



RYE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Business Plan 2026-2031

A Message from the Chair

Rye is a remarkable town, known for its unique history, cobbled streets, and vibrant mix of independent shops, cafés, galleries, and heritage attractions. Its character is unlike anywhere else on the South Coast, and that distinctiveness is part of what draws people here - to live, work and visit.

The town's visitor economy faces increasing pressure from changing government priorities, aging infrastructure, and rising expectations from today's visitors. This BID sets out a clear, deliverable programme to ensure that Rye not only keeps pace but leads and continues to attract visitors throughout the year while delivering to residents.

We will also address long-standing challenges head-on such as inadequate public conveniences which have undermined the visitor experience. The BID proposes a partnership which will deliver modern, self-funding toilet facilities at Station Approach as well as advocating for ones at Strand Quay.

We aim to build on the excellent response of volunteers to save the lights for Christmas 2025. The BID will provide additional funding for future years and expand the offer to include the Strand, the Landgate and Cinque Ports Street.

Our vision for the Strand Heritage Quarter will unlock the potential of the quayside through lighting and greening, and by encouraging businesses to create events in the space. Alongside this, targeted shared space improvements including landscaping at Station Approach, new heritage wayfinding, and practical measures to tackle litter and seagull issues - will ensure Rye presents itself with pride.

The BID is about businesses taking real control through delivering meaningful and relevant projects to collective procurement savings and using high-quality data insights to consistently lobby and advocate for better services. It is about evolving the great work done by so many volunteers and organisations and ensuring that this remains sustainable and is funded fairly.

This plan has been shaped by the consultation and driven by a shared ambition to protect, enhance, and future-proof Rye's economy. By voting for this BID, we take control of our town's future and invest in a stronger, more resilient Rye for all.

Matt Breckon
Chair, Rye BID Task Group



Photo credits:
Keith Warby - Story & Brand
KT Bruce Photography
Rye Chamber of Commerce

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I see the Rye BID as a great way for businesses large and small to work together to raise much-needed funds to improve key aspects of our wonderful town. Being part of the BID working group has allowed me to connect with other like-minded business-owners who collectively want to make a difference.

Matt Breckon Managing Director, Kino



What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

WHAT IS A BID?

A BID is an arrangement whereby businesses come together and decide which improvements they feel could be made in their place, how they will implement these improvements and what it will cost them. A BID is developed, financed and controlled by the businesses within the selected area. A BID delivers additional projects and services over and above those already provided by public bodies.

WHY DO BUSINESSES SUPPORT BIDs?

A BID is a mechanism which allows businesses to raise a sum of money to manage and deliver projects that they have identified and believe will improve their trading environment, ultimately increasing trade for those businesses who are paying for the improvements.

HOW IS THE BID FUNDED?

Once projects and services have been agreed by businesses, along with how they are going to be delivered and managed, they are costed and set out in a business plan. The cost to each business is worked out on a pro rata basis. This is called the 'BID LEVY'. This investment is ring-fenced and can only be spent within the BID area on the projects detailed in the business plan. It is important to note that the levy has nothing to do with normal business rates which pass straight to the government. ALL eligible businesses within the BID area are required to pay the BID levy if the ballot is approved.

HOW DOES AN AREA BECOME A BID?

Normally a 'BID Task Group' is set up which is responsible for putting together a business plan setting out the projects it aims to deliver on behalf of the businesses in the BID area. This is based on a consultation process with businesses. The business plan will include the projects, cost, delivery guarantees, performance indicators and the management structure. A confidential postal vote is held with all the businesses that would pay the BID levy getting a vote. To become a BID a majority of those that vote must be in favour by number and rateable value. A successful BID then has a mandate for a maximum of 5 years after which the BID would need to seek a rebalot.

HOW IS A BID MONITORED?

Like any good business plan, specific key performance indicators (KPIs) are set, and performance is monitored against the KPIs by the BID board. The BID Company is answerable to the businesses that pay the BID levy and will be required to monitor and inform its members on its progress towards the agreed KPIs.

DOES THIS MEAN THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WILL STOP DELIVERING SERVICES?

