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RECONNECTING PEOPLE, IDEAS & COMMUNITIES

A CRITICAL-FRIEND PAPER

One stronger BID, or a different one?

Questions and commitments on the Derby BID 2027–2032 proposal, for answer before the ballot closes on 12 November 2026

Read through Citrey CIC's Living City™ framework, Place Nutrition™ and Destination Derbados

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Citizen's Orrery CIC (Citrey CIC)

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

What this paper is asking for

Derby city centre levy payers are being asked to vote on a single Derby Business Improvement District (BID) for 2027–2032, bringing together the Cathedral Quarter and St Peters Quarter BIDs and adding Becketwell. The postal ballot closes at 5pm on Thursday 12 November 2026 and the result will be declared on Friday 13 November.[1,3]

This paper asks Derby BID for **specific answers and commitments before the ballot closes**, while leaving room for the BID to respond. We would welcome a written response by **5pm on Monday 9 November 2026**, so that levy payers have time to read it before they vote. Any substantive response will be given fair consideration.

We write as a critical friend. We want Derby city centre to thrive, and we want a BID that helps it do so. The full business plan already addresses many of the right themes: vacancy, footfall, contributions from property owners and local delivery. It includes outcome measures and recognises that the BID must separate its own contribution from wider market conditions.[2] Our challenge is about **specificity, measurability and how convincing those commitments are**, and about whether the model itself has kept pace with how much the city centre has changed.

> WHERE CITREY CIC STANDS
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> Citizen's Orrery CIC (Citrey CIC) is a Derby community interest company based at 6a Sadler Gate. Sadler Gate is listed in the BID street schedule as "Entire street", so our home sits inside the proposed BID area, in the Cathedral Quarter part that would join on 1 March 2028.[1,2] Our directors are Lauren Thompson (Founder & CEO), Amit Zala and Devon Daley.
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> We have an interest in a thriving Sadler Gate and a thriving city centre, and we declare it openly. Our visitor numbers and activities to date are promising early progress; we apply the same distinction between activity and sustained outcomes that we ask of the BID. This paper is not a request for BID funding for Citrey CIC.

Published figures carry a numbered source (Appendix B). Our own views are labelled "Our interpretation" and offered for debate. We comment on the BID's published proposal, not on any individual. Detailed evidence is in Appendix A.

Key dates for levy payers

Date	What happens
5pm, Thursday 12 November 2026	Ballot closes; papers must be received by then[1,3]
Friday 13 November 2026	Result declared[1,3]

SUMMARY

The case in brief

1. **The picture is mixed, and both sides deserve recognition.** Core Area ground-floor vacancy has improved, from 26% in 2022 to 19% in July 2025, and new businesses are opening.[8,13] Yet city-centre vacancy still stands at 18.2% of outlets, against a UK average of 14.1%, and the footfall recovery is "largely skewed by the Derbion".[7] Some businesses inside the proposed BID area are still closing.[10–12]
2. **Improvement needs protecting through the winter.** January and February can place additional pressure on businesses. We would like to see how the plan anticipates and cushions that pressure, including what the current BIDs and partners will do for February 2027, before the new term begins.
3. **The plan names the right themes, but not yet with targets.** Every 2027–2032 measure is described as "illustrative", with no numeric targets and no baselines. The survey has no published base, the business plan is still marked "Working draft", and year one (£274,000) covers only two of the three areas.[1,2]
4. **Activity tells us about effort; it does not yet tell us about outcomes.** Ranger hours, engagements and emergency equipment are valuable. The question is how that activity improves conditions and reduces harm, and how we will know.
5. **Major investment is real, but most of it arrives late in the term.** The Great British Railways headquarters at Becketwell is due for completion by spring 2029, and none of the East Midlands Freeport tax sites is in the city centre.[14–16] The city centre needs a plan for the bridge years, 2027–2030.
6. **A healthier mix would give more people more reasons to come.** Civic, cultural, leisure, food, services, independents and upper-floor uses together make a centre worth visiting at different times of day.
7. **Core spend must come first.** Levy money should go, above all, on a proper plan to reactivate the city centre and proper investment in marketing, and we ask whether it could help with parking costs for visitors to the Quarters. Regular cultural programming is one of the most reliable ways to turn that spend into repeat visits, and Derby's 2027 landmarks are a ready-made opportunity.
8. **Community engagement is an open question, and all proposed spending needs clear rules.** We ask that proposed spending, including any community activity, be assessed against agreed BID outcomes, with transparent criteria, costs and reporting, focused on recovering footfall, tackling homelessness, public facilities such as toilets outside Derbion, and helping people trust that the high street is safe.

9. **The model needs to keep learning.** After nearly two decades of business-led place management, we would like the BID to say what has changed, what has been learned and what will change next. A merger changes the scale of the BID. We would like it to change the model too.

SECTION 1

How we read the proposal

Citrey CIC brings three ways of looking at a place to this paper. Each is offered briefly as a lens for asking better questions, not as a verdict; the practical questions that follow do most of the work. Throughout, we test them against the BID's own published examples: the Ice Rink and Golden Ticket, the window vinyls on vacant units, Ride the Mod Wave and the Community Action Group.

