



visit **Inverness** **Loch Ness**

TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BUSINESS PLAN

01.04.2024 – 31.03.2029



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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 (NOR), 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.

If you would like more information please visit our website:

www.visitinvernesslochness.com/BID-renewal-ballot-2024

or contact: admin@visitiln.com

The Team



Don Johnstone
Chief Executive Officer



Sabine MacDonald
Administrator



Sharon Mackay
Membership Manager



Alan Rawlinson
Business Development Manager



Emma Harrison
Destination Development
Manager



Jo Page
Digital Engagement Manager

The Board

Name: Jo de Sylva (Chair)

Business: Bogbain Farm

Sector: Hospitality

Name: Ina Davies

Business: Courtyard by Marriot Inverness Airport Hotel

Sector: Hotel

Name: Caroline Gregory

Business: The Lovat

Sector: Hotel

Name: Jane Slaughter

Business: Pinewood Steadings

Sector: Self-Catering

Name: Anna Low

Business: Foyers Lodge

Sector: Guest House

Name: David Shayer

Business: Aye Stay

Sector: Guest House

Name: Cheryl Campbell

Business: Inverness Airport

Sector: Airport

Name: Emmanuel Dambier

Business: Bazpackers Hostel

Sector: Hostel

Name: Ian Brown

Business: Councillor & City Leader

Sector: Local Authority

Name: Rebecca Holt

Business: Eden Court

Sector: Theatre

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, and they showed their support again for the Tourism BID when they voted for its continuation in 2019.

Ten years on the interest has not abated and BIDs continue to prove themselves as a successful economic model for driving forward the fortunes of businesses, tourism and the economy. The development of BIDs is now a key part of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy, and there are now 35 operational BIDs in Scotland with a further 20 under development. There are 27 operational BIDs in their second or third BID terms, equating to 47 successful renewal ballots demonstrating that businesses value the projects and services delivered by the BIDs.

A **Yes** vote for the Tourism BID at the renewal ballot in March 2024 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: www.scotlandstowns.org



Foreword

Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID Chair & CEO

Chair – Jo de Sylva

I am thrilled to share the collaborative vision for the future of Visit Inverness Loch Ness. This business plan is not just a reflection of our priorities, it gives a taste of how we can continue to improve through our collective efforts over the next five years.

Looking back, I am proud of the way Visit Inverness Loch Ness has tirelessly championed our region, especially during such challenging times. Together, we've not only weathered tough trading conditions but have also thrived. Our success is a testament to you and the strength of our collaborative community approach.

We have made great strides in our social media presence and our community engagement has transformed us into a destination that caters not only to visitors from afar but also to our local community.

Communicating regularly with our newsletter offers our members valuable information, industry insights and opportunities, in the form of networking, events, collaborative projects and member discounts, along with the opportunity to promote and highlight your businesses.

Our new website reflects our commitment to making trip planning inspirational and seamless for visitors. The addition of our Loch Ness cameras, that are drawing thousands of views globally, showcase the beauty of our region to the world.

Events like the Shortbread Showdown and the Taster of Inverness have brought together locals, tourists, and influencers, creating memorable experiences for all. Our collaborative efforts secured a prime time BBC series (due to air early 2024) and the prestigious Scottish Golf Tourism week in March 2024, which is estimated to deliver more than £3 Million of economic benefit for the area. Events that will undoubtedly elevate Inverness and Loch Ness in the eyes of the world.

Recognising the priorities of our members, we focused on the shoulder months, and our joint marketing initiatives have extended the tourist season by almost two additional months each year. Sustainability, a shared value, has been at the forefront of our efforts, earning us international recognition with the ITB Earth award and two Green Destination awards for excellence.

Understanding the challenges faced by our members, we have not only provided marketing support but also invaluable workshops and networking sessions. This commitment ensures that our members stay updated on legislative changes and are well-equipped to navigate the ever-changing business landscape.

Reflecting on the past five years, it's evident that our collaborative efforts have added significant value to our local businesses. We urge all members to cast their vote in favour of this plan, allowing us to build on our achievements. Together, we can shape the future of Visit Inverness Loch Ness and create lasting success for our community.

CEO – Don Johnstone

As an Inverness lad who takes great pride in the area where I was born and brought up, I feel immensely privileged to have been appointed the CEO for Visit Inverness Loch Ness in October 2023, and it is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I welcome you to the Visit Inverness Loch Ness Business Plan.

Our chair notes many of our achievements over the past 5 years, and I am honoured to present our vision and strategy for the future, as we look forward with optimism and excitement for what can be achieved by working together following a successful ballot on March 14th 2024.

