

# Setting up the BID partnership

## Gathering essential information

During the process of establishing the partnership it is necessary to gather a large amount of information in order to understand:

- The viability of establishing a BID in the area
- How the area works (and doesn't work)
- What businesses would like to see from a BID
- What could be done to tackle specific issues

There is a danger of not getting the right balance between gathering the essential data to make well informed decisions and wasting time and resources collecting too much information at the expense of dealing with some obvious 'quick wins'.

### Viability of establishing a BID in the area

This is established by conducting a rateable value modeling exercise. The local authority is obliged to provide information to a prospective BID on the rateable value of business premises in the proposed BID area but is able to charge a reasonable fee for this service. This information can then be used to develop a spreadsheet to test out the potential BID levy income that would be generated ([step 7, defining the BID area](#)).

### How the area works (and doesn't work)

This is concerned with establishing basic baseline data on how the area works with respect to services, facilities, users, transport provision and crime statistics. The Circle BID partnerships did not adopt a very systematic approach to defining and establishing baseline data because this was not seen as a priority and it was more important to identify what needed to be done in the area. Baselines were established once the initial projects had been identified. However, this should be a priority for future BIDs because baseline data becomes vital as and when a BID is established as an objective measure to demonstrate the additional benefits that the BID has delivered.

A number of different aspects can be recorded to establish the initial baseline and understanding of the area:

#### Conditions in the area - clean, green, safe

- A detailed photographic record of the appearance of the area
- Local authority services provided in the area - details of cleaning regimes and any other services like wardens
- Crime statistics; however, these are ward based and it is very hard to extract information on just the BID area. In some cases the police will only give trends and issues.
- Environmental ranking and comparisons with other areas

#### Features and facilities

- Transport provision



- Business directories for the area
- Local history - books and maps
- Property ownership

#### Performance of the area

- Tourism / visitor figures, hotel room rates / rack rates.
- Pedestrian counts
- Business performance trends in the area

#### Planning and Development Control

- Current and planned development activity in the area that will influence the shape and activities of the BID such as Local Area Plans / Development Frameworks and Action Plans
- Land use
- Listed buildings
- Area health checks

Collecting data is time consuming so it is important this is not done randomly but with some understanding of the likely key issues in the area.

### What businesses would like to see from a BID

A variety of different techniques can be used to establish what businesses would like to see happen in an area:

- **Ad hoc discussions** with businesses will yield qualitative information on issues and concerns
- **Networking events** also can be used to identify business priorities ([step 4, engaging the business community](#))
- **Business surveys** - conducting a business survey is a very good way to establish qualitative and quantitative information on what issues are of concern to businesses in the area and where the priorities for a BID would lie. It is important that a survey is conducted in sufficient depth to be representative of views in the area (20% of businesses should be a minimum level). It is also important to ensure that the same questions are asked each time and that responses are recorded fully and accurately. This is time consuming and it may be more appropriate to commission a consultant to conduct work of this kind
- **Visioning** - it can sometimes be useful to ask the question 'what should this area be like in the future?' A brainstorming event of this kind requires skilled facilitation to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have an input and that no individual or group dominates the event. Careful preparation is required if useful conclusions are to be drawn and an exercise of this kind is also often best handled by an experienced consultant
- **Consultation on specific issues** - there are some issues, such as parking, which are of particular concern to businesses that merit in depth consultation to find out exactly what the problem is and how it might be tackled



## Identifying what can be done to tackle specific issues

Consultants can be commissioned to conduct studies to investigate particular issues like:

- **Retail strategies** - to identify particular gaps in an area's retail offer and how the retail offer might be strengthened
- **Transport studies** - investigating transport provision and identifying gaps in services.
- **Public realm improvements** - identifying opportunities for improvements and offering draft proposals for consultation
- **Community safety audit** - investigating local people's experience of crime, views on crime and fear of crime
- **Lighting strategies** - identifying opportunities to improve lighting to make the area safer and more attractive
- **Signage strategies** - to improve access and awareness of facilities in the area

## Experience from Circle

### How the area works (and doesn't work)

**Better Bankside** identified environmental problem areas through a street audit with businesses groups organised by size of business. These walkabouts finished with de-briefings facilitated by MORI. Residents also got involved through a photographic "grot-spot" competition. Southwark Regeneration produced a report 'Bankside means Business' in 1999 which covered comparative rents north and south of the river and visitor expectations about the area e.g. Tate visitors.

**Heart of London** conducted the following baseline studies:

- Coventry Street Audit; recording building quality, shopfront and pedestrian flows
- Baseline on the Street Team operation
- Environmental Audit and 'Vision' study that provided a pictorial record of the area

**The Holborn Partnership** conducted two baseline surveys:

- 2001 Baseline study and streetscape analysis conducted which included: streetscape condition; photographic record of shopfront activity; a street by street analysis and assessment of transport system
- ['Safe and Secure' survey](#) to investigate how crime was affecting businesses: if they reported it; which crime cost most (business burglary) and which crime caused the most concern (ASB)

They also monitored visits to the Rangers kiosk and business trends.

