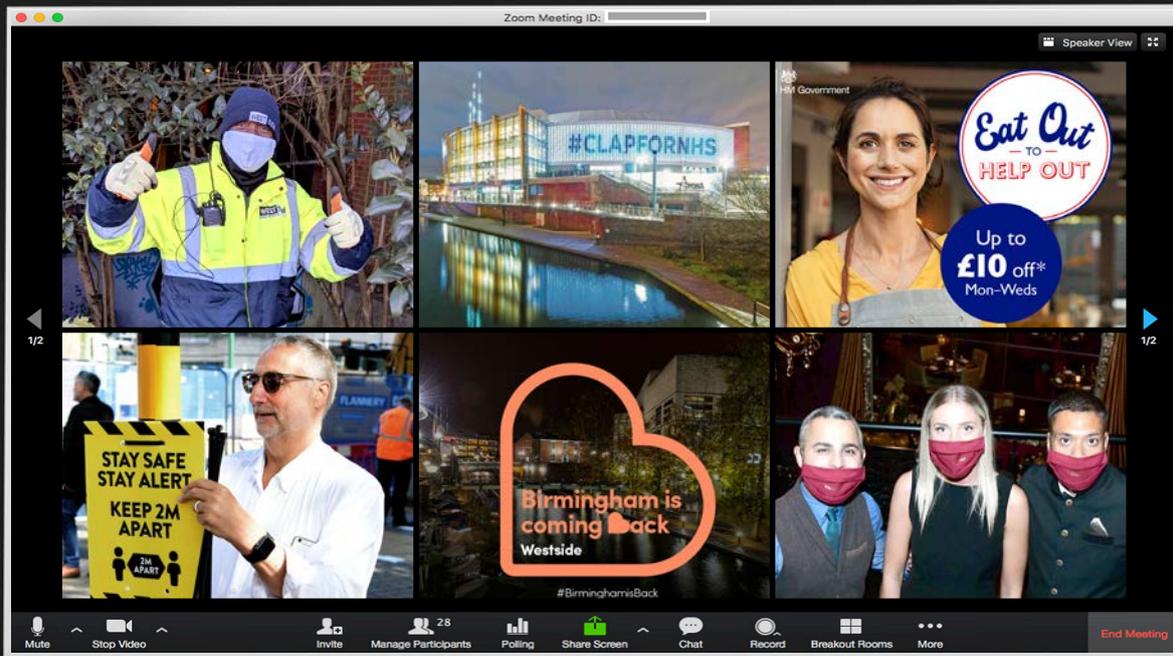


Our diary reveals how Westside coped with coronavirus



The world in lockdown

By Steve Dyson

Welcome to a special 'Lockdown diary' edition of Westside World.

This will reveal how your Business Improvement District Turn to page 2

Diary of a lockdown

From page 1

has helped to tackle the challenges caused by the recent pandemic.

As you'll see over the next 32 pages, Westside BID's staff have been working harder than ever to keep the area safe, clean and bright throughout the lockdown.

The BID's street wardens have kept a close eye on empty properties, its cleaners have made sure various grounds are looking smart, and its office staff have been supporting members with numerous campaigns and marketing efforts. This has included creating more than 60 stories on our website and videos that have also drawn huge audiences across the BID's social media channels.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "From the moment the government announced its lockdown, here at the BID we have been busier than ever, making sure that we help our members get through this challenging period."

"We hope our members enjoy reading our latest edition of Westside World to learn exactly how we've been working for the whole district throughout the pandemic."

- Any BID member with a story to tell can contact Luisa Huggins at the BID via luisa.huggins@westsidebid.co.uk

WEST SIDE World
BIRMINGHAM

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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As soon as the lockdown plans were unveiled, Westside BID reacted with advice and guidance for members, with stories on westsidebid.co.uk and postings across all social media. The first one was created in partnership with a business advice organisation called Bionic...

Firms get some Bionic strength

By Steve Dyson

The emerging coronavirus pandemic has caused huge worries for many businesses – not least here on Westside.

From bars to theatres, from cafes to cinemas, and from clubs to restaurants, this area has hundreds of companies and organisations that need to know what government can do to help them survive.

We've researched the marketplace and have made contact with Bionic, an advisory service that aims to make it as easy as possible for people to run small businesses.

And the experts at Bionic have produced a great blog that takes just 12 minutes to read and that tells you everything you need to know about how coronavirus affects your business. For example:

- What should you do next?
- What sick pay, rates relief and other financial aids is the government offering for you to use?
- How can you go about it?
- What else can help your business to get through this crisis?

This story was linked to a constantly changing article on Bionic's website which brought our members the latest facts and tips on assistance throughout the pandemic.

What every small business owner needs to know about coronavirus

How will coronavirus affect your business? What should you do next? And will your business insurance cover coronavirus COVID-19? We answer your questions.

What help is available for small businesses during the coronavirus crisis?

by Les Roberts on July 8th 2020

The coronavirus lockdown is affecting businesses of all sizes in all industries, right across the UK.

If your business has been closed during lockdown, or if you've had to change the way you do things, now is a good time to start thinking about life after lockdown, especially as restrictions are gradually being lifted. The Bionic business blueprint for getting out of lockdown offers useful guidance on everything from reintegrating employees into the workplace to keeping that delivery service or online store running.

Even though lockdown restrictions look like they're being relaxed in certain circumstances, many businesses still aren't able to open or operate at full capacity.