Inverness and Loch Ness is not just a destination; it's an experience waiting to be embraced. Nestled in the heart of the Scottish Highlands, our region boasts a rich tapestry of culture, history, and natural beauty.

It is a privilege to lead a team dedicated to showcasing the best of what Inverness, Loch Ness and surrounding areas has to offer to the world.

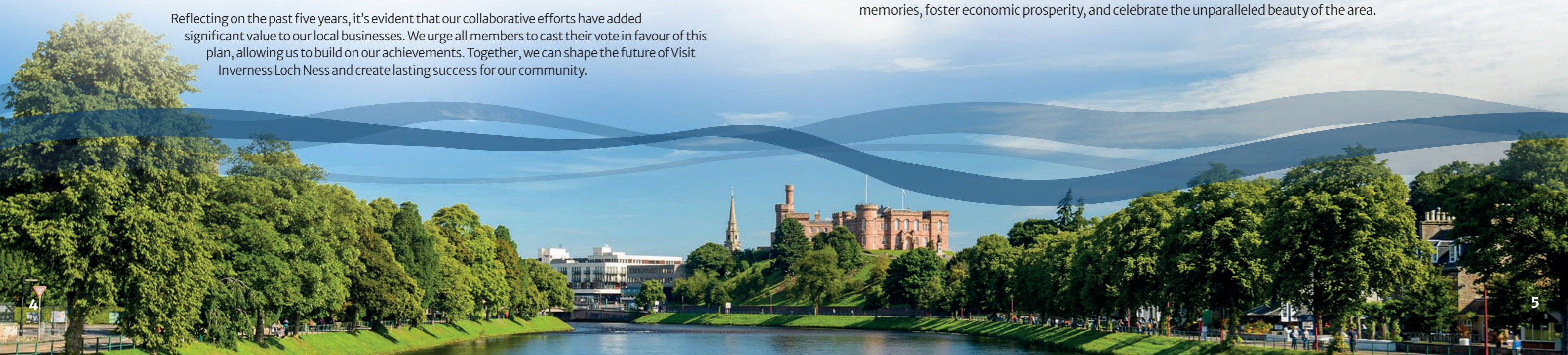
This business plan reflects our commitment to responsible growth, community engagement, and innovation. We understand that the travel landscape is evolving rapidly, and we are ready to adapt, ensuring that our destination remains a top choice for visitors seeking authentic and unforgettable experiences.

Collaboration lies at the core of our approach. We recognise the importance of working hand in hand with member businesses, government bodies, partners and residents to create a harmonious and thriving community. Together, we can further unlock the potential of our destination and elevate it to new heights.

In the pages that follow, you will find details of our vision, aims and objectives. From playing our part in enhancing infrastructure to leveraging digital technologies, our goal is to position us as a premier destination that captivates the hearts of travelers from around the globe.

As we embark on this exciting journey, I extend my gratitude to all those who contribute to the success of Visit Inverness Loch Ness. Your dedication, passion, and collaboration are instrumental in shaping the future of our wonderful destination.

I encourage you all to vote YES, and invite you to join us in this endeavor, as we strive to create lasting memories, foster economic prosperity, and celebrate the unparalleled beauty of the area.





Last 5 Years

Key Achievements 2019 - 2024

The Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID was developed in the belief that Inverness, Loch Ness and surrounds are not separate destinations but one, and that by working together we have the opportunity to continue to maximise the strengths of the area for the long-term benefit of tourism and the area by building on what has been achieved to date.

