

# Businesses urged to fill out BID survey

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THE coordinator of an initiative to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) in Dornoch is urging local businesses to fill out a survey sent to them a fortnight ago, or risk the project stalling.

Paula White said 202 businesses in the IV25 postcode had been sent the survey, but only a tenth of that number had so far responded while a minimum of 50 responses were needed to keep the BID initiative on track.

And she warned that if the BID did not go ahead, then there would be no organisation on hand to take over Visit Dornoch, which works to promote the town, but which is run by a volunteer who is set to stand down in a year.

"This is really a call to action for businesses," she said. "We need to show that businesses are behind us and willing to go ahead. If you do not fill out the survey and we do not hear your voice, then the BID cannot go ahead."

A series of drop-in sessions have been organised next week to bring business operators up to date with the BID's progress and to help them



BID coordinator Paula White and steering group chairman Neil Hampton.

with the survey, if needed.

The move towards establishing a Dornoch BID took its first significant step last November when Ms White was appointed by a Dornoch Business Improvement Steering Group. Chairman of the group is Royal Dornoch Golf Club manager Neil Hampton.

A Business Improvement District is a defined area within which businesses are asked to invest collectively to help fund projects and make improvements which will

benefit the local community.

The businesses involved in Dornoch range from tourist-orientated enterprises to shops, garages and legal firms. A meeting is to be held next week to discuss whether charities and other organisations can be involved.

BIDs are developed, managed and paid for by the businesses involved, by means of a compulsory, annual BID levy, usually based on rateable value.

More than 40 BIDs are currently

in operation or development across Scotland, from Lerwick to Largs. BIDs have been established in Nairn and Inverness.

Ms White said the latest survey asked businesses to rate the importance of four themes – promoting and marketing Dornoch; town centre and environment; business collaboration and advocacy; and staff, employment, recruitment, retention and development.

The responses are needed to create a five-year business plan and also to draw up costings for projects.

If the BID progresses, a ballot will be held on November 16, and for it to be established 25 per cent of the 202 businesses identified must vote and of those that vote, 50 per cent must be in favour of the initiative.

Ms White said she was working to a tight timescale with the draft business plan needing to be drawn up by June. It is also required to be approved by Highland Council and the Scottish Government.

Next week's drop-in sessions are being held from 5pm-7pm and will take place in the golf club on Monday and Friday and in the Dornoch Hub on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.