



2025

Annual Report

About Watford Town Centre BID

Watford Town Centre BID is a business-led not for profit company voted for by the organisations and supported by the public sector.

Watford Town Centre BID represents 497 businesses and organisations in Watford Town Centre. It is one of over 330 BIDs across the UK; Watford's was established on 3 April 2016 and secured a second term in February 2021.

Watford BID Ltd delivers against the Watford BID Business Plan 2021 – 2026. It is the employed team who are responsible for the delivery of the Business Plan and the day to day management of the company. The team reports to the Board of Directors which is made up of business representatives from across the town.

The Team

Kara Mesiano

BID Manager, Executive Director &
Company Secretary

Glen Hempenstall

Marketing Manager

John Hattingh

Watford Business Against
Crime Coordinator

Fiona Hadley

Business Support

Cameron Evans

Cardboard Collector



The Board of Directors

Simon Plumb (Chair)

Harlequin Shopping Centre

Donna Lawrie (Vice Chair)

One YMCA

Kwame Tefe

Moon Under Water

Ben Martin

Watford Borough Council

Justine Hoy

Watford Borough Council

Samantha Ford

Watford Palace Theatre

Robert Walker

Leonardo Hotels Ltd

Lavanya Gamsani

Subway

Mark Ryan

Metro Bank

Saffron Johnson

Chamber of Commerce

Carol Andrea

Hair Connections by Andrea of Wembley

Kara Mesiano

Watford BID Ltd

Introduction from the Chair

I am delighted to introduce this year's annual review as Chair of the Watford Town Centre BID Board. Since being appointed to the role in November 2024, it has been a privilege to support the continued development of Watford's town centre alongside a dedicated and experienced board.

In my role as Centre Director at the Harlequin, I bring over two decades of experience in the retail and property management sector having worked with some of the largest property management companies in the world. This background gives me a deep understanding of both the strategic and operational needs of town centre businesses. I believe that this insight has helped guide the BID with a steady hand, ensuring that we remain focused on delivering meaningful value to our levy payers, even during periods of change.

Following the last business rates revaluation and the resulting impact on the BID's annual income, stabilising our financial position has been a key focus. I'm incredibly proud to say that, despite these challenges, the BID team not only maintained full delivery of the agreed business plan, but also successfully introduced new town centre events and launched a range of support initiatives tailored to the needs of our business community. These achievements reflect both the professionalism and the agility of the team.

I'm also extremely grateful for the strength, guidance, and continued support of the current BID Board of Directors, who bring a wide range of perspectives and expertise. Together, with the BID team, we have built a collaborative and resilient foundation from which the BID can continue to grow.

As we look ahead to the BID ballot in September 2025 and prepare for the 2026–2031 term, I am confident that we are in an excellent position. With strong partnerships, a proven track record of delivery, and a shared vision for the future, the BID will remain a driving force behind a vibrant and successful Watford Town Centre. I will be voting yes in the upcoming ballot because I believe in what we've achieved and where we're heading and I sincerely hope that you will join me in supporting another five years of investment, collaboration, and progress.

Simon Plumb

Harlequin Centre Director

Watford Town Centre BID Chair



What we delivered in 2024/25

A snapshot of 2024/25 - The team at the BID have been busy over the past 12 months delivering a range of projects and activities. Here are the highlights:

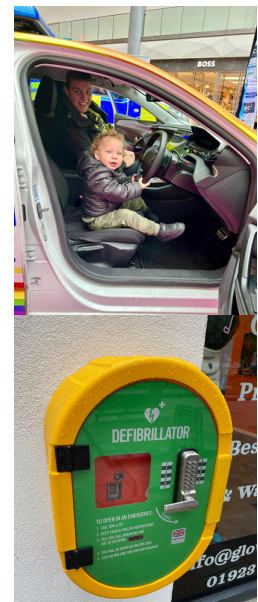


The Watford Gift Card

- Signed up even more businesses to the Watford Gift Card scheme, with particular focus on new businesses that opened in our town. There are currently over 140 places to spend the Watford Gift Card.
- Increased the number of hours the Watford Gift Card sales kiosk was open in Harlequin during the Christmas period to 88 hours.
- 2024 Watford Gift Card sales increased to £57,230 (up 12.5% compared to 2023), thanks to direct sales via our Watford Gift Card sales kiosk and an extensive marketing campaign.

Crime & Safety

- Grew the Watford Business Against Crime scheme, helping members prevent thefts and recover stolen items.
- Contributed to the town's CCTV operations.
- Raised £2,000+ towards One YMCA thanks to team members Kara & Glen completing the National Three Peaks Challenge
- Contributed to Shopmobility to encourage and support accessibility.
- Continued to manage the AED defibrillators located at Glow in One and The Moon Under Water, providing life-saving support for Watford Town Centre users.
- Increased our partnership working with Watford Police and other Watford Town Centre partners to support the reduction of crime in the town.
- Supported and actively participated in ASB forums to identify and establish solid action plans for the most prolific offenders in Watford Town Centre.
- Held two Community Safety Partnership seminars, enabling businesses to meet the town's policing team and gain valuable insights on the police priorities in Watford Town Centre.



