

# Wardens help homeless man to rebuild life

**Aziz now has home and job as a waiter**

**EXCLUSIVE**  
By Gary Young

A man who ended up homeless and begging in the middle of winter has turned his life around with the help of Westside wardens and a Broad Street restaurant.

Aziz Khan's life quickly spiralled out of control when he was thrown out of his Walsall home following a family dispute.

After four days on the streets, the 36-year-old had run out of money and was reduced to begging outside a takeaway when he was approached by Westside warden Shaeed Latif on 14 January.

Now Aziz has a new job as a waiter at Dilbar restaurant in Broad Street and a home in shared accommodation in the city.

"I had no home and no money – I had really hit rock bottom," said Aziz. "I spent four nights huddled in phone boxes and bus shelters without sleep and I was hungry, tired and desperate. That's when I started begging and that's when the warden found me."

Shaeed took Aziz back to the Westside wardens' offices where the team set about helping to find him somewhere to stay.

The following day Aziz returned to Broad Street where he met Ahad



Turn to page 2 ■ Aziz Khan (right) with Dilbar manager Ahad 'Raj' Uddin.



## Why we're asking you to vote 'Yes'

We're asking you to vote 'Yes' in the Westside Business Improvement District's rebalot, which is taking place in March.

The rebalot happens every five years and allows local businesses to approve or reject the BID's detailed plans for the area.

You can find out what is proposed – and why we would like you to support it – inside.

**Full story: Page 3**



## WOW, what a celebration!

Birmingham's top entertainment district celebrated its finest venues and businesses in style at the glittering annual Wonders of Westside Awards.

Westside BID organised the WOWs Awards night on Sunday 26 January, which took place at the Pryzm Birmingham super club.

Read all about the fun-packed night and see all the winners in our three-page special on this night to remember.

**Full story: Pages 11-13**

## Working for a better Westside

By Mike Olley

Westside BID general manager

Here at the BID, we just love working for the entire Westside area.

And as you'll see throughout this special bumper edition of Westside World there's always a lot of hard work for us to do.

Our work includes everything from organising exciting networking events to holding our annual awards, from removing graffiti to tackling crime and safety issues, and from helping the homeless to pushing for faster Metro extension progress. But I can honestly say that we enjoy it all – with your help making Westside a safer, cleaner and brighter place to work and visit.

One of our favourite jobs is spreading the good news about your businesses and events, and one of the best places to do that is here in Westside World. If you've got something new happening, tell us about it by emailing [luisa.huggins@westsidebid.co.uk](mailto:luisa.huggins@westsidebid.co.uk) and we'll include your stories in the next edition.



Published on behalf of Westside BID, the Business Improvement District constantly working towards creating a more attractive, better marketed, safer, cleaner and brighter business environment in Birmingham's Westside entertainment area. Westside BID was voted in by 350 businesses in the area in August 2015, with a 99.75% yes vote (the best in the UK). Westside BID is based at 252-260 Quayside Tower, Broad Street, B1 2HF.

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of all content, but the publisher takes no responsibility nor accepts any liability for errors or omissions. Please check details with venues if travelling to events.

# Restaurant gave Aziz new chance



■ Aziz Khan (second left) with (from left) Dilbar owners Vijay and Pam Bassi and manager 'Raj' Uddin.

### From page 1

'Raj' Uddin, the manager of the Dilbar restaurant.

Raj said: "I recognised Aziz as we had worked together years ago. He told me his story and I could see he needed help.

"I spoke to the owners of Dilbar, Vijay and Pam Bassi, and they agreed to give him a chance.

"Luckily Aziz is a quick learn-

er and he's worked really hard so everyone's really impressed with him.

"Hopefully we can encourage other local businesses to give homeless people a chance and Aziz will be an example to them to show that they can turn their lives around."

Aziz believes that the intervention by Dilbar and the Westside wardens saved his life. "I really can't thank them all enough – I didn't know

that there were people out there who could be so kind and helpful," he added.

"Like everyone, I've seen homeless people on the streets but now I really understand what they are going through. At one point I just wanted to get arrested and go to prison, as at least then I'd have some shelter.

"But I didn't have the heart to commit a crime – and since my low point I've been really lucky."

Warden Shaeed Latif said that a week after helping Aziz he felt a tap on his shoulder before being embraced in a big hug from him.

"He thanked us for our help and I was delighted for him," he added. "We've been watching over him and popping in to check that everything is fine and he seems to be doing well.

"We really do try to make a difference out on our streets. Not everybody wants our help or is willing to change, but when we can help someone turn their life around that's a great feeling."



■ Aziz Khan hard at work in Dilbar restaurant, on Broad Street.

## £1.7m bid to bring Bard's archive to life

A major £1.7 million project to re-connect Birmingham's communities with the city's Shakespearean heritage has been launched.

'Everything to Everybody' aims to revive the city's 'hidden' Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial

Library, located in the Library of Birmingham on Westside.

The project will also feature the George Dawson Collection, documents relating to the nonconformist preacher, lecturer and activist, who founded the Shakespeare library.

The University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council will work together to make both collections more accessible, with family days, open days, workshops, community exhibitions, online displays and neighbourhood productions.



■ Your Westside BID team (from left) general manager Mike Olley, operations manager Luisa Huggins, chairman Dipesh Mistry, business liaison manager Elaine Weir, office manager Nasim Akhtar and director Gerald Manton.

# Vote YES for a safer, cleaner and brighter Westside!

By Steve Dyson

Westside will enjoy a safer, cleaner and brighter future for the next five years if businesses vote 'Yes' in the rebalot that starts on 5 March.

That was the pledge from Dipesh Mistry, the chair of Westside Business Improvement District (BID), in his address to members.

The rebalot happens every five years and allows local businesses to approve or reject the BID's plans for the area.

Mr Mistry, who is also a local director for NatWest Bank, said: "In the last five years, Westside BID has gone from strength to strength.

"For example, our street wardens are constantly deterring crime by patrolling the area for an average

of more than 250 hours a week," he added.

"Meanwhile, in addition to the council's cleaning services, our street cleaners remove an estimated additional 16,000 litres of litter every year.

"We have seen huge infrastructure developments in recent years, and we are pleased to see that the tram extension has now reached Centenary Square.

"These works have had some impact on our members and we are committed to playing a bigger part through our respected partnership with the tram extension team to

encourage fast but safe completion of the project."

Mr Mistry explained how the BID had listened carefully to members' requests for more wardens' patrols, increased marketing and for levy payments to remain the same. He said: "I am delighted to tell you that the BID board has listened and acted to restructure our budgets to deliver more wardens, enhanced marketing of the area and your levy held at current rates."

The overall aims of the BID for the 2020 to 2025 period are contained in a proposal document

which every business will receive, and which can be found on a pdf on the [westsidebid.co.uk](http://westsidebid.co.uk) website.

Mr Mistry said that if members voted 'Yes' in the rebalot, the BID would continue to work hard to listen and act on feedback, tailoring resources to members' needs.

He added: "A 'Yes' vote means the BID will keep crime low and Westside safer by providing an even more professional and high-profile warden service, supporting our colleagues in law enforcement.

"The BID will also keep the streets cleaner in Westside by providing an environmental warden five days a week.

"And we will promote the area to make Westside an even brighter place to be, with enhanced marketing strategies including popular events, awards, a vibrant website and social media strategy, and our quarterly Westside World newsletter.

"Why? Because we are passionate about developing an even safer, cleaner and brighter Westside for all our members."

● Ballot papers will be sent out on Thursday 5 March asking business members to vote 'Yes' for a new five-year term for Westside BID. Ballot papers will need to be returned by Wednesday 1 April.



■ We're backing the BID... (from left) Paulo Jacinto of The Brasshouse, Billy Sidhu of Baguette Du Monde Brindley Place, Matthew Symes of Popworld and John Angus of Park Regis.

See more details of latest West Midlands Metro tram extension: Pages 16-17

## Springtime treats at The Rep

The Birmingham Rep has a series of main house treats for theatregoers this spring.

