

Live Bute, Love Bute, Visit Bute

Isle of Bute Business Improvement District

Business Plan 2026 - 2031



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Live Bute, Love Bute, Visit Bute

Better times ahead for Bute

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR,

Duncan Martin, Bute Blacksmiths.



As a proud Brandane and local businessman, I am pleased to present our business plan for the Isle of Bute BID for 2026-2031. I am acutely aware that everything didn't come to plan in our first term, we are committed to learn from past mistakes and to keep listening. However, I am also aware that a lot of progress was delivered, and I believe that our combined investments and willingness to collaborate going forward will be critical for the Island's future success.

Supporting the Isle of Bute BID is a great opportunity to come together and make the changes we all want. If you choose to elect us for a second term, I as Chairman will ensure that the Isle of Bute BID will be transparent, will comply with all its statutory obligations and most importantly, will deliver on what you've said you want from us – ie a bigger focus on tourism, marketing and more advertising campaigns, more events and festivals and activities outside the peak season, and a cleaner better and more welcoming environment.

We already know that our Island is a natural gem. With the reopening of the Pavilion, the Adventure Lane project, a community run Discovery Centre, a revamped Royal Hotel and the Isle of Bute BID – all of us working together, gives us a great chance to create better times for Bute.

By getting involved in the Isle of Bute BID, we can work together to increase footfall, stimulate investment and enhance the reputation of our Island. The purpose of the Isle of Bute BID is to support our businesses, increase trade, and improve our business environment. You can find more information on our website <https://www.butebid.com/> or for more general or national information refer to <https://improvementdistricts.scot/>

A notice of ballot will be sent to all eligible persons on or before the 30/07/26. You will have 6 weeks to cast your vote before the ballot closes at 5pm on 10/09/26. Ballot papers received after this date and time will be null and void.

Finally, I have been involved in family and business on the Isle of Bute all my life. I am convinced that the BID will bring much needed improvement to our island and would urge you all to vote YES so that we can work together to make the Isle of Bute better drive the positive change for all of us.

Insert Duncans Signature

Proposed Projects for 2026-31

1. Visit BUTE, Advertising and Marketing Campaigns

Feedback from our consultation has shown that levy payers want to see more advertising and marketing campaigns.

We plan to expand our advertising and marketing reach by undertaking the following activities :

- Investing almost **£200,000** on advertising and marketing campaigns over the next 5 years to help raise the profile of Bute to mainland Scotland and beyond. With the ambition to encourage more visitors, more tourism expenditure and longer stays.
- Using **Visit Bute** as our main brand and redeveloping the website, its design and functionality and analytics
- Developing closer **campaign partnerships** with Argyll and Isles Tourism Cooperative, Calmac, Scotrail, Visit Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council and Events Scotland.
- Continue to advertise the Island to a **wider audience** on the mainland (subway, cruise companies, airport, motorways, social media, press etc)
- Working with businesses and groups on the Island to promote their **activities, events and festivals** to a wider visitor audience



Proposed Projects for 2026-31

2. Events, Festivals and Activities

Feedback from our consultation has shown that levy payers want to see more events, festivals and activities to compliment the wonderful destinations, boutique retail, food and drink and hospitality which already exists on the island.

We plan to support and help facilitate the following activities with **£185,000** over the next 5 years :

- Using Visit Bute as our main brand and redeveloping the website, it's and functionality and analytics – this platform can be used to support **events and festivals** in addition to social platforms. Having a more digital focus will allow us to promote events to a wider audience in a much more cost effective way.
- Supporting **new and existing events**, including Easter, Pub Trails, Bute Fest, Halloween, Christmas, Bute Feis
- Help to **fund and facilitate** existing groups to deliver events – eg Young Farmers, Bute Fest, Bute Yard, Bute Feis
- Working with **businesses**, charities and groups on the Island to promote their activities, events and festivals to a wider audience



Proposed Projects for 2026-31

3. Environmental Improvements

Feedback from our consultation has shown that levy payers want to see more environmental improvements to compliment the larger scale investments being undertaken at the Pavilion, Royal Hotel, Pier and Harbour, Adventure Lane, Discovery Centre – Winter Gardens etc.

