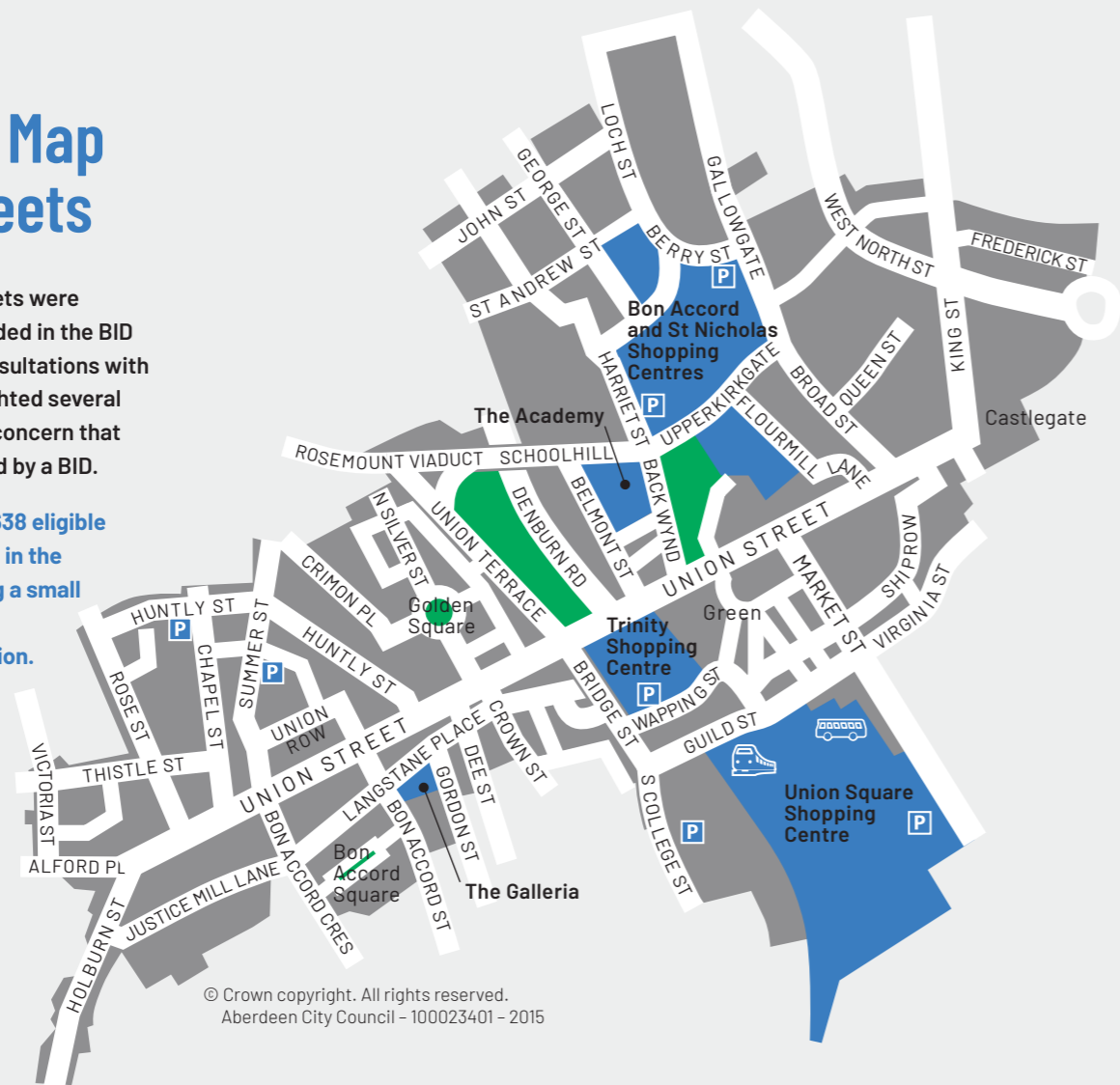
BOB SANGUINETTI, CEO, PORT OF ABERDEEN



The Bid Map and Streets

The following streets were chosen to be included in the BID footprint after consultations with businesses highlighted several common areas of concern that could be addressed by a BID.

There are around 638 eligible properties located in the BID area, excluding a small number currently under reconstruction.



