



Annual Report
2025-2026

(Sept 2025 - Apr 2026)



Vanessa Ross

Chair, Kingston First

As we reach the end of the first year of our fifth term, I am pleased to reflect on the progress we have made against the priorities set out in our Business Plan. While there is much to celebrate, it is important to recognise that this has continued to be a challenging and uncertain period for many businesses. Rising operating costs and wider economic pressures continue to affect us all, and I would like to acknowledge the resilience, adaptability and commitment shown by our business community throughout the year.



This year also marked a change in leadership, as we said goodbye to our Co-Chair, Greg Miles, who stepped down from his role. Greg has been a passionate champion and dedicated supporter of Kingston First and the town centre for many years. His commitment to supporting young people, encouraging innovation, and bringing fresh ideas has helped make a positive impact on the local community. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Greg for his contribution, support and dedication during his time as Co-Chair.

One of the highlights of the year has been the completion of both Eagle Brewery Wharf and Memorial Gardens, delivered in partnership with Kingston Council and co-funded by Kingston First. These projects have transformed two important public spaces within the town centre, creating more welcoming and attractive environments for residents, visitors and businesses alike. They are strong examples of what can be achieved through

partnership working, shared ambition and long-term investment in Kingston's public realm. The experience and learning gained through these collaborations will help shape how we continue to work with partners to deliver further improvements across the town centre in the years ahead.

Finally, I would like to thank all our businesses, partners and stakeholders for your continued support, collaboration and engagement. By continuing to work together, we can help ensure Kingston remains a vibrant, resilient and thriving destination for everyone.

Kirsten Henly

CEO, Kingston First

This past year has very much been about building strong foundations for the future and putting in place the building blocks needed to deliver the ambitions set out in our Business Plan. While the challenges facing businesses and town centres continue, I am incredibly proud of the progress the team has made, not only in delivering impactful projects and initiatives, but also continuing to strengthen Kingston First as an organisation so we can best support you and the town.



Alongside delivering major projects such as the transformation of Memorial Gardens and Eagle Brewery Wharf in partnership with Kingston Council, we have also focused on how we develop ourselves to better support our members in the years ahead. This has included important work around sustainability, creating an action plan to help us become a more environmentally responsible organisation, as well as investing in training, policies and new ways of working to help us embrace emerging technologies and opportunities.

The successful delivery of Memorial Gardens and Eagle Brewery Wharf has reinforced the value of strong partnership working and what can be achieved when organisations share a common ambition for Kingston. Looking ahead, I am excited to build on this collaborative approach further, particularly as we continue our commitment within the Business Plan to improve wayfinding and connectivity across the town centre in partnership with the Council and other stakeholders.

One of the most exciting developments this year has been the launch of the new **inKingston app**. I hope many of you, your colleagues and employees are already enjoying using it. The app represents a significant step forward in how we connect

people with Kingston town centre and its businesses. Bringing together tailored content for employees, visitors and the wider public within a single platform is something rarely achieved in town centre apps, and we are proud to be leading the way in this space. This is just the beginning, and the team is already exploring new ways the app can further support engagement, footfall and town centre experiences in the future.

It has also been fantastic to see so many members come together through our networking events this year. I hope those who attended enjoyed the opportunity to meet new people, share experiences and strengthen local connections. I would also encourage all members to continue making the most of the wide range of training opportunities available through Kingston First, all of which are offered free to members and their employees.

Finally, I want to say how incredibly proud I am of the Kingston First team. Their passion, creativity and commitment continue to drive everything we achieve as an organisation. Thank you also to all our members, partners and stakeholders for your ongoing support, collaboration and belief in what we are working to achieve together for Kingston town centre.

Who are Kingston First

Kingston First is a business improvement district (BID) which operates within Kingston town centre. Set up in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, we are a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee and principally funded by a levy. This levy is used to provide additional projects and services to those provided by Kingston Council and other public agencies. The company is governed by a voluntary board of directors who represent a cross-sector of the town's business community. They are responsible for overseeing the delivery of the agreed business plan. A dedicated team has delegated responsibility for its delivery and the management of the company.

