

Front Cover



BID Darlington

BID Proposal and Business Plan

A Proposal to improve **your** Town Centre

Together, making a difference

Inside Front Cover

Introduction

Darlington Town Centre Management began life in 1998 as a public/private sector initiative. With a budget of approximately £30,000pa it currently delivers a range of services and projects for the Town Centre. **The formation of Darlington Town Centre Traders' Association** in 2008 allowed further investment in the Town Centre through a membership subscription to fund marketing initiatives, projects and events. The organisations have worked closely and collaboratively to build a successful partnership to deliver a range of benefits.

Past achievements and current work include:

- Liaison with town centre businesses during the implementation of the 2007 Darlington Town Centre pedestrianisation/improvement scheme
- Delivery of the Darlington Town Centre 2008-2011 Business Plan
- Successful marketing initiatives including television advertising campaigns; Darlington 'Shop Local' Campaign; Sunday Trading initiative and Darlington jute eco bags
- 'Art in the Yards' – large scale art gallery for the historic core of the town centre
- Darlington Heritage Trail – an interpreted trail to drive town centre footfall
- Darlington Retail Awards Event – introduced in 2010
- The 'dine/unique' membership scheme (8,000+ members) and hand-over to the 'get more from Darlington' commercial scheme
- Establishment of a Darlington Town Centre Traders' Association
- The introduction of the 'Best Bar None' accreditation scheme to Darlington in 2010
- Improved town centre signage project (physical signage at entrances to Yards, colour-coding of town centre streets, signage to heritage Market Hall and shops)
- Collaborative work on the Shopwatch and Pubwatch schemes for the Town Centre
- Introduction and development of the Darlington Towntalk website (one of highest ranked in UK)
- Collaborative work with the Traders' Association to create a new Town Crier Competition event for Darlington (national finals)
- Establishment of a Retail Skills Academy in Darlington Town Centre

- Funding and installation of a new CCTV system in the historic 'Yards' area of the Town Centre
- Introduction of new Christmas lighting to the whole of the Town Centre and work with Events and Markets Teams to co-ordinate events/activities
- Provision of seasonal hanging baskets for the historic 'Yards' area
- Successful business consultation with town centre organisations/businesses via an e-newsletter, welcome pack, pavement café initiatives and regular visits/updates
- Introduction of a footfall monitoring system for the Town Centre and maintenance of KPI statistics

Today, **Darlington Town Centre** faces increasing competition as a retail/leisure destination, from neighbouring towns/cities, from out-of-town retail parks and from online shopping. For Darlington Town Centre to remain competitive we need to promote and improve our town; attract more visitors and shoppers and encourage them to stay longer and spend more.

Town Centre Businesses have increasing expectations and a desire for a cohesive, sustainable approach to managing the town. As a result, Darlington Borough Council funded a detailed feasibility study, assessing the suitability of a Business Improvement District (BID) to deliver this for Darlington Town Centre.

Business Improvements Districts are a new and exciting way to fund and manage operations in Town Centres, including safety & security, marketing and promotions, access, business support and other improvement works over and above what the public sector has to do.

This led to the separate 'Distinct Darlington' BID Task group being created comprising key stakeholders, representing the wide variety of organisations and businesses in Darlington Town Centre. All are genuinely passionate about the Town Centre and the BID Task Group is responsible for steering the activities of the BID project, including the production of this business plan, which will be voted on in March 2012.

Together both the Council and Darlington's Town Centre Traders' Association truly believe we have a unique opportunity, through a BID, to improve the Town Centre. The BID can deliver a wide range of initiatives, from a budget of nearly £1.5 million, and achieve tangible improvements. All initiatives in this plan have been identified by businesses in the BID area and are aimed at driving footfall, promoting Darlington Town Centre and its offer and attracting more businesses and inward investment.

Let's make sure we grasp that opportunity now! Vote 'YES' to the BID.

"Darlington Town Centre Traders' Association recognises a Business Improvement District as key to enable us to continue to improve the trading environment of the Town Centre for customers, workers, and residents. It will bring further investment to sustain the town's future and it is vital that the 'Yes' vote is achieved to provide nearly £1.5 million over the 5 year BID time frame."

Nicola Reading, Chair Darlington Town Centre Traders' Association

Page 1 **Contents**

Section	Page
Introduction	Inside cover
Contents	1
BID Executive Summary	2
The Business Improvement District Explained	3
Frequently Asked Questions	4
Why do we need a Business Improvement District for the Town Centre?	5
Why should I vote YES?	6
What happens if I vote NO?	7
How have we got to this point?	8
What will I get for my money? The Projects	9
Clean, Safe & Welcoming	10
Marketing, Promotions & Events	11
Business Support	12
Access	13
BID Budget Income & Expenditure	14 - 15
How will I know it is working? Success Measurement & Reporting Back	16
What benefits can I expect?	17
How will the Business Improvement District be delivered? Management Structure & Transparency	18
Where will the BID operate?	19
How long will the BID last? How much will I pay?	20
The Darlington BID levy rules & management	21
The postal ballot: how does it work and when do I vote?	22
Final thought	23
Date for your diary and Contact Details	24
Acknowledgements	Inside back

Page 2 **BID Executive Summary**

A Business Improvement District (BID) is an arrangement where businesses in a defined area agree improvements they want to make over and above what the public agencies have to do, how they are going to manage it and how much they are willing to pay. The fund is ring-fenced and used solely to deliver the agreed set of projects and activities voted on by the businesses within the BID area.

