

Development brief vision

Blueprint sets out the future

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WORK is to begin shortly on a blueprint for the regeneration of Inverness city centre, looking at how to attract developers, improve transport and make better use of the waterfront.

The development brief is a joint initiative between Highland Council and the city's Business Improvement District, which comprises shops and firms operating in the city.

Landowners and developers are being encouraged to contribute and a public consultation will be staged later in the year.

A key part of the process will be to identify sites and buildings that are or may become available over the coming months and years.

BID chairman Craig Duncan describes the brief as being "essential to the future prosperity and growth in the city centre".

"We see this initiative as bringing new opportunities within the retail, office, leisure and property sectors, which will further enhance the area and in turn bring a greater number of shoppers and pedestrians into the heart of Inverness," he said.

In his Business Comment on this page, BID manager Mike Smith sets out his own ideas, including a major city centre tourist attraction such as a House of Bruar-type retail outlet, student residences, an office quarter and

an arts and crafts complex. He also believes more should be done to encourage tour operators to include Inverness on their schedules by providing a central coach park and a drop off point, possibly in Church Street.

"BID sees the brief as saying to developers we want to do business with you, we have our thoughts but we need to understand what will work for you," Mr Smith said.

"Currently there is market failure with only limited development, so how do we get new development into the city centre?"

"We see this initiative bringing new opportunities within the retail, office, leisure and property sectors."

Craig Duncan,
BID chairman

He argues that Inverness Common Good Fund money could be used to subsidise developments and help attract private investment.

BID has already set up a sub-group of directors to contribute to the brief, including representatives from the retail, office, leisure and property sectors.

All have experience of how other British cities have addressed similar problems.

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