

MAY INSIGHTS by CHRIS TURNER

The early summer is bringing much new government policy, economic change and a raft of interesting research and development activities. As ever I will try to pick up as many of these here as possible and provide the links to where further information is made available.

The Government has an aim of having [12 new towns](#) under construction by the end of this Parliament. The [New Towns Taskforce](#) is an independent expert advisory panel, established in September 2024, to support the government to deliver the next generation of new towns. The primary objective of the new towns programme is to create new and expanded places and thereby boost economic growth and the supply of new homes – spreading opportunity and supporting strong communities. This will be an opportunity for the business community and BIDs to get involved at a very early stage. The 1946 New Towns Act led to the building of Stevenage, Harlow, Crawley, Corby, Milton Keynes, Peterborough and others. Many of these original new towns now have some terrific BIDs.

The [Welsh government](#) wants people staying overnight in Wales to pay £1.30 plus VAT per night for hotels, B&Bs and self-catering accommodation, and 80p plus VAT for hostels and campsites. The Welsh government said it believed "it is fair that everyone contributes towards the services they use". Tourism employs nearly 160,000 people in Wales and is thought to be worth between £3bn and £4bn to the economy. Introducing a **tourism tax in Wales** would be a "very risky economic move" which could jeopardise jobs and businesses, the UK's largest holiday let provider has [claimed](#). If passed by the Senedd, the levy could raise up to [£33m per year](#), support and improve tourism in local areas and that councils would choose whether to charge it.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as [Martyn's Law](#), received Royal Assent on Thursday 3 April 2025 and many BIDs will be affected by it. The Government intends for there to be an implementation period of at least 24 months before the Act comes into force. This will allow the SIA's new function to be established, whilst

ensuring those responsible for premises and events in scope have sufficient time to understand their new obligations. The government believes that this will enable them to plan and prepare appropriately. Martyn's Law aims to improve protective security and organisational preparedness across the UK by requiring that those responsible for certain premises and events consider how they would respond to a terrorist attack. In addition to this, at certain larger premises and events, appropriate steps to reduce vulnerability to terrorist attacks must also be considered. The Government stresses that whilst those that fall within scope of the Act may wish to begin considering the requirements, they should note that guidance will be published in due course. This guidance will assist in understanding the requirements set out in the legislation. The guidance is being designed to be easy to follow, needing neither particular expertise nor the use of third-party products or services. To support enforcement of the regime, a regulator will be established through a new function of the Security Industry Authority (SIA), which will support, advise and guide those responsible for premises and events in meeting the requirements of this legislation.

The government has [confirmed](#) that the **Valuation Office Agency** (VOA), will be brought back into its parent department, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) by April 2026 in order to cut red tape, make savings, and improve businesses' experience of the tax system said Tax Minister James Murray, helping to deliver the Plan for Change by creating the conditions for growth. Clearly, as a major user of the VOA, both as BIDs and on behalf of all our 134,000 levy payers, we spoke to our contacts in government, and we were reassured by the VOA that "the change will not impact the delivery of our current or future work. The VOA will continue to deliver our work as we do now, and we will continue to provide independent and impartial advice. We are in the early stages of planning for the integration with HMRC. We will share further details as plans develop". If people have any questions in the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me for more information and I can speak to the VOA.

Sometimes the smaller stores resonate best; here is a great [link](#) to a piece of work that **Blue Bermondsey BID** funded on Bermondsey Market, a special community project set out to uncover the voices that have long gone unheard. 'Out of the Blue: Unheard Voices, Different Stories' was a project by Blue Bermondsey BID, created in response to community

feedback. Its goal was to uncover and celebrate the hidden histories of the Blue marketplace in Bermondsey, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and connection among residents. With support from the Everyday Heritage grant programme, the project explored how Bermondsey's past shaped its present. Historically, the area was home to a tight-knit white working-class community that was often resistant to change. While this has evolved over time, some traces of that mindset remain. By bringing these unheard voices to the forefront, the project aimed to create a more inclusive, understanding, and united Bermondsey for generations to come. It is also a celebration of Russell Dryden, who set up the BID and sadly passed away a year ago - take a look at the YouTube clip [here](#).

This week we launched our [British BIDs Learning Portal](#). We wanted to provide an online platform that supports individual's learning that can be done at their own pace and convenience. This is just the beginning, with new features and content to be added regularly. Thanks to all who have contributed content already and do let us know what else you would like to see added! Active members will have received notification of how to get themselves registered on the platform as part of their own individual learning journey. We encourage you to spend a little time over the coming days, taking a look at the various videos, articles, course listings, BID related resources...and so much more. Remember, this portal is designed for you and your teams to maximise your BID activity and outcomes. Through the Portal you will be able to learn and upskill yourself wherever you are, whenever you like, hear from experts and advisors with specialist knowledge relevant to BID operations, keep up to date with learning cycles on various British BID courses and hear from those who've taken part, as well as our incredible course facilitators, and finally, contribute yourself, we're keen to have more voices and insights as our platform evolves.

A very interesting piece of work that is so relevant to the BID and place making community, from the [University of Warwick](#), suggests that the visual reminder of community and economic deterioration which empty store fronts represent, plays a significant role in political behaviour. Published in the *Economic Letters Journal*, [Local Decline and Populism](#) investigates the relationship between visible signs of local economic decline and the rise of right-wing populist support in the UK, focusing on the period from 2009 to 2019.

The team found a significant positive association between vacancy rates and support for UKIP, the right-wing populist party. The research also highlights the way the disappearance of traditional social spaces contributes to isolation and loneliness. “The relationship between high street vacancies and populist voting behaviour reveals how changes in the lived environment shape political preferences. Empty storefronts represent more than economic statistics—they are visual signifiers of community transformation that affect residents' sense of place and belonging. By understanding these connections, we can develop more effective responses to the challenges of structural economic change and the political reactions they provoke. The future of our democratic politics may depend on how we address not just the economic realities of decline, but its visible manifestations in the spaces where community life unfolds.”

As ever, these topics on BIDs and their places are discussed in greater detail in our **British BIDs Academy Courses**, including: the [Certificate in BID Management](#), [Certificate in BID Marketing](#), and the [Diploma in BID Leadership](#).

Our next CiBM course begins on **Wednesday 25th June**. To book your place or for further information, please [get in touch](#) at your earliest opportunity.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris". The signature is stylized with a large 'C' and a small 'h'.

Professor Christopher Turner, Head of Research, British BIDs