Adelphi	Crown Street (as far as No. 27)	Justice Mill Lane	Stirling Street
Alford Place	Dee Street (as far as No. 16)	Langstane Place	Summer Street
Back Wynd	Denburn Road	Little Belmont Street	The Academy
Bath Street	Diamond Lane	Loch Street	The Galleria
Belmont Street	Diamond Street	Market Street (as far as Union Square Shopping Mall)	The Green
Berry Street	East Craibstone Street	McCombies Court	Thistle Street
Bon Accord Centre	Exchequer Row	Netherkirkgate	Thistle Lane
Bon Accord Square	Flourmill Lane	North Silver Street	Thistle Place
Bon Accord Street (as far as East Craibstone Street)	Frederick Street	Queen Street	Trinity Centre
Bon Accord Terrace	Gaelic Lane	Rennies Wynd	Trinity Street
Bridge Place	Gallowgate (as far as Spring Garden)	Rose Street (as far as No. 67)	Union Row
Bridge Street	George Street (as far as No. 230)	Rosemount Viaduct	Union Square Shopping Mall
Broad Street	Golden Square	Ruby Lane	Union Street
Carmelite Street	Guild Street	Schoolhill	Union Terrace
Carnegie's Brae	Hadden Street	Shiprow	Union Wynd
Castlegate	Harriet Street	South Silver Street	Upperkirkgate
Castle Street	Holburn Street (as far as No. 70)	St Andrew Street	Wapping Street
Chapel Street	Huntly Street	St Mary's Place	West Craibstone Street
College Street	John Street	St. Nicholas Centre	West North Street
Correction Wynd	King Street (as far as East and West North Streets)	St Nicholas Lane	Windmill Brae
Crimon Place		St Nicholas Street	

BID Renewal Management

BID STAFF

The Project Manager for the BID is Innes Walker, BID Consultant, while the BID Development Co-ordinator is Brian Morrice.

Both are accountable to the BID Renewal Working Group. Feedback from consultations between levy payers and Aberdeen Inspired staff have helped shape the business plan. They are both accountable to the BID Renewal Ballot Working Group.

BID RENEWAL BALLOT WORKING GROUP

The BID Renewal Ballot Working Group comprises a cross-section of the Aberdeen Inspired Board of Directors.

They are:

- **Jeanette Forbes**, representing the technology sector
- **Elaine Farquharson-Black**, representing the legal and professional services sector
- **Ryan Manson**, representing the retail sector
- **Gavin Paterson**, representing the hotel sector
- **Derren McRae**, representing the hospitality sector

The working group provides direction on the development and renewal of the BID and BID development staff. Ultimately all key decisions relating to the developing BID have been taken by the BID Renewal Ballot Working Group on behalf of Aberdeen Inspired Board of Directors.

Management of the BID

Following a successful yes vote, the management and operation of the BID will be undertaken by the BID management company, Aberdeen Inspired, with the new business plan commencing on 1st July 2026.

The Company will be run by the businesses for the businesses and will operate in a transparent way, answerable to the businesses in the BID footprint. There will be a detailed set of protocols which will cover the management of the BID Company and billing, collection and transfer of the levy.

A Board of Directors has been established, comprising up to 15 individuals. 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 onto the Company Board, but limited to one eligible person from each eligible property. 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.

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

The 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 businesses and without recourse to an alteration ballot.

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





The BID Levy

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.

It has been agreed by the BID Board and the Renewal Ballot Working Group that the rate will comprise 1.25% levy based on the rateable value of the property on the day of the ballot (**25th June 2026**). This will rise to 1.35% in year 2, 1.4% in year 3, 1.45% in year 4 and 1.5% in year 5. The BID levy will be index linked and tied to CPI 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 3% per annum, based on the previous year's levy to take account of inflation.

The threshold for payment of the levy is a non-domestic rateable value of £27,500 and above. The BID levy will be calculated on the Rateable Value of the properties in the BID area on the day of the ballot (**25th June 2026**). In the event of doubt, the rateable value of any commercial premises in Scotland can be accessed by searching on the Scottish Assessor's Association website; www.saa.gov.uk.

There are around 617 business properties in Aberdeen's BID area (see page 18 for a map), which will together generate a total income of around £758,000 per annum, in year 1, rising to £928,000 in year 5, and an estimated total levy income of £4.3m over five years. This does not include voluntary or external funding contributions.

All eligible non-domestic properties (i.e. the eligible person, those who are liable to pay the non-domestic rate) that are listed on the Local Assessor's Valuation Roll on the ballot date will be liable.

