



Basingstoke
and Deane

SUPPORTING TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION

AN INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN FOR BASINGSTOKE AND DEANE

MARCH 2018



INTRODUCTION

This integrated action plan aimed at supporting town centre revitalisation was developed as part of the RetailLink URBACT Action Planning Network. It is the result of extensive engagement and consultation with a wide range of town centre businesses, local authority officers and elected members, the Basingstoke Together Business Improvement District, and Festival Place and The Malls shopping centres.

Through the consultation and engagement process, a series of challenges were identified which this plan aims to address. As such, this action plan outlines some key actions and interventions to be implemented in Basingstoke to support town centre businesses as part of a wider programme to revitalise the town centre.

This plan builds upon the Town Centre Programme led by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) and the Basingstoke Together Business Improvement District's business and annual action plan.

RetailLink

BDBC joined URBACT's action planning network RetailLink in 2016. We worked alongside 9 other medium-sized European cities, that all shared similar challenges and ambitions. A series of transnational events gave the council and members of Basingstoke's ULG access to expertise and examples of good practice from within and beyond the network. The learning generated through these events and exchange of learning with other partner cities has helped the council and its partners develop different approaches to tackling the challenges faced by its town centre and retail sector and has been integrated into this action plan.

The following key learning points were of particular relevance to Basingstoke's context and Integrated Action Plan:

- the importance of understanding a city's retail profile, mix and identity – the experience of Hengelo and Hoogeveen.
- the importance of knowing a retail area's consumers, their behaviours and expectations.
- the changing face of retail in a digital world and particularly the effective use of town centre data to inform decision-making – the experience of Hengelo and Hoogeveen.
- the role of events in supporting retail growth – the experience of Igualada and its programme of events linking leisure and retail.
- the power of place branding and marketing and the importance of partnership working in developing and rolling out a brand.
- the role of urban planning policies and tools in reshaping retail areas.
- alternative uses of empty retail premises and complementary uses – the experience of Igualada and Romans with their pop-up festivals.

LOCAL CONTEXT

About Basingstoke and Deane

The borough of Basingstoke and Deane covers an area of over 245 square miles in north Hampshire, with the town of Basingstoke being the main urban settlement in the borough and the focus for key services, economic activity and employment.

The town is surrounded by attractive rural areas, including small towns and villages, with over 75% of the land within the borough defined as agricultural or woodland and a significant part being designated as a part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The number of residents in the borough has steadily increased since Basingstoke's designation as an expanded town in the 1960s and the population stands at around 174,600. The population of the borough is expected to rise to almost 250,000 people by 2050.

Basingstoke and Deane has a strong and diverse economy with a good balance of businesses across a range of sectors, including advanced manufacturing and ICT, financial and business services, creative industries, logistics and distribution, digital tech, and environmental technologies. Retail and wholesale trade is the largest key sector of employment for the borough and provides 20.5% of local jobs.

The borough has high level of employment with 87.7% of the working age population being economically active. Unemployment is low at 2.5%. The economy is worth £5.2bn in Gross Value Added (GVA) and there are over 7,700 businesses providing 83,000 jobs. The borough also has a high start up number of around 1,000 per year and a survival rate of just under 48% after 5 years.

In the Local Plan period up to 2029, 15,300 new homes are to be built, with 3,500 to be located at Manydown to the west of Basingstoke.

Retail in Basingstoke

Catchment area

The following map shows the catchment area for Basingstoke's town centre. It is divided into three levels as follows:

The total catchment area for the town centre represents a population of over one million¹ and is divided into three levels:

- Primary catchment area covering mainly the town of Basingstoke: 106,930 residents.
- Secondary catchment area covering mainly the borough: 164,130 residents.
- Tertiary catchment area extending to parts of Berkshire, Test Valley, Hart, Rushmoor and west Surrey: 1,033,990 residents.



