



March 25th 2020.

Dear (To whom it concerns LEPs, SW MPs)

South West Business Improvement Districts - COVID 19

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a very important element in the sustainability and profitability of towns, cities and other commercial communities across the world. They are schemes that are devised by business, managed by business and paid for by businesses by means of a statutory levy on rateable value, to fund the delivery of a programme of activity that benefits business and the community.

There are 326 BIDs in operation nationally. They represent 128,000 businesses and invest more than £126m into the economy. The 17 South West BIDs cover Cornwall, Somerset and Devon, represent more than 4000 businesses with a collective rateable value of £200m; providing a significant contribution to the economic well-being of the region. They form a vital link between Local Authorities, businesses, and Government agencies. There are few other structures that can provide this link and conduit between business and statutory bodies.

At present as you will know, thousands of businesses in our towns have closed in response to the COVID 19 restrictions. Many of these businesses rely upon the support of BIDs for marketing, security and representation. When this crisis has passed, BIDs will be vital player in revitalising our towns and cities, and to return businesses and places to viability and profitability. Funding BIDs however is very vulnerable as businesses will be unable to find the levy.

BIDs are set up as not-for-profit businesses and hence are no different in that sense, to other small businesses. Without levy income being safeguarded, many of them are unlikely to be viable to provide the support that our businesses need and deserve once this crisis is over. Furthermore, with the emphasis that the Government has placed on the High Street and the various funding mechanisms introduced to help town and city centres, BIDs are ideally placed to help shape the projects that will provide much needed regeneration and revitalisation, working with private sector businesses as valuable partners.

Similarly, many BIDs are due for renewal this year, in the current climate it is highly unlikely that BIDs will secure the mandate they require, as businesses are unable to see beyond their immediate survival.

We are asking you to support us in our request to Government to support BIDs by:

1. Firstly, allowing BIDs whose five-year terms come to an end before 31st March 2021, to extend their BID terms by one year allowing them to defer their ballots by a year also. We understand that British BIDs has also asked for this but that the draft COVID 19 Bill may only provide an opportunity for ballots to be deferred by a short time period up until 31st March 2021. In the South West, given our tourism economy, it is important that businesses have the opportunity to experience a normal holiday season before being balloted again.

2. Secondly and crucially, we are also asking Government to fully fund the BID levy for all BIDs across the UK for one year, in order that they can be ready to provide the vital support that towns, cities and all commercial centres are going to need so badly when they open their doors again.

Thanking you in anticipation for your support.

Yours sincerely



Richard Wilcox
Chairman, South West BIDs, Falmouth BID Manager

On behalf of the South West BIDs Group:

A.M. Miller St Austell BID Manager, *Emily Gibbon* inxeter BID Manager, *Janna Sanders* Tavistock BID Manager, *Steve Townsend* Love Weston BID Manager, *Andrew Hopkins* Minehead BID Manager, *Lucy Ball* Taunton BID (in development), *Carla Lewis* Newquay BID, Newquay BID *Jess Colliver*, Penzance BID Manager, *Helen Tripconey* BID Manager St Ives *Sarah Gibson* Plymouth Waterfront BID Manager *Mel Richardson* Newham BID Manager and on behalf of Truro BID *Steve Hughes* Plymouth City Centre BID Manager, *Carolyn Custerson* English Riviera BID Manager, *Anna Pascoe* Camborne BID Manager

Please visit our website for more information about South West BIDs www.southwestbids.co.uk

The South West BIDs Group:

