



The
Falkirk
BID
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

MORE FOR FALKIRK BUSINESSES

“The Next Step” in the Falkirk BID process

FALKIRK BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) SUMMARY

What is a BID?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have successfully been in operation in many countries of the world for over 30 years. They arrived in England in 2004 and there are now over 50 established BIDs in the UK. Legislation was introduced in Scotland in 2007, and whilst there are no BIDs in Scotland at present, Falkirk has the opportunity to become one of the first towns in Scotland to achieve BID status.

A BID is a geographically defined area (see map page 4) of a city, town or commercial district, where businesses have voted in a legally binding ballot, to invest collectively to make local improvements to their trading environment, in addition to those provided by local authorities. The improvements will be funded with money collected through an investment levy paid by the businesses located within the BID area, and will not be a replacement for services already provided by Falkirk Council and other public bodies.

The Levy

The investment levy will be based on 1% of a businesses rateable value. i.e. if a business's rateable value is £10,000 per year the levy investment by the business will be £100 per year. If a business's rateable value is £40,000 per year, the investment levy will be £400 per year. The levy money will fund the improvements proposed in a business plan, and on which businesses will vote on. A copy of the Falkirk BID Business Plan will be sent to every business just prior to the ballot in Spring 2008. Details will also be posted on the Falkirk BID website www.falkirkbid.co.uk.

We estimate that the levy will raise in the region of £200k per year, which will be used to lever in additional funding from other sources, creating a significant budget to be used by the businesses to improve Falkirk's trading environment.

The Ballot

Every business in the proposed BID area will have the opportunity to vote for or against the BID proposal. Voting papers will be sent to every hereditament (rateable business) within the BID area. Ballot papers will be issued in spring 2008, and businesses will have 42 days from the date of issue in which to return their completed ballot paper.

Voting is strictly confidential, with the results being declared within one week of the count.

For the ballot to be successful, it requires a combination of over 50% of businesses by number, and 50% by rateable value, of those businesses that vote, to vote in favour of a BID. In other words, the ballot cannot be determined by all the small businesses or a few large businesses, but a combination of both. If the vote is successful, the BID will then become legally binding and every non-domestic ratepayer will have to pay the levy.

How long will the BID last?

If successful, the BID will be implemented after the ballot results are announced, and will run for a period of three years. At the end of three years, a renewal ballot will be held. If businesses do not want to continue with the BID and a no vote is returned, the BID will cease after the initial three-year period.

Why does Falkirk need a BID?

The Town Centre Management Company (TCM) a not-for-profit organisation largely funded by Falkirk Council and the local private sector, is proposing ambitious plans for the future development of the town centre, to help Falkirk grow and develop in an increasingly competitive environment. TCM successfully applied to the Scottish Government for funding to develop a Business Improvement District. The company believes that BIDs are the way forward to secure the long term survival and success of the town and has set up a BID Steering Group to help guide the proposed BID.

Although Falkirk is reported as doing well in recent retail surveys, a BID would provide the mechanism for businesses to invest collectively to improve the long-term trading environment of the town centre.

Falkirk, like many other town centres is increasingly under pressure from the many managed shopping developments such as The Gyle, Almondvale, Braehead, the new Antonine centre in Cumbernauld and Silverburn in Pollock. In addition, Falkirk has to compete with the cities of Stirling, Glasgow and Edinburgh and other retail destinations such as factory outlets.

Although the town centre predominantly consists of retail premises, all businesses in the town would benefit from the projects and services that the BID would introduce.

Recent local research with businesses and town centre users suggests that Falkirk is perceived by some, as being not clean, has night time safety issues, and accessibility problems. It would be these issues and more that the BID would address. A BID would allow Falkirk to retain and improve its competitive advantage, in a sustainable, proactive, and managed way, enabling the town to build on its current success.



What the businesses think of Falkirk

A questionnaire was mailed to every non-domestic ratepayer within the proposed BID area. The purpose of the questionnaire was to consult with the business community and establish what they like and dislike most about Falkirk town centre. They were asked to indicate their support in principle for the concept of a BID. Businesses were also given the opportunity to suggest the type of projects they feel would most improve their trading environment. The results of the questionnaire, along with the results of the visitor surveys will help progress a business plan which best meets the needs of the business community, their customers, clients and employees.

From the responses received, businesses top priorities for the BID area are:

- **70% - clean and attractive** – help make the town centre as clean and attractive as possible.
- **59% - safe and secure** – help make town centre users feel safer during the day and during the evening economy period.
- **55% - accessibility** – help make the area more accessible by promoting awareness of good transport access to the town centre and making the town centre easier to navigate.
- **45% - perception and image** – help improve the perception and image of Falkirk to encourage town centre development opportunities and initiatives aimed at encouraging businesses to locate in Falkirk Town Centre.
- **38% - marketing and promotion** – actively market and promote Falkirk town centre to maximise the potential number of visitors and shoppers to the BID area.
- **14% - facilitation** – act as a collective voice to identify issues and assist businesses in the BID area.

