

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024/2025



It is my privilege to present the 2024/2025 Chester BID Annual Review.



This document details the BIDs achievements over the last 12 months and highlights the hard work and dedication shown by the BID Team and BID Board who are committed to supporting you, the great Businesses of Chester.

I would like to start by thanking all those businesses who took part in 2024’s BID renewal ballot. 96% of participating businesses voted in favour of extending Chester BID for a third, 5-year term. This result exceeded our expectations and highlighted just how much you value the wide range of projects and initiatives delivered by your Business Improvement District.

The last few years have showcased Chester’s resilience in the face of lingering inflation and a cost-of-living crisis that continues to impact many of our customers. 2024 ended with total debit card sales of £292million, up almost £6.4million year on year while footfall increased by 1.5%. And as I write, 2025 is on track to deliver another year of growth. Businesses must take credit for the way they have adapted to these challenging times and helped ensure Chester remains attractive to both businesses and consumers.

For Chester BID, the start of a third term came with a host of new initiatives aimed at supporting our members and priority number one was data. Chester BID now subscribes to multiple data sources to produce a monthly performance report exclusively for BID Members. The report includes information on consumer spend; demographics and behaviours aimed at helping you understand how the city is performing and make better informed decisions about how to run your business.

We continued the business support theme by launching our very own HR & Health & Safety Helpline. This free to use resource is exclusive to BID members and allows you to access the latest legal and regulatory advice which you’ve told us is a costly expense.

The start of our third term was also the right time to consider how the BID is presented to both you and your customers. An overhaul of the BIDs branding has given us a more dynamic and adaptable design style while a redesigned website offers a more user-friendly experience. 2025 also saw the BID explore new ways at driving footfall into the city. We started by taking Chester to the movies with our very own Paddington statue before giving away over 1800 free tickets to local events and attractions in our ‘Summer in the City’ campaign.

We have continued to invest heavily in our enhancing initiatives which aim to deliver a clean, safe and welcoming city. This year we teamed with Cheshire Police to deliver a series of drug dog operations targeted at curbing anti-social behaviour. These operations coincided with renovation works on the Groves aimed at making the riverside as attractive as possible to summer visitors.

As we look towards 2026 and beyond, we will continue to respond to the needs of businesses and explore innovative ways of ensuring Chester continues to thrive.

Yours sincerely
Carl Critchlow
CEO – Chester BID



Ian Macdonald
Digital Channel Manager



Luka Morrell
Business Engagement Manager



Monica Roman
City Host



Tom Hughes
Maintenance Operative

Chester is at a crucial stage of its evolution and I’m proud of the role Chester BID has played in helping to drive the city forward.



With the support of the BID Board, Chester BID continues to influence decisions at a strategic level and ensure the needs of our members are considered. We work closely with the council and other stakeholders to deliver the Chester One City Plan and continue to promote Chester as a city that is open to investment. As we look forward there is much to be excited about.

The imminent arrival of Harrods Beauty is a major coup for Chester and will help position the city as a retail hub. This show of confidence from such a prestigious brand has already sparked interest from several new and exciting businesses who want to follow suit.

Progress is expected on the second phase of the Northgate Development with the announcement that a development partner has been appointed. It is widely expected the scheme will be primarily residential, complimenting the leisure focused first phase and providing more opportunities for city centre living.

These are just some of the exciting developments that will shape the Chester of the future. You have my assurance that both the BID board and I will continue to support the BID team in ensuring that the needs of our businesses are prioritised as the city moves forward.

Yours sincerely
Neil Hardy
Chair – Chester BID

THE CHESTER BID BOARD

Neil Hardy	Chair
Carl Critchlow	Chester BID
Ian Gordon	IKO Hospitality
John Welsh	Hickory’s / Barlounge
Paul Wildes	The Wildes Group
Nigel Driver	Grosvenor Estate
Gemma Davies	Cheshire West & Chester Council
Kate McEvoy	Jigsaw
John Farrell	Ellis & Co
Will Powell	Powells Jewellers
Emma McGlinchey (Co. Secretary)	Aaron & Partners
Stephanie Peters	Pastry Pedaleur
Very Revd Dr Tim Stratford	Chester Cathedral
Helen O’Sullivan	University of Chester
Andy Farrall	Andy Farrall Ltd

ENHANCING

The BIDs ‘Enhancing’ function aims to create a city that is safe, attractive and welcoming for people who shop, visit and work in Chester City Centre. It aims to provide you with direct services, as well as elevate the city as a whole.



