



WILMSLOW
WAY BETTER

WILMSLOW BID ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

wilmslowswaybetter.co.uk



INTRODUCTION

The Business Improvement District (BID) is a partnership between the businesses in Wilmslow and a range of partner organisations.

The BID's vision for Wilmslow is to create a destination of choice for residents, visitors, employees, and shoppers, making Wilmslow a location where business and the community can thrive.

Wilmslow BID was approved in August 2022, with 74% of organisations voting in favour, representing 85% of the rateable value of those that voted.

The BID started on 1st November 2022 and is delivering a circa **£1 million investment into Wilmslow town centre** through to 31st October 2027.

Businesses pay a small additional supplement through the business rates system (the BID levy), which is invested into a range of improvement projects and services which are over and above the services provided by the Local Authority.

HOW THE BID OPERATES

The project is managed by the businesses in Wilmslow through an elected Executive Board. The Board has a terms of reference and has contracted with registered charity Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside to project manage the Business Improvement District. The Executive Board meets at least six times a year.

THE BID LEVY

All non-domestic ratepayers in the geographical area with a rateable value equal to or above £15,000 are liable for a BID levy. This includes all organisations that occupy a rateable property (hereditament) and property owners/ leaseholders (when units are vacant) in the BID geographical area. The BID levy 1.6% of rateable value for all hereditaments.

THE BID TEAM

Lisa Russett	Wilmslow BID Manager	Lisa.russett@groundwork.org.uk
Jon Houghton	Assistant Project Manager	Jon.Houghton@groundwork.org.uk
Stephanie Leese	Business Team Co-Ordinator	Stephanie.leese@groundwork.org.uk
Jane Hough	Deputy Director for BIDs and Business Services	Jane.hough@groundwork.org.uk
Laura Diffey	BID Programme Manager	Laura.Diffey@groundwork.org.uk
Adam Gerrard	Operational Manager	Adam.Gerrard@groundwork.org.uk

THE 2024/2025 BID EXECUTIVE BOARD

Joanna Davies – Chair	Black White Denim
Charles Jarvis - Deputy Chair	Cheshire East Council
Tony Jones	Orbit Developments
Danny Brown	Howden Insurance
Jane Eastwood	Boots
Martin Lowe	Suburban Green & The Wine Cellar
Neil Matthews	Mail Boxes ETC
Samuel Burrows	Wood Fire Smoke
Susan Marshall	Hoopers
Chris Hilliard	The Electric Bike Shop
Verity LeChapois	Arlo and Jacob
Jo Wise*	Cheshire East Council
Mark Goldsmith*	Wilmslow Town Council

*Advisory members of the board and have no voting rights.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

JOANNA DAVIES



As Chair of the Wilmslow Business Improvement District Board and local independent business owner, I am delighted to reflect on yet another stand-out year for Wilmslow town centre. Running a business on the High Street gives an in-depth understanding of both the opportunities and the challenges facing town centres today. The BID board's first-hand experience is central to its role. Our job is to ensure that the projects delivered are relevant, impactful and genuinely support the needs of levy-paying businesses. Over the past year the BID has continued to demonstrate clear value. From events that bring energy, footfall and new audiences into the town, to practical support such as training, marketing, safety initiatives and town centre enhancements, the focus has remained on creating a stronger trading environment for businesses large and small.

As a board we work closely with the BID team to provide strategic direction, challenge ideas

constructively and represent the diverse voices of Wilmslow's business community helping to ensure that Wilmslow remains a place people want to visit, spend time in and invest in. What stands out most to me is the collective effort behind everything that has been achieved to date. The success of the BID is rooted in partnership between businesses, the BID team, the board and our wider stakeholders. That collaboration is what gives Wilmslow its unique strength and sense of identity.

I would like to thank Lisa and the BID team for their commitment and drive, my fellow board members for their time and insight, and all Wilmslow businesses for their continued support. I am excited about what lies ahead as we move into year four and continue working together to keep making Wilmslow Way Better.

Joanna Davies
Chair of Wilmslow BID

MESSAGE FROM LISA RUSSETT

WILMSLOW BID MANAGER

As we reflect on 2024/2025, I am incredibly proud of what we have delivered together for Wilmslow town centre. Year three of the BID has been about momentum, building on strong foundations, listening closely to our businesses and partners, and continuing to deliver a Way Better Experience for residents, visitors and the business community. Despite ongoing challenges facing town centres nationally, Wilmslow has continued to stand out as a vibrant, welcoming and evolving destination.