No. BID money can only be used to carry out projects/services which are ADDITIONAL to those that the public agencies are required to provide. Prior to the BID business plan being produced, the current services being delivered by public agencies including the are set out in Baseline Statements. Baseline Statements have been made available by Rother District Council and Rye Town Council for the following areas:

Waste Collections, Car Parks, Open Spaces, Public Conveniences, Public Realm, Street Cleansing, Recycling and Events.

The BID company can agree to provide additional resources to deliver a higher level of service over and above the benchmarked level.



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Having lived in Rye all my life, I'm extremely fond of the town and, as traders, we all depend on it being welcoming. With continued cuts to public funding affecting local services and the environment, I'm concerned about Rye's future. The BID gives us - local businesses - the chance to invest in the town, make needed improvements, and protect and enhance the place we all care so deeply about.

Felicity Sturgeon Manager, The Rye Retreat

BID STATS & FACTS

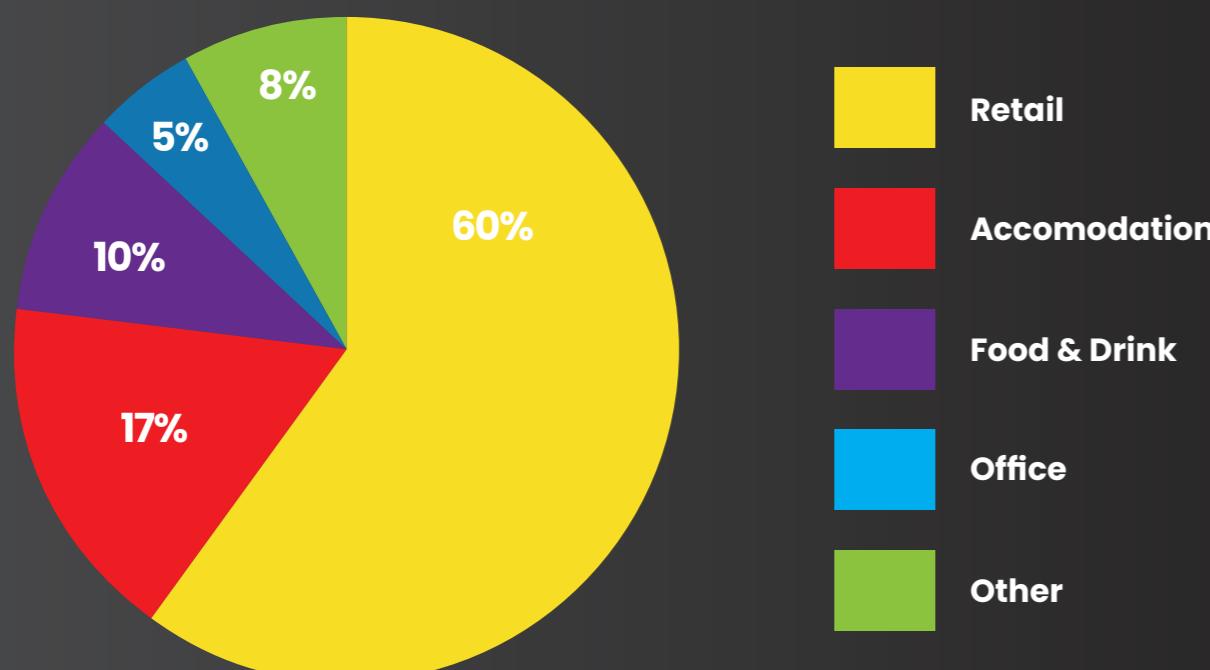
The BID boundary encompasses

290+ Units

Total Potential Investment of over **£450,000 OVER 5 YEARS**

2.5% Levy (minimum £100pa)

THE BID AREA – SECTOR BREAKDOWN



Listening to You

Extensive engagement has been conducted over the last year to arrive at this business plan. We have listened to all your feedback, and this has shaped the document. Our consultation and engagement have included:

