



Consideration of a possible Business Improvement District for Cirencester

Background

Heartflood have been commissioned to carry out an independent Feasibility Study to investigate the possible creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) in Cirencester town centre. This note is therefore the first of a series of ways in which we will be asking town centre businesses for their views on this and we hope that it answers a few initial questions about what might be proposed.

What is a BID?

A BID is a business-led and business-funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area. Most are governed by a Board made up of BID levy payers who represent the BID area, which means that businesses have a genuine voice – and are able to decide and direct what they want for their town or city.

Does there need to be business support towards a BID?

Absolutely – which is why it will be critical for us to assess

the views of as many town centre businesses as possible. Any BID would be subject to a vote of all eligible businesses within the area and so we will be surveying the views of as many businesses as possible between now and April to establish whether or not a BID should be proposed for the town.

How could a BID help my business?

There are more than 300 BIDs already operating across the UK, with the majority focusing on town or city centres. Businesses report the benefits they have brought include:

- Businesses get to decide the major improvements they want to see enacted
- The area benefits from increased footfall, which in turn boosts trade
- Major improvements, such as promotions, events and streetscene enhancements generate a greater sense of local pride in the town, which is good for business
- Businesses gain better networking opportunities with their fellow traders and better links to contact the Council, Police and other public bodies



What type of projects might be considered?

This will depend entirely on the results of the survey, although many other BIDs focus upon:

- Marketing & promotion of their town or city centre
- Major town or city centre events
- Improvements to the town or city centre streetscene
- Initiatives to improve the security of the town or city
- Projects to support businesses and to reduce business overheads

Many other ideas will be encouraged as part of the business survey.

How are BIDs funded and set up?

A BID is funded by businesses paying a small proportion (typically between 1.5 % and 2 %) of their business Rateable Value towards the BID. This money is then ring-fenced for use only in the BID area, unlike business rates which go to and are re-distributed by Government. A BID can only be formed following extensive consultation and a ballot in which businesses vote on a detailed Business Plan which they have developed.

How much would it cost my business and how much money would be raised?

Both of these questions would be considered as part of the survey, because we need to assess the level of local support for businesses to invest in major improvements. The typical BID levy is approximately 1.75 % of the rateable value of the business premises and we anticipate that a BID in Cirencester could generate £150,000 per year, although it should be emphasised that these are simply guide figures, which remain open to consultation.

Which area could be covered?

This question will also need to be considered as part of the survey, because we will also need to assess the level of local support for businesses to be situated within a possible BID

area. Any possible BID boundary therefore remains open to consultation.

Would all businesses be liable to pay the BID levy?

In principle yes, although an exemption level is typically applied, which means that small businesses falling under a set threshold of, say £5,000 Rateable Value, would not usually be liable to pay the levy.

When could this happen?

The current proposals are for the Feasibility Study to be completed by April, which should provide a clear indication of whether or not a BID proposal could be pursued. Given the complexity of a BID and the level of consultation required, we would anticipate that a BID would take a further 9-12 months to be implemented, which would then be subject to the majority of businesses voting to support the BID in a ballot.

How long could a BID last?

The maximum term for any BID is 5 years and this is the typical duration chosen, which we would typically expect to generate over £750,000 over this timescale in Cirencester.

So how can I give you my views?

We are seeking the views of as many businesses as possible in helping shape the considerations and would urge you to complete the business survey via www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CIRENCESTERBID. You can also get in touch with Chris Gregory, Project Manager for the Feasibility Study to request a copy of this via either chris@heartflood.co.uk or **07854 027080**.

Where can I get further information on BIDs?

For further information on BIDs, please feel to get in touch using the details above, or alternatively visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/business-improvement-districts>