LENS 1: THE LIVING CITY™

The Living City™ framework is the intellectual property of Adaptiv. It is applied here by Citrey CIC to explore the conditions shaping Derby's city centre, including in Citrey CIC's September 2026 papers, *Crisis Beneath Success*.[9,22] It asks what turns a city's strength into a good life for its people, and reads a place "from the roots upwards":[22]

- **Civic Roots:** community roots (people's relationships, belonging, skills and culture) and institutional roots (the ability of councils and other institutions to listen, coordinate, deliver and learn). *For the BID: who shapes it, and who is heard?*
- **Civic Qualities:** trust, civic culture, coherence, resilience, collective energy, adaptability and reputation. *For the BID: how much confidence do levy payers and the wider community have in its ability to listen, act fairly and deliver on its commitments, and how effectively does it learn and adapt?*
- **Civic Friction:** the rules, habits, assumptions and disconnected decisions that make good ideas hard to realise. *For the BID: what gets in the way of effective action, and which assumptions, established practices or decision-making processes may need revisiting as the city changes?*
- **Civic Canopy:** the visible activity of jobs, investment, businesses and footfall. *For the BID: are the streets beyond Derbion sharing in it?*
- **Civic Prosperity:** whether people can live well and feel "This place is mine. I belong here." *For the BID: does the centre work for everyone who uses it?*

LENS 2: PLACE NUTRITION™

Place Nutrition™ is a framework developed by Lauren Thompson through Roots & Futures and being tested by Citrey CIC in Derby. Inspired by the clarity of food nutrition labels, it makes the economic and social effect of spending visible by following the money: **where does the money go, and what does it build?** It asks how much of an organisation's spending actually stays local.

Applied to a city centre, it suggests a place needs a balanced diet: a varied mix of reasons to visit across the morning, the day and the evening, rather than a single ingredient or a single destination. Applied to the BID, it asks what £2.687m of levy and other income over five years will build on the streets, and how levy payers will see it.[1,2]

LENS 3: CULTURE AS ROUTINE FOOTFALL

Destination Derbados is a culture and destination brand curated by Devon Daley, founder of Mojobouji. Mojobouji describes itself as an umbrella for a handful of "feel-good projects": sonic and cinema sustenance, cultural concierge, live events and travelogue.[23] Devon also founded the Feel Good Film Club at QUAD in 2009, with monthly screenings.[23]

In September 2026, Citrey CIC, Mojobouji and Adaptiv hosted a canal cruise launching Destination Derbados, with the aim of keeping Derby on the map, sharing "Derbados" as a destination and nourishing local civic pride. The principle we take from this work is simple: **culture brings people back when it is regular, local and easy to find, not only when it is big.**

Lens	The question it asks of the BID	Where it appears
Living City™	What helps or holds back the centre's roots, qualities and canopy, and who benefits?	Sections 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10
Place Nutrition™	Where does the levy go, what does it build, and is the centre's diet balanced?	Sections 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9
Culture as routine footfall	Will people have regular reasons to come back, in every season and at every time of day?	Sections 6 and 8

SECTION 2

What the proposal says, and who pays

The proposal covers Cathedral Quarter, St Peters Quarter and Becketwell, "nearly 1,000 businesses and organisations", from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032. Income is £2,687,000 over five

years, of which £2,462,000 is levy, and the largest objective is the Derby Experience at £1,054,745.[1,2] The proposal at a glance, with our arithmetic on the budget, is in Appendix A.

Why year one is smaller

The budget is £274,000 in 2027/28 because only St Peters Quarter and Becketwell pay in the first year; Cathedral Quarter joins on 1 March 2028. It rises to £583,000 in year two, the first full year with all three areas, and then by around 2% a year to £624,000 in year five.[2] The budget roughly doubles once, when Cathedral Quarter joins, rather than every year.

Charities, education and the University

The levy criteria exempt only a narrow set of properties: those affected by insolvency or by legal restrictions on their use, places of religious worship, and courts. "No other relief or exemption will be given", and there is no exemption for education.[2] Charities in St Peters Quarter and Becketwell receive a 50% reduction in year one, and qualifying charities across the BID area a 25% reduction after that.[2]

The University of Derby's Cavendish Building, home to Derby International Business School at 1 Agard Street, opened in September 2025, and the BID rightly welcomes the students and staff it brings.[2,3,4] The street schedule includes only part of Agard Street ("4-6 on the south side and then north side only between Ford Street and Bridge Street"), so it is not clear whether the building is inside the boundary.[2] The University is a valued civic anchor. Its civic contribution is welcome, but it should not be assumed to stand in for paying in, on the same terms as everyone else.

QUESTIONS ON THE MONEY

- What will Cathedral Quarter businesses receive in year one, and how will spend be split across the three areas over the term?
- Is the Cavendish Building within the BID boundary, what levy will the University of Derby pay, and what will the BID do for student life in return?

SECTION 3

What has been achieved, and has the model moved on?

A record worth acknowledging

Cathedral Quarter BID was established in 2007 and St Peters Quarter BID in 2011, "creating almost two decades of business-led place management in Derby".[1] That record contains genuine achievements:

- Cathedral Quarter was ATCM BID of the Year and Best City Location at the Great British High Street Awards in 2016.[1]
- Derby has retained Purple Flag, an accreditation for how the evening and night-time economy is managed, for 13 consecutive years.[1,35]
- Over three years, the BIDs report 262 hanging baskets, 53 three-tier planters, more than 80 events, and around 6,000 people at A Jurassic Day Out in 2024.[1,2]
- The BIDs report more than £342,000 in savings, in-kind support and grants in the current term.[2]
- The 2022 Cathedral Quarter renewal won 85% of votes cast and 88.9% by rateable value.[6]

Many of these were delivered by small teams with modest budgets. They deserve recognition.

Has the business model evolved?

Over the same period, the conditions facing the city centre have changed profoundly: online retail, the pandemic, national cost pressures and the concentration of demand in Derbion.[7] Much of that is beyond any BID's control, and we do not hold the BID teams responsible for it.

THROUGH THE LIVING CITY™ LENS: ADAPTABILITY

Adaptability is one of the civic qualities the Living City™ framework looks for: the capacity of a place and its institutions to learn and renew.[22] Our own diagnostic paper notes that "enduring value depends on adaptation and renewal".[22] A BID entering its third decade should be able to show where it has adapted.

OUR INTERPRETATION

The levy basis, governance, delivery model and measures in the proposal are recognisably those of the current BIDs, and the merger is mainly a change of scale.[1,2] That is a starting point for a fair question, not a conclusion.

