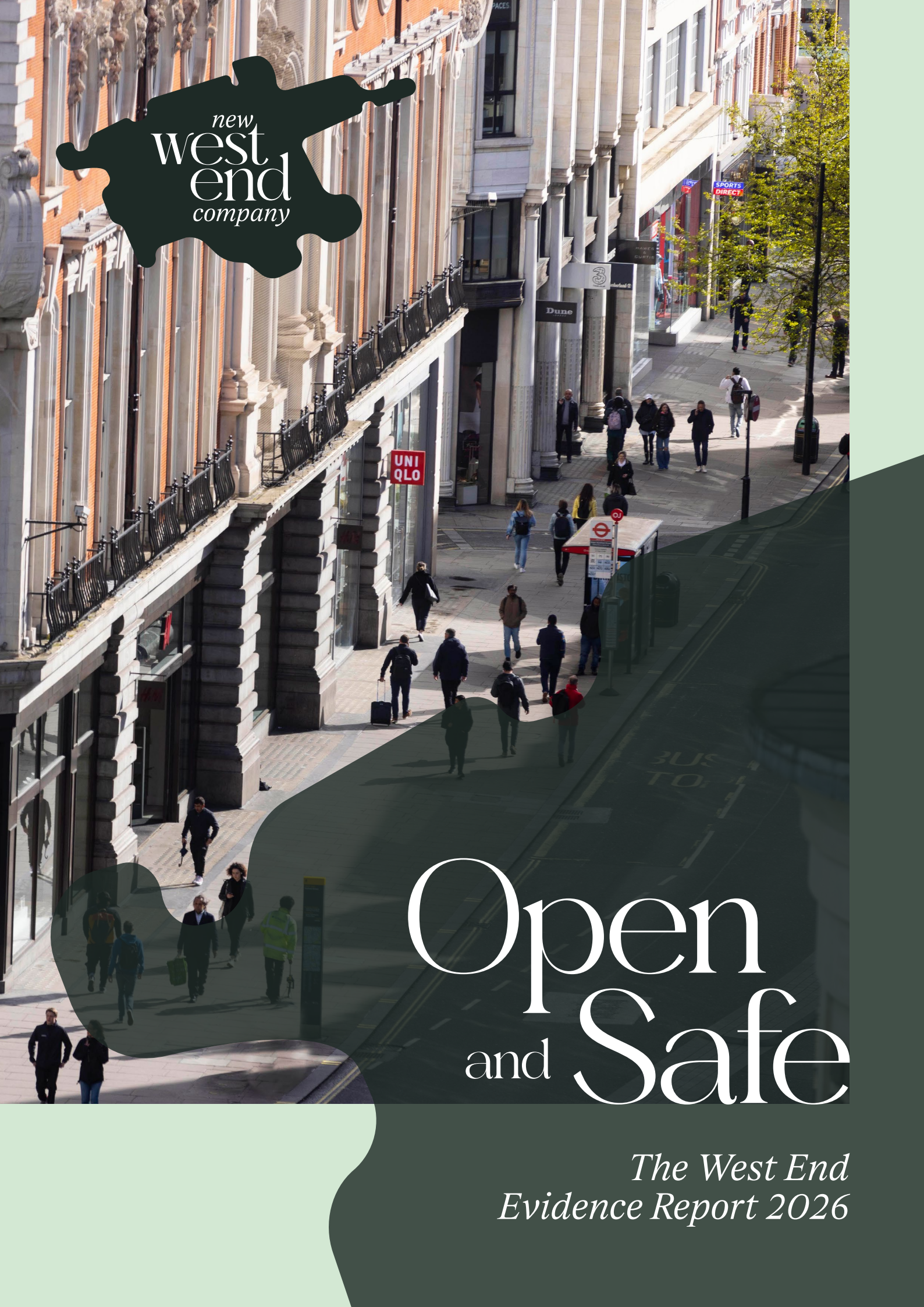




new
**west
end**
company



Open and Safe

*The West End
Evidence Report 2026*



Foreword

The West End is a district you can walk across in just 20 minutes, yet it is one of the UK's most economically significant places, generating nearly £9 billion in annual turnover. It boasts an extraordinary concentration of British heritage, globally renowned retail, leading hospitality and leisure providers, cultural institutions, and in-demand Grade-A office space. It is a world-leading destination where international perceptions of London and the UK are shaped every single day.