We love the Chester BID jet washing service!

One of the biggest benefits of having this done is the peace of mind it brings knowing the alfresco area appearance can be maintained in an easy, stress-free way. The BID Maintenance operatives are very professional. 10/10 for this service.

Raquel, GM, Urbano 32

CITY IMPROVEMENTS

To ensure Chester continues to look its best for our businesses and their customers, Chester BID regularly undertakes improvements to the public realm.

The Groves
The banks of the River Dee are some of Chester’s most popular attractions, so this summer we collaborated with our local Ward Councillors to fund a range of improvements. The project included the painting of 116 black bollards, bike racks, 236 green benches, and a refresh of the much-loved bandstand.

Floral Displays
Chester BID’s award-winning floral displays have become an annual event, and this summer we installed over 130,000 flowers across the city. Additionally, more businesses than ever took advantage of our subsidised hanging basket scheme, helping you play your part in enhancing our beautiful city.

Event Preparation
Last June, our team completed city centre improvements to ensure the city looked its best ahead of the Duke of Westminster’s Wedding at Chester Cathedral, which brought international coverage and press to the city. This included the jet-washing and refurbishment of phone and post boxes, removing pigeon mess and chewing gum, cleaning bins and removing stickers, and cleaning and re-vinyling empty units.

CITY HOSTS

Our City Host service continues to welcome thousands of visitors every year while helping to monitor the city centre and report issues as they arise.



+3,500

Visitors and tourists assisted by Monica this year



CRIME & ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) has a negative impact on both businesses and the visitor experience. Chester BID works closely with Cheshire Police & Cheshire West & Chester Council to ensure they are aware of the impact on businesses.

Business Crime Survey
Our bi-annual business crime survey gives business the opportunity to feedback the true impact of crime & ASB and helps the authorities effectively direct their resources. The survey is completed by over 100 businesses and helps to identify trends and the most effective strategies to tackle crime & ASB.

Drug Dog Operations
In our most recent BID consultation you prioritised the tackling of crime and ASB. In response we have partnered with Cheshire Police to undertake multiple drug-dog operations at key times of the year. The first operation took place in May and resulted in 31 stop searches with 8 positive results for drugs.

Purple Flag
Chester continues to hold its Purple Flag accreditation – the internationally recognised standard for a safe, well managed night-time economy. The BID funds the annual accreditation process in collaboration with partners including the police, council and university.



BID MAINTENANCE OPERATIVES

Chester BIDs very own BID Maintenance Operatives help ensure Chester is always looking its very best, delivering a daily programme of cleaning and maintenance in addition to that provided by the council.



£38,900

saved for businesses across the year in jet washing costs

544

shopfront cleans completed over the last 12 months



I always feel incredibly supported by the BID.

The biggest thing that has improved our business is the deep clean that the BID provides. We are a very prestigious brand so keeping our storefront clean is important to us.

Andrew, Store Manager, Penhaligons



SUPPORTING

The BIDs supporting initiatives provide businesses with the help they need to run as effectively as possible. We represent the interests of our members on multiple groups and boards, as well as providing one-to-one support and guidance.

CHESTER PERFORMANCE REPORT

Responding to requests for more detailed information about how the city is performing, we now publish a monthly Chester Performance Report. The report is produced exclusively for Chester BID members and includes data including consumer spend, demographics and footfall to provide a detailed snapshot of how Chester is performing.



TRAINING

Strong demand from our members has seen us offer more training courses than ever over the last 12 months. Our fully funded courses cover everything from first aid and fire safety to digital skills and customer experience, all to help businesses upskill staff and make cost savings.

10
Courses delivered

+150
Members of staff trained

£16,750
in staff training costs saved by businesses

BUSINESS GRANTS

One of the many ways we support to our businesses is through our Business Grant schemes. Redistributing additional funds generated by the BID (not BID Levy), our grants help businesses grow and attract more customers.

This year has also seen the launch of our Accessible Assistance Grant which enables businesses to access equipment, training, or enhancements that them more accessible to people with disabilities



£20,000
AWARDED IN GRANTS

Almost £20,000 has been awarded to fund things like new signage, outdoor equipment and marketing support.



