

Annual Report 2025



Welcome to the Blackburn BID 2025 Annual Review

2025 has been a year of transition and continued progress for Blackburn BID, as we built on the strong foundations of our third term following the successful ballot that secured a further £1.5m investment into Blackburn town centre.

I am proud to continue as Chair of Blackburn BID, supported by our dedicated Executive Board Members from across the BID area. This year saw changes to the Executive Board, and I would like to thank those members who stepped down for their valuable contribution and commitment. At the same time, we are pleased to welcome new and returning Board Members whose experience and enthusiasm will help guide the BID as we move forward.

The year saw significant internal change too, including saying a fond farewell to our BID Manager earlier in 2025, and welcoming a new BID Manager towards the back end of the year. This transition ensured continuity for BID members while bringing fresh momentum and perspective to the organisation.

A key highlight of the year has been the introduction of a new Blackburn Businesses Against Crime (BBAC) and Events Coordinator role. Now well established, this role has built strong relationships with businesses and partners and has played an important part in supporting a safer town centre environment.

Our events programme has continued to be a major strength. In 2025 we supported major town centre events including Blackburn Pride and The

National Festival of Making, both of which attracted significant footfall and national attention. Alongside this, we commissioned and delivered popular BID-led events such as Pumpkin Carving and the Blackburn Christmas Lights Switch-On, as well as a programme of smaller-scale, regular activities. These events have proven extremely popular and have helped create a sense of consistency and expectation, with people now anticipating activity whenever they visit Blackburn town centre.

Promotion of Blackburn has remained a priority throughout the year. Through continued investment in our website and social media channels, we have positioned Blackburn as a destination, with visitor numbers slightly up on the previous year, bucking the national trend.

I would like to thank our Executive Board Members, BID staff team, partners and businesses for their continued support throughout 2025. I look forward to building on this progress in the year ahead and wish all our members a successful and prosperous 2026.

Nicola Clayton

Nicola Clayton

Chair of Blackburn
town centre BID



It has been a pleasure to join Blackburn BID as Interim BID Manager during what has been a positive and productive year. Despite significant changes to both the Executive Board and staff team, the agreed delivery plan for 2025 has been successfully implemented. This reflects the strength of the annual delivery plan established by the previous BID Manager and the continued oversight and support of the Executive Board.

I joined the team at a particularly busy period, with the delivery of the Pumpkin Carving event, the Christmas Lights Switch-On and associated promotional campaigns. Alongside this, I have had the opportunity to meet many of our delivery partners and BID businesses, and I look forward to strengthening these relationships further in the year ahead.

Throughout 2025, Blackburn BID has supported and commissioned a wide range of activity, including events, marketing and promotional campaigns, safety initiatives, a Town Centre Rangers service, management of the town centre radio and DISC channel, community gardening projects, and the provision of business advice and support. Together, these initiatives have contributed to an overall increase in town centre footfall, in contrast to the national trend.

Changes implemented within the BID have delivered clear benefits, particularly in relation to town centre safety. The Blackburn Business Against Crime and Events Coordinator, working alongside the Town Centre Rangers and supported by the expanded town centre smart radio scheme, has developed strong relationships with businesses and partners.

This joined-up approach has resulted in a measurable reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour when they are on duty, representing a significant achievement for 2025 and a strong foundation for further improvement.

I was also delighted to attend the North West in Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood awards in Bolton, where two Blackburn BID Growing Places projects were recognised. Our community partner Purple Patch received a Level 5 'Outstanding' award for the planters at Richmond Terrace, while the project delivered with St Mary and St Joseph Primary School achieved a Level 4 'Thriving' award for their work at Blackburn Train Station.

I would like to thank all BID businesses, delivery partners and community organisations for their continued support throughout 2025, and I look forward to working together in 2026.



Gemma Johnson

Blackburn town centre
BID Manager



What is **Blackburn BID**?

Blackburn BID (Business Improvement District) exists to invest in and support the success of Blackburn town centre and surrounding retail areas, led by and for the local business community.

