

visit Inverness loch ness

Tourism Business Improvement District



BUSINESS PLAN

1st April 2019 – 31st March 2024

What is a BID and why is it important?

A Business Improvement District (BID) or, as in the instance of Inverness and Loch Ness, a Tourism Business Improvement District (Tourism BID), is defined as a private-sector led initiative where businesses within a clearly defined geographical area work together, invest and collectively deliver projects that will make an impact on their area over an agreed period (no more than 5 years). The money raised is ring-fenced for the use of the Tourism BID Company to deliver the projects and services as detailed in the Business Plan. A Tourism BID for Inverness and Loch Ness also ensures that everyone that benefits will also contribute to the success of the initiative.

In March 2014, businesses in the Inverness and Loch Ness area voted for the establishment of Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID (hereafter referred to as the Tourism BID) with 81% of those who voted, voting in favour. In doing so, the Tourism BID became the first of its kind in Scotland and drawing considerable interest from other destinations both nationally and internationally.

Five years on the interest has not abated because BIDs have been proven to be a successful economic model for driving forward the fortunes of businesses, tourism or otherwise. The development of BIDs is now a key part of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy and there are now 39 BIDs in Scotland with a further 21 under development of which three are Tourism BIDs. Nationwide, there are now in excess of 270 BIDs.

A Yes vote for the Tourism BID at the renewal ballot in March 2019 is therefore essential if the Inverness and Loch Ness area is to remain not only competitive with other tourism destinations but also continue to raise the quality of the visitor experience and value of tourism to the local economy.

*For more information on BIDs see <http://www.scotlandstowns.org>



Introductory message from Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID Chairman, Graeme Bell

As Chair of the Board of Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID I often reflect on how extremely fortunate we are to be selling such a magnificent destination to the world. From the breathtaking beauty of Glen Affric to the ancient burial chambers of Clava Cairns, from the vibrancy of Inverness to thriving communities such as Beaulieu and Fort Augustus, and of course Loch Ness, a magnet to visitors the world over, we are indeed very fortunate.

For years though the problem for the area was getting people here but not so much now. We have seen major transport improvements in recent years particularly in air links with the introduction of London Heathrow and Schiphol flights which are making connecting with the world much simpler. This coupled with the growth in the tourism industry world-wide in recent years, has really opened the area to more visitors from many more countries which of course is great news, and the business community has responded with the provision of more quality accommodation, quality food and drink and quality activities and visitor attractions. It was therefore significant I feel from the perspective of how much the destination was changing, that in March 2014 Visit Inverness Loch Ness was established, becoming the first Tourism BID in Scotland, and the envy of many similar sized destinations not only in Scotland but also Europe.

Being new of course there were those that understandably doubted whether it would work, were we value for money? What would be their return on their investment into this new company? There were many that felt they would not benefit from being members of VILN. I think many of these doubts disappeared though when early in 2015 we were able to secure £2M for VisitBritain to market the destination internationally in key European markets. Without any doubt, this funding would not have made its way all the way up to the Highlands of Scotland had we not had a legislative basis as a Tourism BID which was backed by a robust strategy and vision.

Since then the Tourism BID has blossomed and achieved so very much which we can all be justifiably proud of. Success stories such as:

- Completion of the 55km South Loch Ness Trail opening the way for development of a LochNess360° trail - a legacy for the destination that will be here long after us
- Managing the delivery of Knitfest in 2016, the first international knitting festival in Inverness. Attracting in excess of 1100 visitors, this had an estimated economic benefit of £450K and established the event as one of the key annual events in the destination calendar
- Facilitating the Social Travel Summit in Inverness in 2016. Forty-eight of the world's top influencers and bloggers descended on the city and in between conference seminars, generated a staggering 54 million #STSinverness impressions on social media
- Facilitating multiple business tourism events and conferences resulting in an economic benefit to the destination in excess of £1.3 million, based on VisitScotland average delegate spend figures
- In 2017 becoming only the second destination in Scotland to be awarded World Host destination status.
- Developing a strong online presence for the destination. Website traffic per annum to www.visitinvernesslochness.com has risen 110% since launch in 2015

Introductory message from Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID Chairman, Graeme Bell

But what lies ahead? If we are to aspire to a more sustainable local tourism industry providing an outstanding visitor experience, then there is much we can and still need to do. At our member conference early in 2018 we focussed on this and how we collectively achieve this through initiatives such as:

- Continuing to develop the trail network, to give visitors more choice of places to walk and cycle in the destination
- Support the transformation of Inverness Castle in to a world class tourist attraction. This is absolutely fundamental to the future of not only Inverness but the wider Highland area. We need more things for people, especially families, to do when they are here which will keep them here longer
- Continuing to market the destination to show case the destination and range of experiences possible. Almost every country in the world now has a 'tourism offer', we need to shout loud about what we have to offer and we have to be doing it not only through a website and social media, but in more innovative ways
- Carrying the voice of the local tourism industry to the highest level in government to ensure that our tourism facilities, creaking under the weight of visitor numbers, get the investment that is required
- Providing opportunities to raise the level of our digital skills. We live in a digital world and if we are not digitally savvy in our businesses we can no longer expect visitors to find us!
- Providing opportunities to raise our knowledge of and thus ability to respond to new markets such as China

It is clear therefore how important it is that the Tourism BID continues its work, work that is very much in line with the strategy of the industry body, The Scottish Tourism Alliance, as it looks forward towards 2030. So, within this Business Plan 2019/2024 you will find the projects that are a continuation of the work that we embarked on five years ago as well as new exciting projects to build on this. Without your ongoing support these projects and activities will simply not happen. Our destination needs your vote on the 7th March 2019 to ensure that tourism in Inverness, Loch Ness and surrounding communities remains strong, vibrant and most importantly visible! Vote YES and let's embrace, develop, grow and excel through the next five year term.

