

Carlisle BID – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

A BID is a partnership where local businesses work together to fund and deliver projects that make the city centre more vibrant, welcoming, and successful. It is created through a formal ballot of local businesses and lasts up to five years before renewal.

2. Who decides if the BID goes ahead?

Every business within the defined area that meets the eligibility threshold can vote. For the BID to be approved, there must be a majority in favour both by number of votes and total rateable value. If that majority is achieved, the BID becomes legally binding on all eligible businesses within the boundary.

3. Which businesses are included?

To focus the levy on larger and medium-sized businesses, only premises with a rateable value above £15,000 are included in the ballot and liable for the levy. That means around 850 business premises out of roughly 4,000 citywide will form the voting group. Smaller businesses below this threshold will not pay the levy — but we are exploring an optional “buy-in” membership scheme so those who wish to join the BID can do so voluntarily.

4. How much will I pay?

The Carlisle BID levy is set at 1.58% of a property’s rateable value — in line with or below the national average (many UK BIDs set levies between 1.75% and 3%). For most businesses, this equates to just a few pounds per week:

- Small independent shop – around £6 per week
- Medium restaurant or office – around £15 per week
- Large retailer or hospitality venue – around £45 per week

The aim is to return that investment in real terms — so that businesses see greater value from BID-funded projects than they contribute through the levy. In addition, the BID will actively seek external funds, grants and partnership schemes from government, local government, and national organisations to bring further investment into Carlisle.

5. How will the money be used?

Every pound raised is ring-fenced for Carlisle and spent on projects agreed by local businesses. Our plan focuses on three key themes:

1 Animating Carlisle – Creating more reasons to visit — events, experiences, restaurant and retail offers — to boost footfall and spending.

2 Marketing Carlisle – Telling everyone what a great place Carlisle is to live, do business, study, and visit — through coordinated campaigns, PR, and social media.

3 Business Support – Helping businesses connect, collaborate, and thrive through training, networking, and practical improvements to the trading environment.

6. How much is spent on administration?

Administration is capped at 18% of total expenditure — in line with or below the national average for UK BIDs. This covers staffing, financial management, and governance. We've studied the approaches of successful BIDs such as Newcastle NE1 and Sunderland BID to ensure efficiency and impact.

7. Who is developing the BID Plan?

We are working with Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, the University of Cumbria, Carlisle United Football Club, major employers, cultural organisations, and independent businesses to develop the BID plan in greater detail and to ensure transparent governance post-ballot.

8. Who manages the BID if it's approved?

If successful, the BID will be delivered by an independent not-for-profit company led by a board of local business representatives. The board will be accountable to levy payers and publish annual reports and budgets.

9. What if I voted 'No'?

Once a BID is approved, the levy is mandatory for all eligible businesses within the defined area. This ensures fairness — everyone who benefits contributes proportionally. Importantly, all businesses, regardless of levy status, benefit from a thriving, active, well-marketed city centre.

10. What's the Council's role?

The Council helps facilitate the ballot and collect the levy but does not control or spend BID funds. All BID income is passed to the BID company and used solely for agreed projects that are additional to Council services.

11. What is the long-term ambition?

We're seeking a step change for Carlisle — one where independent businesses, major employers, and civic partners all have a real say in how to make our city more successful. The BID is about unlocking Carlisle's potential, together.

12. How can I check facts or get involved?

Visit <https://greatborder.city/> or contact info@greatborder.city for factual information. You can also attend open briefings and consultation events to help shape the BID Plan.

13. How has the BID been communicated to businesses?

All businesses eligible to vote have been contacted directly. Information events have been held, leaflets produced and distributed, and a full BID manifesto has been published. Press releases have been issued, resulting in coverage across local digital, print, radio and

television outlets. To stay updated or receive verified information straight to your inbox, join our mailing list at <https://eagbc.typeform.com/to/XgS00n3T>