■ The Bionic blog offered vital support at a time of uncertainty.



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18

Westside World editor Steve Dyson also interviewed Bionic's expert Les Roberts via Zoom, with the resulting vodcast placed on the BID's website and social media to give members instant assistance.

End of an era for veteran doorman

MARCH
20

Just ahead of the lockdown, the BID still wanted to reflect ongoing events on Westside, and this story was so popular on our website that it was picked up by the local media...

What started out as a favour to a friend turned into a 32-year career on Westside for club doorman John Maughan.

And now that career, which saw John work security on many of the doors in Broad Street, has come to an end after he decided to take early retirement.

John has worked at numerous bars and clubs past and present, from the former Ronnie Scott's, Liberty's and Tiger Tiger to O'Neills, The Figure of Eight, and Revolution.

He said: "I owed a favour to a friend who had done a job for me and wouldn't take payment for it. He worked in the security business and later on called the favour in by asking me to work as a doorman. I said 'I don't think I'm cut out to be a doorman', but I did one week for him and thought it was lovely meeting all sorts of people. So I'm glad I did it because it's been a brilliant experience."

John, aged 54, said the biggest change he has

noticed in his career is the licensing of door supervisors, which came in in 2001.

"Bringing licensing in for door staff made a huge change," he added. "You didn't need a licence before, so if someone did something wrong you all got tarnished. Licensing got rid of some of the negative elements."

John is now looking forward to a well-earned rest but acknowledges: "I will definitely miss the job, and the hustle and bustle of Broad Street. It has been a big part of my life."

Senior Westside warden Pete Willis said: "I have found John to be a gentleman with a wealth of information and experience from his time on the doors."



■ Doorman John Maughan.

Businesses protected by watchful wardens

By Steve Dyson

Westside BID is working flat-out to keep Birmingham's main entertainment district secure during the shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The city's golden mile of pubs, bars, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, gyms and hotels has been temporarily closed by the government to cut social interaction and the virus spreading.

And now the BID's team of wardens is constantly patrolling the area, working with West Midlands Police and the City Watch 24-hour CCTV system to keep Westside secure.

They will be looking after the area after more than 150 licenced premises were closed since the weekend, with several thousand workers sent home and just skeleton staff left at some premises to keep security ticking over.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "Since Friday's (March 20) announcement we have been working closely to expand Westside wardens' patrols as much as possible."

"We are also working closely with West Midlands Police and with those larger businesses that have managed to retain some security presence."

"We are hoping to coordinate all



■ Westside warden Dimitrios Mitropoulos patrols Broad Street at the beginning of the lockdown.

MARCH
23

On lockdown D-day itself, the BID was focused on making sure that all members knew it would take care of the district throughout the pandemic...

our resources with a target of moving as much towards 24-hour cover of the Westside area as possible.

"We've liaised closely with the police and as long as our wardens work with social distancing in mind – that's at least seven feet apart at all times – their crucial patrols can continue."

"This is what the businesses that have had to close need, to make

sure their premises and the surrounding areas are kept as safe, clean and secure as possible.

"Several bar and club owners have already told us how they are visiting their premises several times a day because they are fearful of break-ins, crime and vandalism during the shutdown."

"This is obviously not practical for them to continue for what will

be several weeks or months of shutdown, and so Westside BID has to act fast to cover this need."

Mr Olley explained that the BID was also an integral part of the 24-hour CCTV operation covering Westside via City Watch, and that this resource would also be maintained throughout the shutdown.

He added: "By increasing our own Westside wardens' patrols, working even more closely with the police and other organisations' security, and making full use of the CCTV cameras, we will keep the area safe and secure. I want us to be as near to 24-hour security for the whole area as possible."

A welcome vote of confidence in BID

Westside BID was today (April 3) delighted to announce a resounding vote of confidence from members.

The returning officer has calculated (subject to an official announcement after verification) an 87.8% vote in favour by number and 97.35% in favour by value.

A crucial aspect was the turnout – which has been estimated to be an impressive 80% of previous ballots, despite half of the voting



Just before lockdown, the BID had held a ballot of members to decide on whether it should continue for the next five years. The results were released at the beginning of April without too much fuss, as now was the time for the BID to prove its worth...

period taking place during the coronavirus shutdown of many businesses.

This result follows the fourth consecutive ballot where businesses have given the BID a resounding 'Yes' for the

continuation of its services for the next five years.

The result maintains Westside BID as one of the most valued BIDs in the UK.

Westside BID directors and the team today issued

a big "thank you" to all its members for their continuing support.

● The official report on voting that relates to the ballot can be downloaded at <https://bit.ly/3jy6u7d>

Delight as Metro tram work is back on track

By Tony Collins

Work has resumed on the Midland Metro tram extension up Broad Street to Edgbaston after detailed discussions involving Westside BID and Birmingham City Council.

The works, linking Centenary Square to Hagley Road on the far side of Five Ways, were suspended for two weeks when the government introduced COVID-19 social distancing measures on 23 March.

The Midland Metro Alliance had taken this decision to ensure the safety of its teams and the public.

But following talks with Westside BID and Birmingham City Council, the extension works have restarted because a considerable reduction in road traffic and pedestrians makes it safe to do so.

Mike Olley, general manager at Westside BID, said: "With bars, restaurants and clubs currently closed in and around Broad Street because of COVID-19, now is the perfect time for Metro works to safely continue."

