

# Shaping the next decade for Newcastle

*By Stephen Patterson, Chief Executive of NE1 Ltd, the Business Improvement District company for Newcastle city centre*

**Over the past ten years, Newcastle has undergone significant change. With many of the transformational projects scheduled for completion over the next two years, Stephen Patterson, Chief Executive of NE1 argues that the focus must shift to building on this momentum and planning for the next decade.**

We've had an extremely successful 2025/26 at NE1. In the space of just 12 months, we have won four prestigious awards for our work animating Newcastle city centre, including international recognition for our placemaking efforts, from the International Downtown Association in the United States, and from the National BID Awards where we were recently crowned 'Overall Winner'.

While awards are never the goal, they are welcome recognition and provide an opportunity to pause and reflect on what has been achieved. These awards also highlight what can be delivered when businesses work together with shared passion and a vision for the city.

The honours also come at a time when Business Improvement District (BID) companies have never been more important in providing an independent voice for business. And for NE1, they come at an important juncture as we enter the third year of our current five-year term, our fourth term voted for by businesses. This continuity matters. It demonstrates the confidence Newcastle's business community has in NE1, and in our role as a consistent voice for businesses and the city centre.

In times of political change and uncertainty, independence matters. That is exactly what a BID provides. Our role is not to set the political agenda. BIDs are deliberately apolitical, designed to work with whoever is willing to collaborate to bring businesses together, encourage investment and champion the area they represent. This consistency provides stability and focus, ensuring the priorities of city centre businesses remain front and centre, regardless of the political climate.

For many, the term Business Improvement District, or BID, may still be unfamiliar. But BIDs have become one of the most effective tools places have at their disposal and in Newcastle, people know and recognise NE1 for what we deliver.

Central to what we do is lobbying and advocating for Newcastle and its businesses. When NE1 was first set up in 2009, there had been relatively little investment in Newcastle city centre. Working with partners we helped change that, championing projects that have been pivotal to the city's growth, including the redevelopment of Newcastle Central Station. This investment helped unlock the regeneration of the Stephenson Quarter and paved the way for the long-term vision for the redevelopment of Forth Yards.

More recently, we worked closely with city and regional partners over many years to bring forward the City Centre

Transformation Programme delivered by Newcastle City Council which has delivered major investment in Northumberland Street, Grey Street and surrounding streets. The largest public investment in the city's retail core in a generation.

Our success ultimately depends on the businesses we represent. A BID is only as strong as the passion of the businesses it represents and their willingness to collaborate. It is not our job to be the 'big voice' in the room, but to reflect the priorities of our businesses and help turn their vision and ambition into reality.

After a hugely successful 2025, we are now at an important crossroads. With local government elections looming in May and NE1 at the midpoint of our current BID term, it is the right time to start looking ahead to 2029 and beyond.

Walk around Newcastle today and the scale of the change delivered over the last decade is both visible and impressive. Major infrastructure and regeneration projects that have reshaped the city are nearing completion. The Tyne Bridge restoration and central motorway improvements are visibly progressing, the impressive new HMRC offices at Pilgrim's Quarter will be fully occupied by 2027, while hospitality destinations like Hotel Gotham, WC Newcastle and the Maldron Hotel have completely revitalised areas and premises that once were underused or even derelict. The Helix's regeneration of the former Newcastle Brewery site over the last ten years is perhaps the clearest example of how the make-up of the city has changed. But, what comes next?

We must start thinking about the future of the city centre, and not just the next project, but the next decade. By the time our current BID term ends in 2029, NE1 will have been working on behalf of Newcastle and its businesses for a full twenty years.

As a BID and as a city we have demonstrated what can be achieved when the public and private sectors work together. The challenge now is to build on that success and ensure the next decade for Newcastle is as transformative as the last.

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*Stephen Patterson*