

Agenda Item	4
Report No	CIA/22/21

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness Area Committee

Date: 26th August 2021

Report Title: Annual Report on Inverness Business Improvement District

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Inverness City Area Manager

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the activities of the Inverness BID Ltd, operating as Inverness City Centre Business Improvement District (BID), for the period February 2020 to July 2021.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. endorse the work detailed in this report; and
- ii. note the presentation provided by Inverness BID representatives and the on-going development of partnership working.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

Since April 2017 the costs of collecting the Levy by the Highland Council have been met by BID from its levy income. Collection is administered by the Council as part of the collection arrangements for Non –Domestic Rates.

There are no additional resource implications other than those detailed in the report.

3.2 Legal

The roles and responsibilities of the Council and Bid are managed in accordance with the Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Business Improvement Districts (Scotland) Regulations.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)**

No Implications

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever**

The Partnership working **undertaken** with the Inverness BID assists in progressing Council Policies which promote a Low Carbon Economy

3.5 **Risk**

No Implications

3.6 **Gaelic**

No Implications

4. Background

- 4.1 BID is a private sector led initiative where businesses, within the clearly defined geographical City Centre area (**see Appendix 1**), work together, investing through payment of a BID levy to collectively deliver projects over an agreed period that will have benefit to the trading economy of that area.
- 4.2 BID is an independent, not-for-profit company limited by guarantee which is entirely separate from the Council. BID is run by a Board of 17 Directors (**see Appendix 2**) drawn from Members of the Company in the Retail, Hospitality, Office & Property Owner sectors of businesses located within the City Centre.
- 4.3 BID started operations in April 2008 as one of the first in Scotland and there are now 34 operational BIDs in Scotland with a further 30 in varying stages of development across a range of sectors (City Centre, Tourism, Business Park etc.) They are being used as the primary mechanism for the business community to collectively create a budget which can be used flexibly to promote business growth.
- 4.4 BIDs are supported by the Scottish Government as part of its economic strategy with the Scotland Towns Partnership recently took over as the Government's agent for BIDs.
- 4.5 BID is now 3 months into the 4th year of its third 5-year term of operation following a formal Renewal Ballot organised by The Highland Council held in March 2018. That ballot confirmed the support of the City Centre business with a massive 77% vote in favour of BID continuing the project.
- 4.6 BID's remit as agreed by BID levy payers and set out in its Business Plan 2018-23, is to deliver a series of projects and services to improve "the trading environment of Inverness City Centre to the benefit of the business levy payers, their customers, clients and visitors"
- 4.7 The BID Business Plan 2018-23 was developed following consultation with the City Centre businesses. It was supported by this Committee at your meeting on 30th November 2017. The Key focus in the Business Plan is on:
- Marketing the City Centre – attracting people to a vibrant and thriving City Centre.
 - Enhancing the City Centre – enhancing the experience and fabric for visitors and residents alike.
 - Engaging and Championing the City Centre – engaging to champion the City Centre and its businesses.
 - A Safe and Welcoming City Centre – essential that the BID area is viewed as Safe & Secure.

5. Benefits and Partnership Working

- 5.1 Governance of BID rests with its Board of Directors who report to their 850+ members of the Company on a regular basis, with their AGM held each Spring. The Directors are drawn from representatives of each of the business sectors in the City Centre. Board Membership is shown at **Appendix 2**.
- 5.2 The Inverness Provost & Leader of the City is a Member of the Board of Directors and attends Board Meetings, which are held approximately every six weeks. The primary links to the Council are through the Provost/Leader of the City and the Inverness City

Area Manager. The Area Manager meets with the BID Manager on a regular basis to ensure consistent communication at City level.

- 5.3 There is a focus on the need to promote economic vibrancy, which is at the heart of the objectives of the Councils Programme, the Inverness City Vision and the City Area Priorities with BID is clearly aligned with these ambitions.

6. The Role of BID During Covid

- 6.1 As with many businesses the pandemic increased BIDs workload and changed the emphasis of its work which it delivers through a small staff of BID Manager, Administration & Communications Manager, BID Ambassador (part-time) and Community Safety Manager.