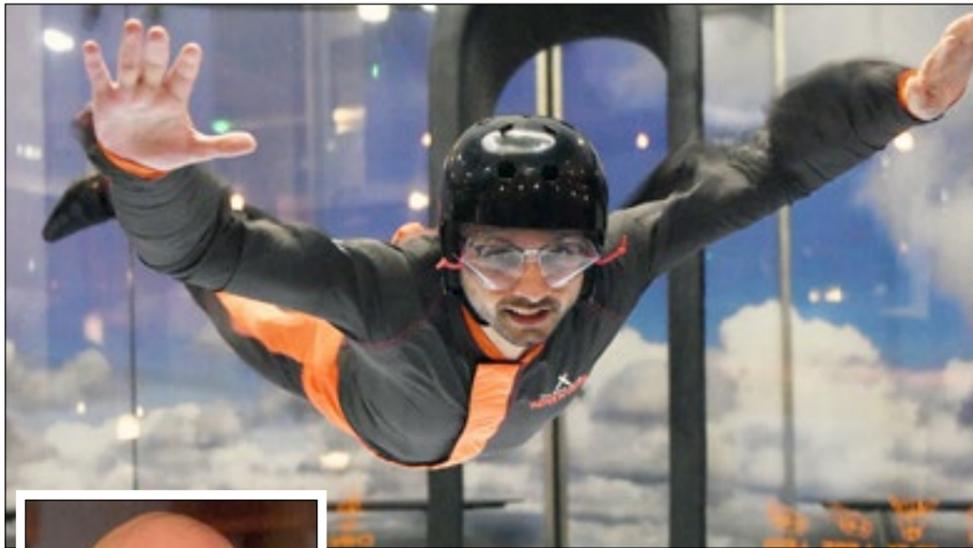
Iqbal Khan's production of Molière's *Tartuffe*, which originally ran at the RSC, will transfer to the Rep from 20 March to 4 April.

The Rep's deputy artistic director Amit Sharma will then create a new version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, from 16 to 25 April, featuring a community cast.

*Oliver Twist*, by Bryony Lavery adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens, hits the stage from 29 April to 9 May.

Then from 26 to 30 May, Ian Hislop and Nick Newman will present their new comedy *A Bunch of Amateurs*, about an ex-Hollywood action hero who accidentally decides to appear in an amateur production of *King Lear* in Suffolk.

For full details, visit [www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/](http://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/)



■ New Meriden MP Saqib Bhatti goes skydiving (above) and (left) NEC Group chief executive Paul Thandi.

# New year's honours for leaders

By Steve Dyson

Two leading businessmen from the Westside BID area have been recognised in the New Year honours list.

Paul Thandi, chief executive of the NEC Group, received a CBE for services to the economy, while accountant-turned-politician Saqib Bhatti was awarded an MBE for services to diversity and inclusion in business communities.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "We are very proud that two of the leading lights in Westside have been recognised for their tremendous input into our business sector."

"They are both very deserving of their honours, which not only acknowledge their contributions but also represent the great diversity in leadership that we enjoy in this part of the city."

Paul, whose NEC Group empire includes the ICC and Arena Birmingham, said: "I feel both privileged and proud to receive this award."

"Working within the live events sector has provided me with many opportunities to meet and engage with so many inspirational people."

"To be personally recognised in this way is truly fantastic but I owe

so much to many others who have helped me throughout my career and for that I am always grateful," he added.

Meanwhile Saqib, who moved on from the BID in December after being elected as the Conservative MP for Meriden, said: "Championing diversity in business is an issue that I am incredibly passionate about, and I'm really thrilled to receive this honour."

The 34-year-old, who was director and company secretary of the BID for seven years, was also the youngest and first Muslim president in Birmingham Chamber of Commerce's 206-year history.

He also spent four years as president of the Asian Business Chamber of Commerce, where he championed diversity in business.

Saqib added: "Located in one of the most diverse parts of the world, I feel honoured to have helped develop diversity, boost underrepresented groups in business and allowed for more diverse senior management across the region."

"My time at the BID has given me the opportunity to champion businesses in the area, to tackle and help resolve various problems, and to understand just how important it is to accurately reflect the views of members."

WEST SIDE BIRMINGHAM



# Warden tackled thug who punched woman

By Tony Collins

A have-a-go hero street warden has been recognised for his bravery in tackling a thug who punched a woman to the ground in Broad Street.

Saghir Ahmed was on patrol outside Pushkar restaurant in the early hours when he spotted a woman, in her mid-20s, who appeared to be the worse for wear.

But before Saghir could ask if she needed help, a man approached her from the opposite direction and hit her without warning, knocking her unconscious to the floor.

Saghir rugby tackled the attacker, forcing him to the ground before police arrived to arrest him.

Westside BID has now officially recognised the 35-year-old warden for his actions by rewarding him with a gift voucher, presented by BID chairman Dipesh Mistry.

Saghir, who works for Euro-



■ Warden Saghir Ahmed (left) is rewarded by Dipesh Mistry.

guard Security as well as being a BID warden, said: "Nobody should be treating a woman like that, so I didn't think twice about tackling him."

Saghir described the incident, which happened at about 1.15am on Saturday, 30 November.

He said: "The female seemed to

be quite drunk and our approach if someone is vulnerable is to keep any eye on them, make sure they get into the right taxi to get home, or help them meet up with friends."

"But a man just walked straight up to her and thumped her once in the face, knocking her to the ground. As soon as I got alongside

I got him in a rugby tackle and pushed him into the railings and forced him to the ground."

Saghir held the assailant down with one hand and radioed City Watch to call the police, who soon arrived to arrest the man.

He added: "The man said: 'Leave me, she's my girlfriend', but I told him it was unacceptable to hit a woman like that. She was only just coming round when the police came."

Dipesh Mistry said: "Here at Westside we are incredibly proud of the work our street wardens do every day."

"Each time they come onto shift they never know what they will face. However, I am glad to say they are truly committed and passionate about ensuring Westside is a safe and protected space. I am truly proud of Saghir's achievements and look forward to seeing and hearing his continued success stories here at Westside BID."



■ Doreen McCann with Westside warden Dimitrios Mitropoulos.

# Doreen's message from the heart for her hero Dimitrios

By Steve Dyson

A regular beggar in the Broad Street area sent a special thanks to a Westside warden for the kind way he treated her.

Doreen McCann created a Christmas card for warden Dimitrios Mitropoulos, made up from old cards, and inside wrote him a message from her heart.

This read: "To the best warden, Demi, happy Xmas and new year and thank you for supporting and helping me. Best wishes, Door."

Dimitrios said: "This was a lovely gesture from someone who has so little."

"Doreen is one of our regular beggars and I always take time to talk and listen to her, gently moving her on or helping with advice. "She told me that this

makes her feel like a human being, which was a touching comment as, while we aim to get beggars off the street, we always try to care for everybody as individuals," he added.

Mike Olley, general manager at Westside BID, said: "One of the roles of our wardens is to keep beggars and homeless people to a minimum in the area."

"But when moving them on, we have a strong emphasis on the pastoral side, trying to give them options of where to go and how they can be helped."

"This doesn't always work, but if we can help just one person it's worthwhile making the effort."

Mike added: "Hearing about Doreen's card for Dimitrios just shows how respected our wardens are."

# It's a new 'spin' on speed networking!



Westside networkers are put through their paces by DJs (right) and Natalie Graham speaks to the budding DJs (above).



## Tony Collins looks at three of the latest fun networking events organised by Westside BID to give members an opportunity to connect with and learn about other businesses.

The glory days of vinyl records made a stirring comeback when a BID networking event took place with a great new 'spin'.

Popworld late night bar on Broad Street was the perfect venue for the unusual business networking event, which was based around the theme of a DJ masterclass.

The event involved two accomplished DJs teaching basic vinyl-mixing and beatmatching techniques on separate turntables, culminating in a competition to find the best DJ who won a Westside goody bag and a bottle of wine.

And the vinyl theme was maintained throughout with old 45-inch singles cleverly adapted as name badges.

The masterclass, held in December, was given by former club DJ Matthew Symes, who is now general manager of Popworld, and Al Rippon, who is a resident DJ at nearby O Bar.