Whether you are visiting for the first time or the hundredth, it is the buzz of the West End, coupled with the district's unique ability to offer something for everyone, that is so magnetic, drawing people back time and time again. That experience however depends on people feeling welcome and safe as they explore everything the district has to offer. Safety is not just a public service issue; it drives visitor confidence, investment decisions and the long-term commercial viability of an area.

As the Business Improvement District (BID) representing over 800 West End businesses, which employ approximately 350,000 workers, New West End Company is committed to protecting and strengthening that foundation. Creating a West End which is safe and welcoming is one of our core pillars, with Security and District Operations representing our single largest area of investment.

That is why, in addition to continued investment into our

own security operations, we pride ourselves on having built close working relationships with the Metropolitan Police, Westminster City Council and other local stakeholders over the past decade. And, as our inaugural 'Open and Safe: The West End Evidence Report' demonstrates, this type of partnership working delivers real results.

Crime in the UK's busiest commercial district is increasingly organised rather than opportunistic. The concentration of world-class retail, hospitality, leisure and business operators, combined with visitor numbers not seen anywhere else in the UK, make the West End an attractive target. Despite this, our own data shows year-on-year footfall increases, and our bi-annual on-street sentiment surveys of thousands of visitors show that the majority feel safe when they are here.

That said, there is still more to do, and it is critical we maintain the momentum of positive changes already underway. Recognising the impact crime and the perceptions of safety have on the West End's reputation and economic success, New West End Company has committed £23 million to enhance security operations over the next five years, a clear demonstration of our long-term commitment to an open and safe West End.

A step-change from the Metropolitan Police, which has committed additional officers to the West End, alongside a further

£4.5 million investment from the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime to tackle high-profile crimes like phone theft are all beginning to make measurable differences.

Furthermore, the new administration at Westminster City Council has placed street safety front and centre of its own agenda, reflecting commitments made in its manifesto and responding to concerns from businesses and residents. The newly created position of Cabinet Member for Enforcement, held by a Deputy Leader of the Council, signals a renewed focus on ensuring the public realm reflects the West End's global reputation, focusing on issues including anti-social behaviour, illegal street trading and dumping of e-bikes and scooters.

This report examines what is working, where further action is needed, and how we can build on the progress already made. Creating an open and safe West End depends on a shared ambition, continued investment and a sustained partnership approach.

Together, we can ensure the West End remains one of the world's most welcoming, safe, vibrant and economically successful destinations for generations to come.

Dee Corsi

Chief Executive,
New West End Company

What we invest and what we do

New West End Company is one of the most established BID in the UK, backed by business for over two decades to shape a district they can thrive in. Our 800+ membership includes the most respected names in global retail, leisure, culture, hospitality, property and business.

Security is one of New West End Company's largest areas of investment and consistently ranks as our members' top priority. In tackling this challenge, New West End Company is leading the way, becoming the first BID in London to achieve the national Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) accreditation in December 2025, and securing the highest standard.

We are investing £23 million over the next five years into our security and operations infrastructure, including enhanced on-street patrols, expanded local CCTV capability, and initiatives that support safer, welcoming places. Maintaining the safety of the West End requires a permanent, professional operation working around the clock.

KEY STATISTICS

£23m 78,949

Invested in West End on-street security operations and infrastructure over the next five years.

Hours of high-visibility patrols in 2025 – up 16% on 2024.

12,935 77%

Incidents responded to in 2025.

Of visitors to the West End rate their personal safety 8 out of 10 or higher.

45%

Drop in theft from person in the West End compared to 2025, while neighbourhood crime is 41.7% lower

“We are investing £23 million over the next five years into our security and operations infrastructure.”

153,000+

Business reassurance visits conducted in 2025 – up 14% on 2024.

600,000+

Business visits since 2020.



Building an intelligence network

Each layer of New West End Company's intelligence infrastructure is designed to work together seamlessly and has been developed in close consultation with the Metropolitan Police to ensure our investment is deployed where it makes the greatest operational difference.

The foundation is connectivity. In 2025, we replaced the district's radio network with a new 5G and Wi-Fi system, providing our security team and member businesses with reliable, real-time communication across the whole of the West End.

Building upon this real-time capability is ALERT – our Prolific Offender Management Portal. ALERT gives member businesses a secure, GDPR-compliant platform to report incidents, share intelligence with our security team, and receive instant notifications when known offenders are active in the district.

This intelligence informs both our day-to-day on-street deployments, and our partnership work with the Metropolitan Police. With a data-sharing agreement in place, and as a founding member of the West End Strategic Taskforce and of a local intelligence 'Command Fusion Cell', we are in constant conversation with local policing teams, working together to tackle and deter crime in the West End.

