

SEPTEMBER INSIGHTS by CHRIS TURNER

The community of Business Improvement Districts seems busier than ever, with a large range of new projects and initiatives. As we approach the **Golden quarter**, the updates from the major retail stores are [here](#), with the Retail Gazette covering how the critical Christmas period is unfolding for UK retail. Covering everything from Black Friday to a comprehensive analysis of retailer results, as well as trends that are shaping the festive period. For those with retail led BIDs this is useful material.

On the health and well-being front, **The Association of Directors of Public Health** (ADPH) are working with several BIDs across the country and are keen to stress that there are a range of sponsorship and collaboration opportunities. The Association is inviting organisations and companies to invest in initiatives aimed at improving and protecting health and wellbeing across the UK, while also supporting investors to advance their business goals. Funding opportunities include support for specific public health projects, training and development for public health professionals, and event sponsorships. For more information, please visit the [website](#) and if you'd like to discuss it further, please contact specialprojects@adph.org.uk.

The [National Business Crime Centre](#) have been working with the Crown Prosecution Service and police forces to develop a witness template statement that can be used when uploading CCTV evidence. The [standardised statement](#) will ensure retailers provide all the information the police need to process CCTV evidence in a criminal case. Supt. Patrick Holdaway, lead for the NBCC explains: "Many retailers have the ability to upload CCTV but there was a myriad of different statements being used by police forces. Following some workshops with retailers there was a call for a consistent statement format to be used to help retailers and police. *NICE Investigate* is a Digital Evidence Management Solution (DEMS) software tool that automates the

entire digital investigation and evidence management by helping police investigators close more cases, faster There is now a user group for those forces who use NICE (about 20 forces) focused on business engagement.

Rowan Moore writes that **Department stores**, once palaces of delight are now less of these things. Yet, there are signs of hope. Just as warehouses and workshops were turned into homes and studios when industry retreated 50 years ago, so might department stores. Their low values are provoking creative thinking about their future. The £25,000 [Davidson prize](#), an annual design award for “transformative architecture of the home”, has this year been won by a proposal to make an old Debenhams in Taunton, Somerset, into a centre of communal life. As part of this emerging story on **repurposing the High Street**, **John Lewis Partnership** has [submitted](#) a planning application to build 215 rental homes in Reading as part of its property venture. The proposals involve transforming a former distribution warehouse into 215 energy-efficient homes, 6,000 sq ft of internal amenity space, two new external garden spaces and an “improved public realm”. The homes will be purpose-built for renters with shared areas for fitness, home-working and socialising.

A new **House of Commons Briefing paper** sets out the working of Business Improvements Districts in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The report, by Mark Sandford, provides details of the legal framework for BIDs, with recent statistics and developments. Interestingly, the briefing paper reminds us that the last government announced the launch of a Business Improvement District Innovation Forum in April 2024, that this forum has not met, and it is not clear whether the new Labour government will take it forward. Previously, the then Government published a review of BIDs in November 2014 and launched a consultation in March 2015; again, no response to this consultation was published. The new Ministry of Housing Community and Local Government has much on its agenda, but we await with interest any new plans. Very usefully, at our [British BIDs Conference](#) on November 7th, **Catherine**

Bennion, Deputy Director, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will provide an overview of government policies and priorities. She will also take part in a Q&A. **Alex Norris**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Housing, Communities and Local Government) stressed in Parliament last week “The future of the high street is not about returning to how things were. There must be a place for leisure, a place, of course, for retail and a place for residential properties, and councils of all political persuasions throughout the country are trying to find that perfect alchemy ... we are working our way through it, and future funding decisions will be made in the Budget on 30 October”.

In Edinburgh, a [New tourist tax](#) may help on some of this. The [Scottish government](#) have given each local authority the ability to raise additional income via charging overnight visitors. Edinburgh City Council recently approved a 'transient visitor levy' of 5% of the booking fee to hotels, B&Bs, self-catering accommodation and rooms and properties let through websites such as AirBnB. Of the monies raised £5 million goes to housing, 35% goes to the arts sector, and the rest is to improve public spaces. The levy, which mimics tourist taxes used by European cities such as Madrid, Amsterdam, Berlin and Lisbon, is expected to raise between £43m and £50m a year from about 5.3m overnight stays a year. This is clearly an interesting alternative to the emerging Accommodation BID approach, which has had mixed success thus far and it will be interesting to see if the model is adopted South of the border.

An interesting debate has been running in the papers during and following the election, on the importance of a “Gails” on a high street. The battle over [Gail's](#) is a much-cited symptom of **gentrification** – the process, named 60 years ago by the German-British Marxist sociologist Ruth Glass, by which the newly arrived middle-classes displace working-class occupants in neighborhoods undergoing upward socioeconomic change. BIDs are often seen as complicit in this process, and the piece gives us all much food for thought.

Business Crime Reduction Partnerships were discussed in the House of Lords this month, at the Select Committee on Justice and Home Affairs Shop Theft Enquiry, with experts in this field called to give oral evidence to influence the changes that are needed in policy and legislation to address this huge issue. The expert group, including the National Association of Business Crime Reduction Partnerships, represented BCRPs by answering questions from the Committee about the purpose and function of BCRPs, how they gather and share data, and the outcomes of doing so. The full session can be viewed here [Parliamentlive.tv - Justice and Home Affairs Committee](https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Justice-and-Home-Affairs-Committee). Asked for suggestions on what is needed to make BCRPs even more successful recommendations included, secure funding, data sharing and engagement, recognition of the value of BCRPs and better governance and regulation.

As ever, [British BIDs](#) continues to provide training courses, the Certificate in BID Management, the Diploma in BID Leadership and the Annual National BIDs Conference. On ballots, we send congratulations to seven BIDs: Spalding, Our Bury St Edmunds, Ferndown & Uddens, Your Eastbourne, Gadbrook Park, Greater Yarmouth Tourism and Witham Industrial Watch on their successful ballot results; Coleraine and Linlithgow results will be out soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chris' with a horizontal line underneath.

Professor Christopher Turner, Head of Research, British BIDs