

BID proposal

Neath Inspired: an even brighter future,
together

Chair note

Neath is a wonderful town with great promise. We are fortunate to have a number of assets such as Victoria Gardens, The Castle, Neath Market, the Gwyn Hall and an excellent selection of independent and unique shops all on our doorstep. Now is the time for us to capitalise on these and increase footfall to become a thriving town centre.

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a way for us to do this. To address town centre issues and deliver real change we are seeking to form a Business Improvement District (BID) - a business led and business funded organisation. This can only be formed following a successful ballot of businesses which is to be held on November 19th.

By voting Yes in November, we will raise £500,000 worth of extra funding that will be targeted specifically at town centre improvements and increasing Neath's vibrancy. This strategy will include all the strands that are proven for success – **a better experience, a strong identity and the tools to help businesses flourish** – delivered through a programme grounded in the strengths already here in Neath.

Having a BID in Neath will mean we have a clear route to a brighter future for the town centre. It will create an opportunity for us to work together and achieve more for our town and have our say, by identifying priorities and investing in them together. This document outlines these priorities and projects, as suggested by you during the BID consultation.

With a YES vote in November, **Neath Inspired** will deliver targeted projects and services that are new, unique and not delivered currently by any other agency or organisation.

It will take our town centre to a new level.

Sally Evans- owner of the Castle Hotel & Chair of Neath Inspired

We all know that successful centres are places where we want to spend time as well as money. The surest way to make that work is by working together. Neath now has the opportunity to achieve that success and with your support, Neath Inspired can pledge to:

- 1. Deliver targeted marketing campaigns to enhance Neath's image as a place to visit and invest in.**
- 2. Strengthen the businesses' voice on matters that affect the town centre.**
- 3. Provide services that are over and above what the council currently provide.**
- 4. Reduce costs for businesses through schemes such as collective purchasing of recycling and waste.**
- 5. Negotiate a parking offer and work with the local authority to develop an effective parking strategy that supports businesses.**
- 6. Enhance the appearance of the town centre through small scale environmental improvements.**
- 7. Attract additional funding from other sources.**
- 8. Support businesses through access to grants, seminars and workshops on key business issues.**

"As the chairman of the Healthy High Streets Initiative in Neath and Store Manager of Marks and Spencer, I believe that with the additional funding raised from the BID, we can increase the footfall in to Neath Town Centre and build a greater, more verdant shopping experience for our customers"- Alun Morgan, Store Manager Marks & Spencers.

Strand 1: Creating a better experience

The priority – A more accessible, attractive and welcoming town centre will drive up footfall, encourage dwell time and grow the number of return visits.

Investment through **Neath Inspired** will mean a town centre that is:

i. Easily accessible

Neath town centre will be easy to access however you get here. **Neath Inspired** will work with the local authority, other parking providers and local transport companies to make sure the town centre is a cost effective destination for those arriving by car or public transport. We will work to introduce effective offers and promotions that will appeal to those visiting and working in the town centre.

As a first step **Neath Inspired** will develop a new town centre parking strategy so that the range of charges, choices of ways to pay and signage will help to make long and short term parking easier and more attractive.

ii. Green, attractive and well connected

The town centre has a wonderful asset in Victoria Gardens, but there are opportunities to make so much more of its potential. **Neath Inspired** will create a series of gateways and green corridors throughout town, linking attractions such as the canal, the railway station and the different commercial areas together: routes become more inviting and people explore further and stay

longer.

iii. Actively welcoming

You know from visiting other towns that the best experience comes when you are made to feel welcome. The success of the trial scheme here in April 2015 shows the value of **Neath Inspired** investing further in our 'Welcome Ambassadors'. Visitors will be given a clear welcome point on arrival to town, while local workers and regular shoppers will value information about upcoming events – so they come into town more often, or stay in the evenings after work.

iii. Safer

A safer town centre will also be good for business. **Neath Inspired** will support the efforts of the Business Crime Reduction Partnership, Pubwatch and other initiatives, to increase safety and support both the daytime and evening economies. This will encourage businesses to share local intelligence that can help reduce crime.

