



TOWN CENTRE BID

**Year 4
2nd Edition**

News

Watford Town Centre's Upcoming Events

Our town has an exciting programme of events and activities to look forward to in the upcoming spring and summer months.

We are delighted to be hosting brand-new **Easter activities** including an Easter Egg Hunt, Mobile Farm and a visit from costume characters designed to encourage footfall, dwell time and entertain families.

We have also collaborated with Watford Council and The Pump House Theatre to bring a brand-new summer festival to our town **Watford Fringe Festival Presents: Cultural Party.**

As always, we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with businesses for this event, so please use the contact details on the next page if you'd like to be involved.

Events and activities are just one of many projects that we deliver to benefit our businesses; in this newsletter you'll be able to find out more about the **Business Improvement Grant**, colourful floral displays and our free **cardboard collection service.**

We also have crime & safety content within this newsletter, including advice for **preventing diners from walking out of your eatery without paying.**

The Community Safety Partnership recently created a dedicated **crime & safety newsletter**, which you can access in the 'For BID Businesses' section of watfordtowncentre.com.

Read on for pertinent data and insights to share exclusively with your business, jump to section 4 of our newsletter for **retail spend insights, vacancy rates** and **Watford Gift Card sales.**

Everything that we deliver has Watford Town Centre businesses as our number one priority. Please help us to help you by completing our **levy payer survey** ahead of the upcoming **BID ballot**, details of which can be found on page 4.





**This is our
Watford Town
Centre Business
Improvement
District (BID)**

**newsletter for spring 2025,
where we put together content
specifically for businesses and
employees in our town.**

**As shown by the contents, this
newsletter keeps you up to date
with all the current BID projects
& campaigns to benefit Watford
Town Centre.**

**Visit the 'For BID Businesses'
section of
watfordtowncentre.com
for more information
about us.**

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1. Introduction

About the BID

Formerly known as Watford BID, in 2023 we changed our name to **Watford Town Centre BID** to reflect the area we operate in and to coincide with the launch of the **Watford Town Centre** brand.

A Business Improvement District – or BID – is a way for local businesses to work together to tackle issues that affect their trading environment. Problems which are too large or widespread for any one business to address can be solved by all businesses coming together to finance and manage improvements. This can increase footfall, make it easier to retain staff, solve difficult issues and ultimately result in higher profits.

Watford BID Ltd was established in April 2016 covering Watford Town Centre. In 2021 our businesses voted in favour of a 2nd BID term, meaning that Watford Town Centre BID will continue to provide its service until 31 March 2026.

Meet the BID team



Kara Mesiano

BID Manager

kara@watfordtowncentre.com

01923 919 984



Glen Hempenstall

Marketing Manager

marketing@watfordtowncentre.com

01923 919 983



Fiona Hadley

Business Support

business@watfordtowncentre.com

01923 919 989

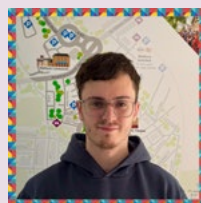


John Hattingh

Business Against Crime Coordinator

john.hattingh@herts.police.uk

07732 009 438



Cameron Evans

Cardboard Collection Service

01923 919 989

Contact us

Suite 5, Kings Court, 153
High Street, Watford WD17 2ER

Telephone: **01923 919 989**

www.watfordtowncentre.com

Social media

    @WatfordTownCentre

 @WatTown Centre  Watford Town Centre BID

2. BID projects & campaigns

BID ballot

Watford Town Centre BID – Upcoming ballot for a third term in September 2025

We are excited to inform all levy payers that Watford Town Centre BID will be holding a ballot in September 2025 to secure a third term. This ballot is an opportunity for all businesses in the BID area to have their say on the future direction of Watford Town Centre and the continued support of initiatives that benefit the local economy.

Reflecting on past successes

Over the past two terms, Watford BID Ltd has made a significant impact on our town, delivering key projects and investments that have helped revitalise the area. From improving the appearance of the town through public realm enhancements, to hosting events that attract shoppers and visitors, our work has supported businesses in becoming more visible and accessible.