I look forward to joining you on the next stage of our journey.

Graeme Bell

Chairman of Visit Inverness Loch Ness
and
General Manager, Inverness Airport

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Please note:

“Business” or variations of the word “business” are used throughout this document. The word “business” in this context refers to property owners or tenants and occupiers of properties who are liable to pay the non-domestic rate (NDR), whether they pay business rates or not. This includes all properties listed on the Scottish Assessors Association Portal (website) with a non-domestic rateable value, some of whom may be a charitable organisation, public sector organisation, social enterprise or community group who may not consider themselves to be a business.

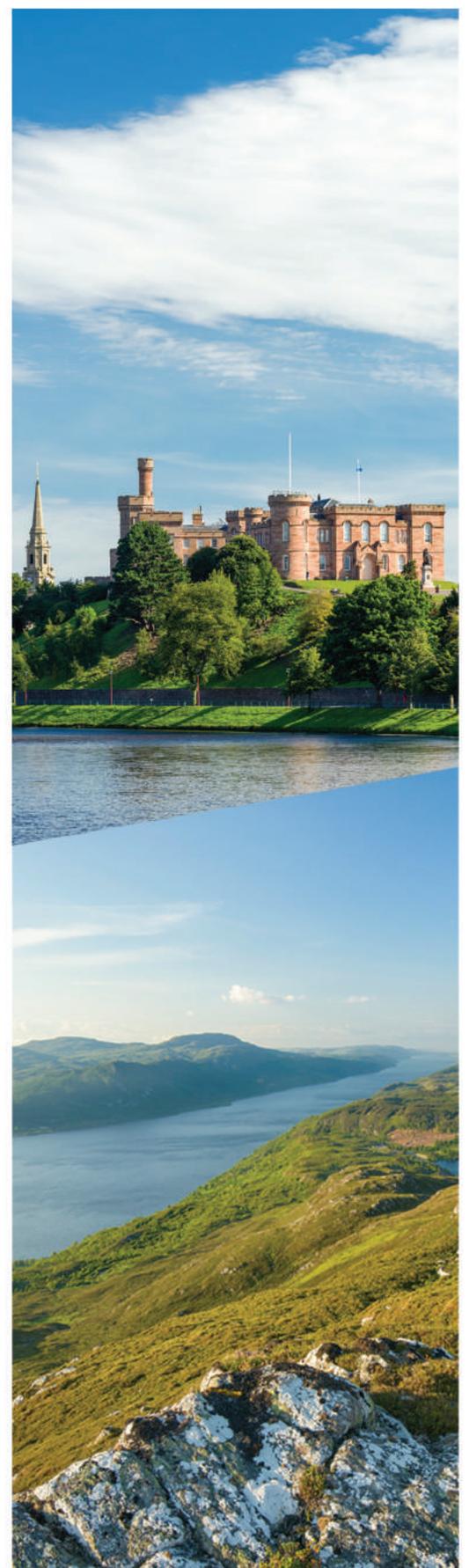
Goals and Objectives

The goals of the Tourism BID are to:

1. Ensure that the destination remains competitive with other similar sized destinations both nationally and internationally
2. Continue to grow the value and importance of tourism to the local economy
3. Create confidence in the destination for tourism businesses to invest and create more quality, all year round jobs
4. Enhance the visitor experience and reputation of the destination
5. Ensure the long term sustainability of a viable and attractive tourism destination that visitors will value and return to

In order to achieve these goals the organisation is committed to delivering initiatives, both independently and in collaboration with others, under six key objectives which are as follows:

1. To better market and promote the destination nationally and internationally
2. To undertake initiatives that will improve the tourism infrastructure of the destination, particularly that relating to outdoor activities
3. To promote and support new and existing sustainable events and festivals
4. To grow the value and importance of business tourism to the destination by attracting more conferences and business related events
5. To provide business development opportunities for member businesses
6. To be a strong lobbying voice on local and national issues that matter to member businesses



Key Achievements 2014 -2019

Securing additional funding for activities over and above that specified in the 2014 Business Plan, to the value of £507,000

Marketing and Promotion

- Successfully branding Inverness and Loch Ness as one destination and creating a destination branding toolkit for members to use
- In collaboration with VisitBritain, delivery of a £2M four year marketing campaign aimed at increasing international visitors from key international markets to the destination in the shoulder months. In 2017/2018 alone there were 15.4M opportunities to view the campaign activity online
- Developing a strong website presence for the destination – average of 38,000 unique sessions per month on www.visitinvernesslochness.com in 2018
- Developing a strong social media presence – 33K Facebook likes, 2000 Instagram followers to date
- Hosting over 50 media, travel influencers and travel trade visits to the destination resulting in over 300 international media articles and features
- For the past four years producing a 'See and Do' map, free for members



Over the course of the past 5 years VILN have achieved a huge amount at a time of unprecedented change. Providing a well development business organisation, highly capable and credible in representing the area and promoting to consumers, VILN have really grasped the opportunities to use digital technology to work much smarter and through working with influencers have achieved great international profile for the area, punching well above their weight. By working in partnership with VILN we can achieve much more together, getting more great content in front of potential visitors around the world. For VisitScotland, there are substantial benefits in having such a capable organisation as VILN to partner with.

