

Your Ballymena BID



Ballymena
means More



The Ballymena Business Improvement District (BID) is now in its third year. Formed in 2015, the BID has focused on delivering specific improvements for local businesses in the BID's defined area.



Ballymena, as we all know, is a great town with a huge amount to offer; great location, heritage and a large number of independent retailers, which continue to offer that something different for the customer in addition to the many high street brands, the various retail centres and the coffee shops, restaurants and public houses, which offer sustenance and a place to enjoy themselves or rest.

The BID, to date, has invested in and delivered a number of projects, which have improved the local trading environment, driven down business costs, where bespoke offers have been taken up by traders and raised the area's profile. This has ultimately benefited not just the retailers and business, but their customers, clients and visitors too.

The BID is leading the way in helping the town and in particular those businesses involved in the BID area, to come together and work as one. Collectively, we've been able to do so much more than as individuals. We've been able to support businesses in the town through our BID for business meetings, as well as various services.

We've been able to market the town as one, through our new 'Ballymena means' website and various social media platforms, as well as hosting different events from Discount Day to our Christmas campaign, Ballymena means Fashion and Ballymena means Summer Carnival.

Please do read on, this informative brochure will give you a flavour of the ongoing work of the BID and how it has already helped many of the businesses, as well as market, Northern Ireland's largest and, of course, best shopping town.

Alison Moore

Alison Moore
BID Manager



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What is the BID?

Ballymena was the first town in Northern Ireland to introduce the BID programme after the pilot scheme was announced in 2014. The BID was implemented in Ballymena Town Centre on 1 July 2015, following a successful vote by the town centre businesses.

A Business Improvement District (BID) is an arrangement whereby businesses get together and decide;

? What improvements they want to make in the BID area?

T How they will manage and deliver the improvements?

£ What the improvements will cost?

This all goes into a business plan, which is voted on by all those who would have to pay.

BIDs offer businesses an opportunity to identify priorities and invest in projects and services that benefit them, their customers, clients, visitors and employees. The BID company monitors results and performance.

The projects are funded by raising finance, principally through a levy. This levy is an investment by businesses.

The BID levy is mandatory for all businesses in the BID area with a rateable value of £5,000 or more, regardless of whether they chose to vote. After the BID has been established, it is not possible for a business to 'opt out'.

The annual BID levy is set at 1.5% of the Rateable Value of each eligible property as set out in the Local Non-Domestic Rating List for that financial year. In order for a business to calculate their annual BID levy based on a 1.5% charge, divide the rateable value (RV) by 100 and multiply by 1.5. For example:

Rateable Value Calculation
BID Levy £1,500 =
 $£1,500 / 100 \times 1.5 = £22.50$

BIDs operate for a maximum of five years and after five years, a re-ballot must be held to enable the BID to continue. Throughout the five-year term, the BID company is accountable to their levy-paying businesses and must demonstrate how they make a difference.

The BID's vision is to create a safe, welcoming, cleaner, accessible and distinctive location for all to shop, visit, experience and enjoy.

The aim of the BID is to encourage growth, development and investment in local businesses.

The key objectives of the BID include:

M A coordinated programme of marketing, promotions and events

P Accessibility – car parking, better signage and improving the visitor's journey

O Supporting Town Centre businesses

S Improving safety and security

G Improving the physical environment

£ An innovation fund

The Ballymena BID is made up of a wide range of local businesses, from small independent retailers and services, to larger high street brands.