Why a 'YES' vote is Crucial

The BID's success over the last 9 years is a direct result of the collaboration and support of levy payers like you. A 'YES' vote in the upcoming ballot is crucial to continuing the momentum and funding the next phase of growth for Watford Town Centre. With the challenges facing high streets today, it is essential that we work together to ensure Watford remains competitive and appealing to shoppers, visitors, and businesses alike.

A third term will allow us to build on the progress we've made, fund key initiatives, and continue to advocate for the needs of local businesses. This is our chance to shape the future of Watford Town Centre, and we need your support to make that happen.

Ballot timeline

Here are the important dates for the upcoming ballot:

- **Business Plan Launch Event: Friday 1 August 2025**
- **Ballot Opens: Friday 12 September 2025**
- **Ballot Closes: Thursday 9 October 2025**
- **Result Announced: Friday 10 October 2025**

Your vote is your voice in how we continue to enhance Watford Town Centre. We encourage all levy payers to take part in this vital process and show your support for the future of the town.

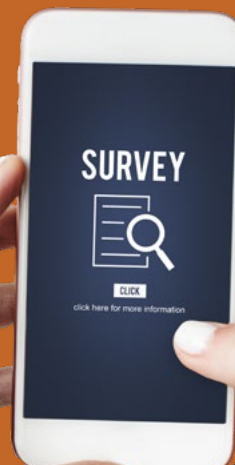
For any questions or further information on the ballot, please don't hesitate to email the team at enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com. Together, we can ensure that Watford remains a thriving town centre for years to come.

Annual levy payer survey

What do you think of crime in our town? Would you like to see more townscape enhancements? Should Watford Town Centre events be changed?

As we approach the BID ballot for a third term from 2026 – 2031, we want to gather your valuable feedback on the services, projects and activities provided by Watford Town Centre BID.

Your responses will help shape the future of our community and guide decisions related to the BID's continued operation. We really appreciate your time and feedback!





Floral displays

For the tenth year running, Watford Town Centre BID will be installing floral displays to provide a wonderful array of colours over the coming summer.

In June 2025 up until early autumn, Watford Town Centre will be filled with dozens of colourful large planters. Amethyst Horticulture, a well-renowned horticultural contractor in the placemaking industry, will be the suppliers for this year's stunning flowers.

There will be barrier baskets decorating our iconic bridge going over the pond, and some of our businesses have requested colourful hanging baskets to brighten up their exterior.



Iryna Poderienie

When my friends visited Watford-they were absolutely impressed by that amount of beautiful displays. Thank you 🌸👩🏻❤️



Sandra Lavelle

Absolutely beautiful, I was very impressed with Watford on my recent visit.



BID social

Thank you to everyone who attended our BID social at Hollywood Bowl in February 2025. We really enjoyed seeing so many of you for our best-ever attended BID social. See you at the next one!

If you have any feedback on the event, please do let us know so we can keep it in mind for our future B2B events.

Our next BID social will be in Autumn 2025, and we will send out invites closer to the time. If you'd like us to consider your venue for the next BID social, please contact us.

3. Business support & offers

Business Improvement Grant

The 2024/25 Business Improvement Grant has now closed, but it has already made a significant impact on several small businesses in Watford Town Centre. The grant has provided crucial funding to help local businesses improve their storefronts, enhance customer experiences, and invest in new equipment and services.

Several businesses have benefited from the program, helping to create a more vibrant and attractive town for both shoppers and businesses alike. We are proud to have supported these initiatives, alongside Watford Borough Council via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and look forward to continuing efforts to boost the local economy in the future.

The Business Improvement Grant supported the following businesses in 2024/25:

Bubble King (NSTT GLOBAL 1 LTD)	Store front improvements – New vibrant branding
Humo	New kitchen equipment
Splendor Beauty Lounge	Customer loyalty app to reward / retain customers
Café Bianco	Storefront improvements and new menu board
Woody Express LTD	Interior enhancements – New tables, chairs and décor
Shots (Twenty Twenty Shots LTD)	Store front Improvements – Outside Lighting and Lightbox sign repair and upgrade to energy efficient LED
Watford Town Centre BID	Digital presentation screen & bracket for hosting meetings and training for levy payers
Runnersworld	Store front improvements – Re-spray of Shop front
Beat School Uniform	Interior Improvements – Energy efficient heating & hot water system installation
Café De Lisboa	Interior improvements – Digital Display menu to improve customer experience
Magic Nail Bar Beauty Salon	Interior improvements – Painting & decorating

The Business Improvement Grant has proven to be incredibly popular, with a high demand for funding each year. Due to its success and the positive impact it has had on the local business community, we are excited to announce that we've secured an additional £20,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to offer the grant again in 2025/26.

