



TOWN CENTRE

BID factsheet

Your BID
levy invoice

What is a BID?

A Business Improvement District – or BID – is a way for local businesses to work together to tackle issues that affect their trading environment. Watford BID Ltd began trading on 3 April 2016. A second five-year BID term was agreed following a successful 'YES' vote from levy payers in the February 2021 renewal ballot. A third BID term commenced on 1 April 2026 following a resounding **92% of votes in favour** in the October 2025 ballot. Watford Town Centre BID will deliver the projects and services set out in the new BID business plan for 2026-2031, which can be found on watfordtowncentre.com or you can request a hard copy from our team.

What is the BID levy?

Watford Town Centre BID is funded primarily by all the eligible businesses and organisations in the defined geographical area paying an annual BID levy. This levy income allows us to deliver the BID business plan which was approved by levy paying businesses in October 2025. We also generate additional income; for example from public sector agencies, grant bodies, sponsorship and Watford Gift Card breakage. All income that we generate is invested back into Watford Town Centre for the benefit of levy paying businesses.

Who has to pay the BID levy?

The person or organisation liable to pay the non-domestic rates for the property, with a rateable value of £12,000 or more, is liable to pay the BID levy. Where a property is occupied, this will be the occupier; for empty properties the person or organisation entitled to occupy the property is liable to pay. Ordinarily, this will be the leaseholder or the owner.

How is the BID levy calculated?

The BID levy is charged at 2% of the rateable value of each eligible business within the BID area on 31 March 2026. Retailers that pay a service charge to Harlequin Watford are charged at a reduced BID levy rate of 1.75%. Registered charitable organisations are charged at a reduced BID levy rate of 0.25% if they are not based in a retail unit.

What happens if I don't pay?

The BID levy is mandatory and Watford Borough Council, who collect the levy on behalf of Watford Town Centre BID, are liable to take action to recover any outstanding money owed. Any levy payer experiencing financial difficulties should contact Watford Borough Council or the BID at the earliest possible opportunity to explore spreading payment over a period of 3 months to help your situation.

Transparency and accountability

We are accountable to each and every levy payer. We are not-for-profit and all accounts are published in an annual report and presented at our AGM, which is available for all levy payers to view and attend. Our board of directors is made up of representatives from different business sectors operating in Watford Town Centre. Our directors are elected annually and are responsible for governance matters such as financial arrangements, contractual obligations, human resources, standards and compliance, as well as providing strategic direction.

2016-2026: Our achievements

Our commitments for 2026-2031 will improve upon our significant achievements delivered since Watford BID was formed in April 2016.

For more information on each project visit:

watfordtowncentre.com > [For BID Businesses](#) > [What we do](#)



£5 million+ investment
into Watford Town Centre



55k
watfordtowncentre.com
visitors



£177k
Watford Gift
Card sales



44 colourful
umbrellas to celebrate
neurodiversity



18 tonnes of
cardboard recycled
via our service



10 years of
lighting up
Christmas



545 bright
and colourful
floral displays



75 Watford
Business Against
Crime members



22k+
@WatfordTownCentre
followers



10,000s of
Watford Town Centre
event attendees



£100k
small-medium sized
business grant funding

Theme 1: Safeguarding the future of our town

Business support services

- **Business Improvement Grant** – Collaborated with Watford Council to distribute over £100,000 worth of grant funding to small-medium sized businesses.

Sustainability

- **Cardboard collection service** – Collected over 18 tonnes of cardboard for recycling as part of our FREE cardboard collection service for BID businesses.
- **Green events** – Collaborated with partners to host Watford Green Festival and The Gift Swap, where we repurposed 250+ unwanted Christmas presents.

Welcoming and accessible

- **“Neurodiversity Umbrella Project”** – Introduced the Neurodiversity Umbrella Project in 2024 to celebrate all the different minds we are proud to have in our town.
- **Supporting inclusivity** – Championed Proud Watford and Purple Tuesday in our town and became ambassadors of their causes.
- **Shopmobility funding** – Contributed £20,000 towards Shopmobility to help with accessibility around Watford Town Centre.

Locking in spend

- **Watford Gift Card programme** – Sold over £177,000 worth of Watford Gift Cards since launching the BID-funded programme in 2020, with 148 accepting the card.
 - **Watford Town Centre performance** – Shared valuable vacancy rate and retail spend insights with levy payers to inform them on how Watford compares with the nation.
 - Achieved **“Watford Business Pledge Ambassador”** status from Watford Council in 2025 to recognise commitment to local suppliers and social responsibility.
 - **“Hertfordshire SME Awards”** for Sustainability: Won Silver in 2023 and Gold in 2024.
 - **Winner of Retail District Award** in 2022 at the “Good Retail Awards”.
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Theme 2: Enhancing the look and feel of Watford

Crime and safety

- **Watford Business Against Crime scheme** – Managed the shop link radio scheme linking over 75 retailers to police and CCTV.
- **CCTV funding** – Contributed £75,000 to support surveillance operations.
- **Community Safety Partnership seminars** – Hosted 2 seminars with Hertfordshire Constabulary and Harlequin Shopping Centre.
- **Safety equipment funding** – Contributed to AED defibrillators, anti-drink spiking kits and bleed control kits.