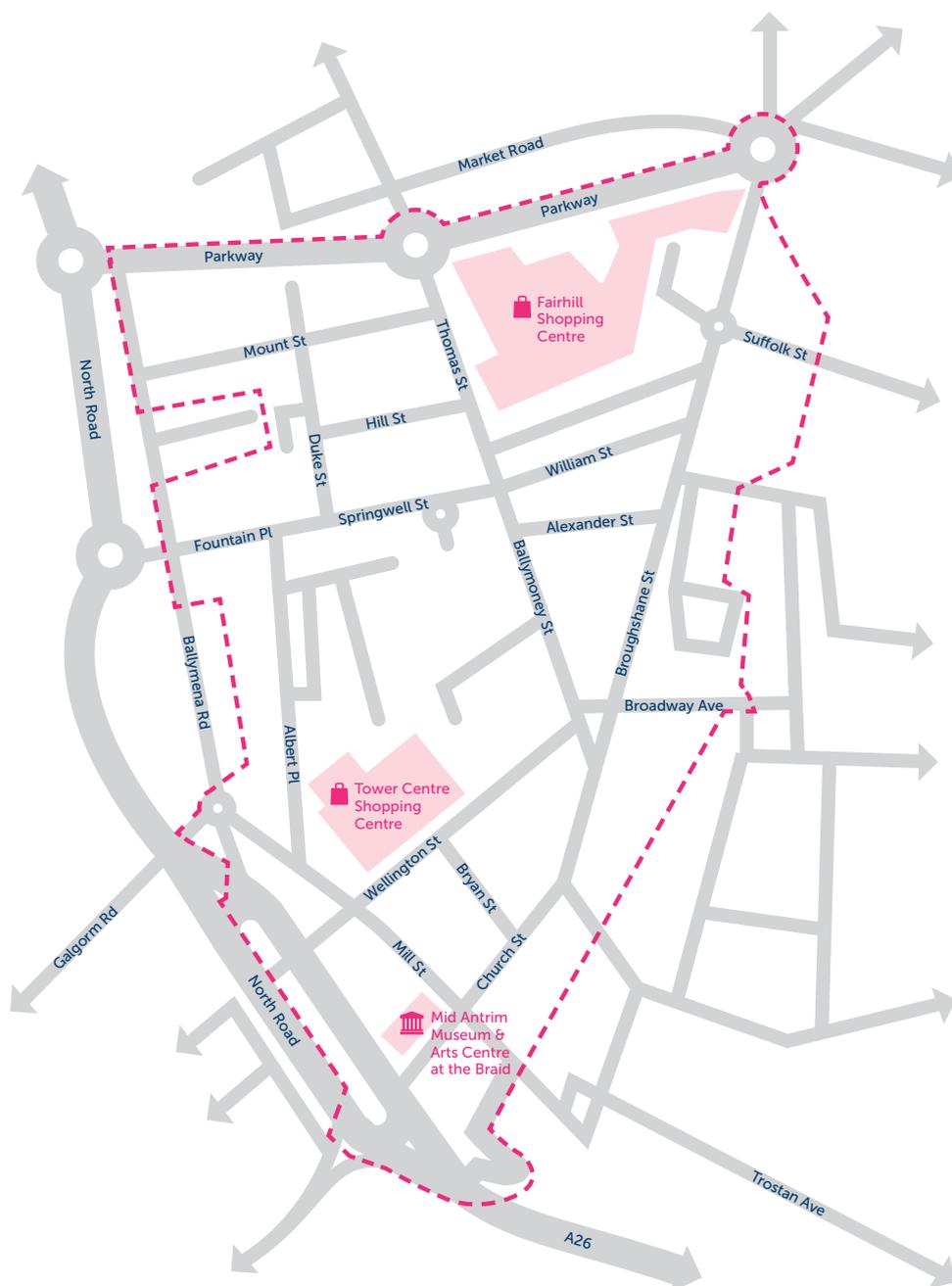
The BID Board is made up of a Chair, Vice Chair and a number of Directors. Details of those holding these positions can be found at: ballymenameans.com

The BID map

The BID fund will only be spent on projects to benefit the businesses within the designated area, in line with statutory requirements.

Streets include:

Alexander Street
Ballymoney Street
Bridge Street
Broadway Avenue
Broughshane Street
Bryan Street
Castle Street (part of)
Church Street
Church Street Arcade
Duke Street
Fairhill Lane
Fountain Place
Galgorm Street
Garfield Place
George Street
Greenvale Street
High Street
Hill Street
John Street
Linenhall Street
Mill Street
Mount Street
Parkway
Pat's Brae
Springwell Street
Suffolk Street
Thomas Street
Wellington Court
Wellington Street
William Street



Business Support

Ballymena BID is leading the way in helping to improve the trading environment of member businesses in the BID area. Committed to assisting BID members, a range of initiatives to improve their trading environment including Merchant Services, Energy Costs and Retail Audits, have been provided.