Over the past year, the BID has delivered an ambitious programme of events, activities and enhancements that have brought the town to life, increased footfall and supported local businesses. From large-scale events such as Winter Wonderland, Comic Con, Wilmslow Live and Street Fest, to low-cost, high-impact initiatives like our Easter and Halloween trails, our focus has remained on creating experiences that encourage people to visit, stay longer and return more often. Alongside this, we have invested in the look and feel of the town centre, from floral displays and bunting to Christmas lighting, while continuing to work closely with Wilmslow Town Council, Cheshire East, local organisations and stakeholders to support longer-term public realm improvements, safety initiatives and intelligence sharing.

This year also marked a change in how we promote Wilmslow. With the introduction of a new marketing agency, our digital reach, engagement and national media profile has grown significantly, helping to position Wilmslow well beyond the local area while still championing its independent character. Supporting our businesses remains at the heart of everything we do. Through free training, improved communication, stronger partnerships and a more representative BID board, we continue to ensure that levy payers see real value from their investment.

None of this would be possible without the continued support, collaboration and enthusiasm of our businesses, partners and stakeholders. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Wilmslow. I look forward to building on this success as we move into year four of the BID.

Lisa Russet
Wilmslow BID Manager



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WHAT WE DELIVERED IN 2024/2025

THEME 1 CREATING A 'WAY BETTER' EXPERIENCE

In line with the commitment to deliver a Way Better Experience for Wilmslow, we delivered and supported several events throughout year three.



Working in partnership with Wilmslow Town Council, the annual Christmas Light Switch-On took place in November, with our support delivering the event and welcoming local business owner, influencer, and ultra-marathon runner Amy Hughes to switch on the lights. The evening attracted a significant turnout in Bank Square and the surrounding streets, marking the start of the festive season and contributing to a **16% increase in footfall for the month**.

In collaboration with Wilmslow Town Council, a new contractor was appointed to supply the town's main Christmas tree, which was enhanced with state-of-the-art LED lighting and 'Twinkly' bulbs featuring interchangeable lighting patterns, creating a 'way better' Christmas display.



In December 2024, we delivered the third Wilmslow Winter Wonderland. A free, family-friendly festive event, transforming Bank Square into an Aprés Ski-themed hub featuring giant tipis, live entertainment, festive food and drink, and performances from local artists and DJs. The programme included a winter edition of the popular Friday Street Fest with artisan and street food traders, fairground rides, Santa's Grotto, festive workshops, children's entertainment, and live performances across the town centre. The popular event supported local businesses and Wilmslow Town Council and successfully drove increased footfall into the town.

We launched a free Easter Trail, offering families a fun, interactive way to explore the town. Participants followed a trail to find hidden Easter eggs and bunnies in shop windows, solve themed puzzles, and entered a prize draw to win Easter hampers. The event engaged local businesses, including cafes, restaurants, and cultural venues, encouraging visitors to experience Wilmslow's high street while providing hours of free family-friendly entertainment while driving footfall, increasing dwell time and encouraging customer spending.



	731 trail maps were completed both digitally and on paper
	396.2k people viewed, engaged and reacted on Facebook
	68.3k people viewed, engaged and reacted on Instagram throughout the event

In April, immediately following the Easter holidays, we delivered a highly successful Comic Con event. The programme featured a wide range of popular characters, including Iron Man, Spider Man, Batman, members of the Gotham City Police Department, and Transformers Bumblebee and Optimus Prime, alongside a Jurassic Park-themed area complete with animatronic dinosaurs. Families enjoyed interactive superhero workshops, character walkabouts, photo opportunities, and a unique Comic Con market, with special guest appearances such as Star Wars actor Willie Coppern. The event significantly enhanced town centre vibrancy and supported local businesses. **Footfall for April was up 14% year on year for 2025.**

"Wilmslow Street Fest was a fantastic celebration of our town, bringing people together with great food, live music and a brilliant atmosphere. It showcased the very best of Wilmslow and created a real buzz in the town centre."