Matthew, a DJ for 17 years before going into management, said: "We bought up a load of old 45s, some of them disco classics, and hired a couple of turntables.

"Al, who is a legend in the game, and I then taught basic beatmatching which is the first level of learning how to mix records.

"In a club, you play records continuously from one to another so there isn't a lull between them and the atmosphere never lets up. Beatmatching is where you match the speed control of the actual records so you can keep the same beat going.

"We didn't want to blow anyone away by going on to scratching, so we just tried to give people a taste of what to do.

"It was a good, fun concept, especially with vinyl having a bit of a resurgence."

The event was hosted by radio DJ Natalie Graham, who also manages and sings backing vocals for her mum, Birmingham singer-songwriter Jaki Graham, who achieved several UK Top 20 hits in the 80s.

Natalie, who hosts a weekly music show on local radio on Monday nights, said: "It was a wonderful afternoon and an honour to be the host.

"Rather than the usual networking event it was a fantastic way of bringing businesses together by providing an extra twist around the general love of music."

Among the businesses who attended were Broadway Plaza, Hampton By Hilton hotel, Hyatt hotel and Nuffield Health.



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Weatherman Des Coleman (second left) with city pastors (from left) Karen Taylor, Jo Jowett, Thomas Cantwell and Maria Thompson.

# Des breezes in for breakfast

Television weather presenter Des Coleman left his isobars and warm fronts behind to help pay tribute to some of Westside's unsung heroes.

Des, who regularly presents the weather on local TV, was invited by Westside BID to host the annual Blue Collar Breakfast.

The event, which took place at The Figure of Eight in Broad Street in December, was held to thank deserving blue collar workers, emergency and volunteer support staff.

This year's breakfast was attended by around 50 people who tucked into a specially laid-on cooked meal.

Among the people at the event were ambulance workers, police community support officers, and



Des Coleman with PCSOs Dave Shipley (left) and Lewis Bell.

members of the City Pastors team, as well as workers from Midland Metro Alliance, Birmingham

cleaning company We Clean, highways contractor Amey and construction firm Balfour Beatty.

The City Pastors work alongside the BID's street wardens, police, paramedics and door staff on Friday and Saturday nights to ensure that the city is a safe, vibrant environment for everyone who visits the area.

Jo Jowett, from the City Pastors leadership team, said: "It's always a pleasure to be invited to the Westside BID's annual Blue Collar Breakfast, even though City Pastors are volunteers and not blue collar workers.

"We are privileged to be part of a wider team who are seeking to make our city a great place to visit and to be a caring presence on the streets for all who may need a helping hand."

# A visit to the gym is just the tonic...

There was a bit of a workout involved when a networking event with a difference took place at Nuffield Health.

BID members were invited to attend the gym, in Broadway Plaza in January, to allow businesses in the Broad Street area to learn about the facilities.

The networking event, arranged via Westside BID, saw more than 20 attendees taken on a tour of the gym, and invited to sample the equipment for themselves.

Each BID member, including representatives from hotels and the Midland Metro Alliance, was also offered a free seven-day pass to try the facilities, ranging from a pool, sauna and jacuzzi to a steam room and gym.

Barrington Ngandu, Nuffield Health Birmingham's business development manager, said: "We wanted to showcase what we do for businesses in the area by offering them a health assessment and



use of the gym. We also gave them free seven-day passes so they can come back and try the facilities for themselves."

Barrington added: "At Nuffield Health we aim to look after your health and wellbeing in a way that goes beyond getting you fit.

"Whether you want to relax and unwind on our poolside, get your heart racing in one of more than 100 weekly group exercise classes, or work out in our recently upgraded fully-equipped gym, we've got you covered."

BID members enjoy the Nuffield facilities.



# A Westside launch for £1bn tourism strategy

By Tony Collins

A new regional tourism strategy aimed at growing the West Midlands' visitor economy by more than £1 billion over the next decade has been launched in Westside.

The West Midlands Regional Tourism Strategy, which claims it could create 19,000 jobs across the region, was launched at the Library of Birmingham on Centenary Square.

The document, largely developed by the West Midlands Growth Company, highlights how work to support the tourism sector can help to grow its economic value from £12.6 billion in 2018 to £13.7 billion over the next ten years.

It proposes that the growth can be achieved by attracting more domestic and international visitors, with the help of major events such



■ Outside the Library of Birmingham are (front, from left) Neil Rami, chief executive, West Midlands Growth Company; Fiona Allan, artistic director and chief executive, Birmingham Hippodrome; Sally Balcombe, chief executive, VisitBritain/VisitEngland; and Matthew Hammond, chair, West Midlands Growth Company.

as the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022. John Angus, managing director of the Park Regis hotel at the top of

positive and we are now working with West Midlands Growth Company to see how we can assist them and enhance the programme going forward."

The strategy includes both leisure and business tourism, aiming to attract more major conferences and events to the region as well as holidaymakers.

Neil Rami, chief executive of the West Midlands Growth Company, said: "The visitor economy is critically important to the wider success of the West Midlands.

"The new Regional Tourism Strategy provides a comprehensive, detailed framework that will help us to realise this industry's potential."

Meanwhile, respondents to the latest British Meetings & Events Industry Survey have ranked Birmingham as the best UK regional events destination.

Broad Street, and chair of the Birmingham Hoteliers' Association, welcomed the new initiative.

He said: "Any tourism strategy is

## Beat counterfeiters with new £20 note



Bars, shops and restaurants within Westside BID have started handling the new £20 note designed to beat the counterfeiters.

The new polymer £20 note, which remains purple in colour and features the artist JMW Turner on the back, appeared in cashpoints and tills across the UK at the end of February. Retailers and anyone who regularly handles cash are now being urged by the Birmingham Retail Crime Operation to remain vigilant for fake bank notes.

The new £20 note is the latest to be made out of polymer. It is the most secure banknote yet with sophisticated security features, including see-through windows and a hologram image, making it difficult to counterfeit but simple to check.

The old paper £20 is the most forged banknote, with 426,000 counterfeit twenties received by the Bank of England in 2018 – the last full year of figures available – compared to just 8,000 £10 notes and less than a thousand fivers.

Retailers are advised to check that banknote machines, such as self-service checkouts, are updated and ready for the new £20 notes.

The outgoing paper £20 notes will remain legal tender and should be spent and accepted as usual before gradually being withdrawn.

Mick Barnes, co-ordinator at the Birmingham Retail Crime Operation, said: "It's important that everyone remains vigilant so they can deter the counterfeiters and protect their bottom line."



■ Specialist contractors removing graffiti from walls around the Westside area (main picture and bottom). Graffiti 'tags' on the walls of the Auchinleck Walkway (below).

# We're declaring war on graffiti

By Tony Collins

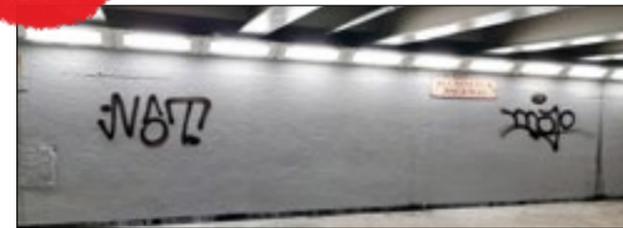
A concerted war has been declared on graffiti on Westside, with the BID's street wardens playing a key role in the fight.

Westside wardens are adopting a 'broken window syndrome' approach to tackling the blight of graffiti, which is thought to cost thousands of pounds a year to remove.

If they come across any freshly-sprayed areas while out on patrol, the wardens photograph it and report the sighting to a specialist contractor who then aims to remove the paint on the same day it appears.

Peter Willis, the senior warden at Westside BID, said: "The graffiti that we find is predominantly in the Five Ways area, particularly in the subways of the island.