First established in 2013, Blackburn BID has delivered approximately £1.5m of targeted investment into the town centre over successive five-year terms. In 2023, BID Members voted overwhelmingly to renew the BID for a third term, with 92% voting in favour, demonstrating strong confidence in the BID's work and direction. The current term began in 2024, making 2025 the second year of the third term.

A BID is a business-led, business-funded partnership that operates within a defined geographic area. Businesses within the BID area contribute through a levy, charged as a small percentage of their business rateable value, collected alongside business rates. This funding is then reinvested directly into projects and services designed to benefit those levy-paying businesses.

BIDs are focused on delivering additional services; enhancements that go beyond those already provided by local authorities. These can include a wide range of initiatives, from events and marketing activity to safety, security, environmental improvements and business support. The core aim is to increase footfall and dwell time, as evidence consistently shows that higher visitor numbers lead to increased spend within local businesses.

Since their introduction in the UK in 2005, Business Improvement Districts have grown significantly, with around 350 BIDs now operating nationwide,

as businesses increasingly recognise the value of having greater influence over their local trading environment.

Blackburn BID is delivered through an accountable body model, with Newground CIC acting as the accountable body. Newground CIC is responsible for financial management, governance and administration, including planning for employment of BID staff and producing audited accounts and progress reports.

The BID area covers Blackburn town centre along with Townsmoor Retail Park, Blackburn Retail Park and Peel Retail Park. In 2025, Blackburn BID represents approximately 350 levy-paying businesses.

The BID's work is structured around four key priorities:

- Marketing and promoting Blackburn as a vibrant town centre**
- Creating a safer and more secure environment** for businesses, employees and visitors
- Developing a cleaner, greener and more sustainable town centre**
- Supporting businesses through information, guidance and engagement**



Marketing & Promoting Blackburn Town Centre



HEADLINES

£117k+

Investment in marketing and promoting the town centre

27

Town Centre events & activities provided for FREE by Blackburn BID

New

regular activity programme promoting events and activities across the town



IMPACT

24.4m

Visits to the Blackburn BID area

99 mins

Average dwell time of visitors

4.2m

Social media impressions

40.1k

Active users of Discover Blackburn website





WHAT WAS DELIVERED IN 2025

- Cunning Plan continue to support Blackburn BID's key marketing objectives via the Discover Blackburn website, social media channels and e-newsletters.
- Cunning Plan have delivered monthly content creation visits to the BID area, event marketing campaigns and supported and promoted Blackburn BID members.
- The Discover Blackburn website was enhanced to allow better user interaction. The What's On allows the key events to be featured, plus a new search function allows users to find the events they are interested in. This is the most popular element of the website, with nearly 14% of the traffic going through it.
- Blackburn BID delivered events in a different way this year. Alongside larger events, including Pumpkin Carving and the Blackburn Christmas lights switch on, a regular programme of smaller scale activity was commissioned from local organisation Culturapedia. 25 events took place during the year with 13.5K people engaging with the activities and many more encountering them as they passed by.

- The BID supported the delivery of fantastic partner events including the National Festival of Making and Blackburn Pride. Providing insight into security considerations at the planning stages, supporting with security during the events and promoting these events across all Discover Blackburn channels.
- Blackburn BID continued to work with Visitor Insights to obtain consumer data for Blackburn town centre and the wider BID area. This data has been used to inform the work schedule of the town centre rangers, events planning and marketing and promotion.
- To continue the positive partnership working across event and activity providers from the previous year, seasonal brochures have been produced detailing what's on in Blackburn over the key school holiday periods. Encouraging people to attend and to shop, eat and drink too, promoting Blackburn as a visitor destination.



WHAT'S NEW FOR 2026

In addition to continuing our current programme of events and initiatives, we will introduce the following new activities in 2026:

- Increase Eid focused activity to reflect its significance for local businesses.
- Explore the introduction of a Santa's Grotto in the town centre to enhance the Christmas offer.
- Implement targeted social media campaigns featuring human-interest stories from BID businesses to strengthen community engagement.
- Integrate the BID website into the Discover Blackburn platform for streamlined management and improved user experience.
- Enhance member communications through updated contact databases and the introduction of a WhatsApp channel to ensure timely and relevant information delivery.

