

# ROAD TO IMPROVE LOOK AND RAISE PROFILE OF CITY CENTRE

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**B**USINESSES in Bristol city centre are being urged to have their say over a five-year £5million initiative to improve and invest in the area - because if approved it will cost them money.

Destination Bristol, which is part owned by Business West and the city council, is working to set up a Business Improvement District (BID) to embrace the city centre, in a wide area that runs north from the Floating Harbour up to the University of Bristol, past Cabot Circus and back to the Harbourside.

It embraces within it 940 businesses, as defined by the fact that they are payers of non-domestic rates, so it covers all sectors, including the hospitals, offices, retail, leisure and the universities.

If the BID is approved, all 940 businesses would need to pay in 1.5 per cent of their rateable value each year to a common pot that would be used to fund improvements to the area as suggested and agreed by the members themselves.

It is estimated that the levy income for the five-year life of the BID would generate £5million to be re-invested into improvements to the area and make it work better, this would include marketing and promoting the area along with improving its management, perhaps by prompt removal of graffiti and chewing gum or better signage and maps.

The levy would need to be paid by businesses with a rateable value of more than £20,000, other than those performing licensable activities and open after midnight where the threshold is £3,000.

This is why each of the 940 needs to be aware of the BID project and take part in the consultations into it and the eventual vote next July, which will decide whether it goes ahead or not.

That's the message from retired police inspector Keith Rundle, the City BID development manager.

who is spearheading the project along with his assistant Pauline Gendre.

He said: "So far we have sat down with between 400 to 500 people and asked them what they think, and fortunately it is overwhelmingly positive."

"It's a large task to get hold of the right person at 940 businesses but we want them to engage with us, and tell us their views and what improvements they would like."

"We are really keen to get across that there is a cost element involved to them so they need to make sure they have their say."

A consultation meeting will take place on Thursday October 20 and



the feedback gathered overall will be included in a prospectus that is due to go out towards the end of November.

"Basically it will say this is what you have asked for in terms of how the area can appear better, work better, and reduce costs for business," said Keith.

Feedback from the prospectus will help the team draw up a costed business plan for the first five years of the proposed BID, then all potential levy payers will get the chance to vote in a postal ballot that ends on July 6.

For the BID to come in, more than 50 per cent of those who vote have to be in favour and they must rep-



Keith Rundle, the City BID Development manager, who is spearheading the project along with his assistant Pauline Gendre. Picture: Barbara Evispas

## KEITH RUNDLE

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resent a majority of the rateable value represented by those voting.

So far top of the list of priorities expressed by potential levy payers is better marketing.

Keith said: "We know there is a desire for better marketing and promotion in the city centre itself. It's not to bring in tourism because that's already being done really well by Destination Bristol, but it is to create an identity for the centre that works to promote the area."

"There's also an element of drawing businesses together to work out cost reductions."

"For example a waste recycling contract could bring in economies of scale that could deliver savings greater than the businesses are paying in the levy."

"There's also the potential to have uniformed 'welcome hosts' who can direct and help visitors. They would also talk to businesses and be aware of what's happening in the city which means if there's a large meeting in one part of the area we can divert the hosts there to help and welcome. They will give that sense of care."

Keith has 30 years' experience working in city centres during his time with the police.

He came to Bristol in 2003 and was the inspector in charge of the city centre neighbourhood policing team, where part of his work involved tackling issues in licensed premises that weren't well managed. "That's how I landed up doing this job because I really care about the city," he said.

"Bristol is a fantastic city and needs to be looked after and nurtured. I think with the help of the BID it could be even better."

His sentiments are echoed by French-born Pauline, a former lingerie shop owner who moved to Bristol three years ago, when she took a job as the tourist information centre. "I fell in love with the city and decided to stay," she said.

"It is a great place to live and work, but there's always room for improvement, which the BID can deliver."

For more details go to the website [bristolcitycentrebid.co.uk](http://bristolcitycentrebid.co.uk) or email [keith.rundle@destinationbristol.co.uk](mailto:keith.rundle@destinationbristol.co.uk)



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## 'THE SHOPPING AREA HAS IMPROVED DRAMATICALLY SINCE BROADMEAD SCHEME BEGAN IN 2005'

**T**HERE are five other BID areas in Bristol, at Broadmead, Redcliffe, the Cater Road Business Park, Gloucester Road and Clifton Village. The first one to be set up was the Broadmead BID area which launched in 2005, and it has gone from strength to strength, being renewed twice - each time increasing the amount of votes in favour from the levy payers.

Over the 11 years it has operated, it has raised £300,000 a year from the 300 businesses involved and every penny has been ploughed in to improvements.

John Hint, the chief executive of Destination Bristol, said it has transformed the area in so many ways.

He recalled the early days. "When it first started in 2005, the businesses there said they wanted us to come up with a scheme to invest the money into pavements, lighting and street furniture, to transform the street scene."

"The BID legislation allows us to accept voluntary contributions and the owners of Cabot Circus worked with us on the scheme to transform the pedestrian area of Broadmead, contributing £5m to the project."

"Without the BID that wouldn't have happened - so it's a real positive."

The BID came up for renewal in 2008, when it was voted through with an improved majority.

Mr Hint said: "On that occasion the members said they didn't want any more physical work, but they wanted businesses to benefit from strong marketing campaigns and some money to be reserved for special cleansing, with standards kept at the same level as Cabot Circus, which opened in 2008."

Measures introduced included extended areas of cleaning, a special machine to remove chewing gum was bought, a special squad came in to remove graffiti and tagging, and another special cleansing squad carried on cleaning after the city council's team, which worked from 6am to 3pm, stopped for the day.

Mr Hint said: "What the BID did was fill that gap and paid for extra cleaning until the shops shut at 6pm."

The other issue the members wanted addressing was the damage to street furniture that often took weeks if not months to repair. The BID paid for repairs to be



John Hint, the chief executive of Destination Bristol, says the Broadmead BID has transformed the area in many ways

carried out quickly so you didn't have a wonky bollard or damaged bench waiting around for the council team.

The Broadmead BID was renewed again in 2013, again with an increased majority, and members voted for more of the same for the money to be spent on marketing, cleansing and maintenance.

Mr Hint concluded: "The shopping area has improved dramatically, as has the performance of the BID. We're very proud of what we've achieved."

"I very much hope it's the same for the city centre BID and the businesses vote in favour of it."