The ambition of the VILN team has also led to the Loch Ness 360° project, which will provide a considerable boost to local communities in the destination.



Chris Taylor, Regional Partnerships Director, VisitScotland



Key Achievements 2014 -2019

Infrastructure

- Completing the development of the 55km South Loch Ness Trail from Fort Augustus to Inverness, opening the way for development of a LochNess360° trail.
- In partnership with Forest Enterprise Scotland , improving access to the shores of Loch Ness and laybys on the south side

Events and Festivals

- Managing the delivery of Knitfest in 2016, the first international knitting festival in Inverness. With over 1100 visitors this had an estimated economic benefit of £450K and established the event as one of the key annual events in the destination
- Facilitating the Social Travel Summit in Inverness in 2016. The summit brought together 48 of the world's top travel influencers from 17 different countries and resulted in 54M impressions on social media of #STSIInverness
- Sponsorship of Etape Loch Ness 2016 -2018



Key Achievements 2014 -2019

Business Tourism

- Facilitating multiple business tourism events and conferences resulting in an economic benefit to the destination in excess of £1.3M*
- Attending the leading national and international business tourism events to increase awareness and to encourage buyers to use Inverness and Loch Ness for their events and conferences
- Creating a bespoke Business Tourism Directory for the destination

*Based on VisitScotland average delegate spend figures

Business Development

- In 2017 becoming only the second destination in Scotland to be awarded World Host destination status. This was achieved as a result of over 50 member businesses gaining World Host accreditation
- Supporting delivery of the Digital Tourism Scotland Programme. To date in excess of 100 member businesses have participated in the programme
- Establishing a programme of regular networking events for members
- Delivering the first Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID Conference in 2018 attended by over 100 people



Shaping the Future – member consultation

Speaking and listening to members is core to the success of the Tourism BID. In order to ensure that the planned activity set out in the 2019-2024 Business Plan reflects what the members want the Tourism BID to deliver, we have undertaken extensive consultation.

The consultation process for 2019 began in November 2017 when the Tourism BID sent out a survey asking members for their initial thoughts on what possible new initiatives they would like to see the Tourism BID undertake and also what initiatives they thought were important that we continue to undertake. Eighty questionnaires were returned representing 15% of membership. We then analysed these results to formulate another more detailed questionnaire which was sent out to all 370 eligible voters in April 2018. Fifty-one members returned the survey representing a response rate of 14%. The responses were analysed and the findings were set out in a Summary Document which was sent out to all members and also available in the trade section of www.visitinvernesslochness.com

The questionnaire also asked whether-or-not they would support continuation of the Tourism BID for a further 5 year term. 30 (59%) said Yes, 17(33%) Don't know and only 4 (8%) No.

Further to the April 2018 survey the Tourism BID has also conducted a number of one to one consultations with businesses and held several open meetings. Seventy one to one's had been conducted by November 2018. Of these 76% said they would vote Yes, 16% Don't Know and 8% No. The feedback from these meetings has provided further additional information to help shape the content of this Business Plan.

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When the Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID started in 2014 I was unsure as to what would be achieved. However, over the period, I've seen great promotion of the area, an improvement in some infrastructure and I sense that the local industry is working together much more. Ness Castle Lodges has supported, and benefited from hosting, some of the international trade and media brought to the destination by the Tourism BID. I look forward to seeing what the next five years will bring and to working collaboratively with them to continue the steady growth we've had.

”

David Sutherland, Ness Castle Lodges



The Next 5 years: what initiatives the Tourism BID will deliver

Over the next five years, the Tourism BID will deliver the following initiatives under the six Tourism BID objectives

To better market and promote the destination

On-going marketing and promotion is central to the tourism success of any destination and it was therefore no surprise that it was ranked top by members in the April 2018 survey. With virtually every country in the world now having a 'tourism offer', without continued effective marketing the competitiveness of the destination will be undermined, which ultimately could result in less visitors to the destination. To better market and promote the Inverness and Loch Ness area the Tourism BID will undertake the following activities:

1. Continue to invest in www.visitinvernesslochness.com and social media. The new website was launched in autumn 2018 and with strong brand recognition in international markets of Inverness and Loch Ness, online activity will remain the key focus of the Tourism BID marketing and bringing visitors to not only Inverness and Loch Ness, but to all areas in the destination including Beauly, Strathglass, east and south of Inverness
2. Continue to facilitate visits by key national and international press, media and tour operators. Over the past four years the Tourism BID in collaboration with VisitBritain has facilitated over 50 of such visits to the destination from our key markets. The legacy of this collaboration is that we have developed a large number of travel contacts world-wide which enable us to continue to do this independently
3. Work in collaboration with VisitScotland to maximise local and Highland wide marketing and promotional opportunities and those associated with the theme years, specifically '2020 Year of Scotland's Coast and Waters' and '2022 Year of Scotland's Stories'
4. Use international travel influencers and bloggers. In collaboration with VisitScotland, we will bring a number of key influencers and bloggers to the destination annually and work with them to not only promote the destination but also encourage maximum spread of visitors throughout the destination
5. Support local tourism groups in the destination to maximise their marketing and promotional activities
6. Collaborate wherever possible with other regional destination organisations to promote not only the Inverness and Loch Ness area but the Highlands as a whole
7. Continue to produce the popular visitor 'See and Do' maps for members
8. Maximise the use and sharing of the photographic assets developed by Visit Britain. This bank of high quality images and video content is now available for the Tourism BID to use and share with members in perpetuity

Measuring Success: To measure the success of our marketing and promotional activity, we will monitor and evaluate key online performance indicators on a regular basis and utilise other analytical tools appropriate to individual activities. We will also use as a measure of gauging destination performance, the quarterly VisitScotland Local Tourism Business Barometer.

