

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Southside Businesses say 'Yes' for a Business Improvement District**

Businesses and organisations in Birmingham's Southside have made their voices heard and voted in favour of taking more control over their futures by setting up a new Business Improvement District (BID).

Ballot results released by independent scrutineer, Electoral Reform Services, reveal that 82% of all those who voted were in favour of the BID progressing. For the BID to be successful, a majority by rateable value was also required. This was achieved with 85% of the total value of those who voted.

This Yes vote sends out a positive message that businesses in Southside are willing to work in partnership to fund agreed additional projects and initiatives to improve the local environment and enhance the identity of the area, despite the current economic challenges. The BID will also strengthen Southside's position to really capitalise on major development opportunities, including New Street Gateway and the Wholesale Markets site.

Southside has rightly emerged as a distinctive quarter within Birmingham's expanding city centre, driven by a unique mix of developments including those restaurants, bars and clubs which characterise the area's Chinese Quarter and Gay Village, the Arcadian Centre, the Hippodrome, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Radisson Blu Hotel and O2 Academy. The Electric Cinema, Old Rep Theatre and the National Trust Back to Backs also add to the area's eclectic mix. Southside is also home to a wide range of city living developments, retail, commercial, offices and warehouses.

The BID will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 for a five year term and will be financed through a 2% levy on rateable value which will be collected by Birmingham City Council at no cost to the BID. It is anticipated that over the five years, at least £1.75 million will be generated to fund the additional projects and services, as set out in the BID Proposal.

The Southside BID was promoted by the Southside Steering Group consisting of key businesses and community organisations in the area and chaired by Stuart Griffiths, Chief Executive of Birmingham Hippodrome. The Group has been generously supported by Birmingham City Centre Partnership, Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Police.

This is now the fourth BID in Birmingham city centre, with the Broad Street, Retail Birmingham and Colmore Business District BIDs already firmly established, collectively bringing in over £10 million of additional investment. Although run separately, all four BIDs share key aims and objectives, including making each area cleaner and safer and working together on key city centre projects such as the Big City Plan.

Commenting on the ballot result, Stuart Griffiths said;

“This is a very positive day for businesses in Southside. With the establishment of the BID, we will now be able to deliver a whole range of enhancements to the area that will improve the experience of those who work and visit here and also unlock Southside’s ability to attract more investment, employment and visitors.

“I believe today’s resounding result in favour also demonstrates that businesses understand the real difference that a BID can make to an area. We will now have a single voice to represent all of the business interests in Southside with the capacity and expertise to promote and champion this diverse market mix.

“We have seen, not only through the three existing BIDs in the city centre, but from others around the world, how they can make a significant impact on the district in which they operate. I am confident that in Southside we can now begin to realise the area’s full potential as a contemporary urban village set within Birmingham’s wider city centre.”

Councillor Timothy Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Transportation and Regeneration said;

“I am delighted that businesses have voted Yes for a Southside BID, enabling them to share the same success that the three existing city centre BIDs have enjoyed for a number of years. Southside is strategically important to the city, is a key component of the Big City Plan and is well placed to benefit from the New Street Gateway and the redevelopment of the Wholesale Markets site.

"I wish the Southside BID well and look forward to working with the Board of Directors, businesses and community organisations in the months and years to come."

The Southside BID will be governed by a Board of 15 Directors, supported by a full time BID Manager, all to be appointed and all accountable to the BID levy payers, delivering on 10 key pledges including:-

- Improve the visitor experience
- Create a safe and welcoming environment
- Promote a clear identity and profile for the area
- Provide an effective 'business' voice

The YES vote follows over two years of development work in the Southside area, including detailed consultation (through events, presentations and one to one meetings) to inform the content of the BID Proposal.

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**Note to Editors:**

- The Southside BID Ballot took place between Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October – Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2010.
- The total number of votes cast was 123.
- Ballot papers were counted and verified independently by Electoral Reform Services, London.
- The Southside BID's first term will run from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. Renewal of the BID will require a further Ballot.
- Birmingham City Centre Partnership (BCCP) has now sponsored four BIDs – Broad Street, Retail Birmingham, Colmore Business District and Southside. BCCP provides the forum for BIDs to meet collectively with other city centre stakeholders to engage, inform and share best practice.