"South Wales Police will establish a strong partnership with 'Neath Inspired' to improve town centre safety and reduce anti-social behaviour. I have been delighted to support the Steering Group and would look to work closely with the BID should it be established"- Tim Barrell, South Wales Police

Strand 2: Promoting a strong identity

The priority – A distinctive, lively and rewarding destination will grow a wider reputation, encourage repeat visits and build a loyal local customer base.

Investment through **Neath Inspired** will mean Neath is:

i. A distinctive destination

There are many more ways to get the message out these days and having a marketing plan will mean we make the most of them. **Neath Inspired** will develop a five year marketing strategy to build on Neath's unique identity, selling the town centre as a great place to visit and invest in. Having a plan will ensure momentum builds over the first term of the BID, with local, regional and national markets targeted through themed PR and marketing campaigns. Showing Neath in a new light will encourage new businesses too, which will add to the town's offer.

Neath Inspired will also work with the business community and organisations, such as Menter Iaith and other initiatives, to promote Welsh culture and language.

ii. Lively and entertaining

Activities and events are a great way to attract people into town and when held regularly they become fixtures to look forward to every year. Building on the success of activities such as Neath's Food & Drink Festival, Real Ale & Cider Festival and Community Christmas, **Neath Inspired** will develop and promote a full calendar of regular events., appealing to a broad range of audiences and showcasing the variety of businesses in town. We will help businesses make the most of these events with their own special offers and activities, and build on their success by measuring benefits

such as increases in footfall, and collecting feedback to ensure that each year is better than the last.

“Neath town centre has a great offer that it can capitalise on, and a BID is a real opportunity to ensure this happens. An effective marketing campaign and packed schedule of events will positively influence the profile of the town centre and increase footfall.”- Steve Jones, Gwyn Hall

iii. A rewarding place to shop

Customers who feel valued become regulars and understanding who those customers are is key. One proven solution to both of these business basics is to introduce a local incentive scheme to promote the centre and reward customers. **Neath Inspired** will deliver a loyalty offering that will encourage people to explore the great variety of independent as well as national retailers here. It will provide perks for regular customers and students, and encourage workers to spend more in the town centre at lunchtime and after work. The initiative will aim to keep more spending power in the town centre and help businesses understand their clientele by building a database of customers.

Strand 3: Growing Neath’s business

“The Healthy High Streets Initiative, supported by managers from Santander, Boots and M&S, are proud to support the development of the Neath Inspired BID. We feel confident that it has the potential to bring positive benefits and growth to the town centre and its businesses.”- Healthy High Street Champions

The priority – Investing together in services and benefits that reduce costs, share intelligence and support employees and the wider community will make Neath a better place to do business, a more appealing place to work and a safer, more resilient place.

Investment through **Neath Inspired** will mean the business community can:

i. Save money

Investing together means we can find opportunities to reduce business costs for everyone, including the setting up and management of collective switching schemes for waste, energy and recycling. **Neath Inspired** will also work with different media platforms to explore opportunities for reduced rate advertising, including local and national newspapers as well as specialist publications and radio. We will also investigate other options to reduce costs of business marketing, such as an online business directory where BID members will be featured for free.

“This is a great opportunity for businesses to make economies of scale. The collective purchasing and switching scheme proposed by Neath Inspired, will enable us to reduce costs and work together.” Samantha- Crazy Cow

ii. Build knowledge networks

Learning from business advisors, as well as from each other, can help you keep up to date with the latest requirements for companies. **Neath Inspired** will deliver regular seminars to keep businesses

informed on current requirements and topics that may impact them, such as auto enrolment into workplace pensions. A valuable partnership will also be established with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to deliver events that support businesses such as Small Business Saturday, Support Your High Street Week and business seminars.