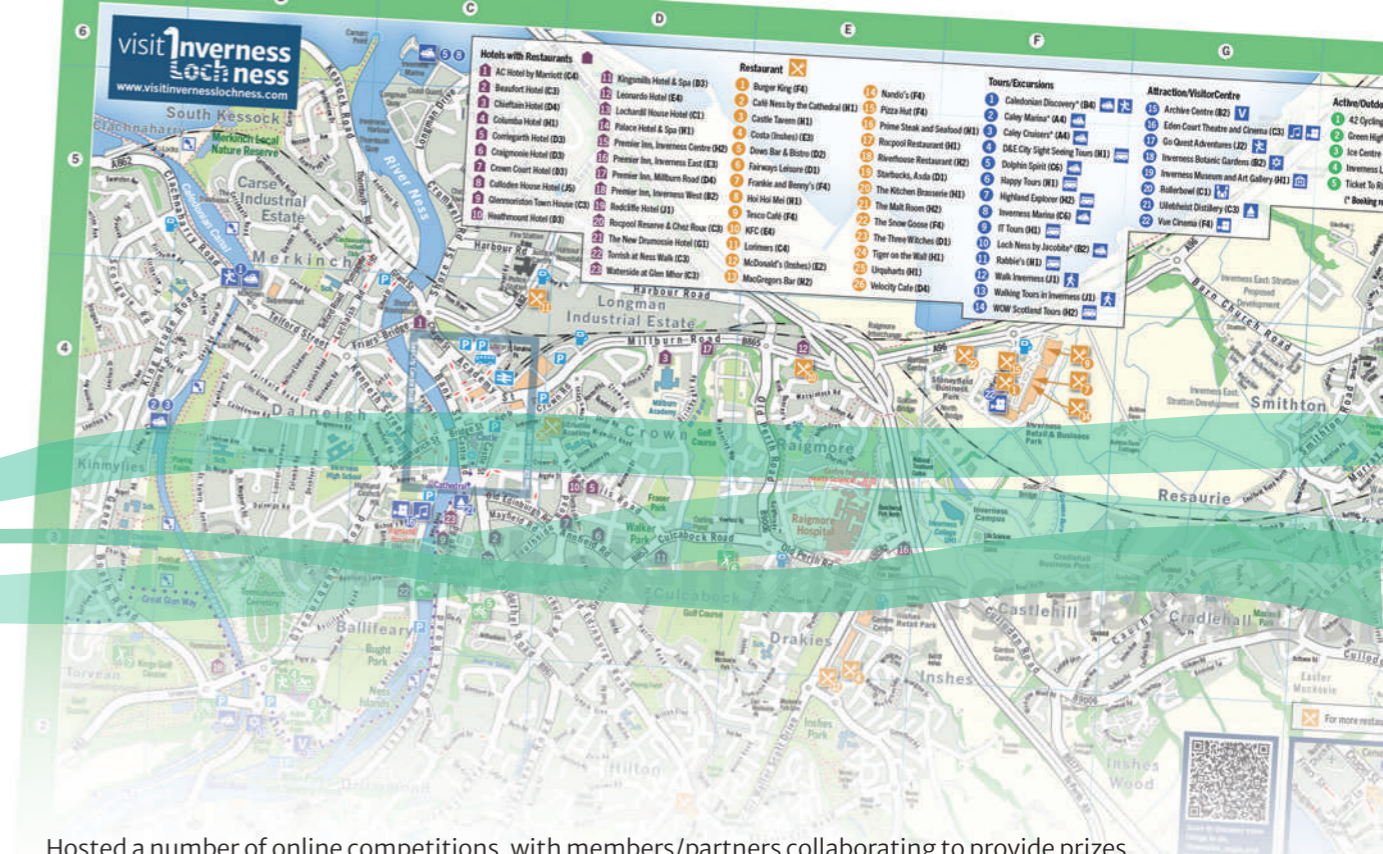
Despite the challenges that tourism and the wider world has faced over the last five years which resulted from Brexit, a Global Pandemic, Fuel Price increases and the inflated costs of doing business, Visit Inverness Loch Ness has still been successful in:

- Delivering the 2019-2024 Business Plan in full
- Securing additional funding for activities over and above that specified in the 2019 Business Plan, to the value of £1.25M

Specific achievements include:

Marketing & Promotion

- 900k See & Do maps, promoting VILN Members, distributed free of charge to visitors
- New website developed
- Loch Ness live cameras have brought over 300,000 visits to our website with hours of live streaming viewed
- 100k referrals to member websites
- 1350 images and videos added to the online library for member use
- 79% growth in social media followers
- 42 Million social media reach



- Hosted a number of online competitions, with members/partners collaborating to provide prizes and experiences for winners attracting over 40,000 entries
- Regular press and media coverage including local, national and international newspapers and magazines, TV and Radio on topics to promote the destination and tourism industry
- Over 200 media enquiries/requests received, and supported
- Creation of high quality, destination promotional videos that were seen worldwide, including New York Tartan week. **"View videos here"**
- Influencer Lodge project, brought several travel content creators to the area that produced a range of videos, blogs and social media content promoting the destination globally
- Refreshed Visit Inverness Loch Ness branding
- Facilitated the filming of an episode of a prime time TV show in the area (non-disclosure agreement in place at time of this publication)
- South Loch Ness Trail signage renewed
- Support Local banners erected alongside River Ness, Millburn Road, Beauly, Foyers, Ardersier, Cannich, and Dores.