¹ Source: Festival Place 2017

Basingstoke town centre

Basingstoke's town centre is the primary and main retail area in the borough for comparison shopping (items not obtained on a frequent basis such as clothing, footwear and recreational goods). It comprises three separate retail centres:

- The Malls shopping centre: home to 26 retail units and the Anvil Concert Hall. The Malls mostly specialises in value for money retail. The Malls is owned by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council but managed by a private shopping centre operator.
- Festival Place shopping centre: this is the largest and main retail area in the town centre at 1,000,000 sq ft. Home to 200 different brands, Festival Place comprises a mix of retail, leisure and food and beverage offer. Festival Place is fully privately owned and managed.
- The Top of the Town: this is the town centre's secondary retail area located in the historic part of the town. The offer focuses mainly of services (hairdressing, banking, solicitors, betting shops, etc.) and the night time economy. The retail offer is limited and centred on charity shops and small convenience stores. It is home to the Willis Museum and the Haymarket Theatre. Ownership is mostly private and fragmented and the area is not managed as a whole.



Basingstoke's town centre remains the main area for comparison retailing while convenience retailing is mainly concentrated in retail parks and shopping centres in and around the town such as the Chineham Centre, the Brighton Hill Centre or Hatch Warren Retail Park. The town centre accounts for a market share of 9.9% for convenience retailing and 47% for comparison retailing².

The Going Shopping 2018³ report, which ranks UK shopping centres, has placed Festival Place in the top 20 for the second year running. Ranked 20th out of 500 shopping centres, Festival Place is the only shopping centre in the region to be included in this league table. No other shopping centre from comparator towns is within the top 20. The Oracle in Reading has been ranked at no 32 and the Lexicon in Bracknell at no 33. Woking and Guildford do not feature in the top 50 (Woking was ranked no 64 and Guildford no 187). This ranking is based on overall attractiveness to shoppers, retailers and investors based on features that are important to these groups. This includes tenant mix, lettable area, weekly footfall, turnover and facilities available.

Basingstoke's town centre performance has remained strong and occupation levels have increased. The overall estimated vacancy rate stands at 8%⁴ across the town centre. The vacancy rate in the Top of the Town has reduced from 9% in 2016 to 7%⁵ in 2017, the lowest level since monitoring started in 2013 when vacancy rate stood at 10%. The Malls Shopping centre is nearly fully occupied with only two vacant units out of 26. Festival Place does not provide vacancy rate data but the centre has seen a reduction in the number of vacant units following a series of new lettings in 2017. Since 2016, 24 new shops have opened in Festival Place⁶.

² Source: Basingstoke and Deane Retail Capacity Study – Carter Jonas 2015

³ Going Shopping 2018 – The Definitive Guide to Shopping Centres – Trevor Woods Associates

⁴ Source: Basingstoke Together Business Improvement District

⁵ Source: annual vacancy survey, People and Places Insight, November 2017

⁶ Source: Festival Place

The south east average level is 7.2%⁷ and the national average is 11%⁸. Comparing to nearby towns with a similar retail mix and catchment area size, Woking has a vacancy rate of 7.2%⁹ while Guildford's rate stands at 7.1%¹⁰.

Overall, levels of footfall have been maintained. Festival Place has seen an increase of 1.4% to 22.4 million¹¹ in 2017. Footfall in the Top of the Town has remained stable. This compares favourably to south east and national averages which stand at -1.8% and -3.8%¹² respectively. Footfall data is currently not recorded for The Malls shopping centre but is expected to be in line with Festival Place.

The Basingstoke market has remained stable both in terms of average number of stalls and income. In 2016/17, the average number of stalls increased to 15.5 compared to 12.4 in 2015/16 and 7 in 2014. Full financial year data is not currently available for 2017/18. However, current numbers up to December 2017 show that the average number of stalls is expected to remain at a similar level to 2016/17. Year on Year average footfall has remained stable.

Town centre stakeholders

This IAP was developed with a group of stakeholders, which formed Basingstoke's URBACT Local Group, through a series of meetings and participation in transnational events. Membership included town centre retail and non-retail business representatives, the Basingstoke Together BID, Festival Place Shopping Centre, The Malls Shopping centre, representatives from arts organisations and representatives from the council's planning, property services, licensing, community safety and social inclusion departments. In addition, wider engagement and consultation has also taken place to help shape the IAP through the Town Centre Annual Summit, the BID's Annual General Meeting and BID board meetings.

This IAP complements and integrates with other local programmes and action plans focused on the town centre – the council-led Town Centre Programme and the Basingstoke Together BID business plan and annual action plan.