The Opportunity

This is **your chance** to invest nearly **£1.5 million** over five years to increase footfall, improve business performance and make Darlington Town Centre a cleaner, busier, better-managed town, ie making Darlington **THE** place to be.

The Management

The BID will be run by the Darlington Town Centre BID Company: 'Distinct Darlington', which will be an independent, not-for-profit company controlled by the private sector with up to 15 Board Members elected from businesses and employing a BID Manager. They will be responsible for ensuring projects are delivered on time and on budget.

The Funding

The Darlington Town Centre Business Improvement District would be funded by a 1.5% levy on the rateable value of those eligible businesses which are located within the specified BID area.

The Decision

You decide whether the Darlington Town Centre Business Improvement District should go ahead by voting in the BID ballot.

Voting

Ballot papers will be sent to you by 1st March 2012 and you will have until 30th March 2012 to vote.

The Result

For the ballot to be successful, two conditions must be met:

- More than 50% of businesses who vote must vote in favour
- Of the businesses that vote, the 'yes' votes must represent more than 50% of the total rateable value of all votes cast

If both these conditions are met the levy will be mandatory on everyone with an eligible business located in the BID area.

Together making a difference ...

Page 3 **The Business Improvement District Explained**

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a business-controlled initiative, which gives local organisations the power to raise funds locally, to be spent locally, with the aim of improving their own business environment. It is an investment scheme where local businesses agree how their money should be invested to benefit themselves, their employees, customers and clients.

The purpose of a Business Improvement District is to give businesses real control over the development and delivery of projects and to monitor the results. It is aimed at increasing footfall in the area, leading to an increase in business performance and improvement in the business environment. It is flexible enough to address the issues of individual sectors whilst offering a fair system – those that invest, benefit.

Businesses up and down the country are reporting that Business Improvement Districts are good news for their town centres. Over 140 Business Improvement District schemes are already successfully operating in places such as Winchester, Reading, Newcastle, Royal Leamington Spa, Bedford, Truro, Rugby, and are making positive differences for businesses trading in those areas.

Darlington Town Centre now has an exciting opportunity to create a Business Improvement District and finally secure a position as a leading retail and leisure destination.

BIDs really work!

Over the last 6 months, you have told us what you believe are the priorities for Darlington Town Centre and your comments have shaped this final proposal. However, the Darlington Town Centre BID will only go ahead if it is approved through a confidential postal ballot.

For the Darlington Town Centre BID to proceed, two conditions must be met: firstly, over 50% of businesses who vote must vote in favour and secondly, those businesses voting 'yes' must represent more than 50% of the total rateable value of all votes cast. If both of these conditions are met, all eligible businesses in Darlington Town Centre, regardless of how, or if, they voted, will have to pay 1.5% of their rateable value, every year for five years. After five years, businesses will have the opportunity to review, and decide whether the Darlington Town Centre Business Improvement District will continue for a second term.

It is important that you take time to consider the proposal and decide how you will vote in the ballot. Remember, a 'YES' vote gives you the chance to make a real difference to the future of Darlington, your town. Voting papers will be sent to you by 1st March 2012.

Together making a difference ...

Page 4 Frequently Asked Questions

Is the BID part of Darlington Borough Council?

No. Distinct Darlington, the BID Company for Darlington Town Centre, is an independent, not-for-profit company. The company is formed and managed by businesses and operates solely to deliver projects that are paid for and chosen by the businesses it represents. It cannot carry out any projects or services that have to be statutorily provided by the public agencies. Any projects identified must be **ADDITIONAL** to those statutory services. Prior to this business plan being produced the current services being provided by Public Agencies, Darlington Borough Council and the Police were base-lined/benchmarked giving you clarity on what is currently being provided.

Isn't this what I pay my Business Rates for?

No. Business Rates are a national tax that is collected by the Council and then redistributed at a national level. The Council's income is spent on statutory and discretionary services for residents and businesses. Businesses have very little say in the way the funds are spent. The great thing about a BID is that the level of investment via the BID levy has been set by businesses, through a series of consultations. **The money is kept locally, and spent locally**, for the benefit of the local area. The BID levy does not pay for anything covered by your business rates. It is based on a 1.5% levy on the rateable value of the business unit and is an investment in the town centre. The funds collected through the BID levy will be kept in a separate BID bank account, held by Distinct Darlington. The income from the levy, and from extra funds attracted, will be used to fund local activities and services, as decided by the businesses.

Who else is doing this?

Over 140 BIDs have been successfully established in the UK.

Businesses have chosen to invest over £300 million in over 140 BIDs.