Making the Town Centre Safer & More Secure



HEADLINES

£103k+

BID Investment in making the town centre safer and more secure

2483

hours of targeted and event **security patrols**

117

members of DISC Crime Prevention Information Sharing Platform

45

Smart radios being used across Blackburn BID

11

Major trauma kits deployed

10

licensed premises engaged with **Pubwatch**

7

town centre **information and awareness** raising events

New

Blackburn Businesses Against Crime and **Events Coordinator**



IMPACT

Strong partnership

working tackling crime and anti-social behaviour issues in the town centre including the recovery of stolen goods and offenders arrested

Support

for businesses in reducing crime and responding to challenging situations via request via the Smart Radio Scheme

Highly visible

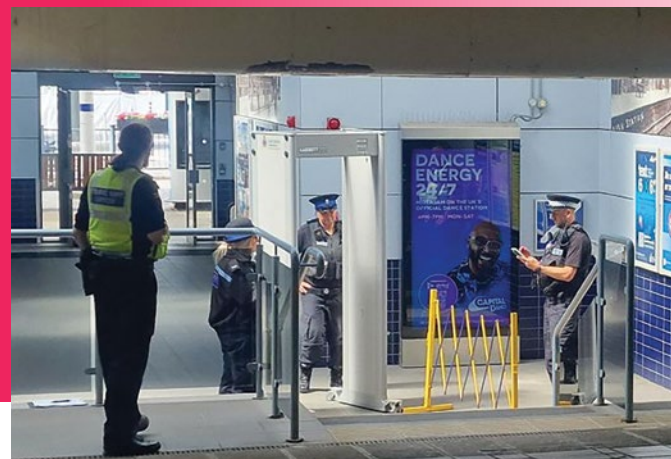
security patrols acting as a deterrent for crime and anti-social behaviour and providing confidence and reassurance to businesses and visitors

Increased

information for businesses on potential safety issues across the BID area

Safe and secure

town centre events delivered with Town Centre Ranger support





WHAT WAS DELIVERED IN 2025

- Lee Pickering joined Blackburn BID as BBAC & Events Coordinator based in Blackburn with Darwen Council’s Community Safety Team, which has ensured closer collaborative working. Reporting progress on all matters Safe and Secure to both the BID Board and the Council Executive Member for Housing & Public Health.
- The Town Centre Ranger service new delivery model was implemented and improved security and made the town centre more safe and secure. Feedback from businesses and partner organisations has been overwhelmingly positive.
- The Smart Radio Scheme was successfully launched in April 2025, proving popular among town centre Businesses. Success stories have been reported from Pubwatch, Town Centre Rangers and businesses including, recovery of high value items for stores and numerous arrests, where Town Centre Rangers and the CCTV Hub have collaborated with the Neighbourhood Policing Team via the Smart Radios.
- Following a full refresh of the Crime Information and sharing System (DISC), visits to businesses and partner meeting showcasing the benefits of the system, the numbers of users has increased from 81 in January 2025 to 117 in January 2026.
- Blackburn BID’s Safe and Secure working group has met regularly, leading to Days of Action, pop-up awareness events and the distribution of 11 Major Trauma PACT Kits in Blackburn Town Centre.
- Partnership working with the town centre offenders panel, community safety and housing teams, street homeless and substance misuse services, and town centre partners has helped to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in Blackburn town centre.
- Blackburn BID have worked with the Blackburn Neighbourhood Policing Team Manager to share hotspot data including locations and times. This has been collated and interrogated to allow the sharing of intelligence with key stakeholders and to focus tasking of the Town Centre Rangers.
- Blackburn BID have initiated and attended established meetings to tackle specific issues identified. This includes the Town Centre Drinking Strategy, Safe Space Operation around the Fielden Street (College) area to reduce ASB and Blackburn with Darwen Mapping group supporting vulnerable young people and communities.