The Town Centre Programme

The Town Centre Programme focuses on building partnership working across the town centre to deliver a wide range of small to medium-scale interventions aimed at improving the attractiveness and economic vibrancy of the town centre. These interventions are also intended to create the business environment where entrepreneurs will feel more confident to invest in small businesses in the Top of the Town area.

The Town Centre Programme focuses on 6 main areas of intervention:

- The community – engagement and partnership working.
- The place – environmental improvements.
- The connections – mobility and accessibility.
- The support – business engagement and support.
- The “feel-good factor” – events and culture.
- Marketing – promoting the town centre



⁷ Source: Springboard – October 2017

⁸ Source: Local Data Company – January 2018

⁹ Source: Woking Borough Council – December 2017

¹⁰ Source: Guildford Borough Council – Springboard, October 2017

¹¹ Source: Festival Place

¹² Source: Springboard – January 2018

Basingstoke Together BID

The Basingstoke Together BID was established in April 2016 following a successful vote in November 2015. The BID covers the whole town centre and is a private company funded through a levy paid by each business in the BID area. It is business-led and represents just under 500 town centre businesses. It is overseen by a Board of Directors representing all town centre interests and is managed by a small team of staff. The BID runs initially for a period of 5 years at the end of which a ballot will take place to renew the BID for another 5 years.

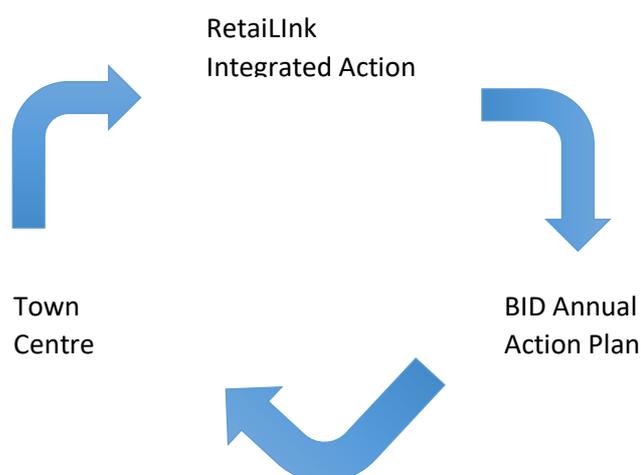
The Basingstoke Together BID business plan has four main priorities:

- Promoting Basingstoke together – a collaborative approach to coordinated marketing activities and a programme of events.
- A place for people – improving the experience of visitors and shoppers.
- A place for business – providing support to town centre businesses to continue to grow and prosper.
- A voice for business – representing the views of town centre businesses to influence decision-making and in various partnerships.



To deliver against those four priorities, the BID implements an annual action plan. Interventions include:

- Free town centre Wi-Fi in the Top of the Town and The Malls in partnership with the council and using the council's CCTV stands and cabling.
- Regular marketing campaigns to coincide with key retail periods reaching 1.8 million people.
- The roll out of digital tools such as Geo Sense and Place Dashboard enabling data collection on town centre visitor behaviour, movement, and length of stay.
- Creation of a fortnightly e-newsletter providing BID updates as well as information on council-led initiatives.
- Recruitment of one Town Centre Hosts whose role is to interact with levy payers on a daily basis as well as providing assistance to visitors to the town. This role is currently under review.
- Introducing a cost-saving scheme for town centre businesses on expenditure such as utilities, merchant services or insurance.
- Delivering an annual programme of events across the town centre.
- Running a programme of training courses for town centre businesses.
- Launching a customer loyalty scheme.
- Working with BDBC to consolidate and improve the town centre weekly market.
- Running vibrancy projects for the Top of the Town area such as art or lighting installations.



INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

Challenges

- Decrease or stagnation of footfall numbers.
- Decrease in sales volume and transaction values.
- Increase in vacant retail units.
- Competition from other towns in the surrounding area.
- Lack of complementary facilities (arts, leisure, family, culture).
- Fragmentation of town centre retail areas – lack of connections.
- Increasing visibility of rough sleeping particularly in the Top of the Town area.
- Overall image of the town – lack of USP/clear identity/visibility.
- Duplication of uses – too many shops that sell the same.