Winchester, Reading, Bedford, Newcastle, Royal Leamington Spa, Solihull and Rugby, - to name a few - all have Business Improvement Districts.

These Business Improvement Districts are delivering projects solely aimed at their town.

More importantly 29 BIDs out of 30, who had a BID the first time round, like Bedford and Reading, who have gone for vote for a second term have been successful. This is the clearest indication of success. **BIDs work!**

Will rates & rents increase?

Rents and rates are a matter between tenants, landlords and the local authority.

Page 5 **Why do we need a Business Improvement District for the Town Centre?**

Darlington is a great town, with so much to offer. It has a fantastic mix of retail, leisure and office sectors and a high level of independents. However, it is clear that it is facing progressive competition as a retail, leisure and office destination. Businesses have high expectations and the desire for a more cohesive and sustainable approach. If Darlington Town Centre is to remain competitive and grow then we need to generate a realistic level of funding to promote and improve the town, attracting more shoppers, visitors and inward investment.

Through Distinct Darlington, the BID Company for Darlington Town Centre, we aim to create a business-led programme of exciting projects and initiatives focused on tackling the issues identified by Darlington Town Centre businesses. These will all be over and above what is already being delivered by the public authorities. This will ensure that Darlington Town Centre offers the best all-round shopping and leisure experience that it can, guaranteeing its place in an increasingly competitive environment.

“For Darlington to move forward and compete with other similar towns we need to work together and pool our resources, a Bid looks like an excellent way to do this. Can any of us afford not to get involved?”

Terri-Anne Rigg, Manager, Marks & Spencer Darlington

Distinct Darlington has engaged in two major consultations with the businesses in the proposed Business Improvement District area. The first consultation identified your issues and objectives - you told us what was important to you. The second consultation encouraged local businesses to refine and develop these initial objectives, leading to the development of this business plan - the formal proposal.

In order to remain competitive it's clear that Darlington Town Centre needs to stand out. By obtaining Business Improvement District Status, we can all work together to invest in our Town Centre, enhance our trading environment and make a real difference, attracting more shoppers and visitors and in the long term, businesses wanting to invest in our Town Centre.

Great news for Darlington Town Centre, great news for you!

Page 6 **Why should I vote YES?**

It is clear that here in Darlington Town Centre we need to address the escalating competition from surrounding towns. Planned shopping developments in neighbouring towns also have the potential to draw shoppers away from our town. We need to develop our own marketing strategy, projects and initiatives, steered by the needs of those directly affected - you, the businesses.

Darlington Town Centre has a regional catchment area of over 1 million (within a 20 mile radius) and over 1.8 million (within a 30 mile radius). Many of these potential customers are unaware of what a great place Darlington Town Centre is! So, we need to shout about what we have to offer and focus their attention on Darlington Town Centre as the ideal location to spend their valuable time and money.

A BID in Darlington Town Centre offers an exciting and unique opportunity for businesses such as yours to shape and define the future of Darlington Town Centre. BID funds will invest in the activities and events that will help attract new customers, inward investment and prevent trade being lost to competing town centres.

The BID process is a fair one with every eligible business paying a modest amount -but together these contributions create a sound and powerful investment. Offices and independent businesses may even save money. By being a collective, ie a large group, we can attract economies of scale when it comes to negotiating trade waste, insurances etc.

If you vote 'YES' the funds generated from the levy will reach nearly £1.5 million over the next five years, to be spent on what you have identified, but it doesn't end there. The money accumulated through the levy will be used to try and lever in more funding with additional income from public sector agencies, grant bodies and landlords during the 5 year lifetime of the BID. This is funding that will only be available if the BID proceeds.

Darlington Borough Council is committed to the principle of 'Distinct Darlington' - the BID Company for Darlington Town Centre, plus they will also be a BID levy payer. What's more, Darlington Borough Council has already put considerable resources into the BID development and where appropriate, is committed to working in partnership with Distinct Darlington to support the programme. The improvement of Darlington Town Centre is one of its top priorities.

You have invested your time, energy and hard-earned cash in operating your business in Darlington Town Centre. We want you to make the most of this investment. A BID in Darlington Town Centre will give you direct influence over your trading environment.

Being part of the Distinct Darlington BID will give you a greater voice – the lobbying influence of a collective has much more impact than a few.

A BID puts you in control – you have already told us what Darlington Town Centre needs and when. If the BID succeeds you will have a guaranteed voice through the Distinct Darlington BID Board, an independent limited company responsible for delivering the programme. The BID Manager will be working in Darlington Town Centre and will be easily accessible to all businesses.

YOUR 'YES' VOTE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Page 7 **What happens if I vote NO?**

Well, let's be honest, if the BID doesn't go ahead Darlington Town Centre won't necessarily fall apart. But ... we will miss the opportunity to see almost £1.5 million invested in our town. In these trying economic times, such an investment could make a significant difference to the future of Darlington Town Centre.

Without the necessary investment we will not be able to carry out a comprehensive marketing programme, deliver quality events, achieve car-parking promotions or bring in improvements such as additional cleansing or policing. The opportunity to make a tangible difference would be lost.