**Paddington BID** invested in a broad range of data collection from environmental mapping of the key elements of the streetscape to Health Checks of the retail district centre produced by the local authority. They also developed a library of local history books and maps.

**Waterloo Quarter** conducted baseline surveys in late 2001 and early 2002 covering a range of issues - transport, land use, graffiti/rubbish problems, and a crime map was provided by the Police.



## The Circle Initiative: Thirty nine steps to developing a Business Improvement District

Setting up the BID partnership  
06 Gathering essential information

## Identifying what businesses would like to see from a BID in the area

### Business Surveys

**Paddington BID** conducted a [perception analysis](#) to investigate: business confidence; issues facing the area; awareness of the BID concept; involvement in BID; perception of demonstration projects and voting intentions. Approximately 40% of businesses in the area were interviewed by a consultant during a three month period. A [questionnaire](#) was used to ensure that all businesses were asked the same questions and all comments were written up and copied back to each interviewee to ensure they had been recorded accurately and to provide an audit trail. The results were presented back to businesses and used to write the draft BID business plan.

**Waterloo Quarter** also conducted a perception analysis, this was handled in-house and conducted with 20% of businesses in the proposed BID area completing a face to face [questionnaire](#) between April and August 2005. The conclusions were used to shape the draft business plan.

### Visioning

**Better Bankside** commissioned consultants to help them to draw up a shared vision for improving the area. Background research was conducted: looking at the area and how it was changing; summarising studies and reports on the area and attitudes to change; and identifying the different organisations working to improve the area. A visioning event was held in 2002 at which six groups discussed different themes and came up with recommendations for short-term and longer term actions.

The themes discussed were:

- Making Bankside more welcoming (2 groups)
- Promoting a safer environment
- Ensuring cleaner streets
- Improving access to attractions
- Communicating a better image

The conclusions were written up in a [report](#) and the framework has proved helpful and resilient.

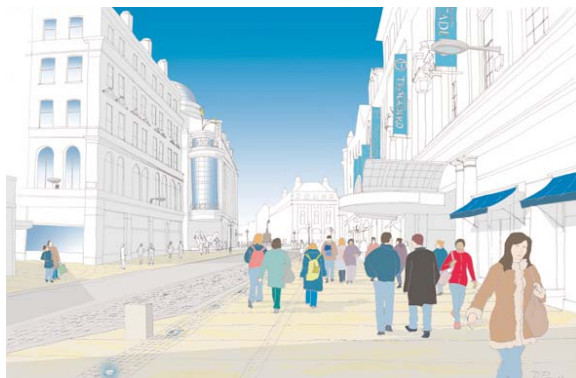
**Heart of London** also conducted an externally facilitated [visioning seminar](#) attended by landlords, businesses, the police, Westminster City Council and residents. The main aims of the seminar were to explain BIDs, develop a jointly held vision for improving the area, and to identify priority actions in order to produce a 3 year business plan. A report was produced on the seminar detailing recommendations on the services a BID should provide.

**Paddington BID** commissioned consultants to conduct a visioning exercise. Facilitated discussions were held with the sector groups ([London BIDs](#)). This produced a huge 'shopping list' of priorities, helping to reach a consensus on how Paddington should be in the future. The BID partnership has subsequently delivered on a lot of the priorities identified.



## What can be done to tackle specific issues

**Heart of London** commissioned consultants to work up designs for streetscape improvements to Coventry Street.



**Paddington BID** undertook a [Community Safety Audit \(SAFE\)](#) in 2001 to understand experience and perception of crime in the area. This investigated: resident and visitor perceptions of safety; business community safety issues; and reported crime. It identified the need for environmental improvements and a more visible police presence in the area.

Paddington Management Zone - commercial analysis, also undertaken in March 2001 investigated: retail floorspace; Paddington Station retail; diversity of uses; presence of national retailers; vacant street level property; comparison with 1997 Health Check; rental costs; Pedestrian flow count; Environmental quality.

A retail strategy for the area was also commissioned.

**Waterloo Quarter** commissioned a number of consultants to look at specific issues and these often included surveys of local businesses and other stakeholders where appropriate.

- A [retail strategy study](#) was commissioned to investigate how the local retail economy could maximise its business opportunities. This included: a retail audit and pedestrian flow analysis; consumer research; catchment profile and expenditure. This work was followed up by a proposed spatial retail layout in 2005
- A [markets study](#) was commissioned on street market management investigating: costs of operation in the street market; streetcare; and turnover of stallholders.

These studies helped the partnership to focus on key priorities whilst engaging a wider set of stakeholders in the process.