WHAT’S NEW FOR 2026

Building on the successes of 2025, we will also deliver the following new initiatives:

- Host bi-monthly drop-in sessions for businesses to raise and discuss safety concerns with the BBAC Coordinator, Town Centre Rangers, and Neighbourhood Police.
- Increase Town Centre Ranger patrol hours in response to positive feedback and demonstrated impact.
- Support the implementation of new Respect Orders by gathering evidence of anti-social behaviour to assist enforcement.
- Investigate improvements to key gateways and identified areas within the BID zone to enhance public safety and perceptions of security.

Making the Town Centre Cleaner, Greener & More Sustainable



HEADLINES

£3k

Investment in making the Town Centre Greener & More Sustainable

6

different community partner groups supported to deliver improvements across the designated Growing places sites

3

guided town centre walks about trees and green spaces

2

days of drop-in Cyanotype workshop sessions for The National Festival of Making



IMPACT

240

Volunteer hours

15

planters weeded, planted and maintained on Richmond Terrace

14

planters at Blackburn Train Station maintained and plants replaced

4

planters at Victoria Gardens maintained and plants replaced

2

projects recognised with RHS It's Your Neighbourhood Awards





WHAT WAS DELIVERED IN 2025

- Blackburn BID worked Lancashire Wildlife Trust and community partners such as primary schools, charities, volunteers and BID members to carry out regular planting and maintenance at Blackburn Train Station.
- We have created and installed interpretation signage on the planters, explaining the nature of the project, and encouraging travellers to pick, eat and cook with the edibles in the planters, and share their experience on social media.
- Blackburn BID worked with Blackburn Train Station Manager / Northern Rail to redesign and install new seating and planting at the front of Blackburn Train Station.
- Purple Patch were supported to deliver environmental improvements at 15 planters at Richmond Terrace.
- Planting and maintenance sessions were delivered at the Growing Places planting spaces at Victoria Gardens.
- Blackburn BID delivered 3 town centre guided walks covering town centre trees and green spaces. Members of the public and organised groups took part in the walks.
- Cyanotypes workshops at the National Festival of Making showcased and engaged
- Pumpkin pulp, skins and seeds from the free Pumpkin Carving Workshops were donated to local farms as animal feed making the activity more sustainable.



WHAT'S NEW FOR 2026

Alongside ongoing activity, these new plans will further strengthen our impact in 2026:

- Continue station adoption initiatives at Blackburn Train Station, focusing on its role as a key gateway to the town.
- Collaborate with community groups to build capacity for independent maintenance of planters between scheduled gardening sessions.
- Seek additional funding to enhance the Growing Places project at Blackburn Train Station.

Supporting Businesses

Blackburn BID supports its members through regular communications, expert referrals via Growth Lancashire, and tailored workshop and training to meet business needs. Every BID initiative is designed to help businesses thrive and contribute to a thriving town centre.



WHAT'S NEW FOR 2026

- Maintain regular communication with BID members through e-newsletters and improved contact management.
- Launch a WhatsApp channel to provide timely updates and critical information.
- Supply businesses with regular footfall data for the BID area to inform decision making and planning.

Financial Summary

£308.2k

income

In 2025 there were 10 Executive Board Members Blackburn BID is overseen by an Executive Board, with 10 positions consisting of businesses and key stakeholders operating in the BID area. The Executive Board meets a minimum of 4 times a year, with 5 members required to be present for a meeting to be quorate.

The Board is made up of permanent and elected positions, which allows for representation from all business sectors and key stakeholders in the town centre. BID levy payers are eligible to vote at annual general meetings and nominate individuals for elected board positions.

Blackburn with Darwen Council as the local authority for the area manages the billing and collection of the BID levy, which is then passed to the BID.

£271.6k

Total investment in Year 2
of 2024 – 2028 BID term

Newground CIC is the accountable body for the BID and is responsible for employing the BID Manager, financial management of the BID, administrative support for the Executive Board, and producing audited statements of expenditure and progress reports.