"The BID is delighted that this is now happening so that when things return to normal we will be closer to a completed extension, with the Metro providing a vital link for people to access the Broad Street area."

In a statement, a spokesperson for the Midland Metro Alliance said it had responded to "further advice and clarification" from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, along with updated site operating procedures from the Construction Leadership Council.

The spokesman said: "Following



■ Work gets underway on the Metro tram extension along Broad Street following updated advice.



Within a few weeks of lockdown, the BID announced the resumption of the Metro extensions works...

this, and with further careful consideration, works on the Edgbaston phase of the Birmingham Westside Metro extension have now resumed in a reduced capacity in line with industry safety procedures.

"An abundance of care continues to be taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our team and that government guidelines are met on our site at all times, with much of the work currently taking place in heavy plant allowing for extended social distancing of staff members.

"This is an ever-changing situation and we will continue to follow government advice accordingly. Construction works on additional Metro extension projects will resume as soon as it is deemed safe to do so."

The spokesman added that they had always been keen to resume work, but had to wait for government guidance to "ensure that our staff were able to do their work safely".

Councillor Waseem Zaffar MBE,

Birmingham's Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, explained the city council had an obligation to support the local economy as much as possible, and that identifying opportunities to ensure economic security was crucial.

Cllr Zaffar said: "The UK lockdown has meant that Broad Street is currently very quiet and most businesses are closed.

"This provides us with an opportunity to carry out the disruptive works involved with the Metro extension now, and therefore avoid major disruptions and road closures when businesses are back up and running.

"This work will be carried out safely with social distancing guidelines being observed at all times."

Showbiz stars and political figures hail poll



■ The Broad Street flood (left) and Black Sabbath stars Geezer Butler (left) and Tony Iommi at the launch of the heavy metal bench.



That's a great result for Westside!



Despite COVID-19, plenty of Westside's partners and supporters were thrilled that the BID had succeeded with its 'Yes' vote to continue looking after the area...

By Steve Dyson

Showbiz legends and political figures alike have praised Westside BID's resounding 'Yes' ballot from members for its services to continue for the next five years.

The confidence vote from members reflects various recent achievements by Westside BID, including:

- supporting businesses following the flooding on Broad Street
- installing the 'heavy metal' bench on the newly-named Black Sabbath Bridge
- highlighting quality businesses in the annual Wonders of Westside Awards, and
- celebrating individual success stories with the Walk of Stars.

Comedy legend Jasper Carrott, who was the second 'star' on Broad Street and chairs the BID's Walk of Stars committee, said: "I'm very proud to play a small part in the BID's work and am looking forward to its continued success in the next five years."

"The BID is constantly promoting the area to bring more customers, with examples like the Black Sabbath 'heavy metal bench and bridge', the WOW Awards and

our very own Walk of Stars. The BID's recent communications strategy has never been better, with a stunning quarterly newsletter, a brand new website and vibrant social media.

"They are there at times of need as well, from the floods to the coronavirus outbreak, always offering their help, advice and extra services at times of need."

Jasper's words were echoed by Councillor Ian Ward, the leader of Birmingham City Council, who congratulated the BID on its successful renewal ballot and now looked forward to a "continued close partnership".



■ (From left) comedian Jasper Carrott, Coun Ian Ward, singer Toyah Willcox and Coun Waseem Zaffar.

He added: "There are many exciting developments and opportunities in Birmingham, and when we overcome the current national emergency, Westside BID will have a clear role to play as the city bounces back and looks to a bright future."

Councillor Waseem Zaffar, Birmingham's Cabinet member for Transport and Environment, described the ballot result as "fantastic news".

He urged Westside BID to "keep up your outstanding work, particularly important during these challenging times."

He singled out the BID's street wardens for praise, commenting: "A few months back, I spent an evening with the Westside wardens. They are an important asset, not just for the BID but for the city of Birmingham. Thank you for your outstanding work at this hour of need."

Birmingham's former queen of punk, Toyah Willcox, who is also on the Walk of Stars, said: "Congratulations to Westside BID for your resounding success in being voted by all the businesses in Westside for you to come back and keep the area safe, beautiful and visitor-friendly for the next five years. I am so proud of you. You do such a good job. Birmingham is a beautiful city and you add to that beauty."

Meanwhile, Westside BID chairman Dipesh Mistry said: "I am absolutely delighted that yet again our members have given Westside BID the thumbs-up to continue the great work we are doing for the next five years."

"This vote of confidence means we can continue to offer the services that are aimed at making Westside a 'cleaner, safer and brighter place'."

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Westside BID team for the hard work, commitment and determination over the last term and also to our members for their support."

And BID general manager Mike Olley said: "We are thrilled that our members have given the BID team such a resounding vote of confidence."

"We are determined to justify the confidence that local businesses have placed in us by continuing the hard work and expertise that has already made Westside BID such a success."

APRIL
15

True to its word, the BID was instantly back in action looking after members again that same day, reporting on yet another incident of flood chaos caused by Metro workers...

Water time to spring another mains leak!

