

Huntingdon First | One Town, One Goal | Our Success and Your Future

BID Huntingdon (Business Improvement District), branded 'Huntingdon First', is an organisation whose aim is to re-invigorate the town centre by improving the trading environment and supporting local businesses in order to become more successful. Huntingdon First has been well received by both business and the public over the BID's first term and has played a significant part in raising awareness and regaining Huntingdon's sense of prominence and place.

Huntingdon First has successfully provided a number of services, which were all agreed by local businesses and incorporated into our BID business plan. The business plan was created by you, the local businesses, in 2012 as a result of an extensive consultation process and adopted in July 2012 after a "Yes" vote.

Working alongside a range of other partners, BID Huntingdon's Board of Directors, drawn from local business representatives working on a voluntary basis, have worked hard over the last four years to deliver the business plan projects you wanted, adding value to existing services and seeking opportunities for funding, research and regeneration.

Your BID levy raises a total of £165,000 each year (£825,000 in total over its five-year term) to deliver the projects for which you, the businesses, voted.

In 2017 BID Huntingdon will be reaching the end of its first five year term. In order to continue the significant progress made to date, now is the time for you to review our work and to decide how to build upon current successes by helping us to formulate a business plan for the next five years and by voting "YES" to renew BID Huntingdon and the support it offers to businesses.

Remember, if you choose for the BID not to continue, or if you don't take part in the review and vote, then all the work and achievements gained so far will cease. We need your **active** support.

The trading environment is still competitive and can be tough; we know too that shopping habits and destination choices change and that Huntingdon's Town Centre will have to continue to evolve to survive.

Only you, the local businesses, can enable us to continue to compete with other destinations, to increase the promotion of Huntingdon to relevant markets via a range of tools and an established online presence. Being both progressive and aspirational for our businesses and town is at the forefront of our goals. Vote "YES" for BID Huntingdon.

Chairman's Comments

BID Huntingdon is now completing the first range of projects: attracting shoppers and visitors to the town centre, supporting and sustaining both large and small businesses and growing the Huntingdon First brand. This has been achieved in direct response to you, the voters and sponsors of BID Huntingdon; your ideas have shaped all our endeavors to enhance trading, boost footfall and enhance profitability.

The driving force of our work is determined by a private sector management approach that has ensured that local businesses influence and control decisions about their local trading environment. To this end we have sought to make our town centre cleaner, safer and more welcoming, more engaging and newsworthy, more accessible and we have offered a number of business development and support projects directly to local businesses.

BID Huntingdon's Board of Directors and team are working hard on your behalf and strongly want to continue to do so into another five year term by responding to changing trends and opportunities to continually sustain and improve our town centre. We welcome your feedback and ongoing support and therefore value your responses to our surveys and newsletters. With your guidance we are keen to continue to bring success, plan for the future and build upon the firm foundations we have laid. We can only do this with your ongoing support and commitment to BID Huntingdon.

Town centres change in response to fluctuating markets and economic trends and research anticipates that they will be much altered in the future. Shoppers and visitors will require much more than varied retail offer to sustain their interest. With the added competition of nearby Peterborough, Cambridge, Bedford and Milton Keynes and suffering the same issues as other towns across the UK, Huntingdon will need to "step up to the mark" and increasingly become a destination for people to explore leisure and entertainment opportunities.

Success for Huntingdon requires a proactive mechanism that can unite businesses active within the town centre, work toward a common purpose with a well-informed business plan and implement that plan with a wide range of partners including the local councils. We simply cannot afford to lose our BID.

As you read this document and review our success to date, it is important that you think carefully about the future. BID Huntingdon can only ever be what you make it. Your ideas and needs over the next five years will help shape the future of the town. **It is vital that you vote "YES" to the next BID Huntingdon when the ballot takes place later this year.**

What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

A Business Improvement District, or BID, is an arrangement whereby businesses collaborate to decide what services and improvements (in addition to those already provided) they wish to make in their location, how they are going to manage and deliver those improvements and what they are prepared to pay to make them happen. This information forms a business plan that will be voted upon by all prospective levy payers. If the majority vote YES by both number and rateable value a BID is created. The BID Company exists for a maximum of five years and must spend the funding raised within the BID area and in accordance with the agreed business plan.

An Investment in Your Business

This document offers the opportunity to all within the BID boundary to review the success of BID Huntingdon and begin the process of securing a second term for the BID. There is now a very real chance to invest over £1m over the next five years to maintain and build on the firm foundation we have laid. Together we can share our aspirations for Huntingdon and take real steps to sustain confidence, improve footfall, increase sales, reduce business costs and spread our offer to visitors and shoppers.

The Funding - Your Money, Your Say

Increasingly, town centres are deciding to adopt this private sector management model, BIDs, to ensure the implementation the desires and needs of their business community. BID Huntingdon is an excellent example of this and is funded by businesses in the area that pay a levy (1.5% of their rateable value). This money is ring fenced and can only be spent within the BID area on the projects and services agreed and voted upon in the business plan. The levy has nothing to do with normal business rates (these pass straight to the government). Nor is the levy used to pay for the services that public agencies are already required to provide as part of your business rates, BID money might be used to **add value** to those services, if that is what local business want but cannot substitute or replace these.

