

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	Thursday 29 January 2026
Title of Report:	Waterfront Business Improvement District (BID) Renewal
Lead Member:	Councillor Tudor Evans OBE (Leader)
Lead Strategic Director:	Glenn Caplin-Grey Strategic Director for Growth
Author:	Sarah Gibson CEO and Plymouth Waterfront Manager Plymouth Waterfront Partnership
Contact Email:	Sarah.gibson@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Waterfront BID4 Renewal
Key Decision:	Yes
Confidentiality:	Part I

Purpose of Report

This report:

- Summarises the proposal to renew the Plymouth Waterfront BID for a fourth term Business Plan 2027-2032, along with emerging themes arising from early Waterfront business consultations.
- Invites the Panel's ideas for project consideration within the Waterfront BID4 Plan.
- Sets out Plymouth City Council's support for the renewal of the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership (PWP) Business Improvement District (BID) for Plymouth's Waterfront.

Recommendations and Reasons

That Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel:

1. Note the report and the proposal to renew the Plymouth Waterfront BID for a fourth term, to operate between April 2027 and March 2032;
2. Consider providing recommendations for Waterfront BID4, support the process of renewal of the Plymouth Waterfront BID and endorse the principles and overall approach to create a Waterfront BID4 Business Plan 2027-2032 as set out in this report.

Reason: To confirm the partnership approach to the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership and the Waterfront Business Improvement District and establish a framework for service improvement mechanisms within the Business Improvement District area.

Alternative options considered and rejected**Option 1: Progress Waterfront management through a different vehicle using a voluntary contributions approach**

This has been rejected by Plymouth Waterfront Partnership because the anticipated income and levels of commitment would be significantly reduced as a result of differential contributions from different businesses.

Option 2: Amend some of the assumptions in the Business Improvement District Business Plan

This was rejected as the level of service provision within the Waterfront must be enhanced above pre-Business Improvement District levels for the duration of the Plymouth Waterfront BID Business Plan to meet the requirements of the regulations. In addition, experience in delivering the BID Business Plans demonstrates the added value of a realistic but challenging programme of integrated initiatives in leveraging other sources of income above the basic Business Improvement District levy.

Option 3: Abandon the Business Improvement District Model

This was rejected as it might mean that some of the services and management to be undertaken by the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership would have to be managed in-house and it is not considered this would achieve value for money or efficient operations.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Since 2012 the Plymouth Waterfront Business Improvement District has played a key role in delivering the Council's vision of one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities. The BID principles are closely aligned to the Council's values as set out in the Corporate Plan, and the proposals are designed to deliver against the key Growing City priorities. The BID proposals support the strategic themes within the Plymouth Plan, as a growing, healthy and international city.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Financial implications are included within the body of the report.

Legal Implications

The renewal of the Waterfront Business Improvement District (BID) requires compliance with the statutory framework established under the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004. These regulations place duties on the Council to administer the BID ballot, validate the BID proposal and five-year plan, and undertake levy billing, collection and enforcement in accordance with statutory requirements. Members must also ensure that due regard is given to the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 when considering the BID proposals, and that the decision-making process is robust and capable of withstanding challenge.

Implementation of Waterfront BID4 will require the Council to enter into baseline Service Level Agreements with the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership, which will create contractual obligations to maintain agreed service standards within the BID area throughout the BID term. The Council will also continue to provide statutory and in-kind support services, including legal, finance, ICT, HR and administrative functions, which must comply with internal governance, procurement and financial regulations. Clear delineation of responsibilities and maintenance of statutory environmental, public realm and health and safety duties will be necessary to mitigate the risk of breach of contract, service failure or legal challenge.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Delivery of the Plymouth Waterfront BID Business Plan 2027-2032 will help address the City Council's commitment to improve Plymouth's environment and establish a carbon neutral city by 2030:

The Plan's 'Blue-green' theme, including support for the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, aims to reconnect people to the ocean, leading to increased understanding, respect and care for Britain's Ocean City and its associated blue and green environment.

Plymouth Waterfront Partnership will also continue to promote use of non-single use plastics supporting the city's 'Plan for Plastic'.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The business plan and associated service level agreements will address risk and health and safety management. The Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change OSC will be invited to assess these implications in its review of the BID proposals.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Plymouth Waterfront Partnership Business Improvement District (BID) Partner Survey							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are **unpublished** works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Waterfront BID3 Business Plan see: www.waterfrontbid.co.uk							
Baseline Service Level Agreements see: www.waterfrontbid.co.uk							

Sign off:

Fin	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Draffan											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 20 January 2026											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Tudor Evans approved verbally Date approved: 20 January 2026											

Summary

1) What are BIDs?