The Next 5 years: what initiatives the Tourism BID will deliver

The marketing and promotion of the LochNess360° trail

In addition to our destination marketing activity, a key focus will be the marketing and promotion of the LochNess360° Trail. The trail is presently being created by linking up the South Loch Ness Trail with the Great Glen Way, with the installation of new way marking and directional signage. The marketing activity that will be undertaken will be:

1. Development of a LochNess360° brand
2. Development of a LochNess360° website and social media presence
3. Promotion of the trail at major outdoor activity trade and consumer events nationally and internationally
4. Invite selected press and media to Loch Ness to experience the LochNess360°
5. Work with VisitScotland to promote the trail to travel trade and consumers in key international markets
6. Produce a map of the LochNess360° suitable for all users
7. In collaboration with VisitScotland and other key stakeholders, work with members to make them aware of the marketing opportunities of the trail and how they can maximise these opportunities
8. Develop a range of LochNess360° products that can be purchased by users and thus provide a revenue stream to contribute towards maintenance of the trail

Measuring Success: Measurement of the success in marketing of the LochNess360° will be gauged by footfall counters at selected points around the trail when fully established, user feedback and a survey in year three of the Tourism BID five year term, to estimate the number of persons who complete the full LochNess360° trail



The completion of the Loch Ness 360 trail will be fabulous for the local communities and businesses within them, as long as we let the world know about it. Organising a long distance endurance event around it would be a great way of doing this.



Morag Cameron, Owner Cameron's Tea Room, Foyers



The Next 5 years: what initiatives the Tourism BID will deliver

To improve the tourism infrastructure of the destination

Making improvements to the tourism infrastructure of the destination was ranked the second most important objective by members. Given the pressures that the destination tourism infrastructure has been under in the past few years due to increased visitor numbers, this is of no surprise. The Tourism BID alone cannot make significant impact on infrastructure but has demonstrated in the past five years that by securing additional funding and working in partnership with other organisations, progress and improvements can be made. Over the next five years the Tourism BID will undertake the following infrastructure based activities:

1. With the support of 3rd party funders, HighLife Highland and local community groups, take forward the planned employment of one person as a 'Loch Ness Ranger', whose job will be to improve the visitor experience of the Loch Ness area and surrounds, addressing local issues that are presently negatively impacting on the tourism infrastructure, and also to instigate measures and activities that will actively improve it.
2. Develop and deliver with member businesses around Loch Ness, the installation of water fountains at key locations along the route of the LochNess360°. This innovative project will not only have a positive impact upon the environment but also help to position the destination more positively in terms of sustainable tourism.
3. Work with HighLife Highland and other stakeholders to maximise the tourism potential of Inverness Castle as a major new visitor attraction for Inverness and the Highlands. The success of this project will not only have a wide economic impact but is also fundamental to the future economic vibrancy of Inverness.
4. Continue to make improvements to, and maintain, the South Loch Ness Trail
5. Work with Highland Council to establish way marking of the South Loch Ness Trail in to the centre of Inverness and the castle where it is planned the LochNess360° will start
6. Work with Highland Council to develop a long term strategy for the maintenance and development of key local paths and trails in the Tourism BID area

Measuring Success: To measure the success of the Loch Ness Ranger project we will conduct a visitor survey annually to assess the economic, social and environmental impact of the Ranger's activity. Measurement of the success of the work undertaken on the South Loch Ness Trail will be assessed through user feedback and footfall counters along the length of the trail.



The Next 5 years: what initiatives the Tourism BID will deliver

To develop and promote new and existing sustainable events and festivals

Events and festivals account for 35%* of the visitor economy today, they are worth £42.3B to the UK economy and there are now over 7000 major outdoor events in the UK each year worth £1.1B. This huge value and overall importance of the sector is recognised by the Tourism BID members who have expressed a strong desire to see the organisation not only continue to promote new and existing events and festivals but also develop new ones. The planned initiatives under this objective over the next five years are thus as follows:

1. Work with Highland Council and Inverness City Centre BID and other key stakeholders to enhance the Winter Festive Programme, and ensure that the benefits extend to member businesses out with the city centre
2. Develop a major new 3 day running/cycling event based on the Loch Ness 360° trail, to be launched in 2020 and thereafter be an annual event. Although in its early stages of planning it is hoped that the event will be as inclusive as possible with a number of different options to participate available. The event will be based in communities around Loch Ness, thus ensuring that local communities benefit.
3. Provide funding up to a maximum of £500 per event towards support of local community events and festivals that can demonstrate wider economic benefit
4. Develop in partnership with other key stakeholders an online portal for event (and conference) organisers where they can find all the information they require easily in order to make an informed decision as to the suitability of Inverness and Loch Ness
5. Continue to support sustainable events and festivals that deliver major economic benefit to the destination
6. Work with Scottish Canals and other key stakeholders to maximise the impact of the Caledonian Canal bi-centennial in 2022 and associated legacy in respect of community events and marine infrastructure along the Great Glen

*www.eventbrite.co.uk/blog

Measuring Success: The success of Tourism BID support of events and festivals will be measured by the economic benefit the events generate for local communities and the destination as a whole.



