

NOVEMBER INSIGHTS by CHRIS TURNER

The budget, and its repercussions are clearly the big story of the moment but there is very much else that is going on across the BID community and this November Insight tries to bring them together for BID members across the country.

The Economist's [take](#) on the **budget** was that “it was dramatic but lacked the sort of vision that was needed to bring the country back on course”. They feel that the Chancellor had a mandate to fix public services, a huge parliamentary majority and four months to work out how to raise taxes and encourage growth. In the end, she offered an odd mix of eye-popping numbers and small-bore thinking. She has taken steps to fix Britain’s crumbling public services, chronic underinvestment and fairy-tale fiscal forecasts. But she has lost her best chance at reform. The figures in the budget were certainly audacious. Ms Reeves announced an increase in the level of taxation worth £40bn (\$52bn; just over 1% of GDP), mostly by raising employers’ national-insurance contributions as well as by making some smaller increases in taxes on inheritance and wealth. That, along with an increase in borrowing of roughly £30bn, will fund a £70bn rise in government spending. The state will swell to a size not seen outside an emergency or war, and there is already an uproar on the new national insurance rates and the impact of the inheritance tax on the farming community. We will all clearly keep an eye on the narrative as it unfolds.

One of the major stories of the budget is the proposed business rates reform [Transforming Business rates](#), which will be a topic of interest to us all over the next few months. British BIDs will clearly make a response on behalf of our members and levy payers. The objectives of the reforms will be protecting the high street; encouraging investment; and creating a fairer system. Clearly, the consultation is going to impact our levy payers very differently. It is obviously welcome that the high street’s smaller retail, hospitality and leisure businesses may see their rates held down, but as business rates are a major income stream for the government, the loss of revenue will need to be clawed back elsewhere; and national levy payers and BIDs in industrial estates are already concerned. Whilst many levy payers feel that the likes of Amazon need to be paying more, much light industry is not high profit. As the new government [Industrial](#)

[Strategy](#) consultation recognises, someone making furniture or engineering equipment needs much more space than a desk-based firm, and we would not want them to be penalised for this with hiked 'industrial' business rates.

The [Justice and Home Affairs Committee](#) conducted an inquiry into **shop theft**. The Committee found that shop theft is an underreported crime that is not being effectively tackled, leading to a devastating impact on the retail sector and the wider economy. The Committee heard that there are almost 17 million incidents of shop theft annually, with few leading to an arrest and costing the retail sector almost £2 billion last year. The Committee welcomed the work of Pegasus, the new national scheme to tackle organised crime in the retail sector and recommended that existing schemes such as Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (linking police and local businesses) should all be part of a National Standards Accreditation Scheme. British BIDs are very much part of that scheme and will continue to keep BIDs informed.

One key element of the last government's policy was [High Street Rental Auctions](#), and the current government is determined to continue with them. This week, Minister Norris spoke at an HSRA Showcase event in Wolverhampton, to explain the powers in greater detail and introduce early adopters – local authorities that will champion HSRA's by immediately taking action and working with MHCLG to provide strategic guidance and best practice advice to other councils. There was a good turn out, and Minister Norris and the MHCLG team focused on local solutions and stressed that they were there to deal with high rates of high street vacancy, with a national average of 1 in 7, but higher in the West Midlands and Northeast. Local authorities are key to designating high street areas - this a complex process involving property law, and owner rights, but there was a real emphasis on the role of local authorities trying to reach positive outcome by working and engaging with landlords. There were a couple of helpful references to BIDs and the role that they can play here, and we'll be exploring these further with MHCLG colleagues.

It's always good to see ourselves as other see us, and a piece in The Standard last month allowed just this. [Twenty years on London's BIDs are still helping the capital's neighbourhoods thrive](#) suggests reckons BIDs are still not well known and are often

misunderstood in their purpose and powers. Most common amongst these is that they are somehow tasked with a sinister agenda of privatising public space and replacing the role of local councils. BIDs were never intended to replace the role of local authorities but to acknowledge the additional attention needed in parts of the city with high business and visitor use. Across the city BIDs work to bring together people with first-hand business experience to partner with our cultural sector bringing heritage and art into the everyday. Increasingly our attitudes to the environment, quality of life and social development issues are major concerns alongside those of wages and the cost of living. And in a world where “data is the new oil,” BIDs are increasingly able to collect and provide information benefiting the economy, tourism and social development.

And following on from these there is an interesting piece of research in the London School of Economics Business Review. [BIDs bring benefits but gentrifies](#). The researchers estimate that BID formation leads to an increase of at least three per cent in house prices. These effects were driven by an increase in demand for BID-provided goods and services. At the same time, the share of managerial and administrative professionals among BID residents grew more. The researchers calculate that for each £1 spent by a BID district, the public gained around £1.26, which is a measure of the societal value of these private expenditures. Since residents do not contribute directly towards BID funds, the increase in house prices may also be seen as a positive externality for incumbent households.

An interesting development in [Bristol](#) sees new plans to unite the city's three current business improvement districts. The proposed Bristol BID would bring together the City Centre BID, Redcliffe and Temple BID and Broadmead BID under one umbrella and, if approved, would launch in November 2025. They believe that the consolidation of the three BIDs will formalise existing collaborations such as the Bristol Light Festival, TAP for Bristol and the Business Crime Reduction Partnership. We are always interested in changing delivery models so will watch this with interest.

We all know that shopping centres have changed in the UK and its useful to have this reinforced with new data. **Shopping centres** across the UK [have declined in recent years](#), as store closures and online shopping change consumer habits for good. According to a report by the property consultancy Lambert Smith Hampton, about 60 of the UK's 500 bigger shopping centres are likely to be razed, and a further 200 could be partially demolished.

Long-Term Plan for Town

The Chancellor [confirmed](#) at the Budget on 30 October that the Long-Term Plan for Towns will be retained and reformed as part of a new regeneration programme.

A revised prospectus for the programme will be published in due course, confirming the associated timelines and a new set of strategic objectives aligned to this government's missions.

The **Centre for Cities**, the leading think tank dedicated to improving the economies of the UK's largest cities and towns, and with whom we share work, have published a report that looks at the size and role of the **visitor economy** in different cities. You can find the report [here](#). As part of this, they have created a [data tool](#) to provide a city-by-city breakdown for all the cities and large towns they look at, as a resource to anyone looking to understand how the visitor economy in their city compares to others, and what the offer to visitors could be to increase visitor spending. By analysing millions of in-person individual-level card transactions, this report provides a comprehensive picture of domestic visitor spending across the UK's 63 largest cities for the first time. This is a resource for local leaders to understand how the visitor economy contributes to local economic development. Alongside the Visitor economy data tool, the work sets out the 'visitor offer' in each place and how that compares nationally.

As ever, British BIDs monthly **Ballot information** keeps all of us up to date and this past month has been very busy, with successful ballots in Linlithgow, Solihull, Paisley, Wolverhampton, Hereford, Luton, Worcester, and Bracknell. Stourbridge, Wickford and Billericay are three new BIDs.

Our next members webinar takes place on **Tuesday 10th December**. We will be joined by Philip Collins, former chief speechwriter to Tony Blair and founder of [The Draft](#), for a webinar on how language can make people care about innovation and enterprise. You can find out more and register [here](#).

British BIDs are finalising dates for the Academy courses, the Certificate in BID Management, the Diploma in BID Leadership and the Certificate in BID Marketing for 2025. Please check the British BIDs [website](#) to plan your next year's training. Our initial 2025 courses and dates the new dates will be ready next week.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Professor Christopher Turner, Head of Research, British BIDs