Merchant Services

Ballymena BID partnered with Bank of Ireland Payment Acceptance UK (BOIPA UK), in an effort to reduce businesses' costs for credit and debit card transactions and acceptance fees.

BID members benefit with BOI Payment Acceptance

BOIPA UK provides BID members with a wide range of credit and debit card payment solutions, to make payment acceptance easier. Card payments are continuing to rise especially contactless payment, as consumers continue to move towards the most convenient payment methods.

The process to sign up and switch over is quick and efficient, and will create savings for the businesses involved.

The benefit of the BOIPA includes:

£40 Money back:

BOIPA UK is offering Ballymena BID members £40 money back when they sign up to BOIPA UK for their card payment services (*£40 will be paid by voucher 3 months after sign up).

Free logo printed on receipt:

All Ballymena BID businesses can get their logo printed on their receipts free of charge.

Preferential Pricing:

Special rates are available for all Ballymena BID businesses. Get in touch with BOIPA today to discover how much you could save.

Exceptional Service:

Ballymena BID businesses will have a dedicated field engineer on hand to help out every step of the way.

For further information and to sign up, check out boipa.co.uk/ballymena-bid





Renewable Partnerships



Energy Costs

BID members can make savings on their business' electricity costs through the BID teaming up with Renewable Partnerships Ltd.

Renewable Partnerships identify energy savings for BID members.

The energy management broker works with BID members to identify electricity savings that can be obtained both from smarter energy use, as well as through changes in procurement.

The company obtains broker rates for electricity from the five principal electricity suppliers to the market.

From this, Renewable Partnerships will then recommend the ideal supplier given a business' usage pattern.

Renewable Partnerships will continue to work with each client business every year, ensuring that an optimum buying arrangement is maintained.

They will manage all aspects of supplier switch-across, as necessary, and update business owners of the external factors affecting the energy market. All BID members can avail of the services of Renewable Partnerships for the term of the BID.

For more information on the partnership and how your business can benefit, please contact the BID on **028 2568 9440**



Get a Water Bill Health Check

Ballymena BID, in partnership with The Consumer Council, is offering a Free Water Bill Health Check.

The *Water Bill Health Check* is a simple service that checks if you are being billed appropriately, receiving available allowances and using water efficiently.

To get this **free** check, email a copy of your latest water bill to:

Andrew Culbert
waterchampions@
consumercouncil.org.uk
028 9025 1620

If you don't have access to your water bill, you can register online with NI Water to get copies of all your water bills at selfservice.niwater.com/Home/Business

Some recent examples of savings made by The Consumer Council for businesses are:

- Reduction of £1200 a year for a licensed premises by making a simple water efficiency change.
- Reduction from £855 to £140 a year for a solicitor's office by changing the method of billing.
- Reduction of £500 a year and a rebate of £3000 for a chip shop that had their water bill reduced by claiming an allowance they were unaware of.



'BID for Business' Breakfast Events

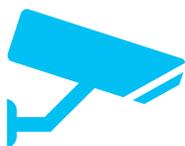


The BID has collaborated with the Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry to run a series of 'BID for Business' Breakfast events.

These events were established to provide guidance and advice to all businesses within the BID area. To date, the breakfast networking events have covered Delivering Customer Experience, Business Crime, Digitalising your Business and Marketing your Business. The next series of Breakfast events are due to begin in October 2017. Further information on ballymenameans.com

Safer, Cleaner, Accessible

The Ballymena BID subgroup, Safer, Cleaner, Accessible, was created to oversee the crime strategy for Ballymena Town Centre, and with the overall objective to produce a low crime Town Centre Environment for both the business sector and consumer.