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There is no doubt that support from VILN has assisted the development of both the Baxters Loch Ness Marathon & Festival of Running and the Etape Loch Ness cycle sportive. This partnership has provided the opportunity for us as event organisers to reach out to new audiences and media. In addition the VILN website has provided our event participants and their family and friends with a very informative 'one-stop shop' showcasing the accommodation, attractions and travel options in the area. Their ongoing support and partnerships with events are vital to ensure that the Inverness and Loch Ness area continues to be leading location for high profile events of all sizes.

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Malcolm Sutherland
Director, Caledonian Concepts

The Next 5 years: what initiatives the Tourism BID will deliver

To grow the value and importance of business tourism

Business tourism is about bringing meetings, incentive travel, conferences and events (MICE) to the destination. It's a highly competitive sector with thousands of destinations world wide bidding for business that delivers substantial economic benefit to destinations. Despite this, Scotland performs well, it is worth over £1.9B to the Scottish economy. However, to gain a share of this market in Scotland we can't sit back and expect it to come to us, particularly when all other cities in Scotland are active in Business Tourism, we have to be proactive too. Over the next five year period the Tourism BID will therefore undertake the following activities and initiatives:

1. Continue to attend major national and international trade shows such as VisitScotland EXPO, to promote the destination
2. Continue to host potential event and conference buyers to the destination to show what the area has to offer
3. Undertake UK wide sales trips with member business representatives
4. Support potential buyers with destination information and contacts
5. Support potential buyers with submission of funding applications to relevant public organisations
6. Provide destination management services in association with local destination management companies
7. Respond to requests from potential buyers for a 'Destination Proposal'
8. Provide members with contact leads
9. Produce a quarterly newsletter for the trade

Measuring Success: To measure the success of Business Tourism activity the Tourism BID will record the number of appointments at trade shows and on sales trips, the number of requests for Proposals and information requests responded to. Also, as far as can be ascertained, the known confirmed business tourism for member businesses as result of the work of the Tourism BID, and the overall economic benefit to the area based on the latest VisitScotland average delegate spend figures.



An increase in conferences in Inverness benefits a wide range of businesses, therefore it's important we continue to keep the organisers informed and having VILN represented at the main International Trade Shows is an essential way of doing this. Having access to the VILN team makes securing business a much easier and smoother process. The fact that they can organise delegate accommodation and guide organisers with funding applications really helps me to sell Inverness.

Cara Brigs
Events & Conferencing
Eden Court Theatre



The FAM trip to Inverness Loch Ness and subsequent meetings with VILN representatives at shows such as IMEX has really helped me understand the area and propose the destination to my clients.

Vanessa Bazin
FAB Travel, Paris



The Next 5 years: what initiatives the Tourism BID will deliver

To provide business development opportunities for members

Tourism is a global industry. Virtually every country in the world now has a 'tourism offer'. In such an environment it is becoming harder for businesses in small destinations to compete and ensure that they gain a share of this massive market. To achieve this they must invest- invest in themselves, invest in their product and invest in the future. To assist businesses the Tourism BID will once again not only offer members a range of direct benefits (please see in the trade section of www.visitinvernesslochness.com), but also offer members the following business development opportunities:

1. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Inner Moray Firth Area, are intending to procure the delivery of an SME Tourism Assistance Programme. This assistance will focus on encouraging local tourism businesses to increase their productivity in order to raise wage levels and encourage tourism as a career of choice. The Tourism BID will put forward a proposal to HIE with the intention of being able to offer this programme to members.
2. Digital Tourism workshops. The Tourism BID has supported the national programme to raise the level of digital skills of businesses in tourism over the past three years, and will continue to do so through offering digital workshops for members on topics relevant to their business
3. Opportunities to undertake the World Host customer training programme for frontline staff. Many businesses in the Tourism BID completed World Host in 2016 and 2017 resulting in the destination becoming only the second destination in Scotland to be awarded World Host destination status. The Tourism BID will continue to support this programme by facilitating workshops with a World Host trainer
4. Destination awareness familiarisation tours. For new businesses or existing ones that simply wish to improve their or their staff's knowledge of the destination, the Tourism BID will facilitate annually the opportunity for members to participate in two destination tours in both the autumn and spring
5. A minimum of three networking events per year at which members will not only be able to mix and talk business with their peers but also hear from invited speakers on topical issues and from the Tourism BID on progress with project activity

We will also support new initiatives offered by public sector organisations that provide further opportunity for member business to grow, develop and become more sustainable.

Measurement of Success: Measurement of the success of these opportunities will be determined by the numbers of Tourism BID members that take up the various opportunities and the feedback that we receive on these opportunities.



Digital Tourism Scotland

The Next 5 years: what initiatives the Tourism BID will deliver

To be a strong lobbying voice on local and national issues

Tourism in the Inverness and Loch Ness area has performed strongly in recent years and the outlook is positive as Inverness as a city continues to grow, enhanced transport links steadily transform accessibility of the destination and vastly improved digital connectivity ensures that we can all now at least 'connect with our customers'. However, with growth comes challenges as well as opportunities, challenges such as lack of tourist facilities and infrastructure, the possibility of the introduction of a 'bed tax', staff recruitment issues in key hospitality sectors and also broader economic and social trends such as the accelerating pace of technological change which have the potential to impact negatively upon businesses.