If we fail to provide an exciting, vibrant and safe retail and leisure experience, we could easily lose more revenue to alternative local towns and cities.

You will now have a stronger 'voice' through a private sector-led organisation set up solely to represent your interests and the chance to make a difference and guarantee a great future for Darlington Town Centre.

Page 8 **How have we got to this point?**

Over the past 6 months Distinct Darlington, the BID Company for Darlington Town Centre, has sought your views on a BID for Darlington Town Centre. The consultation process included:

May 2011

- Feasibility study conducted to look at the viability of a BID in Darlington Town Centre.
- Presentation attended by business leaders from the town, who gave an enthusiastic response to the principle of a BID in Darlington Town Centre and gave their approval to develop the proposals further.

July 2011

Postal survey circulated to businesses asking them to indicate their priorities for the town centre. Full analysis of this survey can be found at www.distinctdarlington.co.uk under BID Information – BID Survey.

July 2011

BID Task Group formed, made up of key businesses and organisations from the BID area. The group is responsible for steering the activities of the BID project to the voting stage.

August 2011 – February 2012

- Newsletters circulated to businesses and an opportunity for them to present their views.
- Business Sector Meetings held, to which all potential levy paying businesses were invited to identify key themes and specific projects.
- Face to Face meetings held where you told us what projects you wanted to see in Darlington Town Centre.

December 2011- January 2012

- BID Interim Board formed.
- Distinct Darlington Business Proposal for Darlington Town Centre produced.

Ongoing

Consultations have taken place face-to-face and via telephone with individual ratepayers, business leaders at the headquarters of national retailers, local authorities and other public agencies.

Businesses who attended meetings were asked, based on what they had heard so far, and after being told how much they would have to pay, whether they would vote yes or no to a Darlington Town Centre Business Improvement District.

Consultation Results

Over 90% of businesses who have taken part in our consultation have said they will support the BID.

Together making a difference ...

Page 9 **What will I get for my money? The Projects**

We have carried out a range of consultations to determine what you want and the likely key project areas are:

Project 1 Clean, Safe & Welcoming

Project 2 Marketing, Promotion & Events

Project 3 Business Support

Project 4 Access

But ... only if the BID is successful can they be delivered over the lifetime of the BID, making a tangible difference to your business environment.

What is it?

Making Darlington Town Centre cleaner, safer and friendlier is one of your prime concerns. Distinct Darlington will also act as the key link between businesses and public agencies, ensuring that you are able to carry out your business as easily as possible. Clean, Safe & Welcoming has four distinct elements working together:

- 1 Keep it Friendly** - 4 Town Centre Rangers
- 2 Keep it Clean** - Rapid Response Extra Cleaning/Maintenance
- 3 Keep it Safe** – Retail Radio Scheme & Night Time Economy

1 Keep it Friendly

Town Centre Rangers will work and interact with members of the public (shoppers, workers, tourists, residents etc), retailers, street traders, businesses, officers of other agencies (eg Police, transport, traffic), Council officials, special event promoters and participants, street cleansing teams and highways engineers. They will liaise with business on a daily basis and ensure they benefit from the BID projects and schemes.

2 Keep it Clean

An extra cleansing/maintenance service, in partnership, to provide a rapid response cleansing service to those businesses in the BID area. They will clean graffiti, hot spots, private business doorways etc.

3. Keep it Safe

Radiolink Scheme

The BID will take over and develop the existing retail radio link scheme, ensuring all businesses are able to benefit from the scheme and are free from paying an administration charge. This will further help to bring down business crime, with the aim of making Darlington Town Centre a no-go area for those known to commit

Night Time Economy

The BID will work closely with this sector to develop and promote a safe night out in Darlington Town Centre through initiatives such as Pubwatch & Best Bar None.

Project Performance Indicators

- Reported crime statistics
- Rangers enquiry logs
- Pieces of graffiti removed
- Number of 'hot spot' areas cleaned

Total Project Cost: £600,000 over 5 years

What is it?

A comprehensive marketing, promotion and events campaign which will ensure that the Darlington Town Centre offer translates into an improved identity and perception of the town, improved sales and an improved customer experience. This will be delivered through four key projects:

- 1 Darlington Voucher Scheme
- 2 Two Quality Marketing & Promotional Campaigns
- 3 Two new Distinct Darlington Events
- 4 Customer-focused Website and Social Media Presence

1 Darlington Voucher Scheme

A new Darlington Voucher Scheme will be introduced to sell vouchers to large businesses, educational establishments and the general public, which can only be redeemed on spend in Darlington Town Centre to keep spend local.

2 Quality Marketing and Promotion Campaigns

Using a number of media communication tools such as television, radio, press, leaflets, promotions, branding, banners and guides Distinct Darlington will develop two high quality targeted marketing campaigns, focused on bringing visitors/shoppers to Darlington Town Centre.

3 Distinct Darlington Events

Distinct Darlington will develop and deliver a two new Town Centre Events, which will run each year for five years and will also support and promote more widely the existing events programme, markets, festivals and street entertainment.