- 6.2 Since the initial lockdown being announced for 22nd March 2020 BID has continued to operate throughout the various stages of Covid and lockdown by:

- Disseminating clear and concise information and advice to businesses on a wide range of topics including grant support, government/agency guidance etc
- Keeping their website updated with all relevant information for businesses on Scottish Government guidance and business support.
- Signposting businesses to support agencies as required
- Liaising with other agencies in the UK (e.g. ATCM, STP, BIDs etc) as to the best available practice
- Representing the interests of the City Centre businesses of all sizes (independent or national) in relevant forums
- Promoting the Inverness City Centre Heroes Awards
- Working with Highland Council Officers and other agencies in a number of different forums for the benefit of the economy, businesses and local residents. This included proactively engaging and creating a comprehensive City Centre Re-opening Strategy.
- Developed a new website including a full business directory of the City Centre.
- Co-ordinating and delivering 4 digital City Centre Treasure Trails to give families a fun free activity to take part in, in a safe environment during holiday periods to encourage people back to move around the City Centre
- Promoting the City Centre as well as the individual businesses which operated during lockdown
- Highlighting the adapted services that individual businesses provided on social media and creating/updating easy to access lists of information to keep the public informed.
- Initiated and co-ordinated marketing campaigns including:
 - Bounce back campaign with Highland News Media – this successful 13-week campaign sought to give confidence to the public and businesses on the future of the City Centre
 - Inverness Loves Local campaign – a social media campaign promoting local, independent businesses in the run up to Christmas giving them a platform to individually highlight their business and an opportunity to showcase their festive products.
 - Christmas Marketing campaign – MFR Christmas campaign with 3 revolving adverts promoting Independent Shops, Festive Cheer (hospitality), “Anchor” Stores
 - Festive Bounce back campaign including a unique 8 page Christmas supplement with Highland News Media and weekly blog in the run up to Christmas with Nicky Marr

- April/May 21 “Focus on “Inverness City Centre” at the time of reopening through
 - a) MFR – extensive radio campaign featuring 4 different adverts
 - b) HNM - unique 4-page Inverness Courier ‘Welcome Back’ wraparound
 - c) Tay FM, Northsound 1 & MFR - Staycation radio advertising campaign covering Dundee, Perth, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highlands plus competition on each of the stations
- All of the above were complimented by a social media campaign with promoted posts targeting selected audiences on social media.

6.3 The important role that BID played during the initial pandemic was recognised by Scotland’s Towns Partnership by the award to Inverness BID in November 2020 of a coveted ‘High Street Heroes’ Award - BID was one of only 5 Scottish BIDs to be so recognised from the 32 Scottish local authority areas.

6.4 As with all businesses BID has faced a challenging time financially having to address that their income comes by way of a BID levy from the property owners and trading businesses in the City Centre. Initially BID offered deferred collection of levy for 2020/21 for 6 months and then has been able to offer a grant refund of 25% of the 2020/21 BID levy to the City Centre businesses.

6.5 The BID Chairman Peter Strachan will be present at committee to give a presentation expanding on the work of the Company and answering any questions.

7. Partnership Projects

7.1 BID continues to work with Highland Council on a number of joint initiatives (see below) that add value to what is provided by the Public Sector in an effort to generate economic vibrancy.

7.2 Coach Friendly Project

7.2.1 In 2015 at the request of the Highland Council, BID took on the role of operating this Coach Friendly project by providing Coach Ambassadors (between the months of May and October) to welcome coach visitors on tours organised by both British and foreign coach companies as well as passengers from cruise liners visiting Invergordon and Ullapool. They also act as a liaison with local residents and businesses on Ardross Street as well as with the coach operators. In that first year (2015) the Coach Ambassadors welcomed passengers from more than 1530 coaches to the drop off point.

7.2.2 In 2019 the number of coaches using the 11 bay drop off/pick up facility increased to 3000 (from 2249 in 2017) which represents an increase of 90% over the 5 years from when the project started in 2015.

7.2.3 As an indication of the success of the project, using the industry norm of 45 persons per coach circa 135,000 coach passengers visited Inverness City Centre in 2019 via the Ardross Street facility.

7.2.4 As previously reported in recognition of the success of this project in October 2016 Inverness was granted “Coach Friendly” status by the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) being only the second location in Scotland to gain such an award.

Obviously because of COVID cruise liners were not able to visit Scottish ports until 25th July and even then, it was any coach tours had to be scenic.

7.2.5 It is anticipated that tours from mid-August will allow passengers from the cruise liners to come to Inverness for walkabouts and thus use the Ardross Street facility. Following the agreement of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-committee on 9th August, Coach Ambassadors will be able to welcome such guests from the 18th and all of the remaining tours up until 8th October – the cost of the Ambassador service being met by ICGF and BID.

7.3 Amenity – City Summer Floral Displays

7.3.1 On its creation in 2008 BID agreed to take over responsibility from the Inverness Project for co-ordinating the wonderful displays in the City Centre. This role involves planting, creating the displays, installing, regular watering, removal and then disposal of the displays.