The Tourism BID will continue to listen to the concerns of members and ensure that these concerns are raised and heard at the highest level whether this be with the Scottish Government through the Scottish Tourism Alliance, or on more local matters, with the Highland Council. Only by acting with one strong voice can we as a destination be heard.



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Historic Environment Scotland have supported Visit Inverness Loch Ness from conception through to the successful tourism bid it is today. Visit Inverness Loch Ness has become a key collaboration, attracting funding and infrastructure development partners to invest. Urquhart Castle and Fort George have both benefited from the localised focus on visitor journey, business opportunities and infrastructure projects such as the Loch Ness 360 trail that have brought an excellent enhancement to the Loch Ness experience.

Stephen Duncan
Director of Commercial and Tourism
for Historic Environment Scotland.

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Who is included in the Tourism BID 2019 - 2024

The Sectors Included

Only businesses, as detailed on the Highland Council Valuation Roll by the local Assessor, in the sectors listed in the table below, are included. The only additions to this are public sector organisations offering tourism services in premises not categorised in any of these sectors.

Airport	Hostel
Bowling Alley	Hotel
Bunkhouse	Ice Rink
Caravan Park	Information Centre
Caravan Site	Inn
Caravan and Camping Site	Licensed Restaurant
Castle and Visitor Centre	Marina
Castle	Public House and Restaurant
Chalets	Restaurant
Cinema	Self-catering
Exclusive Use (Non Standard Description)	Serviced Apartments
Golf Club and Clubhouse	Sports Centre
Golf Course	Swimming Baths
Guest House	Theatre
Harbour	Visitor Centre
Heritage Centre	Youth Hostel
Holiday Complex	



Who is included in the Tourism BID 2019 - 2024

The Tourism BID Area

The Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID will once again encompass the geographical area that is covered by Highland Council Wards 12 (Aird & Loch Ness), 13 (Inverness West), 15 (Inverness Ness-Side) 16 (Inverness Millburn), 17 (Culloden and Ardersier) 19 (Inverness South)

Ward 14 (Inverness Central – excluding the area covered by Inverness City Centre BID) will also be included.



Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID area comprising of:

Abriachan	Croy	Foyers	Lewiston
Ardersier	Culloden	Glenmoriston	Lochend
Balloch	Culloden Moor	Gollanfield	Lochgarthside
Balnain	Dalreichart	Inchmore	Milton of Leys
Beaulieu	Dalcross	Inshes Wood	Moy
Blairbeg	Daviot	Inverarnie	Newlands
Bunchrew	Dochfour	Inverfarigaig	Piperhill
Bunloit	Dochgarroch	Invermoriston	Slackbuie
Cannich	Dores	Inverness	Smithton
Cawdor	Drumadrochit	Kilmorack	Tomatin
Clachnaharry	Dundreggan	Kiltarlity	Westhill
Clephanton	Errogie	Kinmylies	Whitebridge
Cradlehall	Farr	Kirkhill	
Croachy	Fort Augustus	Lentran	

Who is included in the Tourism BID 2019 - 2024

The Levy

The third and final factor which determines whether-or-not a business is liable to pay the levy, is their rateable value. Only businesses with a rateable value of £3,500 or above are included. This means that businesses without a rateable value or those which are below the £3,500 threshold are exempt from paying the levy. However, they can if they so wish 'opt-in' by paying an annual fee and become a non-levy paying member.

The threshold entry level has been raised to £3,500 from £2,000 after review by the Board of the Tourism BID, of the impact and fairness of the rates revaluation in 2017 upon small businesses.

Only businesses included in the Tourism BID are liable to pay the levy and vote on the Business Plan.



With the support of VILN, The Lovat has taken advantage of the reduced cost at the VisitScotland Expo in both 2017 & 2018, enhancing the hotel's visibility to international markets. Likewise, the hotel has been chosen for various Fam Trips and press visits throughout the year as the organisation focuses on marketing the area as a key tourist destination.

VILN: is receptive to new ideas; has developed adventure tourism with the Loch Ness 360; and has designed networking events to provide stable business opportunities for those within and surrounding the tourism industry.

Caroline Gregory
The Lovat, Loch Ness



Income and Expenditure 2019-2024

Income	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Levy*	£195,000	£196,000	£197,000	£198,000	£199,000	£985,000
Opt-In Income	£16,000	£17,000	£18,000	£19,000	£20,000	£90,000
Common Good Fund*	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£100,000
Highland Council*	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£50,000
HIE *	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000			£60,000
SSE *	£20,000					£20,000
Total	£281,000	£263,000	£265,000	£247,000	£249,000	£1,305,000
*Expenditure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Marketing and Promotion	£69,400	£70,400	£71,400	£72,400	£73,400	£357,000
Business Tourism	£40,000	£40,000	£40,000	£20,000	£20,000	£160,000
Events & Festivals	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£50,000
Infrastructure	£32,000	£12,000	£12,000	£12,000	£12,000	£80,000
Business Development	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£50,000
Mangt. & Operational	£109,400	£110,300	£111,200	£112,100	£113,000	£556,000
Contingency	£10,200	£10,300	£10,400	£10,500	£10,600	£52,000
Total	£281,000	£263,000	£265,000	£247,000	£249,000	£1,305,000

* The estimated levy income for the Tourism BID is based upon a 96% collection rate and small annual increase to reflect the growing membership over the 5 year term of the Tourism BID.