– Erik Garner (local resident)



WHAT WE DELIVERED IN 2024/2025

THEME 1 (CONTINUED) CREATING A 'WAY BETTER' EXPERIENCE

Wilmslow Street Fest returned as a free, family-friendly event, bringing the community together with live music, entertainment, and a diverse range of global street food. These events were delivered as a joint venture with The Market Co., and the festivals took place in April, June and August, animating Bank Square and lower Grove Street. The events offered residents and visitors an engaging and vibrant experience showcasing Wilmslow as a great destination to eat and drink while complementing the town's bricks-and-mortar hospitality venues.



Wilmslow Live returned with a change of date to mid-June, featuring a purpose-built stage in Bank Square that hosted performances throughout the day by local groups, acts, artists and bands. Free games and activities were installed along Grove Street complemented with a dedicated street food and drinks area delivered by local businesses and venues along Hawthorn Lane. A 'What's On' guide was produced and distributed online and in stores promoting food offers, events, performances and activities taking place in venues throughout the BID area. **Social media stats show 45.5k engaged and reacted on Facebook and 48.7k on Instagram throughout the event.**



"Wilmslow Live created a fantastic buzz in the town centre and made a real difference to footfall on the day. It was great to see so many people enjoying the music and spending time in Wilmslow, events like this are hugely valuable for local businesses."

- Danny Brown (Howden insurance)



We delivered the town's first Home Interiors Day, Style Up Your Space, bringing together local interiors and home design businesses to showcase Wilmslow's thriving design sector. The event encouraged visitors to explore the town centre, access expert advice and inspiration, and engage with businesses through workshops, displays and exclusive offers.

A Halloween event was delivered for the first time throughout October, featuring a themed trail similar in style to Easter and supported by a range of events hosted by local businesses. Additional family engagement was provided through creative workshops, including a free Gizmobots robot making session at Wilmslow Library.

	26 businesses included in the trail
	202 maps returned
	45 families attended robot workshop

The installation of bunting along Grove Street during the spring and summer is now a regular feature.



Following a successful first year with the new supplier for floral arrangements, we once again worked with them, alongside the IN-bloom team and Wilmslow Town Council, to identify areas where additional enhancements could be made. This led to the purchase of three new three tier floral displays placed in prominent locations, helping to soften and improve the aesthetics of the busy junction joining Water Lane and Alderley Road.

We continue to work in partnership with Wilmslow Town Council, Cheshire East, and the Wilmslow Neighbourhood Plan Improvement Group to explore public realm improvements for Grove Street and Bank Square, in line with the town prospectus that was produced last year.

WILMSLOW BUSINESS CRIME REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP



We continue to strengthen relationships with key stakeholders from Cheshire East, Wilmslow Town Council, Cheshire Police, Wilmslow High School, and Wilmslow Youth, to progress improvements to the town centre radio network and address issues relating to anti-social behaviour and theft. As part of this work, DISC was introduced, with **26 businesses across the retail and hospitality sector signing up free of charge to the information sharing offender reporting system**.

Regular e-newsletters were sent monthly to consumers and the business community, providing updates on events and activities across the town centre to ensure they remained informed, and able to have a voice. **The subscription list of 1,613 recipients represents an increase of 7.2% on the previous year.**

WHAT WE DELIVERED IN 2024/2025

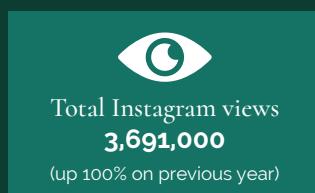
THEME 2

DELIVERING 'WAY BETTER' MARKETING AND TOWN CENTRE PROMOTION



BID Year 3 saw the introduction of a new marketing agency to further elevate the brand as we continued to grow our reach and engagement across the Wilmslow's Way Better digital platforms.

STATS FOR 1ST NOV – 1ST JAN



With the introduction of the new marketing agency, it allowed us to reach new audiences beyond Wilmslow and secure coverage across a wide range of media outlets, titles, and agencies. Over the past 12 months, they achieved **93 features showcasing Wilmslow town centre** in titles such as The Telegraph, Time Out, The Daily Express, The I Paper, and Great British Life. Closer to home, Wilmslow has been regularly featured in Cheshire Life, The Manchester Evening News, Muddy Stilettos, The Knutsford Guardian, and Wilmslow.co.uk, as well as many other regional titles and publications. Collectively, this coverage is **estimated to have a reach of 3.49million people**.

