



RYE BID – ALL QUESTIONS ANSWERED

BACKGROUND

1. What is a BID?

A BID is a means by which Rye could paddle its own canoe - given the changes in local government that lie ahead. It would mean a modest pot of funding is raised locally, to be managed locally by businesses, and spent locally, on the priorities agreed by eligible businesses in the BID area that will help ensure our town continues to thrive.

2. Why can't we get funding for the town another way?

In the current economic climate, there is very little funding available for businesses and for towns. The town council has limited budget and is responsible for its residents not its businesses. The district council has a funding crisis and will cease to exist in 2028 but little of your business rates get spent directly on the town. The county council also has a funding crisis and will cease to exist by 2028.

Having been asked by business owners on countless occasions to look at ways of financing changes to the town, Rye Chamber secured a funded opportunity to consider how the town might do things differently. Their intention was simply to secure a means through which Rye's businesses could openly consider and discuss their ideas and give them the potential means of shaping a town strategy going forward.



3. Why is this happening?

The Department of Levelling Up allocated Rye Chamber some funding to explore whether a Business Improvement District would be a good option for Rye.

The funds to explore this process are RING FENCED for this purpose only. This cannot be spent on anything else.

4. Who decided a BID would be a good idea for Rye?

It will be decided by businesses whether a BID is a good idea for Rye or not. We are simply exploring the concept and talking to businesses about what they want for the town.

WHERE WE ARE AT

5. Is there a BID in Rye already?

No, A BID does not yet exist – we are currently in an engagement and consultation period during which we hope that all 277 eligible businesses in the specific area being considered for a BID will contribute their views.



6. What is the consultation process?

The consultation process began in October 2024.

All businesses in the wider area including Camber were contacted during the feasibility study in October 2024. A postcard was issued with a link and a QR code to the business survey.

A letter went out to all businesses in February 2025 asking businesses to come along to a meeting about forming the BID Task Group.

The first BID newsletter was posted to all businesses in the BID area in April 2025

The Task Group (through the advising consultants) began one to one meetings in April and have been doing them ever since.

The Task Group members have been speaking with businesses in the BID area to make sure they are aware of what is going on.

In July two in-person workshops were held in Rye followed by two on-line workshops and all businesses were invited to sign up for these via a postcard that was posted to them.

Additionally a central source of information is www.ryebid.co.uk and anyone can email hello@ryebid.co.uk . The Task Group have approved the information on the website, and everyone is aware of the enquiries being made via the email address.



Any eligible business can also ask for an individual meeting. We are fully aware that you are all busy - we are busy business owners ourselves and are doing this voluntarily in the belief that it is a good opportunity to explore while we have the funding to do so. We are happy to accommodate your requests for further meetings and workshops. Our priority is to ensure everyone within the area being considered has the opportunity to have their say.

FUNDING

7. What is this process costing the town?

This process is costing the town nothing. The money for the feasibility process, the consultation and business planning process, the BID website and email, the services of people to help with the consultation and advise on governance and procedure is all being covered by the levelling up funding allocated to Rye Chamber for this purpose only.

8. How much money was Rye Chamber given?

Rye Chamber has a legal agreement with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) via Rother District Council to deliver this project. The maximum amount of funding available is £63K. This amount has not been given in full to Rye Chamber. Rye Chamber has a set of milestones laid out in a legal agreement and on delivering each of those steps and reporting them through official channels, the associated funds are released for



invoices to be paid. There is never any excess funding sitting in the Chamber's bank account.

To date a feasibility study has been paid for including the printing and postage of the postcards, the online survey and the analysis of the results. Half the cost of the business consultation phase has also been paid for – that includes the setting up of the website, the newsletters, the postage, and around 120 hours of time for Mosaic to talk one-to-one with businesses and respond to queries. There have also been four workshops.

If the BID process were to proceed further the remaining funds will pay for the campaign, election services and remaining consultation services from our agency. Any levelling up funds left at the end of the process will be kept by central Government.