* Opt-in income is from businesses not automatically included in the Tourism BID, who have chosen to join. These businesses pay a fee commensurate with that of levy paying members.

* Common Good Funding: Highland Council members endorsed the continued work and activities of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID at a meeting of the Inverness City Area Committee in August 2018. The Council are therefore fully committed to supporting the projects and activities of the Tourism BID and will look favourably on funding applications to the Common Good Fund up to the sum of £20,000 provided the applications meet all the required criteria including most importantly, evidence of direct benefit to the city of Inverness. Applications to the Common Good Fund will only be considered on an annual basis and be subject to the strict governance on the use of Common Good Fund monies

* Highland Council Funding: Highland Council endorsed the continued work and activities of the Tourism BID in August 2018 and the Council are therefore fully committed to supporting the activities of the Tourism BID and will look favourably on funding applications to appropriate Highland Council funds up to the sum of £10,000 provided the applications meet all the required criteria. Applications will only be considered on an annual basis and be subject to the strict governance on the use of Highland Council funds.

Income and Expenditure 2019-2024

* Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE): HIE are fully committed to continuing to support the activities of the Tourism BID and subject to meeting the funding criteria, will fund Business Tourism activities undertaken by the Tourism BID up to £20,000 per annum for three years.

* SSE: The £20,000 in Year 1 is the 2nd tranche of funding secured by the Tourism BID in 2018, towards the employment by the organisation of a Loch Ness Ranger (for detail please see under The Next Five Years, 'To improve the tourism infrastructure of the destination')

In kind support in the form of office space has also once again been secured from Forestry Commission Scotland.

The Tourism BID will also continue to seek to secure additional grant funding for project activity from appropriate national funds as and when they become available, as well as from the Highland Council, HIE, VisitScotland, SSE and other organisations.

*Any variations within budgets will be reported to the Board of Directors for agreement. The Board will agree on an annual basis how funds for subsequent years will be allocated. This will be based on business feedback during the previous year and the priorities identified in the Business Plan for the coming years, which allows the Tourism BID the flexibility to respond to changing business needs and requirements. Funds will be set aside for the renewal Ballot in Year 5. The Tourism BID Board will have the authority to make relevant variations in projects and budgets without the need for an alteration ballot for the effective operation of the Tourism BID Company and in the best interests of the member businesses.



HIE have worked closely with Visit Inverness Loch Ness (VILN) over the last 5 years, having supported both the development of the organisation and the work they undertake within the field of business tourism in raising the profile of the destination.

HIE's focus is on helping tourism to increase productivity by taking advantage of opportunities to expand the season and integrate the use of digital skills and innovation. We are also keen to help grow the range and quality of visitor experiences. All of this will strengthen the sector, increase economic return and make tourism a more attractive career option, particularly for young people in rural areas. VILN has a very important role to play in developing and supporting the sector and this is why HIE will continue to have an active relationship with VILN.



Rhona Fraser

Head of Strengthening Communities & Regional Development – Inner Moray Firth Highlands and Islands Enterprise



What will it cost me as a levy payer?

The levy is paid by the occupiers (as the eligible persons i.e. those liable to pay the non-domestic rate) only, with the exception of vacant premises when the property owner will be liable for the levy payment. Also, any new commercial development, sub division of existing properties or merging of properties or new businesses with a non-domestic rateable valuation (and liable to pay the non-domestic rate) of £3,500 or more coming in to the Tourism BID area and not exempted from paying the levy during the 5 year term of the Tourism BID, will be liable for the Tourism BID Levy. In this instance if the property is empty on the date the levy is issued, the property owner will be liable for the full levy until such time as the property is occupied.

The Tourism BID levy is a banded scale of levy fees based on the rateable value of the properties in the Tourism BID area at the time of the ballot and will not change during the 5 year term of the Tourism BID. The fees are set out in the table below.

RATEABLE VALUE	TOTAL ANNUAL LEVY	COST PER WEEK
£3,500 - £4,499	£160	£3.08
£4,500 - £9,999	£220	£4.23
£10,000 - £19,999	£350	£6.73
£20,000 - £29,999	£450	£8.65
£30,000 - £49,999	£650	£12.50
£50,000 - £79,999	£800	£15.38
£80,000 - £99,999	£1,100	£21.15
£100,000 - £149,999	£2,000	£38.46
£150,000 - £199,999	£2,500	£48.08
£200,000+	£3,000	£57.69

The only instance when a change will be made to a levy will be as a result of a change in valuation, (to the ballot date valuation) due to a successful valuation appeal, by an individual business.

The Tourism BID levy is a fair and equitable way to fund projects and activities that businesses in the area would like to have, and which the public sector is not required to provide. Following a successful ballot the levy will be mandatory for all eligible businesses in the Tourism BID area that are listed on the Highland Council Valuation Roll by the local Assessor on the ballot date and will be liable for the levy for the duration of the Tourism BID.

The levy fees range from £160 to £3,000 per year. The levy fees are based on the cost of delivering the projects and activities, as identified by members during the consultation process.