Looking ahead, we are investing in the phased roll-out of a 24/7 local CCTV network, with initial site mapping underway. The design and implementation of the network is being developed in close collaboration with local business stakeholders including Westminster City Council, the Oxford Street Development Corporation and the Metropolitan Police to ensure it meets the needs of the district.

As part of our commitment to ensure the West End benefits from the most innovative measures to keep businesses, workers and visitors safe, we are also working with the Metropolitan Police and other partners to explore a Live Facial Recognition pilot in the district.

“The West End attracts customers from all over the world, and the confidence of those visitors depends on them feeling safe when they arrive. New West End Company's security team is a constant, visible presence on our street, and the intelligence they share helps us stay ahead of the risks rather than simply reacting to them. The investment they make in safety is an investment in the reputation of the whole district.”

Adam Hawksbee, Director of External Affairs,
Marks & Spencer

Our partnership with the Metropolitan Police

New West End Company works closely alongside the Metropolitan Police as an operational intelligence partner and has lobbied consistently for more ring-fenced local police funding which reflects the West End's strategic importance. In the last year, this has been acknowledged with the additional resource of 80 officers in the district, made possible by investment from the Mayor of London. The relationship is grounded in the quality of our data and the consistency of our on-street presence.



“We know the impact crimes such as shoplifting, robbery and phone theft have on residents, businesses and visitors to the West End, which is why we remain relentlessly focused on driving them down. Theft from the person in the West End is 45 per cent lower compared with last year, while neighbourhood crime overall is down by 41.7 per cent. Working closely with partners, including the New West End Company, and using intelligence-led policing is key to sustaining this progress and ensuring the West End remains a safe and welcoming place for everyone.”

Natasha Evans, Neighbourhood Superintendent for Westminster, Metropolitan Police

Operation West End

Operation West End is our annual flagship security operation, delivered in partnership with the Metropolitan Police and Westminster City Council. Our 2025 operation was the longest in its history: seven weeks, running from November through December, covering the West End's most demanding trading period. New West End Company provided a significant uplift to its on-street security team on peak days including Black Friday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Eve, and weekends. This was matched by a dedicated, ring-fenced policing presence funded by New West End Company and directed by intelligence from our team. We also worked closely

with Westminster City Council city inspectors to tackle issues around anti-social behaviour and unauthorised street pop-ups.

Visitors' positive perceptions of personal safety across November and December held level with summer months, despite footfall across the district rising by an average of 25%. This underlines the value of visible partnership working during peak trading periods. Building on the success of our annual operations, across 2026/2027 we will deliver an enhanced Operation West End programme per quarter.

OPERATION WEST END 2025

30

Arrests made during Operation West End 2025, 81% theft-related.

2×

New West End Company's stop-and-search positive outcome rate vs the Metropolitan Police average.

£7,233

Worth of stolen retail property recovered and returned.

- Founding member of the West End Strategic Taskforce, bringing together the Metropolitan Police, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, and Westminster City Council - giving us a platform to shape local policing priorities.
- Signed a landmark data-sharing agreement with the Metropolitan Police, enabling targeted hotspot policing and real-time intelligence sharing.
- Gained a seat at Gold Command calls for protests and major events, giving us direct access to senior police decision-making and enabling us to work with partners and government to highlight the cumulative impact of repeated protests on the West End economy.
- Informed by strategic insights from the West End Strategic Taskforce, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime earlier this year announced a £4.5 million investment into tackling crime in the West End, including a dedicated 'Command Fusion Cell' to tackle acquisitive crime.
- New West End Company has consistently supported the use of Live Facial Recognition to tackle and deter crime in the West End. That's why we are in talks with the Metropolitan Police and other partners about permanent, static cameras in the West End. This is an important step forward in our ability to tackle prolific offenders and a statement of ambition for our partnership looking ahead to 2027.
- Two members of our on-street Security Team were awarded a Certificate of Excellence by the Metropolitan Police, in recognition of their outstanding professionalism and commitment to public safety.

Our intelligence at work

Over several years, the pattern of acquisitive crime in the West End has changed, with an increase in organised criminality and a negative narrative about theft-from-person in the media. Phone theft, retail crime, and organised shoplifting increasingly involve coordinated groups and repeat offenders who target the district deliberately, move across multiple sites, and exploit a criminal justice system where the consequences for this category of offending have remained comparatively light. This shift places a much greater emphasis on the ability to collect intelligence which makes the link between seemingly unconnected incidents.