Townscape enhancements

- **Floral displays** – Increased from 215 displays in first term to 330 in second term.
- **Lamppost banners** – Introduced 36 banners for branding and wayfinding.
- **Christmas installations** – Delivered annual festive lighting and seasonal displays.

Cleanliness

- **Community litter picking** – Organised 6 litter picks for local areas.
 - **Service Road Q clean up** – Funded deep clean following business demand.
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Theme 3: Marketing, communications and events

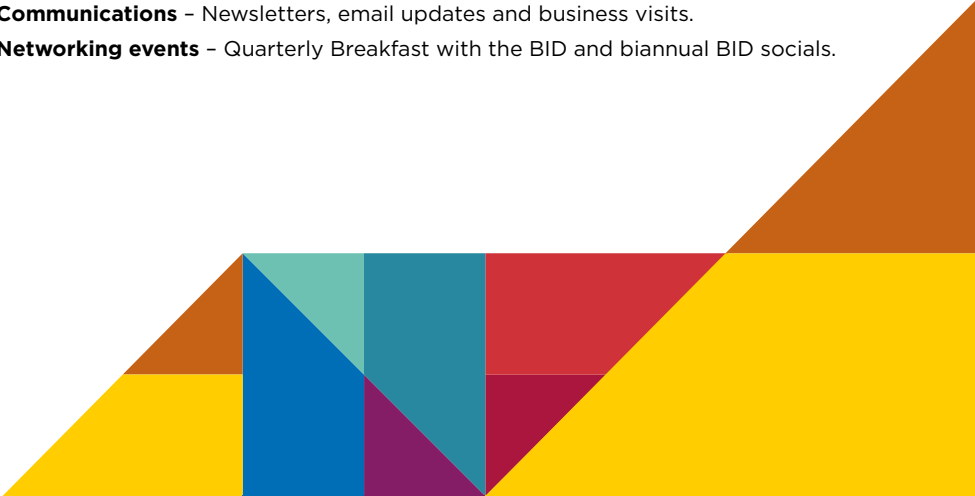
Online presence

- **watfordtowncentre.com website** – Created to showcase events and promote businesses, with 55,000+ users since August 2023.
- **@WatfordTownCentre social media** – Reached 2.5 million+ users since July 2023.

Watford Town Centre events and activities

- **“Winterfest” and “Christmas lights switch-on”** – Annual free Christmas events attracting thousands.
- **“Birds of Prey Experience”** – Free interactive event (August 2024, returning 2025).
- **“Wellbeing Day”** – Celebrated Emergency Services Day, National Fitness Day and World First Aid Day.
- **“Trick or Treat Week”** – Halloween event with trail and show (returning 2025).
- **Easter programme** – Included Easter Egg Hunt distributing 6,000 mini eggs.
- **“Watford Fringe Festival Presents: Cultural Party”** – Summer event in partnership with local organisations.

Engaging with levy payers

- **Communications** – Newsletters, email updates and business visits.
 - **Networking events** – Quarterly Breakfast with the BID and biannual BID socials.
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What's new for 2026/27?

As well as growing and improving many existing projects and campaigns, we will be delivering brand-new initiatives in line with our five commitments for 2026-2031.

Here's a snapshot of plans to look forward to from April 2026 – March 2027:

Enhance the town centre experience

Pondside rejuvenation

Funds allocated to improve the event space by the pond to support a new calendar of activities

Flyover and public art improvements

Significant enhancements to improve the look and feel of the town, heightening the Watford Town Centre experience for users.

Promote Watford Town Centre

New events

Watford Fan Park, Watford Fringe Festival launch, Watford Wonderland Christmas programme and more.

Social media and website

Increased resources put towards growing our digital presence including watfordtowncentre.com, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

Support business growth

Business Improvement Grants

Increased Business Improvement Grant sum from £2,500 to £3,000.

Watford Unlocked

New website section offering exclusive access to discounts and insights.

Champion collaboration

Watford Clarendon BID

A brand-new BID to unlock even more local investment and collaboration.

West Herts College partnership

Watford's largest education-sector organisation is now part of our BID and we will be collaborating with them to support career and young enterprise opportunities.

Embrace sustainability and innovation

Simpler Waste Recycling

Additional support given to businesses to ensure they are compliant with legislation on both a local and national level.

Watford Gift Card

Implementation of a permanent click and collect kiosk within the Harlequin and a move towards a contactless payment system.

Getting involved

The value of what you get out of the BID depends on how much you use the services available.

You can find more information at watfordtowncentre.com or arrange a 1-to-1 with the team.

Or can contact us at our offices:

Email: enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com

Tel: **01923 919989**

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



@WatfordTownCentre



Watford Town Centre BID