"We occasionally get it in Broad Street as well, but it's a very busy area so vandals are more likely

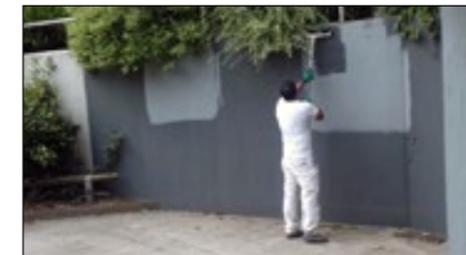
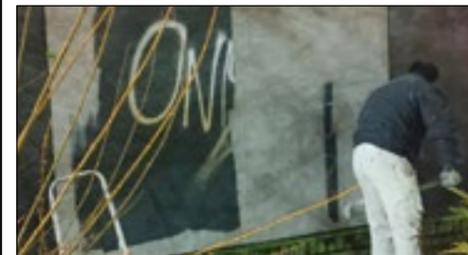


to be spotted. Graffiti has always been a problem, but we aim to get it repaired the same day.

"We look at it as the 'broken window syndrome' – if you leave one window damaged it just encourages the possibility of more windows being smashed.

Peter added: "In addition to the specialist contractor, we also have graffiti cleaning kits in the office so our wardens can clean up any minor graffiti themselves, such as you might find on lighting columns and bus stops."

Mike Olley, Westside BID general manager, said: "It's important that we identify and remove any unsightly graffiti so businesses and visitors can fully enjoy their time in the area."





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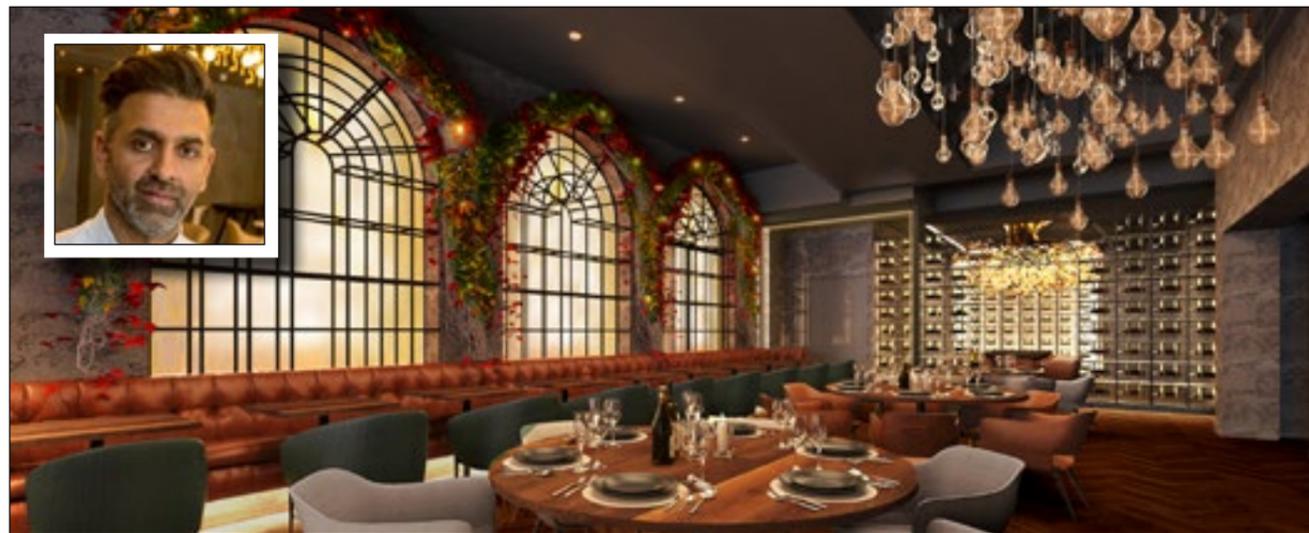
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# Brindleyplace serving up taste of Argentina



Argentine cuisine comes to Westside. Pictured are the restaurant (above) and bar (bottom) with (inset) Michelin star chef Aktar Islam.

By Tony Collins

The taste and aroma of Argentina have come to Westside with the opening of a new restaurant in Brindleyplace.

Award-winning city chef Aktar Islam, who was awarded a Michelin star in October last year for his Opheem Indian restaurant, has just unveiled Pulperia, celebrating Argentinian cuisine and culture.

Aktar, who achieved national recognition in 2011 by winning the fish course on the BBC 2 series Great British Menu and now appears regularly on TV's Saturday Kitchen, will employ up to 35 people with the opening of Pulperia.

The steakhouse restaurant has taken over the site vacated by the CAU restaurant which closed in 2018.

A second Pulperia restaurant is due to open in Edgbaston towards the end of this year.

Aktar, who was born and brought up in Aston and still lives in Birmingham, said: "I've spent a lot of time in Argentina over the last decade. I like riding horses, eating red meat and drinking fine wine. I have been fortunate enough to have had some truly wonderful experiences in the country which I now want to share with diners in Birmingham. Ultimately, it's a beef restaurant reflecting Argentine culture."

Aktar, aged 39, whose family have been in the restaurant business for three generations, added: "For me, it's always about looking for a more quality-led, ingredient-led experience, so we will be using choice cuts of beef from naturally-reared pure breeds, both from Argentina and also locally sourced. "A truly great dining experience is built around quality and, from the ingredients to the plush dining room, every element should reflect this ethos."

Pulperia, which will also serve fish, grilled chicken and vegetarian options, will employ traditional cooking methods, including the use of a parrilla, which is a South American grill.

● For further details visit [www.pulperia.co.uk](http://www.pulperia.co.uk)



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## As Westside hails its finest venues what can you say but...



■ The team at Pryzm – the venue for this year's WOW Awards – celebrates winning the Best Club award through a blizzard of confetti.



Birmingham's top entertainment district celebrated its finest venues and businesses in style at the glittering annual Wonders of Westside awards.

The WOWs 2020 ceremony, hosted by local TV weather presenter Des Coleman, saluted the venues, bars, clubs, restaurants, hotels, organisations and businesses based in

**Pictures by Jas Sansi**



and around Broad Street and Brindleyplace.

Westside BID organised the awards night on Sunday 26 January, which took place at the Pryzm Birmingham super club.

Mike Olley, Westside BID general manager, said: "Every year the WOWs just get bigger and better and this fantastic event really gives us the chance to celebrate in style the very best in entertainment that Birmingham has to offer."

More details and pictures on pages 12-13



■ The annual Wonders of Westside Awards, which were held this year at Pryzm, on Broad Street.



## Raffle raises £650 for Round Table

A charity raffle at the WOWs Awards raised £650 for the City of Birmingham Round Table.

Staff from Westside's numerous entertainment businesses contributed to the total, which will go towards various needy causes.

Raffle prizes donated by venues and won on the evening included:  
 ● a Sunday brunch for four at the Hyatt Hotel  
 ● one month's free gym membership at Nuffield Health (with a bag of goodies)

- two tickets for Faustus at the Rep
- family tickets to the National Sea Life Centre and Legoland
- a round of golf for four at the Belfry on the PGA or Derby course (from Grosvenor Casino), and
- dinner for four at Grosvenor Casino.

Gerald Manton, a Westside BID director who supports the Round Table, said: "This was a terrific charity effort and it will all go to some great causes."



Best Club: Pryzm



Best Themed Club: Popworld



Best Bar Team: Velvet Music Rooms



Best Club Manager: Jo Ellerbury (Reflex)



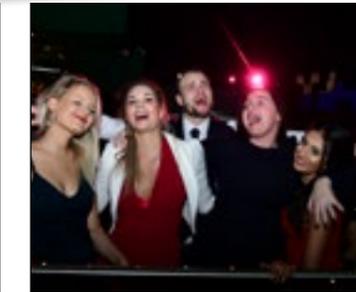
Best Promo Team: Players Bar



Best Pub: O'Neills



Best Voluntary Team Leaders: City Pastors



Best Hotel: Hyatt Regency Birmingham



Best Arts and Entertainment Venue: Arena Birmingham

Seventies soul and funk legends Heatwave soon got the audience up on their feet, singing and dancing along to their hits, including Boogie Nights, Always and Forever and The Groove Line.

# Oh, what a night!



Best Newcomer: Vietnamese Street Kitchen



Best Hotel Manager: Samantha Dunion (Hampton By Hilton)

Staff at Westside's bars, restaurants, nightclubs, hotels and other entertainment businesses partied the night away at the WOWs Awards 2020.