4 Website/Social Media

Distinct Darlington will produce a professional, customer-focused and regularly updated website and social media presence, supported by a large scale promotional campaign. It will target the audience which would be looking to shop in the town centre or set up a new business/office.

Project Performance Indicators

- Sale and Redemption of Vouchers
- Daily Footfall Counts
- Business & Customer Surveys
- Web Usage Statistics

Total Project Cost: £577,500 over 5 years

What is it?

A series of initiatives that will address the concerns raised by many businesses during our consultation to achieve business savings, business excellence, business networking and the provision of a financial loan scheme for small businesses. This will be achieved through four key projects:

- 1 Centralised Procurement (Insurance, Trade Waste, Recycling)
- 2 Annual Business Awards
- 3 Business Networking
- 4 Grants/Loan Scheme for Independent Businesses

Centralised Procurement

Distinct Darlington can attract economies of scale by centrally negotiating better deals for some routine services resulting in reduced costs to businesses such as insurance, trade waste, and recycling and reduce business costs for operators.

Annual Business Awards

Distinct Darlington has the opportunity to develop and secure the longevity of the existing Retail Awards scheme to maintain the focus on recognising and rewarding excellence in business throughout Darlington Town Centre.

Business Networking

Businesses networking will be facilitated for the commercial/office sector to highlight local expertise and to encourage intra-trading in the Darlington BID area.

Grants/Loans for Independent Businesses

Distinct Darlington will work with financial bodies to secure the implementation of a Grants/Loan Scheme for Independent Businesses in Darlington Town Centre.

Performance Indicators

- Number of businesses using the insurance scheme
- Number of businesses using trade waste and recycling options
- Entries in Retail Awards
- Attendance at Networking Events
- Take up of Loan Scheme

Total Project Cost: £150,000 over 5 years

What is it?

The vast majority of Darlington Town Centre businesses want Car Parking Promotions to make the Town Centre more accessible and affordable to visitors, shoppers and town centre users in general.

Distinct Darlington will run a series of free/discounted car parking promotions to achieve this. They will be focused, specific and measurable and aim to achieve increased car parking usage and footfall for specific periods of time or events, within the town centre.

Project Performance Indicators

- Usage statistics for participating car parks
- Town centre footfall statistics during car parking promotions

Total Project Cost: £115,000 over 5 years

Distinct Darlington BID – Income & Expenditure Accounts 2012-2017

Distinct Darlington BID

Proposed Income & Expenditure Accounts - 2012-2017

	12/12	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	TOTALS
	£	£	£	£	£	
INCOME						
Bid Levy	306,000	306,000	306,000	306,000	306,000	1,530,000
Voluntary Contributions (Cash or In Kind)*	88,300	88,300	88,300	88,300	88,300	441,500
TOTAL INCOME	394,300	394,300	394,300	394,300	394,300	1,971,500
EXPENDITURE						
Projects:						
Clean, Safe & Welcome	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	600,000
Marketing, Promotions & Events	115,500	115,500	115,500	115,500	115,500	577,500
Business Support	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	150,000
Access	25,000	25,000	25,000	20,000	20,000	115,000
Staff	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	275,000
Training	500	500	500	500	500	2,500
Office costs (incl IT support)	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500	62,500
Insurance	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000
Legal/Professional	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	12,500
Market Research	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	7,500
Levy Collection Fees	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	30,000
Collection Software	22,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	32,500
Bank Charges	200	200	200	200	200	1,000
Contingency/Reserve	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	100,000
						0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	412,200	392,200	392,200	387,200	387,200	1,971,000
NET PROFIT	-17,900	2,100	2,100	7,100	7,100	
CUMULATIVE	-17,900	-15,800	-13,700	-6,600	500	

*Please note voluntary contributions are being negotiated. Includes Staff Costs, Office Costs, Voluntary Contributions

Success Measurement & Reporting Back

Primarily you should notice an upturn in business and a renewed optimism amongst everyone trading in Darlington Town Centre. You will see physical improvements such as new rangers, events, publicity literature and much more.

Additionally, like any good business plan, specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are set and performance is then measured by the Board against these KPIs. Distinct Darlington, the BID Company for Darlington Town Centre, will be required to monitor and inform its members whether they are meeting the KPIs on a regular basis.

Footfall Research – Darlington Town Centre will measure footfall within the town centre over the lifetime of the BID and will be undertaking regular footfall counts to monitor progress.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys – regular research will be undertaken with visitors to Darlington Town Centre to find out how satisfied they are with the Town and how the BID projects have affected their shopping patterns.

Annual Survey of all BID Levy Payers – with your participation, we will find out your views on how the BID is performing.

Sales Performance – research will be carried out with a cross section of national and independent retailers to assess the impact, where possible, of the BID on sales figures.

Tenant Mix – analysis will be conducted on the types of businesses within the BID area.

National Comparison - through partnerships with organisations like the British Consortium of Shopping Centres and the Association of Town Centre Management, Distinct Darlington will be able to cross reference and compare the data we collect with the rest of the country. We will be able to provide a regular, comprehensive, national report on market trends and activities.

