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DORNOCH BID NEWSLETTER

CALL FOR EVIDENCE: 2026 RATES REVALUATION



The Highland Assessor came to Dornoch last week to talk with members about the 2026 Non-Domestic Rates Revaluation. During the meeting two key points emerged:

1. The Assessors assign a "Rateable Value" based on the theoretical rent your property could get, using national benchmarks and other information to tailor this for the Highlands. They admit limited understanding of the Northern Highlands. This is our opportunity in terms of appeals.

2. For accommodation businesses, the Assessors' "draft valuations" assumed the whole of the Highlands was a "High Demand" area. Due to the volume of complaints, this changed for the "final valuations" (issued after April 1st). Only SKYE, AVIEMORE, INVERNESS and DORNOCH were classed as "High Demand". We do NOT agree that Dornoch has anything like the year-round trade that these other places enjoy. The Assessor received this message loud and clear from the room.

The BID is gathering "Evidence" for Dornoch businesses to challenge this "High Demand" classification. Part of the evidence includes a Trading and Seasonality survey. Please complete the survey. **Without evidence we can't challenge the position.** Findings will be shared along with a **practical template, to support members** in submitting a Revaluation Appeal, ('Proposal') at the end of May, ahead of the **31st July deadline**.

[TRADING AND SEASONALITY SURVEY 2026](#)

SECTOR SPECIFIC BUSINESS RATES RELIEF AND THE NEED TO RE-APPLY!



Most people will now have had their new 2026 Rates invoice from Highland Council. For many, it will be much higher than last year. This is because the Valuation itself has increased (this is the responsibility of the Highland Assessor) and the "Reliefs" have not been fully applied (this is the responsibility of the Highland Council).

The "blue" letter which comes with your Non-Domestic Rates Annual Bill, gives you information as to how to re-apply for Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS) if your valuation is below £12/15k, for Self-Catering Revaluation Transitional Relief, and for Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Relief from the Highland Council.

***IF YOU DON'T RE-APPLY FOR THESE RELIEFS, YOU WON'T RECEIVE ANY DISCOUNT/S ON YOUR BILL.** Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

CRUISE SHIP SEASON UPDATE



There are 15 'Royal Dornoch Tours' booked this season and the first half day tour **arrives on Monday 4th May**. There will be 74 passengers coming to town to enjoy guided tours of Dornoch Cathedral, Historylinks Museum and exploring Dornoch. The dates/time of the **'Royal Dornoch' Tours** are available [HERE](#). Well done to all the volunteers who help to make this happen once again this year!

A total of 97 cruise ships are expected into port between early May and mid-October. While not all are part of organised tours, many will be sending coach groups to Dornoch during the season. The complete list of all the dates are in the link below.

[CRUISE SHIPS CALENDAR](#)

DORNOCH TOWN TIDY PREPARING FOR THE ROYAL VISIT



The next monthly Town Tidy being organised by the BID, takes place on **Tuesday 5th May**. With the Princess Royal due to visit Dornoch on Wednesday 13th May, this session provides a timely opportunity to give the town an extra lift.

Meeting outside The Jail at 5.30pm, we look forward to having the support hopefully of many volunteers once again. The Flowers & Fairs volunteer group are also co-ordinating additional work on the floral planters ahead of the visit, adding even more colour to the town for all to enjoy.

EVENTS AND SPECIAL OFFERS WEBSITE LISTINGS

<p>MAY 16 9:30 am - 12:30 pm Car Boot Sale Dornoch Community Centre (Social Club) Dornoch, Sutherland IV25 3PF</p>	<p>MAY 18 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm Dornoch Gatherings: John McDermott in concert Dornoch Cathedral High Street Dornoch, Sutherland IV25 3SH</p>	<p>MAY 21 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm Official Launch of North House Press - A Neil Gunn Celebration Dornoch Bookshop High Street Dornoch, Sutherland IV25 3SH</p>
<p>MAY 23 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm Dornoch Cathedral</p>	<p>MAY 23 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm Dornoch Pipe Band</p>	<p>MAY 28 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm Dornoch Gatherings:</p>

A reminder to members that you can **promote your events** on the Dornoch website events page. This is a great way to increase visibility and attract both visitors and locals throughout the year.

Members can also list **special offers**, helping to showcase deals/encourage bookings. To submit your events/offers for inclusion in the links below, please email the BID.

Events: thisisdornoch.com/events
Special Offers: thisisdornoch.com/accommodation/summer-special-offers
[Things To Do in Dornoch | Special Offers](#)

PLEASE help to promote 'What's On' with your guests/customers. Please also remember that copies of the visitor maps are available from Historylinks Museum.

HISTORYLINKS MUSEUM BID MEMBERS INVITATION TO A FREE TOUR!



Spaces are still available to BID members and their staff, **particularly those in direct contact with visitors/customers**, to attend an Open Morning at Historylinks Museum. Taking place on **Tuesday 21 May from 11am - 12 noon**, please email Lynne at curator@historylinks.org.uk to book your **FREE** slot!

If you would like to host a BID members visit to **your business**, to help raise awareness of what you have to offer visitors/customers, please contact the BID.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS!

MAKE SURE YOU AREN'T MISSING OUT ON YOUR BENEFITS!

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING CONTENT	WEBSITE LISTING	IMAGE LIBRARY	SEE AND DO MAPS	NETWORKING EVENTS	NEWSLETTER AND WHATSAPP GROUPS
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BID membership gives you marketing exposure and practical business support but the value comes when you use it. Take five minutes to review your membership and check you are using everything available to you? If not, get in touch. We're here to help you maximise the benefits. The latest list can be viewed [HERE](#).

- Quick wins include:
- ✓ Check your website listing is up to date
 - ✓ Tag @thisisdornoch on social media to reach 20k+ followers
 - ✓ Share your special offers, events or late availability
 - ✓ Use our professional images to promote your business

- Beyond marketing, don't forget:
- Networking events to build connections
 - WhatsApp groups for quick updates and support
 - Regular newsletters to keep you informed
 - Strong lobbying voice representing your interests

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Stay up to date - The Minutes of the BID Board meetings are saved at the base of the website homepage.

WhatsApp Groups - There are Retail, Accommodation, Restaurant and Professional Services WhatsApp groups. **A General BID Group has also been added.** Please text the BID on 07471 200103 to have your number added to the relevant group(s).

'Dornoch BID' Facebook Page - This is for member communications, business updates, funding opportunities, consultations, a behind-the-scenes look at how we support businesses, plus the latest on local projects and ways to get involved in our community. Please follow @dornochbid on Facebook and tag us to re-share your updates. Give this page a like and/or leave a comment.

'This Is Dornoch' Facebook and Instagram - Follow [@thisisdornoch](#) on Facebook and [@visitdornoch](#) on Instagram and discover local shops & services, bringing events, town news, community celebrations, and tourism campaigns, seasonal visitors to the town. Remember to tag us to re-share your posts and please share our posts.

Get in touch - Email DornochBID@thisisdornoch.com to discuss any membership matter and/or to arrange a call or meeting with Sharon, Dornoch BID Manager.



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