Mike Olley, Westside BID general manager, said: "Our venues, bars, restaurants and hotels are genuinely world class and we'd like to congratulate all our nominees and especially everyone who won an award last night."

"They all do a fantastic job in attracting 25,000 people into the Westside area on a Saturday night and as many as 10,000 on a midweek student night."

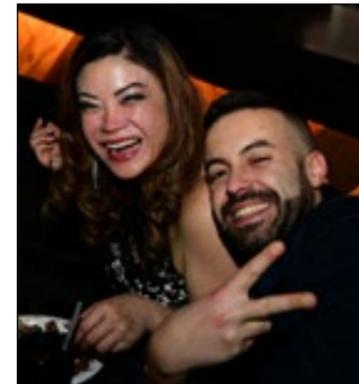
"With so many people flocking to the city centre, we can surely say that the biggest winner each year is Birmingham itself."

This year's winners were Pushkar (Best Fine Dining), Hyatt Regency Birmingham (Best Hotel), Samantha Dunion of Hampton by Hilton (Best Hotel Manager), Vodbull (Best Promoter) and Jurys Inn (Best Front of House).

Pryzm Birmingham was crowned Best Club, and other awards included Velvet Music Rooms (Best Bar Team), Steven Emmison of Velvet Music Rooms (Best



(From left) Host Des Coleman kept events running smoothly as revellers enjoyed food from Belly's Caribbean Grill and enjoyed an evening of celebration.



Best Promoter: Vodbull

Independent Bar Manager), Vietnamese Street Kitchen (Best Newcomer), Grosvenor Casino (Best Specialist Venue) and Arena Birmingham (Best Arts and Entertainment Venue).

Players Bar clinched the Best Promo Team title with other awards going to Barajee (Best Specialist Restaurant), Dave Alebon of The Brasshouse (Life-

time Achievement Award), O'Neill's (Best Pub) and Andrew Shipley of Del Villaggio (Best Restaurant Manager).

City Pastors were hailed Best Voluntary Team Leaders, and other winners were Popworld Birmingham (Best Themed Club), Jo Ellerbury of Reflex (Best Club Manager) and The Rocket Club (Best Themed Entertainment Ven-

ue). Awards entertainment came from music legends Heatwave who enticed those gathered to pack the dancefloor.

They set the temperature soaring with a selection of modern funk hits alongside their seventies disco classics. Belly's Caribbean Grill provided a selection of mouthwatering dishes to refuel revellers in time for the WOWs 2020

afterparty. The WOWs 2020 awards evening was sponsored by Jelley's Organic Vodka.

Other awards presented since the ceremony are Gorgio Poigomai of Cielo (Best Fine Dining Manager), George Zheo of Ikrave (Best Hot Food Takeaway Manager), and Subway (Best Hot Food Takeaway).



Best Fine Dining: Pushkar



Best Specialist Restaurant: Barajee Restaurant



Best Specialist Venue: Grosvenor Casino



Best Themed Entertainment Venue: Rocket Club



Best Ind. Bar Manager: Steve Emmison (Velvet Music Rooms)



Best Restaurant Manager: Andrew Shipley (Del Villaggio)

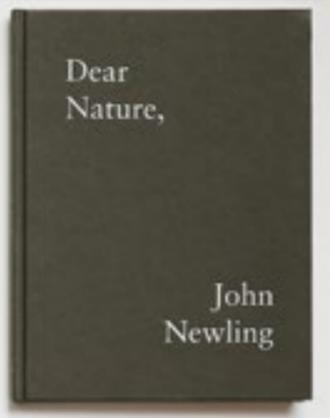
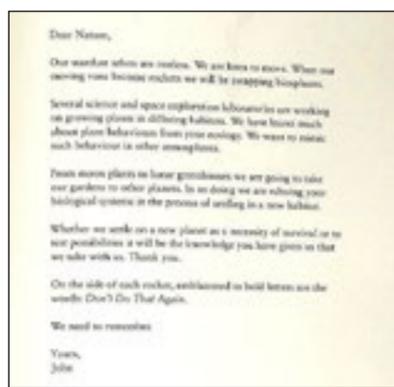


Lifetime Achievement Award: Dave Alebon (Brasshouse)

# Artist goes back to nature at the Ikon



■ John Newling.



■ John Newling's work includes (from left) A Language from the garden (Nymans language) and Dear Nature, featuring a series of letters.

By Steve Dyson

A modern Birmingham-born artist who cares about the natural world is displaying his new work at the Ikon Gallery until the end of May.

John Newling's 'Dear Nature' exhibition focuses on environmental challenges, and pushes at the boundaries of what defines art with a book of letters which he wrote to nature every day for 81 days in 2018.

Each letter explores humanity's relationship with the natural world, with one quoting how Adam and Eve in the Bible were told: 'Be



■ The artworks Waste Land Soil (left) and Eliot's Note Books.

fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature'.

Newling, a pioneer of public art



with a social purpose, then reflects on the implications of this, and writes:

*This is my guilt and worry. We have filled the earth. We have subdued it. We do rule over it.*

*What is the cost to ourselves of subduing all that we seem to encounter?*

*Yours is a vast history, ours is a blink in that history. Perhaps that's where the hope lies in our geological youth; we are young and still learning.*

*I am sorry  
Yours, John.*

Newling grew up with conceptual art, land art and arte povera in the 1960s and, when in America in the mid-1980s, he produced works of art in hotels, swimming pools, burned-out cars and on the streets of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington DC and New York.

His more recent work, Waste Land Soil (2018), saw him shred hundreds of copies of T.S. Eliot's poem The Waste Land, mixing it with coffee grounds and other kitchen scraps to make a soil to sustain vegetative growth – the opposite of waste. He says he is determined to grasp "what is it to know that we have affected" because "you can trace our evolution to a point where we subdued nature, but to our own cost, because we will make ourselves extinct".

In 2016 he developed a new alphabet based on leaves he found at Nymans, a National Trust garden in West Sussex. Pressed and photographed, he matched these plant forms to letters in the modern English alphabet.

At Ikon, Nymans language (2017) occurs in a grid of marble slabs on the floor and as an officially registered downloadable font.

The exhibition runs until 31 May and includes a series of live events.

● For more details of the exhibition, visit [www.ikon-gallery.org/event/dear-nature/](http://www.ikon-gallery.org/event/dear-nature/)

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■ Brasshouse general manager Paulo Jacinto (left) fixes the display to the wall as Westside BID general manager Mike Olley reads on.

# Writing's on the wall for crime writer Paul

By Tony Collins

**A leading crime author has been given pride of place in a Broad Street pub after the venue featured in one of his novels.**

Paul Finch, a former police officer, referred to The Brasshouse in his 2017 crime thriller, Shadows, the second in his Det Con Lucy Clayburn books.

This led to Paul being invited to a special Meet the Author event at The Brasshouse last year as part of the 35th Birmingham, Sandwell & Westside Jazz Festival.

A photo taken at the event, together with the relevant passage mentioning The Brasshouse, has now been incorporated into a special display that Westside BID has framed and presented to the pub, and it now hangs in the main bar area.

The passage in Shadows reads: "Tonight, oddly, even though the rest of his mates were well known on campus as big-time boozers,

Keith Redmond had somehow found his way to the last port of call alone.

"It was called The Brasshouse and it was located on Broad Street, where its reputation as a popular watering-hole was very well deserved."

The Meet the Author invitation was triggered by avid book reader Paulo Jacinto, general manager of The Brasshouse, who said: "I've



■ Author Paul Finch pulls a pint (left) during his Brasshouse visit.

read most of Paul Finch's books and my wife is an even bigger fan.

"I was very surprised when I saw The Brasshouse mentioned in Shadows, as you don't expect the place where you work to appear in a novel.

"I told the BID and jokingly said I would like to invite him in for a drink, so that's how his visit came about."

Paul said his invite to the Meet

the Author event was "unexpected and unusual" but also "hugely flattering".

He said: "It's not often that I mention a real pub in a book, particularly as bad things sometimes happen to them.

"Thankfully, The Brasshouse doesn't get embroiled in any unpleasantness, it just happens to be the last pub to host Keith before he set off to meet his ghastly fate.