Marketing & Communications

- Increased our total @WatfordTownCentre social media reach across Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn and TikTok to 1.7 million users in Year 4 of our BID term, up 20% compared to the previous year.
- Optimised the BID's watfordtowncentre.com website which helped result in a 42% increase in total users for Year 4 of our BID term compared to the previous year.
- Produced and delivered two BID newsletters to all BID levy payers detailing information and news from Watford Town Centre.
- Regularly circulated email updates to levy paying businesses including pertinent information from Watford Council, Herts Police and other key stakeholders in the town.



Watford Town Centre Events & Activities

- Co-hosted Watford Green Festival in June 2024, running a series of green initiatives and educational activities for kids to enjoy in our town.
- Funded a popular Birds of Prey Experience in August 2024 that led to queues of families wanting to handle eagles, falcons and owls.
- Collaborated with Watford's emergency services, charities and gyms to introduce Wellbeing Day activities throughout The Parade in September 2024.
- Launched Trick or Treat Week to drive footfall in the town with a bespoke Halloween event and a trick or treat trail across the High Street and The Parade.
- We were unfortunately unable to deliver Winterfest in 2024 due to adverse weather conditions, but we were able to have Santa Claus in town to switch on the lights. We will commit remaining Winterfest resources to a new event in 2025.

Christmas Lights & Installations

- Funded impressive twinkly LED festive lighting throughout Watford Town Centre to light up the town as a Christmas destination.
- Lit up our town's Christmas tree, The Parade bridge arches, the giant 'WATFORD' letters and the tree lights across Watford High Street with a warm golden glow.
- Illuminated lamppost lights across our area with purple snowfall animations.

Townscape Enhancements

- Introduced the Neurodiversity Umbrella Project installation on Queens Road, celebrating all the diverse minds we are proud to have in Watford, whilst creating a memorable and unique design for our town.
- Filled the Watford Town Centre with beautiful floral displays from June to late September.
- Installed colourful lamppost banners to promote the Watford Town Centre brand whilst enhancing the look of the town. The designs also help users to navigate their way around Watford Town Centre.
- Celebrated Proud Watford, Halloween, Purple Tuesday, Remembrance Day, Chinese New Year, Valentine's and International Women's Day by lighting up Watford Town Centre's LED tree lights in appropriate colours.

Going Greener

- Grew the free Cardboard Collection Scheme in Watford Town Centre, reducing operational costs for businesses and collected over 9.3 tonnes of cardboard.
- Regularly attended the Environmental Manager Network alongside other Watford Town Centre partners and businesses to support the town's wider sustainability strategy.
- Funded a deep clean-up of Service Road Q following high demand for improvement from businesses located around that area.
- Organised community litter picks that would encourage Watford Town Centre users to keep public and private spaces clean and tidy.
- Won the Gold Sustainability Award at the 2024 SME Hertfordshire Business Awards in recognition of the BID's outstanding green initiatives.



Business Improvement Grant

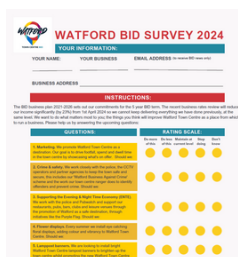
- Secured £20,000 worth of grant income from Watford Borough Council via the UK SPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) for redistributing via our small business improvement grant scheme.
- Utilised the grant funds to help improve multiple businesses with the quality in which they operate, including shop refurbishments, new appliances and technology advances.

Business Engagement & B2B Events

- Recruited Fiona in the newly introduced 'Business Support' role to provide more frequent and valuable face-to-face contact with levy paying businesses.
- Conducted an annual BID survey for the third year running, allowing levy paying businesses to have their say on the performance of Watford Town Centre, and provide valuable feedback that shapes BID activities for 2025/26.
- Hosted two BID socials within Watford Town Centre venues, allowing employees in the town to network in an informal setting.
- Introduced quarterly Breakfast with the BID networking events in the BID office, inviting all levy paying businesses to engage face-to-face with the BID team.
- Conducted marketing 1-2-1 support for businesses, providing pertinent information to improve how businesses promote themselves.

Watford Town Centre Performance & Analytics

- Invested in invaluable monthly retail spend insights from Beauclair, allowing the BID to monitor Watford Town Centre performance across multiple sectors.
- Made both Watford Town Centre retail spend insights and vacancy rates accessible exclusively to levy paying businesses and key partners.
- Monitored job vacancies across Watford Town Centre and shared the insights with local partners such as West Herts College and recruitment agencies.



Financial Report 2024/25

Income

BID Levy Income	£459,047
External Income	£112,652
Total Income	£571,699

Central & Fixed Costs -£104,559

Project Costs

Theme 1 – Safeguarding the future of Watford	-£66,194
Theme 2 – Enhancing the look and feel of Watford	-£205,686
Theme 3 – Marketing, communication and events	-£84,646

Total Expenditure -£461,125

Projected Surplus/savings* £117,001

*The Board of Directors approved surplus income from 2023/24 and 2024/25 to be carried over to support to support the delivery of the final year of the BID term when income was impacted following the 2023 business rates revaluation.