7.3.2 Having missed the 2020 display season due to COVID it is pleasing to note that a total of 650 floral displays were provided in the City Centre this summer which has attracted extremely positive public feedback as to the quality of the displays. Inverness Common Good Fund is the main funder of the displays with support from BID.

7.4. Amenity – Gull Management

7.4.1 In the original SNH report to this Committee it was always recognised that there was a need for a long-term programme to control the growth of gull population which without intervention, grows at a projected rate of 7% per annum. The project run by BID is to remove eggs and nests (where possible) during the gull breeding season from premises in Inverness City Centre and the adjacent areas.

7.4.2 Unfortunately, due to COVID it wasn't possible for BID to provide this service in 202 as permission couldn't be gained to access the various premises.

7.4.3 In 2021 a total of 1357 eggs were removed which it is projected will have prevented circa 550 additional gulls being fledged i.e., reared to an age at which they can fly.

7.4.4 Overall, the total number of eggs removed in the 9 years from 2012 to 2021 is 14,250. An independent count of the number of breeding pairs of gulls was undertaken in the week prior to the start of the 2021 egg & nest removal programme which confirmed a total of 532 pairs compared with 673 pairs in 2016, a reduction of 21%.

7.5 Marketing

BID has joined with Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID for joint marketing campaigns to promote the City Centre alongside the wider area including Loch Ness and has contributed to the joint marketing fund along with the TBID, Highland Council and Inverness Common Good Fund

7.6 Safety – Inverness Community Safety Partnership (ICSP)

Set up in 2010, the ICSP has become a template model for the delivery of partnership working in the City. The Council and BID have worked with the Police, NHS Highland, Highlands and Island Fire and Rescue service and others including the Third Sector, to deliver projects within this remit.

7.7 Safety – BID Security Task Team

Jointly funded by Inverness Common Good Fund and BID - this has provided a service which has been recognised by the Police as providing a significant contribution to reducing crime and anti-social behavior in the City Centre.

7.8 Amenity – BID Ambassadors

The BID team continues to monitor amenity issues in the City Centre as well as undertaking removal of flyposting and graffiti which are reported to and dealt with in liaison with the Council and the Police.

7.9 The relationship between BID and the Council has developed over the years to one of a mutual understanding of the needs of each organisation. As stated, the Provost is a member of the BID Board and regularly attends its meetings. A communications protocol has been put in place so BID is given prior notice of matters that may affect the City Centre. Presentations are also regularly made to BID Board meetings.

7.10 BID has been successful in making application to the Inverness Common Good Fund for project funding which has allowed more effective use of the funds put into BID by City businesses. **Appendix 3** provides a summary of the projects funded in the current financial year.

7.11 The relationship between business and the public sector is vital to the ongoing development of the City of Inverness. BID represents the 850+ businesses in the City Centre. Being a body incorporated under statute, BID is thus a significant partner of the Council in ensuring that Inverness has a high profile as “the City in the Highlands” and the private sector “adds value” to the activities of the public agencies. Although BID’s focus is on the City Centre, there is no doubt that the benefits of working with BID proactively and progressively is leading to reflective benefit on the wider areas.