9. How much is Rye Chamber making out of this?

Nothing, the Chamber's directors are unpaid volunteers and take no expenses. The Chamber is a not-for-profit company. Legally Rye Chamber and its directors cannot earn any money from the Levelling Up fund for the BID. They are giving of their time freely in the belief that researching the concept of a BID at no cost is worth exploring.

10. Why are you using an agency?

Rye Chamber commissioned an agency to undertake the work of the consultation and engagement because it is hugely time consuming



and its directors are unpaid volunteers. Legally they cannot be paid to undertake this work, so an outside body was the only option. The Chamber followed procurement rules dictated by their legal agreement with the Government (MHCLG) and Rother District Council who are the local authority ensuring that the project is compliant at all stages of delivery.

Of the three agencies asked to quote, Mosaic were awarded the contract as they are a) experienced b) made clear they would include a lot of time on the ground actually talking to people in town c) have a local member of staff and d) were cost effective.

THE TASK GROUP

11. Who chose the Task Group?

A letter was issued to ALL businesses in the BID area in February this year appealing for business owners with BID eligible businesses to join. Those that wanted to find out more came to the meeting that was announced in that letter, and from that the Task Group was formed. Anyone with an eligible business in the area being considered for the BID had the opportunity to step forward and be part of this group.

12. Who is on the Task Group?

The Task Group is made up of businesses within the BID area being considered. It is representative of different sizes and sectors of



business as well as of the geography of the town so that we have a balanced line up of people. All of the Task Group members are volunteers and are unpaid.

13. Why is the Chamber on the Task Group?

The Chamber is on the task group as they are the channel for funding this process through the Levelling Up agreement they have with MHCLG.

14. What does the Task Group Do?

They are responsible for talking with local businesses and feeding back views and ideas. At the end of the process of consultation they will be responsible for considering all of the views that have been collated and making a decision on next steps. They will also develop a draft business plan for a potential BID that reflects those needs and wants expressed during the process of consultation. This business plan will then be circulated to the BID area for further consultation. At the end of that phase the Task Group will be responsible for deciding whether Rye businesses want to progress with a BID or not.

NEXT STEPS

15. When will it be decided whether a BID is a good idea for Rye?

At the close of the consultation and business plan consideration period the Rye BID Task Group will consider all of the views that



have been gathered and make a decision on whether there is sufficient interest in the idea to continue with this work. If not, the process will end, and all associated government funding will cease. No money from the town, or from its businesses will have been spent in this process.

16. When is the ballot?

There will only be a ballot if the results of the consultation and business plan consideration process clearly show that Rye businesses want the chance to vote on becoming a BID. If there is no appetite for a BID, then nothing further will happen. If businesses want to vote on a business plan for a BID the ballot will take place early in 2026.

17. How does the ballot work?

An independent and confidential BID ballot is held by the local authority – in this case Rother District Council who would likely use CIVICA in the same way they do for all official elections. The BID ballot is required to be a postal ballot that runs for a minimum of 28 days, giving every eligible business time to submit their vote.

18. I don't agree with this so can I opt out?

No.



If the BID goes to ballot and the vote is won, then the BID is formed, and you would legally be required to pay the annual levy even if you voted no.

19. Is it one vote per business?

No. It is one vote per hereditament.

A hereditament is a rated unit. A rated unit could be one single building, or there could be several rated units within one building. To illustrate: one building could have say three hereditaments e.g. a ground floor that is retail, a first floor that is an office, and a second floor that is another office. In this instance if all three floors were rated separately (three hereditaments) and the businesses within each hereditament were eligible for the BID then each would get a vote.

20. How does the voting work?

If the town decides to go to ballot, then a BID can only legally come into effect if the majority of votes cast are in favour of the BID on two counts.