iii. Support the community

Many businesses value the opportunity to make connections with their local community and **Neath Inspired** will deliver a Corporate Social Responsibility programme that facilitates and grows these links. A charity of the month scheme will also be formed, where businesses fundraise and put on activities to raise money for a specific cause.

iv. Understand the market

Collecting and sharing information about who uses the town centre can be expensive but extremely useful. **Neath Inspired** will develop a relationship between businesses that encourages the sharing and collection of data, such as footfall and spending habits, which will enable Neath to tailor its offer, to appeal to consumers and encourage spending in the town centre.

v. Grow healthy employees

Successful places have happy and healthy employees. To encourage activity around town, **Neath Inspired** will work with Groundwork Wales on their points-based 'Go Green for Health' scheme and all employees of member businesses will be offered free lunchtime walks, activities and competitions.

"Groundwork Wales would be delighted to support the work of 'Neath Inspired' through providing opportunities to BID members through our 'Go Green for Health Scheme.' This will help businesses to retain staff and grow productivity." - Gail Deval, Groundwork Wales

Local employment companies such as Careers Wales will help businesses find apprentices, work experience candidates and skilled employees, reducing local unemployment and matching suitable candidates with businesses who want to grow their teams.

vi. Have a stronger voice

Businesses will have a stronger voice together and **Neath Inspired** will become the active voice for town centre businesses, lobbying to deliver change on the issues that matter to them. With representation from an incorporated organisation and a collectively funded body, businesses will also get the chance to input into future town centre developments.

"Neath is a town with great history and potential, but business drive and continued improvement is the key to the town centre's growth and future success. We personally believe that the BID is an opportunity for the businesses in Neath Town Centre to take control of their future." Lynn & Brian Warlow- Neath Market

"The Neath Chamber of Trade supports the establishment of the BID and is certain that Neath Inspired will bring many positive benefits to businesses. We look forward to working collaboratively in

the future.” Andy Ludwig- Neath Chamber of Trade

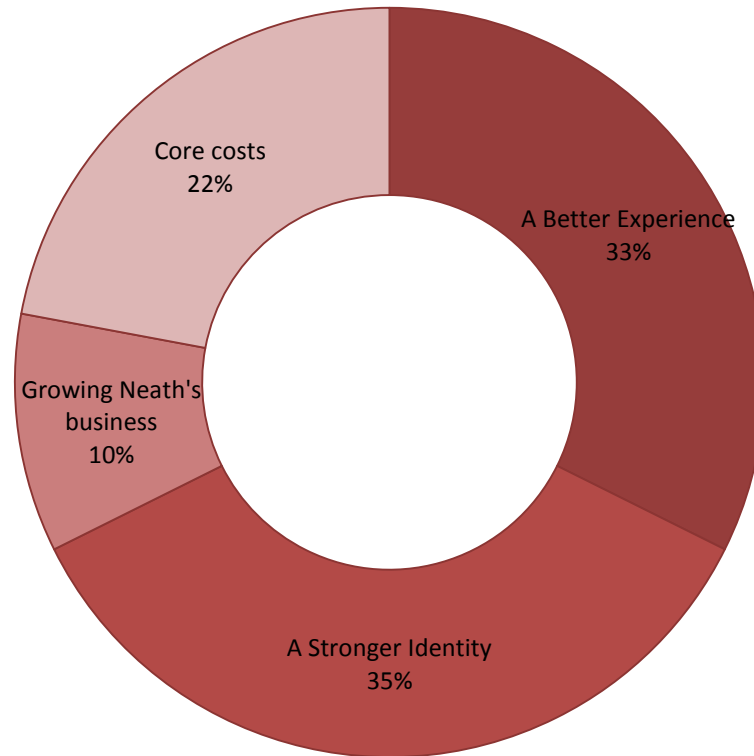


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How Neath Inspired will invest in the Town Centre's future