We plan to support and help facilitate the following activities with **£200,000** over the next 5 years:

- Support small capital works and environmental across our Island **communities**
- Complete the upgrades, long with partners, to the **Amphitheatre** to ensure we have season long entertainment and events
- Maintain **winter gardens** in partnership with the Council, local charities, and volunteers
- Deliver the new **kids playpark** in Rothesay, to compliment the recently installed playground games project
- Provide seedcorn funding for community orchards and **greenspaces**



WHAT IS A BID?

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a geographically defined area, where businesses come together and agree to invest collectively in projects and services that the businesses believe will improve their trading environment. BID projects are new and additional projects and services; they do not replace services that are already provided by Argyll and Bute Council and other statutory bodies. BIDs are developed, managed, and paid for by the non-domestic sector by means of a compulsory levy, which the eligible persons in the proposed BID area must vote in favour of before the BID can be established. Each eligible person liable to pay the BID levy will be able to vote on whether the BID goes ahead.

The background of BIDs

BIDs first started in Bloor West Village, Toronto, Canada over 55 years ago by the town's business community. The town's businesses were increasingly under pressure from the new shopping centres that were being developed on the outskirts of the town, diverting shoppers away from the traditional town centre out to the new shopping malls. As a result, some businesses were forced to cease trading and the town started to look tired and neglected. To stop the haemorrhage of deserting shoppers, local businesses fought back to revitalise the town. They successfully lobbied for legislation for all the businesses in the proposed BID area to pay a levy. The levy money was used to improve the physical appearance of the town, and then promote the town centre as a vibrant, attractive, and safe place to workshop and live. The strategy paid off, as shoppers started to return to the town centre in large numbers. The success of the Bloor West Village BID paved the way for future BIDs, not only in Toronto; but spreading throughout Canada and the USA in the late 1960's and 1970's.

Today there are well over 1800 successful BIDs worldwide

WHY DOES THE ISLE OF BUTE NEED A BID

As government and local authority budgets/ funds come under **more** pressure, and priorities of the national government and Local Authority are directed towards essential services, investment in non-essential requirements become more challenged. It is extremely important for the island to have a BID to ensure that local needs can be co-ordinated and deliver those essential **LOCAL** projects.

The Isle of Bute has experienced significant changes over recent years. In particular, the reduction in tourists from further afield than the West/Central Belt of Scotland and increased competition from not only UK destinations.

There are many voluntary groups in the island and there is no shortage of community spirit and can-do attitude! However, these groups can suffer from a lack of funds and dedicated staff time. The BID is the opposite of this. It can help local groups to be more island inclusive to help achieve more with staff resources and access to funding. There is a desire from a range of sectors to see the island improve its marketing activity. The BID would work alongside Visit Scotland, Calmac, Zero Waste Scotland, Visit Bute, and the local environmental and community groups to deliver an increase in visitor numbers.

The BID will provide a unique opportunity for local businesses across all sectors to work together, invest collectively, and undertake projects which can contribute positively to improving the economic viability of businesses and securing investment in the town.

Rothesay is a Conservation Area as is Port Bannatyne and the BID will be working with the Council, businesses and communities regarding this.

Benefits of a BID

The strengths of having a BID include –

- Collective investment which makes often more impact than individual investment
- Operating Agreement and Baseline Services Agreements with Council and key Stakeholders to ensure minimum standards can be enforced
- More collaboration and communication, we have a database of all 306 levy payers, partners and stakeholders and voluntary contributors
- Constituted delivery body which can attract external funding and grants, BID 1 secured an extra £60,000 of funding, BID 2 will aim to increase this amount.
- A single voice representing and lobbying for over 300 businesses on key issues

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

What you told us!

TIMELINE

October 2025 onwards

The Board held an open meeting in Rothesay Shinty Hall on October 30th. Since then we have issued 3 Newsletters, revamped both IOD BID and Visit Bute websites, ensured all Board Minutes have been published, and have had regular press updates. On March 30th 2026 we held an open information sessions for businesses in the Shinty Hall. A further open night is planned before the election in September along with more business information days.