Businesses can look forward to the launch of the next round of funding this spring, providing more opportunities to enhance their operations and contribute to the continued revitalisation of Watford Town Centre.

We will be in touch with all eligible businesses once the grant is launched this spring.





Free cardboard collection service

As part of Watford Town Centre BID's service, our team member Cameron collects and recycles cardboard from small businesses in Watford Town Centre. Our now **Sustainability Award winning** service comes at no additional cost to levy payers and was introduced as an initiative to save local businesses' money, whilst also being proactively sustainable.

Cameron collects cardboard three times a week in our electric vehicle, with 59 traders currently signed up. We are proud to have collected over 16 tonnes of cardboard since we launched the pilot scheme in early 2023!

A massive thank you goes to our sponsors & partners for making this possible: **Twocan Graphics, Atria Watford, We Are Acuity and Carbon Rewind.**

If you would be interested in finding out more and joining our Cardboard Collection service, please complete the operational agreement by visiting the "For BID Businesses" section of our website under "Resources". Return the form to enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com or phone **01923 919 989** for more information.

Marketing 1-2-1 support

Watford Town Centre BID's marketing & communications manager, Glen Hemenstall, offers support to Watford Town Centre businesses wanting help with marketing their business.

Glen specialises in digital marketing and can help your business to set up your social media profiles, grow your follower count, and provide useful tips on maintaining a good digital marketing strategy.

- Manages the @WatfordTownCentre Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok accounts and watfordtowncentre.com
- Advice on SEO, Display Ads, Google Search Ads, working with agencies
- Contacts with Watford Observer, Vibe radio, Heart Hertfordshire, Watford Council communications

Simply email through to marketing@watfordtowncentre.com if you'd be interested in arranging a conversation to aid you with your marketing needs.



4. Watford Town Centre data

Vacancy rates

National vacancy rate data is provided by British Retail Consortium.

Quarter	National	Watford High Street
Q1: Jan '23 - Mar '23	13.8%	7.8%
Q2: Apr '23 - Jun '23	13.9%	7.0%
Q3: Jul '23 - Sept '23	13.8%	6.7%
Q4: Oct '23 - Dec '23	13.9%	7.4%
Q1: Jan '24 - Mar '24	14.0%	7.0%
Q2: Apr '24 - Jun '24	14.0%	8.9%
Q3: Jul '24 - Sept '24	14.0%	9.5%
Q4: Oct '24 - Dec '24	17.6%	10.2%

Retail spend insights

Watford Town Centre retail spend insights are provided by Beauclair data. We've provided the stats for February 2025 here, but please do get in touch for figures from other months of the year and we can provide them to you.

Watford Headline Metrics

- In Feb 2025, monthly retail sales in Watford were £12.2m. Year-to-Date (YTD) sales were £24.6m.
- Compared to Feb 2024, monthly sales marginally increased by +0.5% while YTD sales marginally increased by +0.6%.
- The marginal increase in monthly sales was due to an increase of +3.9% in average revenue per customer (ARPC) and a decrease of -3.3% in customer numbers.

Metric	Feb 25	Feb 25 vs Feb 24	YTD Feb 25	YTD Feb 25 vs YTD Feb 24
Sales	£12.2m	+0.5%	£24.6m	+0.6%
Transactions	597k	-4.5%	1.21m	-2.5%
Customers	158k	-3.3%	312k	-3.8%
ATV	£20.37	+5.2%	£20.24	+3.1%
ARPC	£76.95	+3.9%	£78.67	+4.6%



