



RYE BID
CONSULTATION
DOCUMENT
October 2025

Introduction The Case for Taking Control

Rye is a remarkable town with a proud history and unique character, but we cannot afford to stand still. Our economy relies on both residents and visitors, and the reality is that future investment will not come our way unless we take the lead in creating it ourselves.

To secure our future, we must:

- Retain our catchment area with a resilient, diverse, and well-maintained High Street.
- Drive footfall by offering a thriving range of shops and services that suit the needs and budgets of residents and visitors alike.
- Recognise that while Rye businesses report strong summer trade, the wider 1066 region has seen major coastal attractions suffer declining visitor numbers and reduced spend.
- Prepare for local government reorganisation: in two years, both Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council will be replaced by a unitary authority with an executive Mayor. Funding will be tighter than ever.

Introducing a Business Improvement District (BID) is not a simple decision. It requires majority support, shared commitment, and new ways of working together. Some will ask if now is the right time. But inaction carries its own risks: decline, missed opportunities, and the gradual loss of the vitality that makes Rye so special.

A BID would establish a local fund, controlled by local businesses, with resources spent on initiatives that directly benefit Rye's economy. It is about protecting what we value while building what we need - on our own terms.

This document is not a finished plan but a framework for discussion. It outlines how a BID could work, the projects it could deliver, and how it could maximise return on investment. The ideas presented here come from businesses within the proposed BID area through ongoing consultation. There is still time to contribute your views and shape this plan further.

The Task Group now invites feedback to assess Rye's appetite for collective action to secure long-term prosperity in a challenging funding landscape. Eight key projects are outlined in the following pages. A BID runs for five years, so initiatives would be phased - some delivered immediately, others introduced later.

Together, we must decide whether Rye takes control of its future or leaves it to others.



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Rye Chamber of Commerce
Tony Ham
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Destination Marketing Visit Rye

The visitor economy is Rye's largest economic sector, yet domestic tourism currently receives little government focus. The BID would invest in positioning Rye as a leading year-round destination, ensuring our visitor economy is strengthened and protected.

Key initiatives include:

- Visit Rye Website: Funding the full development of the town's website (already initiated with Levelling Up funding through Rye Chamber), along with continued social media support and national/regional marketing campaigns.
- AI Tourist Information Guide: Launching in October 2025 as the UK's first interactive AI visitor tool, supported by ongoing BID funding.
- Heritage Programming: Contributing to community-led events marking the "Year of the Normans" in 2027, celebrating 1,000 years since William the Conqueror's birth.
- Film Income Lobbying: Campaigning for filming revenues generated in Rye to be reinvested locally rather than directed to Rother District Council via the 1066 Film Office. This would ensure that businesses disrupted by filming benefit directly.

With local government reform likely to concentrate cultural funding in West Sussex, Rye must speak louder and act decisively to secure its share.

Rye Public Conveniences

For years, inadequate public conveniences have hindered the visitor experience. The BID would invest annually over five years in a larger Community Interest Organisation (CIO)-led project to redevelop the Station Approach toilets into a modern, self-sustaining "pay-to-pee" facility.

Highlights:

- Partnership with Rye Town Council to secure the lease, sublet to a CIO with BID representation.
- Lobbying for £50,000 in Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding plus £50,000 in match funding from investors and partners.
- Phased BID contributions: initial support for design and planning, followed by delivery funding in years two and three.
- Facilities to include turnstile access, advertising opportunities, and added features such as a water fountain and refill point to reduce single-use plastics.

This project would not only resolve a long-standing problem but also transform a cost centre into a self-funding "welcome mat" that enhances Rye's image and supports the visitor economy.

Christmas in Rye

Christmas is a vital trading period, and Rye must position itself as a leading festive destination.

The BID would:

- Fund extended professional Christmas light displays across High Street, East Street, Lion Street, The Mint, The Strand, and Cinque Ports Street.
- Replace the long-standing reliance on volunteers, traders, and residents, ensuring safety, compliance, and high-quality displays using warm white lights.
- Deliver lights from early November to create a festive atmosphere that complements Rye's historic charm.

This transformation would attract greater visitor numbers, increase dwell time, and boost spending across retail, hospitality, and accommodation. The BID would also support and promote wider festive programming, ensuring a joined-up approach and amplifying the impact of the lights.