Problem statement

CAUSES

- legacy – historic perception of the town doesn't reflect reality
- historic lack of investment
- gateways/access points are uninviting
- communication – no pro-active challenge to clichés about Basingstoke
- perceived as a commuter town that services its own resident population
- lack of consistent standards in terms of look and feel across the town
- local media – focus on bad news stories
- no strong champions or advocates promoting Basingstoke's town centre



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Basingstoke's town centre is not recognised as a quality retail and leisure destination



EFFECTS

- people go elsewhere to shop/access leisure and culture
- the catchment area is limited and is mostly centred on Basingstoke
- decrease in footfall and spend
- prevents new lettings and investments
- shop closures and increase in vacant units
- the town stagnates – no growth
- the town can be perceived as "rough" (crime, antisocial behaviour, rough sleeping)
- a town that is perceived as uncared for attracts antisocial behaviour

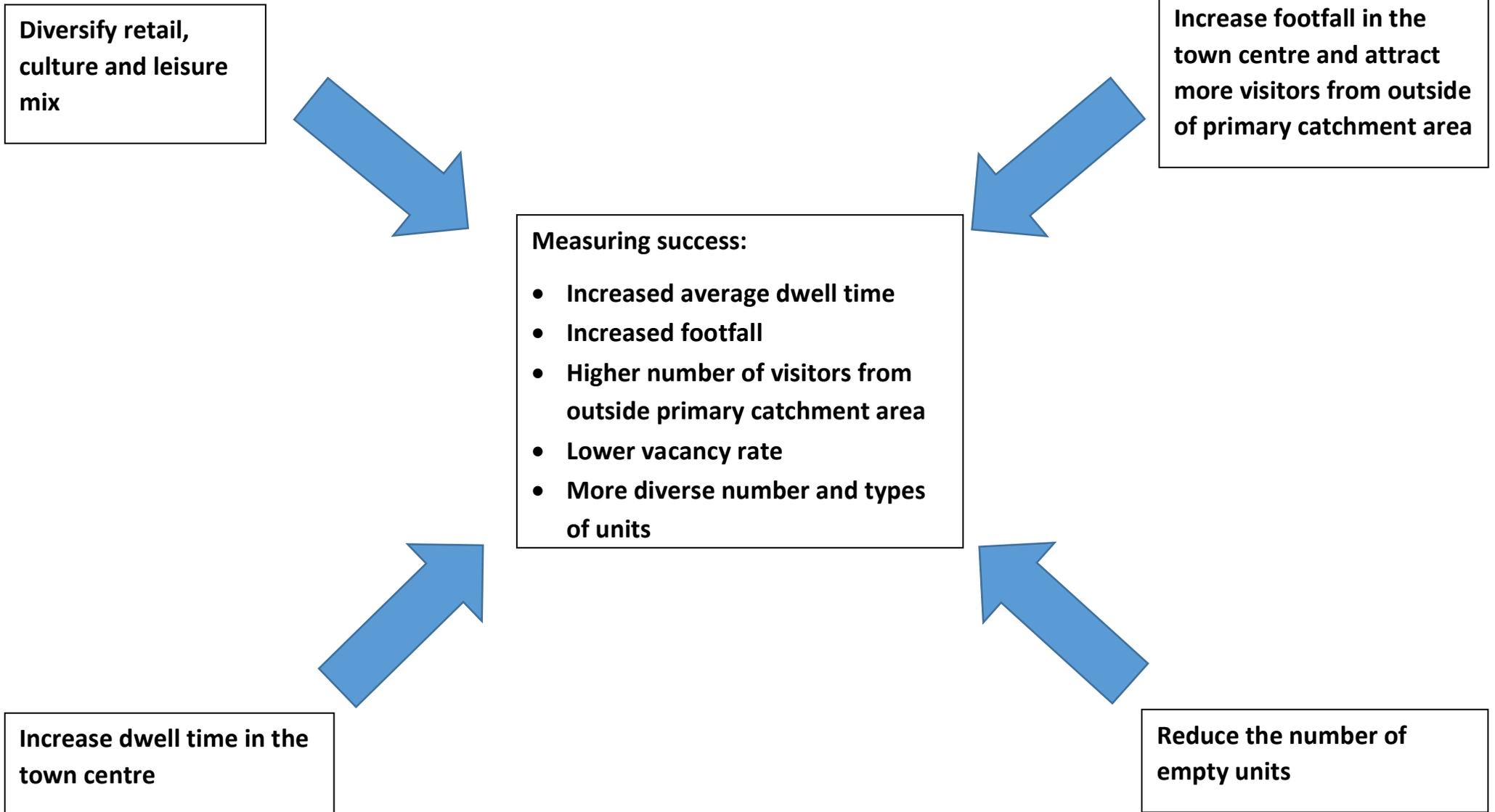
Strategic aim

Make Basingstoke's town centre a destination recognised for the quality of its experience and of its retail, cultural and leisure offer