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a defined area in which a levy is charged on all eligible business rate payers in addition to the business rates bill. This levy is used to develop projects which will benefit businesses in the local area.

There is no limit on what projects or services can be provided through a Business Improvement District. The only requirement is that it should be something that is in addition to services provided by local authorities. Improvements may include, but are not limited to, extra safety/security, cleansing and environmental measures.

The Business Improvement District proposer is required to develop a proposal and submit this to the local authority, along with a 5-year plan. The proposal should set out the services to be provided and the size and scope of the Business Improvement District. It will also set out who is liable for the levy, the amount of levy to be collected and how it is calculated.

Businesses located within the proposed Business Improvement District area must be consulted at ballot.

Once a BID has been established all businesses contribute the BID Levy annually based on the rateable value of their premises (hereditaments) to ensure fairness and equity. BIDs have a maximum duration of 5 years, hence the need to renew the Waterfront BID at this stage.

There are c.350 BIDs in the UK, including Exeter, Falmouth, Newquay, Tavistock, English Riviera, Bristol and Plymouth. A mark of their success is that c.92% of BIDs are renewed by business ballot for their third term ballot. The City Centre Company is in its fifth term following four successful renewals.

2) What is the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership?

The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership is an important delivery partner which provides dedicated, one voice representation for c.950 businesses located across the Waterfront area. Established in 2010, the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership is business led, as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and driven by a Board of Directors which includes Cllr Sally Haydon Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries and Crematoria. The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership is the proposer of the Plymouth Waterfront BID and operates its delivery, prioritising projects including city marketing, events, cleanliness and safety in the public realm.

Initially started up in 2012 and delivering effectively since, the Plymouth Waterfront BID delivers 5-year business plans shaped by Waterfront businesses, which are designed to align with city policy and strategies. Currently working through its third business plan, the Plymouth Waterfront BID has contributed more than £4,523,430 since 2012 raised directly from Waterfront BID levy. More than 180 projects have been delivered, 60 events funded, and city ambitions supported, including the hosting of the Transat, Olympic Torch and National Armed Forces Day in 2012, the shaping of the Waterfront Masterplan in 2014, the first bid for City of Culture for 2017, and celebrations for Mayflower 400 in 2020.

The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership works closely with its partners, and codesigns and funds delivery plans with Destination Plymouth, Plymouth City Centre Company, Plymouth Culture and Plymouth City Council.

3) Waterfront BID3 (2022-2027) Achievements

The current Plymouth Waterfront BID plan known as Waterfront BID3, identified 46 projects for delivery within 4 key themes:

- Transformational – creating the waterfront of tomorrow, today!
- Vibrant Tourist Destination
- Environmental Excellence
- Business Voice

Plymouth Waterfront Partnership is currently reviewing the delivery of the Waterfront BID3 plan. Early surveys suggest that the plan is already around 80% delivered and is on target for delivery by its due end date in March 2027.

Plymouth Waterfront Partnership won GOLD in 2025's Britain In Bloom awards for floral planting schemes in the Barbican, Bretonside, Hoe and Millbay Park.

4) Early Ideas for Waterfront BID4 (2027-2032)

The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership intends that Waterfront BID4 is business led and will continue to focus on business priorities of increasing visitor numbers, customer spend and commercial success through:

- Leadership - Providing a strong business voice to lobby and influence for future investment and public realm improvements for the Waterfront.
- Marketing - Supporting regional and national marketing campaigns and key events linked to local businesses, to attract new customers to live, work, study and visit, and increase loyalty, whilst radically improving visitor signage and information.
- Operational management - contracts will hold the City Council and all area service providers to account for the standard of existing cleansing, maintenance, safety and security, and other services. BID investment will only be used to pay for additional services prioritised by businesses.
- Finance - attracting significant match funding in addition to levy contributions from businesses for expenditure within the Waterfront.

Since December 2025, the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership (PWP) has invited to survey more than 900 Waterfront businesses and organisations, held formal and informal consultation meetings and will continue to consult over the next two months. Following this early consultation of Waterfront businesses and consideration of the Waterfront BID's potential for aligning with city policy and strategy, project ideas have begun to emerge around four broad themes.

These are very DRAFT and set out in high level below and projects will continue to build on key, inter-related themes that represent the Waterfront area:

Place – Vibrant, Regenerative Waterfront:

Enhance business trading in the Waterfront area, through:

- support for major defence-linked growth and regeneration.