By Tony Collins

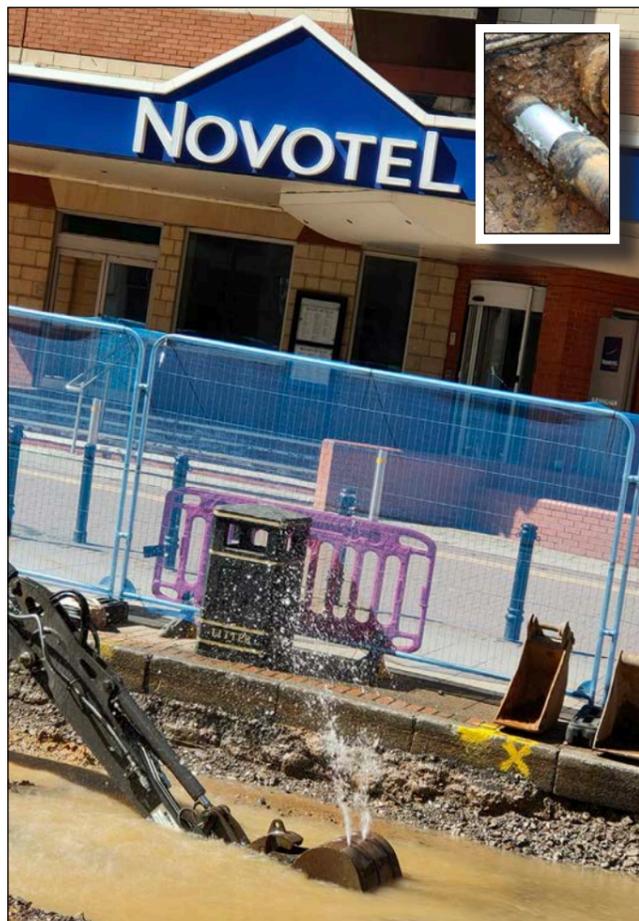
Flooding brought disruption to Broad Street for the second time in just over six months after a water mains burst close to ongoing work on the Midlands Metro tram route.

Severn Trent Water immediately apologised for any inconvenience caused by yesterday afternoon's (April 14) incident, which hap-

pened when one of its workers apparently struck a mains pipe.

The damage follows major flooding further along Broad Street in September last year when a nine-inch mains pipe was damaged by workers involved in building the Metro.

That incident left a number of BID businesses without any water supply for up to a day, resulting in compensation claims for lost trade



Water sprays from the broken main and (inset) the leak is fixed.

which the BID was able to provide legal advice on.

But unlike last September's major flooding incident, no businesses appear to have been affected this time,

and the leak was fixed by around 11pm last night. Work on the Metro's Birmingham Westside extension connecting Broad Street with Edgbaston only resumed last week following the lifting of a two-week suspension starting on 23 March due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In the latest incident, the area affected by flooding was confined between the junctions with Granville Street and Sheepcote Street, near Novotel.

It is understood that a mechanical digger was used to try to suppress the jet of water erupting from the fractured pipe.

Speaking before the pipe was fixed, a Severn Trent spokesperson said: "Our teams are currently working on Broad Street to fix a damaged water pipe, although it's not currently affecting anyone's water supply.

"We're really sorry for any inconvenience caused, and we'll work hard to get the pipe fixed as quickly as possible."

Mike Olley, general manager at Westside BID, said: "We've been looking forward to getting the Metro works started again, and so it was worrying to see that another flood had paused their efforts.

"But we're pleased that Severn Trent has quickly responded to sort the issue and to prevent any damage to our members' properties, and the tram works will now be continuing."



Hotel chief outlines future plans

APRIL
15

Later that day, the second Westside World vodcast was broadcast, giving one of our leading members a voice. John Angus, managing director of Park Regis Birmingham, explains how the hotel is dealing with the disruption caused by COVID-19, how it is opening for key workers and outlining his team's positive plans for when normality returns.

Casino pays out to 999 workers and NHS staff

APRIL
21

One of the remarkable themes that ran throughout Westside during the pandemic was the determination of businesses to help frontline workers...

By Tony Collins

Chefs at a Westside venue are cooking up a storm in support of key workers in the front line of the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

Grosvenor Casino, situated in the Five Ways Leisure Complex, is offering free cooked meals to members of the NHS and emergency services to support them during the current crisis.

Since they started the scheme, which is run in partnership with Uber Eats, the casino has been handling around a dozen orders a day, Monday to Friday, but is hoping to expand that as word gets around.

Matt Rudd, who has been general manager of Grosvenor Casino Broad Street for nearly six years, said: "We wanted to do something to support these key workers and to show them how much we appreciate what they're doing.

"We closed as soon as the lockdown was announced, but since this scheme began we've had two chefs operating daily."

The free meals initiative is open to members of the Blue Light Card scheme, which provides discounts online and on the high street to people in the emergency services, NHS, social care service and Armed Forces, among others.

It is being run by The Rank Group, which operates several Grosvenor Casinos across the country.

Matt added: "Emergency services and NHS staff often find it difficult to obtain cooked meals at lunchtime, so that's why we decided to offer this service between 11am and 3pm, Monday to Friday."

Matt said their orders had included feeding staff at the nearby Highgate and Ladywood community fire stations.

A spokesperson for West Midlands Fire Service said: "It's incredibly heartening to learn of thoughtful gestures such as the casino's which recognise the fact that our staff are ready, willing and able to go above and beyond."

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "Our NHS and emergency services staff are doing an amazing job during these immensely difficult times, so we are really pleased that one of our businesses is able to support them in this way."

Tom Dalby, chief executive of Blue Light Card, said that they were "really excited" to provide the free meals offer for their members in the NHS and emergency services.

