



NEXT STEPS

MARCH 2026



East Lothian Food and Drink

Introduction

“I am delighted to introduce the ‘Next Steps Plan’ for the East Lothian Food and Drink, Business Improvement District (BID).”



On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all our members for their continued support over the last five years. Together, we have built a strong and collaborative network that continues to support and champion East Lothian’s food and drink sector.

Following extensive consultation, we have carefully reviewed your feedback to shape a clear and focused set of priorities for the next BID term. This plan reflects what matters most to you as businesses and sets out how we will deliver meaningful, measurable support that provides real value for money.

At a time when businesses continue to face economic challenges, the BID provides a vital platform for collaboration, shared opportunity and collective strength. The renewal ballot offers us the opportunity to build on our progress, address key challenges and continue positioning East Lothian as Scotland’s Food & Drink County.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Ray Donovan

Chair, East Lothian Food & Drink
March 2026

Your Top Priorities

1 Stronger partnership working across the sector

2 Increased opportunities for collaboration and connection

3 Greater business support and development opportunities

What You Told Us and What We Will Deliver

1. Stronger Collaboration & Networking

You said:

- More opportunities to bring members together;
- Better engagement across producers and hospitality.

We will:

- Deliver a structured programme of networking events and member meet-ups;
- Strengthen connections between producers, hospitality and retailers;
- Create more opportunities for peer learning and collaboration.

2. Business Development & Growth Support

You said:

- More transparency and access to business development and training courses;
- Interest in logistics collaboration and shared solutions.

We will:

- Deliver a structured programme of networking events and member meet-ups;
- Strengthen connections between producers, hospitality and retailers;
- Create more opportunities for peer learning and collaboration.

3. Events, Festivals & Promotion

You said:

- Desire for a dedicated festival;
- Seasonal events and more opportunities to showcase products.

We will:

- Develop a programme of seasonal events and festivals;
- Create platforms to showcase East Lothian produce;
- Continue to produce publications that promote local businesses.

4. Strategic Partnerships

You said:

- Stronger links with organisations such as Queen Margaret University;
- Better understanding of partners.

We will:

- Formalise partnerships with key institutions;
- Improve communication and visibility of partner activity;
- Leverage partnerships to create new opportunities for members.

What You Told Us and What We Will Deliver

5. Retail & Destination Development

You said:

- Interest in a hub/café showcasing local produce.

We will:

- Explore the feasibility of a physical retail or showcase space;
- Promote East Lothian products across local businesses;
- Strengthen the “food and drink destination” offer.



The BID Levy

Food and drink businesses that pay non-domestic rates and wholesale their products will be required to contribute to the BID levy.

The levy is calculated based on the **rateable value of the property at the time of the renewal ballot**.

A reduced levy will apply to:

- Businesses in their first year of operation;
- Social enterprises, community organisations and cooperatives.

The levy will be collected by East Lothian Council.

Your Investment – And What It Delivers

The BID levy is not the only source of funding – it is **the foundation that unlocks significantly greater investment** in the East Lothian food and drink sector.

- The annual BID levy generates approximately **£17,000**;
- This supports the delivery of over **£55,000 of activity each year**;
- For every **£1 invested, more than £4.12 is returned** in activity, support, and promotion.

This means your levy contribution is **amplified through additional funding, partnerships and commercial activity**, delivering far greater value than the levy alone.

Why This Matters

The BID levy enables:

- Collective marketing and promotion of East Lothian as Scotland's Food & Drink County;
- Events, festivals and opportunities to increase sales;
- Business support, training and collaboration;
- Strategic partnerships that bring additional funding into the area.

Without the BID levy, this level of coordinated support, promotion and investment would not be possible.

Strategic Partnerships

The BID is strengthened through a range of strategic partnerships that bring additional investment, expertise and opportunities to East Lothian food and drink businesses.

We will continue to work closely with East Lothian Council, particularly through its Economic Development team, to align priorities, access funding and support business growth across the sector.

We are delighted to have secured a three-year sponsorship with Papple Steading. This partnership will provide:

- Flexible meeting and collaboration space for members ;
- A venue for key events, including an East Lothian Food & Drink Festival;
- Support for delivering a “Meet the Buyer” event to connect producers with new markets.

We will continue to benefit from national support through Scotland Food & Drink, including project funding via the Regional Food Groups coordinator programme.

Collaboration will also continue with Visit East Lothian and Queen Margaret University, supporting promotion, skills development and innovation across the sector.

We will maintain strong engagement with MSPs and MPs to ensure the sector has a clear voice and to help raise the profile of East Lothian as Scotland’s Food & Drink County.



Key dates

W/c 25 June 2026

Ballot papers issued

20 August 2026 at 5pm

Final date for return of ballot papers

21 August

Ballot papers counted and result announced

22 August 2026

BID Term begins if ballot returns YES vote

Comments, feedback and more information

If you would like to comment or provide feedback or would like more information about the next steps for the BID, please contact Emma Bouglet.

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