

**Please see below questions submitted by John Eccles (Sweets Apenty, 64 Scott Street, Barrow in Furness, Cumbria, LA14 1QE) as part of AOB:**

Subject: Important Questions Regarding Barrow BID Operations and Financial Transparency  
Received for inclusion in AGM: 18/05/25

Q

Grant Scheme Fairness and Policy:

I recently applied for a Business Development Grant for a significant shop improvement project, including new windows and a door, which would have a substantial positive impact on my property and the town's appearance. My application was refused on the grounds that my business had previously received a grant. My prior grant, however, was for a sign, which was a comparatively small enhancement.

Could you please clarify the specific policy regarding repeat grant applications, especially differentiating between minor and major projects? How does this policy ensure that all levy payers have an equitable chance to undertake significant improvements that genuinely contribute to the BID area's overall regeneration?

A

Barrow BIDs Business Development Grant is available to all levy paying businesses, with all applications reviewed against the grant criteria detailed on the application page of the Barrow BID website. The application received from Sweets Aplenty (28/11/24) clearly states the application is to replace window frames and doors which have rotted. The grant criteria clearly states that maintenance of a property is not covered by the scope of the grant scheme, therefore the application was rejected. This decision was confirmed in writing by the BID Manager, as well as verbally to Mr Eccles who confirmed his understanding that general maintenance was not covered, prior to the application being submitted. While preference is given to new grant applicants to ensure a fair distribution of grants, there is no limit on the number of applications an applicant can submit.

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Expenditure and Value for Money:

I have observed vehicles, including what appears to be a Range Rover, being used for BID business. I have also been informed that this particular Range Rover allegedly belongs to the BID Manager personally.

Could you please provide a clear explanation of:

- \* The ownership status of the vehicles currently used for BID operations, especially the Range Rover?
- \* If any vehicles used for BID business are personally owned, what is the BID's specific policy regarding their use, including any costs incurred by the BID (e.g., fuel, mileage reimbursement, maintenance, insurance, lease payments, or other benefits)?
- \* How are such arrangements justified and transparently accounted for to all BID levy payers, ensuring there is no perception of personal benefit from collective funds?

\* What is the rationale behind the choice of vehicles like Range Rovers or the new electric truck, and how does the BID ensure cost-effectiveness for all vehicles used, regardless of ownership?

A

Barrow BID owns and operates a Goupil G4 zero emission electric utility vehicle which is specifically designed to fit the needs of BIDs and local authorities by operating within a town centre environment. After looking at a range of options to provide the correct equipment to allow our employees to safely deliver the projects we undertake, this vehicle was selected primarily due to it being the best fit for our operations while also having significantly lower running costs than a traditional van.

Personal vehicles owned by the BID Team are also used as and when required to supplement specific projects. No financial gain is made in these cases, with any mileage payments being made inline with the government's minimum approved mileage rate of 45p per mile. Any personal vehicles used in this way are fully insured for commercial use by the individual, with Barrow BID making no financial contributions towards this. The vehicle in question, a Land Rover Discovery, is solely owned by the BID Manager, with its purchase pre-dating him being employed by Barrow BID.

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Fairness in Member Promotion:

It appears that businesses with representatives on the BID Board may receive a disproportionate amount of promotional exposure through BID channels. Could you please outline the transparent process for allocating promotional opportunities to all businesses within the BID area, ensuring fairness and equitable distribution of exposure, regardless of Board affiliation?

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All promotion through Barrow BIDs social media channels is allocated in a fair and transparent manner, with businesses regularly encouraged to send us details of promotions, offers and events in advance for inclusion. We have a wide variety of different promotions, events and projects taking place throughout the year, with various degrees of priority. Due to this busy schedule, we ask all businesses to send us content at least 2 weeks in advance for scheduling. We have done promotions for Sweets Aplenty on multiple occasions in the past. Most recently we were sent content from them at 12.40, 7th May 2025 to promote an event the following day. Due to the timescales involved, we were unable to support this and informed Sweets Aplenty as such.

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Event Participation Charges:

I am also concerned about the policy of charging BID levy payers for participation in BID-organised events, such as having stalls. Could you clarify this policy and explain why levy payers, who already contribute financially to the BID, are subject to additional charges for events intended to benefit the business community?

A

Barrow BID does not charge any businesses to attend our events. Street trading within Barrow town centre, including the outdoor market is managed and governed by Westmorland and Furness Council who charge traders for their attendance. Barrow BID receives no form of reimbursement for this.

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Ensuring Inclusivity for All Businesses:

As a business owner in the BID area, I sometimes feel that businesses like mine are overlooked. It's not just my business that feels this way; having spoken with neighboring businesses, they also share my concerns. What proactive, direct communication methods does the BID use to ensure all levy payers, particularly those who might feel less connected or engaged, are fully aware of and can benefit from all BID initiatives, support, and opportunities?

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Barrow BID uses a wide variety of communication methods including:

- Monthly paper newsletters
- Monthly e-newsletters
- Face to face meetings
- Barrow Buzz App
- Weekly Radio Show
- Open Meetings and briefing sessions
- Bi-monthly Business Breakfasts
- Social Media (covering multiple channels)

As well as the above, the contact details for all the Barrow BID team are published and freely accessible on the Barrow BID website, including contact numbers and email addresses. Details of all of our volunteer directors including which business sectors they represent are also publicly accessible.

If Mr Eccles or other levy paying businesses have any suggestions on how we can improve our communications, then we are always happy to receive feedback.