- 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.
- As a result of the initial consultation, the boundary area was reduced. All businesses were contacted again, within the new boundary in February 2025 inviting them to come along to a meeting about forming the Rye BID Task Group. As a result, a BID Task Group was formed representing businesses to help develop the BID.
- The first Rye BID newsletter was posted to all businesses in the BID area in April 2025.
- The Rye BID website was developed to provide comprehensive information about the BID development.
- The Rye BID Task Group began one-to-one meetings in April 2025 and these have been ongoing.
- The Rye BID Task Group members have been speaking with businesses in the BID area to make sure they are aware of what is going on, on a continuous basis.
- In July 2025, all eligible businesses were invited to two in-person and two online workshops.
- All eligible businesses have had the opportunity to sign up for individual meetings with the team.
- In October 2025 the Rye BID Consultation Document was delivered by hand to all eligible businesses and sent by post to those that we were unable to.
- In October 2025 three in-person workshops were held to which all eligible businesses were invited to attend providing an opportunity to share ideas and information.

To date over 170 people/organisations have directly engaged with the BID through meetings and workshops. This is ongoing.

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Rye is built on community. The BID will help us strengthen that foundation - supporting local business and keeping our town vibrant and welcoming.

Katie Clarke The George in Rye

The Projects

Rye's economy depends on both local people and visitors. To stay resilient, especially in a period of change for local government and public funding, we need to take responsibility for improving the town in ways that directly support businesses, staff, and customers.

By working together and all contributing towards the BID we can deliver the projects that you asked us to prioritise. These are set out below under 3 themes.

1. WELCOME TO RYE

Appearance and Wayfinding

During the consultation businesses highlighted the need for practical improvements to the town's appearance. We will focus on:

- improving key entry points into the town - with Station Approach identified as a priority.
- clearer signage and wayfinding to help visitors navigate with confidence to all areas including those which currently lack footfall.
- delivering gull proof bins.

2. ELEVATING THE EXPERIENCE

Maintaining and Improving Public Toilets

Access to reliable, clean, and secure public facilities is vital for all users of the town. This proposal responds directly to long-standing concerns repeatedly raised during consultation.

The BID will support the planned redevelopment of the Station Approach toilets through an expanded, community-led model designed to create a modern, self-financing facility. The intention is to turn a current challenge into a sustainable asset that is properly maintained, professionally managed, and able to support the town year-round.

In addition, if the proposed new leaseholder for the Strand Quay toilets is not secured by RDC, the BID will look at working with partners to keep these toilets operating as a community asset. The BID Task Group has already submitted an Expression of Interest to RDC.

Christmas Lights

Rye's festive period underpins winter trading.

This year's displays have been made possible thanks to remarkable volunteer effort and local fundraising. Looking ahead, the BID will aim to build on that foundation, ensuring future lighting is safe, reliable, attractive, and professionally installed - while respecting the community legacy behind it. The BID's priority would focus on ensuring sustainable and equitable funding is available in future years to allow us to continue and build.

The Strand Heritage Quarter

Businesses have highlighted the importance of the Strand and Quayside area and the need to help it reach its full potential as a welcoming waterfront space. The BID will focus on modest, achievable improvements that support local trade with an emphasis on practical steps that contribute to making the Strand Heritage Quarter a more attractive and economically active part of the town year-round.

Working with partners the BID would strengthen this area through:

- organising a small number of seasonal markets in the Strand Car Park.
- supporting greening and planting where appropriate.
- working with the Environment Agency enhance the area to attract visitors.

Supporting Rye Year-Round

Rye performs strongly in summer, but businesses have highlighted the need for support during quieter periods to maintain trade and footfall throughout the year. This part of the plan focuses on practical, achievable measures that complement what local businesses already do.

The BID will:

- Provide targeted support to encourage off-peak activity, working alongside businesses and existing initiatives.
- Trial short-term closures or pedestrian-friendly measures in selected areas to see what works best in practice, providing data and insight to inform future improvements.
- Trial measures to improve more efficient car-park usage during peak visitor times.
- Develop a strong BID website to drive and support local marketing initiatives and to keep levy payers fully informed of initiatives and progress.