The question we would put to levy payers is not whether the BIDs have worked hard; they clearly have. It is what has changed, what has been learned, and what will change next as a result.

QUESTIONS FOR DERBY BID

- What will the BID do differently in 2027–2032, and what has it learned from the current terms that informs those changes?
- Which parts of the model (levy basis, governance, delivery and measurement) will be reviewed in the first year, and how will levy payers and the wider city be involved?

SECTION 4

Evidence, reporting and trust

Trust is one of the civic qualities in the Living City™ framework. It grows through people's experience of being heard and treated fairly, commitments being kept, and meaningful outcomes being delivered. Openness about difficulties and learning from setbacks help sustain that trust.[22] The BID's accountability to levy payers and the wider city depends heavily on what it publishes. The plan's own principles are "Baseline first", "Separate outputs and outcomes", "Report by area" and "Publish openly".[2] These are welcome. Four things need clarifying so that they can be met: the business plan published for the ballot is still marked as a working draft; survey results are given without a base; the combined Ranger business-visit figure mixes three-year and four-year counts; and baseline statements, footfall and vacancy series are still to be published.[1,2,4,5] The detail is in Appendix A.

THROUGH THE PLACE NUTRITION™ LENS: A LEVY LABEL

Place Nutrition™ asks where the money goes and what it builds. A simple annual "levy label" would answer that question on one page: what was spent under each objective and on management; which streets it reached; how much was spent with local suppliers, including levy payers themselves; and what changed as a result, against published baselines.

QUESTIONS FOR DERBY BID

- Which document is the formal proposal levy payers are voting on, and where are the survey base and the evidence register?
- What is the combined Ranger business-visit figure, and over what period?
- Will the BID publish the footfall and vacancy data it already holds, and commit to a date for publishing baselines and targets by area?
- Will the BID publish a short annual summary showing where the levy went, by objective and by street, and how much was spent locally?

SECTION 5

From activity to outcomes

The prospectus presents 19,030 Ranger hours, 23,000 business visits and more than 3,200 "public or ambassadorial engagements" over three years. It also lists trauma kits, defibrillators, bleed kits and CPR training, and Community Action Group meetings to "coordinate responses to homelessness, rough sleeping and persistent anti-social behaviour".[1,2] The BID's own survey shows how businesses experience the street:[2]

Issue	Rated poor or very poor	Rated important or very important
Drug and drink issues on the streets	81%	93%
Street begging and rough sleeping	74%	88%
Personal safety during the evening and at night	58%	86%
Crime and safety generally	53%	93%

OUR INTERPRETATION

Emergency equipment and training are worthwhile preparedness measures, and a visible Ranger service has real value in its own right. But activity figures need careful reading. More Ranger contacts could reflect worsening conditions, better coverage or greater trust. Fewer recorded incidents could reflect genuine improvement, reduced reporting or displacement.

In Living City™ terms, these are signs in the canopy; the test is whether they translate into civic prosperity, a centre where people feel safe and welcome. That is why the plan's own principle of separating outputs from outcomes matters. We are not asking the BID to do less. We are asking it to show how its activity improves conditions and reduces harm, and how levy payers will be able to tell.

QUESTIONS FOR DERBY BID

- Which of the conditions businesses rated poor should be measurably better by 2032, from what baseline, and by how much?
- Will the BID publish annual trends in incidents, first-aid and welfare responses, with an explanation of what is driving them?

SECTION 6

Vacancy, footfall and the bridge years

Improving, and worth protecting

There is real progress to welcome. Derby City Council's own monitoring shows Core Area ground-floor vacancy falling from 26% in 2022 to 19% in July 2025.[8] There are wider signs of private recovery in the streets too: a food court in the yard linking Sadler Gate and St James's Street, a new bookshop-café on Sadler Gate, and a pub application for a long-empty listed building.[13] These are the work of owners and operators. Levy payers would find it helpful to know what part, if any, the BID played, and how it will help sustain them through their first winters.

Progress of this kind needs protecting. January and February can place additional pressure on businesses: a weak festive season, the quarter-day rent at Christmas and quieter trading can make a hard year harder. Nationally, Insolvency Service figures reported by *Retail Gazette* showed company administrations rising by 41% between December 2025 and January 2026; that is an example of winter pressure, not evidence of a recurring Derby pattern.[21] Locally, a long-standing Green Lane shop announced its closure in January 2026.[10] A new term begins on 1 April 2027, so February 2027 still sits with the current BIDs and partners, and the first January and February in the new BID's hands would be in 2028.[1]

BID CASE STUDY: THE CATHEDRAL QUARTER ICE RINK AND THE GOLDEN TICKET

What the BID did. The BID sponsors the Cathedral Quarter Ice Rink in the Market Place, run with Derby City Council from the end of November to New Year's Eve.[30,31] Its Golden Ticket prize draw, whose stated goal was "to increase foot traffic in the city centre", asks shoppers to collect tickets from participating businesses.[30]

What its own evidence shows. The rink recorded more than 11,000 visits in 2025, and the Golden Ticket generated more than 4,000 entries in each of the last two Christmas seasons.[1,2] The council reported more than 11,800 skaters in 2024.[31]

The question it raises. This is a genuine success, and it ends on 31 December. Through the Place Nutrition™ lens, it is a seasonal feast followed by a lean January. What do the current BIDs and partners plan for the weeks after the rink comes down, when January and February can place additional pressure on businesses, and could some of the rink's audience and the Golden Ticket's business network be carried into the new year?

QUESTIONS ON THE WINTER MONTHS

- What part did the BID play in the recent openings around Sadler Gate, and how will it help new businesses like these through their first years?
- How does the plan anticipate and cushion the additional pressure January and February can place on businesses, including what the current BIDs and partners will do for February 2027?
- Will the BID talk to occupiers and agents before Christmas about who is at risk, and have support, marketing and meanwhile uses ready for units that close in the new year?