Feeling Safe

We want Ballymena town to be a friendly, welcoming, safe and clean place for our visitors, workers and traders.

The BID aims to promote a safe, welcoming and enjoyable experience in Ballymena from daytime to the evening. The BID works in partnership to ensure there is a link up with the daytime economy around safety, security and street cleansing issues, to provide a seamless transition from the daytime economy and into the early evening, to encourage customers to stay in the town.

Retail Crime Watch

Ballymena Retailers Against Crime (BRAC) has agreed, under a Service Agreement with the Ballymena BID Company, to extend the Retail Theft Awareness Training that has been available to BRAC Radio Link Members, to include BID members.

The training for retail staff covers general recognition awareness training and how to deter potential thefts using a variety of techniques.

Ballymena BID has produced a Retail Crime Reduction guide as part of its continued Crime Reduction Strategy.

This new guide, produced by Ballymena Retailers Against Crime (BRAC) and Ballymena BID has been kindly sponsored by Ballymena PSNI, Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mid and East Antrim Policing and Community Safety Partnership and Mercury Security Management.

This booklet contains useful information on reducing crime and even covers risk assessment procedures for protecting staff. This initiative is unique to the Ballymena BID.

Visit the Ballymena Means website at ballymenameans.com for your copy of the Retail Crime Reduction guide.



Town Centre Safety Warden

The Town Centre Safety Warden Scheme continues to be highly successful and is funded 50/50 with the Police Community Safety Partnership. Ballymena Retailers Against Crime, apply for the funding from the PCSP on our behalf and to date have raised £20,000 for the scheme.



Cigarette Pouches

The BID obtained nearly 5,000 cigarette pouches from JTI and these were distributed to premises throughout the Town Centre to be handed out for free to staff and customers. A check was carried out after the project and it was found that there was a marked reduction in cigarette litter in the Town Centre.



Street Orderly Trolley

This initiative involved purchasing a street orderly trolley for the Town Centre Street Cleaner. This meant that the street cleaner was able to have proper levels of equipment when dealing with street fouling problems. This has made the system more efficient and problems can now be dealt with quicker than normally would have been required, when waiting for machinery to be brought in from outside of the town to deal with the problem.

Planters

Ballymena BID worked closely with Mid and East Antrim Council in regard to the Britain in Bloom Awards this year and undertook to purchase 17 tiered planters to enhance the planting of the town centre, in preparation for the judging in August. These additional planters have made a positive additional impact on the overall planting scheme and we look forward to the winning announcements in due course.

Defibrillators

The BID Company has purchased three defibrillators to be placed in the town centre. These will assist in providing a safer environment for retailers, traders, businesses and visitors alike.



Car Park Signage

Considerable work was undertaken with the Council to provide directional signage to the off-street car parks in the town centre. The scheme is

due to be delivered early 2018 and will help visitors arriving in Ballymena to easily access the town centre.



Lobbying

The BID Company linked up with Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry to engage with the Council on the policy for off-street car parking in the town centre. One aspect of this was the retention of the £1 for 5 hours parking, which was agreed.

The joint lobbying by the BID and Chamber will continue as council consultants review the off-street parking provision and future recommendations are brought forward. The BID will continue to seek the best deals for businesses and the public in future negotiations.

Ballymena Retailers Against Crime (BRAC), Ballymena BID

and Ballymena Borough have met with the senior Police Command on two occasions during the year, to lobby for resources in the town centre. On both occasions, plans have been put in place to enhance the structures. These will be continually monitored to assess the impact.

During the Public Realm works, Translink found it necessary to suspend the town centre bus service due to safety concerns. BID lobbied for the return of the system at the earliest opportunity. The Council also became involved in addressing this problem. It was successfully reinstated at the first opportunity.

Marketing & Public Relations

As the first successful area to secure a Business Improvement District for Northern Ireland, it was important that the Ballymena BID reflected the importance of this accolade, and also set the standards for further BIDs to follow.