Tourist Information

The BID will focus on helping visitors access tourist information by:

- Supporting the newly launched Tourism Information Service that runs via WhatsApp.
- Ensuring consistent information availability throughout the year.
- Provide ongoing funding to run the Tourist Information Service beyond the first year.

The Rye BID is an opportunity for businesses to help improve their local business environment to the benefit of the town and their own business. The Rye Retreat fully supports the plans for Rye to become a Business Improvement District and looks forward to the resulting benefits being shared by all.



Ralph Sperring Owner, The Rye Retreat



The Rye BID Area

3. PROCUREMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Supporting Rye's businesses is at the heart of the BID. Its focus will be on practical measures that reduce costs, improve operations, and provide a stronger voice for local traders.

Collective Procurement

By working together, businesses can benefit from collective purchasing power. The BID will help secure savings on essential services such as waste collection and recycling, energy, and card payment systems thereby reducing overheads and delivering a return on your investment.

Data and Insight

The BID will collect and analyse key information on footfall, seasonal trends, and the impact of marketing initiatives. This evidence will guide investment, highlight what works, and support advocacy on issues affecting businesses.

Lobbying, Advocacy and Operational Support

A staffing resource, either a part-time BID Manager or third party contractor will provide operational support to the Board and levy payers by delivering the priorities detailed in the business plan and by measuring progress against Key Performance Indicators. The BID will also lobby local government, regional bodies and partners and will advocate for businesses

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The Mermaid volunteered to be part of the BID Task Group to provide input into the development of projects that will seek to improve the public realm in Rye. As a business we are very aware of the diminishing role played by Local Authorities and the increasing responsibilities placed on volunteers. A successful BID will enable Rye to access the funding needed to develop projects and to improve our public spaces in this unique town.

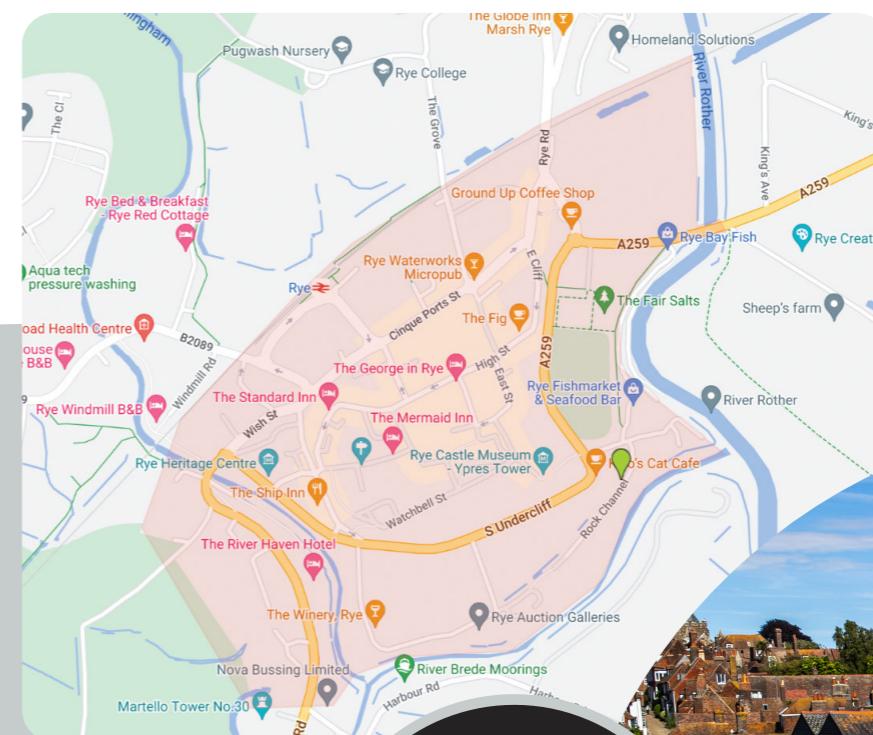
Martin Blincow Mermaid Inn

As a member of the Rye community and a local business owner I am proud to show my support for the Rye Business Improvement District. Rye is such an amazing and unique town, with a wealth of history and wonderful independent businesses for locals as well as visitors and we need to nurture this, BID is an important step in keeping this alive in our town. We need a vision for Rye before and after devolution, BID is our chance to do this.

