

Belfast's Linen Quarter BID plans extension to Gasworks and Shaftsbury Square

A major business improvement district (BID) in Belfast city centre has announced plans to extend its area of management to both The Gasworks and Shaftsbury Square areas.

The Linen Quarter BID announced the extension of its focus beyond the city's Linen Quarter as part of its new five-year business plan.

The LQ Bid is a not-for-profit organisation which operates under statute to manage a defined area, with organisations within the area paying a levy to fund improvements.

LQ BID was first appointed in 2018 for an initial term of five years and in January 2023, eligible businesses will have the opportunity to vote for it to be appointed for a second term.

The group said the Linen Quarter and its surrounding areas are set to benefit from £1 billion investment over the next 10 years with Belfast Grand Central Station, Weaver's Cross and BBC Building all in the pipeline for re-development.

"LQ BID already works in close partnership with the organisations where these incoming improvement projects will land such as Belfast City Council and Executive Departments, so we can ensure cohesive representation for Linen Quarter's businesses as they come to fruition,"

Chris McCracken, managing director of LQ BID, said: "Furthermore, the extension of LQ BID's remit will allow us to deliver more across a greater stretch of the city including new social spaces, enhanced seating, enhanced planting, murals and parklets – all of which drives footfall and support the

longevity of our businesses, many of whom are still recovering from the onslaught of the pandemic.”

To date LQ BID said it has delivered £4 million worth of improvements across one of the city’s most important areas for business and tourism. A total of £500,000 of that comes from grant funding applications that we have submitted to safeguard the future of the District.

A recent example of this being FLAXX – a pioneering social space at Brunswick Street complete with a pétanque court, outdoor seating and a performance area with a stage for small concerts.

Along with focusing on regeneration and improvements to the public realm, LQ BID is also responsible for improving cleanliness and safety across the District, and has also prioritised sustainability, with improving air quality an identified goal for Term 2.

“Belfast is a city on the cusp of real change. It’s a vibrant place to be and we’re proud of the contribution we have made to this journey over the last five years,” Mr McCracken said. “Ahead of the January ballot, I would urge businesses to take a look back on how much we have achieved together whilst also taking a look at counterpart cities – Manchester, London, Amsterdam for instance – and the potential that remains to be had on our doorsteps.”