Creating an Identity

As part of the initial BID Marketing and Public Relations Strategy, an instantly recognisable Ballymena Town Centre brand was created, which would be used in all BID projects and services. By using the brand consistently over the course of the five year BID mandate, the brand will continue to build momentum and presence through channels which include TV, radio, print and online resources. It is important that the BID brand is clearly communicated to customers at all times. This will result in a boost of trade and activity, day and night, all year round.

The brand 'Ballymena means' was created.

The BID marketing group set out a key number of objectives in their Ballymena BID Marketing Plan, which included increasing:

-  Footfall
-  The number of visitors from outside Ballymena
-  Sales for coffee shop and restaurants
-  Engagement to Ballymena BID website
-  Presence on social media platforms
-  And raising the profile of Ballymena and the BID



Ballymena means More

Internet and Social Media

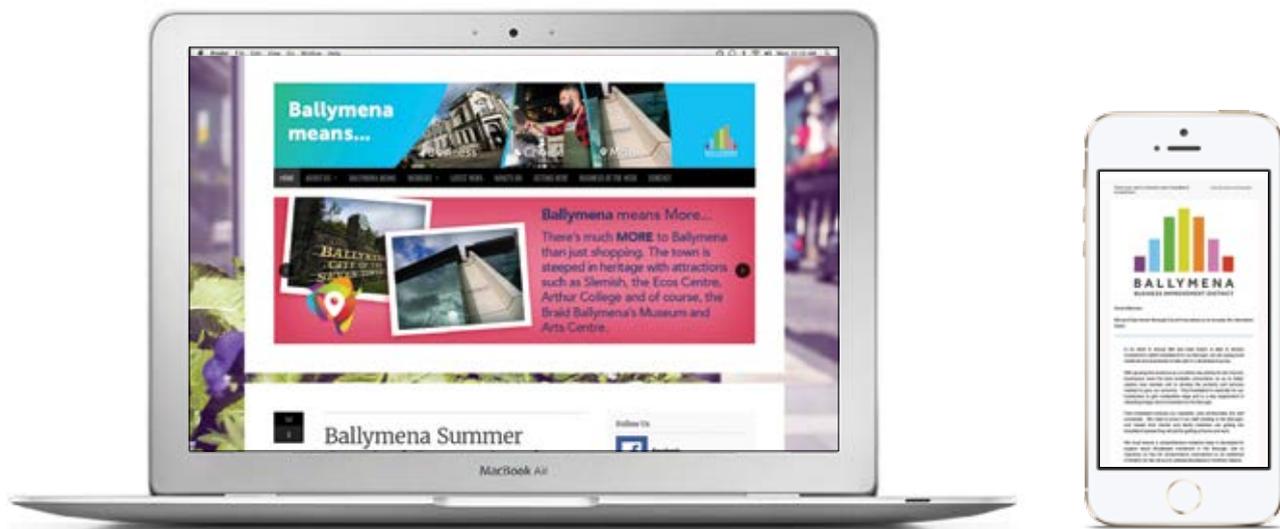
Throughout the duration of the BID to date, a comprehensive internet and social media strategy has been implemented.

A new website promoting all aspects of the BID was launched in November 2016. The BID website, using the header title, Ballymena Means, proved to be a source of information for visitors that includes the latest news from the BID area, an outline

of What's On in Ballymena, the Ballymena 'Business of the Week', as well as helpful resources for BID members.

As outlined in the initial brief for the BID, it is imperative that traders have access to relevant and up-to-date information relating to the BID. We are working hard to deliver this, as well as expanding and investing in Ballymena's online presence.

The BID continues to maximise the use of social media to give Ballymena Town Centre businesses the coverage they deserve by using Twitter, Facebook and Snapchat. Regular eNewsletters relating to specific town promotions and offers are circulated frequently to businesses, as well as existing and potential customers.



Investor Marketing

In addition to the consumer marketing that will help to bring in customers, the BID is constantly working with other organisations to promote Ballymena to potential investors as a business location. This

includes work with both retail and commercial uses that complement the BID's existing offer, through the provision of resources that help to make the case for why Ballymena is a good place to do business.