Jo Dorey Ethel Loves Me

The BID area covers that shown on the map below alongside the list of streets that will be eligible.

Church Square	Landgate	Strand Quay
Cinque Ports St	Lion St	The Grove
Conduit Hill	Love Lane	The Mint
Cyprus Place	Market Place	The Strand
Eagle Rd	Market Rd	Tower St
East St	Market St	Traders Passage
Ferry Rd	Mermaid St	Watchbell St
Fishmarket Rd	Regent Square	West St
Gungarden	Rock Channel	Winchelsea Rd
High St	Rope Walk	Wish St
Hilder's Cliff	St Margarets Terrace	Wish Ward
Hucksteps Row	Station Approach	



**VOTE
YES**



The BID Levy

Every eligible business located in the BID area shown on the map on Page 11.

Across all eligible levy payers, the rate will be as follows:

- For those with a rateable value of between £2,500 and £4,000 a flat rate of £100 pa
- For those with a rateable value of over £4,000, it will be 2.5% of RV

The following exemptions will apply:

- Organisations with a rateable value below £2,500
- Non-retail charities, with no paid staff, trading income, arm or facilities.
- Entirely not-for-profit, subscription and volunteer-based organisations.
- Businesses that fall in the following sectors – educational, medical, clubs & societies, industrial, manufacturing, storage, workshop, boatyard & premises and leisure centre and premises

Where multiple hereditaments in the BID area are under the ownership of the same directors and/or under the same company name, their total levy contribution will be capped at £5,000 per annum.

The BID area will only include whole hereditaments and not part of hereditaments. If successful, the Rye BID will commence on 1st April 2026 for a duration of 5 years.

The levy will be collected by Rother District Council on behalf of the BID Company and transferred to the BID Company's bank account. This income is then ring-fenced and only used to fund the priorities included in this business plan.

The table below shows examples of what you will pay:

Rateable Value of Premises	Annual Levy Payable
Below £2,500	Exempt
£2,500 - £4,000	£100
£5,000	£125
£7,500	£187.50
£10,000	£250
£20,000	£500
£50,000	£1,250
£100,000	£2,500
£250,000+	£5,000

80% of businesses will pay less than £1 per day.

50% of businesses will pay less than 50p per day.

The Rye BID will raise £90,000 per annum in levy, a total of £450,000 over the 5-year term.

In addition, the BID will aim to leverage a further 10-15% per income per annum from grants and other fund raising opportunities.

Five Year Budget Forecast

Rye BID Five-Year Projected Income/Expenditure.

BID Income	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL
BID Levy	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000	£90,000	£450,000
Additional Income	£13,500	£13,500	£13,500	£13,500	£13,500	£67,500
Total Income	£103,500	£103,500	£103,500	£103,500	£103,500	£517,500

BID Expenditure

Welcome to Rye	£31,300	£31,300	£31,300	£31,300	£31,300	£156,500
Appearance and Wayfinding						
Elevating the Experience	£60,000	£60,000	£60,000	£60,000	£60,000	£300,000
Toilets, Christmas Lights, Strand Heritage Quarter, Supporting Rye Year Round, Tourist Information						
Procurement and Performance	£6,500	£6,500	£6,500	£6,500	£6,500	£32,500
Procurement, Data, Lobbying and Advocating						

BID Overheads

Insurance, Accountancy Services and Levy Collection cost payable to RDC	£5,700	£5,700	£5,700	£5,700	£5,700	£28,500
GRAND TOTAL	£103,500	£103,500	£103,500	£103,500	£103,500	£517,500

Please note: the costs incurred in developing the BID proposals and holding of the ballot have been met using Levelling Up funding and will NOT be recovered through the BID Levy.

BID Membership

Any BID levy payer can apply to become a member of the BID Company. This enables them to take part in the decision-making process, as well as stand for and vote during Board of Director elections.

Voluntary Contributions

A voluntary investment can be made by any businesses that are exempt such as those that have a rateable value of less than £2,500 and businesses located outside the BID area. This will entitle them to all the projects and services outlined in this business plan as well as full rights as members in the management and governance of the BID company. Details and eligibility will be set by the Board.

