

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

COVID-19: ONE LINLITHGOW BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT- REQUEST FOR RESILIENCE FUNDING SUPPORT

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to detail a proposed application to the Scottish Governments Business Improvement District Resilience Fund by One Linlithgow, the BID company in Linlithgow. The fund requires any application to be supported and countersigned by the relevant local authority.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Executive:

1. Agrees to support the proposed application to the Scottish Government's Business Improvement District Resilience Fund;
2. Agrees that the Linlithgow Town Centre Manager, who acts as the BID co-ordinator, should sign the application on behalf of the council; and
3. Notes that it is possible that other funding proposals will come forward from BID companies in West Lothian.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; and working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	The BID Resilience Fund is part of a suite of financial assistance which has been made available by the Scottish and UK governments to respond to the economic and social challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance	None

Indicators

V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 3 - Our economy is diverse and dynamic, and West Lothian is an attractive place for doing business.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	There are no staffing, property or financial implications arising for the council.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Given current governance arrangements there has been no opportunity for the matter to be considered by the Development & Transport PDSP.
VIII	Other consultations	None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Background

As part of a wider response to address the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic the Scottish Government has established a £1million fund to support Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). There is no deadline for submitting applications but there will be some urgency if early responses to current issues are to be progressed

BIDS are generally funded by a levy on ratepayers operating within the BID area. However, recognising that a significant number of businesses in BIDs will currently be closed, most BID companies have suspended the levy.

The BID Resilience Fund recognises that the suspension of the levy will create financial difficulties for BID companies. However, the fund is not intended solely to plug this funding gap. BID companies are being encouraged to consider how best they can support local businesses and communities through this crisis, including the on-going challenges which result from social distancing.

Any application to the fund must be supported by and countersigned by the relevant local authority.

D2 Proposed Application By One Linlithgow

One Linlithgow has drafted a proposed application and is seeking the council's support for that application. The draft application is attached as Appendix 1.

The application has four main elements – firstly to provide co-ordinated support to businesses in the BID area; secondly to strengthen links with community groups operating in the BID area including supporting PVG checking of volunteers; thirdly to establish a digital resource pool of local businesses who can deliver services remotely; and fourthly to distribute locally produced hand sanitiser within the area.

The total project cost is calculated as £27,880 of which £23,698 is being sought from the BID Resilience Fund. The balance of £4,182 is being funded by the BID company. No funding contribution is being sought from the council.

If approved, the project will provide appropriate support to those businesses operating within the BID area. It also builds on the “community inclusive” element of the BID by not only looking at the businesses which operate in the BID and proposes stronger links with community groups. Many community organisations do valuable work to support vulnerable people or those suffering disadvantage in the community. These organisations have become invaluable in responding to the current crisis. Co-ordination of volunteer activity and support for practical issues such as PVG checking will be beneficial.

The proposal also looks beyond the immediate impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and starts to look at changes which will be required to allow the town to re-open for business and maintain vitality going forward.

The proposal identifies the One Linlithgow as having an “umbrella” role for community organisations and that it will use this role to provide leadership to community groups. While recognising the need for such co-ordination, officers are aware of funding bids by other organisations within the community with similar objectives. While supporting the funding proposal by One Linlithgow the council does not support any one organisation in the community adopting a lead role but it does encourage a joined up community approach to meeting the challenges presented by Covid-19. The council will, of course, continue to play an active role in partnership with community groups and organisations to support those in need.

E. CONCLUSION

One Linlithgow, the Business Improvement District Company for Linlithgow, has prepared an application to the BID Resilience Fund. The application requires the support of the council before it can be submitted. This report sets out that there are no financial implications for the council and the proposal fits with the council’s wider community and business objectives.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: One

Appendix 1 – One Linlithgow Application to the BID Resilience Fund

Contact Person: Craig McCorrison, Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration.
Email: craig.mccorrison@westlothian.gov.uk

Craig McCorrison
Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration
21 April 2020



BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

COVID-19 Resilience Fund

APPLICATION FORM

COVID-19 BIDs Resilience Fund

This funding is provided by the Scottish Government to support local partners to take forward the delivery of localised COVID-19 BID response projects from the 1st April 2020 to 30th Sept 2020.

Section A: Basic Information

Q1. Contact Details

Organisation Name: One Linlithgow

Contact Name: Eddie Linton-Smith

Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED]

E-mail Address: [REDACTED]

Website: onelinlithgow.com

Please provide details of alternative contacts, including email address,

Position	Name	Telephone Number	E-mail Address
BID Chair/Other	Evelyn Noble (Chair)	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Local Authority Contact Name: Stewart Ness

Local Authority Contact Position: Economic Development Officer

Telephone Number Local Authority Contact: [REDACTED]

Address of Local Authority Contact: Linlithgow Partnership Centre, 93 High Street, Linlithgow, West Lothian EH49 7EZ

E-mail Address of Local Authority Contact: stewart.ness@westlothian.gov.uk

Section B: COVID-19 Response

Q1. Briefly describe your COVID-19 response project / activity or expenditure you would like us to fund? Please refer to attached guidance note. (Max 400 words)

Coordinated campaign to circulate information and support (mailshots, web page, social media). Business advice on eligibility for grants/loans and the conditions of that support.