Creative entrepreneurship and investment, as well as supporting a strong economic future for the next generation is also actively encouraged.

Coordinated Campaigns and Supporting Events

Throughout the course of the BID, funds have been allocated to developing a high quality calendar of strategic events, to complement a schedule of planned and coordinated PR and marketing campaigns.

Year one of the campaign saw the introduction of the now infamous, **Ballymena Bear**. The 2015 Christmas advert, which promoted the town's Christmas festivities, became a viral sensation and global hit with over 105,000 views. Some national publications even reported that the advertisement was better than the world renowned John Lewis Christmas advertisement!



2015 also saw the well known Church Street **Discount Day** move to a wider Ballymena Discount Day. In 2016, this took the form of a social media and off line campaign (press releases, print adverts in local press, television and radio advertising). The main focus for this was a competition whereby potential consumers engaged through Snapchat, which was created with a geofilter to appear only within the BID area, therefore driving people to go to the BID area.

The 2016 Christmas campaign, which was a mix of digital marketing, PR and town centre entertainment throughout the month of December, included the creation of a new '**Ballymena Bear**' advert. Following on from the success of the previous year's Ballymena Bear advert, this year saw the story develop of Bertie the Bear and introduced a second bear, a beau named Bella.

A special preview event was held for over 200 local families, with tickets acquired through links to Eventbrite through the Ballymena Means Facebook, Twitter and website. The preview event was publicised on social media and in addition, a competition was promoted through social media to encourage children attending the preview to bring along their own favourite teddy bear, dressed up, on the evening.





The BID won free **bus advertising worth £25,000** thanks to a competition launched by Exterion Media, through its corporate partnership of Business in the Community's (BITC) Healthy High Streets Programme, Ballymena. The advertising was used in the run up to Discount Day and Christmas and on routes throughout Coleraine to Larne.

Then came the Valentine's Day promotion. A **#MovieMonth** campaign was launched, which starred Bertie and Bella in a range of online photographs, re-enacting famous scenes from popular movies. The photos then appeared on social media and the website, as three separate competitions throughout the month.



To further engage with local businesses and the public, the BID launched a **'Business of the Week'** campaign in February 2017. Each Monday a local business features on the Facebook page with key information about the business and any special offers it has on. Local businesses are contacted through email and eNewsletter to encourage them to send through information and images for promotion.



In June 2017, Ballymena Town Centre was transferred into a haven of fun and excitement with the arrival of **'Ballymena means Summer Carnival'**. The one-day event took place throughout the town and featured on-street entertainment including carnival games and crafts, face painting, fun characters, live music by buskers all around the town, a pet farm and much more. Local retailers took part in the day with special offers and promotions.



April 2017 saw the hugely successful **'Ballymena Means Fashion' Campaign**. The fashion event was promoted online in the lead up to the event and we engaged the services of fashion bloggers to provide behind the scenes information on the fashion available in Ballymena. On the day, visitors to the town centre were encouraged to take part in a Best Dressed competition and post their photo to the Ballymena Means Facebook page.

The activities outlined above have seen an increase in footfall and spend in local businesses, as well as recapturing market share from surrounding areas.

Preparations are also underway for further campaigns including the November Discount Day and the Christmas campaign, which will involve town centre entertainment. This year, there will be another exciting Christmas advert for Ballymena. It's all a bit 'hush hush' at the moment but keep an eye on the website and social media platforms for the launch date.

#MovieMonth

How can you get involved?



The BID cannot work in isolation. Without the many members who sit on various boards, committees and sub-groups and give of their time freely, the BID would not work. The BID would like to say a massive thank you to each and every one of them. Thank you!

We also need your input, so all ideas for future activities are most welcome.

To make Ballymena BID the best it can be, it needs each and every business and retailer to engage and not only get the most out of the BID, but also assist in the many activities and programmes.

We can also help you. So, send us your info for our various platforms and we will gladly promote your activities.

If you want to get involved please do not hesitate to contact BID manager:

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