Meet the Task Group



Matt Breckon
Kino & Chair of the
Rye BID Task Group



Martin Blincow
Mermaid Inn



Katie Clarke
The George in Rye



Jo Dorey
Ethel Loves Me



Stephen Jempson
Jempson's
Supermarkets Ltd



Jessica Neame
Rye Town Council



David Parsons
The Kind Table



Felicity Sturgeon
The Rye Retreat



**Jane Brook & Sarah
Broadbent**
Rye & District
Chamber of Commerce

Governance and Management

The BID will be structured to ensure:

- Transparent & accountable management through a not-for-profit BID company, overseen by a board of unpaid local business directors (initially formed from the Task Group, but open to others).
- A realistic delivery plan using a staffing resource, either a part-time BID Manager or third-party provider as appropriate.
- Achievable targets through clearly identified Key Performance Indicators to measure impact.

The Company will have Members and a Board of Directors comprising of representatives from levy paying businesses or equivalent voluntary contributors. Additional, non-levy paying members may be co-opted, as required.

Board Director positions are unpaid and voluntary and will include a mix of sectors and geography of businesses that operate within the BID area as well as having the necessary skills and experience required to deliver the BID business plan. Board elections will be held, and Company Members will be eligible to stand as a BID Board Director. Nominated representatives from public agencies will also be present at board meetings.

By becoming a member of the BID Company, you can have your say in controlling how the funds are spent and hold the BID company accountable throughout the 5-year term. The BID company will not be able to make a profit, and any surplus must be spent on the projects and services agreed by the levy payers and Board of Directors.

Through an open recruitment process, the BID will employ dedicated personnel (directly or contracted) and/or third-party providers(s) to ensure the projects outlined in this Business Plan are delivered effectively and efficiently.

In the first year, the BID Task Group who have been involved with the development of the BID, will form an interim Board to allow for continuity. Open and transparent elections will take place then to allow others to put themselves forward. A Chair will normally be elected by the Directors.

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Having traded in Rye for over 30 years, it's clear that Central Government support for communities like ours has been declining and will continue to do so. The BID offers a way to raise funds that are ringfenced for Rye, benefiting the town and its people directly. Let's get behind this proposal and see what we as a local community can achieve!

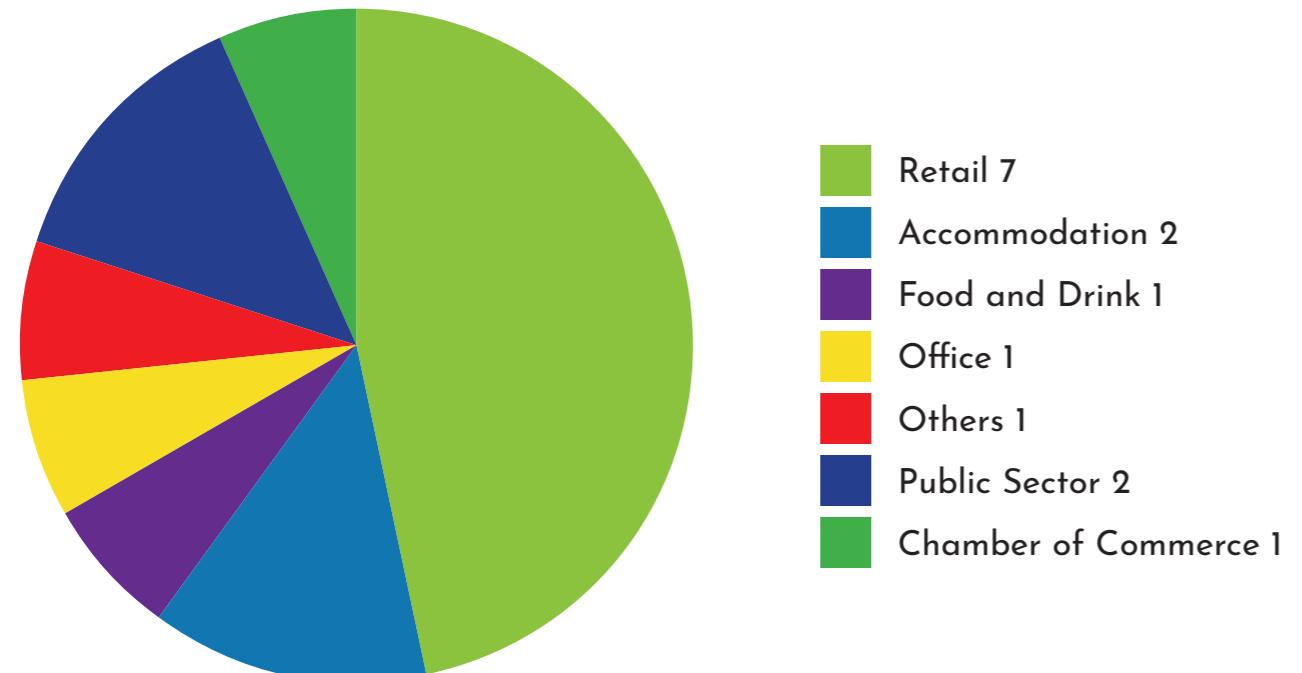
Stephen Jempson
Managing Director, Jempson's Supermarkets Ltd