"But it's never happened before that any establishment has ever been so grateful for a mention that they've invited me to an event like this."

Paul visited various city centre pubs during writing conventions or at Police Federation conferences in Birmingham.

He added: "I've fond memories of having a good drink at The Brasshouse so I thought it was a great place to set the start of this book, and it's an honour to have this memento of my visit displayed in the pub."

## Bird's eye view for Broad Street diners

Birmingham City Council has granted permission for a new 61-storey skyscraper on Broad Street.

It is claimed the 633ft-tower at 100 Broad Street, designed by

Glancy Nicholls Architects, will provide the UK's 'highest altitude dining experience' outside of London with a 'sky lounge' restaurant. It will also feature luxury apartments, shops, a gym and a cinema.

## Centenary Square water fountains dance again

Visitors to Westside will be pleased to see that the dancing water fountains in Centenary Square have been switched on again after their first winter break.

The fountains, which feed a new £16m reflection pool and were a big hit with children, were shut down in October for the City Flyer ride, Big Wheel and Ice Rink.

# A tram-endous Metro already a hit with warden



■ Dimitrios Mitropoulos hops aboard a tram on Broad Street.

By Steve Dyson

A street warden's journey to work from Wolverhampton to Birmingham's Westside area has been made quicker and more convenient thanks to the latest extension of the West Midlands Metro.

Dimitrios Mitropoulos was catching the train every day from Wolverhampton to New Street station and then walking up to another 30 minutes to and from Broad Street, where he works for Westside BID.

But now that the tram is carrying passengers all the way to its new Centenary Square stop, Dimitrios reckons he's saving around two-and-a-half hours every week on his round journey times.

Dimitrios, aged 26, who lives with his family in Moseley Village, Wolverhampton, said: "When I first started working for Westside BID last year, it was quite a journey once you'd taken the palaver of getting to the railway station, all the stairs and then walking from New Street to Broad Street into account.

"But now I simply jump on the tram at the nearby Wolverhampton St George's or the Priestfield stop and end up getting off on the street where I work, which is much faster and far more convenient."

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "Dimitrios is a great worker for the BID and we're so pleased his journey to work has



■ Dimitrios Mitropoulos with his Metro tram ticket.

become quicker and easier thanks to the new tram stop.

"It's a great example of how the West Midlands Metro will attract more people to Westside from Wolverhampton and the Black Country – both to work and to enjoy the vibrant nightlife we offer."

Laura Shoaf, managing director of Transport for West Midlands said: "The tram extension was designed for people like Dimitrios who work in and around the Westside area as well as the thousands of people who visit the many attractions in Centenary Square and Broad Street every day.

"We are delighted that it is saving him time on his commute and would urge more people to give it a go now it is open."

## New Centenary

By Steve Dyson

Four musicians from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) played their hearts out on Broad Street to welcome the new tram stop at Centenary Square.

The brass quartet treated Metro passengers to musical treats after the opening of the latest extension by the Midland Metro Alliance, providing direct access to Westside. The new tram stop has made it even easier

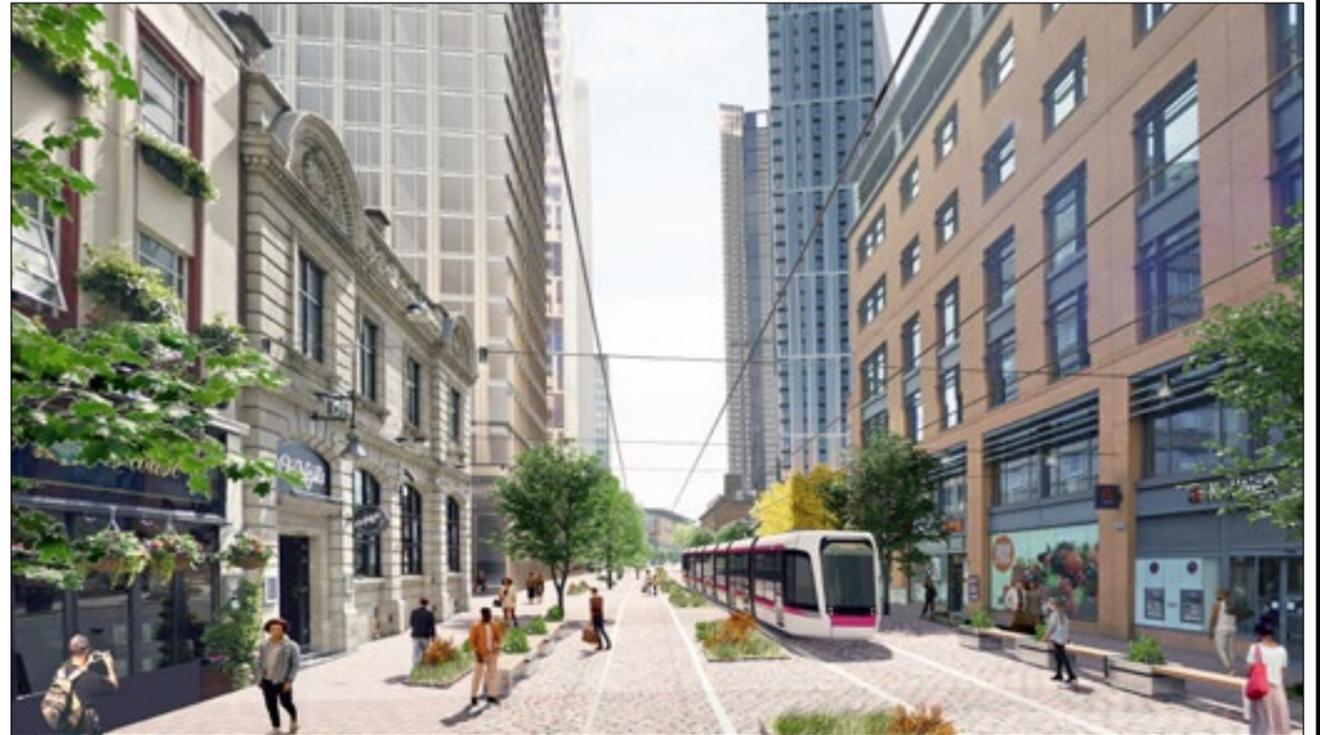
for music lovers to attend performances at Birmingham Symphony Hall, the home of the CBSO.

The CBSO musicians bringing delightful festive tunes to Westside in December were Elspeth Dutch on the French horn, Jon Holland and Richard Blake on trumpets, Tony Howe on the trombone and Graham Sibley on the tuba.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "What a treat for us all on Westside to listen to



# improvement!



## Glittering future for golden mile

This is how smart Broad Street could look once the tram extension works have been completed.

The artist's impression depicts an impressive scene with the tram passing Sainsbury's Local, opposite O'Neills, while pedestrians go about their business.

Work on the Westside extension began in June 2017, carried out by the Midland Metro Alliance (MMA), a consortium set up by Travel for West Midlands (TfWM) to build a series of tram extensions across the region.

TfWM is already working with the MMA on the next

section, which will see passenger services running along Broad Street to Edgbaston in 2021, stopping at Brindleyplace, Five Ways and Edgbaston Village.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "This artist's impression shows our businesses and residents just

how attractive the golden mile will become. This is an exciting time for Westside, and we're working closely with the MMA to make sure that the extension happens as quickly and safely as possible.

"Hopefully the disruption caused by the works will be worthwhile in the long term."

## Square stop gets festive fanfare

some of our favourite tunes played by members of one of the best orchestras in Britain. This was a lovely touch, and rightly celebrates the latest stage of the Metro tram extension onto Broad Street.

"It's been a long journey waiting for this important new means of transport to arrive, and we've still got to have patience for the next year or so for the tram to reach Five Ways. Therefore, it's good that we celebrate every stage that's reached, and that the BID makes sure

that the rest of the works are completed as soon and as efficiently as possible."

The line to Centenary Square is the first phase of the Westside extension to Edgbaston, with phase two taking trams along Broad Street to Five Ways to be completed by the end of 2021.

Mike added: "We're very much looking forward to when everything's complete, and then we'll hopefully get the full CBSO ensemble out to celebrate!"