There are currently around 535 separate eligible persons in respect of all the properties, with a significant number being responsible, individually or corporately, for more than one property.

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 although in the case of a special arrangement with the billing body this may be split into a maximum of four instalments.

The property owner will be liable to pay the levy where the property is vacant on the day the levy invoice is issued and for all of the period thereafter while the property is vacant.

Any new commercial development, sub division of existing properties or merging of properties or new businesses with a non-domestic rateable valuation of or above the threshold coming in to the BID area during the five-year lifetime of the BID will be liable for the levy.

Where a property is taken out of rating (e.g. due to demolition, division or merger) the BID levy for that individual property will be due up to the date of the removal from the Rating List and the annual BID levy will be apportioned accordingly.

Exclusions

The BID Board decided to exclude premises that have a rateable value of under £27,500. These premises can pay a voluntary levy and become an "associate member" should they wish.

Voluntary contributions and other funding

The BID will endeavour to secure voluntary contributions from owners of properties outwith the BID area, or owners of properties who fall below the current threshold, as well as other external funding partners where possible. These voluntary contributions, which will inevitably vary from year to year, will be paid into the Aberdeen BID Revenue Account.

In 2025-26 this accounted for an additional £8,000 in revenues. Whilst this amount cannot be assumed every year, it is hoped that a similar level of additional funding will be secured year on year.

The BID Board decided that there is no benefit from being part of the BID to certain categories of property and therefore nursing homes, non-retail charities, places of worship and ATMs are exempt.

The Levy Tables

The table below illustrates the annual, monthly and daily cost of BID membership.

YEAR 1

RATEABLE VALUE OF BUSINESS	ANNUAL COST OF 1.25% LEVY	MONTHLY COST OF 1.25% LEVY	DAILY COST OF 1.25% LEVY
£27,500	£343.75	£28.65	£0.94
£50,000	£625.00	£52.08	£1.71
£100,000	£1,250.00	£104.17	£3.42
£250,000	£3,125.00	£260.42	£8.56
£500,000	£6,250.00	£520.83	£17.12

YEAR 5

RATEABLE VALUE OF BUSINESS	ANNUAL COST OF 1.5% LEVY	MONTHLY COST OF 1.5% LEVY	DAILY COST OF 1.5% LEVY
£27,500	£412.50	£34.35	£1.12
£50,000	£750.00	£62.40	£2.04
£100,000	£1,500.00	£125.00	£4.10
£250,000	£3,750.00	£312.50	£10.26
£500,000	£7,500.00	£624.99	£20.50

The table below illustrates the number of businesses in each Rateable Value (RV) band

RATEABLE VALUE BAND	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES	TOTAL RATEABLE VALUE
£27.5K - £30K	47	1.36m
£30K - £40K	116	4.03m
£40K - £60K	133	6.48m
£60K - £100K	137	10.47m
£100K - £200K	108	15.13m
£200K - £500K	64	18m
£500K+	12	9.56m
Total	617	65.03m

The table below illustrates all the sectors within the BID footprint

BUSINESS SECTOR	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES	% OF BUSINESSES
Accommodation	18	2.92%
Car Parks	12	1.94%
Charity	9	1.46%
Entertainment/Leisure	24	3.89%
Food and Beverage	39	6.32%
Licensed Premises	108	17.50%
Property	8	1.30%
Public Services	31	5.02%
Retail	128	20.75%
Health	21	3.40%
Office	109	17.67%
TBC	110	17.83%
Total	617	100%



Collection of the BID Levy

Aberdeen City Council will collect the investment levy on behalf of the BID. This ensures a secure, efficient and cost-effective method of collection. Aberdeen City 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 Aberdeen City Council nor can it be used by the Council as an additional source of income.

The first BID levy will be due in July 2026, and on the first day of each financial year thereafter. Payment must be made within 28 days from the date of the levy invoice.

Enforcement

In the event of any non-payment of the BID improvement levy, it will be strongly pursued by Aberdeen City Council using the recovery powers available to them to ensure complete fairness to all the businesses that have paid. Aberdeen City 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 notice in writing requesting the local authority to instruct the ballot holder to hold a BID ballot in relation to the BID proposals. 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, 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 42 days before the day of the ballot. In the case of national companies, the responsibility for voting may lie with head office. Where an eligible property is vacant the voting papers will be sent to the property owner.