Watford vs Comparator Areas

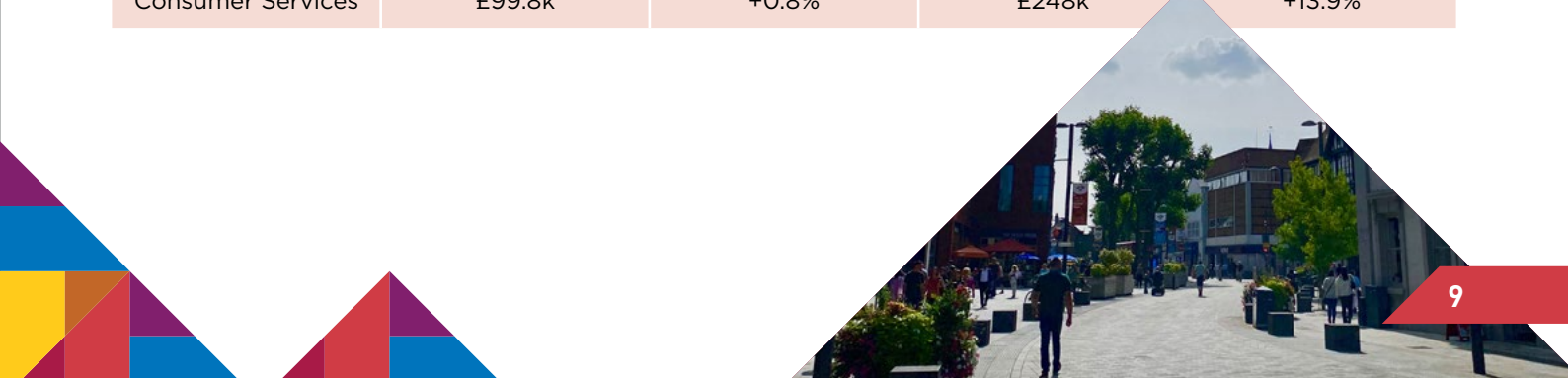
- Monthly sales change between Feb 2024 and Feb 2025 in Watford (+0.5%) is higher than Reading (-5.9%) and Woking (-10.1%).
- YTD sales change between Feb 2024 and Feb 2025 in Watford (+0.6%) is higher than Woking (-3.4%) and Reading (-6.1%).

Retail Area	Feb 25 vs Feb 24	YTD Feb 25 vs YTD Feb 24
Watford	+0.5%	+0.6%
Reading	-5.9%	-6.1%
Woking	-10.1%	-3.4%
GB Benchmark	-5.6%	-4.4%

Watford Sector Sales

- The five sectors with the highest monthly sales are Fashion (£5.25m), Food & Drink (£2.14m), Health & Beauty (£1.55m), Grocery (£1.01m), and General Retail (£982k).
- The five sectors with the highest YTD sales are Fashion (£10.6m), Food & Drink (£3.95m), Health & Beauty (£2.99m), General Retail (£2.25m), and Grocery (£2.12m).
- The five sectors showing the largest change in sales between Feb 2024 and Feb 2025 are Food & Drink (-£177k), Household (+£142k), Tourism (+£112k), General Retail (+£107k) and Health & Beauty (-£93.7k).

Sector	Feb 25	Feb 25 vs Feb 24	YTD Feb 25	YTD Feb 25 vs YTD Feb 24
Fashion	£5.25m	+0.1%	£10.6m	+0.3%
Food & Drink	£2.14m	-7.7%	£3.95m	-10.0%
Health & Beauty	£1.55m	-5.7%	£2.99m	-7.4%
Grocery	£1.01m	-3.1%	£2.12m	-0.9%
General Retail	£982k	+12.3%	£2.25m	+16.8%
Tourism	£366k	+43.9%	£773k	+4.1%
Entertainment	£298k	+4.1%	£573k	+3.4%
Transport	£258k	-7.7%	£526k	-7.5%
Household	£220k	+183.6%	£586k	+321.7%
Consumer Services	£99.8k	+0.8%	£248k	+13.9%