"We were particularly grateful for the support that VILN provided when we were working to secure the Scottish Golf Tourism Week in March 2024. This legacy event will bring an estimated £3.5M over the coming 3 years! VILN continue to do an excellent job of creating awareness of the Destination"

A N Story, CEO, Kingsmills Hotel Group

"The Tourism BID has been instrumental in the progression of our holiday accommodation business over the past 5 year term. They've been invaluable in promoting our beautiful area to the world as a year-round destination. A huge asset for businesses, tourists, locals and the local economy, we are so lucky to have this fabulous organisation flying the flag for us"

Morag Campbell, Pine Chalets, Lentrax





Events

Loch Ness Challenge

- Welcomed 300 entrants and their support crews to the area for a 3 day long event that spanned the whole destination area.

Highland Shortbread Showdown

- 300 attendees at 2023 Shortbread Showdown Shortlisting event at the Victorian Market.
- 1000 attendees at the 2023 Highland Shortbread Showdown Final at Inverness Cathedral.
- Created a working collaboration with 8 DMO's we brought together competitors from across the Highlands, along with locals and visitors for this inaugural event.



Highlands first Photomathon hosted and captured over 300 winter images

Taster of Inverness

- 250 attendees at the inaugural 2023 event held at the Dumossie Hotel.
- This 3-day event involved bringing 10 Scottish Food & Drink influencers to the area to experience firsthand what we have to offer and to tell their global audiences about it.
- This included accommodation, food and drink hospitality, and experiences all around the destination.
- The networking day encouraged business to business collaboration showcasing the produce they have on offer, and delivered many new connections between local businesses.

Pedal Power

- Held in Drumadrochit to promote active outdoor experiences, active travel businesses and the area.
- Around 250 locals and visitors came to enjoy the event with booked cycling experiences and tasters on offer.

Active Ness

- Over 300 people came along to the event held at Torvean Park, Inverness to promote active travel and outdoor activity based businesses in the area, bringing awareness to a relatively new activity area and endeavoured to suit a variety of demographics.
- Cycling, kayaking and accessible bike experiences were available.

Introduction of the Food & Drink Fortnight in collaboration with Inverness City BID

- A promotional fortnight in Jan/Feb 2024 for food and drink business to offer visitors and locals a deal or experience to showcase what we have and encourage business in the shoulder months.

Over 40 Networking Events & Webinars

- Regular member networking events covering a range of key topics, including sustainability, short term let, food & drink, outdoor activities, and business familiarisation.
- Regular webinars giving members access to information, skill development and key speakers from industry and Scottish Government.

“Tourism is one of our most important industries – an economic and social powerhouse that helps sustain communities, creates jobs and attracts investment. It is critical then, that we come together across industry and the public sector to encourage responsible travel, inspire visitors to discover more of our region, stay longer, visit year-round and take time to really immerse themselves in the destination. Visit Inverness, Loch Ness are an important partner for us to work with, collaboratively supporting businesses to grow the value of tourism to Scotland, helping create better places for people to live, work and visit.”

Chris Taylor, Destination Development Director, Highlands & Islands, Visit Scotland

“Member's events have been most helpful, in particular the Food & Drink Taster Event at Drumossie and the short term letting regulations session with Highland Council at Eden Court.”

Frank Spencer-Nairn, Culligran Cottages & Estate





Business Tourism

- 23 trade events attended worldwide to promote the destination, and members, to international buyers
- Facilitating multiple tourism events, conferences and incentive travel resulting in an economic benefit of over £3M*
- In addition, we assisted in securing the Scottish Golf Tourism Week taking place in March 2024, which is estimated to bring a further £3M* of economic benefit (*based on VisitScotland average delegate spend figures).

Business Development & Collaboration

- 43% increase in opt-in membership
- Climate Action Plan implemented & became first Carbon Neutral BID in the UK
- Employed the first Loch Ness Ranger
- Lobbying, including Short Term Let, Transient Visitor Levy, and Covid Grant Support
- Brought together member businesses to form Culinary Strategy and Adventure Tourism Groups, to develop strategy and action plans
- Inaugural Taster of Inverness – See detail under events. Whilst this was operated as an event, business development was at the very heart of it
- Regular member newsletters with latest industry news, updates & B2B member offers
- 5 for 5 business presentation opportunity for members

“We really value and enjoy our working partnership with VILN, the team are professional, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and inclusive. They connect us, and others in providing opportunities to work collaboratively for the benefit of our businesses and local tourism.”

Donna McHugh, Head of Revenue and Sales, Loganair Ltd

“As a new business due to open when covid struck, we did not have the easiest start. However, Visit Inverness Loch Ness have been incredibly supportive. They brought influencers and journalists to visit who have, in turn, brought us business and helped raise awareness of our food and drink events. Their drive to improve the food and drink offering and awareness is very welcome”.