In addition to achieving a majority of YES votes - all of the YES votes must also have a combined rateable value that is greater than all of the no votes. If they don't have a combined rateable value greater than the no votes **the majority yes votes alone cannot win the ballot.**



So, the ballot first has to be won by majority YES votes and second also has to be won by majority rateable value.

This is a safeguard so that small and big businesses have equal weighting.

21. Who pays for the election / ballot?

If this project progresses to a ballot, the process would be paid for out of the Levelling Up funds allocated to Rye Chamber as part of this project.

THE CRITERIA FOR BUSINESSES AND THE BID AREA

22. What businesses are included in the BID?

The criteria for whether you are eligible for the BID is determined by your classification in your business rates valuation. These criteria are set by the Valuation Office. The BID cannot influence the criteria under which your business is classified by the VOA.

The only sorts of businesses not being included in this consultation are warehouses, manufacturing, light industrial. These businesses are unlikely to see any benefit from the type of activity a BID in Rye would undertake and so it has been deemed sensible not to include them.



23. What is the BID area – how was it decided?

The BID area is not set in stone at this stage but there has to be a start point. It has been roughly determined as the area within which a BID could deliver a return on investment to those businesses paying a levy. To illustrate the point: if the BID area was too big then businesses in one area might well object to paying for activity being delivered miles away in another area that they wouldn't benefit from. A smaller area means more centralised spending that every business within that area will benefit from.

IF THE WORK CONTINUES TO BALLOT AND A BID GETS IN

24. Will Mosaic run the BID?

There is no BID at the moment. If Rye was to progress to ballot and a BID was formed, Mosaic would not run it. They would have no further part in the BID beyond helping us through the ballot process and ensuring the Rye BID Company was set up properly and followed all regulatory and legal governance requirements.

25. What is the Rye BID Company?

There isn't a Rye BID Company. But it would be formed should the BID progresses to ballot and wins the vote. The BID Company would be responsible for overseeing the BID and delivering the business plan.



26. Who would run the Rye BID Company?

A board of directors would run the company. It would be a company limited by guarantee and would be not for profit. The board of directors would all be unpaid. The directors would be made up of representative businesses from within the BID area, from different size businesses and different business sectors.

27. How much would be raised?

There are 277 eligible businesses within the area being considered for Rye BID. If a BID levy was set at 2.5% of rateable value, then the total pot of funds raised each year by businesses would be just under £100K. Having a pot of funding then opens the door to apply for further public grants that require match funding – most BIDs are able to increase their revenues by about a third in this way.

28. How much will I pay?

If you have a business rateable value of less than £2500 you won't pay anything.

Beyond that it's 2.5% of your rateable value. Your rateable value is on your business rates bill – which you will receive from RDC even if you don't pay business rates. If you don't know what your rateable value is the data is in the public domain, or you can contact us, and we will advise. But to illustrate:



If you have a business rateable value of between £2500 and £5000 you would be paying £125 a year.

If you have a business rateable value of between £5000 and £10000 a year you would be paying a maximum of £250 a year.

The area being considered comprises 277 businesses and of those – the majority – 185 - have a valuation of under £10,000.

29. I don't pay business rates so will I need to pay this levy?

The BID system doesn't impact on your Small Business Rates Relief. If you don't pay business rates but you are in a business property that has a business rateable value, and you are an eligible business in the BID area you would still pay the BID levy.

THE BUSINESS PLAN & COSTS

30. Why isn't there any detail on the business plan?

There isn't any detail on what the money will be spent on yet because that is entirely up to the eligible businesses to decide. The purpose of a BID is that it is totally up to the business involved to make a plan that will benefit them. The Task Group will be drafting a business plan in coming weeks, and this will be circulated for your views and feedback.



31. Why isn't there any detail on what this would cost?

The cost of delivering a BID cannot be decided until you decide what activity the BID will deliver. Again, it is up to you - the eligible businesses. Once the priorities have been determined the Task Group will cost them out to see what is achievable and affordable.