4. Watford Town Centre data

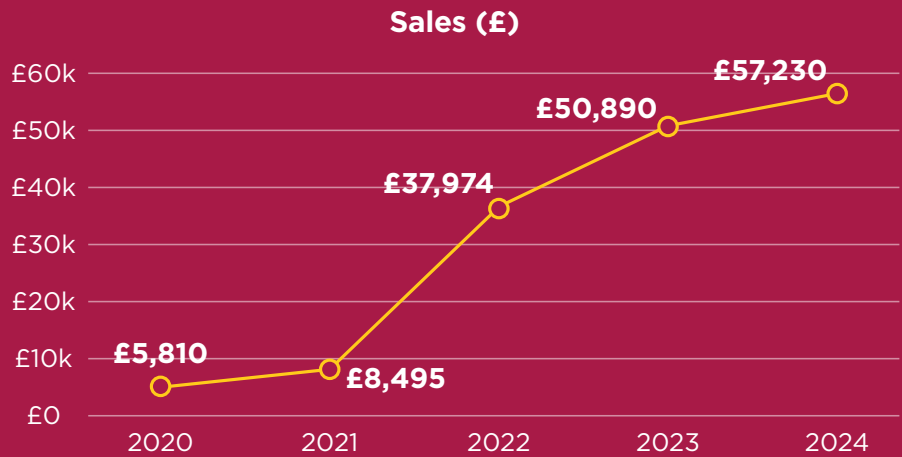
Watford Gift Card sales

Launched February 2020,
cards purchased via
watfordgiftcard.com

140+ businesses accepting the
Watford Gift Card

£150,000+ sales to date

New Watford Town Centre Gift
Card design recently introduced



Does your business accept the Watford Gift Card?

- “Where to spend” businesses: watfordgiftcard.com
- Costs nothing to onboard, simply arrange a date with our team to swipe/tap your payment machine
- Email enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com



5. Crime & safety

Prevent diners from leaving your restaurant without payment

Prevent an easy getaway

Look at the exit points from the restaurant from a security perspective – the fewer the better. If you have an outside smoking area – especially if it's the street – and all members of a dining party are outside, then it's easier for them to leave. Ensure your staff patrol the area and that you have good surveillance of outside spaces from inside the building.

Capture their faces

It is recommended that you install CCTV in your restaurant and that it covers all exits. This not only deters crime, it also provides reassurance to customers and staff.

Own the door

By meeting and greeting every customer, thereby 'registering' their faces, you are demonstrating a high level of customer care and attention – which will make a potential thief less likely to leave without paying the bill.

Cover the exit

Review the position of the cash till. A clear view of the entrance from the till always enhances crime prevention, but be careful about locating the actual till too close to the front door, as this could compromise its security.

Be engaging

Encourage staff to pay attention to your customers, make good eye contact and engage in polite conversation. The better the customer care, the less chance of anyone leaving without paying.

Get their number

Many restaurants take mobile phone numbers when accepting bookings. Likewise, most hotels now ask for credit card details when guests book or check in. And it's always a good idea to call the customer the day before the booking, to remind them and to make sure the booking is authentic.

Protect the business

If a party of diners arrives without having made a booking, it's best to ask for a credit card before seating the group – particularly large parties.

Remember, there's only so much you can do to establish the identity of customers, and there's nothing to stop them giving false information. However, by following the tips listed above, you'll be far better equipped to prevent people making off without paying.

In the event of an incident, call police as quickly as possible – we do not recommend taking matters into your own hands. Remember, you are accountable for your actions both legally and commercially.

Invest in the Watford Business Against Crime Scheme

If your business suffers at the hands of shoplifters or individuals making off without payment or carrying out antisocial behaviour, then we encourage you to join our Watford Business Against Crime (WBAC) scheme.

More details on the WBAC scheme can be found in the next article.

5. Crime & safety

WBAC information

Watford Business Against Crime (WBAC) is a membership scheme, run by Watford Town Centre BID, which aims to reduce retail crime and anti-social behaviour throughout the town.

Benefits of joining:

- Exclusive access to intelligence about, and photos of convicted retail crime and fraud offenders.
- Participation in the WBAC Exclusion Order Scheme which sees persistent shop thieves banned from all member stores.
- Links to Hertfordshire Police through nominated PCSOs and police officers who work in Watford Town Centre.
- Monthly meetings to share intelligence.
- Free signage, stickers and crime prevention material.

Email enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com for more information about joining the WBAC membership scheme, rates are reduced for Watford Town Centre BID businesses.

Radio procedure guidelines:

- State what business you are.
- Be accurate with your information stating description of suspect, sex, nationality, colour, age, physique, skin, hair, outfit, and direction of travel.
- Keep your message short and include what has been taken and what way they are heading.
- Set your radio to an appropriate volume level. Log off when you finish your shift.