Car Park Data – we can use data supplied by Darlington Borough Council and The Cornmill and Queen Street Centres for their car parks to measure the number of visitors to the Town.

Community Safety Data - we can use data supplied by the Police; Darlington Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership (DCDRC); Shopwatch and Pubwatch (Darlington's radio and information links) to measure the levels of safety and security of the businesses within the Town Centre.

The British Retail Consortium recognises that in the right circumstances, properly developed and implemented, BIDs can provide retailers with an important tool to co-ordinate collective investment to improve their trading environment.

Page 17 **What benefits can I expect?**

There are many factors that are putting pressures on large and small businesses alike, but it is only by being proactive that we can increase the footfall and consumer spend in Darlington Town Centre. It is only through joint activities that we can deliver the types of projects that will bring more people and businesses into the town. We can then encourage them to stay longer and spend more.

Without new investment, the outlook for Darlington Town Centre would look worse in these tough times, but through the BID, the town could secure additional sales for all retailers and benefits to the office sector.

These are the benefits our BID aims to deliver:

- Increased footfall in the Town Centre, leading to more sales.
- Increased profile of Darlington Town Centre, with a targeted marketing campaign attracting visitors, inward investment and helping with staff recruitment and retention.
- More attractive and vibrant trading environment.
- Greater involvement in Distinct Darlington with a strong 'voice' and collective budget to make things happen.
- Business to business marketing and networking opportunities, helping you to grow your client base.
- FREE membership of the town centres' radio network and information sharing initiative*.
 - *(Radios will need to be purchased or rented as now but there will be no further charge for administrative costs saving you approximately £100per annum)
- Improved management of the Town Centre through a BID Manager working for you.
- Reduced costs - for instance through collaborative marketing and the economies of scale that a collective can attract ie discounts on trade waste, insurance, recycling etc
- Sustained investment over a 5 year period.
- A more cohesive Town Centre with all sectors represented and promoted.
- A more welcoming and positive experience for your customers.

Management Structure & Transparency

Driving the Business Improvement District forward for Darlington Town Centre is Distinct Darlington: a not-for-profit company led by business people like you, who are passionate about Darlington Town Centre and its future.

During the last year, you have told us what you like about Darlington Town Centre, what lets the town down and how it can be improved. In return, we have listened and drawn up a list of 4 Project themes which we are convinced will increase footfall, improve the vibrancy of Darlington Town Centre and make it a better place to trade.

These projects will not happen unless there are people to deliver them. Distinct Darlington will employ a dedicated, full-time BID Manager whose sole responsibility will be to ensure the programme is delivered effectively, on time and to budget. As well as ensuring that your money is wisely spent, the Distinct Darlington BID Manager will be there to represent your interests through the Distinct Darlington Board. The Board will comprise of up to 15 directors elected from business like you giving their time free with the Chair coming from the private sector. Distinct Darlington will be run by, and for, local businesses and as a levy payer; you will have a stake in the company.

If you are interested, you could be a director on the Board. It will also be the BID Manager's responsibility, where possible, to increase the value of the Distinct Darlington BID through securing voluntary contributions and sponsorship for the programme and also by working in partnership with appropriate organisations to maximise the amount and quality of projects delivered.

Distinct Darlington will not be allowed to make a profit. The money you give us and the additional income generated through the lifetime of the Distinct Darlington BID will all be invested in projects that will make a positive difference to trading in Darlington Town Centre.

If the BID is approved, this exciting initiative will start in July 2012.

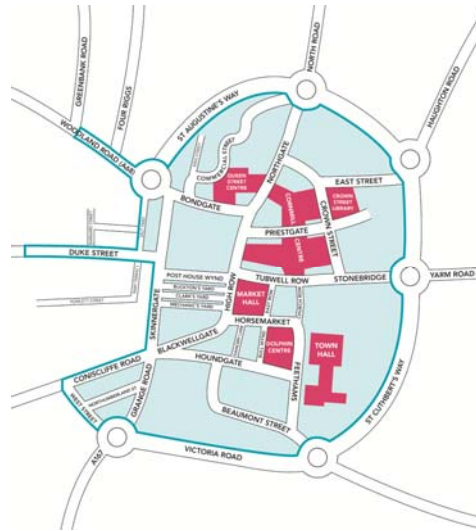
Distinct Darlington will have up to 15 Directors elected from the BID levy payers who will oversee the delivery of the business plan projects and the efficient running of the company. The Board will aim to represent the following sectors:

Sector	Number of Representatives
Retail	6
Office	2
Entertainment & Leisure	2
Property Owners	1
Local Authority	1
Police	1
Co-opted Members	2

Others with specialist skills may be co opted in as required. After the first year, a formal ballot will be held in which all levy payers will have the opportunity to stand for election.

Page 19 **Where will the BID operate?**

The following area and streets are included in the Darlington Town Centre Business Improvement District Area, either in whole or in part. All eligible businesses in these areas will contribute if the BID is approved. If you are unsure whether your business falls within the boundary or want to know how much you will pay, please contact us.