● For information about the Blue Light Card scheme, visit www.bluelightcard.co.uk.



Grosvenor Casino chef Patrick Berisford hard at work providing meals for 999 workers and (inset) general manager Matt Rudd.

Brummies defy Covid to keep networking

One of Birmingham's most popular business networking groups, which has been running monthly meetings on Westside, is continuing its activities online during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Brummies Networking was launched back in 2015 and until the recent pandemic its members were getting together on the second Tuesday of every month at the Grosvenor Casino Broad Street, based in the Fiveways Leisure Centre.

While the current virus has temporarily ended such gatherings, Brummies Networking is continuing its valuable work remotely in three different ways to keep its members linked up.

APRIL
23

Meanwhile, the BID was also proud of how its business members showed their determination to keep in touch...



The group's Twitter handle @brummiesnet is hosting a regular Twitter Hour chat every Tuesday between 11am and 12 noon, which anyone can join using the hashtag #brummiesbizhour.

Another initiative is the new Brummies Networking LinkedIn Group open to any of the existing 172 members who can participate by visiting <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8920597/>

Brummies Networking is also

still hosting its podcasts, with the most recent (Episode 20) featuring Greta Geoghegan from Birmingham agency Digital Glue offering top advice on marketing and social media during COVID-19.

Richard Heathcote, founder and co-organiser of Brummies Networking, said: "For obvious reasons, it's clear that we won't be able to host our in-person networking events for the foreseeable

future. We hope things get back to relative normality as soon as possible."

● For more details, visit www.brummies-networking.co.uk, contact Mr Heathcote on 0121 270 4551, 07971 463 592 or email thevoice@richardheathcote.co.uk
● Don't forget to join the Twitter Hour chat with @brummiesnet every Tuesday between 11am and 12 noon using the hashtag #brummiesbizhour.

Westside cleaner Sean is made of the Wright stuff!

APRIL 24
It's remarkable to remember just how hard Westside BID staff continued to work during the lockdown this spring...

By Tony Collins

Westside BID street cleaner Sean Wright went the extra mile to ensure one of the city's major entertainment venues was looking its best for when the COVID-19 lockdown ends.

Sean was tasked with carrying out a major spring clean of the area around the Utilita Arena Birmingham – and he collected an amazing 4,900 litres of litter in two days.

Much of the rubbish consisted of discarded empty bottles and cans, as well as wastepaper and even bits of clothing.

Sean, who's been a Westside BID street cleaner for seven years, enlisted the help of one of the BID wardens during his mammoth task.

The 42-year-old said: "There was so much rubbish that I had to go back the following day, and by the time we'd finished we'd filled seven bags of rubbish."

"It was mainly empty bottles and cans, but also paper and old clothing such as shoes and coats. It was all to make the place look nice and tidy."

Sean's outstanding effort, which took place on Tuesday (April 21), drew a welcome vote of thanks from NEC Group Arenas, which is responsible for Arena Birmingham, and the BID has named him their first #WestsideHero of COVID-19.

Guy Dunstan, managing director of NEC Group Arenas, said: "On behalf of all of us here at Utilita Arena Birmingham, I'd like to say a huge thank you to Sean Wright and everyone at the Westside BID for their efforts in keeping our neighbouring streets clean and tidy."

"At times like this, it's fantastic to see that people are continuing to take pride in the city of Birmingham and are keeping it looking its best."

"The Westside area is such an



■ Street cleaner Sean Wright hard at work outside the Utilita Arena.

important hub for leisure and entertainment in the region and I really hope we'll be able to see it brimming with people again very soon."

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the BID is committed to ensuring standards of cleanliness are maintained throughout the Broad Street area, despite a significant reduction in visitors and workers.

Mike Olley, general manager at Westside BID, said: "I would like

to give a huge vote of thanks to Sean for his excellent hard work in removing so much litter from the area around Arena Birmingham."

"We are anxious that the Broad Street area remains clean, present and protected despite this period of lockdown, and it is to people like Sean who we turn to ensure that this is carried out."

"We're very proud to name his our first #WestsideHero of COVID-19!"

APRIL 27
The #WestsideHero awards launched by the BID quickly took off...

Duo's heroic work creates vital PPE

Two wardrobe staff at The Birmingham Repertory Theatre have been named as the latest recipients of the #WestsideHero awards for helping the NHS with personal protection equipment (PPE).

The REP is temporarily closed because of COVID-19, but Kay Wilton, the theatre's head of wardrobe, along with her colleague Caroline Mirfin, have started making PPE clothing for staff at Heartlands and Solihull Hospitals.

Richard Leigh, marketing manager at The REP, said: "I'd like to jointly nominate Kay and Caroline from our wardrobe team."



■ The Rep's Kay Wilton (left) and Caroline Mirfin.

"As they can't currently work, they've been creating scrubs and gowns for local hospital staff from home. I think they are brilliant!"

Mike Olley, general manager at Westside BID, said: "This is a great effort by Kay and Caroline at The REP, and we are delighted to present them with our #WestsideHero awards, which are well deserved."

A blog on the theatre's website, entitled 'Help Us To Help The NHS', said: "With the unprecedented demand on the NHS, The REP is eager to help."

"As many of our staff members are unable to work during the current crisis, they are turning their attention to supporting the NHS and its staff."