Prior to or on the date the ballot papers are issued, the BID Proposer will provide a copy of the Business Plan to all those eligible to vote in the ballot. 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 BID ballot is a confidential postal ballot conducted by Aberdeen City Council on behalf of Aberdeen Inspired and in accordance with Scottish BID legislation. In Aberdeen BID's case, voting papers will be issued no later than 14 May 2026.

The deadline for all ballot papers to be returned is 5pm on 25 June 2026. Papers received after this date and time will be deemed null and void.

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.

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 the turnout, the majority must vote in favour by number and combined rateable value.

The ballot papers will be counted on 26 June 2026 and the results announced by Aberdeen City Council within one week.

Following a successful ballot, the BID will commence on 01/07/2026 and will run for a period of five years until 30/06/2031.

BID Ballot Timetable

PROCEDURE	TIME	DATE
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 ballot. <i>Aberdeen Inspired confirmed this on 9 June 2025.</i>	11/12/2025
BID Review	BID project should be reviewed, and agreement reached as to whether a positive ballot is achievable or not. If a positive ballot is not achievable, then the BID should not go to ballot.	19/02/2026
Last day for the submission of the BID proposal to the local authority and Scottish Ministers	Regulation 5 (2) (a) (i) At least 98 days* before the day of the ballot in accordance with regulation 4. *This would give the local authority at least 28 days to consider proposals before deciding whether or not to exercise veto.	19/03/2026
Local authority to confirm that 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.	16/04/2026
The BID Proposer requests local authority to instruct ballot holder to hold ballot	Regulation 5 (2) (a) (ii) and (b) The request to hold a ballot should be at least 56 days* before the ballot date. *To allow time to put in place ballot arrangements, before issuing ballot papers (at least 42 days before ballot), it is recommended that the request to hold a ballot should be made at least 56 days before the ballot date.	30/04/2026
The local authority instructs the ballot holder to hold BID ballot	Regulation 6	30/04/2026
Ballot holder puts in place arrangements to hold BID ballot	Regulation 8	14/05/2026
Issue of ballot papers	Schedule 2, para. 3 42 days before ballot date.	14/05/2026
Spoilt ballot papers	Schedule 2, para. 11 Spoilt ballot papers may be replaced at any time from the issue of ballot papers.	
Publication of notice of ballot (by ballot holder)	Schedule 2, paras. 2(c) and 3 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).	14/05/2026
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.	14/05/2026

BID Ballot Timetable

PROCEDURE	TIME	DATE
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.	15/06/2026
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.	16/06/2026
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.	20/06/2026 By 5pm
Ballot Day	Schedule 2, para. 2 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 Item 7).	25/06/2026 By 5pm
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.	26/06/2026
Declaration of results	Schedule 2, Para 17 (2) The ballot holder, having made the certification under subparagraph (1) Shall: (a) forthwith make a declaration of the matters so certified; and (b) Give public notice of the matters so certified as soon as practicable and within 7 days after the counting of the votes.	03/07/2026

Public Sector BID Involvement

Baseline Services

A baseline service agreement ensures the BID does not use the levy money to duplicate any services provided by Aberdeen City Council and Police Scotland. The services directly delivered by the BID must be 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. Additionally, a baseline agreement avoids the risk that public agencies including Aberdeen City Council will not reduce its statutory level of service to the BID area following a successful ballot.

Finances

Estimated Income and Expenditure

It is noted that there are circa 617 eligible properties located within the BID area (this figure may change as businesses move, expand or close). The BID levy income is therefore calculated to be approximately £758,000 per annum, in year 1, rising to £928,000 in year 5.

The average BID levy collection rate for Aberdeen Inspired is 89.4%. A corresponding amount has been set aside in the budget under 'contingency' to allow for any bad debt.

The BID will endeavour to secure voluntary contributions from property owners outwith the BID area, owners of property who fall below the current threshold, as well as other external funding partners where possible, to increase the amount available to spend on projects as they develop.

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

Financial Management Arrangements

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 patterns and requirements. Any variations within budgets will be reported to the Board of Directors.

Aberdeen City Council will collect the levy payments on behalf of the BID and will retain these funds in a separate account until the BID Board draws 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.

Contact Information

For more information, contact our BID Renewal Consultant, Innes Walker

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ABERDEEN
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BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Contact

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