Knoops was founded in Rye and provides testament that independent brands can grow from humble roots. Supporting the voice of retailers is critically important to the vitality of the sector and vibrancy of town centres, especially in settings with such unique history and heritage as Rye. We support giving local traders a stronger voice and a ring-fenced budget to focus on what drives footfall, spend and growing the love of Rye as a retail destination.

Lucy Winzer Property Director, Knoops

**VOTE
YES**

The following provides an indicative board structure:



There will be regular updates via newsletters and e-bulletins. The annual reports and accounts will be produced at the end of each year and available to members online and at the Annual Review.

Financial Management Arrangements

The BID will be managed by a Company Limited by Guarantee without Share Capital and will follow all typical Companies House requirements including the filing of annual accounts which will consequently be available to the BID Levy Payers. An annual report will also be made available publicly.

Measuring Performance

Levy paying businesses in Rye will be kept up to date with all BID activity on a regular basis via newsletters, the website, social media, face-to-face meetings and an annual meeting.

The BID Board will set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and criteria used to measure the BIDs performance.

Examples of the criteria the BID will use include:

- Footfall figures
- Visitor numbers
- Vacancy levels
- Car park usage
- New business activity
- Annual surveys
- Business feedback
- Media coverage
- Website/social media interactions



The BID Ballot

All eligible businesses have the opportunity to vote.

- The ballot will be conducted through an independent, confidential postal vote conducted by the Returning Officer at Rother District Council (or their agent) which is the responsible body as determined by the BID legislation.
- Each eligible ratepayer will have one vote in respect of each hereditament within the BID area, provided they are listed on the National Non-Domestic Rates List for the defined area as provided by Rother District Council.
- A proxy vote is available, and details will be sent out by Returning Officer at Rother District Council.
- Ballot papers will be sent out to each appropriate organisation from 13 January 2026 to be returned no later than 5pm on 12 February 2026.
- For the BID to go ahead, two conditions must be met. More than 50% of businesses that vote must vote in favour by number AND rateable value.
- The results of the ballot will be declared on 13 February 2026.

“Projects like Christmas lights, better public loos, tourist information, business support, advocacy and lobbying can't sustainably rely on volunteers to do all the work. A BID won't replace our Town's incredible volunteers; it will protect them. It would deliver consistent funding for agreed projects and a part-time town manager to coordinate them, while ensuring continuity and accountability. We're asking businesses to vote YES for a stable, business-funded, professionally managed solution that provides year-round support to keep Rye thriving.”

Jane Brook & Sarah Broadbent
Rye & District Chamber of Commerce

“I believe the Rye BID is a way of us to come together to improve the town for the benefit of us all.”

