

## Can you afford not to back the BID?



With Worcester's Business Improvement District (BID) ballot set to take place in October, now is the time for you and over 500 other businesses in the city centre to let us know what you think about the projects suggested by you. The BID will have an impact on all businesses in the city centre with a rateable value of over £7,500 as it will be funded by contributions from all businesses and it could generate well over £1.6 million over its 5 year period. The BID is an ideal opportunity for Worcester's businesses to work together and agree on the ways in which you can save money, have a better environment to work in and increase the level of spend in the city. We hope that you will want to back the BID in Worcester.

**Adrian Field, Worcester BID Project Manager**

### What is a BID?

**A BID is an arrangement under which businesses decide how to improve their trading conditions.**

Businesses such as yourselves identify projects or services that will add value and then agree on the level of funds which they will contribute to make it happen. They cannot replace projects ordinarily provided by public agencies such as Councils and the Police. A vote will take place in October and if those businesses who vote do so in favour both by a simple majority in number and rateable value then everyone with a rateable value of over £7,500 will contribute and a business led BID company run by a Board representing your interests will be formed.

### How much will it cost me?

The Worcester BID levy is 1.5% of a property's rateable value. For those properties in managed shopping centres who already pay a service charge, the rate is 0.75%. Empty properties are exempt from the BID and those properties who receive rate relief only contribute to the BID a proportion of the post relief amount (if it above the £7,500 rateable value threshold).

If you are not sure of your rateable value, please contact Worcester BID Project Manager Adrian Field on 01905 722337. To get an idea of what your contribution equates to:

Size of Business	Rateable Value	Annual Levy	Weekly Equivalent
Small Shop / Office	£10,000	£150	£2.88 (a pint of beer)
Average Shop / Office	£20,000	£300	£5.76 (a paperback book)
Large Store / Office / Bank	£50,000	£750	£14.42 (a new release DVD)



# Worcester BID Projects

Many thanks to those of you who have filled in both surveys, attended the open day in the CrownGate shopping centre, met on a face to face meeting or who have discussed the BID on the phone.

We received 87 different project ideas from you – far too many and too expensive for the BID to deliver but the BIDs Steering Group have spent a lot of time assessing each project to see if it is something which the Worcester BID can deliver using a variety of criteria.

Their criteria for shortlisting the projects included:

1. Will it improve trading conditions for businesses?
2. Will those businesses who contribute via the BID levy benefit more than those who don't?
3. Is it feasible?
4. Could / should another organisation be delivering the project?
5. Is it something additional to that which is the responsibility of the Councils or Police
6. How much will it cost?
7. Can we measure the success of the project?

As a result, we now have a much clearer idea of the types of projects that you want and the Steering Group anticipate will make excellent BID projects.

## The projects that you would most like to see are:

### 1. Spreading the Word – Marketing and Promotion

- **Your issue:** We need improved awareness of what is going on in the city and the fantastic array of businesses, attractions and events that it has to offer.
- **Your suggestion:** We need to develop a **marketing strategy** for Worcester that will include a **PR campaign, banners to promote events, upmarket branding, develop innovative trails around the city centre** to get people into areas that they were not aware of, **create an Independent Quarter** in New Street, Friar Street, Cornmarket, Sidbury, Union Street, Charles Street, Mealcheapen Street and Reindeer Court.
- **Your issue:** Our turnover plummets when Worcester floods as the city is seen as a 'no go area'.
- **Your suggestion:** We want a **rapid response PR campaign to the floods** to promote Worcester to turn a negative issue into a positive one.
- **Your issue:** The right event brings in people and money – we want more events which are targeted at the right audience.
- **Your suggestion:** A regulated programme of **street entertainment** similar to Bath and Covent Garden throughout the year all around the city centre. Develop a **programme of new events** throughout the year to boost footfall and spend in the city. Suggestions so far have included an English Festival, an 'Independents Day' and a Food Festival for local BID businesses to promote their goods and services. **More activities at the riverside and improved links** between the river and the city centre's commercial area.

### 2. Getting Out and About – Accessibility

- **Your issue:** Signage in Worcester is poor and doesn't direct people to a lot of areas within the BID area where there are businesses. People don't know we are here.
- **Your suggestion:** The **pedestrian signage** needs to highlight many more parts of the BID area than at present to get people discovering all of the city centre not just the areas that they know.  
We need to improve **signage to car parks** and consider adding **more brown tourism signs** on the M5 to promote Worcester's attractions.
- **Your issue:** We want people to spend longer in the city centre and not be restricted by pay and display parking.
- **Your suggestion:** Although Pay on Exit car parking is not feasible for a BID project, **Pay by Text parking** is a good, far cheaper alternative used successfully in Cheltenham and Birmingham for example where you top up the length of your stay in the car park by texting using your mobile phone or using the internet.
- **Your issue:** Parking for our staff is expensive and can be a factor in recruiting a good candidate for a job.
- **Your suggestion:** We want **car parking deals and incentives** for employees in underused car parks such as **discounted season tickets**.

### 3. Attractive City – Cleaner and Greener

- **Your issue:** We need to add some colour and pride to the city centre and make it look smarter and more inviting.
- **Your suggestion:** Heavily subsidised **hanging baskets** on the front of premises more seating for people to enjoy their visit and increase the time they spend in the city centre. Improve the appearance of **Angel Place. Christmas Lights** in areas that don't presently have any would benefit employees, residents and other visitors to Worcester.
- **Your issue:** The gulls are intimidating and leave a mess which is a big problem in late Spring / early summer.
- **Your suggestion:** Employ someone to **oil the Gulls' eggs** to ensure that they don't hatch and gradually decline in number.

### 4. Safer City – Safety and Security

- **Your issue:** We need to encourage more repeat business by making the city centre friendlier and less intimidating by in the day and at night.
- **Your suggestion:** **Taxi marshals** to assist customers of the night time businesses to get home safely and quickly. Employ **Street Rangers** to help visitors to the city, to assist businesses by visiting them regularly and work with the Police and CityNet / NightSafe schemes to inform businesses of any issues in the city.

Lobbying for additional visitor accommodation provision such as hotels was also highlighted as a project Worcester badly needs to focus on to address so that we can get more overnight visitors and spend in our local economy.

The Steering Group are also seeking your views on other cost saving schemes such as a deal to allow BID businesses to get discounts on insurance through the purchasing power of over 500 businesses working together. Let us know!

We want to know what you think of the projects outlined above and whether you are willing to back the BID. So please return the enclosed form with your views or call Adrian Field on **01905 722337**.

### What Happens Next?

In the coming months there will be a chance to discuss the Worcester BID at **Street Meetings** and other forums culminating in an **Open Event** to which all eligible businesses will be invited. From there all the views will be taken into account and any amendments to the projects will be made.

Remember they are your projects for your benefit. A **Business Plan** is then drafted before being finalised and a **ballot** takes place in October to which all businesses are invited to vote. If the vote is successful then Worcester will have a BID and the future will be a lot rosier!