Jane Cumming, The Downright Gabbler, Beaulieu

“VILN is an invaluable resource, it provides access into a business network that would be totally inaccessible for small businesses. VILN is a voice for businesses that support the local area and tourism and a great asset having this singular voice and representation. VILN is an equaliser providing networking and collaboration opportunities, a platform for advertising, Intellectual Capital, and resources for both owners and visitors to help plan stays and trips. In addition, we benefit from many referrals from the VILN’s website and it is difficult to find a marketing spend that will provide as much of a return as this”.

Malcolm Allan – Pitfaranne Guest House, Inverness

“Throughout our membership with VILN we have seen many benefits both for the wider area and our own business. Ness Castle Lodges had the opportunity recently to host journalists and influencers, which VILN organised, resulting in excellent promotion of our area on social media channels. We look forward to the next five years and to further collaborative opportunities, such as Scottish Golf Tourism Week, being maximised for VILN’s members and the Destination at a local, national and international level”.

David F Sutherland, Ness Castle Lodges, Inverness

“Visit Inverness Loch Ness offered us invaluable support during the launch of the revamped centre by offering invaluable advice and promotion across their channels. They also helped us to reach out to new trade contacts during the recent familiarisation trips we offered to business people in our area”.

Aimee Todd, Marketing Executive, The Loch Ness Centre

Watch additional member testimonials [HERE](#)



Consultation Process & What You Said

Consultation Process

The Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID has undertaken research to discover what the businesses of Inverness and Loch Ness would like us to deliver. The research established the need for the continuation of the Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID and confirms that the following key aspects have been completed to deliver a successful ballot:

- Local need for the Tourism BID to continue is strongly supported by the members
- The Tourism BID area is logical and clearly defined
- Support of the Local Authority at both officer and political level

The consultation process for the 2024 renewal ballot began in March 2023 when the Tourism BID sent out a questionnaire to all eligible voters asking for their initial thoughts on what possible new initiatives they would like to see the Tourism BID undertake and what initiatives they thought were important to continue to deliver.

In May 2023 the survey results were presented at a members networking event and further feedback gathered.

In August 2023 the initial consultation results were sent to all members as part of the “Next Steps” document and the 1-to-1 consultations began.

Additional open meetings were held during September and October, with 5 further drop-in sessions being held throughout the area during September at various locations. These meetings/sessions were attended by around 40 individual businesses.

As of 21st November 2023, a total of 88 1-to-1 consultations had been completed in person and by phone.

- 65 (73.9%) say they intended to vote “Yes”.
- 2 (2.3%) say they intend to vote “No”.
- 21* (23.9%) say they are “Undecided”. *Includes members who are unsure whether they will continue to operate. Reasons given include ill health and the effects of “staff shortages”, “costs of doing business”, and “short term lets legislation”.

A pre-ballot members event is planned for 22nd February 2024.



WHAT YOU SAID

Member Businesses highlighted the following as things we are doing well:



Areas highlighted by member business for consideration included further help and support for:



AWARDS





Next 5 Years – Vision, Aims & Objectives

The Mission, Aims and Objectives of Visit Inverness Loch Ness have been formulated based on feedback from our member businesses, whilst remaining mindful of:

- The objectives laid out in Scotland Outlook 2030
- The Sustainable Development Goals highlighted in our Climate Action Plan
- Partner/funding agency policies – Highland Council, HIE, Scotland Food & Drink, Paths for All, as examples.

Mission statement of Visit Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID

Ensure the long-term future of a viable, responsible, and attractive tourism destination that visitors will value and return to.

The Aims of the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourism BID

By working together as one destination the Tourism BID aims to:

- Ensure that the destination remains front of mind for both domestic and international travelers looking for somewhere to spend their time
- Continue to promote the value and importance of tourism to the local economy
- Continue working towards a year-round tourism economy and destination
- Continue to develop the relationship between tourism and the communities it serves
- Enhance the visitor experience and reputation of the destination

