

## FROM THE CHAIR: FEBRUARY 2025

### Going for Growth...

The current political and policy narrative is very much focused on the issue of growth...the UK's economic productivity and what can be done to improve it. The Prime Minister and Chancellor are clear that growth is the number one mission of the government. Whilst obviously a macro-economic measure, "good growth" ultimately means more money for households and individuals, better trading conditions for businesses, more prosperous places, and a corresponding rise in consumer, business and investor confidence.

It's been an interesting week to reflect further on why growth matters, and what this means for BIDs, and our levy payers and partners. Two events have stood out:

Firstly, the London Growth Plan was launched yesterday: [growthplan.london](https://growthplan.london). The Plan is impressive and ambitious and is the result of months of work done by Howard Dawber - London's Deputy Mayor for Business and Growth - and the teams at the Greater London Authority (GLA), London & Partners, and London Councils - who bring together London's 32 boroughs and the City of London Corporation to work in collaboration. This partnership approach is fundamental to achieving the ambitions of the Growth Plan and is important for BIDs.

I was stuck by this statement, in the section on the importance of local places:

*"Growth feels real when people see their local area becoming safer, greener and cleaner with more opportunities to work, learn, go out and be part of the local community."*

London is the UK's economic powerhouse, and it is positive to see how London's growth will benefit the whole of the country, and the commitment from the Mayor of London to work with the Government on all aspects of Invest 2035, the UK's modern industrial strategy. All BIDs should engage with the relevant growth plan for their area.

One of the strengths of the London Growth Plan is the importance that it puts on local places, and that growth "starts with the basics: clean streets; tackling crime and antisocial behaviour; and designing safe and pleasant public spaces and neighbourhoods." There is a welcome recognition that people experience the economy through their everyday lives in our high streets and town centres.

As part of the 10-year plan to improve local places in London, the Growth Plan includes a commitment to "create local places where people want to spend time and money, day and night. This includes designing and maintaining quality public spaces; supporting empty shops to be repurposed; supporting London's nightlife so everyone can feel safe and welcome; and encouraging the creation of more Business Improvement Districts to invest alongside local authorities in local areas."

This is a very welcome endorsement of the positive impacts that BIDs have on their areas, and British BIDs welcomes the GLA's commitment to see more BIDs operating in London and that they are key to the realisation of the ambitions of the Growth Plan. The Plan references the power of partnership between London government (at all levels), the UK government, and key partners which include BIDs. This is a strong and positive statement about the strength of the BID industry.

Building on work done and underway (including the establishment of London's newest BID in Edgware), British BIDs looks forward to working with the GLA, London Councils, individual boroughs, businesses and other stakeholders in looking at how the BID model can continue to deliver positive impacts across London, in line with the ambitions of the Growth Plan.

The second event this week was the excellent ATCM Place Management conference, with the theme of "A Crisis in Local Government Finance." This was a timely and relevant opportunity to examine the challenges that many of our local authority partners are tackling, and I participated on a panel with Danielle McRorie-Smith, National Programme Manager, Scotland's Improvement Districts (who is an active member of the British BIDs Advisory Board), and Alex Flint, CEO of Nottingham BID. The panel was expertly chaired by Lisa Carlson, ATCM Chair and CEO of Canterbury BID, with the question / debate framed as *The End of Additionality?*

As you would expect, the debate was wide-ranging and views varied (depending on the definition of additionality) but there was a consensus that partnership and collaboration will be key dynamics as the BID industry moves forward, into our collective 21st year and beyond, along with new forms of creative and innovation, as we have seen with the Accommodation BID model. These points were exemplified in the case studies from Falmouth and Chelmsford BIDs, who presented with their local government partners.

It is clear that partnership and collaboration - between BIDs, local government (at all levels) business, property owners, investors, and community groups - will be key to successfully delivering growth.

There is a powerful and relevant statement in the London Growth Plan that encapsulates these issues:

*"Local authorities need the capacity to provide decent core services, to plan for inclusive growth and to attract investment in it."*

Whilst continuing to deliver services, projects and programmes, BIDs will be vitally important partners in that planning process, and in ensuring that the investment that we make in our places enables growth that delivers to the needs of levy payers, partners, and the wider community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Nic Durston".

**Nic Durston, Chair of British BIDs**