BID budget expenditure 2015-2020

A Better Experience- 22%- £36,000

A Stronger identity- 33%- £33,000

Growing Neath's business- 10%- £10,500

Core costs- 22%- £22,500

Collection costs, project support & administration

Total- £102,000

**“As a business owner and member of the Swansea BID, I have experienced first-hand the great benefits that such an initiative can deliver. I am excited that Neath has the chance to grasp this opportunity and feel that it will help significantly in creating a more vibrant and prosperous town centre.”-
Leighton Williams, Alison George Estate Agents**



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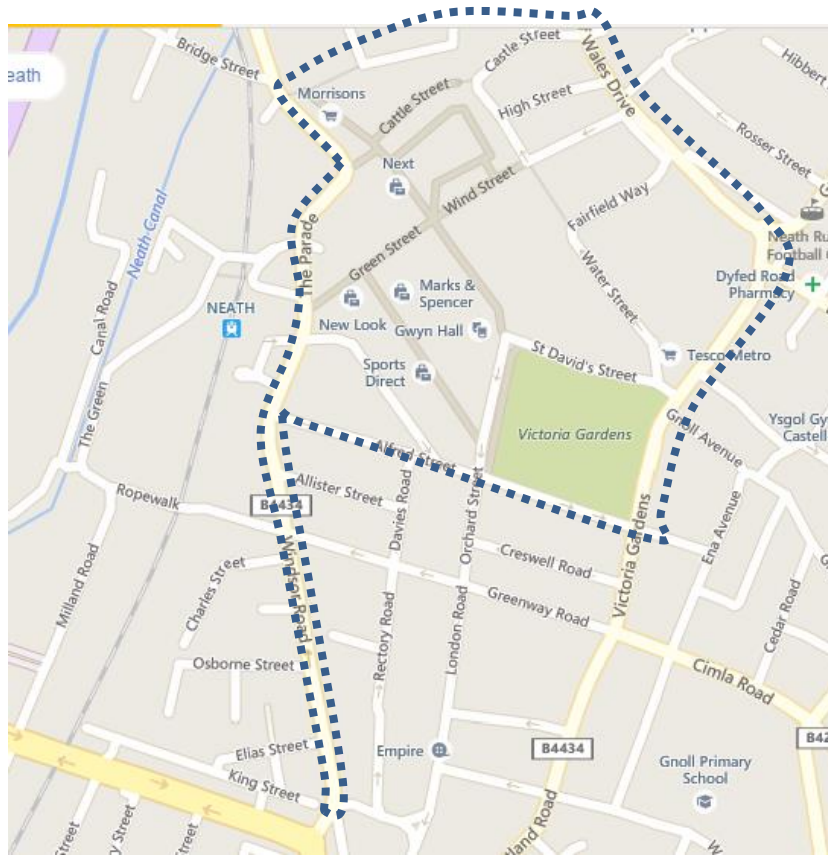
Neath Inspired		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
DRAFT LIFETIME BUDGET		£	£	£	£	£	£
	Levy Budget at 1.25% of rateable value, assuming 3% annual increase. (based on 95% collection)	£104,000	107,120	110,334	113,644	117,053	552,150
Core Costs	Collection (no more than 3% of overall levy income)	3,000	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	12,600
	Project Support	18,000	18,540	19,096	19,669	20,259	95,564
	Admin costs (postage, printing, insurance, etc.)	1,500	1,545	1,591	1,639	1,688	7,964
			-	-	-	-	-
		22,500	22,485	23,088	23,708	24,347	116,128
Creating a better experience	Easily accessible: Delivering better Access & Parking	21,000	21,630	22,279	22,947	23,636	111,492
	Green, attractive & well connected: gateway enhancements & improvements*	5,000	5,150	5,305	5,464	5,628	26,546