"Our wardrobe team have transferred their exceptional skills to helping frontline NHS staff."

"Kay and Caroline have been tirelessly working from home to make gowns and scrubs for staff at Heartlands and Solihull Hospitals."

BID backs campaign for new business support

By Steve Dyson

A national lobbying campaign to enable more retail, hospitality and leisure businesses to get financial help from the government has been backed by Westside BID.

The #RaiseTheBar campaign wants the rateable value thresholds for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses to be raised from £51,000 to £150,000, giving more firms the chance to access £25,000 grants to help survive the COVID-19 lockdown.

The campaign, led by Croydon BID, has also been backed by the BID Foundation, British BIDs, the Association of Town and City Management, UK Hospitality, Beer and Pub Association and the Night Time Industries Association that together represent over 100,000 businesses across the UK.

Westside BID is now calling on its members, other local businesses and the general public across the Midlands to sign up to the cam-

APRIL 29
The BID was determined to help its members to survive COVID-19, and enthusiastically joined a national campaign in an attempt to win more assistance over grants which are based on rates...



paigned via this website: www.raise-the-bar-campaign.com

The campaign has highlighted how the retail, hospitality and leisure sector is vital to the UK economy with the following figures:

- The UK hospitality employs over 3.2 million people, equivalent to 11% of UK jobs, making it the third largest sector in the UK, accounting for £130 billion in revenue, 6% of all businesses and 5% GDP

- In 2019, the UK leisure sector reached over £111 billion in sales

- The retail industry alone generated £394 billion of sales in 2019 with 306,655 units across the UK.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "The retail,

hospitality and leisure sector is vital to the UK economy and must be protected at all costs. Here on Westside, the hospitality and leisure businesses in particular are crucial, with the 'golden mile' acting as the lifeblood of the area, bringing hundreds of thousands of visitors a year onto Broad Street and maintaining thousands of jobs. We are therefore fully backing Croydon BID's #RaiseTheBar campaign to persuade the government to act now so that this sector can be protected."

"The rateable value threshold of £51,000 is basically far too low to provide adequate support to these businesses in their time of need."

"Whether they are independents

or multiple operators, we forget those businesses with rateable value of £51,000 or more at our peril.

"We call on all our members, other local businesses, their staff, family, friends and the wider general public that loves Birmingham's vibrant nightlife, leisure and retail sectors to also back this campaign."

Matthew Sims, chief executive of Croydon BID said: "We acknowledge that increasing the threshold up to and including £150,000 will increase the burden on central and local government."

"This is a price we believe is worth paying to ensure businesses are given the opportunity to become part of the greater push to mobilise our economy, rather than leaving premises empty."

Bill Addy, chief executive of Liverpool BID and chair of the BID Foundation said: "We cannot underestimate the importance of our retail, hospitality and leisure sectors and not just to what they bring to our economy but the people that are employed within them."

Camera catches conman snatching phonecards from Five Ways store

By Tony Collins

Shops within the Westside BID area are being urged to remain vigilant during the current lockdown after a fraudster brazenly made off with telephone cards from a local store.

As this video footage shows, the man walked into the Premier Edgbaston premises in Islington Row, Five Ways on Tuesday 21 April and asked to buy two phone cards.

But the camera then catches him in the act as he switches the new cards for two old ones.

He then tells the shopkeeper that he doesn't want to make the purchase and, after being given his money back, leaves the shop with the new phone cards, worth a total of £10, in his pocket.

Mr Humayun Mian, who runs the Premier Edgbaston store, said: "It is only a minor theft in terms of the amount, but it is still fraud and other premises need to be on their guard."



■ The fraudster is caught in the act on CCTV at the Premier shop in Islington Row, in Five Ways.



APRIL 30
At the same time, the BID has its eyes open to catch anyone who dared to try to take advantage of its members during the lockdown, with this story once again making the local press...

"This man bought a couple of telephone cards but then quickly turned around and swapped them for old ones. He told the shop staff that he didn't want the cards, he

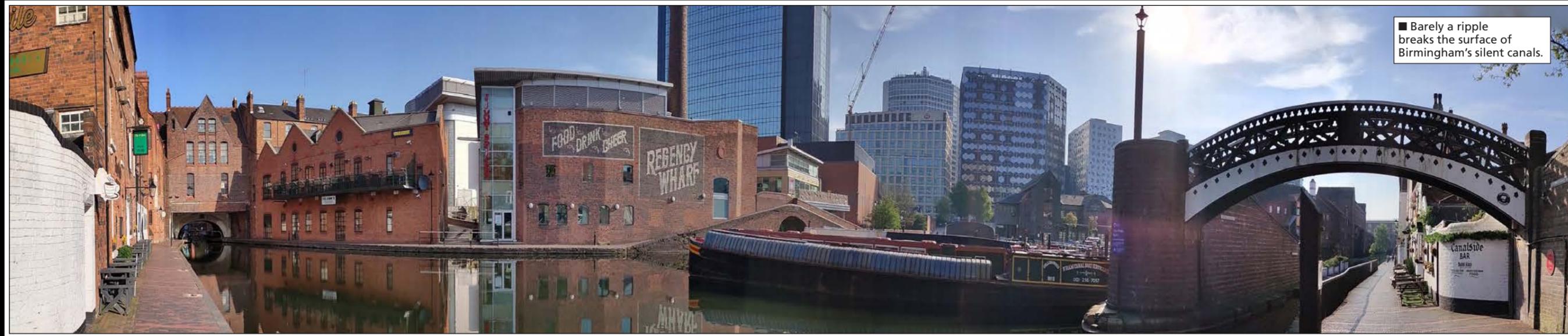
wanted a voucher instead, so basically he got his money back."