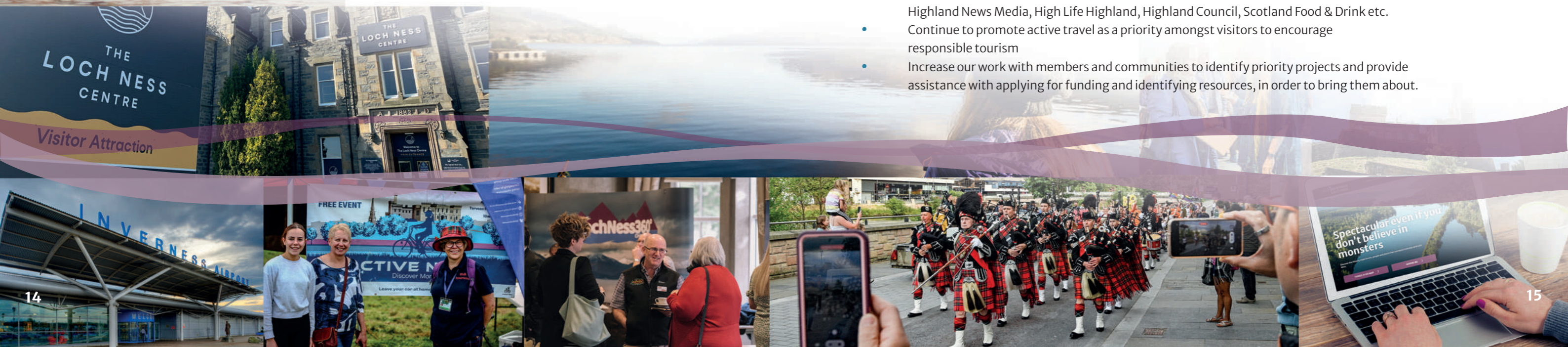
DELIVERABLE OBJECTIVES

Promoting and Marketing our Destination

- To continue marketing and promoting the destination locally, nationally, and internationally
- To provide opportunities for members to enhance their knowledge and skills base to effectively market themselves and the destination to their target audience/s
- Keep up to date with new technologies, channels and trends in social media marketing to enhance our promotions and campaigns
- Continue collaborative work with external partners and key stakeholders to increase destination awareness to new audiences
- Continue collaborative work with creators to further promote the destination and member businesses creatively and effectively

Visitor Experience and Destination Development

- To provide members with access to the tools, information and experience needed to develop their business in a responsible manner, which delivers improvements for people, places, and profit
- To work with appropriate agencies in identifying and supporting initiatives that will improve the tourism infrastructure of the destination
- To promote and support responsible events and festivals, with additional focus on those which encourage visitors during traditionally quieter periods
- Leverage our position on the Highland Events & Festivals Group to encourage support for a more extensive winter programme which goes beyond the city
- To develop initiatives that encourage visitors to treat our communities and historical, cultural & natural assets responsibly and with respect
- Work with stakeholders in the region to promote, create and market events including Highland News Media, High Life Highland, Highland Council, Scotland Food & Drink etc.
- Continue to promote active travel as a priority amongst visitors to encourage responsible tourism
- Increase our work with members and communities to identify priority projects and provide assistance with applying for funding and identifying resources, in order to bring them about.



Next 5 Years – Vision, Aims & Objectives cont...

Business Events & Travel Trade

- To continue our work with members to retain existing Business Events, whilst identifying and developing new opportunities for the growth of conferencing and business events in the area
- To work with our members in highlighting the benefits of working with the Travel Trade and ensuring they are equipped to make the most of the opportunities available
- To respond to enquiries and provide support with proposals, contacts and funding options
- To promote the area as a location for television, movies & media. Assist with location finding/suggestions. Facilitate contact with local authority and landowners regarding approvals.

Member Representation

- To be a representative voice on local and national issues that matter to our members.

Including, but not limited to:

- Be an active participant in discussions with Highland Council on decisions relating to the implementation and use of the Transient Visitor Levy
- Continue as a voice for the members on efforts to bring positive improvements to the Short Term Let licensing legislation.
- Work with our colleagues at the Highland Tourism Partnership to represent the wider voice of Highland businesses

Member Engagement, Networking and Collaboration

- To further develop our member communication strategy
- Deliver regular networking events based around member wants/needs and where we identify further opportunities
- To provide additional opportunities for member collaboration.
- Building on the success of the 'Taster of Inverness' event. Looking to offer similar opportunities in other sectors and across a broader range of members
- Facilitate business showcase talks/webinars to encourage members to share what they do/best practice
- Work with members to identify other areas where collaboration can be of benefit
- To work collaboratively with other sectors, local communities, and neighbouring areas for mutual benefit
- Develop a partner/sponsor programme with a view to securing support for events and projects, as well as more direct benefits for members. E.g. Discounts on services, supplies, training etc.

A Safe and Secure Destination

- Collaborate with Inverness City BID to facilitate and invest in the extension of, and access to, the independent commercial ShopSafe Radio System currently operating in the city centre. This will link businesses from the wider city area, including retail parks, with Police Scotland, and the Operations Centre, allowing them to share information that helps drive down crime across all business sectors.
- Lead on collaboration with Police Scotland, businesses, The Highland Council, communities, and relevant crime reduction groups to identify any issues, collate information and intelligence about criminal activity, and agree action/response plans where needed.



BID Area

The 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....