Streets within proposed Darlington Town Centre BID Boundary

Abbott's Yard
Arcadia Court
Archer Street (Number 1 only)
Bakehouse Hill
Barnard Street
Beaumont Street
Beaumont Street West
Bells Place
Blackwellgate
Blackwellgate Arcade
Bondgate
British School Yard
Buckton's Yard
Bull Wynd
Burns Yard
Chancery Lane
Church Row
Clark's Yard
Commercial Street
Coniscliffe Road (Nos 1-21 & 2-38)
Cornmill Shopping Centre
Covered Market
Crown Street
Duke Street (Nos 3-43 & 2-38)
East Row

East Street
Feethams (within Ring Road)
Grange Road (Nos 1-53 & 2-24)
High Row
Horsemarket
Houndgate
Houndgate Mews
Kearton's Yard
King Street (Nos up to 18)
Market Place
Mechanics' Yard
Northgate (Nos 1-75 & 2-84)
Northumberland Street
Post House Wynd
Prebend Row
Priestgate
Punch Bowl Yard
Prospect Place
Quebec Street
Queen Street Shopping Centre
Richardson's Yard
Royal Oak Yard
Salt Yard
Skinnergate
South Arden Street
Stonebridge
Tubwell Row
Union Street
Victoria Road (Nos 1-45)
Wellington Court Mews
West Row
West Street
Winston Street

Why this area?

The Business Improvement District for Darlington Town Centre covers the heart of the centre (primarily the land enclosed by the Ring Road) and contains the main retail, leisure and commercial areas. The area was defined through consultation with businesses to identify the commonality of the issues that affect their environment.

Page 20 **How long will the BID last?**

The Distinct Darlington Business Improvement District will be in operation for five years. After this time, businesses will have to vote again on whether the Distinct Darlington Business Improvement District will continue. In the meantime the Board, elected by you, will continually monitor its progress and performance.

How much will I pay?

If a majority of businesses vote in favour of the Distinct Darlington Business Improvement District proposal by the 30th March 2012, all eligible businesses or properties in Darlington Town Centre will be billed for 1.5% of their rateable value each year for a period of 5 years.

Over 60% of businesses will pay less than a £1 a day. This 1.5% levy will bring in additional investment of over £1.5m over the five year BID term.

In order for the projects and services agreed by you to happen, the Distinct Darlington BID levy will be set at 1.5% of the rateable value of your business. The following table gives an idea of your contribution:

Type of Business	Rateable Value	Annual BID Levy	Daily Equivalent
Small Shop/Office	£10,000	£150	41p (a bag of crisps)
Medium Shop/Office	£50,000	£750	£2.05 (a cup of coffee)
Large Store/Office	£100,000	£1,500	£4.10 (a cinema ticket)

The following businesses will be exempt from the BID levy

- 1) Premises that are occupied wholly or mainly by a charity as office accommodation for the charitable purposes of that charity or of that and other charities; that have no commercial/trading income (this exemption may apply, for example, to offices occupied by charities such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Evolution, Age UK, Darlington Association on Disability)
- 2) Premises that are occupied wholly or mainly by clubs and societies that are not for profit and have no other means of income other than voluntary subscriptions.
- 3) Those businesses with rateable value of less than £6,500.
- 4) Stalls in the Indoor Market.

The levy will be collected independently by Darlington Borough Council on behalf of Distinct Darlington and then transferred to Distinct Darlington on a regular basis to manage and spend in accordance with the business proposal.

Page 21 **The Darlington BID Levy Rules & Management**

The ballot will be conducted through a confidential postal vote. Ballot papers will be sent out to the eligible organisations with any relevant documentation by 1st March 2012, to be returned no later than 30th March 2012 by 5pm. The result will be announced the following day.

Each eligible business ratepayer will have a vote, provided they are listed on the National Non Domestic Rates List for the defined BID area on the 1st day of January 2011, as provided by Darlington Borough Council.

Exemptions, relief or discounts prescribed in the Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Local Lists) Regulations 1989 made under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, will not apply.

Those responsible for unoccupied and part-occupied hereditaments, (rateable property) will be liable for the full BID levy. The BID levy will also not be affected by the small business rate relief scheme and businesses who already pay service charges to landlords will not receive any discount. Where a hereditament is vacant, undergoing refurbishment or being demolished, the registered business ratepayer will be entitled to vote and also obliged to pay the BID levy with no void period.

Each person entitled to vote will have one vote in respect of each hereditament within the Distinct Darlington BID area where business rates are payable. A proxy vote is available and details will be sent out with ballot papers.

A 1.5% levy will be charged to each qualifying ratepayer using the most current Non-Domestic Ratings list to calculate the amount payable. The BID levy will be set on 1st April each year based on the most current Non-Domestic Ratings list. It will be updated for any changes in ratepayer, appeals, additions or removals.