From dressing empty units to filling them

Objective 3, Growth & Investment, is the smallest of the three objectives at £421,898 over five years.[1,2] The plan includes vacancy and business-opening measures. We would welcome

published baselines, targets and an explanation of how the BID will assess its contribution to those changes. The business plan itself says case studies "should explain how the BID's coordination or funding added value without overstating causation".[2] We have tried to read the BID's own examples in that spirit.

BID CASE STUDY: WINDOW VINYLS AND THE ART AND POETRY PROJECT

What the BID did. After lockdown, Cathedral Quarter BID used Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding for window vinyls, lighting and graffiti installations.[26] Working with Derby City Council, landlords and local creatives, the BIDs dressed vacant shopfronts with art and poetry, including the former Barclays Bank on the corner of St James Street and Cornmarket, "to create a more interesting environment for visitors".[27] In 2023–24 the BID funded new vinyls for "some long-term vacant units".[29]

What its own evidence shows. In the 2022 renewal survey, 68% of Cathedral Quarter businesses said the vinyls and boardings for empty units were beneficial.[28] The same survey found businesses wanting a focus on "filling the empty units by creative thinking and options for more flexible use".[28] The new prospectus lists the vinyls among the BIDs' achievements.[1]

The question it raises. Vinyls make a street feel cared for, and local artists benefited. The question the BID's own survey points to is what happened next. How many of the dressed units have since been let, and to what kinds of use? In Living City™ terms, what friction kept the others empty? A former bank dressed with art is a reminder that the bigger prize is a new use behind the glass.

Derby has another large departure to prepare for: Primark will leave Cornmarket for Derbion in 2027.[12]

THROUGH THE LIVING CITY™ LENS: CANOPY AND FRICTION

Derby has secured investment that is real and large in scale. The Great British Railways headquarters at Becketwell is expected to start construction in early 2027 and finish by spring 2029, housing up to 450 staff.[14,15] The BID notes that the Market Hall has reopened and the University of Derby Business School is welcoming students and staff.[2] But the headline investments arrive late in, or after, the proposed term, and several are outside the city centre.[14–18] Our diagnostic asks: "What would help activity at Derbion, Pride Park and cultural venues support more of the surrounding streets and independent businesses?"[22] Part of the answer lies in friction: property terms, opening hours, routes and decision processes that leave promising uses stuck.[22]

OUR INTERPRETATION

The city centre needs a bridge: a plan for 2027–2030 that keeps people coming into the streets between today's closures and tomorrow's openings. The opportunity is to turn the investment and activity Derby already has, at the Market Hall, at events, among students at the Business School and in new employment, into repeat visits and spending across the surrounding streets.

QUESTIONS FOR DERBY BID

- Which streets will be prioritised for vacancy and footfall, and why?
- Of the vacant units the BIDs have dressed with vinyls, how many have since been let, and what will the BID do differently to bring units back into use?
- Will the BID bring owners, agents, the council and community and cultural organisations together around a live register of vacant units and a list of the uses each street lacks?
- How is the BID preparing for Primark's move from Cornmarket in 2027?

SECTION 7

A richer mix for the high street

Derby's streets are at their best when they offer many different reasons to visit. We would love to see the BID champion a more varied mix: **civic** spaces where people meet and take part; **cultural** venues, studios and makers; **leisure**; **food** and drink across the day; everyday **services**; a strong showing of **independents**; and **upper floors** brought back into use as homes, studios and workspaces.

This is not a criticism of retail, which remains vital. It is a recognition that a healthy centre depends on the mix of uses, not only the number of empty units. Derby already shows what a richer mix looks like: Bustler's food court and a new bookshop-café near Sadler Gate, and the Market Hall and Vaillant Live as new settings for trade and culture.[13,22]

BID CASE STUDY: RIDE THE MOD WAVE

What the BID did. On 15 August 2026, Cathedral Quarter and St Peters Quarter BIDs organised Ride the Mod Wave with Derby Market Hall: more than 200 classic scooters from Mercia Scooter Club on the Market Place, a vintage fair in the Market Hall, performances on Osnabruck Square, and a Northern Soul and Motown night in the Market Hall into the evening. QUAD screened *Quadrophenia*, and visitors were encouraged to support independent shops, food and pubs in the surrounding streets.[32]

What its own evidence shows. The BID reports that the event "attracted thousands of visitors and generated interest in similar future events".[1] It was described as the first of its kind in Derby.[32]

The question it raises. This is close to what we mean by a balanced diet: the Market Hall, the streets, an independent cinema and the evening economy working together around a shared theme. The BID's own evidence stops at attendance. Did visitors spend in the surrounding streets, and could a one-off become a regular fixture that people return for?

THROUGH THE PLACE NUTRITION™ LENS: A BALANCED DIET

A centre that depends on one ingredient, or one destination, is fragile. A healthy place diet has something for the morning, the working day, the early evening and the night, and for people of every age and income.

Event footfall is part of the diet too. When thousands of people leave a concert, a match or a show, the question is whether the Quarters are open, lit and inviting enough to catch some of that spending before people head for their cars.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED AT 6A SADLER GATE

Citrey CIC's home is the former Eden venue on Sadler Gate, a building that sat empty for years after a past in the late-night economy.[24,25] Rather than another bar or restaurant, it is becoming a civic hub: since opening on 28 June 2026, more than 600 people had crossed the threshold by September, and a resident artist and new tenants are joining the building.[22,25] Our lessons are modest but transferable: start with what the street lacks rather than the default use; curate a mix of tenants and a regular programme; and open the doors early, with early-morning coffee raves, tours, workshops and debates while the renovation is still under way.[24,25]

QUESTIONS FOR DERBY BID

- Will the BID map the mix in each street, identify the uses each street lacks, and publish the uses it wants to attract?
- How will the BID work with the council and owners to make it easier for non-retail, cultural and upper-floor uses to take space?
- What will the BID do to capture spending from events at Vaillant Live, Pride Park and Derby Theatre, and from its own events, in the streets of the Quarters?