The BID Company

BID Huntingdon is managed by a Board of Directors drawn from local businesses, both large and small, from within the BID area. It is a private, not for profit, independent company. Any levy payer is eligible to become a member of the BID

Company and can then be put forward to serve as a Director.

The Vote

If you are eligible to pay the levy, you are eligible to vote. It's your future. If a majority of businesses vote in favour of the BID both by number and total rateable value, the levy will be mandatory on all businesses in the BID area. The proposal may exempt some businesses (e.g. those with a very low rateable value or certain charities) but those exempted will not have a vote.

What Happens if it is a 'NO' Vote.

If you do not vote "YES" then BID Huntingdon will cease to exist in entirety on 1st October 2017. All of the services such as Town Rangers, free membership to Huntingdonshire Business Against Crime (HBAC) scheme, LIVE magazine, business support, training and information, support for events, along with all the marketing, events and promotional activities including the Huntingdon First website will stop immediately at that time.

Our Achievements

Vote "YES" for BID Huntingdon; and see these services and projects continue

Much of our work is operational and addresses the services you, our BID levy payers, wanted to see delivered in addition to those provided by the local authority. Huntingdon First has invested over £850,000 delivering over eleven exciting new business initiatives by the end of its first five-year term. Your BID is having a significant impact on footfall and sales in our town centre. These services and benefits will continue with new projects for 2017 – 2022, if businesses vote "YES".

Here are a selection of projects and services we have delivered during our first term;

- Town Centre Rangers; working Monday to Saturday
- Huntingdon First website; one-stop shop for anyone wishing to find out all Huntingdon has to offer including a business directory.

- Huntingdon First Facebook and Twitter with a strong following and inter-use from other local Facebook pages
- Events organised and delivered by BID Huntingdon; nine annual events which increased footfall by an average of over 23% across all days
- Christmas Programme; funding and organisation of Christmas lights and Switch On event in partnership with Huntingdon Town Council and Churchmanor Estates.
- Free membership to Huntingdonshire Business Against Crime (HBAC) scheme
- Business Support; FREE training and business seminars, 112 businesses trained in First Aid
- Improved signage; Town centre maps and Guides to shops and services
- Promotional space; raising funds to augment the levy fees, free to BID levy payers.
- Live Magazine – distributed to over 9,000 homes and businesses promoting town centre events and business achievements/news
- Distribution of local business marketing materials to visitors and shoppers
- Regular press releases, articles and marketing in local newspaper
- Action and results on issues such as street drinking where we successfully applied for a Public Space Protection Order
- Seasonal & Regular Competitions encouraging visitors to Town
- Improvements to enhance the approach to the town e.g. the traffic island by The Old Bridge Hotel and painting of the Iron Bridge
- Business newsletter to update on recent events and helpful training
- Support for locally organised events such as Live Nativity, Potato Day, Beach Party and the regular traditional and Farmers markets
- Installation of Springboard Footfall counter; weekly and monthly statistics available

1 Clean, Safe and Welcoming

You said you wanted to see a more attractive and welcoming town centre.

You voted for Town Rangers exclusively for Huntingdon.

You wanted to see extra cleansing and maintenance of the town.

You also wanted free HBAC membership.

Town Rangers

Making sure Huntingdon town centre is safe, friendly and welcoming

The most recognisable, high profile and friendly face of Huntingdon First is the Rangers in their red uniform. Patrolling the town centre, their presence and services have made a real difference to businesses and customers, making **Huntingdon safe**, friendly and welcoming and a great place to do business.

- A high profile uniformed presence that acts as a deterrent to criminals with direct radio links to CCTV to assist in the reduction of crime
- Regular security patrols in areas of high footfall
- Always available to businesses to support and advise on a range of issues
- High quality customer service providing help, support, information and directions to visitors, enhancing the town centre experience and encouraging repeat visits
- A trusted face dealing with first aid incidents, vulnerable people and lost children
- Reporting Highway defects to the relevant authority, keeping businesses updated and making sure problems are fixed
- Managing pedlars, buskers and rough sleepers professionally and sensitively
- Supporting marketing activities in the town centre

Making a REAL difference to your town centre since becoming a valued part of the BID team since 2013

- Assisted with over 915 shoplifting incidents averaging 15 per month
- Dealt with 1170 cases of anti-social/drug/alcohol related behaviour averaging 19 per month
- Administered First Aid to 363 people averaging 6 per month
- Removal of graffiti, fly posters and shopping trolleys 975 averaging 16 per month
- 14,650 customer service visits averaging 244 per month (recorded visits to businesses)
- Involved with aiding 180 lost/vulnerable persons averaging 3 per month
- Delivered 700 items of promotional material for businesses averaging 11 per month

“We must say that your Rangers are always a pleasure to meet and they do a fantastic job of promoting our lovely town, always with a friendly smile. Magpas are proud to be part of the local community.”

Magpas

“I am often in the High Street and am amazed how often people ask the Town Rangers for advice and to deal with incidents. Their sense of community and goodwill runs deep and all the Rangers seem sensitive to people and situations. It has taken me a long time to understand their role and the benefit to the town but I finally get it. Thank you.”