Strengthen links with community groups (Linlithgow CDT, Community Council, Transition Linlithgow, Burgh Trust, St. Michael's Kirk) and administer division of labour. Linlithgow has many community groups, each able to help in their own way. Work already begun to establish a core of PVG-certified volunteers helping the vulnerable.

Local delivery will be key to supporting vulnerable (through volunteers). Businesses set to benefit enormously through this, but must focus on getting required service to vulnerable first. Establish list of local emergency contacts, including responsible tradespeople for boiler breakages, leaks etc. Volunteers and staff alike would prioritise those most in need, but staff would also support businesses by providing delivery service.

Oversee development of digital resource pool: local accountants provide financial advice, booksellers reading bedtime stories/hosting digital book clubs, etc.

With Local Authority support of this application, One Linlithgow would become the official organisation, through which to coordinate support, rather than various groups vying to make their mark (which would inevitably result in nobody knowing which organisation is, in fact, in charge).

Source, bottle and distribute Covid-19 certified hand sanitiser to businesses, front line workers, the vulnerable etc. Expand, where possible and appropriate, to distribution of face masks and other supplies according to need and vulnerability.

Direct support, tutorials and instructional guides to help businesses establish their online presence, keeping them afloat during shutdown and securing client base ahead of reopening.

Utilise proximity to local MSP/MP, Local Authority Elected Members and senior Officers to coordinate questions, rather than inundating each with repeats of the same question. Establish coordinated means of gathering – and subsequently disseminating – relevant information quickly.

Prepare for changed landscape post-shutdown e.g. public sanitiser dispensers, advice for businesses, automatic doors.

Coordinate means of community fundraising: a collaborative effort among community partners.

Section C: Project Details

Q1. What are the estimated total costs to deliver the project for period 1st April 2020 to Sept 30th 2020?

£27,880

Q2. We expect BIDs to generate or contribute between 15% - 20% of annual levy. This can be achieved through existing cash and reserves, BID Revenue Account, Voluntary Contributions, Sponsorship, Crowd Funding etc. Can you provide an estimate of this contribution?

£4,182

Q3. Please provide a projected cost breakdown for your project.

Item/Activity	Funding from BID (£)	COVID-19 Resilience Fund (£)	Total Cost (£)
Online communications, advice mailshots, develop online resources/lists and adapt websites	£1,008	£5,712	£6,720
Distribute hand sanitiser and other supplies to frontline, vulnerable, businesses	£402	£2,278	£2,680
Direct support to businesses: social media presence, client base maintenance, online meetings etc.	£1,260	£7,140	£8,400
Administration of collaborative community support effort/volunteers	£1,008	£5,712	£6,720
PVG certification and supplement local delivery effort	£504	£2,856	£3,360
Total:	£4,182	£23,698	£27,880

Q4. How many jobs will be secured?

4 directly, many more through activity

Q5. Please use the space below to provide any additional information in support of your application, not already covered e.g. A brief project plan and summary of key outcomes.

One Linlithgow was established in October 2019 as one of Scotland's first Improvement Districts to embrace the new "community inclusive" model.

That inclusivity is anything but lip service: it's built in to the BID's Articles of Association. Additionally, we've made strong links with community groups whether or not they've joined the Board, inviting the local CDT to work from our own offices and collaborating to produce a unified Linlithgow website that works for businesses and the community.

The BID's new-found position of "umbrella" organisation within the community, coupled with the Local Authority's full confidence in its ability to deliver effectively, make it imperative for the town that the requested funding is secured.

Project plan: West Lothian Council, through its Community Regeneration Officer, has already acted to identify the role of each community group with respect to the virus crisis. The first action of One Linlithgow would be to establish regular digital meetings of these groups, assisting (often elderly) volunteers to participate. A strong, but flexible agenda will allow effective division of labour: deliveries, supply logistics, emotional support etc. St. Michael's Kirk will be a key partner, having already established support links and operating a social media support channel with over 1,300 members.

Key outcomes: from a BID perspective, the priority is to prevent businesses closing down, however it is understood that the physical and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable people is more important in these difficult times. Records of number of conversations held on the telephone support line can easily be kept. Social media engagement and mailshot opens can also be monitored with ease. The desired outcome here would be high engagement with support offerings.

One Linlithgow must provide leadership to community groups and guidance to residents and businesses, resulting in a coherent approach to disseminating information – as opposed to simply adding to the cacophony of different voices struggling to be heard and often spreading misinformation as a result.

The application must be jointly submitted by e-mail from the BID Chair or BID Vice Chair and the Local Authority Chief executive or lead Local Authority contact.

Please email your completed application to Phil Prentice, Scotland's Towns Partnership: [REDACTED]

Any queries please contact Phil Prentice on [REDACTED]