SECTION 8

Culture as routine footfall

The BIDs have run more than 80 events over three years, and around 6,000 people came to A Jurassic Day Out in 2024.[1,2] Ride the Mod Wave and the Ice Rink show the BID can draw a crowd. Large events matter: they put the centre on the map. What sustains a street, though, is the habit of coming back. A monthly film night, a regular music session or a weekly market gives people a reason to return, and gives businesses a pattern they can plan around.

THROUGH THE DESTINATION DERBADOS LENS

Devon Daley's Feel Good Film Club, founded at QUAD in 2009, offers monthly screenings.[23] That is what routine footfall looks like: a fixture people put in their diaries, built on local talent and local audiences. Destination Derbados extends the idea to the city as a whole, treating Derby itself as somewhere worth visiting and being proud of.

The Mod Wave's Northern Soul night is a good example of an event running on into the evening. Regular early-evening culture in the Quarters, well lit and easy to find, can help more people feel at home in the streets after dark.

OUR INTERPRETATION

The Derby Experience objective is the natural home for this work. We would like to see part of it committed to a year-round cultural calendar of regular fixtures, co-programmed with Derby's own cultural producers and deliberately strong in January and February, when the centre needs it most. Success should be measured by repeat visits and time spent in the Quarters, not only by attendance on the day.

Purple Flag and how safe people feel

Derby has retained Purple Flag for 13 years, and that deserves a warm welcome.[1] Purple Flag is an accreditation for how well a centre manages its evening and night-time economy, assessed

against standards for policy, wellbeing, movement, appeal and place.[35] It is not a measure of how safe people feel. In the BID's own survey, 58% of businesses rate personal safety during the evening and at night as poor or very poor; 81% say the same of drug and drink issues on the streets, and 74% of street begging and rough sleeping.[2] Alongside maintaining the award, we ask how perceptions of safety have changed over time, and what the BID will measure — and improve — next.

2027: a landmark year for Derby

2027 gives the BID a rare opportunity. It is 50 years since Derby became a city on 7 June 1977, and the council's 50:50 programme, marking city status alongside 50 years of twinning with Osnabrück, runs into 2027.[36,37] It is also the centenary of Derby Cathedral: All Saints became a cathedral on 7 July 1927, and the Cathedral and Diocese are running a year-long centenary programme.[38,39] That programme includes a Bess of Hardwick weekend at the Cathedral on 12–14 February 2027, in exactly the post-Christmas weeks when the Quarters need visitors most.[39,40]

There is a heritage moment too. The Assembly Rooms on the Market Place were opened on 9 November 1977 and have been closed since a fire in 2014.[41,42] Their would-be 50th anniversary could be a gentle prompt to celebrate what the building has meant to the city, and to talk together about the future of the Market Place.

QUESTIONS ON CULTURE, SAFETY AND 2027

- How have businesses' and visitors' perceptions of safety changed over time, what will the BID measure on perceived safety, and what further improvements will it pursue alongside maintaining Purple Flag?
- How will the BID use 2027, including 50 years as a city and the Cathedral centenary, to bring people into the Quarters, encourage repeat visits and carry footfall through the post-Christmas months?
- How much of the Derby Experience budget will support regular, year-round programming in the Quarters, as opposed to one-off events?
- How will the BID measure whether events bring people back to the streets, rather than only how many attend?

SECTION 9

Protect the core spend

The levy is a compulsory charge on businesses. Its first job is to bring people back into the city centre and give them reasons to stay and return. Community-led activity can itself deliver reactivation and marketing, and the budget inevitably involves choices. We ask that all

proposed spending be assessed against agreed BID outcomes, with transparent criteria, costs and reporting, so levy payers can judge value. The core outcomes we most want protected are:

- **A proper plan to reactivate the city centre,** street by street, with milestones that levy payers can track.
- **Proper spend on marketing** the city centre and its Quarters as a destination in their own right.

The Derby Experience objective is the largest in the plan, at £1,054,745 over five years.[1,2] The published documents do not make clear how much of that will go on marketing. *Evidence needed.* Getting to the Quarters matters too, and we would like to know whether levy money could be used to support parking costs for visitors.

QUESTIONS FOR DERBY BID

- How much of the Derby Experience budget will go on marketing the city centre and its Quarters, and how will its effect on footfall be measured?
- Could levy money be used to support parking costs for visitors to the Quarters, and has the BID explored this with Derby City Council?
- Will all proposed spending, including any community activity, be assessed against agreed BID outcomes, with transparent criteria, costs and reporting?

SECTION 10

Community engagement and community money

Has the BID engaged enough?

In Living City™ terms, a BID's community roots matter as much as its institutional ones.[22] It is an open question whether the BID has done enough to engage the wider community. In the proposal, "community" appears chiefly as a Community Action Group that coordinates responses to homelessness and anti-social behaviour. Residents appear mainly as "residential investment", "new homes" and a "growing residential… economy".[1,2] There is no reserved place on the Board for a community organisation or a resident, and working groups exist to "provide business input".[2] We would welcome the BID setting out how it has engaged residents, community organisations and people with lived experience, and what it heard.

The BID already has building blocks to work with. Volunteers from local businesses joined the Great British Spring Clean, collecting more than 20 bags of litter alongside the council's Streetpride team.[29] The BIDs worked with partners to bring the Baton of Hope, the UK's leading suicide prevention campaign, to the city centre, and they support Derby Festé, Derby Folk

Festival, St George's Day and the Caribbean Carnival.[1] The BIDs' hanging baskets and planters are among their most visible work, and the BID is likely to be behind much of the greening of the city centre.[1,2] A clear, regular two-way relationship with the people who live in and use the centre is not yet set out in the published plan. We would welcome the BID setting out what arrangements already exist, and how they could be strengthened. Two practical forms would make a difference: **regular open discussions between businesses and residents** about what the centre needs, and **community-led activity with a clear purpose** around repeat visits and positive experiences of the city centre.