Angela Makey - Niche Comics

Huntingdonshire Business Against Crime (HBAC)

supported by BID Huntingdon.

Making your town safer

As a BID Huntingdon business that pays a BID levy, you get FREE membership to the HBAC scheme

Since the launch of BID Huntingdon the membership of HBAC has more than trebled in Huntingdon.

Working closely with the Police and CCTV, HBAC helps to analyse crimes, incidents and anti-social behaviour. It also distributes photographs of known offenders, issues Exclusion Notices, manages a two-way business-link radio scheme with Police and CCTV and communicates via meetings, newsletters and training.

- Enabling close working of partner agencies sharing information to target criminal activity quickly
- Town Centre Radio Link working closely with businesses and the Police to share information, track offenders and target criminal activity
- BID Huntingdon Rangers continually liaise with HBAC and provide 'on the ground' support when required and are a welcome connection to members of HBAC who do not hold a two-way radio
- The BID Manager works closely with HBAC and attends regular HBAC Board of Manager meetings

2. Marketing, Promotions and Events

You asked for:

[a voucher scheme to encourage 'shop local'](#)

[a marketing campaign to increase footfall](#)

[new events to attract visitors](#)

[a website and more use of social media to attract and target shoppers and visitors](#)

Increasing footfall, spend and raising the profile of Huntingdon town centre

Marketing Huntingdon has been a key project for BID Huntingdon. Under the brand of 'Huntingdon First', an exciting programme of marketing, promotions and events have been delivered. Town centre footfall has remained above the national and regional average effective in increasing spend, raising the profile of Huntingdon and local businesses as well as attracting new customers and businesses to the town.

- Popular events are developed and delivered to drive footfall, spend and put Huntingdon on the map including Chilli Fiesta, Craft Fair, Summer Entertainment, Specialist Markets, Christmas Entertainment and Christmas Lights Switch On
- Innovative marketing campaigns and targeted promotions that use the full marketing mix including seasonal competitions, food & drink and beauty promotions bringing people into the town

- Regular proactive press releases and PR campaigns helping to raise the profile of the town centre and the business community
- Website www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk comes in the top three in Google searches placing it as one of the first ports of call to find Huntingdon. 'Find a Business' gives each businesses a profile page. Social media plays a strong part in promoting the town and its local businesses and events
- LIVE Magazine, a popular publication issued bi-monthly carries promotions, town events, developments, promotion of independent businesses, competitions and local news. It is distributed to over 9,000 businesses and homes in and around Huntingdon with a digital version on Huntingdon First's website

3. Business Support

You were keen that we should pursue business savings through centralised buying

You wanted the opportunity for more networking and sharing of expertise.

You asked for advice on marketing and websites

You requested more cost effective local training

Supporting all businesses in the BID area is the primary objective of BID Huntingdon. Many of the initiatives are free to BID businesses.

FREE Promotional Space

Free promotional space is available to all BID members to enable business promotion from a central location in the town centre. These promotional sites are also used by other businesses and charities that are not located within the town centre and the funds raised from the rental of this space augments the levy fees.

FREE Delivery of Promotional Materials within the BID area

Flyers and promotional materials are delivered for BID Huntingdon businesses by the Town Rangers at the same time as LIVE magazine. Flyers are also distributed for businesses throughout the year to shoppers and visitors.

FREE Training & Business Seminars

FREE training and seminars have been provided examples are 'Emergency First Aid at Work' and Food Safety training courses, at least twenty-four businesses attended 'Emergency First Aid at Work' each year with more than 112 people now trained.

Commercial Waste Service

An exclusive offer has been negotiated with Mick George Waste Management &

Recycling to help members save money. A number of members have signed up with an average monthly cost saving of £30.

4. Access, Including Car Parking

You said you wanted to see parking promotions to increase footfall

You asked for improved signage and maps.

You suggested help for visitors to find their way to you.

You requested Shopmobility encouraging more visitors.

Parking Offers

Free after 3pm car parking in December has been granted for the last five years by Huntingdonshire District Council and has been widely promoted by BID to help increase footfall in the lead up to Christmas.

Town Maps and Guide to Shops & Services

There are nine wall mounted signs, a Guide to Shops and Services strategically placed around the town. These maps include a list and location of all town centre businesses. There is also a free paper version available to shoppers and visitors which includes all the town centre parking options.

Improvement to Enhance the Towns Gateways

BID Huntingdon has worked in partnership with local authorities to substantially improve the traffic island near The Old Bridge Hotel and has liaised with Network Rail to paint the Iron Bridge spanning Ermine Street.

Your opinion is vital

Tell us what you want for the next Five Years

We want Huntingdon to build upon its current level of success and to become a market leader and example of best practice as a town centre. To achieve this, it is important we know what has worked well for you to date and what needs further improvement. Your ideas and feedback will form the basis and content of our next BID business plan.

With that in mind, we would be grateful if you could complete our survey and return it by XXXx. You can also complete the survey online by visiting our website.

www.huntingdonfirst.co.uk