



**Working together to get us
through a difficult time**

**Advice for Improvement
Districts in Scotland**



Advice for BIDs **currently** going through the ballot process

In discussion with the Scottish Government, we have developed the following advice and guidance for Business Improvement Districts currently going through the ballot process, whether a first-time or a renewal ballot.

- Given the scale of disruption and uncertainty, we are advising developing BID projects to consider pausing projects for a **3-month period**.
- This should be done by agreement between the Steering Group, Local Authority and other stakeholders in order to save resources and allow existing staff in key organisations to focus on crisis management and resilience.
- Steering Groups should develop a short and succinct communication by way of an email or short newsletter to eligible BID voters to explain the decision to postpone the BID project **BEFORE** notifying any other stakeholders.
- In discussion with the Local Authority, provide a short statement to the local media and upload it to your website. This should be a short statement, an example of which is outlined below.

Draft Q&A – Suggested Responses

1. Why have you postponed your ballot?

The Steering Group for our BID project is made up of local business owners. Given the advice and guidance from the Scottish and UK Governments, and understanding the strain and pressure our local businesses are facing, we have decided to postpone the project to allow all our efforts to focus on working together to support each other through this challenging time.

2. Who made the decision?

We are following the advice given to us by the Scottish Government who have the national oversight for BIDs legislation. We have also consulted with our Local Authority and Scotland's Improvement Districts, the national centre for BIDs in Scotland.

3. When will the ballot take place?

We've suspended the project for an initial period of 3 months, but that will be subject to review and the advice and guidance issued from the Scottish and UK Governments.

4. Aren't you just postponing this because you're worried you'll lose?

We started this project, as a group of local businesses, because we passionately believe a BID would have a really positive impact on our local economy and on local communities. We still believe that, indeed, the challenges we will face in helping town centres to recover after the crisis subsidies make co-ordinated action even more necessary. However we've taken this decision because it's the right thing to do. Local businesses have enough to worry about, and now is the time for us all to work together to address the immediate challenges at hand.

5. So what work will you be doing now?

We aren't a BID yet, so we don't have a mandate to undertake any formal programmes, but we are local business owners and local people. We'll be joining the collective effort to bring everyone together to do what we can to support local people and local businesses to get through what might be a very challenging time.

Draft media statement

STATEMENT: INSERT NAME postpones BID project in light of coronavirus pressures and Scottish Government advice

INSERT NAME, Chair of the Steering Group and INSERT JOB TITLE, said:

"Following the advice issued by the Scottish and UK Governments in relation to the measures that need to be taken to tackle the coronavirus crisis, INSERT NAME has decided to postpone the BID project for an initial 3 month period, subject to review, to ensure that all efforts are focussed on supporting local businesses, local communities and our town centres.

"This was the advice and guidance provided by the Scottish Government to all BID projects across Scotland currently going through the ballot process, and the decision was taken in consultation with our Local Authority, Scotland's Improvement Districts, the national centre for BIDs in Scotland, and our Steering Group made up of local businesses. As local people and business owners, we will now be joining the collective effort to help our community get through a difficult time for our town centre."

ENDS

General advice for **existing** BIDs

- It's important that BIDs in Scotland maintain a sense of calm and "business as usual" as far as possible.
- Whilst it won't be possible for BIDs to undertake their full range of activities, there are lots of things you can do to help local businesses and demonstrate the value of their membership.
- During this period of disruption, it will be important to be as visible and helpful as possible, as many BIDs are already doing.

BID Levy

- Invoices should continue to go out.
- Those who can pay should pay to help keep the BID solvent and allow it to provide support to businesses during this difficult time.
- Those who can't pay should either pay by instalments or have a 3 month payment holiday (no collection by Sheriff Officers) and when business is back to normal arrange to pay arrears.

Working Practices

- Set up Crisis support tools - web, bulletins, webinars etc.
- Agile and remote working using technology.
- Consider part-time and flexitime working.

This is advice and guidance based on what we think are the challenges facing most BIDs in Scotland. However, any final decision should be made by the BID Company and Local Authority as circumstances will vary considerably.

How **existing** BIDs can add value during COVID-19: some tips and advice

There are two main ways you can support your local businesses:

1. Signpost them to the support and help that's available from the Scottish and UK Governments and ensure they are kept up to date.

The Scottish and UK Governments have both announced a series of measures to support local businesses.

- Support available from the UK Government can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19>
- Details of forthcoming Scottish Government support can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/news/gbp-320-million-package-of-support-for-businesses/>
- Send out a newsletter or an email to your businesses highlighting the support that's available from the Scottish and UK Governments.
- Send regular updates as new advice and support becomes available.
- It's important to keep an eye on both the Scottish (www.gov.scot) and UK (www.gov.uk) websites for any further updates and for details of how to access the recently announced support arrangements.

2. Develop new ideas about valuable services you can provide and things you can do to help local businesses within the confines of the Government's advice

- Liaise with local councillors, MSPs and MPs to ensure they're aware of the needs of BID members and any initiatives taking place.
- Provide conference call or video call options to local businesses with Council Officers who may be able to provide more detailed advice on available support.

- Join local community initiatives to help support local people and local businesses and think creatively about new initiatives that comply with the Government's guidelines.
- Signpost local businesses to online training and resources which could help improve their ability to trade online and via delivery.
- Liaise with local economic development agencies and the Council and provide important intelligence on the support required locally.
- Think Local, Think Social - develop social media content to link residents to local businesses that have set up innovative ways of trading within the confines of the Government's advice.
- Planning "shop local" campaigns during/post crisis – depending on advice from the Government.
- Running webinars, producing advice packs for business e.g. accountancy/contingency planning etc.
- Signpost businesses to the public health advice available from the Government.

Emergency contacts

- For logistical enquiries about BIDs, contact:

Phil Prentice | phil@improvementdistricts.scot | 0131 247 1439
Bill Harvey | bill@improvementdistricts.scot | 0131 247 1439

- For emergency communication support, contact:

Gareth Brown | gareth@messagematters.co.uk | 0131 516 5613