



A review of the first ten years of Bathgate's Business Improvement District and a look forward to the next five years

2008 - 2018

In 2008 businesses in Bathgate town centre voted to become Scotland's first Business Improvement District (BID). It was a leap into the unknown, with businesses agreeing to pay a levy for five years to support the aims set out in the BID Company's business plan.

The average annual levy raised during the first five-year term of the BID was £66,063, with a generous agreement from West Lothian Council to match the levy £ for £.

In 2013 Enterprising Bathgate received a strong endorsement based on the achievements of the first five years. The businesses overwhelmingly agreed to not only support the new five year business plan but also to increase their levy payments by 25% per annum. The average annual levy raised during the second five-year term was £94,115. The Council once again agreed to match fund the levy collected to a maximum of £100,000 per annum.

In the 2013 business plan Councillor Cathy Muldoon said *"The tremendous achievements of the relationship, including the significant success in securing Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Funds, in what has otherwise been an*

economically challenging five years, has brought huge benefits and a notable revival in the fortunes of Bathgate town centre. West Lothian Council acknowledges that this is a long-term relationship, and will continue to support and back Enterprising Bathgate, in this their renewal year and beyond, sharing the desire to further develop and build upon the momentum established in Enterprising Bathgate's first term".

The increased budget allowed Enterprising Bathgate to continue its successful projects and introduce further initiatives for the benefit of the town centre. This vote in 2013 was no longer a leap into the unknown for businesses, having experienced five years as a Business Improvement District. This ballot showed a huge support from the business community for the initial work of Enterprising Bathgate and a continuing strong partnership with the local authority.

2018 - 2023

In 2018 Enterprising Bathgate prepared a new five-year business plan seeking support for a third term. In order to maintain the increased programme of projects the businesses were asked to agree to a further increase in levy for the new five-year term. Despite the demand for increased contributions the ballot provided even more successful, with support from 85% of those taking part in the ballot.

The expected annual levy collected during the third term is £121,400 in the first year with an increase in subsequent years as a result of new developments within the BID area (e.g. the new Lidl supermarket in Whitburn Road).

Despite the BID Company's proven track record West Lothian Council withdrew its financial support for the next five year term.

This decision put pressure on Enterprising Bathgate's plans to sustain successful existing projects. However nearly all have

been maintained by making substantial savings on other costs such as management and administration. It should be pointed out that Enterprising Bathgate has gone from being a BID company receiving significant financial support from its local authority to one which has not only had funding withdrawn but also continues to pay for office accommodation and levy collection which the majority of Scottish BID companies receive as a free benefit from their council.

It should be noted that the establishment of Enterprising Bathgate coincided with the significant economic downturn of 2008 which was to last for five years. The BID Company has also operated against a backdrop of the continued deterioration at a national level of the well-being and financial viability of local high streets. How Bathgate town centre positioned itself to meet these challenges is dealt with elsewhere in this review.

Summary of Annual Levy Contributions Since 2008

This table shows the total levy contributions from properties within the Bathgate BID area:

Term	Total levy collected	Total to date
2008-2013	£330,315	£330,315
2013 -2018	£470,579	£800,894
2018-2023	£622,000*	£1,422,894*

* Projected figure

Bathgate Town Centre – Adapting to Change

In 2006 Bathgate was chosen as a Pilot BID categorised as a town centre in need of help.

Representatives of Bathgate Traders Forum took up the challenge to lead a Steering Group to develop a Business Improvement District in partnership with West Lothian Council. The successful ballot in 2008 resulted in Bathgate town centre becoming Scotland's first Business Improvement District and Enterprising Bathgate set about delivering the Business Plan which had received approval from 92% of those voting.

At an early stage the Enterprising Bathgate Board and Co-ordinators saw the need for the town centre to adapt to meet the needs of the Bathgate community and confront the challenges of the 21st Century, such as on-line shopping and out of town

retail parks. It was agreed that a successful town centre needed to operate on several levels. This includes a mix of specialist independent retailers and national multiples, a wide range of personal services, public and private office sectors, a vibrant evening economy and promotion of the town centre as a residential area.

All of these outcomes have been achieved as the BID area continues to be an example of a social space where people live, work and meet to shop, use the personal services on offer and socialise.

Many other towns are only now getting this message about diversity and Bathgate seems to be ahead of most other towns.

Expansion of the town centre

It seemed to be a general view in 2008 that the town centre would need to contract. Although there was a slight initial adjustment for a short term, subsequent years have actually seen an expansion of the commercial side of the town centre. Morrisons opened a large supermarket on the edge of the BID area and McDonalds built a unit on Whitburn Road. Former Council properties which were vacated with the opening of

the Partnership Centre have been converted to retail units, day nurseries or modern office accommodation, all benefitting from Premises Grants from Enterprising Bathgate. Disused office accommodation on Jarvey Street has become a Polish supermarket, the former St. David's Church is now Bathgate Cinema, and 2019 will see Lidl build a new supermarket on the former market site.

Increased employment opportunities

One of the main benefits of the above changes is the increased employment opportunities offered.

Many more people now work in Bathgate town centre in a wide range of sectors. An accurate survey of the number of people working in Bathgate town centre may prove an eye opener to many.

The projects, initiatives and achievements

Enterprising Bathgate has been responsible for many ongoing projects and initiatives and has also played a key role in notable achievements for the town centre. A brief summary is detailed below.

