

APRIL INSIGHTS by CHRIS TURNER

Spring is here and it feels a time of major global concerns, and nationally we have new rules around employers National Insurance, business rates and devolution plans that will no doubt be weighing on people's minds. It may be that at times like this it is useful to focus on doing the best we can in those areas where we have skills and expertise and know that we are making our business communities better places than they might otherwise be.

A new [report](#), supported by some of London's Business Improvement Districts suggests ways to do away with unloved heaps of commercial waste. Compiled by Nicholas Boys Smith and Tom Noble of Create Streets and funded by three of London's business improvement districts (BIDs), it addresses problems with commercial waste and why so much of it is left lying around. Three key issues are defined: Britain's waste collection market is "*uniquely fragmented*" and under-regulated, with consequent pile-ups of "*rubbish refuse*" on pavements commonplace; these unsightly heaps are bad for high street businesses; waste mounds attract pests and other litter, and the systems for clearing them add to traffic, noise and pollution. The report produces three sets of recommendations. In the short term, there should be more consolidation schemes, more use of e-cargo bikes for collections, and more centralised locations for depositing waste that do not look horrible. In the medium term, councils making better use of powers they already have, higher fines for those who break existing rules, and simplifying enforcement systems. In the long term, fewer and better commercial waste collection operators, creating a new category of "*ordinary commercial*" waste which would enable smaller firms to use ordinary municipal services in return for a small fee, and setting up a zone in which a single operator is responsible for everything.

New government measures have been [announced](#), to put neighbourhood police back on the beat. The hope is that communities will be safer and trust in local policing will be restored under plans to put police officers back in our neighbourhoods, with the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. New measures will ensure every community will have

dedicated and specialist neighbourhood policing teams, ending the postcode lottery on law and order. The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee will put 13,000 more officers into neighbourhood policing roles by 2029, an increase of more than 50%. The early focus of the plan will be to establish named local officers, target town centre crime and build back neighbourhood policing, meaning hard working people can feel safer and more secure in their daily lives.

Staying with the policing theme, [The National Business Crime Centre](#) recently hosted a [Safer Action Business Days](#) (SaBA) national week of action. SaBA Days is a joint approach by police, business, private security, Business Crime Reduction Partnerships, and Business Improvement Districts working in partnership to focus resources into designated location to create a significant impact to reduce crime.

The **devolution** agenda is truly hotting up. [London's local authorities](#) have called for joint decision-making arrangements between the mayor and the capital's boroughs as part of a new devolution settlement. London Councils warned that without implementing joint decision-making arrangements, London's boroughs would become the only councils without a formal say over the strategic authority for their region. [Essex County Council](#) has told the Government that it cannot support the proposal for devolution in Greater Essex 'in its current form'; they argued that under the proposals the council would have fewer votes than Southend and Thurrock combined despite 80% of Greater Essex residents living within the county council area.

The Nationwide Caterers Association represent independent hospitality businesses across the UK. Their members include street food, event & festival caterers, coffee shops, restaurants, pubs, bars and hotels. They have launched a campaign; [Independent Hospitality Week](#). From the 5th - 11th of May they are raising the profile of and celebrating independent hospitality businesses. There are tens of thousands of independent hospitality business who work hard in a challenging economy to open their doors, hatches and hearts to customers every day and who bring their brand of hospitality to highstreets, events and venues across the country. IHW is a week for everyone to choose independents, share food

and drink experiences and back the businesses that make our cities, towns and villages what they are. From the 5th – 11th May 2025, they are asking businesses and their customers to come together and shout about how much their local bars, cafes, restaurants pubs, street food, event & festival traders mean to them. Collectively they want to make as much noise as possible about how important these food and drink businesses are. They believe there is real strength in their diversity, resilience, creativity and innovation. A strength that if championed, would create meaningful economic growth. The independent hospitality sector has huge economic potential, however for too long now, the challenges faced by businesses have overshadowed their growth. The sector needs a boost. This Independent Hospitality Week, please shout about, support and share the campaign.