"The shopkeeper realised pretty quickly what had happened when he turned over the cards that had

been returned to him and could see they were old ones. The barcode had already been scratched off and the cards already used."

Westside BID general manager Mike Olley said: "Unfortunately, criminals are continuing to operate during the coronavirus outbreak, so it is really important that retailers also remain vigilant throughout this period."

The incident has been reported to West Midlands Police.



Life goes on in lockdown



By Steve Dyson

A new montage of video clips and pictures has been stitched together to show businesses how Westside BID is keeping the district safe during COVID-19.

The montage shows several clips of the quiet streets, gardens and grounds in and around Westside, along with footage showing the activities of the BID's wardens, cleaners, key workers and Midland Metro expansion works.

The final section of the montage shows the various tributes paid to the NHS by Westside businesses and wardens.

All footage and pictures used in the production have been either filmed by Westside wardens or other key workers, with everyone fully conforming with government advice on social distancing.

The resulting 87-second video was planned by Luisa Huggins,



The BID was working so hard to look after the area that Westside World created a special video to tell members what was happening. This went semi-viral on our website and social media, as well as being used by local media...

who heads Westside BID's media department, using the production and voiceover skills of Steve Dyson of Dyson Media, and the technical editing expertise of Paula Young of Magic Lantern Media.

Luisa said: "We're absolutely thrilled at this video montage which is a genuine depiction of the ongoing activities on Westside during the lockdown period."

"We were keen to show our members that while many of them are temporarily closed, certain businesses are still open and busy, such as key shops, the Metro works and venues like the Sea Life Centre."

"We also wanted to show how hard our wardens and cleaners are

working to keep the area clean, safe and secure, with extra checks taking place around the clock to keep an eye on all those properties that are closed during the lockdown."

"Our main message is that Westside BID is taking care of things for members, and that this means that once the lockdown begins to lift in various stages, the district is ready and waiting to get things back to whatever the new normal becomes."

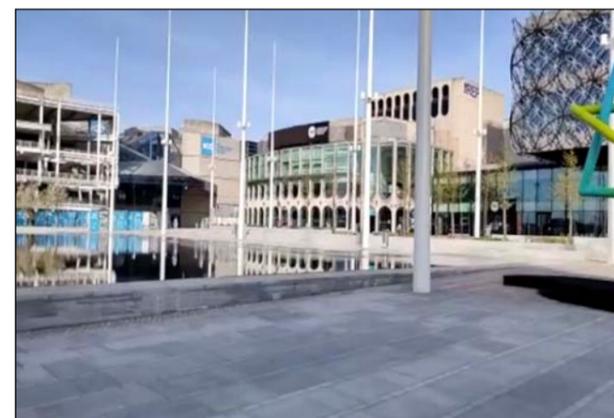
As well as appearing in this story on Westside BID's website, the video montage will also be distributed across the BID's multiple social media channels like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.



■ The Hyatt Regency Hotel (top), Hampton by Hilton Hotel (left) and Utilita Arena Birmingham pay tribute to NHS workers during the lockdown, and (right) the Westside wardens pay their own tribute on film for the Westside BID video during the weekly Clap for Carers.



■ Feeding time at a deserted Sea Life Centre during lockdown.



■ An eerily-quiet Centenary Square and Broad Street are captured on film at the height of the pandemic for the Westside video.



■ (From left) wardens Enoch White and Pete Willis check on venues while Dimitrios Mitropoulos hands out water to the homeless.



Transport chief discusses plans for city

MAY 4
Westside World interviewed Birmingham City Council transport chief Waseem Zaffar for its next vodcast.

Coun Zaffar revealed the detail behind speeding up the Metro tram extension to Five Ways at the same time as delaying the Clean Air Zone. In an exclusive vodcast interview with Westside World editor Steve Dyson, the city council's cabinet member for Transport and Environment also told of how proud he was of Birmingham's NHS, other key workers and volunteers for bravely tackling COVID-19.



The REP goes online to support young people

By Steve Dyson

Birmingham Repertory Theatre has launched a new online project to help hundreds of young people across the Midlands this summer.

Although the REP's actual stage is temporarily closed because of COVID-19, the theatre's creative learning team has decided to go virtual with REP RELOADED.

This project will include a five-day-a-week interactive digital programme for schools that runs across the summer term until mid-July, and those taking part will be able to be creative online from the safety of their own homes.

Sean Foley, the artistic director at The REP, said: "Everybody at The REP has worked hard to develop and deliver a programme of engaging digital content for REP RELOADED."

"This new venture is typical of the groundbreaking work of The REP. We're not open for performances, but we are continuing to create theatre in many ways."

REP UNLOADED will see regular digital content and videos sent out to the following eight local schools:

- Billesley Primary School
- Braidwood Trust School for the Deaf
- Hillstone Primary School, Shard End
- Robin Hood Academy, Hall Green
- Percy Shurmer Primary School, Highgate



■ Birmingham Repertory Theatre's creative learning team has been able to reach out to schools online.

MAY 6

Westside was determined to report on members' efforts to continue operations virtually...

