

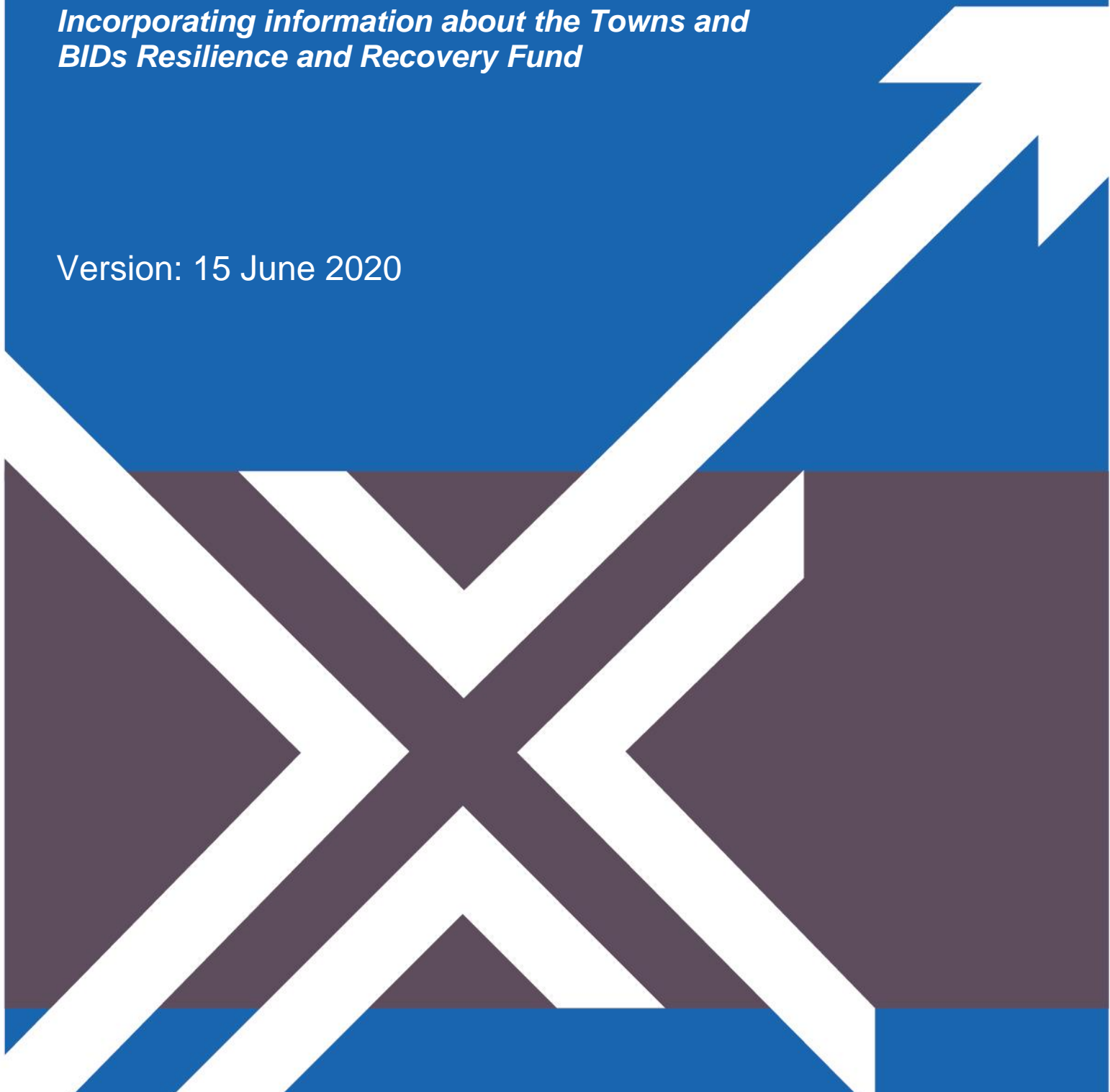


COVID-19 Recovery Phase

Advice and Support for Improvement Districts

*Incorporating information about the Towns and
BIDs Resilience and Recovery Fund*

Version: 15 June 2020



Scotland is beginning to move from the 'resilience' to the 'recovery' phase of the coronavirus crisis. As during the resilience phase, Business Improvement Districts have a vital role to play as part of the local response to support local businesses and communities.

Where you can agree a response role with Local Government, Scottish Government will help resource your continuity via the COVID-19 Towns and BIDS Resilience and Recovery Fund, [announced 12 June 2020](#), which be administered by Scotland's Towns Partnership via Scotland's Improvement Districts - www.improvementdistricts.scot.

BIDs Resilience and Recovery Fund

In March when the United Kingdom went into lockdown, Scotland's Towns Partnership, on behalf of all operational Business Improvement Districts in Scotland, asked BIDs and Local Authorities wherever possible, to pause the collection of BID Levies from 1 April 2020 for a period of 6 months. In addition, the Scottish Government supported BIDs via the £1 million COVID-19 BID Resilience Fund. In response, Business Improvement Districts have undertaken a wide range of response activities to help increase local businesses and community resilience during.

We are now seeing some restrictions ease and some shops and offices reopening. If the phased approach is successful we will see further relaxation as we move through the Scottish Government's [Route Map](#) out of the crisis.

It is vital that BIDs help with the efforts to support the reopening of our local economies and to support communities back to the high street and town centre. We encourage BIDs to remain on an emergency footing to deliver support, and to continue to work with the local council, agencies, businesses, neighbouring districts and towns, local communities, and charities etc to prepare for the re-opening and recovery of town centres, city districts and economic sectors.

To aid you do so this, SID's welcomes the announcement by Communities Secretary Aileen Campbell to provide additional funding of £700,000 to BIDs, to continue to support you for a further six months beyond the current BIDs Resilience Fund period.