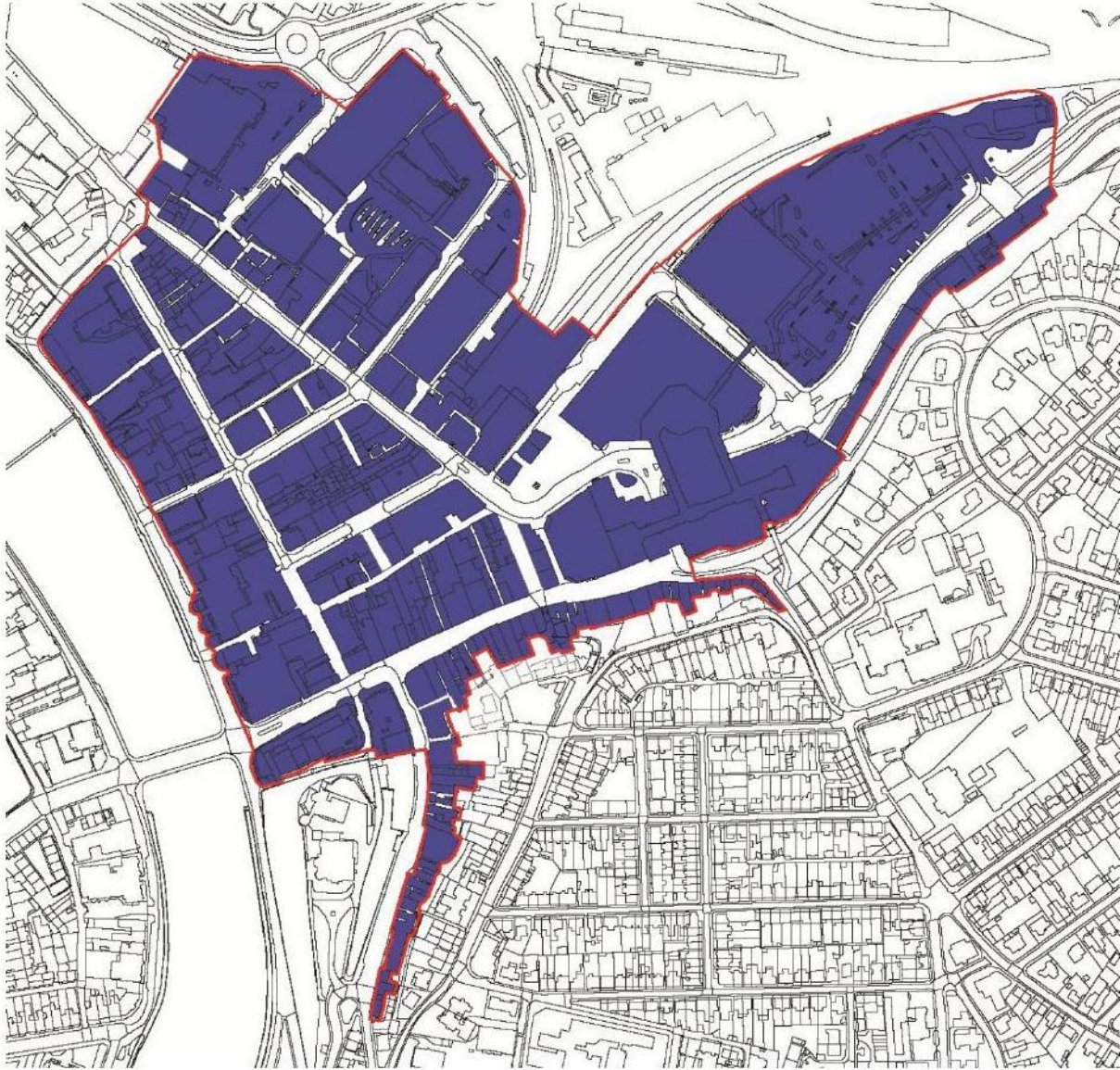
7.12 If the projects listed in this report were not undertaken by BID in partnership with the Common Good Fund, the Council could find it more expensive to deliver such projects, certainly to the same high standard, or indeed to deliver some of them at all.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Community and Place

Date: 12th August 2021

Author: David Haas, Inverness City Area Manager

Background Papers:



Inverness BID Directors (as at Nov 2019)**Appendix 2**

Peter Strachan (Chair)	Serco/Caledonian Sleeper
Colin Craig (Vice Chair)	Oil & Vinegar
Cllr Helen Carmichael	Provost & Leader of Inverness & Area
Duncan Chisholm	Duncan Chisholm & Sons
Julie Crompton	Chisholm Hunter
Jackie Cuddy	Eastgate Centre
Craig Duncan	McDonalds
Malcolm Fraser	Duncan Fraser Fishmonger
Keith Gordon	Morrisons
Corra Irwin	MacLeod & MacCallum
Norman MacDonald	Café One
Gordon McIntosh	Munro & Noble
Owen McManus	Marks & Spencer
Brian Philip	Co-opted Director
Graine Riach	Edinburgh Woollen Mill
Suzanne Ross	Lush
Graham Thomson	Coffee Affair

Appendix 3 - Contribution from Inverness Common Good Fund to BID delivered projects 2021/22

Inverness BID Limited is expected to receive BID levy income in 2021/22 of circa £190k part of which is invested in the following joint schemes with Inverness Common Good Fund:

Civic Amenity

City Centre Floral Displays
Gull Project

Summer 2021
Summer 2021

ICGF Contribution of £61.1k to a total project cost of £74.8k
ICGF Contribution of £11.2k out of total project cost of £16.8k

Community Safety

Task Team
Inverness Community Safety Partnership

Easter, Summer & Autumn 2021
2021/22

ICGF Contribution of £9.1k of total project cost of £15.5k
ICGF Contribution of £9.7k out of project cost of £32k

Coach

Coach Friendly Project

Summer 2021 (part)

ICGF Contribution of £2.3k for total project cost of £3.8k