If levy money goes to the community, who decides?

If more BID levy is set aside for community activity, levy payers and the public need to know how it will be allocated and who decides who gets it. That needs a clear, transparent allocation process, agreed before any money is committed:

- **Published criteria,** tied to the BID's outcomes rather than to who asks first or loudest.
- **An open and accessible call,** so that any eligible group can apply on equal terms.
- **A decision panel** that includes levy payers and community representatives, with conflicts of interest declared and recorded.
- **Published decisions,** showing who received funding, how much, and why.
- **Simple reporting on results,** proportionate to the size of the award.

The money should be focused on the problems that matter most to the health of the city centre, not on nice-to-haves:

- **Recovering footfall,** with activity designed to bring people back repeatedly and measured by whether it does.
- **Tackling homelessness.** Ending rough sleeping is a stated priority of the Prime Minister, who launched a national drive in his first speech in office in July 2026.[33] Community work with the council and specialist organisations, including better daytime provision, would put the BID alongside that effort.
- **Public facilities on the high street,** including public toilets outside Derbion, so that the streets of the Quarters can host people comfortably for longer.
- **Helping people trust that the high street is safe,** given how businesses themselves rate safety on the streets.[2]

OUR INTERPRETATION

The BID's care for greening is a real asset. The next step could be to embrace partners who bring practical, radical change: people greening the city in modern ways that spark curiosity and invite visitors to linger; organisations focused on resilience, including those who know how to set up community restaurants; those using third spaces in new ways; and those helping people learn new things outside a formal academic setting.

The BID is a very small team, and its time is precious. It can do most by working with partners who already have the know-how, on activity with a clear purpose around repeat visits and positive experiences of the city centre.

These proposals are intended to create open opportunities for eligible organisations across the city. Any involvement by Citrey CIC would be subject to the same criteria and conflict-of-interest arrangements.

Prevention, not displacement

Homelessness appears in the proposal mainly as a business concern: "begging and rough sleeping", rated poor by 74% of businesses.[2] The council has been asked to approve a 12-week public consultation on its draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2027–2031. Its vision is that homelessness should be "rare, brief and non-recurring", and its principles include "Person-Centred and Trauma-Informed" and "Lived Experience".[20] Derby is also set to become a Marmot Place, working with the Institute of Health Equity from autumn 2026 to September 2028.[19]

BID CASE STUDY: THE COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

What the BID did. The BIDs run regular Community Action Group meetings to "coordinate responses to homelessness, rough sleeping and persistent anti-social behaviour", alongside the Ranger service, Safer Business Action Days and crime-reduction partnerships.[1,2]

What its own evidence shows. The prospectus and business plan describe the meetings but do not publish who attends, what they decided or what changed as a result. We could not find published outcomes.

The question it raises. Through the Living City™ lens, this is where community and institutional roots meet. Does the group include people with lived experience and specialist services, and how does its work connect with the council's prevention-first strategy and with daytime provision? A short annual account of what it achieved would build trust.

In any city, a street presence set up mainly to reassure businesses can move people who are homeless or vulnerable from one doorway to the next without improving their situation. We are not suggesting this happens in Derby. We note only that the proposal does not say how it would be avoided. A BID that wants a "safer, more welcoming" centre has a stake in the council's prevention-first approach, and in the civic prosperity of everyone who uses the centre.[1,20]

QUESTIONS FOR DERBY BID

- How has the BID engaged residents, community organisations and people with lived experience in shaping this proposal?
- If levy money is set aside for community activity, what will the criteria be, who will decide, and how will decisions be published?
- How will the BID's safety work support the council's homelessness strategy, including better daytime provision, rather than displacing people?

SECTION 11

What we are asking Derby BID to do

Some of these requests can be answered now. Others need longer-term work, and it would be unreasonable to expect them all to be settled before the ballot. To make a substantive response achievable by 9 November, we have grouped the immediate asks into **six priorities**. The longer-term asks below are grouped by the three lenses.

Before the ballot closes: six priorities

1. **The definitive proposal and supporting evidence.** Say which document levy payers are voting on, explain why the business plan is marked "Working draft", and publish the evidence register listed in its contents.
2. **Survey and Ranger reporting clarifications.** Publish the survey base (number of respondents and response rate), and clarify the Ranger business-visit figure, including how it was compiled and over what period.
3. **Existing data and a timetable for baselines and targets.** Publish the footfall and vacancy data the BIDs already hold, and commit to a date for publishing baselines and targets by area.
4. **Year-one coverage, contributions, boundary and transition.** Explain what Cathedral Quarter receives before it joins, how spend will be split across the three areas, what changes for Cathedral Quarter businesses who vote now but join only in March 2028, whether Derbion's units are within the BID (the street schedule does not name Derbion, and St Peter's Way is limited to "businesses fronting onto St Peter's Street"), and whether the University of Derby's Cavendish Building is within the boundary and what levy the University will pay.[2,34]

5. **Immediate priorities for struggling streets and winter trading.** Say how the plan will cushion the additional pressure January and February can place on businesses, including what the current BIDs and partners will do for February 2027, and what will happen from 2028 under the new BID.
6. **Rules for any community money.** Set out how much, the criteria, who decides, and how decisions will be published. Confirm that all proposed spending will be assessed against agreed BID outcomes, with transparent criteria, costs and reporting.