32. Who would do the work?

That would be up to the BID Board / Company. Clearly there will be a cost attached to delivering the work that is agreed in the business plan. Should the town progress to ballot and the BID get in then it would be up to the BID company to decide the most cost-effective means of delivering the business plan. For a small BID it would not be feasible to consider employing someone full time, it would likely need to be a part-time self-employed person to oversee activity, or it may be that different projects are subcontracted out to different suppliers for delivery. Once a business plan is decided it will be costed, but it isn't too late for any business to contribute its views as to what should be included in the business plan.

33. The big businesses gain out of this, but the small business will suffer, won't they?

No. Any business plan that is developed will need to reflect the wants and needs of ALL businesses in town. A BID always strives to offer businesses a return on their investment, so it is vitally important that the consultation phase is comprehensive enough to know what is important to every business and develops a comprehensive plan accordingly.



GENERAL

34. How long does a BID last?

If a BID is voted in, it lasts for a maximum of five years. At the end of that term the BID will need to go for re-election in order to continue.

35. I think Rye is fine, so what's the point of this?

That's a perfectly valid point of view. Others don't share it. This process will determine whether the status quo remains or whether it changes.

36. Does the Council know about this?

The Town Council, The District Council, the County Council and our MP are all fully aware that this process is underway.

37. Shouldn't the Council pay for stuff the town needs?

In a perfect world yes. But there is so little public funding, Rye Town Council is accountable to its residents (not businesses) and has a small budget made up of Council Tax contributions. Only 82 businesses of the 277 within the BID area being considered, currently pay any business rates and only a small portion of business rates is then delivered back locally in terms of services that businesses benefit from. Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council will cease to exist by March 2028. For years Rye residents and businesses have complained that they are the 'poor relation of Bexhill' because most funding gets spent elsewhere in the



county, the chances of that changing will become even more slim when we are run out of Lewes by a new unitary authority.

38. Wouldn't a BID let the council off the hook for paying for things?

A BID cannot provide statutory services that councils are required to deliver. A BID can only provide additional services and improvements. To make sure this is the case ESCC, RDC and RTC have provided us with their 'baseline statements' which are the details of all of the services they MUST provide, so should Rye progress with the BID project the business plan will only offer activity and services not already provided by the council.

39. What would the benefits of Rye being a BID be?

The town's businesses could make some decisions to improve the town at a time where there is little money being invested in infrastructure from any other source. Rye should rightfully be one of the biggest tourist destinations in East Sussex but it will always be a long way down the list of spending priorities when it comes to local government investment. We hope that businesses will welcome the chance to consider how they might like to invest in the town, as this opportunity is free of charge. Most towns who decide to consider becoming BIDs have to borrow the money to do this and that loan then needs to be paid back from the BID pot if a BID is voted in, this wouldn't be the case for Rye as the funds for exploring the idea have been given to us by central government. So there is literally nothing to lose by giving it due consideration. Plenty of you have given us your ideas on town improvements ranging from better use of public spaces, planters, hanging baskets, signage and wayfinding, dealing with litter, shared costs of waste management, tourist information, destination management,



Christmas lights throughout the town and plenty more. But there are some of you who haven't shared any ideas – and there is still the opportunity to do that. Once we have drafted a business plan you will be able to consider whether it might offer a return on investment for you and your business, or not.

The very reason we think BID is an option worth considering is that we want to ensure that our town remains as vital and thriving as it is today. We want our town to remain full of independent shops and businesses who all work together to deliver an exceptional experience to both the local resident, day visitor and tourist alike and we firmly believe that the concept of a BID is worth exploring in order to consider how it might help us continue to do that. Well run BID towns attract outside investment and further funding and keep the economies of towns buoyant.

We hope that Rye's business community will continue to engage in this important process, supporting one another in open, honest conversation. This is a rare opportunity to shape the future of our town together and every voice matters.