

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
United Kingdom

20 March 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Business Improvement Districts and their Coronavirus Response

Business Improvement Districts [BIDs] provide a wide range of essential services across hundreds of business communities, not least safety and security, marketing and promotion, clean and attractive space and a whole range of business support services. We are currently providing a watchful eye on the increasing number of locked down shops on our high streets and supporting those staff who are coming in to provide essential services.

There are currently 259 BIDs in England, with 100,841 business investing £106,770,198 in their business communities.

We particularly believe that BIDs will be vital as part of the revival process once the COVID-19 virus has lessened and the business community starts its recovery phase. BIDs are a key lever of fast change and support for government; they are business led and work closely with their levy payers. They get the job done.

They are facing two particular crises because of the Coronavirus.

Firstly, levy payers in the retail, hospitality and leisure industries are responding to government advice and temporarily shutting up shop. They have also been allowed business rates relief for the year under your *Expanded Retail Discount 2020/21: Coronavirus Response*. This has given these BID levy payers a conundrum; they are not being billed for their business rates, but they are still being billed for their BID levy. They are already signalling that they will not pay, and many BIDs will not survive the lack of levy money.

We therefore ask that Business Improvement Districts be allowed a levy holiday to mirror the one-year business rates holiday that government has enabled. We believe BIDs could be included in your *Expanded Retail Discount 2020/21: Coronavirus Response – Local Authority Guidance* and allow you to reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended), to grant relief.

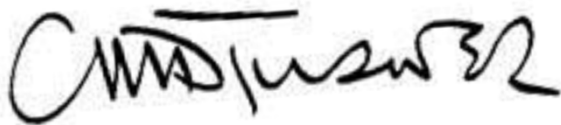
It will be for individual local billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when to grant relief under section 47. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the discretionary relief.

Secondly, the Local, Mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections that were due to take place in May this year have been postponed until May 2021. It is unclear whether the quinquennial BID ballots are covered by the legislation, but we understand that the advice notes imply that they do. Some 70 BIDs are due to hold their ballots this year to continue in existence under the *BID Regulations (2004)*, which have a maximum five-year term. They will be forced to close if they cannot ballot, or their terms are not extended.

We therefore ask that relevant BIDs could have their terms extended by one year, to mirror the extension government has enabled for local elections.

British BIDs is the trade body for all 326 BIDs in the British Isles, and has an Advisory Board of fourteen, representing BIDs across the country and the national levy payers. We have consulted with both the membership and the Advisory Board.

Yours sincerely



Professor Christopher Turner
Chief Executive
British BIDs