

Lancaster BID Renewal Ballot – FAQs

What is a BID?

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a business-led and business-funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area. Within the area a compulsory levy is charged on all businesses as defined within the individual BID rules. BIDs can deliver any projects or services as long as they are additional to statutory services provided by Local Authorities. Currently there are more than 300 BIDs across the UK.

Lancaster BID operates for the benefit of Lancaster city centre and has been in existence since 2013. We are now asking businesses to VOTE YES to BID for another five years so we can continue to support you and make sure Lancaster remains to be a great place to live, work, visit and do business.

What will Lancaster BID Deliver?

Lancaster BID has published a Business Plan detailing how we will support city centre businesses throughout the next Five Years. The plan details Five Key Goals as follows:

- **Marketing Lancaster as a Destination** – this will be achieved through a combination of online and traditional marketing methods to raise the profile of the city centre to locals and visitors.
- **Safe and Secure City Centre** – Lancaster BID will continue to provide a BID Warden to enhance safety and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour through improved networking between different businesses and agencies including the Police.
- **Clean and Attractive City Centre** – Strategic projects to visually enhance the city centre will be delivered alongside installation of seasonal street decorations and a continued targeted approach to keeping the city centre clean and tidy to ensure it provides a pleasant and welcoming environment for all.
- **High Quality Events Programme** – as soon as COVID restrictions allow, there will be a return of our annual programme of flagship events including Dino Day, Festa Italia and the Christmas Lights Switch On. Partnership events including Light Up Lancaster and Lancaster Music Festival will also be supported to return to help create a vibrant city centre.
- **Direct Support to Businesses** – Lancaster BID will ensure a regular flow of relevant information to city centre businesses as well as organising themed networking events and relevant training. Support will be tailored to changing circumstances to ensure businesses receive the maximum level of support in the most effective manner.

All eligible voters will receive a printed copy of the Business Plan along with your ballot paper. You can also view the Business Plan online at <https://lancasterbid.org/business-plan-2021/index.html>

Why is the Ballot Happening Now?

Lancaster BID understands the difficulties which all businesses are currently going through due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a BID ballot must legally be held a minimum of every five years. This means Lancaster BID has no option but to continue with the ballot to ensure we can continue to support city centre businesses. We believe that the support from Lancaster BID will be more important than ever as we finally emerge from lockdown and hope that you will agree and vote YES for another five years.

Who Gets to Vote?

Everyone who will be liable to pay a BID levy will receive a ballot paper to enable them to cast their vote in the Lancaster BID Renewal Ballot. Where an individual or company has more than one property within the BID Zone, they will receive one ballot for each premises where a levy will be charged.

How Are Votes Cast?

The ballot is a postal ballot. The registered ratepayer for all eligible properties will receive a ballot pack in the post. This will include a copy of our Business Plan, an individually addressed ballot paper and a prepaid reply envelope. We encourage ballot papers to be returned as soon as possible to avoid any risk from postal delays. Any ballot papers received after the deadline of 5.00pm on Thursday 11th February cannot be counted.

Can I Get a Replacement Ballot Paper?

If your ballot paper is lost or damaged to the extent it cannot be used as a ballot paper you can request a replacement. This is also possible if you cannot access the address where the original ballot has been sent due to lockdown. Details of how to request a replacement will be included in the ballot mailing. Alternatively, you can email info@lancasterbid.org for full details of how to request a replacement.

Can I Opt Out of BID?

No – If the ballot is successful Lancaster BID will continue for a further five years from 1st April 2021. As detailed in the BID Levy Rules, all businesses within the BID zone will be included. The annual BID levy is then charged to all properties with a rateable value of £10,000 or above on 1st April 2021.

How Much Will I Have to Pay?

The Lancaster BID levy will be charged annually at 1.5% of the rateable value on 1st April 2021 and will remain fixed for the full five-year term. Email info@lancasterbid.org if you want to check the exact amount you will pay.

What if I Don't Vote?

If you are entitled to vote but do not return your ballot, the outcome will be decided for you by the businesses which do vote. Like a General Election, there is no minimum turnout so the outcome is decided by the ballots which are returned.

What happens if a Majority Vote No?

To succeed the majority of ballots cast, by both number and rateable value, must be in favour of Lancaster BID continuing for a further five years. If this majority is not achieved on both counts Lancaster BID will automatically cease on 31st March 2021 and will no longer be available to provide any support to businesses in Lancaster city centre.

When Will the Result be Announced?

Voting closes at 5.00pm on Thursday 11th February 2021. Votes will be counted the next day and an announcement of the result will be made shortly after.

Who Can I Contact with Further Questions?

The Lancaster BID Team are available throughout the ballot and can be contacted on 01524 590650 or by email to info@lancasterbid.org.

Please contact us with any questions you have regarding the ballot. Also contact us if you think we can help you in any way during these challenging times for all businesses.

Thank you in advance for your support – the Lancaster BID team look forward to continuing to work for the benefit of all city centre businesses for a further five years.