Kingston First was the first BID set up in the country and following a successful renewal ballot in June 2024, the company started its fifth five-year term on 1 January 2025.



VISION

Kingston will be a vibrant town where **everyone** has an **amazing** experience.

MISSION

By leading, supporting and working with our members, partners and community, we will create a town where our members can thrive and where people want to be.

Key Achievements

in 2025-2026



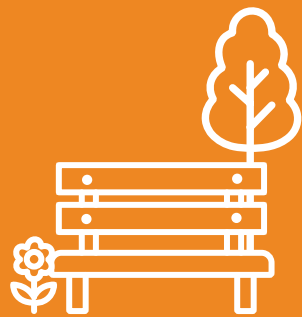
We launched a new app for visitors and employees, InKingston, and already have 9000 people signed up, enjoying over 200 offers.



We continue to actively promote the town and its businesses across our socials with over 33,000 followers across Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.



We've delivered deep cleaning across the town: 23,200 square metres equivalent to five medium sized supermarkets, and removed 75 graffiti tags.



We completed the transformation of Eagle Brewery Wharf and Memorial Gardens in partnership with the council, creating welcoming and attractive public spaces for everyone to enjoy.



We launched the third round of our Kingston Town Centre Community Fund and we are proud to be supporting Pride in Kingston, Kingston Youth Anthems, Windows of Belonging and Kingston's second Street Art Festival.



We delivered a town wide lighting scheme and installations at Christmas, with an integrated marketing campaign to promote Kingston at Christmas generating almost 1.5million impressions.



Our priorities for our new term 2025-2030

Investing in a safe and welcoming town centre

SECURITY AND SAFETY

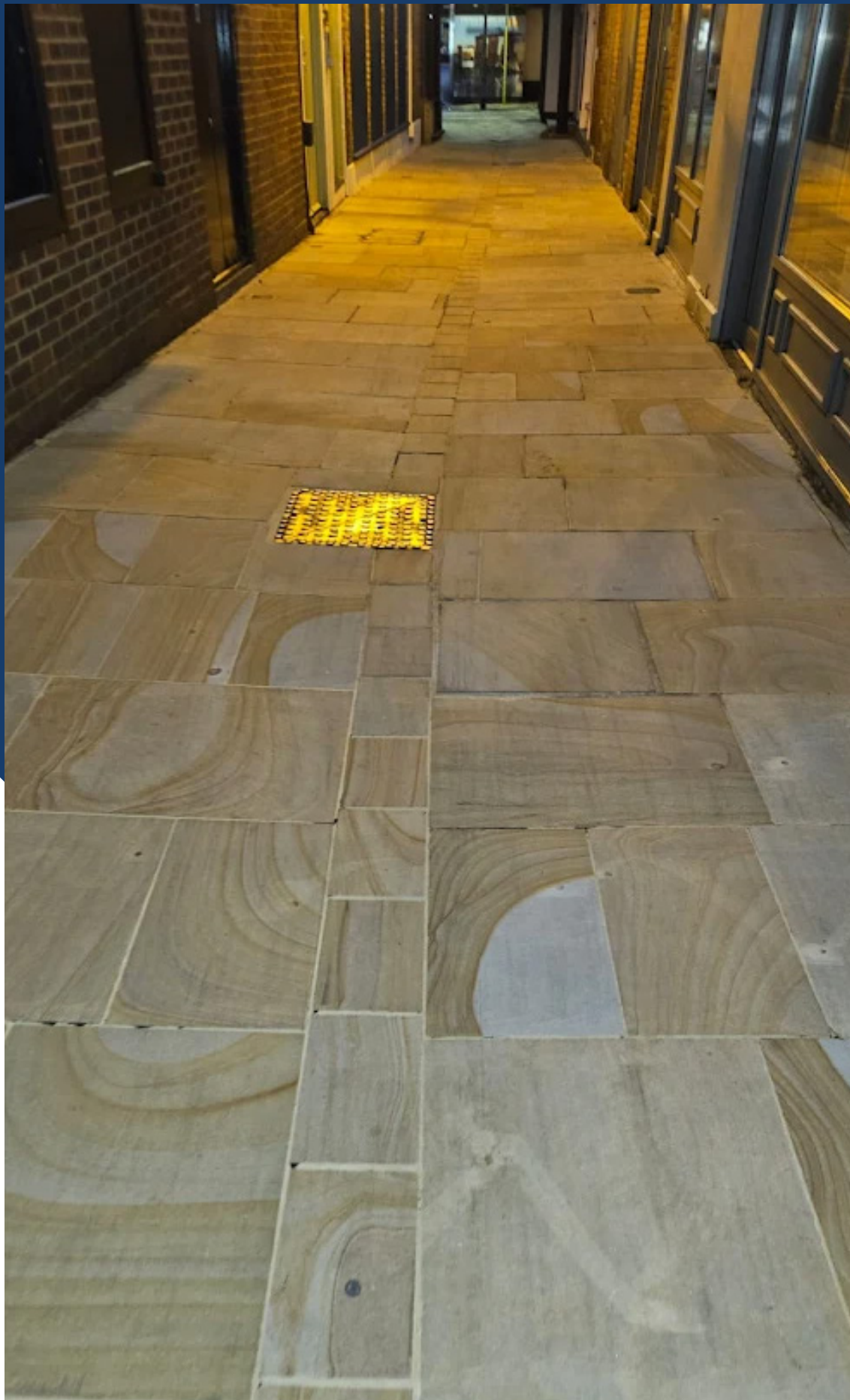
We will:

- Invest in additional skills and resources, including people and our team, to provide services and initiatives to contribute to a safer town centre. This will also include designated pastoral support to any member (owner or employee) who has been affected by anti-social behaviour in the town centre
- Recruit a safe and secure representative from the Met Police to provide additional strategic expertise and insight
- Advocate for a better and more widespread CCTV in the town centre

Progress so far:

- Designed and delivered a pastoral support programme in collaboration with the Street Pastors
- We continue to work closely with the council, police and other partners for support and intervention for the homeless in Kingston
- We introduced gates at the carpark on Fife Rd to stop fly tipping and address homelessness in the space

Our priorities for our new term 2025-2030



Investing in a safe and welcoming town centre

CLEAN AND WELCOMING

We will:

- Continue to provide the town Radio Link and introduce other ways to share information and advice on safety, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Provide monthly updates on what the Police have done to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and work with them to make sure your voice is heard and responded to
- Carry out regular deep cleans throughout the town to remove grime, gum and graffiti
- Respond to your street scene concerns within 24 hours

- Lobby for cleaner and healthier streets for people that work here and visitors, using data and insights to drive change. Invest, lobby and support public realm projects, including projects that improve the Ancient Market Place, Clarence Street and the riverside
- Create a working group with landlords, estate agents and stakeholders to facilitate investment in the town centre offer by encouraging more diverse organisations, including more start-ups and meanwhile use

Progress so far:

- We have deep cleaned: 23,200 square metres equivalent to five medium sized supermarkets, and removed 75 graffiti tags graffiti tags across the town centre
- We continue to provide the Radio Link service and have established the Business Crime Reduction Partnership with, and for, businesses
- We have created a Vacant Units working group made up of businesses, landowners and property agents and facilitate pop-ups in vacant units

Our priorities for our new term 2025-2030



Promoting and celebrating Kingston as a unique destination

We will:

- Introduce at least one new activation, experience or event that encourages footfall and dwell time in the town centre every year
- Continue to celebrate and promote Kingston by managing and generating content for the consumer brand and website, kingstonuponthames.info, and provide year round advertising, PR and social media

- Attract new visitors within and outside of the Kingston borough with marketing campaigns and activations targeting the after work crowd, students and families

- Showcase our independent businesses with bespoke marketing campaigns and encourage new independents to set up home in Kingston

- Work with local artists, Kingston University and Kingston College to deliver more public art around the town

Progress so far:

- We introduced the new [InKingston app](#), with over 9000 downloads so far

- We delivered a campaign to promote independent businesses and will build on its success this year with a bolder, more impactful campaign

- We worked with 18 businesses on our Easter campaign to develop an Easter trail and exclusive Easter offers and discounts targeting families. This generated over 9000 views to our landing pages and over 1000 new downloads of the InKingston app