■ The CBSO brass quintet delighting passers-by on Broad Street.

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# BID choir adds a seasonal sparkle



■ The Westside BID choir brings Christmas cheer to Baskerville House.

By Tony Collins

Festive cheer was in great supply at Baskerville House when Westside BID organised a choir to sing Christmas carols.

The event took place in the reception of Baskerville House in Centenary Square, which now houses more than 2,000 staff after the grade II-listed former city council building was refurbished.

The BID arranged the choir for the second year running to bring some pre-Christmas joy to Baskerville House tenants and also raise money for charity.

Anne Robbins, Baskerville House receptionist, collected money in aid of Ronald McDonald House by holding a variety of pop-up sale events in the reception area.

Elaine Weir, of Westside BID, said: "To get into the festive spirit, we organised a choir to sing an hour



of Christmas carols in the reception of Baskerville House, and members of staff enjoyed mince pies and hot drinks.

"Everyone in there seemed to love it and hopefully the event re-

sulted in them all feeling festive."

Jane Ryan, facilities manager for property management company JLL, which manages Baskerville House, said: "The event was heart-warming and full of Christ-

mas cheer and was very well received by all the tenants on site."

Baskerville House is currently occupied by six companies across four of its six floors, with 2,300 people coming through the door.



■ Laura Moore drops off Christmas goodies at the collection point.

## Staff play Santa for underprivileged kids

Staff at a Birmingham hotel brought festive cheer to underprivileged local children who otherwise would not have received a gift at Christmas.

Hampton by Hilton Birmingham Broad Street, working alongside the city's Free Radio station, took part in the annual Mission Christmas 'Cash for Kids' charity event.

The hotel's 35 staff all bought an extra gift which was left inside a box in reception. Sales manager Laura Moore then delivered the trolley-sized pile of presents to a collection

point at the local B&M shop. Laura said: "Mission Christmas, which we also supported last year, helps families whose children wouldn't get gifts at Christmas, with a particular emphasis on the six women's refuges in Birmingham.

"It's really sad that there are a lot of children in Birmingham who wouldn't otherwise receive a present, so it was nice to do something for a local charity."

Laura said that more than 10,000 gifts were donated across Birmingham.



# In any language, TEG spells student success

By Tony Collins

Bem-vinda, bonjour, benvenuto, willkommen! Westside BID has 'welcomed' a new member to its ranks that's attracting students from around the world.

TEG English language school has opened its doors on Broad Street offering language courses to students whose English ranges from elementary to advanced levels.

The modern city centre school currently teaches an average of 35 students at a time, mainly from across Europe as well as Turkey and Brazil.

And following British Council accreditation, TEG can now take students who need study visas to come to the UK – leading to applications from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Annabel Camilleri is the Birmingham office manager of TEG, which stands for Tompkins Educational Group.

She said: "We test students before they come so we know which level to place them in.

"Evening classes tend to be for students whose home and life is here, while daytime students tend to be visiting from overseas to improve their English. We have a good spread of nationalities, with students from 14 different countries at one point, mainly from Europe but also further afield."

Annabel explained that teaching English as a foreign language is more than just learning a language but focuses on 'goals and ambitions'.

Success stories include Lenka Chlebusova from the Czech Republic whose goal was to develop a career with an international company.

She has since started a new



■ TEG Director of Studies Emma Sobey (left) presents a graduation certificate to Lenka Chlebusova.

job and continues to practise her English every day. Meanwhile, Iolanda Silo from Italy came to TEG Birmingham to improve her English for better prospects in administration roles. After 12 weeks of study, TEG took her on as an intern within the school's own administration department.

Annabel added: "All of our colleges have a fantastic social programme with day trips, events and activities.

"The German Christmas market was a big hit at Christmas," she said. "We believe successful language learning is helped by regular socialisation between students of many cultures and contact with local UK culture."

● For more details and offers, visit [www.tegenglish.com/language-college/birmingham/](http://www.tegenglish.com/language-college/birmingham/)



■ Iolanda Silo at work in Birmingham.

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■ The new lighting in Hall 11 (above) and (left) the Hall 6a Theatre. (Inset) NEC Group Conventions general manager Allan Boyle.

# ICC proving size isn't everything

By Tony Collins

**Smaller is clearly just as beautiful when it comes to the world-renowned International Convention Centre in Centenary Square.**

ICC Birmingham has unveiled the latest phase of its multi-million pound refurbishment programme, and is placing a key focus on the venue's smaller hall offering.

Included in the major facelift are refurbishments to Halls 6 and 7 which have maximum capacities of 120 and 140 people respectively, making them ideal for hosting events such as conferences and dinners.

The halls, which can be sub-divided for further flexibility, have been upgraded with new lighting, fixtures and fittings to fit the theme of the wider venue.

Fittings include new displays, plus enhanced cabling which allows organisers to send data to screens wherever they are in the room.

In addition, all ten of the venue's executive rooms, which can accommodate up to 50 delegates, have also benefited from the refurbishment.

This includes the ability to turn rooms three and four into a single, larger space if needed.

Allan Boyle, general manager for NEC Group Conventions, said: "I feel there is a perception in the marketplace that the ICC only does large, 1,000-plus delegate events."

"While we do host large international congresses, we take just as much pride and dedication in delivering smaller events."

"We've worked extremely hard to provide a venue that can really help our customers to spark success through their events."

"For every aspect of the refurbishment, customer needs and desires have been considered to create an environment that goes above and beyond that of your standard conference and meetings venue."

He added: "Over our 28-year history, we have established ourselves as leaders in the sector, but to maintain our position it's so important to consistently explore new ways of enhancing our offering and reinvest in our facilities."

Mr Boyle said the majority of the works had come about as a result of listening to customer feedback.

The wider refurbishment programme at the ICC has included the upgrading of all flat floor halls, which can house up to 3,000 delegates, plus improvements to other facilities such as screens, Wi-Fi and bathrooms.



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# Mayflower sets sail for business success

By Tony Collins

**A Birmingham firm of solicitors born at the height of the recession has created its own success story within Westside BID, culminating in being nominated for a national award.**

Mayflower Solicitors, based in The Wharf, Bridge Street, began its business journey in 2008 in the middle of the UK recession.

It started as a small team in the heart of Birmingham, and then successfully overcame the challenge of finding its feet in the commercial law market alongside larger, more established firms.

This resulted in Mayflower being shortlisted for the Best Landlord Legal Services Provider of the Year award 2019 at

The National Landlord Investment Show held in November.

Director Jimmy Ogunshakin, who is originally from London but found his career growing in the Midlands, always dreamed of having his own firm, having worked in some of the leading national and international law firms.

He said: "The opening of Mayflower provided an opportunity for budding solicitors to be given the opportunity to work at a new firm based in Birmingham."

"We have often organically grown our own solicitors and will continue to do so, working with law students and graduates from local universities."

He added: "It was a slow process which involved building the brand over a course of a few years."

"We strive to differentiate ourselves from other firms by building strong working relationships with our clients and ensuring they are satisfied with the service provided by our solicitors."

"We now have an extremely good and continuously-developing client base, and last year our clients included two diplomatic missions working internationally."

"Mayflower has been a real success, demonstrated by us being nominated for an award at the annual National Landlord Investment Show, which recognised us for 'excellence'."

Mayflower has recently been advising BID members on how to make compensation claims following last September's burst water main.



■ Mayflower director Jimmy Ogunshakin.



■ (From left) Jog Hundle (Mills & Reeve), Jill Mason (Mills & Reeve), Shajeda Ahmed (North Staffs Combined Healthcare NHS Trust), Dawn Brathwaite (Mills & Reeve), Jill Weston (Mills & Reeve) and Ann Clark (King Edwards High School).

## £12k raised for cancer research on Westside

Business leaders from across the city joined forces to raise more than £12,000 for life-saving cancer research when they staged a glittering dinner on Westside.

The annual Business Beats Cancer dinner took place on February 6 at the Park Regis Hotel to raise money for Cancer Research UK, which funds clinical trials at the University of Birmingham and beyond.

Committee chair David Smeeton, of Cushman and Wakefield, said: "It was great to unite the business community of Birmingham in the fight against cancer."

