

It's been an important two weeks for BIDs and those that work in our industry. Not only have we had the budget (the first from a Labour government for over 14 years) we have held a first and very positive meeting with Alex Norris MP - the de facto "Minister for BIDs - and his team, and we will be publishing the 2024 Annual Survey and Report on the BID industry very soon. Much of our collective activity came into focus at this year's very successful British BIDs National Conference, held on 7 November in Euston.

The theme of this year's conference was around "What's next for BIDs". We have rightly and collectively celebrated 20 years of our industry but now is the time to look forward. The conference was a sell-out, with around 250 delegates from across the UK and Europe hearing the latest policy updates from Catherine Bennion, the Deputy Director at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and endorsement and support for BIDs and the work that we do from Florence Eshalomi MP, who has recently been selected as the Chair of the MHCLG Select Committee.

Florence spoke passionately about the work of BIDs and gave examples of how she values the many ways that BIDs engage with communities, local and devolved authorities, national government and with key partners to effect positive change in their areas.

Both Alex and Florence have highlighted the importance of the Devolution Bill, and we'll be engaging with stakeholders once that begins its passage through Parliament. We will also be organising and coordinating an authoritative response to the Government's consultation paper on [Transforming Business Rates](#) which aims to create "a fairer business rates system that protects the high-street, supports investment, and is fit for the 21st century."

Whilst there are still detailed aspects of budget to consider, there is no shortage of comment and analysis. The general consensus is that this was a budget that will present some challenges for business - especially SMEs (including BID companies themselves) - and a related wish for more on economic growth and development.

In welcoming the intention to introduce permanently lower business rates for retail, hospitality, and leisure properties from 2026-27 to "level the playing field for the high-street" our response to the consultation paper will focus on the government's priority areas of reform to achieve shared objectives around incentivising investment and ensuring that further changes to the business rates system supports businesses and the areas where BIDs operate. British BIDs look forward to working with our members and partners in framing its response to this important consultation.

Many of these and other issues that matter to BIDs were raised in a brilliant session at this year's conference, with Professor Chris Turner presenting the findings and insights from this year's authoritative national BIDs survey and discussing these further with Ojay McDonald from ATCM and Diane Wehrle.

Other sessions at the conference brought together BID leaders and practitioners from across all part of our industry - a powerful combination of experience, knowledge and passion. We also celebrated those BIDs that had successfully been through the British BIDs Accreditation process, which has recently been streamlined and enhanced, and we took time to recognise those that had successfully completed the Certificate in BID Management and the Diploma in BID Leadership.

In summing up at the end of what was a very positive conference, I made reference to the themes that had emerged throughout the day, including how BIDs are recognised and respected as vital parts of the civic and civil infrastructure of our towns and cities, and in other places; the contribution that we can make to growth at a local, regional and national level; and that our voice is heard and valued in government - again, both locally and nationally. We should be positive about our collective future. British BIDs is here to support our members and others that work in the BID industry - please do get in touch with the team if you want to know more about the many ways in which we can support you in your work.



**Nic Durston, Chair of British BIDs**