	Actively welcoming: Volunteer ambassadors*	5,000	5,150	5,305	5,464	5,628	26,546
	Help make Neath safer: supporting Store Net	5,000	5,150	5,305	5,464	5,628	5,796
			-	-	-	-	-
		36,000	37,080	38,192	39,338	40,518	191,129
Promoting a strong identity	A distinctive destination: communication strategy, PR & Marketing campaigns	£20,000	20,600	21,218	21,855	22,510	106,183
	Lively and entertaining: additional events	8,000	8,240	8,487	8,742	9,004	42,473
	A rewarding place to shop: Loyalty card initiative	£5,000	5,150	5,305	5,464	5,628	26,546
		33,000	33,990	35,010	36,060	37,142	175,201
Growing Neath's business	Save money: subsidised advertising	£8,000	8,240	8,487	8,742	9,004	9,274

	Building knowledge networks: networking, seminars & training	£2,500	2,575	2,652	2,732	2,814	2,898
		£10,500	£10,815	£11,139	£11,474	£11,818	£12,172
	Total expenditure	102,000	104,370	107,429	110,580	113,825	494,631
	Total income	104,000	107,120	110,334	113,644	117,053	552,150
	Contingency	2,000	2,750	2,905	3,064	3,228	13,946

*Match funding available from sources such as Visit Wales, Welsh Government & Big Lottery Funding.

BID boundaries



How will Neath Inspired work? Your questions answered

“As the store manager of Boots in the town centre of Neath I see this as a fantastic opportunity for us all to grow our business and make a difference to the community. We should all drive for improvement and grow our customer footfall. Let's make Neath a more attractive and welcoming town centre and return the pride back to Neath”- Kurt Carlsen, Store Manager Boots

Having a Business Improvement District will put Neath in good company. There are now over 200 BIDs across the UK, working successfully to enhance commercial areas for their members. If successful, **Neath Inspired** will be the fourth BID in Wales, joining Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil and, most recently, Newport.

What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

A BID is a business-led and funded partnership, where businesses within a defined area invest money together to make the improvements they identify for their trading environment. The money generated is targeted only at the **Neath Inspired** programme.

How is it funded?

Neath Inspired will be funded by a 1.25% levy on the rateable value (RV) of all hereditaments, or business units, within the defined BID boundary with an RV of £6,000 or more. Businesses with an RV below this threshold will be exempt from paying the BID levy.

Am I eligible to vote in the BID ballot?

If your business is within the defined BID boundaries and has a rateable value above £6,000 you will be eligible to vote and thus pay the BID levy, if the ballot returns a ‘yes’ vote.

Who decides?

It is up to you to decide if a BID should be established here in Neath town centre. In the Autumn you will receive a ballot paper by post asking whether you support the formation of the BID. To be successful, the ballot must pass on two majorities:

1. By the number of businesses voting (over 50% of votes cast must vote yes)
2. By the RV (over 50% of the total RV of all votes cast must vote yes)

Who pays?

If both these conditions are met the BID will be established and the BID levy will become mandatory for all eligible hereditaments within the BID area– this includes those owned by the local authority, town council and other public bodies.

The BID will then run for five years when a renewal ballot would be held and businesses take another vote to decide whether the BID continues or not.

Who is exempt from the levy?

- Business with a rateable value of under £6,000. This is because the cost of collection can be

more or equal to the amount paid in by the business.

- All hereditaments in receipt of mandatory charitable relief will be exempt apart from those listed on the Domestic rates list as 'Shops and premises'.

How is the levy collected?

The BID levy will be collected on an annual basis and we have commissioned the local authority to collect the levy on our behalf.

The levy will be amended on an annual basis using the rate of inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The final amount used will be agreed by the Neath Inspired BID Board.

Neath Inspired will be clear and transparent about how it is spending the money. There will be regularly updated information about income and expenditure available to all members of the BID.

Is the council contributing?

Yes, both the county and town councils have a number of properties in the town centre and will be levy payers.

How do you ensure services are in addition to those provided by the council?

To ensure that services will be additional to what's already delivered, the BID will have a baseline agreement with the local authority, which details the services they currently deliver.