- enhance and promote Waterfront as Plymouth's cool place to live, work and play.
- influence city's "new town" ambitions for 10,000 new homes in the City Centre and Waterfront area.
- private sector-led approach to place-making in the Waterfront area including.
- major signage and interpretation improvements to link Waterfront businesses with benefits of Plymouth Sound National Marine Park.

People – Vibrant Culture, Day and Night:

Enhance business trading in the Waterfront area, through:

- help deliver 2020-30 Plymouth Visitor Plan.
- promote the UK City of Culture 2029 bid.
- champion safety and security, particularly through Purple Flag and PARC initiative support.
- establish a new Evening and Night-time Economy approach.
- deliver cultural events and story-telling.
- welcome visiting cruise ship visitors.
- support skills and talent development.
- unify the voices of Waterfront businesses.
- reduce business costs.
- champion projects that promote access, equality and inclusion for all.

Planet – Environmental Excellence:

Enhance business trading in the Waterfront area, through:

- support Plymouth Plan for Nature and People (2025–2030).
- support our re-imagined Britain's Ocean City brand, aligned to the city's new Brand Strategy 2030.
- boldly position the importance of our 'blue and green' economy and spaces, including our unique heritage.
- support the UK's first Plymouth Sound National Marine Park.
- signpost businesses to enable them to improve their environmental performance/standard.
- champion the Green Tourism scheme.

Overall, the Plymouth Waterfront BID4 plan will consolidate resources to continue to attract more visitors and visitor spend to the Waterfront, encourage enterprise, improve skills and help to make Plymouth a thriving regional centre; which in turn will attract people to live, work, study and invest.

Plymouth Waterfront BID3 already plays a key role in the city's visitor economy, working in close partnership with the Plymouth City Council, Plymouth City Centre Company BID, Destination Plymouth and Plymouth Culture to maximise delivery outcomes.

Waterfront BID4 will continue this work and align with Plymouth City Council-related policies, strategies, designations and partnership initiatives that relate to Plymouth's Waterfront, including defence-linked growth, regeneration, "new town" ambitions and economic growth deals, including:

Joint Local Plan – Waterfront & Growth Area Policies:

PLY20 – Managing and Enhancing Plymouth's Waterfront

PLY21 – Supporting the Visitor Economy

PLY37 – Strategic Infrastructure Measures for City Centre & Waterfront Growth Area

Plymouth & South Devon Freeport
Defence Growth Deal / Team Plymouth
New Town in the City / City Centre & Housing Growth
Vision & Economic Strategy (e.g., Driving Growth in Plymouth)
Plymouth Sound National Marine Park
Energy Policy
Food Strategy Plymouth Food Action Plan (2023–2026)
Plymouth Plan for Nature and People (2025–2030)
Port Strategy
UK City of Culture 2029 bid support
Visitor Plan 2030
Brand Strategy 2030

The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership intends to circulate a secondary consultation, describing the proposed 4 themes and projects that align with city policy and strategy as a DRAFT Waterfront BID4 plan and will incorporate this business feedback into the FINAL Waterfront BID4 plan as appropriate.

It is intended that Waterfront BID4 will generate a minimum of £1.675m of additional BID levy contributions across the 5 year term. It will include c.500 BID levy payers and c.400 entry level, non-voting/non-paying members, encompassing 1,165 hectares of the city's primary waterfront destinations and target 4 major strategic priorities.

The full draft version of Waterfront BID4 is in development and has the input of colleagues from Plymouth City Council, Destination Plymouth, Plymouth City Centre Company BID and Plymouth Culture. The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership operates an information website that contains a record of the Waterfront BID's delivery achievements so far. For this and a live example of the Waterfront BID3 Plan please visit: www.waterfrontbid.co.uk/pwp-bid-renewal

The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership will continue to seek ideas from Waterfront businesses and its partners for another few months.