"This was our fourth annual din-

ner and we couldn't do it without our new and existing supporters and the sterling work by the Business Beats Cancer Birmingham Committee."

"As we continue to raise funds and awareness for the lifesaving research that happens here in our city we are looking forward to Birmingham Beats Cancer dinner 2021 being even bigger and better!" he added.

Since being launched in 2016, Business Beats Cancer dinners have raised more than £26,000 for Cancer Research UK. To get involved, contact: Scarlett.Armstrong-Sly@cancer.org.uk

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# “Hellraisers? were serious



WEST SIDE BIRMINGHAM

**Fifty years ago, Black Sabbath released their first album. Today, in an exclusive article for Westside World, the band’s first manager Jim Simpson recalls those early days.**

**The Black Sabbath I knew and managed were not the crazed, bat’s head-biting, 25-hour-a-day, hell-raising hooligans depicted by the world’s media. In fact, from my experience as the guys’ first band manager, I somehow doubt that they ever were.**

I’m not sure that some of their more ardent fans would like to read this, but they were extremely serious young men. In their early days, touring permitting, we had weekly band meetings at my house every Wednesday morning, which we all viewed very seriously.

We constantly reviewed current problems and plotted world domination. We would have an agenda, have serious discussions about the matters at hand, take meeting notes and action notes which we would all put into practice by the time of the next Wednesday meeting.

They were firmly of the belief that success does not happen by accident, totally focused on doing whatever it took to make their mark in music. Why else would they accept, without question, the punitive playing times at the Star Club in Hamburg, Germany, where weekdays they played six 45-minute sets going up to eight at weekends, for a month at a time. That’s 45 min-

utes on and 15 minutes off non-stop from 8 at night until 4 in the morning. It was exhausting, obviously, but on return to the UK, it made two one-hour sets seem like a stroll in the park, and that was a contributory factor in making Black Sabbath the tightest, most intuitive rock band around.

I first met the musicians that were to become Black Sabbath in 1968 when I was running Henry’s Blueshouse. Among the members signing up on Henry’s opening night were a John Michael Osborne and an Anthony James Iommi.

I got to know them as regulars and it didn’t take long for them to tell me that they played in a blues band called Earth, and they asked if they could play the opening spot at Henry’s. They even forewent the standard support band fee of £5 in favour of a Henry’s T-Shirt each.

That night, they supported 10 Years After and were very impressive, becoming Henry’s regulars and quickly graduating to headliners, becoming the venue’s most popular band. Along the way they asked if I would be their manager, a role I accepted without hesitation.

At the time they were an excellent but straight-ahead blues band, but



# Sabbath men...



Black Sabbath in Jim Simpson’s back yard (above), and (left) a picture of the band taken by Jim outside his Edgbaston home. (Below) a picture of the band featuring Ozzy in a Henry’s T-shirt and (bottom) Sabbath pose on the stairs in the club.

by then the Blues boom was pretty much over, replaced with what was then called ‘progressive music’ (I hate that term) taking over. Earth were so good we were able to keep them working in the Midlands and the North as well as in Europe where the blues were still rocking.

But much as the guys liked their name Earth, I hated it.

They resisted my insistence to name-change until, scouring the small ads in Melody Maker, I found not one but two London-based bands called Earth. That did the trick but left us with the problem of what to call them.

This period seemed, at the time, to go on forever, but there was one particularly memorable band meeting where Geezer turned up late and cheekily poked his head around the door.

He was greeted by a chorus of: “You’re late – what time do you call this?” His response was to tell us that he’d “got it” ...the band’s new name that is. This was greeted by yet more derision which was instantly hushed when he said: “Black Sabbath.”

It took just a moment before the name was unanimously accepted. And the name change set a musical direction for the band’s compositions, providing a theme and direction that took them to international recognition, and not a little notoriety.

● Read more about Black Sabbath’s early years in Jim Simpson’s book, Don’t Worry ‘Bout The Bear (Brewin Books, 2019) £17.95.



Tony Iommi with ex-manager Jim Simpson.

## 50 years of a rock landmark

Westside hosted a special tribute evening to celebrate the birth of heavy metal in the UK’s second city 50 years ago.

The album Black Sabbath was released on Friday, 13 February 1970, and popular music was never the same again.

Fifty years and one day later, on Friday 14 February 2020, the release of that milestone album was celebrated at The Bull’s Head on Bishopsgate Street, just off Broad Street.

The event – attended by scores of Sabbath and metal fans – featured the UK’s leading Black Sabbath soundalike band Sabbra Cadabra live on stage.

Sabbra Cadabra performed the entire first album Black Sabbath, including the legendary thunderstorm introduction, thought by many to be the best ever introduction to any rock recording. The second set saw them belting out Black Sabbath’s second album – Paranoid.

There were also talks and Q&As with various metal names including Stephen Knowles, an organiser of The Global Black Sabbath Convention, the ‘Ozzy’ from Sabbra Cadabra and Black Sabbath’s original manager, Jim Simpson.

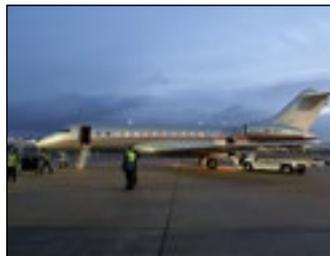
Jim, now owner of Big Bear Music which runs regular Henry’s blues, jazz and rock nights at The Bull’s Head, said: “Black Sabbath emerged from Henry’s Blueshouse where they first appeared as Earth, and as their first manager I was delighted to hold this special tribute evening. Listen to death metal, thrash metal, doom metal or black metal, and you will clearly hear the sound of Sabbath.”

The location of the tribute evening was even more fitting as last year saw Westside BID unveil a bespoke heavy metal bench on the newly-named Black Sabbath Bridge to mark the band’s achievement.

This bench is now in temporary storage pending the completion of the tram extension works, when it will be reinstalled.



The inner sleeve of the Black Sabbath album, featuring a credit for first manager Jim Simpson.



■ Quite a journey... (from left) the sea otters are loaded aboard a plane in Alaska before being transferred to a jet for their transatlantic crossing. After arriving at Birmingham Airport they receive a police escort to the Sea Life Centre, where they emerge safe and sound.

# Brum's a little 'otter than Alaska...

But Sea Life Centre will make these little critters feel right at home!

By Steve Dyson

Two rescued Alaskan sea otters are the newest and cutest residents of Westside.

The loveable marine mammals' new home is the National Sea Life Centre in Brindleyplace after they were relocated as part of an education and conservation project with the Alaska Wildlife Rescue.

The precious cargo arrived in the UK in mid-February after a 5,000-mile journey to Birmingham International Airport, and was then transferred under police escort to the Mammal Rescue Facility.

The temperature-controlled waters at the venue are now replicating the sea otters' natural habitat in the wild and will give them a safe sanctuary for the rest of their lives.



■ Alaskan Sea Otters - The Sea Life Centre's new star attractions.

Jonny Rudd, curator at the National Sea Life Centre, said: "We're absolutely delighted the sea otters have arrived safely.

"We're pleased with their overall

progress and they are rapidly adapting well to their new home. We'll continue to carefully monitor them both around the clock."

Sea otters were once on the verge

of extinction after being hunted for their thick, rich pelt in the 1800s, and they remain a seriously-endangered species.

The endearing creatures have become an important 'poster boy' species for conservation and the escalating climate crisis, but there are more orphaned sea otters than the world's aquariums have room for.

The National Sea Life Centre gained a permit from the United States Fishing & Wildlife Service to look after the pair following a two-and-a-half-year application and a major investment in a purpose-built facility. The guardianship agreement means that funds raised through the sea otters' residency in Birmingham will help further environmental efforts by the Alaska Wildlife Rescue.



■ Curator Jonny Rudd faces the press as a welcome meal is prepared – and the otters find their feet in their temperature-controlled home.

**Do you have a story for Westside World? If you have something to tell us about, or if you would like us to highlight the work of your business in our next edition, please contact [luisa.huggins@westsidebid.co.uk](mailto:luisa.huggins@westsidebid.co.uk)**