In the 2024-25 financial Year, £1.3 billion resource and £0.2 billion capital funding was allocated to the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**, and this was an important funding stream for many BIDs. For the 2025-26 financial year, Alex Norris has just [announced](#) £668 million resource and £234 million capital funding has been allocated to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Local allocations for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2025-26 can be found [here](#).

It is I think for the first time that we can celebrate a recently ennobled BID chief executive. **[Lord Pitkeathley of Camden Town](#)**, chief executive of Camden Town Unlimited BID [spoke](#) in the House of Lords last month: “...*through my work with business improvement districts and workspace provision, I have seen first-hand both the challenges and responsibilities of employing people. Good businesses do more than create jobs. They foster opportunity, stability and prosperity in our communities. For most responsible employers, the principles behind this Bill are nothing new. Anyone who has run a business knows that keeping and supporting a great team is a daily concern. Whether it is offering flexibility, ensuring fair treatment or helping staff through difficult times, most employers already do much of what is set out in this Bill—not because they have to but because a happy, motivated team is the foundation of success. Businesses thrive when their people thrive.*”

There were further mentions of BIDs and the work they do in the House of Commons [here](#), where several MPs commented that BID teams do a really brilliant job in securing investment and having a plan to regenerate town centres.

An interesting piece of work has come from Aberdeen BID and the [Vacant Shops Academy](#) on [vacant upper floors](#). They stress that those upper floor spaces are a waste. They could be homes or offices bringing new footfall to support existing businesses and organisations or in commercial use as a base for hospitality or some elements of the now much longer list of ‘alternative’ or maybe better ‘additional’ uses looking for high street space: arts & crafts, creative, culture, community, history & heritage, leisure, education, health and health & wellbeing. Having the upper floors back in productive use can also be a key to getting vacant ground floor spaces let because that can positively adjust the economics of owning and operating the building. As the study reports, Union Street, Aberdeen is already seeing proactive efforts to bring some of its upper floor spaces back into play, but we will set out how and why taking an extra step is the way forward. The changes they are seeing are ad hoc, depending on the building, insightful agents and architects and, crucially, the circumstances and perspective of the landlord. It is all good. But so much better if Aberdeen takes it on in a strategic way: to build on the data we have collated in this study, draw a complete picture of what spaces are available on Union Street upper floors and set out together, in partnership to overcome the challenges and get them all occupied. Every single one. Getting there would make a huge difference to the look, vibrancy and resilience of the city centre. It would positively impact on the work being done around responding to climate change and sustainability. And it would be an approach with much to offer to other places with un- and under- used upper floors space, UK-wide and beyond.

UK High Streets are being brought into the future by harking back to the past, after hundreds of storefronts have been renovated with more traditional looks. A Historic England-led [programme](#) has transformed 67 British High Streets over four years, to restore and repair over 1,000 buildings and storefronts. The programme has been hailed as a great success by shopkeepers, who say the programme has “restored pride” in local high streets, increased footfall and halted their declines. One of the high streets included in the project was in the market town of Tyldesley, Greater Manchester. Before the intervention, its high street faced declining footfall with its historic buildings being at risk of being lost altogether. But now, the community has been given a “renewed sense of pride” in its high street which

has gone back to its roots. The High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme was launched in 2020 in partnership with Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to demonstrate how heritage-led solutions can help reimagine high streets as a centre of vibrant communities.

On the matter of **ballots**, we send the usual congratulations to Love Treorchy, Our Aberdare, Burnley Town Centre, Wrexham City Centre, Victoria, Heart of London - Leicester Sq. & Piccadilly Circus, Piccadilly & Jermyn Street & St Martin's, Sunderland Seafront and West Bromwich on their successful ballots. Unfortunately, Carmarthen, Crawley Town Centre, Heart of London - St James' & Moray Speyside were unsuccessful in their ballots.

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 DiBL course begins on **Wednesday 7th May**. To book your place or for further information, please [get in touch](#) at your earliest opportunity.



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