Remember, the radio is there for your assistance. Take some time to ensure staff know how to use it. If you need any help, contact John Hattingh on **07732 009438** or john.hattingh@herts.police.uk





Reduction in Watford central crime



-9%

ALL recorded crime



-15%

anti-social behaviour



-35%

bicycle theft



-15%

shoplifting



-35%

theft from vehicle



-4%

violence

**Attended over
3,000
incidents
in Watford
Central**

Crime & safety newsletter

In Watford Town Centre BID's annual surveys, Crime & Safety consistently comes up as the number one priority for the BID.

In response to this, one of the things the BID has introduced is a Crime & Safety newsletter in tandem with the Community Safety Partnership - the newsletter details the work being done to tackle crime and outlines how your business can help to solve the challenges that we are facing.

The BID team worked with the Herts Neighbourhood Policing Team to distribute a hard copy of the March 2025 newsletter to all Watford Town Centre businesses.

If you would like a digital copy, then please visit the 'Resources' section within the BID Businesses section of our website.



6. Dates for your diary

Community litter picks


Some areas within Watford Town Centre can be neglected as they fall under the responsibility of landlords rather than the local authorities. Our community litter picks aim to set a positive example showing that all Watford Town Centre users have a responsibility to keep our town clean and tidy.

Last year, we had McDonalds, Leonardo Hotel and Watford Palace Theatre staff members join us for community litter picking days.


If you would like to be involved this year, then please email enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com to let us know the date(s) you would like to join our team.





 **Friday 9 May**


 **10am - 12pm**


 **Friday 6 June**

 **10am - 12pm**

 **Friday 4 July**

 **10am - 12pm**

 **Friday 1 August**

 **10am - 12pm**



St Mary's Churchyard


The improvements at St Mary's Churchyard will promote biodiversity, offer opportunities for informal play, and provide a peaceful retreat for reflection. They are due to be completed by **23 May**, and there will be an afternoon of activities to celebrate from **12:30pm**.

Updated surfacing, paving, and entrance features will enhance the site's appearance, while soft landscaping, including raised planters and wildlife-friendly installations such as birdhouses and bee hotels, will boost biodiversity.

Improved pathways will enhance accessibility, and informal play spaces will make the area more engaging for families.



Breakfast with the BID

 Tuesday 8 April 2025, 8:30am - 10:00am

 Suite 5 Kings Court, 153 High Street, WD17 2ER

Come along to our office and meet the BID team, learn more about the BID's priorities for 2025/26 and how we might be able to support your business.

To ensure we can cater for all those able to attend, please RSVP to enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com and let us know if you have any dietary requirements.

We look forward to seeing you there.



6. Dates for your diary

More Spring & Summer events in our town

Watford Town Centre BID, Watford Council, Atria Watford and other local stakeholders have a multitude of events and activities coming to our town over the coming months. Visit the 'What's On' page of watfordtowncentre.com to find out more about the following:

Watford Town Centre Easter Egg Hunt

- 7-11 April 2025
- Watford High Street and The Parade
- 10:00am - 4:00pm

Easter Crafts

- 7-11 April 2025
- Atria Watford
- 11:00am - 4:00pm

Record Store Day

- 12 April 2025
- Multiple venues
- 2:00pm - 6:00pm

Mobile Farm

- 14-15 April 2025
- The Parade
- 10:00am - 2:00pm

Inflatable Fun Day

- 16 April 2025
- The Parade
- 10:00am - 2:00pm

Easter Costume Characters

- 17 April 2025
- Watford High Street and The Parade
- 10:00am - 2:00pm

Watford Jazz Junction

- 10-18 May 2025
- Multiple venues

Fashion Weekend

- 17-18 May 2025
- Atria Watford

Watford Fringe Festival Presents: Cultural Party

- 28 June 2025
- The Parade
- 3:00pm - 10:00pm

Watford Fringe

- 1-31 July 2025
- Multiple venues

Numberfit Scavenger Hunt

- Summer holiday - TBC
- Watford High Street and The Parade

BIG Screen

- 15-31 August 2025
- The Parade

BIG Beach

- 15-31 August 2025
- Outside Watford Central Library
- 2:00pm - 6:00pm



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Keep in touch

Send your contact details to enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com to subscribe to our e-updates and receive important information for Watford Town Centre businesses.