Consultation Questionnaire/Survey

The consultation questionnaire was issued to all levy payers in March 2026. Hard copies have been delivered on request and copies can also be collected in person from the Blacksmiths. We are using your feedback and ideas to shape this new business plan. We will continue to consult throughout the summer and plan to have drop in sessions and face to face meetings right up until Septembers ballot.



Live Bute, Love Bute, Visit Bute

THE MAIN KEY THEMES THAT EMERGED

More openness and transparency and better communication from Board and Staff

No more property improvement schemes

Bigger focus on tourism – invest in Visit Bute web and promotional materials, more marketing campaigns, advertising the Island to visitors, closer working with Visit Scotland, Argyll and Isles Tourism Cooperative, CalMac, West Coast Motors and Majestic Line, Scotrail, local, national and regional media, Cruise Ship Operators, Mount Stuart, Pavilion, Adventure Lane, Discovery Centre – Winter Gardens, Bute Community Land Company, Historic Environment Scotland, National Trust and community groups across the Island.

Facilitate more events, festivals and activities – ButeFest, Bute Feis, Halloween, Easter, Christmas, Shopping, Hospitality and Pub Trails. Try to develop more events off season.

Secure more external funding and develop more collaborative partnerships with Council, Crown Estate, Zero Waste Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful

Deliver more capital improvement projects to make the Island more attractive for businesses, residents and visitors – eg Kids Playpark, Winter Gardens, Port Bannatyne and island wide community projects.



BID Geography – The Isle of Bute BID covers the entire Island of Bute. It is the UK's first Island BID. This allows the BID to deliver projects outside the main town of Rothesay to support smaller settlements. Businesses with a rateable value below £2,000 are not included and after the agreed exempted businesses are removed, there are a total of 306 businesses eligible to pay the levy. At present a further 3 businesses have volunteered to pay levy making a total of 309 levy payers.



THE BID LEVY – The Directors have decided not to increase levy payments and will base the 2026-2031 levy at the 2021 rate. Exemptions have also been maintained to support key public service partners, churches, charities, schools, police and fire. This is in recognition that many businesses continue to face cost of living issues. We are also keeping the banding system to ensure smaller businesses pay less and larger businesses pay slightly more. We are confident that all our projects and obligations can be delivered within this budget. We will also work to augment the core budget by applying for external funding and grants. Businesses with a rateable value less than £2,000 have been excluded in order to support micro enterprise and start ups. The average weekly payment for all businesses is £9.84, however for smaller business the weekly average is £5. We understand that many businesses are struggling in this tough economic climate, we will therefore ensure our projects and investments will be designed to deliver as many benefits as possible.

Levy Bands	No. Of Businesses	Levy Amount	Annual Total £	Weekly £
Voluntary	3	£260	£780	£5
£2,000 - £4,999	119	£260	£30,940	£5
£5,000 - £8,999	89	£475	£42,275	£9
£9,000 - £15,999	53	£650	£34,450	£13
£16,000 - £21,999	19	£875	£16,625	£17
£22,000 +	26	£1,275	£33,150	£25
Totals	309		£158,220	



Who will Pay the Levy

A BID levy is an equitable and fair way of funding additional projects and services which are not provided by Argyll and Bute Council. The BID levy will be paid by the occupiers (the persons liable to pay the non-domestic rates), who will be liable for the levy payment. The levy payments are not linked to what businesses actually pay in rates but are based on the rateable value of the property. The businesses within the BID area (2K and above) will generate a total levy of £158,220 per annum which equates to an income of £791,100 over the five year duration.

The levy must be paid either in one payment within 28 days from the date of the levy invoice or in instalments for businesses paying quarterly or monthly by arrangement with the billing body. Where a property is taken out of rating (due to demolition or a split or merger) the BID levy for that individual property up to the date of the removal from the Rating List and the annual BID levy will be apportioned accordingly. All eligible occupiers (of eligible properties) e.g. the person liable to pay the non-domestic rate will be liable to pay the Levy. Any new commercial development, sub-division of existing properties or merging of properties by a company /owner with a non-domestic rateable valuation coming into the BID area during the five year period of the BID will be liable for the BID Levy.