Strand Quarter

The Strand and quayside hold untapped potential as a cultural and commercial hub. The BID would bring this area to life through:

- Specialist Markets: Each year, up to four BID-organised weekend markets in The Strand car park (temporarily closed for events), shaped around local trader input—ranging from international food to artisan crafts.
- Festoon Lighting: Lobbying for solar-powered lighting along Strand Quay to create an inviting evening atmosphere.
- Strand Sessions: Partnering with the Environment Agency and local businesses to host quayside cultural events with seating and a mobile stage.
- Greening Initiatives: Supporting planned tree planting to create a more attractive and welcoming quayside.

These initiatives would boost footfall, extend dwell time, and strengthen Rye's evening economy, making the Heritage Strand Quarter a showcase of culture, commerce, and community.



High Street Activation

The BID would deliver a dynamic High Street programme designed to attract visitors and support trade.

- Feasibility Study: Exploring pedestrianisation and other improvements.
- Weekend Closures: Trialling up to four themed events per year—such as a Christmas market, summer “sundowners,” or live performances—supported by dedicated marketing.

These initiatives would provide valuable data on visitor engagement while testing ways to make Rye’s High Street more vibrant and accessible.

Welcome to Rye - Enhancing the Public Realm

First impressions matter. Under this programme, the BID would:

- Lobby for landscaping and improvements at Station Approach to create a more attractive gateway.
- Install heritage wayfinding signage at Strand Quay, Market Road, and Landgate.
- Address litter and gull issues with gull-proof bags and bins at key locations.

Collectively, these projects would make Rye cleaner, greener, and more welcoming.

Shoulder Season Festivals and Events

Rye’s economy is heavily seasonal, with many businesses reducing hours or closing during the winter. The BID would support initiatives to extend the season and attract visitors. Ideas could include:

- Soup & Bread Festival: A winter event inspired by Rye’s links with Montreuil-sur-Mer.
- Smugglers’ Trail: A distinctive October trail offering an alternative to traditional Halloween events.
- pRYdE: A June celebration of Rye’s diversity and cultural heritage.
- Rye on Screen: A self-led and guided trail showcasing the town’s film and TV locations, with potential for themed weekends such as a Mapp and Lucia festival.



Backing Business

Procurement Benefits

By leveraging collective purchasing power, the BID would secure cost savings on essentials such as energy, waste, recycling, and card services.

Data

For the first time, Rye would systematically collect and analyse data on footfall, seasonal trends, and event performance. This evidence would guide investment, highlight what works, and strengthen advocacy on issues such as VAT and business rates.

Lobbying and Business Support

The BID Manager would:

