

JANUARY INSIGHTS by CHRIS TURNER

Welcome to a new year, with the BID community as ever looking at new challenges. There are some major consultations on government policy matters taking place at the moment, and this issue of Insight looks at them in some detail. Do please get back if there are issues you want us to include in our British BIDs responses to the consultations on business rates, overnight levies and the new planning framework.

After some 20 successful **ballots** listed in the December Insight, another ten are coming up in the next month or so: in Lancaster, Waterloo, Camden, Euston, Hatton Garden, West Norwood & Tulse Hill, Bilston, Marble Arch, and Liverpool Culture & Commerce. Rye Town Centre BID is a new BID going to ballot for its first term. We wish them well.

Business Rates continue to be a crisis for many of our levy payers, with Rachel Reeves' [U-turn on pub taxes](#) being branded 'a temporary sticking plaster' amid calls for a complete overhaul of the 'broken' business rates system. As the backlash over the Chancellor's botched reforms of the property levy mount, ministers were warned the proposed relief package for pubs 'goes nowhere near far enough'. Ros Morgan, chief executive of the Heart of London Business Alliance, [said](#) 'countless' other firms also face 'sharp increases' in their rates bill from hotels and galleries to cafes and independent shops. Warning that the levy 'chokes our high streets' and 'penalises bricks-and-mortar businesses', she called for a 2pc levy on online sales to raise £6bn a year to cut business rates bills by a third.

The government has now [announced](#) a further ***Business Rates and investment: Call for Evidence***. They suggest that they are committed to creating a fairer business rates system over the course of this Parliament that protects the high street, supports investment, and is fit for the 21st century. This Call for Evidence builds on the findings of the Transforming Business Rates: Discussion Paper and asks stakeholders for more detailed evidence on how the business rates system influences investment decisions. The government is interested in hearing from a wide range of sectors to support further policy development.

This Call for Evidence also explores the concerns raised by a small number of ratepayers about the impact of their receipts and expenditure valuation on long-term, high value investment. The government is interested in hearing from ratepayers and their representatives about their concerns and options to address these ahead of the next revaluation. The government also welcomes feedback from all businesses valued on R&E, their agents, and tax specialists. The Call for Evidence will be open until 11:55pm, 18th February 2026 and British BIDs will be responding. We are still very committed to a [full review of the local taxation base](#), which of course must include both Council Tax and Business rates. As we have regularly commented, council tax reform would raise £3 billion while making the system fairer and more progressive, four out of five households would see their council tax fall by an average of 3 per cent and only the top 10 per cent of homes would see their council tax increase. It would also take pressure off the current role of business rates as the only tax base for local authorities.

One new source of funding for local authorities is the proposed **levy on overnight stays**. As was [announced](#) in the run up to the budget last year, England's 16 Mayoral Strategic authorities will be able to invest in transport, infrastructure, and the visitor economy through a new levy on overnight stays. The fee will apply to visitors' overnight trips, and it will be up to mayors and other local leaders to introduce a modest charge if it is right for their area. The move would ensure UK mayors have the same powers as their counterparts in cities like New York, Paris, and Milan, where charges on short-term trips are already commonplace. This will also mirror the existing legislation in Scotland and Wales.

The government wants the levy to apply to virtually all types of short-term commercially let visitor accommodation used by leisure or business visitors, regardless of size, price, or booking method. Examples of accommodation that would attract the levy include hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, campsites, caravan parks, self-catering properties, serviced apartments, and short-term lets (STLs) as well as university halls when commercially let during holidays.

British BID's analysis suggests that this new legislation in England will apply to 149 BIDs in England, and therefore over 50% of the 249 English BIDs.

The [consultation](#) seeks feedback on the design of this new power, including its scope, how it would be adopted locally and what national and local exemptions should be required. The initial consultation period itself lasts 12 weeks, running from November 26th, 2025, to February 18th, 2026. It is asking whether Foundation Strategic Authorities should also have the power to create overnight visitor levies; how any revenues collected should be used; the types of accommodation that will and will not be included; how levy rates should be calculated and the powers Strategic Authorities have to change them; what Strategic Authorities need to do to introduce a levy and to change it; liability for the levy and how this will be assessed; the administrative framework for overnight visitor levies, including options to minimise regulatory requirements; and any equalities impacts.

Clearly it is important that BIDs have a role to play in this new levy and British BIDs has been working through some of our responses in the last month, talking to BIDs and levy payers. A round table **webinar is taking place on January 28th at 2pm** to allow wide ranging discussion to get a sense of the mood of the BID community in how far they want to be involved in the overnight stay levy process in their area. This will then be added to our response on February 18th. Do please sign up [here](#) if you want to get involved.

There is a further [consultation](#) taking place on the **National Planning Policy Framework**: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system. Much of this will be very relevant to BIDs who are in any way involved in Town Centre Development and is worth a read. The policy is about [§8 p42] *inter alia*, boosting local and regional economies and to promote the long-term vitality and viability of town centres by prioritising them as locations for main town centre uses and allowing them to adapt to changing community and business needs, in a way which reflects their locally distinctive roles and opportunities. The government wants to encourage economic growth by giving substantial weight to the benefits of supporting business growth, and to particular areas and sectors –

including...town centres. A very useful analysis of the proposals is from Matt Morris, Director at Nexus Planning, on [LinkedIn](#).

This week we held a webinar **Preparing for Martyn's Law** where Andrew Williams, Head of Security & Resilience at Savills, provided an update on the legislation, what it means and how to be best prepared.

And finally, the **British BIDs 2026 Online Course** schedule is now [available](#). The Academy Courses provide easy access to expert advice, accessible learning tools, professional development for you and your team, reassurance to stakeholders that qualified staff are in place, opportunities to knowledge-share with colleagues in the industry and a relaxed and friendly learning environment. The 2026 Academy [courses](#) include: *An Introduction to BIDs, BIDs and Place Shaping, Managing a BID Efficiently, Planning & Managing a BID ballot* and the *Responsibilities & best practices for BID Directors*. The 2026 class dates for our [Certificate in BID Management](#), [Diploma in BID Leadership](#), and [Certificate in BID Marketing](#) courses are also all now available – click on the links provided for more information. If you would like to enrol, please email Shayni.Langhelt@britishbids.info.



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