In the first year and over the term

Through the Living City™ lens: roots, qualities and friction

1. **Set outcome targets with baselines** (first year). For example: vacancy in the BID streets; footfall outside Derbion; business-rated safety; and repeat welfare contacts. Report them annually by area, as the plan's own principles require.
2. **Complete and publish the baseline statements** with Derby City Council before levy bills are issued, showing year by year what is genuinely additional (first year).
3. **Review the business model** with levy payers and partners, and publish what will change (first year).
4. **Ask property owners to contribute.** Set a target for voluntary contributions from owners, who benefit from occupancy but pay only when units are empty (first year).[1,2]
5. **Strengthen governance.** Use the independent director places to bring in a community or voluntary-sector perspective and a resident of the BID area. Publish Board papers and minutes (over the term).
6. **Engage regularly and openly.** Hold regular discussions between businesses and residents, and report what was heard and what changed as a result (over the term).
7. **Choose prevention, not displacement.** Respond to the council's homelessness strategy consultation, publish a non-displacement and trauma-informed practice statement for the Rangers, engage with Derby's Marmot Place programme, and work with partners on daytime provision and public toilets outside Derbion (over the term).
8. **Report on influence openly.** Publish the BID's consultation responses and planning representations, and say where business views differed from those of residents (over the term).

Through the Place Nutrition™ lens: a healthy place diet

1. **Publish a reactivation plan for 2027–2030** (first year), prioritising named streets, with meanwhile uses of vacant units, a marketing programme for the Quarters and an answer on whether levy money could support visitors' parking costs.

2. **Publish an annual levy label** showing where the money went, by objective and by street, how much was spent locally, and what changed (every year).
3. **Bring partners together on vacancy and mix** (first year): owners, agents, the council and community and cultural organisations, around a live register of vacant units, a list of the uses each street lacks, a plan for known departures such as Primark's, and one place to promote opportunities.
4. **Plan for the winter** (every year), building on the Ice Rink and Golden Ticket, with early conversations with at-risk occupiers before Christmas and support, marketing and meanwhile uses ready for January and February.
5. **Report what happened to dressed units** (first year): how many vacant units that received vinyls have since been let, and to what uses.

Through the culture lens: routine footfall

1. **Commit part of the Derby Experience budget to a year-round cultural calendar** of regular fixtures in the Quarters, co-programmed with Derby's own cultural producers and strong in January and February (first year, then over the term).
2. **Capture event footfall** from Vaillant Live, Pride Park and Derby Theatre in the streets of the Quarters, with coordinated opening, lighting, wayfinding and marketing (over the term).
3. **Measure what culture builds:** repeat visits and time spent in the Quarters, not only attendance (over the term).
4. **Make the most of 2027** (first year): align with the council's 50:50 programme and the Cathedral centenary, including the Bess of Hardwick weekend in February, to bring people into the Quarters through the post-Christmas months.[36,39]
5. **Measure how safe people feel,** not only how the night-time economy is managed, alongside Purple Flag (every year).
6. **Turn one-off successes into fixtures,** such as a regular programme growing out of Ride the Mod Wave with the Market Hall and QUAD (over the term).

Questions levy payers may wish to ask before the vote are listed in Appendix A. Levy payers can send questions about the proposal to Derby BID, and questions about the ballot process to Derby City Council's Elections team, before the ballot closes at 5pm on Thursday 12 November 2026.[3]

An open invitation

Citrey CIC would be glad to host an open conversation at 6a Sadler Gate, bringing together BID staff, levy payers, residents and community organisations to agree what success should mean in 2032. We would welcome the chance to share the evidence behind this paper, and to be corrected where we have got things wrong.

To respond to this paper, please email **hello@citrey.co.uk**.

APPENDIX A

The evidence in more detail

The proposal at a glance

Item	What the proposal states
Area	Cathedral Quarter, St Peters Quarter and Becketwell; "nearly 1,000 businesses and organisations"[1,2]
Term	1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032; Cathedral Quarter joins on 1 March 2028[1]
Levy (Year 1)	2.35% of rateable value (RV) at £8,000 and above; £120 a year at £3,000 to £7,999; exempt below £3,000; rising each year by the higher of 2% or CPI[2]
Income	£2,462,000 levy plus £225,000 additional income, giving £2,687,000 over five years[1,2]
Spend	Derby Experience £1,054,745; Businesses & Organisations £632,847; Growth & Investment £421,898; management and administration £443,160; contingency £134,350[1,2]
Governance	Derby BID Ltd; 3 to 15 directors with a business majority; two councillor places; up to two independent directors[2]
Ballot	Postal; papers issued 15 October; closes 5pm 12 November; result 13 November 2026[1,3]

By our arithmetic, management and administration is 16.5% of the five-year budget and contingency is 5.0%. The "50/30/20" split between the three objectives applies to the remaining 78.5%. Additional income of £225,000 is 8.4% of the total, and is described as additional "where secured".[1,2]

Questions levy payers may wish to ask before the vote

- What has measurably improved in the BID streets since the current terms began, and what has worsened?
- How many businesses answered the consultation survey?
- Which document is the final proposal, and why is the business plan marked "Working draft"?
- What will success look like in 2032, in numbers, and from what baseline?
- What will the BID do between now and 2029 for streets losing footfall today, and how will it help businesses through January and February?
- How much will be spent on marketing the Quarters, and could levy money help with visitors' parking costs?
- How will the BID use Derby's 2027 landmarks to bring people into the Quarters?

- How will the BID encourage a richer mix of uses, including culture, services and upper floors?
- If levy money goes to community activity, who decides, and on what criteria?
- Will property owners contribute, are Derbion's units included, and what will the University of Derby pay?
- How will Ranger and safety work avoid displacing vulnerable people?
- Cathedral Quarter businesses vote now but join only in March 2028. What changes for them in the meantime?