HR & EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Responding to an increase in requests for help dealing with HR & employment-related matters this year, we launched an exclusive support service for BID members. The service can be accessed over the phone or via email and is free for BID members, giving businesses access to the latest employment related guidance.



BUSINESS SUPPORT DROP-IN

Our Business Drop Ins aim to provide you with the knowledge and contacts to support you in effectively running your business. This year, we've connected BID businesses with MP Samantha Dixon, provided accounting advice with experts from Ellis & Co., as well as HR & Employment guidance with WorkNest.



The training provided by Chester BID has been incredibly valuable.

From First Aid and Fire Safety to Customer Experience, it's not only helped upskill our teams, but has raised the standard of on the ground service across the city. The sessions are always relevant, high quality and exceptionally well organised.

Ian, Founder, iKO Projects

INFORMATION SHARING

Keeping businesses informed of the latest news and opportunities is a key role for the BID. Our dedicated BID Member WhatsApp group allows us to communicate with businesses in real time, while our e-newsletter and weekly updates share relevant city news and opportunities.

If you're not already signed up, please get in touch at hello@chesterbid.co.uk.



Retailers know they can count on Chester BID for clear updates, footfall insights, and fast support when it matters.

Chester BID has a hands-on approach which means concerns don't just get heard - they get escalated and addressed. It's about being visible, responsive and genuinely helpful. Thank you!

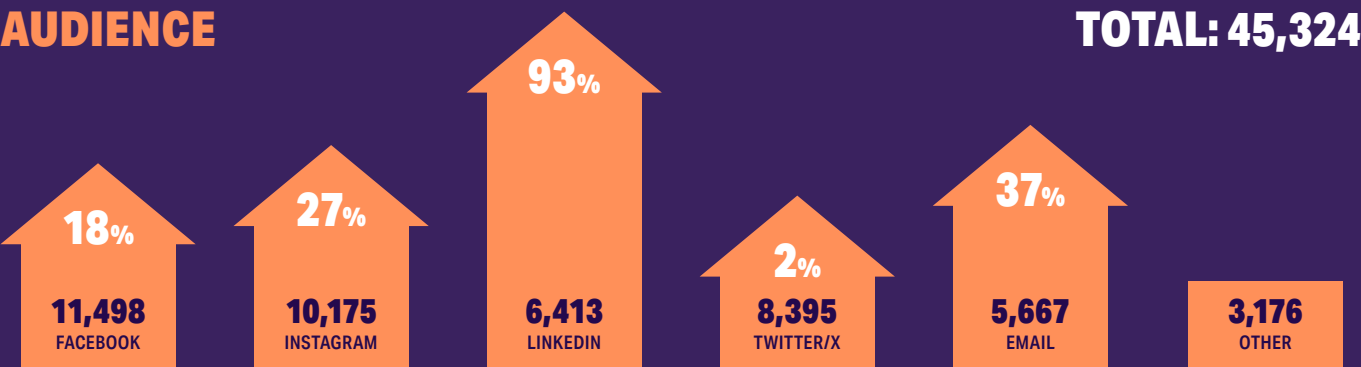
Stephanie, Store Manager, The White Company