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Blackburn BID Account Year Ending 31/12/2025*

INCOME 2025

Funds b/f from 2024	£7,660.81
BID levy collected 2025	£285,082.63
BID Levy collected previous years	£8,181.52
OTHER INCOME	£7,312.00
Total	£308,236.96

EXPENDITURE 2025

Marketing & Promotion	£117,074.29
Safer, more Secure	£102,905.99
Cleaner & Greener	£3,120.47
Supporting Businesses	£854.65
Levy collection Costs	£5,325.00
BID Management Costs	£42,389.54
Total Expenditure	£271,669.94
Funds c/f	£36,567.02

*2025 Financial Summary subject to independent financial review

What our businesses have said about **Making the Town Centre Safer & More Secure:**

“

Our store feels safe when the BID Rangers are around. The rangers are always available on the radio when we need them. They are a great deterrent. They help us to deter potential shop lifters."

MATALAN

“

The BID Rangers have been pro-active and highly engaged with both the public and local businesses. They have consistently been available on the radio when needed and kept us up to date on individuals to be aware of. They have also been effective in helping move on nuisances, contributing to a safer and more welcoming environment. They should work fulltime!"

OUTDOOR ACTION

“

Tiff (Town Centre Ranger) lets us know if there are any issues near us. The rangers check on us multiple times throughout their shifts. If we need help, the rangers are always there and always on the ball with drunken or abusive people. Whenever we see them out of work, the rangers are always pleasant and check on the public in general. The rangers know everyone's name and bring us snacks! They are a pleasure to have and keep us feeling safe."

EXCHANGE COFFEE

“

The rangers are valuable members of the community for Stores, Public and shop colleagues. Less theft in store, Colleagues feel safer, when goods are stolen – get most recovered and available on the radio to support when on duty."

DUNELM

What our volunteers have said about **Making the Town Centre Cleaner, Greener & More Sustainable:**

“

Volunteering on Blackburn BID town centre projects gave our partners the opportunity to make a visible, lasting difference to the town. By contributing their time, skills and enthusiasm, partners strengthened team pride, built closer community connections, and played a direct role in creating an attractive, welcoming town centre that has been recognised and celebrated at a national level."

RIYAZ PATEL, TEAM LEADER AT PURPLE PATCH PARTNERS

“

Thank you so much for this morning. The children had a wonderful time and made a collage (of the leaves they collected) this afternoon."

LISA THORNLEY FROM ST MARY & ST JOSEPHS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Feedback from the Guided Autumn Tree Walk

“

The Gardening Club had a wonderfully informative session at Blackburn Station last week and made an impressive amount of notes on 10 different herbs. The children really enjoyed the project and learnt a lot, so did I!"

ALISON RAMSDEN FROM ST MARY & ST JOSEPHS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Feedback on the Herb Project for planters at the Train Station

Maximizing Your Blackburn BID Membership

Ensure you get the most value from your BID levy by following these steps:

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

- Email your business name, contact name, email address, and telephone number to keep our records accurate – contact BID Manager.

STAY CONNECTED

- Join the mailing list for regular updates on news, guidance, and opportunities – contact the BID Manager.
- Access safety updates via the DISC platform and attend bi-monthly Safe and Secure drop-in sessions – contact BBCA & Events Coordinator for details.

SUBSCRIBE TO MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS

- Receive summaries of recent activity and upcoming events – contact the BID Manager to subscribe.

ENGAGE WITH DIGITAL CHANNELS

- Follow the Discover Blackburn campaign at discoverblackburn.co.uk and on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.
- Tag “Discover Blackburn” to amplify your content.
- Contact Cuning Plan to participate in monthly content visits.

PARTICIPATE IN EVENTS & PROMOTIONS

- Join BID-led events and campaigns that drive footfall. For promotional support, email blackburn@acunningplan.co.uk

PROVIDE FEEDBACK & INFORMATION

- Share ideas and suggestions to help showcase Blackburn and support BID businesses – contact the BID Manager.
- Raise any concerns about anti-social behaviour or day to day issues in the BID area affecting your business – contact BBCA & Events Coordinator.




YOUR BID TEAM

- **Gemma Johnson**, BID Manager:
Gemma.Johnson@blackburn.gov.uk
- **Lee Pickering**, BBAC & Events Coordinator:
Lee.Pickering@blackburn.gov.uk
- **Cuning Plan**, Marketing Specialists:
blackburn@acunningplan.co.uk



BLACKBURN
BID 
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

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