



Dear Member,

Annual Progress Update (March 2025 – February 2026)

As we approach the end of the BID year, I would like to reflect on what has been delivered on your behalf and set this clearly against the commitments made in the Dornoch BID Business Plan.

Dornoch BID remains a young organisation. However, thanks to your levy contributions, the work of our BID Manager, commitment of our volunteer Directors, and the many businesses and individuals who have contributed time, ideas and practical support, we are seeing tangible progress across the objectives set for the BID by the town.

Objective 1 – Market & Promote Dornoch as a Year-Round Destination

- Our **“This is Dornoch” website** has continued to grow, with improved Search Engine Optimisation increasing discoverability and promoting member businesses to a worldwide audience. Over 79k people looked at the website in 2025, an increase of 5% over 2024.
- Improved **Facebook and Instagram activity** has extended Dornoch’s reach and consistently driven traffic to the website. Traffic from organic social media has increased from 1,984 to 6,673 in 2025 an increase of 236% since 2024. Our FB account now has over 20k followers and typically achieves about 250k views a month.
- A comprehensive **online Events Calendar** on the website now provides year-round visibility and bookability for local events, supporting businesses to plan and capitalise on increased footfall.
- The **Spring & Autumn Highland Festivals** generated new shoulder-season demand, supporting accommodation, hospitality and retail businesses beyond peak months.
- Targeted **paid social media marketing campaigns** promoted Dornoch locally and nationally at key points in the year, delivering measurable impressions, clicks and website visits.
- Sponsored **‘What’s On’ leaflets**, funded by BID members, increased awareness of year-round activity and encouraged local and visitor participation.
- The BID supported the start-up of the **Dornoch Gatherings** initiative, positioning Dornoch as the cultural heart of the Northern Highlands.

Collectively, these activities enhance Dornoch’s profile, encourage stays and repeat visits, and support increased visitor spend, benefiting levy payers directly.

Objective 2 – A Welcoming & Attractive Business Environment

- **Monthly Town Tidies**, launched in May and supported by volunteers and sponsor Hi-Safe Ltd., have delivered visible improvements to the town centre.
- Engagement with **Highland Council and BEAR Scotland** led to cleared drains and improved visibility of key A9 signage. These practical improvements enhance first impressions and accessibility.
- **InPost lockers** were installed at Dornoch Spar, as a direct result of BID agitation, adding convenience for residents and visitors. Progress towards **free town Wi-Fi** has continued and should be in place from Spring.
- The Board has demonstrated their responsiveness to community feedback, by pausing a **Winter Lighting Trail initiative**.
- **See and Do visitor maps** have been produced and the information boards around town are to be updated.

These actions support the overall visitor experience and reinforce Dornoch’s reputation as an attractive, destination.

Objective 3 – Business Collaboration & Advocacy

- Regular communication through **Newsletters, WhatsApp groups, the Members’ Facebook page, briefings and networking meetings** has ensured businesses remain informed and connected.
- The BID has used its political voice in the Highlands, and was one of the organisations, actively campaigning against a **Highland Visitor Levy**. This has been successful for the time being, but we are on our guard for potential developments in 2026/7
- Practical support has included guidance on **appealing some astonishingly high draft non-domestic rates revaluations**, potentially delivering financial savings for members.
- Collaboration with community partners included sharing and supporting consultations such as **DADCA’s Community Centre review, NC500 surveys and Highland Council’s Housing Impact survey**.
- Promotion of partner initiatives including the **North Highland Chamber’s Live North website** and the **Highland Small Business Group** has widened opportunity and visibility.
- Early coordination is underway for **Royal Dornoch Golf Club’s 150th Anniversary (2027)**, encouraging accommodation providers and businesses to plan ahead, and prepare for this historic event and economic opportunity.

Through advocacy and collaboration, the BID strengthens Dornoch’s influence and protects members’ interests.

Objective 4 – Facilitating Access to Business Support

- Ongoing **signposting to grants, training and advisory support** has helped members access growth opportunities.
- Support to reduce overheads has included **utilities and broadband reviews**.
- Employment and recruitment support has continued through partnership with Live North. Their candidate matching and job vacancies platform is now linked directly from our website to improve accessibility. Job Fairs have also been promoted.
- Timely updates on **short-term let licensing and rates revaluation guidance** have supported compliance and potentially reduced financial risk.
- Skills development opportunities such as **HIE’s digital tourism 1-to-1 support** and social media/photography training have been highlighted to strengthen marketing capability.

These measures directly support cost control, workforce stability and business improvement.

Looking ahead the momentum now in place is encouraging. We are seeing growing engagement, clearer visibility for Dornoch, and stronger coordination across the business community. Together, we are shaping a stronger and more resilient future for Dornoch.

On behalf of the Board, **thank you** for your continued support and engagement.

I look forward to working together in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Dixon
Chair
Dornoch BID