PROMOTING

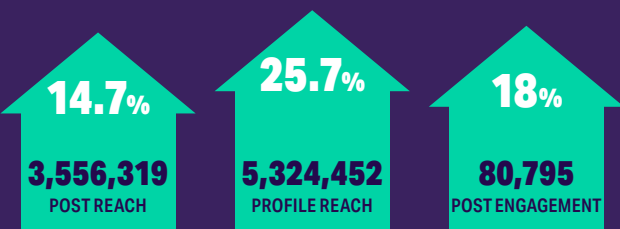
DIGITAL CHANNELS & PR

APRIL 23-24 VS APRIL 24-25

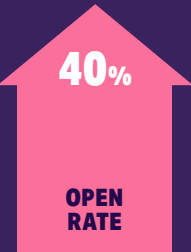
AUDIENCE



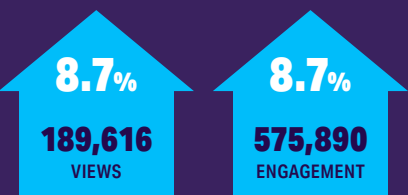
SOCIAL MEDIA



EMAIL

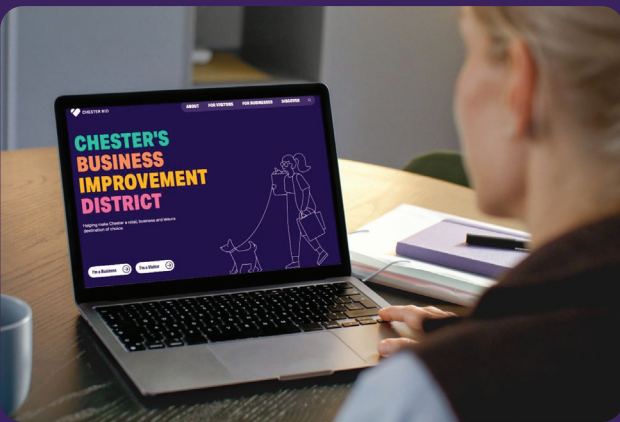


WEBSITE



WEBSITE

This year saw us give our website a much-needed overhaul, integrating our new design style to give a fresh new look while adding new functionality and providing an improved user experience. Built on the latest platform, the new site separates business and consumer content and makes it easier than ever for you to promote your business, events, and offers.



REBRAND

Looking towards our third term, we wanted the Chester BID brand to reflect the vibrancy, diversity and forward-looking spirit of the businesses we represent. Our new branding style moves away from the traditional monochrome and injects colour into our marketing output to make us more appealing to both business and consumer audiences.



CHRISTMAS

Christmas continues to be the focus of our seasonal activity and Christmas 2024 was our biggest to date.

FREE PARKING

Funded by BID every Saturday & Sunday from 23rd November

CHRISTMAS CLEAN

43 Business Frontage Cleans & 13 Alfresco areas jetwashed

GIFT GUIDE

50 Products & 74 Businesses with a reach of 239,489 up 17.4% on our 2023 Guide

INSTALLATIONS

BID Christmas Tree joined Paddington on Foregate Street. Christmas lights installed on:

- St Werburgh Street
- Pepper Street
- St John Street
- Foregate Street

SOCIAL CHANNELS

Reached 1,616,640 - up 16% on Christmas 2023. This included our BIG BID Giveaway & Christmas Shopfront Competition

SANTAS GROTTO

Over 4000 bookings with positive feedback from both businesses and the public

FREE SCREENING

BID funded Paddington in Peru at Storyhouse sold out in 10 minutes

CHESTER GIFT CARD

£8,196 worth of Gift Cards sold across November & December

DIGITAL CONTENT



We continue to invest our digital content, producing eye-catching visuals, high quality videos and informative posts that appeal to a range of audiences.

This is Chester

The campaign highlights the people behind some of Chester's most successful businesses and gives them the opportunity to share why Chester is so special to them.

Invest Chester

Targeting potential investors and developers, the Invest Chester campaign works with city partners to promote Chester as a city that is open for business.

Dog Friendly Chester

More businesses than ever are now dog friendly, our campaign aims to highlight those businesses who welcome customers accompanied by their four-legged friends.

Influencer Outreach

Across our seasonal activity, we've utilised local and national influencers to ensure BID events and campaigns reach our target audiences.

CHESTER GIFT CARD

The Chester Gift Card continues to go from strength to strength helping to lock funds into the high street.



145

businesses

+£156,500

total gift card sales

SEASONAL EXPERIENCES

We continue to fund numerous events and experiences throughout the year that help drive footfall and encourage consumer spend. Highlights included our continued support for Chester Pride, one of the largest city centre events, while the return of our ever-popular Easter and Halloween trails helped us drive visitors to all parts of the city centre.



“

Extremely well organised and professionally done.

We were delighted to be involved in the Chester BID promotional video for the Christmas campaign. The video was a great way to showcase Chester at Christmas.

Eileen, The Coach House

CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARDS

The Chester BID Customer Service Awards have become a highlight of the city's events calendar. Now in their tenth year the awards celebrate those businesses that go the extra mile and provide the excellent customer service that Chester is known for.

The general public decide which businesses are shortlisted and last year's awards was the most successful to date with almost 35,000 votes cast.