By adopting a robust, multi-agency approach, this is a challenge we can meet. For our part, New West End Company is committed to investing in and leveraging our intelligence network to help member businesses gather evidence which can be used to prosecute prolific offenders. We will also continue to share this intelligence directly with the Metropolitan Police and use real-time incident tracking to deter and tackle crime as it happens.

“New West End Company works around the clock to coordinate intelligence between incidents in the West End, ensuring that the Met Police has an accurate picture of what is happening in the district. This intelligence capacity allows us to deploy our security personnel effectively, inform the Met of serious criminality, and help businesses build the evidence required to prosecute their most prolific offenders. It’s this capability that really sets New West End Company apart as a key local partner for the Met.”

Jamie Conroy, Acting Director of Security & Operations,
New West End Company



OUR WORK IN ACTION

Live Interception

Our on-street security team patrol the West End 24/7, year-round. Our integrated radio network, used by hundreds of businesses across the district, means that we are often the first response to incidents as they happen. When a steaming offence was taking place at a national phone brand on Oxford Street, our team responded quickly – detaining nine individuals on site until their arrest by local police, who discovered they were wanted for a similar incident elsewhere in London.

The Bigger Picture

In March 2025, New West End Company’s security team detained a prolific offender on Regent Street carrying £30,000 worth of stolen stock. Working with our prolific offender database and information gathered through the ALERT portal, New West End Company’s team were able to link that single individual to fifteen or more separate offences across the district – offences that individual businesses had reported independently, with no means of connecting them to a single perpetrator. This case makes clear the value of the ALERT system: turning fragmented, business-by-business reporting into a comprehensive picture that gives businesses and law enforcement the ability to prosecute the most prolific offenders.

Preventing Reoffending

In June 2026, a member of the prolific offending group widely referred to as the “Spice Girls,” was sentenced following a prosecution in which New West End Company intelligence played a supporting role. The individual received an 18-month community order, a 20-day rehabilitation activity requirement, and a Criminal Behaviour Order lasting until April 2029 – prohibiting them from entering Oxford Street and the City of Westminster.

The intelligence that underpinned this case was gathered over months, across multiple incidents and multiple businesses, and brought together through the partnership structures described in this report. The outcome reflects what our investment produces when applied in close partnership with the Metropolitan Police.

It also illustrates the challenge: results of this kind depend on prosecutors and courts treating organised retail crime with the seriousness the scale of offending warrants. The work of New West End Company’s intelligence building is integral to building a picture of the organised criminal behaviour, and therefore in securing effective sentencing which prevents future offending.



“Creating a safer West End requires strong partnerships and a shared commitment to tackling crime and antisocial behaviour. We are taking a more co-ordinated approach to enforcement through working closely with New West End Company and the Metropolitan Police, strengthening public confidence and helping to ensure everyone can enjoy everything the West End has to offer.”

Councillor Caroline Sargent, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Westminster City Council

SECTION 4

Perception vs. reality

In an era of instant news and social media, a single clip can quickly gain widespread attention, shaping perceptions far beyond the event itself. This is particularly true in the West End, where the district's global profile means incidents are highly visible and amplified well beyond their local context.

Left unchecked, these misleading narratives can undermine consumer confidence, business investment and the reputation of the district. That is why it is critical we tell a more nuanced story of crime - and those tackling it - in the West End, anchored by on-the-ground, robust data. That doesn't mean

ignoring where there is still progress to be made, but rather tackling the issue from a place of informed understanding, so we can have an impact where it matters most.

What visitors tell us

Twice a year, we survey over a thousand visitors across the West End on their experience of personal safety in the district. The results are clear:

77%

Of visitors rate their personal safety 8 out of 10.

The consistent growth in footfall over the past four years is a measure of confidence in the district. Millions of people make an active choice to come to the West End each year, growing by 3.3% in 2025. The proportion of visitors rating their personal safety highly has not wavered across two years of regular measurement. This is

true even in the festive period, when footfall averages 25% higher than summer months, a marker of the impact of Operation West End and our investment in this period.

That said, as a global destination, there will continue to be domestic and international scrutiny on safety in the district. A negative narrative in the press or on social media is not just misleading - it could be reputationally damaging for both consumer and investor confidence, with economic implications for both the capital and the UK as a whole.

