

BID levy payment and COVID-19 recovery

Following our previous correspondence on the issue of BID levy payments, some BIDs have received notification of part payment or further requests for levy reductions from a small number of national businesses.

Currently, the BID sector is working hand-in-hand with governments and regional administrations to deliver the abbreviated Christmas period for retailers and other operators on the high street. With extended opening hours, people returning to the shops, and expectations of particularly high footfall during the weekend December 19-20, it is a critical time for consumer confidence in a safe and welcoming experience. To this end, BIDs are providing essential operational support, including cleaning, rangers and street wardens, signage and sanitisation equipment, and guidance for national and independent levy payer businesses.

BIDs are also planning now for 2021. **Over 90% of BIDs surveyed in mid-October stated that they are coordinating this recovery planning with their local authority**, providing a voice for levy payers. Aided by the prospect of a COVID-19 vaccination programme, intensive work will be required to encourage people back to town and city centres, particularly in the first six months when social distancing and other measures are likely to be retained.

A wider profile of BID activity is already returning with festive events and attractions, adapted for the relevant local tier of restrictions, run by BIDs across the UK. Whether for single families or larger gatherings permitted in lower tiers, this coordination of place marketing, visitor experience and public space activation is vital. With BID support, we are confident that recent negative stories about mismanaged events will remain isolated incidents, and that the public will return to high streets in greater numbers through January and the Spring.

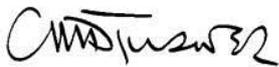
It is in this context that BIDs are still working harder with less resource. Commercial partnerships that typically supplement BID levy and fund much local activity are, in many cases, not viable. Financial support from government covered no more than 3 months of BIDs' direct overheads only, through the summer.

It is for these reasons that BIDs continue to bill and to collect due levy, notwithstanding the legal framework of BID regulations that demand it and ensure equity for a range of levy payers. We continue to believe that there is no argument for waiving or reducing BID levies, and have only been asked to do so by a handful of national levy payers. BIDs work with local authorities' rates teams to collect levy, following the statutory process laid out in the relevant regulations, and with little discretion as to demand notices and summons. As noted in the previous correspondence, a majority

of BIDs have provided flexible options for staged payments where their levy rules permit them to do so.

The sector has worked collaboratively with bodies such as the BRC and UK Hospitality, via its Chair of the High Streets Task Force Sector Leaders Group, to ensure BIDs can support the COVID-19 recovery. We continue to ask that businesses - nationals and independent - pay their BID levy, and thank all levy payers for their contribution, recognised by government, to the recovery effort.

Yours sincerely,



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