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DORNOCH BID NEWSLETTER

NON-DOMESTIC RATES REVALUATION UPDATE

As outlined previously, Dornoch BID is gathering information to support a potential appeal to the Valuation Appeal Committee (VAC) on behalf of businesses in the town affected by non-domestic rates revaluation. This classification does not fully reflect trading conditions, and robust evidence from businesses is key to strengthening our case.

Thank you to all who took the time to respond to the Business Seasonality and Non-Domestic Rates Revaluation Survey. If you operate a **non-accommodation business and have received an email requesting seasonal trading information,** we would be very grateful if you could submit figures by **20 May**. This data is vital in helping demonstrate the true seasonal nature of trading in Dornoch.

Once responses have been received and analysed, we will share a **template guidance document** to support any businesses wishing to submit their own formal challenge ("Proposal") ahead of the deadline of **31st July 2026**.

LET'S KEEP DORNOCH LOOKING GREAT 'TOWN TIDY' 2ND JUNE (5:30PM - 7:00PM)

A big thank you to everyone who helped at our Town Tidy earlier this month. All the efforts helped to ensure Dornoch was looking its very best. The timing couldn't have been better with the Princess Royal's visit to town the next day. The community spirit shown was fantastic and once again was appreciated.

The next Town Tidy is Monday 2nd June and well-deserved tea and cakes will be available from 7pm following all the work which starts at 5.30pm outside The Jail.

POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS COMING TO DORNOCH INDUSTRIAL PARK

We are pleased to share some positive news regarding improvements at Dornoch Industrial Park. Work starts this week to improve the steps and to install handrails to assist with safer and easier access for tenants, visitors and customers. Landscaping improvements are also planned to enhance the appearance of the Industrial Park.

Dornoch BID raised these access concerns with Highland Council last Spring following feedback from some BID members. Discussions continued over the following months directly between some of the tenants and the Council. This positive outcome reflects the value of local businesses speaking up about issues affecting the area and working together with partners to help deliver practical improvements that benefit everyone.

VISITOR LEVY UPDATE FOR DORNOCH BID MEMBERS

The Scottish Parliament passed the Visitor Levy (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill in March 2026. Implementation is now being discussed by ministers a flat fee "tourist tax" instead of only using a percentage-based model.

Local authorities can now set the levy as a fixed amount (per person or per night) or apply varied rates based on season or location. The Highland Council are now deciding what version of a Visitor Levy (or Tourist Tax) they will progress. Highland Council's Timescale:

- A NEW Proposed VL Scheme is expected to be presented to Council in September 2026
- There will then need to be a minimum of an 18 month implementation period. It is unclear as to whether this includes a consultation phase, or whether that would need to be on top.
- Therefore, it seems likely that the earliest date a Visitor Levy Could come into effect would be Spring 2028.

Throughout this worrying time, Dornoch BID will seek clarity for members as to what is happening and make representations to the Council on behalf of our members. Please get in touch if you have any queries.

HIGHLAND COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON SHORT-TERM LET PLANNING CONTROL AREAS

Highland Council is currently consulting on proposals to expand Short-Term Let Planning Control Areas across Highland Rural and Inverness City. These proposals could have implications for self-catering businesses and the wider tourism economy. The Association of Scotland's Self Catterers (ASSC) has raised concerns including a lack of clear evidence that existing control areas are improving housing outcomes, limited economic impact assessment, and potential uncertainty for existing operators.

All affected businesses are being encouraged to review the consultation and respond where appropriate. If the sector does not engage, there is a risk that decisions will be shaped without full understanding of the visitor economy. The Consultation closes 23 June 2026 (5pm). More information can be found clicking on the button below:

ASSC URGES HIGHLAND SELF-CATERING OPERATORS TO RESPOND TO PLANNING CONTROL AREA CONSULTATIONS

LOCAL BUSINESS PROMOTION OPPORTUNITY VIDEO SHOWCASE

Dornoch BID has been in contact with "The American Highlander" to explore opportunities to help promote and showcase local businesses, visitor experiences and the wider area through digital storytelling and online content. Jason is keen to promote businesses in the Highlands and help increase visibility and visitor engagement through his growing YouTube channel which has 40k followers.

This presents a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of the fantastic range of businesses, products and experiences available. The key points are as follows:

- Content is always presented positively and professionally
- The focus is on producing short, engaging features that combine interviews, visuals, and narrative storytelling to promote places, producers, and experiences within the area.
- Businesses will have the opportunity to review their segment prior to publication
- Businesses are not charged to take part

If any member would like to explore being involved, or would like further information, please get in touch with the BID.

EVENTS AND SPECIAL OFFERS WEBSITE LISTINGS

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 the Events page and "What's On" and remember also to collect copies of the visitor maps from Historylinks Museum. Thank you.

FOOD VAN OPPORTUNITY FLY-IN EVENT AT DORNOCH AERODROME

The local branch of the Light Aircraft Association (LAA) will be hosting their annual fly-in event at Dornoch Aerodrome on 8th August, with a range of visiting aircraft expected on the day. Capt. Hughie Urquhart has advised that the LAA is looking to secure a food van to operate in the car park during the event. If you are interested, please contact him:

paul.wyeman@tiscali.co.uk

Reminder: BID members are welcome to email Capt. Urquhart regarding his offer to support local businesses by displaying promotional materials, such as posters and menus, in the pilot lounge. Please email **dornochaerodrome@live.co.uk** if you would like to take advantage of this great opportunity which also includes **printing** *your posters!*

RURAL EV CHARGING FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

The Transport Scotland Rural and Island Infrastructure Fund is now open to support the installation of public EV charging infrastructure in eligible locations. The fund provides up to 75% capital funding for charging equipment, including chargers, AC and DC rapid chargers, with higher levels of funding available for island and remote sites. Projects combining charging infrastructure with battery storage or renewable energy may also be eligible for enhanced support.

Eligible applicants include landowners and businesses or charge point operators working on suitable sites within qualifying areas. All installations must be publicly accessible and compliant with current regulations. For more details click the button below.

RURAL AND ISLAND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND - ENERGY SAVING TRUST

VISITSCOTLAND - FREE BUSINESS SUPPORT AND PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

VisitScotland offers a range of free tools and opportunities for tourism and events businesses, designed to help increase visibility, improve marketing, and connect with wider markets. Businesses can access free support through the Business Support Hub, list events at no cost on VisitScotland.com, and explore opportunities to work with the travel trade to reach new audiences and tour operators.

There are also regular webinars and training sessions covering marketing, digital skills, sustainability, and working with industry partners. Members are encouraged to explore these resources to help promote their business and reach new markets.

✔ **Explore support and opportunities here:**
VisitScotland Business Support Hub
✔ **List events for free here:**
VisitScotland Event Listings
✔ **Travel trade information:**
VisitScotland Travel Trade

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS!

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
✔ Promote your business 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 07411 200103 to have your number added to the relevant group(s).

'Dornoch BID' Facebook Page - This is for member communications, business updates, funding opportunities, business updates, behind-the-scenes look at how we support business, plus the latest in local projects and ways to get involved in our community. Please follow the page and remember to 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 **@thisisdornoch** on Instagram and discover local shops & services, seasonal events, town news, community celebrations, and tourism campaigns bringing visitors to the town. Remember to tag us to re-share your posts and please share our posts.

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

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