Evidence and reporting: the detail

- **A plan still marked as a working draft.** The business plan published for the ballot is headed "WORKING SEPTEMBER 2026". Its final page reads "Working draft… Subject to business consultation, Board approval, definitive rating data and final legal review". Its contents page lists an "evidence register and publication checklist" that we could not find in the published file.[2]
- **A survey without a base.** Consultation results are given as percentages throughout, with no number of respondents, no response rate and no exact survey dates.[1,2]
- **Ranger business visits.** The prospectus reports "23,000 business visits" over "the last three years".[1] The 2026 renewal newsletters report 11,570 visits by the Cathedral Quarter team "over the last three years" and 11,740 by the St Peters Quarter team "over the last 4 years".[4,5] Together these make 23,310 (our arithmetic), but one count covers four years rather than three. A clear statement of the combined figure and its period would resolve this.
- **Baseline statements still to come.** These set out what the council will keep providing, so that BID spending is genuinely additional. They are to be completed after a successful ballot.[2]
- **Footfall and vacancy data.** The prospectus states that "footfall reports, sales monitoring and vacancy surveys provide useful evidence for businesses and investors", but it publishes no footfall or vacancy series.[1]

The condition of the city centre

- **Vacancy.** The council's July 2026 Retail and Centres Study records 150 vacant outlets in the city centre, 18.2% of all outlets, against a UK average of 14.1%. Vacant floorspace is 17.6%, against 14.3%.[7] The council's monitoring report recorded 19% of Core Area ground-floor units vacant in July 2025, an improvement from 26% in 2022.[8]
- **Footfall.** City-centre footfall was 65.5 million in 2019, passed 60 million in 2024, then declined marginally in 2025. The study's authors were advised that this recovery is "largely skewed by the Derbion". A sampled Corn Market location shows "a notable drop" in 2025.[7]
- **Closures reported publicly inside the proposed BID area.**[2] A Green Lane children's shoe shop announced its closure in January 2026 after 19 years, citing footfall, anti-social behaviour and the pull of Derbion.[10] On Albion Street, the closure of the Derbion entrance from November 2025 has been linked by landlords and agents to two businesses vacating and to

units becoming hard to let; the entrance is expected to stay shut until 2027.[11] Primark will leave Cornmarket for Derbion in 2027.[12]

- **Local observation.** Citrey CIC's own street-level record, which began on Sadler Gate in June 2026, counted nine business closures by October 2026, and our September paper reported seven Sadler Gate business exits between 1 June and 31 August 2026.[9] This is local observation, not published data.
- **Openings.** Bustler's food court opened in late July 2026 in the yard linking Sadler Gate and St James's Street. A new bookshop-café opened on Sadler Gate in October. A long-empty Grade II-listed building at 36 Sadler Gate is the subject of a pub application. A £1.5m Sadler Gate public realm scheme is planned, with no start date yet.[13]
- **The start of the year.** Insolvency Service figures reported by *Retail Gazette* showed company administrations in the UK rising by 41% to 151 between December 2025 and January 2026, and 14% higher than a year earlier.[21]

Safety and street conditions

The council's retail study records 11,428 violence and sexual offences, 4,718 anti-social behaviour incidents and 3,020 public order offences within half a mile of a central city-centre postcode between March 2021 and February 2026. It lists "concerns around anti-social behaviour, homelessness, and perceived safety which is amplified by low footfall and vacancies" among the centre's key challenges.[7] The prospectus does not publish the number of incidents, emergency or first-aid responses, or rough-sleeping contacts the Rangers handled, nor whether these are rising or falling. *Evidence needed: incident, first-aid and welfare-response counts by year.*

Investment and timing

- **Great British Railways headquarters, Becketwell.** Construction is expected to begin in early 2027 and finish by spring 2029. It will house up to 450 staff, with an estimated £151m regional economic benefit. Becketwell already includes build-to-rent homes, a public square and Vaillant Live.[14,15]
- **East Midlands Freeport.** Its three tax sites are at East Midlands Airport, Ratcliffe-on-Soar and the East Midlands Intermodal Park in South Derbyshire. None is in the city centre.[16]
- **East Midlands Investment Zone.** In 2026/27 it is "moving from feasibility and proposition development into early delivery", with its first funding period running to March 2029.[17] The INFINITY advanced-technology park at Infinity Park Derby aims to start its first phase in 2027 and to be fully operational in the 2030s.[18]

Governance and the ballot

- **Who pays.** The levy is paid by the ratepayer, normally the occupier. Owners pay only when premises are empty. A voluntary arrangement is offered to the smallest businesses below £3,000 RV.[1,2]
- **Ballot rules.** The ballot passes if a majority of votes cast, and a majority of the rateable value voting, are in favour. There is no minimum turnout.[3] At the 2022 Cathedral Quarter renewal, turnout was 48.6% (287 votes).[6]
- **Board.** It must keep "a clear majority of business or levy-payer representatives at all times". Two seats go to councillors. Up to two independent directors may be appointed "for relevant expertise, independence or stakeholder perspective". No seat is reserved for a community organisation or a resident.[2]

Health and wellbeing

The council reports that people in Derby's most affluent neighbourhoods can expect to live in good health for roughly 19 years longer than those in the most disadvantaged areas.[19]

Citrey CIC

ABOUT CITIZEN'S ORRERY CIC

Citizen's Orrery CIC (Citrey CIC) is a Derby community interest company based at 6a Sadler Gate, in the heart of Derby's historic city centre. We run debates, workshops and learning activities that help people build the confidence to have a say in the decisions that affect them. These are promising early steps; sustained outcomes will take time.

OUR PROJECTS

Place Nutrition™: a framework developed by Lauren Thompson through Roots & Futures and being tested by Citrey CIC in Derby, following the money to show what spending builds locally.

Derby's First Citizen's Assembly

Windrush 2027

The Derby AI Voice Field Guide

Teenage Voices

Youth Advocacy

Directors: Lauren Thompson, Founder & CEO, Citizen's Orrery CIC aka Citrey CIC, Amit Zala, Devon Daley. In partnership with Adaptiv and Mojobouji.

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APPENDIX B

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