The Tourism BID area includes the following 54 communities:

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

The Sectors Include

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

New Sectors for 2024-2029

Supermarkets	Distilleries	Motels
Activity Areas	Garden Centres	

The Levy

A BID levy is a fair and equitable way of funding additional projects and services, which the local authority and other statutory bodies are 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.

It has been agreed by the Tourism BID Board:-

- The threshold entry level be raised to £5000 from £3500
- The levy structure will be based on banded system fixed on the rateable value (RV) of the property on the day of the ballot 14/03/2024
- The BID levy will be paid by the property occupier – the person liable to pay the non-domestic rate
- All eligible occupiers (of eligible properties) i.e., the eligible person liable to pay the non-domestic rate that are listed on the Local Assessors Valuation Roll on the ballot date will be liable to pay the levy
- The levy payments are not linked to what businesses pay in rates but are based on the rateable value of the property
- If there is a change, in occupier to a property, until a new occupier is found, the property owner will be responsible for paying the levy
- Any new commercial development, subdivision of existing properties or merging of properties or new business with a non-domestic rateable valuation coming into the area during the 5-year term of the business improvement district will be liable for the BID Improvement Levy
- If a property is vacant on the day the levy invoice is issued or any subsequent vacant periods, the property owner will be liable to pay the levy
- Self-catering holiday accommodation which is not the sole or main residence of any person, and which is available (or intended to be available) for letting on a commercial basis, with profit in mind, for short periods totalling more than 140 days in the financial year remain liable for non-domestic rates for the whole year and will be included and liable to pay the levy
- The levy will apply to properties with a rateable value of £5000 and above. Levy bandings will be applied with a maximum banding at £1,200,000 and above
- For Year 2, 2025/26, and subsequent years for the term, the Tourism BID Board will have the discretion to increase the BID levy annually by the rate of inflation (index linked to the Consumer Price Index, CPI) to a maximum of 3% per annum based on the previous year's I levy to take account of inflation

The levy fees range from £220 to £6,000 per year. The levy is based on the cost of delivering the projects, as identified by businesses during the consultation process, which will maximise the tourism potential of Inverness, Loch Ness and the surrounding areas working together as one destination.

Rateable Value

Low	High	Total Annual Levy	Cost per Week
£ 5,000	£ 12,999	£ 220	£ 4.23
£ 13,000	£ 24,999	£ 320	£ 6.15
£ 25,000	£ 35,999	£ 450	£ 8.65
£ 36,000	£ 55,999	£ 650	£ 12.50
£ 56,000	£ 84,999	£ 900	£ 17.31
£ 85,000	£ 108,999	£ 1,250	£ 24.04
£ 109,000	£ 149,999	£ 1,750	£ 33.65
£ 150,000	£ 199,999	£ 2,400	£ 46.15
£ 200,000	£ 799,999	£ 3,200	£ 61.54
£ 800,000	£ 1,199,999	£ 4,000	£ 76.92
£ 1,200,000	...and above	£ 6,000	£ 115.38

There is no VAT to pay on the Tourism BID Levy

Exclusions

The BID Board decided to exclude premises that have a rateable value of less than £5000. This means that businesses without a rateable value or those which are below the £5,000 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-levying paying member.

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

Collection of the Levy

The levy will be collected by the 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 the 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.

Projected Income and Expenditure

Income	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL
Levy ¹	£255,000	£260,000	£265,000	£270,000	£275,000	£1,325,000
Opt-In Income ²	£14,000	£14,500	£15,000	£15,500	£16,000	£75,000
HIE ³	£35,000	£35,000				£70,000
Common Good Fund ⁴	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£100,000
Highland Council ⁵	£15,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£55,000
Path for All ⁶	£10,000					£10,000
Total	£349,000	£339,500	£310,000	£315,500	£321,000	£1,635,000

Expenditure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL
Marketing & Promotion	£50,000	£52,000	£54,000	£56,000	£58,000	£270,000
Business Development	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£75,000
Destination Development	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£75,000
Responsible Tourism	£7,000	£7,000	£7,000	£7,000	£7,000	£35,000
Infrastructure	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£25,000
Events & Festivals	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£25,000
Managt. & Organisation	£240,000	£225,000	£200,000	£205,000	£210,000	£1,080,000
Contingency	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£50,000
Total	£347,000	£334,000	£311,000	£318,000	£325,000	£1,635,000