BID funds are ONLY for projects in addition to those delivered by the local councils and can only be spent to improve the area in which they are raised.

Who runs Neath Inspired?

If a Yes vote is achieved an independent, not-for-profit company will be established, known as Neath Inspired Ltd. This will continue to be led by the private sector – by a **board of directors** who represent the businesses in Neath town centre and by **theme groups** also drawn from local businesses, who will meet to oversee specific projects in the programme's three main strands. There will be lots of opportunities for businesses to get involved.

"I believe that 'Neath Inspired' offers a great opportunity for businesses to come together and invest in the future of our town centre. The five year programme will provide the town with the additional resources to establish itself as an attractive location to visit and invest in- John Bowen, Celtic Finance

How is Neath Inspired governed?

Neath Inspired will be a transparent body with a number of checks and balances. This will ensure that the company is open to scrutiny from its levy payers and the community in which it operates, to maintain its credibility and reputation.

A **steering group** of committed business representatives has led this process so far. They have made the key decisions in this document and have influenced the programme of improvements you are using to inform your vote.

If the BID is established a **board of representatives** will be established with members drawn primarily from those who pay the BID levy. Members would be elected at an AGM, the first of which would be held within the BID's first year.

All businesses that are eligible to vote and that pay the levy may become **members of the company**. Any member can stand for election to the board. The directors of this board must be representative of the town centre and include a cross section of stakeholders from all sectors and sizes.

The proposed Neath Inspired BID board will include:

- 4 Large businesses
- 4 Small businesses
- 1 Landowner
- 1 member of the business club (voluntary contributor)
- 1 residential/community member
- 1 statutory body e.g. the police or local authority

To deliver the proposed projects, a part-time BID manager or project specific support will be selected and overseen by the board.

Draft articles of association can be found at www.neathinspired.co.uk

Businesses not elected to the board can participate through joining **theme groups**, which oversee the individual priorities and projects such as parking offers, or marketing and promotion. Theme groups will be established following the setup of the BID board.

The Neath Inspired BID will be transparent and accountable to its members. Its **performance and the impact** of its programme on improving the town centre will be regularly monitored.

Soon after the BID is created a range of baseline information will be collected and key performance indicators set. This will ensure that necessary data is captured at the outset and the impact of the BID programme elements can then be monitored effectively.

An **evaluation framework** will be used to measure performance and will include both quantitative

analysis (using data such as crime statistics and footfall figures) and qualitative analysis (such as visitor and business surveys). Regular reports regarding progress will be communicated to levy payers and the wider business community.

“This is our opportunity to create a vehicle that will represent us as businesses and enable us to drive change and influence the future of Neath town centre. Without this initiative, it will be challenging to coordinate our efforts and work collectively to achieve and voice what businesses want in the future.”- Ryan, Mr Bs Fish & Chip shop

Timescales – what happens next? The ballot is scheduled for November 2015 and ballot papers will be delivered by post to the local (business) addresses. These may need to be forwarded on to the voter at head office if the vote cannot be done locally and then returned by post. You will have 28 days to cast your vote.

If you would like to appoint someone to vote on your behalf, you need to fill out a proxy form and a new ballot paper will be issued to you.

How do I find out how much I am liable to pay? Becky Chantry will be setting up one-to-one appointments with each of the businesses in advance of the ballot, to talk through the business plan and discuss how much you will contribute to the BID. If you would like to meet sooner, please contact Becky on 07803 503973.

How can I be represented?

There is still time to participate in the development of the BID by getting involved in the steering group, please get in contact for more information. Once the BID is established any BID member is able to stand for the board or become involved in the theme groups.

Contact us

We would love to hear from you! Get in touch with Becky to:

1. Ask any questions or raise any concerns
2. Get more involved in the process and provide feedback

Please don't hesitate to pick up the phone or e-mail Becky on the details below.

E-mail: info@neathinspired.co.uk

Tel: 07803 503973