Premises Improvement Scheme

Enterprising Bathgate runs an annual Premises Improvement Scheme open to all levy payers with a very high level of participation. In a typical year more than 80 grants are paid out amounting to £40,000. By the end of 2018 more than 700 grants with a value in excess of £400k have been awarded.

This scheme has helped to keep the percentage of vacant units in Bathgate well below the national average. It has also been an invaluable help to new businesses by making a significant contribution to set up costs.

Bathgate in Bloom

Bathgate in Bloom is now responsible for the planting and maintenance of the 114 hanging baskets situated around Bathgate town centre. It is also responsible for the planting and maintenance of a number of flower and shrub beds in various locations. The Council water bowser initially used for maintenance was removed by West Lothian Council due to Council cut-backs. Enterprising Bathgate board agreed to the purchase

their own in order to keep the project going. Almost all the hanging basket columns are sponsored by businesses and organisations within the BID area. It should also be noted that this is yet another financial contribution made by the business community, local organisations and individuals for the betterment of the town.

CCTV

This project has been one of the major achievements of Enterprising Bathgate. Improved provision of Public Space CCTV was identified for some time by businesses in Bathgate as a main priority for the town. In 2016 Enterprising Bathgate assumed the lead role to find a solution to this problem. The cameras were upgraded by West Lothian Council,

Scottish Government funding was used to put the infrastructure in place, EB provided the money to replace old cabling and in 2017 an agreement was signed between Enterprising Bathgate and TCA Ltd. to provide 24/7 monitoring of the cameras. This initial contract runs until June 2020.

Public Realm Design Guide

In 2008 the Enterprising Bathgate team was contracted by West Lothian Council to project manage the development of a Public Realm

Design Guide. The project was completed from tender to adoption of final Guide as Planning Guidance in seven months.

Town Centre Regeneration Fund

When the Scottish Government established a Town Centre Regeneration Fund in 2009, a joint application was made by EB and WLC as equal partners. The work completed as part of the Public Realm Design Guide formed the basis of a successful award of £600,000. The largest

project undertaken was the re-design of The Steelyard public space and George Street pedestrian precinct, including the creation of St. David's Square.

First Aid Training

Enterprising Bathgate offers free First Aid Training to anyone working in the BID area, with a minimum of two places available to each levy payer.

Public Access Defibrillators

Enterprising Bathgate purchased and installed two public access defibrillators in the town centre – in George Street and South Bridge Street.

Christmas Lights

Having initially hired improved Christmas illuminations for the town centre, Enterprising Bathgate purchased the lights which have been in use since 2008. The BID company is charged approx. £2700 + VAT per

annum by West Lothian Council to put the lights up, take them down and store them.

Christmas Event

After West Lothian Council withdrew all funding for the annual Christmas in Bathgate event which includes Santa's Parade, Santa's

Grotto and the Torchlight Procession, Enterprising Bathgate stepped in to ensure continuation of this popular traditional event.

Healthy Lifestyle Classes for Children

Enterprising Bathgate funds a programme of classes run by Xcite for primary schools in Bathgate. The classes focus on exercise and healthy

eating. It is widely regarded as a worthwhile project which also builds links to the wider Bathgate community.

Adopt a Station

Since 2013 this project has provided floral displays to enhance the train station. The Adopt-a-Station initiative helps to create a good first

impression of Bathgate for visitors.

Sponsorships

Enterprising Bathgate provides key sponsorship for important local organisations such as the Newlands Festival and Procession, Bathgate Thistle Community Football Club and Regal Radio. This raises

awareness of Enterprising Bathgate as well as forming strong links to the wider community.

ChooseBathgate.COM

This online guide to goods and services in Bathgate town centre is entirely funded and managed by Enterprising Bathgate. It is available

free to all town centre businesses and organisations. A full design service is offered with links to social media.

In conclusion

This review demonstrates that Enterprising Bathgate has made a huge contribution to a healthier town centre since 2008.

In partnership with West Lothian Council, the BID Company helped to turn around the fortunes of the town. **In recent years it is clear that Enterprising Bathgate used part of its budget to protect the town centre from cutbacks as the local authority's own budgets came under pressure.**

Enterprising Bathgate now faces new challenges to sustain its projects and build on previous success with the withdrawal of council funding for the third term of the BID. The levy payers have again stepped up with an agreement to pay an increased annual levy. The BID will continue to be run in an efficient and prudent manner, ensuring that reserves are in place to meet future contracted commitments.

The table on page 2 of this report highlights the extent of levy contributions.

By the end of the BID's third term the investment from levy payers will approach a total of £1.5 million.

This shows an incredible level of support from businesses and organisations in the town.

It should also be noted that properties in the BID area are responsible for Non-Domestic Rates in excess of £3.5 million per annum.

This figure will increase significantly again after the new commercial development planned for 2019.

It is disappointing that the local authority has currently decided to withdraw completely from the previous relationship with Enterprising Bathgate which has produced a lasting legacy for Bathgate town centre. Nevertheless, we hope that should circumstances change in the future, the positive and meaningful contribution made by both parties in the past 10 years (**during exceptionally difficult times for high streets up and down the country**) will be reconsidered.

Sam Crawford

Pat Kerr

(Enterprising Bathgate Co-ordinators)

February 2019