That's why New West End Company is committed to tracking and publishing visitor safety perception on a twice-yearly basis, ensuring that the conversation about safety in the West End is grounded in what visitors actually experience.

We're already working with key London stakeholders to align on a shared, consistent narrative which both acknowledges the reality of what needs to be done, and the positive momentum already underway. At our recent roundtable, held to launch our landmark report, 'Unlocking the London Advantage', we convened key decision-makers from the Greater London Authority, Westminster City Council, the Metropolitan Police and across London's business and built environment community - all with a shared belief that maintaining London's global position will require coordinated, public-private partnership working to tackle and deter crime in the capital.

What we have delivered and what we need next

The West End is the most visited district in the UK and within the most crime-affected borough in London.

Yet partnership working has already delivered tangible results and is laying the foundations for more positive forward momentum when it comes to tackling organised crime and deterring future offenders.

Earlier this year, New West End Company began the deployment of £23 million worth of direct investment into security operations and infrastructure, directly funded by over 800 local businesses and set to be rolled out over the next five years.

The strategy behind this investment has been informed by our on-the-ground intelligence, and operational insight developed from close collaboration with businesses, the Metropolitan Police and Westminster City Council. Over the last 18 months, both organisations have already strengthened their own focus on crime and safety in the district, with an additional 80 local Met Police officers, and a newly created Cabinet Member for Enforcement sitting within the Council. The message is clear: together we can make the West End safer and stronger.

Already delivered

1.

80 additional police posts secured in the West End.

2.

Landmark New West End Company and Metropolitan Police data-sharing agreement signed.

3.

Seat at Gold Command calls for protests and major events.

4.

West End Strategic Taskforce established, bringing together New West End Company, the Metropolitan Police, MOPAC, and Westminster City Council.

5.

MOPAC funding for a dedicated Command Fusion Cell to tackle acquisitive crime.

What we need next

1. TARGET PROLIFIC OFFENDERS WITH A DEDICATED OPERATION

Focus on prolific shoplifters, phone theft gangs, and handlers/exporters of stolen goods, with a dedicated West End retail crime operation.

WHAT WE'LL DO

New West End Company will continue to share intelligence through its ALERT Portal, Business Crime Reduction Partnership and Fusion Cell Intelligence Officer, as well as funding a district-wide CCTV network, helping to identify prolific offenders, co-ordinating evidence from businesses and supporting targeted enforcement activity.

2. CREATE A DEDICATED MULTI-AGENCY TASKFORCE ON RETAIL AND ACQUISITIVE CRIME

Develop a national, multi-agency approach to organised crime affecting high streets, including activity by international criminal networks engaged in organised rough sleeping, begging, anti-social behaviour and retail crime.

WHAT WE'LL DO

New West End Company will continue to convene partners across policing, local government, businesses and the wider BID network, ensuring the West End remains at the forefront of collaborative approaches to tackling organised crime.

3. REFORM THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL CITIES GRANT

Policing in London must be funded in line with the city's global role, and the National and International Capital Cities grant has not kept pace with the scale of demand. London is not just the largest city in the UK, it is also our global capital. Yet it lacks the resources of other global destinations. Our global competitiveness ranking found that London's per capita policing levels (although above a global city average at 32 per 10,000 capital) are nearly half of nearby competitors like Paris.

WHAT WE'LL DO

New West End Company will continue to advocate for sustainable funding for policing in the West End, using evidence from our members and research to make the case that investing in safety is fundamental to the UK's economic competitiveness.

4. CONTINUED INTEGRATION OF BUSINESS' SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND POLICE SYSTEMS TO STREAMLINE INTELLIGENCE SHARING AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

A continued focus on integrating technology to improve the intelligence sharing and reporting systems for businesses, to enable rapid and comprehensive police responses.

WHAT WE'LL DO

New West End Company will continue to invest in technology such as the ALERT Portal and radio system, data-sharing, and partnerships that improve the flow of intelligence between businesses and the Metropolitan Police.

5. GREATER DETERRENCE FOR PROLIFIC OFFENDERS AT THE POINT OF SENTENCING

Retail crime cannot be tackled through enforcement measures alone, and the justice system must take a more robust approach to sentencing for those who systematically target high street shops, reflecting the scale of impact on both staff and businesses.

WHAT WE'LL DO

New West End Company will continue to work with government, policing partners and industry bodies to advocate for sentencing reforms so that those responsible for prolific and organised offending face consequences which reflect the scale of harm caused to businesses and frontline staff.