In February 2025, we hosted 15 of the region's most influential media outlets and content creators at our first ever media and influencer event. This resulted in immediate coverage across social media, with an **estimated reach of 142,541** and the Manchester Evening News producing a 'spotlight on' feature about Wilmslow.

We also worked with professional photographer Tom Pitfield to capture a portfolio of images across the town centre, including shops, buildings, businesses, and key points of interest. This enhanced library of professional photography will support future media requests, enabling us to respond quickly to opportunities that showcase stories that require high quality images of Wilmslow.

WHAT WE DELIVERED IN 2024/2025

THEME 3 PROVIDING 'WAY BETTER' BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT

The established BID board saw several changes to its membership and continued to provide businesses with a stronger collective voice, creating new opportunities, and tackling barriers to growth for businesses in the town centre.

We carried out our first town centre wide business survey to review the work delivered to date and gather valuable feedback. This annual survey will continue to give businesses greater opportunities to collaborate, share, and influence future priorities.

We continued investing in free training for our BID members, delivering 15 accredited courses, including:

- ▶ Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid in the Workplace
- ▶ Level 3 Award in Mental Health First Aid
- ▶ Level 2 Award in Health & Safety in the Workplace
- ▶ Fire Marshal
- ▶ Level 2 Award in Principles of Risk Assessment
- ▶ Combined First Aid at Work and Emergency Pediatric First Aid at Work
- ▶ Complaint Handling Training
- ▶ Customer Service Training
- ▶ Managing Conflict in Retail
- ▶ Level 2 Award in Food Hygiene and Safety for Catering
- ▶ GDPR Training
- ▶ Leadership and Management Training and Advanced Effective Leadership Training

This training delivered an equivalent to over **£15,280.00** in cost saving to Wilmslow businesses, with **86 employees trained** across **566 accredited hours**

We also offer access to additional free online accredited courses.

For any businesses wanting to enquire about training, please email stephanie.leese@groundwork.org.uk.



WHAT WE PLAN TO DELIVER IN YEAR 4

We will continue to raise the profile of Wilmslow town centre and the Wilmslow's Way Better brand through our website, PR activity, and social media channels.

We will also deliver a programme of festivals and events in the town centre, building on what we have learned over the past three years and continuing with the things that have been successful initiatives such as Comic Con, Wilmslow Live, and Street Fest. Further events will be developed in partnership with Wilmslow Town Council, local groups, and other key stakeholders.

Planned investment includes additional enhancements such as new lamppost banners and wayfinding maps to enhance specific areas. We will work with Wilmslow Town Council to provide investment in additional Christmas lighting and trees in previously unlit locations to complement those already in place and make create an enhanced Christmas light trail.

In response to positive feedback from both businesses and visitors, the bunting will be reinstalled along Grove Street, establishing this as an annual installation within the town centre

We will continue to invest in enhanced cleaning across the town centre to maintain a welcoming and well presented environment.

We will be working with Cheshire East Council, Wilmslow Police and key stakeholders, looking at the current capabilities of the CCTV and footfall counter software and investigate new advanced technologies to evidence and record more accurate intelligence within our town centre.

We will also build on the work already delivered by undertaking an annual business survey, giving businesses across the town centre more opportunities to provide feedback, collaborate, and share best practice.



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2024/2025

THE ACCOUNTS BELOW ARE FOR YEAR 3 OF THE WILMSLOW BID

1st November 2024 to 31st October 2025

Income	Forecast	Actual
BID Levy Contribution	£204,379	£219,401
Sponsorship & Ticket Sales	£14,250	£7,183
Voluntary BID Levy Contribution	-	£617.00
Other	-	-
Bank Interest	-	£1,345.00
Total	£218,629	£228,546

Expenditure	Budget	Actual
Theme One - Way Better Experience	£113,925	£114,709
Theme Two - Way Better Marketing	£51,068	£68,560
Theme Three - Way Better Business	£22,856	£17,383
Management and Levy Collection Costs	£37,604	£39,369
Total	£225,453	£240,021

There is accrued expenditure of £399 for the Wilmslow BID external accountancy fee.

The income figures for the Wilmslow BID's FY 24/25 includes income in advance to cover expenditure during BID year 25/26. This is due to the billing cycles utilised by Cheshire East Council being different to the BID's financial year. Where expenditure exceeds in-year income, the difference will be funded from existing reserves.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE
WILMSLOW BID, PLEASE CONTACT:

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