The BID levy will have to be paid by any new ratepayer occupying any existing hereditaments within the BID area up until the end of the five year term, even though they did not vote on the initial proposal. Likewise, any new rateable property created during the lifetime of the BID will be obliged to pay the levy provided they are within the BID boundary. If a business ratepayer occupies premises for less than one year, the amount of BID levy payable will be calculated on a daily basis.

The Distinct Darlington Business Improvement District will start in July 2012 and will last for a period of 5 years.

Distinct Darlington will endeavour to secure additional voluntary contributions to supplement the levy throughout the five year lifetime of the BID.

Under the BID regulations 2004, Darlington Borough Council will be responsible for collection of the levy on behalf of Distinct Darlington. The levy income will be kept in a separate ring fenced account and transferred to Distinct Darlington on an agreed regular basis. Collection and enforcement arrangements will be similar to those for the collection and enforcement of non domestic business rates with Distinct Darlington responsible for any debt write off.

Once elected, the Board of Distinct Darlington will meet regularly. Every levy paying business will be eligible to be a member of Distinct Darlington and vote at Annual General Meetings. The BID Manager will work with appropriate agencies to deliver the programme of projects.

The Darlington Town Centre BID area and the levy percentage cannot be altered without an alteration ballot. However, the BID projects, costs and timescales can be altered subject to Board approval providing the changes fall within the income of the BID.

Page 22 **The Postal Ballot – How does it work & when do I vote?**

Under BID legislation, all eligible qualifying business will be asked to vote on whether they want a BID in Darlington Town Centre to go ahead. To date, there are over 130 approved BID schemes operating across the UK, generating in excess of £300 million new funding.

By 1st March 2012, the person with the authority to vote in your organisation will have received a ballot paper– all votes will need to be received by 5pm on 30th March 2012 by Electoral Reform Services, the organisation who will independently conduct the ballot.

Each eligible business within the Distinct Darlington BID area with a rateable value will be eligible to vote. This means that some organisations occupying more than one premises, will have more than one vote. For the BID to go ahead, two conditions must be met:

- More than 50% of businesses who vote must vote in favour
- Of the businesses that vote, the 'yes' votes must represent more than 50% of the total rateable value of all votes cast.

Under the legislation, if the BID is approved, all businesses, regardless of how or if they voted, will be under an obligation to pay the 1.5% levy each year for five years. Collection of the BID levy carries the same enforcement weight as collection of the business rates.

The results of the ballot will be declared on 2nd April 2012. A 'YES' vote for Darlington Town Centre will mean that great things will start happening on the ground from April 2012 with funds to deliver a comprehensive programme of benefits for five years from that date.

Page 23 **Final Thought**

Over the past months, you have been very enthusiastic about the prospect of a Business Improvement District. You told us what you believe are the priorities for Darlington Town Centre's future, and your comments have shaped this final proposal. All you need to do now is vote. Remember, it's your voice, your choice, together making a difference!

The Distinct Darlington Business Improvement District offers a unique opportunity for businesses such as yours to shape and define the future of Darlington Town Centre. The BID puts you in control.

With a powerful investment of nearly £1.5 million in Darlington Town Centre, you have an amazing chance to make changes you believe will improve our town. It's more important than ever that you ensure a future for your business and for the town. The decision you make now will have a lasting impact on Darlington Town Centre for years to come, and could make the difference between a good town or a great town in a difficult economic climate.

Don't miss this opportunity to improve our town. Voting YES gives you the chance to make Darlington Town Centre a better place to be. One business alone may not be able to change the world, but together we can make a difference. Say YES to the Distinct Darlington BID, and say YES to Darlington Town Centre's future.

Terri-Anne Rigg & Nicola Reading

Distinct Darlington BID Task Group Chair & Vice Chair

The Distinct Darlington BID Interim Board Members are:

Terri-Anne Rigg	Marks & Spencer/Distinct Darlington BID Interim Board Chair
Peter Kirsop	Binns
Allan Draper	Darlington Markets/Chair National Market Traders' Federation
Susan Young	The Cornmill Shopping Centre
Nicola Reading	Bliss Gifts and Chair Darlington Traders' Association
Julia Stephenson	Chestnut
Wendy Davies	Granny's Kitchen
Michael Shuker	Latimer Hinks Solicitors
Peter Turnbull	The Tapas Bar/Chair Pubwatch
Les Fry	Voodoo Café
Emma Foffano	Foffano's
Ralph Wilkinson	Number Twenty 2
Peter Robinson	Thomas Watson Auctioneers
Inspector Mick Button	Darlington Police
Councillor Chris McEwan	Darlington Borough Council/Economy & Environment
Councillor Nick Wallis	Darlington Borough Council/Leisure & Local Environment
Mo Aswat	The Mosaic Partnership

Date	Item
By 1 st March 2012	Ballot papers sent out
30 th March 2012 at 5pm	Last day of the ballot
2 nd April 2012	Declaration of ballot
July 2012	Formal launch for the start of the Distinct Darlington BID

Contact Details

You can contact Distinct Darlington with comments or questions by post, telephone or email.

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Distinct Darlington

Town Hall

Darlington

DL1 RQT

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Michelle van Vlijmen

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