Street interviews with Falkirk's customers

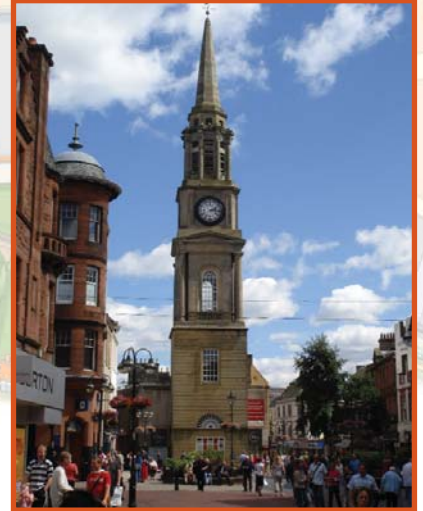
The BID carried out 500 indepth street interviews with members of the public to establish their likes and dislikes of the town centre. From these interviews, it was determined that most users of the town centre live in Falkirk and the surrounding districts. Shopping is the main reason for visiting the town centre, and a high percentage of visitors travel by bus to the town centre. (full details of the results can be found at www.falkirkbid.co.uk).

- ✓ **What your customers like about Falkirk**
 - The compact and pedestrianised nature of the town centre.
 - The variety of shops – both national and independent.
 - Easy parking.
 - Events and markets.
- ✗ **What your customers don't like about Falkirk**
 - Lack of cleanliness – litter, chewing gum etc.
 - Not enough variety of shops.
 - Cost of parking.
 - Feel unsafe at night.

The BID area

Where does the BID area cover?

The Falkirk town centre BID boundary incorporates the traditional core of the town centre from Garrison Place in the north of the town, Cow Wind in the south, West Bridge Street to the west and Callendar Riggs including the Bus Station to the east.



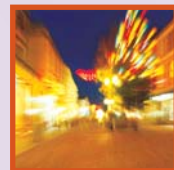
YOUR FALKIRK
YOUR chance to
have YOUR say

What Falkirk Council provides (both statutory and discretionary)

The level of service the local authority provides from business rates and what businesses perceive it should be differs greatly. Businesses often expect a service, which the local authority is actually not under any statutory obligation to provide. For instance, they are not statutorily obliged to provide floral enhancements, or Christmas lights, although most do. The BID will produce a baseline of services provided by Falkirk Council to ensure any service provided by the BID is **additional** to what the Council has to provide statutorily.

What Falkirk Council provide:

- **Street furniture** – finger posts, map cases, bins, bollards and benches.
- **Planting** – hanging baskets, containers, landscaping, shrubbery and walling.
- **Public conveniences** - the provision and maintenance of public conveniences.
- **Waste removal** – trade waste collection and disposal service.
- **Street lighting** – installing, management and maintenance.
- **Road maintenance** - road and footway repairs including winter road and footpath maintenance.
- **Ground maintenance** - maintenance of grassed areas and ground maintenance plots.
- **Street Cleaning** – including litter and dog fouling.
- **Christmas** – street decorations and lighting.
- **Funding** – funding and support for Town Centre Management.



What Town Centre Management already provides:

- **Graffiti and poster removal** – Daily inspection and removal before trading hours.
- **Marketing & promotions** – brochures, leaflets, newspaper and radio advertising.
- **Events** – French Market, Farmers Markets, Charities Day, Christmas events.
- **Safety and Community Initiatives** – Radio Link, Pub Watch, Child Safe.
- **Tourism** – Marketing Falkirk to visitors and tourists.



Managing the BID Process

Town Centre Management has established a Steering Group, which comprises of a cross section of business representatives, located within the BID area of the town centre. Representatives from large national businesses, small independents, franchisees, hospitality, and the financial sector are included. The Steering Group also has the benefit of a representative from Falkirk Council and Central Scotland Police. The role of the Steering Group is to provide support and guidance to the BID Management Team, agree final decisions and monitor overall progress.

Members of the BID Steering Group, along with the BID Management Team, will help to identify the best projects for the BID area, based on the business and visitor priorities listed in the recent research.

The projects will be presented in a BID Proposal and full Business Plan, available in early Spring 2008.



Steering Group Members

Back row from left to right – **Steven Kerr** – Boots, **Andrew McKinnon** – Callendar Square Shopping Centre, **Tom Miller** – Renellas, **Steve Mackie** – The Gilded Cage, **George Linton Smith** -GW Smith Cycles and Chairman of the BID Steering Group, **Brian Flynn** – Behind the Wall, **John Currie** – The Wishing Well, **David Moffat** – Falkirk Council.

Front row from left to right - **Ian Davison Porter** – BIDs Project Director Scotland, **Alastair Mitchell** – Falkirk and District Town Centre Manager, **Chief Inspector Robbie McGregor** – Central Scotland Police, **Linda Worsfold** – Falkirk BID Co-ordinator, **Elliot Jardine** – McDonalds Restaurants, **Bill Wilson** - The Mall Howgate.

Other Steering Group Members not present - **George Stevenson** – R Mathieson & Sons Ltd, **Richard Johnston** – Thomas Johnston Butchers, **Brian Peat** – First Group, **Alan Smillie** – Desire by Debenhams, **George Nichol** – Royal Bank of Scotland, **David Johnston** – WH Smith.

What happens next?

Within the next few months, it is our intention for a member of the BID Management team to visit your business to explain in more detail how BIDs work. They will explain the improvements the BID can make to the trading environment in the town centre for the benefit of your business, your customers and your employees. In the meantime, the BID team, with help and guidance from the BID Steering Group, will write a business plan, setting out the proposed improvements for the BID area of the town. In spring 2008, you will be asked to vote in the BID Ballot.

From the responses received, so far 60% of businesses support the BID, 35% are unsure and only 5% would vote no.



If you would like more information on BIDs, please visit our website www.falkirkbid.co.uk or contact a member of the BID team by telephone, e-mail, or make an appointment to see us.

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