OUR 2024 WINNERS

Best Coffee Shop/Cafe
MARMALADE



Best Independent Retailer
CHESTER BOUTIQUE



Best Travel & Leisure
DEVA TRAVEL



Best Food on the Go

JAUNTY GOAT BAKERY



Best Hotel & Accommodation

THE CHESTER GROSVENOR



Best of Chester Market

GEOFF HUGHES FAMILY BUTCHER



Best Health & Beauty Services

THE SCENTED GARDEN RETREAT



Best Pub/Bar/Club
BAR LOUNGE



Best Restaurant
SHRUB



Best Large Retailer
BOOTS



Best Professional Services
NATWEST



Best Small National Fashion Retailer

DR MARTENS



Best of Grosvenor Shopping Centre

CHISHOLM HUNTER



Joint Best Small National Retailer

THE WHITE COMPANY AND OLIVER BONAS



PADDINGTON IN CHESTER

Paddington first arrived in Chester in 2024, after the city was chosen as one of just 23 locations nationwide to host the beloved bear, following his starring role in the latest movie Paddington in Peru. Initially positioned at the end of Foregate Street he helped animate Christmas driving footfall and greeting visitors from the train station.



ANDEAN ADVENTURE

In 2025 the BID team took Paddington on Tour, with six venues hosting the bench between February and July. These included Picturehouse, Storyhouse, Grosvenor Shopping Centre, Chester Cathedral, Hickory's Chester, and Rooftop Social Club.

In order to drive footfall and encourage repeat visits to the city throughout the year Chester was the only city to transform its statue into a fully interactive event. Over 2,500 stickers were distributed to visitors as part of the Andean Adventure Trail with promotion across our social media channels surpassing 900,000 interactions.



SUMMER IN THE CITY

2025 saw Chester BID launch our Summer in the City campaign designed to offer exciting experiences for families during the summer holidays, whilst also helping to drive footfall and support local businesses.

Working with partners including Picturehouse, Storyhouse, Hole in the Wand, Sick to Death and Rooftop Social, the campaign gave away over 1,800 free tickets to families across five weeks, each uniquely themed around cinema, river cruises, guided tours, attractions, and wellness.



2024/2025 FINANCES

As a renewal ballot year, 24/25 saw the annual BID Levy split across two separate bills pending the ballot outcome.

This did little to disrupt BID Levy income with strong collection rates supported by a 57% increase in additional income from projects including the Christmas grotto and development of the Chester Accommodation BID.

For the first time in 10 years the BID has moved office to a more central location bringing the BID team closer to businesses while reducing accommodation costs. Staffing levels have remained constant as we continue to balance services delivered inhouse with those that are outsourced to ensure best value for money.

Responding to business demands expenditure increased across our Enhancing and Supporting work streams as we allocated more funding to cleaning and expanded our training initiatives.

Consultation ahead of the renewal ballot gave us clear instruction on how businesses would like us to direct our resources. The year ahead will continue to see investment in 'clean, green, safe' initiatives that ensure visitors experience Chester at it's very best while training and support for inward investment will also see additional funding.



John Farrell

Chair Audit & Finance Committee

BID INCOME

APRIL 24 – MARCH 25
ACTUAL

Income From BID Levy	£460,666
Grants Received	£20,000
Commercial Income	£56,287
Other income	£40,828
Total	£577,781

BID EXPENDITURE

APRIL 24 – MARCH 25
ACTUAL

Management	£220,356
Promoting	£193,707
Enhancing	£138,251
Supporting	£16,953
Operating	£65,013
Contingency	£4,295

YOUR BID TEAM

General

Carl, CEO

Luka, Business Support

Ian, Digital Marketing

hello@chesterbid.co.uk

carl@chesterbid.co.uk

luka@chesterbid.co.uk

ian@chesterbid.co.uk

ADVICE

HR & Employment

Health & Safety

Call for all advice

chesterbidhs@worknest.com

chesterbidhr@worknest.com

01244 687 607

Mon - Fri, 8:30am - 5:30pm

CRIME

Emergency

999

Non-emergency

101 - Ensure issue is logged

BID MAINTENANCE OPERATIVES

Frontage cleaning
& jetwashing requests

hello@chesterbid.co.uk

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR



REPORT STREET CLEANSING ISSUES



ROUGH SLEEPING OUTREACH TEAM

ForFutures

0300 123 2442

hello@forfutures.co.uk

MORE CHESTER BID SERVICES