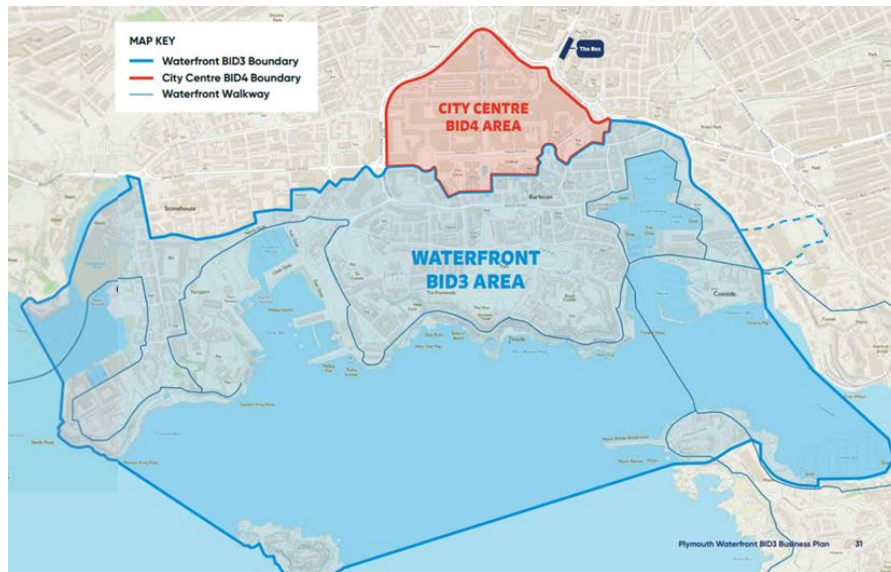
Ideas generated from within the Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel will also be considered for inclusion within the first draft of the Waterfront BID4 plan.

The FINAL Waterfront BID4 plan will be available before the end of August 2026 at: www.waterfrontbid.co.uk

5) What's Included Within the Waterfront BID Area?

The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership will continue to provide leadership and management and be directly accountable to Waterfront businesses for the delivery of the Waterfront BID4 plan, working in partnership with Plymouth City Council, Destination Plymouth, the Police Authority,

Educational Establishments and other public agencies to benefit businesses located within the Waterfront area. The map below shows the existing Waterfront BID3 area:



Following detailed consultations with businesses, the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership includes within the existing Waterfront BID3 boundary area the primary attraction areas of The Barbican, Sutton Harbour, The Hoe and foreshore, Millbay and Royal William Yard, Mount Batten, Mayflower Marina, Queen Anne's Battery Marina, Drake's Island and parts of Union Street and Durnford Street, to ensure a wide view is taken on the visitor experience and gateways into the area. The Waterfront BID4 boundary will also continue to include Bretonside, West side of Sutton Road, West Hoe, Notte Street, Vauxhall Street and Stonehouse. The addition of the Barbican Leisure Park, Friary Mill Business Park and South East side of the River Plym between Turnchapel and Laira Bridge are under consideration for additional inclusion, with business consultations underway. Early soundings suggest that the Barbican Leisure Park (indicated by the hatched line within the map) may be proposed to be brought into the area as a key gateway from the East into the Waterfront BID area.

The Waterfront BID4 area will continue to buffer against the boundary of the City Centre Company's existing BID area, ensuring enhanced links between the two areas and a seamlessly positive visitor experience.

6) What is the Ask of Plymouth City Council?

Waterfront BID4 is designed to attract and deliver investment in the Waterfront area, build sustainable partnerships and deliver agreed projects. The BID legislation does not require that the Local Authority endorse the BID proposals, however it is essential that Plymouth City Council confirms its support, financial and in kind.

The City Council will provide existing statutory services and in-kind support, such as premises, ICT, legal and administration. In addition, PCC will continue provision of BID levy billing, collection and enforcement costs (through the Courts to a maximum value of £9,000 per annum), HR, payroll, accountancy and invoice payment support.

Through the Waterfront BID the City Council will be held accountable to the business community and required to maintain their existing levels of service within the Waterfront. BID

projects will be entirely additional to existing City Council services. Service Level Agreements will be created between the City Council and Plymouth Waterfront Partnership.

National BID legislation enables the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership to establish a contractual agreement with the Council over its provision of existing services in the Waterfront BID area to guarantee that they continue throughout the five-year BID lifetime.

Once the Waterfront BID has been established, the Council will be contractually obliged to maintain agreed standards to conform to baseline service level agreements for all services provided (and listed in the body of this report).

7) Timeline and Next Steps

The Plymouth Waterfront Partnership is grateful for Plymouth City Council’s support and for the time of the Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel in acknowledging the proposal to renew the Plymouth Waterfront BID.

It is the intention of the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership to continue with the development of Waterfront BID4 with the following indicative timeline and next steps:

February	Continue Waterfront business and partner organisation consultations.
Feb – Mar	Draft the Waterfront BID4 plan and review SLAs with the Council.
April	Consult on the DRAFT Waterfront BID4 plan.
May - June	Create the FINAL Waterfront BID4 plan.
July	Plymouth City Council Cabinet.
September	Launch the Waterfront business ballot.
October	Conduct the Waterfront business ballot.