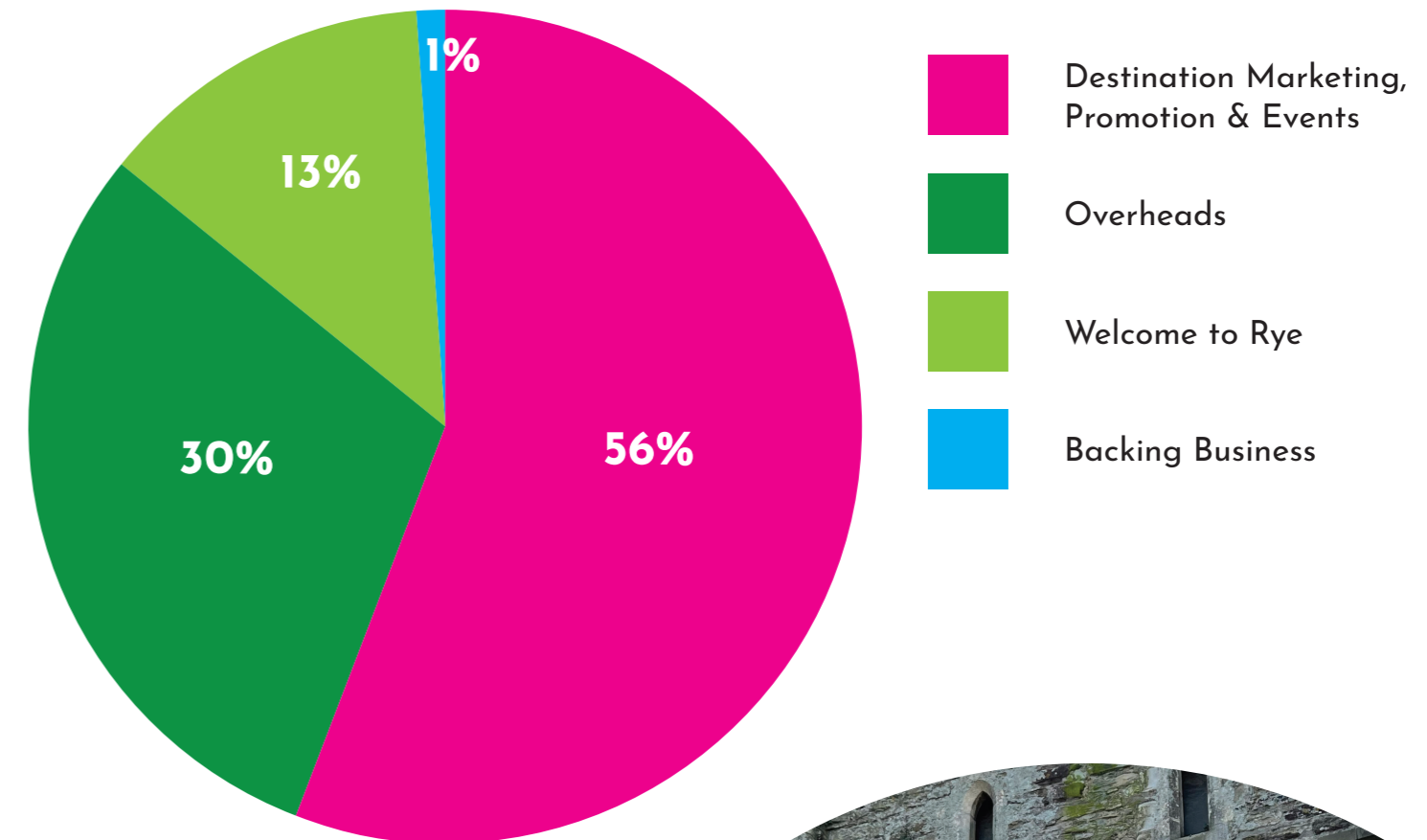
- Maintain ongoing dialogue with levy payers through drop-ins, newsletters, and walkabouts.
- Advocate for Rye businesses with government and regional bodies.
- Provide operational support during events, including lobbying for staff parking solutions.

Operations, Governance, and Delivery

- Operational Costs: Covering essentials such as insurance, IT, levy collection, and legal/professional fees.
- BID Manager: A part-time, self-employed role recruited transparently to oversee strategy, delivery, and funding opportunities.
- Governance: 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).
- KPIs: The final BID Business Plan will include clear Key Performance Indicators to measure impact.

The Budget Forecast

Rye BID is aiming to raise £90,000 pa from the BID Levy and typically a BID would raise 15% in additional income over 5 years. This would mean a total investment of over £500,000 in make Rye better. The proposed spend profile is set out in the pie chart below:



Your Investment

- **Under £2,500 RV:** Exempt.
- **£2,500-£4,000 RV:** £100 flat rate annually.
- **Above £4,000 RV:** 2.5% of rateable value.
- **Capping** - 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.

Of 295 businesses in the BID area:

- 82 would pay between £100-£125 annually.
- 103 would pay between £125-£250 annually.
- 63% would pay no more than £4.70 per week.

By pooling resources, businesses will gain access to initiatives no single business could deliver alone—marketing campaigns, seasonal events, procurement savings, and stronger advocacy.

What Next?

These proposals are not final. No decision will be made until businesses have been fully consulted. This is your opportunity to influence the plan and ensure it reflects your needs and those of your customers.

You can share your views by:

- Emailing the Task Group at hello@ryebid.co.uk
- Ask us for a meeting at a time that suits you on hello@ryebid.co.uk
- Attend a drop-in surgery where you can talk directly with members of the Task Group, ask questions, and put forward your own ideas.

Monday 20th October	10am - 12noon	St Mary's Centre, Lion St
Tuesday 21st October	2pm - 4pm	St Mary's Centre, Lion St
Thursday 23rd October	4.30pm - 6.30pm	St Mary's Centre, Lion St

This is a draft plan for consultation, please take the opportunity to let us know your feedback.

Together, we can decide if a BID is the right path for Rye's future.

The Proposed BID Area

The proposed BID area is shown on the map and covers the following streets:

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 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 | Regents 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 | |





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