Voluntary contributions and other funding

Businesses who are below the Levy threshold of £2,000 are still able to join the BID on voluntary basis paying the minimum fee. However, as they are voluntary, they do not have a vote under the rules. Businesses who are in a position to pay an additional voluntary contribution are also welcome. We encourage both sectors to do so. We would also encourage those organisations who are relieved of a Levy payment to make a voluntary payment and help fund the benefits of a BID.

Who will collect the Levy

Argyll and Bute Council will collect the investment levy on behalf of the BID, as this will be an efficient, safe, and cost-effective method of collection. Argyll and Bute Council will lodge the levy within a BID Revenue Account. The BID levy can only be drawn down by the Board of Directors of the BID to allow the delivery of the business plan. The BID Revenue Account and levy cannot be accessed by Argyll and Bute Council nor can it be used by the Council as an additional source of income.

It has been agreed by the BID Board

The BID levy will be paid by the occupier (the eligible person liable to pay the non-domestic rate), however, the property owner will be liable to pay the levy where a property is vacant on the day the levy invoice is issued and for all the period thereafter when the property is vacant.

The levy structure will be based on a banded system fixed on the rateable value (RV) of the property on the day of ballot Thursday 10th of September 2026 and remain the same throughout the 5-year term of the BID.

There will be no increase or decrease in the levy throughout the BID term because of a non-domestic rateable revaluation occurring during the BID term.

The BID levy will be paid by the property occupier - the person liable to pay the non-domestic rate.

All eligible occupiers (of eligible properties) i.e., the eligible persons liable to pay the non-domestic rate (NDR) that are listed on the Local Assessors Valuation Roll on the day of ballot will be liable to pay the levy.

The levy payments are not linked to what businesses actually pay in rates but are based on the rateable value of the property.

The levy must be paid either in one payment within 28 days from the date of the levy invoice or in 10 instalments by arrangement with the Non-domestic Rates Team Argyll and Bute Council

If there is a change, in occupier to a property, until a new occupier is found, the property owner will be responsible for paying the levy.

Any new commercial development, subdivision of existing properties or merging of properties or new business with a non-domestic rateable valuation coming into the area during the 5-year term of the business improvement district will be liable for the BID Improvement Levy.

If a property is vacant on the day the levy invoice is issued or any subsequent vacant periods, the property owner will be liable to pay the full levy amount, which must be paid within 28 days from the date of invoice.

Self-catering holiday accommodation which is not the sole or main residence of any person and which is available (or intended to be available) for letting on a commercial basis, with profit in mind, for short periods totalling more than 140 days in the financial year remain liable for non-domestic rates for the whole year and will be included and liable to pay the levy.

The levy will be applied to properties with a rateable value of £2,000 and above. Various band levels have been applied with a maximum banding at £22,000 and above.

The BID levy will be index linked and tied to the retail price index (RPI) on the date of the issue of the levy invoice(s), but subject to the agreement of the Board of Directors on an annual basis. Any increase in levy will be at a rate annually of not more than a maximum of 3% on the previous year's BID levy.

Exclusions

The BID board decided to continue to exclude premises, that have a rateable value of under £2,000. These premises can pay a voluntary levy and become an "associate member" should they wish. The BID board decided that there is no benefit from being part of the BID to the following categories of property and therefore are exempt from paying the levy: - Ad Spaces, Fishing Lodge, Health Day Centres, Non-Retail Charity, Places of Worship, Health Care Centre(s), The War Veterans Association, the Community Employment Trust and the Girl Guide Association, Food Banks, Places of Education, Children's play schools, Children's playgroups, Places of Worship, Credit Unions, Community Advice Centres/offices, Community recreational clubs.