Collection of the levy

The levy will be collected by the Highland Council under the terms of the Operating Agreement with the Tourism BID Company. This agreement is available in the trade section of www.visitinvernesslochness.com or you can request a printed copy.

The invoices will be sent out from Highland Council on the 1st April each year and will be payable in a single payment with the payment due 28 days from the date of invoice. In the event of non-payment of the levy, it will be strongly pursued by Highland Council using existing recovery powers to ensure complete fairness to the businesses that have paid. A fee will be charged to meet any additional costs incurred in the recovery.

The Ballot

From 24th January to 7th March 2019 each eligible business will be asked to cast their vote for the Tourism BID in a formal, confidential ballot. Highland Council is responsible for managing the ballot to ensure it is done fairly. All eligible voters (i.e. those persons liable to pay non-domestic rates) will have one vote or where an eligible voter is liable for non-domestic rates for more than one business, that individual shall be eligible to cast more than one vote but they will be required to pay the levy for each of the properties that they occupy. A ballot paper (together with a copy of the Business Plan) will be sent to each eligible business, to be completed by placing a cross in either a 'YES' or 'NO' box, as response to the question 'Are you in favour of the Tourism BID?' The ballot paper should be signed by the person named on the ballot paper and returned in the pre-addressed postage-paid envelope by 5pm on Thursday 7th March 2019. If a business has more than one rateable property it will receive a ballot paper for each property. Each paper counts as one vote. It is important that EVERY paper received is completed and returned. Where the property is vacant the ballot paper will be sent to the owner of the property as the eligible person entitled to vote. Ballot papers received after 5pm on Thursday 7th March 2019 will be deemed invalid and void.

The Tourism BID will only proceed if the following criteria are met:

1. A minimum 25% turnout by those eligible to vote is achieved
2. A minimum 25% turnout by rateable value is achieved
3. Of the votes received, over 50% by number and rateable value must vote in favour of the Tourism BID

The ballot result will be announced on March 8th 2019. Following a successful ballot, the Tourism BID will continue to operate for a period of five years until the 31st March 2024. A renewal ballot will be conducted and completed prior to the five year term being up.



Governance and Management

The Tourism BID is registered as a not-for-profit limited company under the name Visit Inverness Loch Ness Ltd. Following a successful renewal ballot it will deliver the projects and activities outlined in this Business Plan through its Board of Directors and Management team.

There are a maximum of 12 directors on the Board, 10 of which are elected by levy payers as and when position(s) become vacant as per the requirements set out in the company Articles of Association, a copy of which is available to members in the trade section of www.visitinvernesslochness.com or alternatively a written copy can be sent out on request. One position on the Board is reserved for a representative of Highland Council and the final position is filled by directors co-opting a levy paying member or opt-in member on to the Board. Full details with regards the appointment of the co-opted director is also available in the Articles of Association.

The Board also reserve the right to work with representatives from other levy paying businesses who can offer specialist advice where appropriate.

In fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as directors, the Board will at all times minimise any risk associated with the Tourism BID (financial or otherwise) by adhering to best practise, while at the same time being open and transparent.

Measuring Success: Throughout the lifetime of the Tourism BID, all work on the Tourism BID projects will be monitored to ensure the projects proposed in the Tourism BID Business Plan achieve a high level of impact, and are delivered to the satisfaction of the businesses that voted for the Tourism BID.

Board Members & Management



Graeme Bell
Inverness Airport



John Frid
Invergleng Guesthouse



John Martin
Moyness Guesthouse



Joyce Arbuckle
Kingsmills Hotel



Lyn Forbes
Loch Ness Shores



Marina Huggett
Perfect Manors



Cllr. Helen Carmichael
Highland Council



Robbie Bremner
Loch Ness Centre &
Exhibition



Robbie Rapson
Loch Ness by
Jacobite



Rosie Wylie
Historic Environment
Scotland



Clare Christie
Morag's Lodge



Left to right: Alan Rawlinson (Business & Leisure Tourism), Sharon Mackay (Business Development),
Graeme Ambrose (CEO), Sabine MacDonald (Administrator)

What if there is no Tourism BID?

1. In the first 5 years the Tourism BID Business Plan expected to attract an additional £280,000 of funding. By November 2018 it had attracted £507,000 of additional funds plus £2M for VisitBritain to market the destination. Without the Tourism BID there will be no organisation to seek these additional funds and thus deliver additional activity and economic benefit to the destination.
2. There will be no organisation to market and promote the destination and all that it has to offer. This will undermine the destination competitiveness in all our key markets.
3. There will be no organisation to take forward the marketing and development of the LochNess360°. The South Loch Ness Trail will cease to be further improved and only basic maintenance carried out on it annually by the Highland Council.
4. There will be no one employed in the destination dedicated to increasing the value and importance of business tourism to the area
5. There will be less support for new and existing events and festivals
6. There will be no organisation to be the conduit of communications between the public sector and the local tourism industry
7. There will be no organisation to raise the concerns of member businesses at the highest level whether it be with the Scottish Government or local authority and thus ensure that your voice is heard
8. As a key visitor destination in the UK, let alone Scotland, we would be alone in having no destination level tourism organisation, critical to help ensure that not only is the destination competitive but sustainable



visit Inverness loch ness

Tourism Business Improvement District

VOTE YES



For a strong, vibrant, sustainable tourism destination and
outstanding visitor experience

For more information please visit www.visitinvernesslochness.com or email admin@visitiln.com