1. The estimated levy income for the Tourism BID is based upon a 96% collection rate. Due to the current instability in the industry as a result of several factors, and the associated risks of business closure, no forecast is being made for any increase beyond index linking over the 5-year term of the BID. It is calculated that there are circa 401 eligible properties located within the Tourism BID area (this figure may change as businesses move, expand or close).
2. **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. This total figure has been set at 75% of 2023/24 opt-in income levels for year 1.
3. **HIE** funding in years 1 & 2 is in relation to final draw down on previously agreed DMO funding. HIE have advised that no additional core funding is likely to be available beyond this until at least financial year beginning 2025/26.
4. **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 City Committee in November 2023. 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.
5. **Highland Council Funding:** Highland Council endorsed the continued work and activities of the Tourism BID in November 2023 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. £5000 has already been secured towards the provision of an Active Travel Officer in Year 1
6. **Paths for All** have committed to £10,000 towards the provision of an Active Travel Officer in Year 1

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

Any variations within budgets will be reported to the Tourism BID Board of Directors. 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 for the coming year, which allows the Tourism BID the flexibility to respond to changing business needs and requirements.

Highland Council will collect the levy payments on behalf of the Tourism BID and will retain these funds in a separate account until the Tourism BID Board calls these funds down. The Tourism BID Board will manage the levy funds that are collected by the Council. This arrangement will ensure projects are delivered and any financial liabilities of the Tourism BID are transparent and answerable to the business levy payers in the Tourism BID area.

The Ballot

- Ballot papers will be posted to the eligible person responsible for casting a vote within their business at least 42 days before the ballot. In the case of national companies, the responsibility for voting may lie with head office.
- A link to a downloadable PDF of the BID Business Plan will be provided to those eligible to vote along with the ballot papers and published on our website. Hard copies will be available on request.
- The BID ballot is a confidential postal ballot conducted by Highland Council on behalf of Visit Inverness Loch Ness BID and in accordance with Scottish BID legislation.
- Where an eligible property is vacant the voting papers will be sent to the property owner.
- In Visit Inverness Loch Ness BID case, voting papers will be issued no later than 01/02/2024.
- The last date for all ballot papers to be returned is 5pm on 14/03/2024. Papers received after this date and time will be deemed null and void and not be counted.
- Voting papers are easy to complete, simply place a cross on either “yes” or “no” to the question “are you in favour of a BID?” The ballot paper must then be signed by the person eligible to vote and returned in the pre-paid envelope.
- Some eligible persons may receive **more than one ballot paper.**
Each ballot paper should be completed, signed and returned in its pre-paid envelope.
- All eligible persons (i.e., those persons liable to pay non-domestic rates) will have one vote or where a person is liable for non-domestic rates for more than one property, that individual shall be eligible to cast more than one vote however they will be required to pay the levy for each of the properties that they occupy.
- The ballot papers will be counted on 15/03/2024 and the results announced within one week.
- Following a successful ballot, the BID will commence on 01/04/2024 and will run for a period of five years until the 31/03/2029.
- For the ballot to be successful there must be a minimum turnout of 25% (the headcount) by number of eligible persons and by combined rateable value; and of those who turnout, the majority must vote in favour by number and rateable value.
- Following a successful ballot, the BID will commence on 01/04/2024 and will run for a period of five years until the 31/03/2029.



Governance and Management

The Tourism BID is registered as a not-for-profit limited company trading 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 the 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 regard to the appointment of the co-opted director is also available in the Articles of Association.

The Board also reserves the right to work with representatives from other level-paying businesses who can offer specialist activities 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 practice, while at the same time being open and transparent.

The Board will have the authority to adapt or alter the projects and services from year to year to reflect any change in economic circumstances or any new opportunities that may arise. This will be in the best interests of the levy payers and without recourse to an alteration ballot.

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 business that voted for the Tourism BID.

What happens if there is no Tourism BID?

The continuation of the Tourism BID is 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 in a responsible manner and protects the value of tourism to the local economy.

- In the past 5 years the Tourism BID Business Plan expected to attract an additional £320,000 of funding. As at November 2023 it had attracted £1,250,000 (£930,000 more than planned) of additional funds. Without the Tourism BID there will be no organisation to seek these funds and thus deliver additional activity and economic benefit to the destination
- There will be no organisation to market and promote the destination and all that it has to offer. This will undermine competitiveness and ultimately the sustainability of a strong local tourism economy
- There will be no one employed in the destination dedicated to increasing the value and importance of business tourism to the area.
- There will be less support for new and existing events and festivals.
- There will be no organisation to be the conduit of communications between the public sector and the local tourism community
- There will be no organisation to act as a voice for the destination on local and national issues
- As a key destination in the UK, let alone Scotland, we would be alone in having no destination level tourism organisation.



Contact Information

If you would like more information please visit our website:
www.visitinvernesslochness.com/BID-renewal-ballot-2024
or contact: admin@visitiln.com