- We've been exploring how we reach younger audiences by attending Kingston University's Freshers Fayre and experimenting with TiK Tok. We will be launching this channel officially this year helping us to promote Kingston and its businesses to new audiences

Our priorities for our new term 2025-2030

Delivering a better connected Kingston town centre

We will:

- Work with South Western Railway and other partners to transform the train station into a welcoming entry point into the town
- Develop and implement a street-by street improvement plan, including decluttering and greening for the entire town centre to help make sure streets look attractive, and are safe and accessible for everyone
- Introduce new wayfinding across the town to better connect different streets and areas of Kingston
- Lobby TfL and South Western Railway for better rail and bus links within and around Kingston

Progress so far:

- We have secured commitment from the council to invest in Wayfinding across the town and look forward to progressing this work this year.



Our priorities for our new term 2025-2030



Supporting your success by saving you time and money

We will:

- Support access to better broadband
- Continue to help members in the town save hundreds of thousands of pounds through our free recycling, reduced cost trade waste and cost saving opportunities
- Provide free training courses for members based on needs including mental health, sustainability, fire safety and first aid
- Save employees money through our new digital app InKingston, replacing Keep it Kingston with bigger opportunities

- Support businesses and the town to become a more sustainable town centre

- Nurture a strong and connected community, investing in community initiatives, partnerships and bringing people together to create a thriving town centre

- Be the voice of Kingston town centre; representing you and lobbying for what matters, including bidding for external funding that can be invested into the town

Progress so far:

- We've saved members almost £115,000 through our partnership with First Mile
- We've saved employees of Kingston money through over 200 offers and discounts on the InKingston app
- We've provided training to almost 150 individuals across 60 businesses
- Delivered a successful winter networking event
- Provided timely information through our B2B communications

What you can expect from Kingston First in 2026



A bigger and bolder marketing campaign to promote and support independent businesses in Kingston.



Work will commence on delivery of a new wayfinding approach across the town centre.



The official launch of Tik Tok to reach younger audiences.



A deep dive into the state of Kingston's streets with an improvement plan to make sure streets are attractive, safe and accessible.



New and exciting activations and experiences in Memorial Gardens and Eagle Brewery Wharf for Christmas, to support footfall, dwell time and a welcoming town centre.



A new training programme for members and employees



Marketing campaigns throughout the year including Christmas.



Another great networking event in November.

Financial Statement 2025-26

INCOME

Levy	
£1,061,925	Notes 1
Additional public and private sector contributions	
£9,100	Notes 2
Other	
£22,683	Notes 3
TOTAL INCOME	
£1,093,708	

EXPENDITURE

Safe and welcoming
£351,981
Promoting destination
£259,496
Better connected
£43,764
Business support
£224,995
Overheads
£230,693
BID6 Renewal
£10,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE
£1,120,929

Net surplus/(deficit) for the year 2025-26
(£27,221)Notes 5
Net surplus brought forward from 2024-25
£539,112
Net surplus carried forward into 2026-27
£511,891Notes 6

Notes
The financial statement covers the period of 12 months from April 2025 to March 2026 inclusive. Full audited accounts will be available at the Company's Annual Meeting to be held in September and on the Kingston First website.
5. Net Deficit from Expenditure on projects and services was in line with plans.
6. Surplus is carried forward for the projects and services detailed in the business plan, details of these have been outlined in this Annual Report.
Kingston First's voluntary board of directors represent sectors from across the town's business community. They are responsible for the financial oversight of the company and oversee the delivery of the business plan. You can find out details about the board and the Kingston First team on our website.
1. 2025 Levy collection rate of 95% with additional prior year collections.
2. Includes sponsorships and project contributions.
3. Bank interest received.
4. Overheads include non-project staffing, office accommodation, IT, levy collection charges, legal and accountancy costs associated with the running of the company.



Kingston First
3rd Floor Neville House
55 Eden Street
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT1 1BW

T 020 8547 1221
info@kingstonfirst.co.uk
kingstonfirst.co.uk

Company Registered in England No.3838618