David Parsons The Kind Table

The BID Levy Rules

1. The BID Regulations of 2004, approved by the Government, sets out a regulatory framework within which BIDs must operate, including the way in which the levy is charged and collected, and how the ballot is conducted.
2. The BID levy rates will be fixed for the full term and will not be subject to variation (except for the annual rate of inflation, at the discretion of the Board). This will be set on the 1st of April (Chargeable Date) each year using the most current non-domestic ratings list. It will be updated for any changes in ratepayer additions, or removals.
3. The BID levy will be applied to all businesses within the defined area with a rateable value of or exceeding £2,500, provided they are listed on the non-domestic rates list as provided by Rother District Council for the 'Chargeable Date', set annually. For those with a rateable value of between £2,500 and £4,000 a flat rate of £100 pa will apply. For those with a rateable value of over £4,000, it will be 2.5% of RV.
4. The following will be exempt from paying the levy:
 - i. Organisations with a rateable value below £2,500.
 - ii. Non-retail charities with no trading income, arm or facilities and are predominantly volunteer based.
 - iii. Non-profit making organisations with an entirely subscription and volunteer-based set up.
 - iv. Businesses that fall in the following sectors - educational, medical, clubs & societies, industrial, manufacturing, storage, workshop, boatyard & premises and leisure centre and premises.
5. Where multiple hereditaments in the BID area are under the ownership of the same Directors and/or under the same company name, their total levy contribution will be capped at £5,000 per annum.
6. New businesses will be charged from the point of occupation based upon the rateable value at the time they enter the rating list.
7. If a business ratepayer occupies the premises for less than one year, the levy paid will be daily.
8. BID levy payment will revert to the property owner or the registered business ratepayer of vacant properties.
9. Those undergoing refurbishment or being demolished will be liable to pay the BID levy.
10. The BID levy will not be affected by the small business rate relief scheme, exemptions, reliefs or discount periods in the non-domestic rate regulations prevailing at the time.
11. Where the rateable value changes, including rating list revaluation, and results in a change to the BID levy amount, this will only come into effect from the next chargeable year, and no refunds of the BID levy will be made for previous years.

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Two Rye premises, fully pro-BID. Small levy, big collective gains. We've researched it, we're in and we don't begrudge a penny if it helps the whole town trade better.



Dezi Dalton Owner, Rye Deli & Rye Candy

12. If there is a change to the national system relating to non-domestic rates during the term of the BID, the Board of Directors will have the option of continuing to utilise the eligible NNDR list for the last chargeable year, for the rest of the term or move to the new system.
13. VAT will not be charged on the BID levy.
14. The levy rate or boundary area cannot be increased without a full alteration ballot. However, if the BID Company wishes to decrease the levy rate during the period, it will do so through a consultation, which will, as a minimum, require it to write to all existing BID levy payers. If more than 25% object in writing, then this course of action will not proceed.
15. The Billing Body is authorised to collect the BID levy on behalf of the BID Company.
16. Collection and enforcement regulations will be in line with those applied to non-domestic business rates, with the BID company Board of Directors responsible for any debt write-off.
17. The BID funding will be kept in a separate BID revenue account by Rother District Council and transferred to the BID Company.
18. BID projects, costs and timescales may be altered by the BID Board of Directors, provided they remain in line with the overall BID objectives.
19. The BID Board of Directors will meet at least six times a year.
20. The BID Company will produce a set of annual accounts made available to all company members.
21. The BID will commence on the 1 April 2026 and will last for five years. At the end of the five years, a ballot must be held if businesses wish the BID to continue.

Next Steps

January 2026
13 January 2026
12 February 2026
13 February 2026

Final Business Plan mailed to all eligible businesses in the BID area
Postal Ballot Opens
Postal Ballot Closes
Declaration of Result

“

I see BID as a chance for us to move our wonderful town in a positive and forward-moving direction. Rye is thriving, but there's a need for improvement in many parts too - BID resources can aid this process as it has in so many other towns like us.

Sally Bayly Grounded

**VOTE
YES**

Photo credits:
Keith Warby - Story & Brand
KT Bruce Photography
Rye Chamber of Commerce



For further
information please
visit our website
www.ryebid.co.uk or
email: hello@ryebid.co.uk