Income and Expenditure

INCOME	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	TOTAL
BID LEVY	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£791,100
Income Total	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£791,100
Expenditure	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£791,100

EXPENDITURE	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	TOTAL
Advertising Marketing & promoting Isle of Bute, Print,Digital and Media. Campaigns.	£38,720	£40,220	£40,220	£40,220	£40,220	£199,600
Events, Festivals and Activities, Print, Digital and Media	£37,500	£37,000	£37,000	£37,000	£37,000	£185,500
Island Environmental Enhancement	£40,000	£40,000	£40,000	£40,000	£40,000	£200,000
Management, Staff, Administration, Council Fees, Accountancy & Running costs	£42,000	£41,000	£41,000	£41,000	£41,000	£206,000
TOTAL SPEND	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£158,220	£791,100

Staffing and Management

Name	Sector	Name	Sector
Duncan Martin	Manufacturing	Ian McCulloch	Hospitality
Jim Brodbeck	Hospitality	Rachel Greenwood	Retail
Reeni Kennedy-Boyle	Argyll and Bute Council	Fergus Murray*	Argyll and Bute Council
Kirsty Durrant*	Argyll and Bute Council	Jill Devine	BID Coordinator

Contact Details –

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**RENEWAL ISLE OF BUTE BID – 10 SEPTEMBER 2026 PROPOSED RENEWAL BUSINESS
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT FOR BUTE TIMETABLE**

BID Proposal to Local Authority + Scottish Ministers	At least 98 days	26 th February 2026
Baseline services update		27 th February – 27 th March 2026
Deadline for BID submission proposal		21 st April 2026
Deadline for report to SLT		12 th May 2026
SLT Meeting		18 th May 2026
COUNCIL MEETING – APPROVAL FOR BALLOT		24th June 2026
Decision on Veto (no later than)	70 days	2 nd July 2026
BID Proposal to hold a BID Ballot	56 days	16 th July 2026
Ballot Holder publish Notice of Ballot including sending a copy to Scottish Ministers (in postal pack)	At least 42 days	30 th July 2026
Ballot Holder issue Ballot Papers (includes Ballot Arrangements)	42 days	30 th July 2026
Replacement of Spoilt Ballot Papers	42 days	Anytime from 30 th July 2026 up to 5pm on day of Ballot
Last day for postponing the day of the ballot by up to 15 days	42 days	30 th July 2026
Last day to appoint a Proxy	10 days	Monday 31 st August 2026
First day to apply for a lost replacement Ballot Paper	7 working days	Tuesday 1 st September 2026
Last day to cancel a Proxy	5 days	Saturday 5 th September 2026 (5pm)
Last day to apply for a lost replacement Ballot Paper	3 days	Monday 7 th September 2026
BID Ballot Day (Ballot Papers must be received not later than 5pm)	0	Thursday 10 September 2026
BID Count	0	Friday 11 September 2026
Declaration of Results	+7	Friday 11 September 2026 (no later than Friday 18 September 2026)
COUNCIL MEETING – RESULTS		23rd September 2026

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF BID PROJECTS

In the event of a YES vote, a robust and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed to be overseen by the BID Board of Directors. Throughout the lifetime of the BID, all work on the BID projects will be monitored to ensure the projects proposed in the BID Business Plan achieve a high level of impact and are progressing to the satisfaction of the businesses that voted for the BID.

The BID will undergo an independent evaluation of its activities at the halfway point and towards the end of the second term. The BID will undergo Assessment and Accreditation Interim Review (AAIR) for Scottish BID Companies.

The Assessment and Accreditation Interim Review is recommended by Scotland's Improvement Districts (SIDs) as good practice and is included as one of the good practice elements of any Scottish BID Proposal and BID Business Plan.

The evaluations will be made by using evidence from other areas such as surveys, online and paper copies, and group events and drop in sessions.

COLLECTION OF THE LEVY

Argyll & Bute Council will collect the Investment Levy on behalf of the BID, as this will be an efficient, safe and cost effective method of collection. Argyll & Bute Council will lodge the levy within a BID REVENUE ACCOUNT. The BID levy can only be drawn down by the BID Board of Directors to allow the delivery of the AGREED business plan. The BID Revenue Account and levy cannot be accessed by Argyll and Bute Council nor can it be used by the Council as an additional source of income. **Enforcement** – in the event of non payment, this will be strongly pursued by Argyll and Bute Council (as the Billing Body) using the recovery powers available, to ensure complete fairness to the businesses that have paid. Argyll and Bute Council will be entitled to charge additional fees to meet the additional costs in recovery of the levy.



