

APRIL INSIGHTS by CHRIS TURNER

Ballots continue to develop across the British Isles and it's so good to congratulate Nuneaton, Ilkley, Huddersfield, Discover Lanark, Soho Road and Royal Tunbridge Wells Together, Visit Inverness Loch Ness and Horsham on their successful ballot results. We now have 341 BIDs in the British Isles and the latest British BIDs Spring Barometer is being processed now, to come out at the end of the month.

The new **Manchester Accommodation BID** continues to raise [interest](#). Manchester's tourist tax is set to raise £2.8m in its first year. The £1 -a-night fee paid by guests staying at all hotels and short-stay serviced apartments above a certain value in Manchester city centre and parts of Salford was introduced last April in a UK first. The 'City Visitor Charge', which was initially projected to bring in £3m a year, will be used to fund Manchester's Accommodation Business Improvement District (**ABID**) - a new organisation aimed at increasing tourism and overnight stays in the city. The money raised so far has been spent on street cleaning in the city centre, marketing campaigns and bids to host large events and conferences. There is much interest across the the country, with [Cambridge](#) and [Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole](#) taking plans forward.

As most of you know we have been working with our colleagues in ATCM, IPM and TBF on advising government on the future of BIDs, and indeed submitted a detailed [report](#) to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities a few months ago. It is thus very useful that DLUHC has now announced a **BID Innovation Forum**. The government says it wants every BID to be transparent, accountable, and focused on making their local area better for the people living, working and visiting it. DLUHC is thus establishing this BID innovation forum to bring together representatives from business, local government, community organisations, as well as high street experts and academics to explore how BIDs can work more innovatively and effectively in their communities. In its first year, the forum will focus on examining how the BID model in England can be improved for the

future, providing government with a set of recommendations for change. The forum will also be asked to recommend a set of voluntary standards for BIDs. DLUHC will keep the membership of the forum under review and may from time to time invite other organisations to join the forum, or others to leave to ensure a fully representative spectrum of views. This is an important move on the part of government and British BIDs will remain very involved in the process. The Department ask that to share your thoughts with the Forum on how the BID model could be improved, please write to the department at correspondence@levellingup.gov.uk using the subject heading 'BID Innovation Forum'.

The government is also taking its proposed [Levelling up and high street improvements bill](#) through parliament and the Committee stage is available [here](#). The Bill will require local authorities to designate high streets in their area; to require local authorities to undertake and publish periodic reviews of the condition of those high streets; to require local authorities to develop action plans for the improvement of the condition of those high streets. It will be a valuable tool if it gets to the statute book before an election.

A new [Community spaces rescue package](#), will extend lifelines to facilities across the country. More than 80 pubs, clubs and sport centres are expected to benefit from a £33.5m investment in keeping community spaces open. The levelling up minister, Jacob Young, described the money as “a major rescue package” that would “stop these great establishments closing or being lost for ever”. He said: “We know how much these vital community assets mean to people across the country. They are an important lifeline for -people young and old, and they’re the beating heart of our towns, cities and villages.” Among the venues benefiting from the money, which forms the third round of the government’s £150m community ownership fund, are 33 community centres, 19 sports facilities, nine pubs, five community shops and three theatres. These include the Edinburgh Film-house, the Le Pub music venue in Newport, Wales, and the Shrewsbury Arms pub in Kingstone, Staffordshire. A further £1.9million will be spent on keeping four music venues open so that local people have access to live music on their doorstep. That includes Le Pub in Newport.

Ministers also [announced](#) a shoplifting crackdown by investing more than £55m in expanding facial recognition systems – including vans that will scan crowded high streets – as part of a renewed crackdown on shoplifting. The scheme was announced alongside plans for tougher punishments for serial or abusive shoplifters in England and Wales, including being forced to wear a tag to ensure they do not revisit the scene of their crime, under a new standalone criminal offence of assaulting a retail worker. The new law, under which perpetrators could be sent to prison for up to six months and receive unlimited fines, will be introduced via an amendment to the criminal justice bill that is working its way through parliament. The change could happen as early as the summer.

UK retailers were given hope after early Easter boosted consumer spending in March and gave Britain’s retailers their best month in more than two years, according to the latest British Retail Consortium [report](#). The latest snapshot of spending in shops and online showed the value of sales above the current inflation rate for the first time since the early days of the cost-of-living crisis. The monthly sales monitor from the British Retail Consortium and the accountancy firm KPMG said the value of sales was up by 3.5% in March on a year earlier. Inflation as measured by the consumer prices index stood at 3.4% in February and is expected to have fallen to about 3% in March. Linda Ellett, the KPMG UK head of consumer markets, leisure and retail, said the Easter pickup in spending pointed to the possibility of “green shoots of recovery” for retailers. “High street sales growth was driven by food and drink, health and beauty and keen gardeners who headed outside to enjoy the first days of spring. There were also some signs of improvement, with more categories starting to see positive sales growth in March for the first time in months.”

This was reinforced by JD Wetherspoon [revealing](#) a near-eightfold uplift in pre-tax profits as price-conscious consumers flocked to drink and dine at its network of low-cost pubs. The chain reported that pre-tax profits in the six months to the end of January had risen to £36m from £4.6m a year earlier and said it expected a “reasonable outcome” for the current financial year.

We have all learned much from Wayne Hemingway on charity and second-hand shops on our high streets, and it seems clear that concerns over the environment and the treatment of farmers in poorer countries has fuelled a steady increase in [ethical shopping](#).

[Secondhand clothing sales](#) are on track to make up a tenth of the global fashion market next year, as the cost-of-living crisis and concerns over sustainability drives consumers towards “pre-loved” garments. As households across the country rein in their spending to deal with rising bills, Michael Gidney, the chief executive of the Fairtrade Foundation trade body, said consumers were still prioritising ethical products. The group behind the Fairtrade mark – which is celebrating its 30th anniversary – expects to have earned more than £13m in income from the UK last year, slightly more than the £12.8m it earned in 2022. Businesses can apply for a licence to use the logo on approved products for a fee, so as sales increase, the fees to the foundation increase.

[Business Crime](#) remains a key priority, and [Opal](#), the national policing’s intelligence unit for serious and organised acquisitive crime, will play a key role in collating intel to bring down organised crime groups. A new team within Opal, national policing’s intelligence unit for serious and organised acquisitive crime, will soon begin the process of gathering, scoping and analysing information about organised retail crime groups referred from a number of different sources. The team, funded by the Pegasus partnership launched in 2023 by PCC Katy Bourne, is now rolling out training to retailers and police forces to support them in understanding Opal’s role and how to refer intelligence which can then be analysed and explored on a national scale.

As ever, [The British BIDs Academy](#) continues to be the platform for the training and development of BID staff in the UK, and many hundreds have joined us over the years. We cover all aspects of a BID’s lifespan, and our content is consistently reviewed and improved, meaning there will always be something new to learn on a course and all of our courses are brought to you by expert professionals in their field. All training sessions will be held virtually via Zoom or Microsoft Teams throughout 2024. We continue to offer the

Certificate in BID Management and the **Diploma in Bid Leadership**. Do please get in touch on any of these.

Bb **Accreditation** continues to be an industry recognised standard, externally assessed by independent auditors, and designed in line with the Business Plan Criteria and the National Guiding Principles for a BID. The Accreditation process can be completed online and ensures an external evaluation by an independent panel on the key matters of Governance, Management and Operations, Financials, Performance Management, and Communication and Reporting of a BID. Some thirty BIDs are accredited at the moment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. There is a horizontal line underneath the word "Chris".

Professor Christopher Turner, Head of Research, British BIDs