Vision

Basingstoke has a thriving town centre recognised as a regional retail, leisure and cultural destination offering a unique and quality experience through high levels of occupation, a quality mix of retailers and a

Strategic objectives and result indicators



Thematic areas of intervention

The delivery of the integrated action plan will be centred on four core thematic pillars:

Physical environment – improve the look and feel of the town centre

Diversity and choice - improve the retail, leisure and culture mix to respond better to visitor expectations

Experience – improve the visitor experience while in the town centre

Business support – help town centre retailers and businesses through targeted business support activities

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

THEMATIC PILLAR:		PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT			
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Improve the access points and gateways to the town centre	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls	March 2021	New signs installed in the Top of the Town Improvement to The Malls entrance completed	Budget based on each intervention
Continue to improve the navigation around the town centre	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls	March 2019	Installation of digital boards completed	N/A
Develop a long-term transport strategy for the town centre	HCC	BDBC	To be confirmed	Strategy developed and approved Number of interventions completed	Budget to be set based on outcomes of strategy
Continue to support property owners and businesses with improvements to their premises through the Top of the Town grant scheme	BDBC	BID	March 2019	Number of applications Number of grants awarded Number of improvement works completed	£25,000
Work with the Social Inclusion Partnership to reduce the impact of rough sleeping and street attachment on the town centre	BDBC	Social Inclusion Partnership	March 2019	Reduction in number of rough sleepers Reduction in number of antisocial behaviour incidents	To be confirmed
Develop and implement a longer-term strategy to improve the built environment in the town centre	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls HCC	Initiation of strategy – September 2018	Strategy developed and approved Number of interventions completed	Budget will be based on types of interventions

THEMATIC PILLAR:		DIVERSITY AND CHOICE			
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Carry out a retail mix analysis study to assess current offer and identify gaps	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls	May 2018	Study completed Follow up action plan to implement study recommendations	Up to £10,000 – BDBC, RetailLink and BID
Crowd source ideas from residents and visitors to improve the night time offer in the Top of the Town	BDBC	BID	February 2018	Campaign launched and completed Number of ideas submitted	£5,000
Increase number and range of market stalls	BDBC	Market operator	March 2019	Number of stalls attending market	£20,000 – BDBC
Organise ad-hoc thematic markets	BID	BDBC	March 2019	Number of markets Number of stalls	To be confirmed

THEMATIC PILLAR:		EXPERIENCE			
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Explore the feasibility of creating a cultural hub in the Top of the Town	BDBC	Anvil Arts HCC HCT Proteus BID	March 2019	Feasibility study completed Options appraisal completed	Up to £26m
Deliver customer service training courses to ensure better and more consistent customer service across the town centre	BID	BDBC	March 2019	Number of training courses delivered Number of participants	£500 – BID
Run an annual programme of events in the town centre	BID	BDBC Town centre businesses Festival Place The Malls	March 2019	Number of events delivered Number of people attending events Qualitative evaluation	£20,000 – BDBC £tbc - BID
Run a workshop to review the web presence for the town centre to ensure consistent messaging	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls	March 2018	Workshop delivered Number of attendees Follow up action plan	£1,000 – RetailLink funding
Implement the place	BDBC	BID	March 2020	Number of campaigns	£50,000 – BDBC

marketing strategy to promote Basingstoke		Festival Place The Malls		Number of adverts Number of features on Basingstoke	
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THEMATIC PILLAR:		BUSINESS SUPPORT			
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Deliver a programme of retail-focused training courses for businesses	BDBC	BID	March 2019	Number of training courses delivered Number of attendees Qualitative evaluation	£1,000 - BID
Create an enterprise hub in the Top of the Town to support local entrepreneurs and businesses	BDBC	To be confirmed	Inception – April 2018 Phase 1 to run until March 2021	Outputs to be confirmed pending provider selection	£160,000 – BDBC over 3 years