THE BALLOT PROCESS

Pre Ballot

The Bid proposer must submit, at least 98 days I. Advance of the ballot date, the Bid Proposals to the Local Authority, the Scottish Ministers and the billing body along with a notice in writing requesting the local authority to instruct the ballot holder to hold a BID ballot in relation to the BID Proposals. Under legislation the prescribed local authority Bid Proposal veto period is 70 days prior to the date of the ballot.

The local authority is required, under legislation, to notify the Bid proposers and Scottish Government, in writing, if the authority is or is not vetoing the proposals. A “Notice of of Ballot” will be issued at least 42 days before the day of ballot. The BID proposer will make available a copy of the BID Proposal to any person, who is eligible to vote on the Bid Proposals, who requests a copy.

Ballot

Ballot papers will be posted to the eligible person responsible for casting a vote within their business 42 days before the day ballot. In the case of national companies, the responsibility for voting may lie with head office.

Prior to, or on the date the ballot papers are issued, the BID Proposer will provide to all those eligible to vote in the ballot, with a copy of the BID Business Plan.

The BID ballot is a confidential postal ballot conducted by Argyll and Bute Council on behalf of the Isle of Bute BID and in accordance with Scottish BID legislation.

Where an eligible property is vacant, the voting papers will be sent to the property owner.

In Isle of Bute BID case, voting papers will be issued on or before the 30th of July 2026.

The last date for all ballot papers to be returned is 5pm on Thursday 10th of September 2026. Papers received after this date and time will be deemed null and void.

Voting papers are easy to complete, simply place a cross on either 'YES' or 'NO' to the question, 'are you in favour of a BID?' The ballot paper must then be signed by the person eligible to vote and returned in the pre-paid envelope.

For the ballot to be successful there must be a minimum turnout of 25% (the headcount) by number of eligible persons and by combined value; and of those who turnout, the majority must vote in favour by number and combined rateable value.

All eligible persons (i.e. those persons liable to pay non-domestic rates) will have one vote or where a person is liable for non-domestic rates for more than one property, that individual shall be eligible to cast more than one vote however they will be required to pay the levy for each of the properties that they occupy.

The ballot papers will be counted on Friday 11th of September 2026 and the results announced by the Argyll and Bute Council within one week.

Following a successful ballot, the BID will commence on the 1st of October 2026, and will run for a period of five years until the 30th of September 2031.

GOVERNANCE OF THE BID

Following a successful yes vote, the management and operation of the BID will continue under the existing company structure and name, Isle of Bute BID Limited company number SC667727, which will operate from 1st of October 2026.

The Company will continue to be managed by its Board of Directors operating in an open and transparent way and answerable to the businesses in the area. The Directors are committed to the highest standards of management, governance and accountability; recognising good governance helps deliver the strategic objects of the company.

There will be a detailed set of protocols (the Operating Agreement) which will cover, as well as other items, the billing, collection and transfer of the levy to the Company.

The Board of Directors may consist of up to 15 directors, of which there are currently 5 in office. An active campaign will be launched after the successful ballot to recruit additional directors to the Board. Every eligible person that pays the levy will have the opportunity to nominate themselves or someone else from within the BID area to be elected to the Company Board but limited to one eligible person from each eligible property.

Nominations of directors, representatives, or advisors from outside the BID, who do not pay the levy and who may or may not represent those making voluntary or other financial contributions toward the BID, will be strictly at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

The Company will continue to be run by the businesses for the businesses. This Board will be responsible for all decisions relating to staff, contracts, the delivery of the approved business plan and other activities generated by the BID.

The Board will be representative of the businesses and stakeholders in the area. The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected from the directors of the Board. The Board will include one Director from Argyll and Bute Council. There will also be non-voting representatives from Argyll and Bute Council. Other non-voting members or local groups may be co-opted onto the Board at the Board's discretion.

The BID Company Board will have the authority to adapt or alter the projects and services from year to year to reflect any change in economic circumstances or any new opportunities that may arise. This will be in the best interests of the levy payers and without recourse to an alteration ballot.

Additionally, the BID Company Board reserve the right to consider creating a charitable arm of the company to enable it to secure additional funding, which can only be sourced with charitable status.