In addition, as part of the Towns and BIDs Resilience and Recovery Fund, the Scottish Government has announced [an additional £1 million funding stream](#), available from Monday 15 June, aimed primarily at towns which to not benefit from having the presence of a BID.

Application and Support

For BIDs, the application for the COVID-19 Towns and BIDs Resilience and Recovery Fund will be made available on the Scotland's Improvement Districts website in early September, to enable funding awards to be agreed to cover the period October 2020 – March 2021.

SIDs is also operating a dedicated email and phone service to respond to any queries about the recovery fund and any other questions or needs your BID has in responding to the coronavirus crisis:

SIDs support helpline: 07866 590 533.

SIDs support email: support@improvementdistricts.scot.

Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020: Postponement of Renewal Ballots

The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 allows Business Improvement Districts to extend their current terms where a renewal ballot is due before 31st March 2021. You can view the legislation [here](#) (Schedule 7, Art. 31).

Under the terms of the Act, Operational BIDs whose “operational term” is due to end between the 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2021, may extend their operational term until the 31st March 2021.

BID Levy and Voluntary Contributions From October 2020: Advice for Local Authorities

Scotland's Improvement Districts is offering the following advice to Improvement Districts and Local Authorities for the recovery phase regarding levy invoices and payments:

- 1) As the restrictions on towns and cities begin to ease and the economy restarts, BIDs which have paused levy collection, now need to open up a dialogue with council colleagues around issuing levy invoices.

- 2) Please remember that council revenue teams are stretched, therefore planning in advance and agreeing on an approach makes sense.
- 3) Again, one size won't fit all, so aim to agree an appropriate local solution based on current circumstances. However as a pragmatic approach, we recommend issuing full annual invoices, discounted between 30% to 50%.
- 4) Some BIDs may prefer to simply issue full invoices to see the response they receive.
- 5) With levy invoices, it may be recommendable to send a covering letter from the BID Chair and CEO outlining your approach/achievements to date and how you will assist moving forward with recovery.
- 6) In terms of collection and enforcement, BIDs are recommended to be conscious and sympathetic towards those businesses which may be unable to open or operate at full capacity in light of the public health guidelines in place at the time.
- 7) We would also encourage you to try to bring in voluntary contributions, sponsorship and external funding wherever possible.
- 8) Where a joint response is agreed between the local authority and the BID, we would expect existing public sector BID members to continue to pay the levy.

BIDs Response to COVID-19: Recommended Recovery Measures

Those benefitting from the Towns and BIDs Resilience and Recovery Fund would be expected to adopt recovery strategies along the following lines, tailored to local needs and circumstances.

Partnership

You are encouraged to speak to your liaison contact in Local Government to agree a COVID-19 Recovery Plan. Other partners could include Business Gateway, Scottish Enterprise, Visit Scotland, Development Trusts, Community Groups, Housing Associations, FSB, Chamber of Commerce, sector specific umbrella bodies etc.

Scotland's Improvement Districts will assist by hosting the very latest relevant links on our website - www.improvementdistricts.scot.

Advice, Information and Support

BIDs have key contact details, databases, social media and communications assets that allow you to cascade critical information and advice to your members and other local businesses as well as the wider community.

BIDs should continue to be a local information source for businesses and a source of partnership intelligence. This includes communicating all the latest links and information on reopening guidelines, funding support, and 'open for business' guides.

Project Suggestions

- Share sector guidance on how to reopen compliantly and “what’s open” information.
- Develop social media, print and local campaigns around a ‘love local’ message.
- Help with the supply of PPE and social distancing infrastructure (2m markers, sneeze screens, Perspex shields, hand sanitising equipment etc).
- Set up hyper-local delivery mechanisms to assist Housing Associations, Charities and Community Groups to support vulnerable groups.
- Develop systems to help businesses survive - e.g. FB pages to promote local goods and services that can be delivered online or in line with Scottish Government health advice (e.g. plumbing, heating, food delivery etc).
- Run webinars and local awareness updates on how to access existing help and support, drawing on local expertise where appropriate.
- Ensure COVID-19 responses are targeting all local businesses irrespective if they are in the BID geography or exempted from levy; also try to partner with surrounding towns or districts which may not have the benefit of a BID delivering a COVID-19 recovery plan.
- Develop or strengthen links with local Housing Associations, Development Trusts, Charities, Social Enterprises, and Health and Care Partnerships etc.
- Think of ways to support key workers, the NHS and our Emergency Services – from fundraising to local rewards.
- Develop digital assets to help connect different demographics to the town – cycling, walking trails, local knowledge competitions, app trails, and retailer vox pops on their business and products.

- Mobilise philanthropic champions to spearhead investment and to set up local crowd funding platforms to provide those self-isolating or shielding the opportunity to contribute.
- Explore the option to repurpose environmental teams, street ambassadors or volunteer groups to assist local authorities with the management of public spaces and streets as lockdown is eased.

Further Support for BIDs

Some of the key information portals listing sources of support which may be relevant to BIDs and their levy payers are provided below.

- [UK Government – Guidance for Employees, Employers and Businesses.](#)
- [Scottish Government: Coronavirus Advice for Businesses in Scotland.](#)
- [Business Gateway - Guidance for Business Owners in Scotland on Coronavirus.](#)
- [Federation of Small Businesses: Coronavirus Support Hub](#)
- [SCDI Directory of Business Support](#)
- [Support and Guidance for the Tourism & Events Industries](#) (VisitScotland)
- [Resources – Scotland's Improvement Districts](#)

Please also see Scotland's Towns Partnership's directory of COVID-19 related funding and support for towns, improvement districts, businesses and communities [here](#).