- Welsh House Farm Community School, Quinton
- University of Birmingham Secondary School, and
- Peter's Hill Primary School, Stourbridge.

The programme will help students to tell digital stories through drama, learning adventures, storytelling, drawing, and devising and writing plays. Children will submit responses to the challenges which can be shared via school blogs, websites and REP channels. The REP

will also provide access to British Sign Language (BSL) workshops.

Gill Sparrow, head teacher at Hillstone Primary School, said: "I am so impressed with this digital offering. It has meant that we have been able to continue our engagement with the arts for our pupils."

For youth theatres, REP RELOADED workshops hosted by professional directors at The REP will cover acting for screen, performing puppetry, devising, improvisation, monologues and

creating plays. And as part of Shifting the Dial, a national scheme to strengthen the mental wellbeing and skills of young black men, REP RELOADED is helping Lightpost Theatre Company to continue to create new plays of social and historical significance online.

The REP will also be streaming a selection of previous REP productions online, offering remote play-reading sessions for families and community participants.

It will also continue to provide activities for local young people in care as well as adult engagement.

● Anyone interested in REP RELOADED should contact Alex Summers at The Rep on alex.summers@birmingham-rep.co.uk for more information.

Tooth fairies are still creating dental magic

By Tony Collins

Dentists Colin Pocock and Hannah Clark have become the latest #WestsideHero award winners after maintaining a vital service despite current lockdown restrictions.

The business partners, who run The Dentist at Liberty Place, in Sheepcote Street, have taken on the role of real-life 'tooth fairies' despite their practice having to temporarily close on 24 March.

The dentists, who began their practice after previously working for Boots Dental Care in the city centre, have been taking prescriptions to pharmacies, and even delivering the resulting medication to patients' homes, together with vital food shopping when necessary.

Colin and Hannah have also been sending emergency fillings to patients who have lost parts of a tooth, and produced a one-minute instructional video advising people how to brush their teeth efficiently, plus tips on eating healthy snacks.

On top of that, Hannah has donated a box of spare medical gloves, as well as some chocolates, to her local GP surgery.

She said: "We really want to see people, but we can't, so we're inviting people to call either myself or Colin direct. We listen to what the problem is and then give them the appropriate advice."

"We are not allowed to see the patient in person, but we also do a video consultation with patients where you can actually see into their mouth and diagnose the problem more effectively," she added.

Once a diagnosis is over, the dentist prints off a prescription for



■ All smiles... our #WestsideHero dentists Colin Pocock and Hannah Clark, based in Liberty Place.

MAY 7

The BID's next #WestsideHero award winners were two dentists, and what was lovely about this story was the follow up messages posted by visitors to westside.co.uk...

medication such as pain relief or antibiotics and either emails or delivers it in person to the patient's nearest pharmacy.

Hannah added: "A lot of pharmacies don't have designated email addresses, so we have to deliver the prescriptions ourselves. And, on occasion, we also collect the med-

ication and deliver it to the patient's home if urgent and convenient."

Colin said they had even gone one step further at times. He explained: "We have also delivered food shopping to patients who are self-isolating and can't get out. We try to do the best we can to help."

The dentists, who have been run-

ning their practice for 14 years, have also produced a newsletter for patients as well as the video.

Hannah said: "Sometimes it's about maintaining good oral health, so we talk about avoiding unhealthy snacks such as crisps and sweets and instead suggest cutting up fruit to keep in the fridge."

"The video also demonstrates how to clean your teeth for two minutes with an electric toothbrush, and cleaning advice using an interdental brush."

"Luckily in Birmingham we have fluoride in the water supply so that helps strengthen teeth against decay."

The dental practice says it also donates food to a charity called The Sanctuary, which provides basic essentials such as food and sanitary items, including toothbrushes and toothpaste, to refugees in the city.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "Given they are temporarily closed during the lockdown, Colin and Hannah could have just put their feet up and had a rest."

"But they're so committed to their patients they've continued to work hard to support people in any way they can."

"They are both worthy winners of our latest #WestsideHero awards, and we're very proud of them."

'Always going the extra mile'

● **A Horn says: Knowing Colin and Hannah we are not surprised that they are going the extra mile for their patients. We cannot recommend the practice highly enough and even enjoy going to the dentist as everyone is so welcoming, friendly and efficient.**

● **Theresa Holmes says: I have worked with & remain very good friends with Hannah & Colin I also a part they are the Best truly genuine caring wonderful people very much**

real life tooth fairies keep up the good work this award is well deserved

● **Susie Pearson says: What a great story to read, but what the public don't realise that most practices are doing the same. We contact all our vulnerable patients as well on a weekly basis to check they are well and have food supplies and medications, we are also going to collect and drop off medication when the patient is unable to collect. Well done to all that do this**

for the community! Drake Dental Practice, Rochdale.

● **Sarah Evers says: Huge congrats and well deserved. I have been a patient of Colin's since day one and always thought of him as a hero, a true professional with a knack of putting you at your ease and the whole crew at The Dentist at Liberty Place are fabulous! Well done guys!**

● **Julia Wagstaff says: Well done Colin and Hannah. This is very encouraging to see. Your commitment is inspirational.**

MAY 11

Members had responded to the BID and were willing to be featured in the #RaiseTheBar campaign. And while the campaign might not have got everything it aimed for, it certainly kept BID members in the limelight. This story resulted in restaurateur Oliver Ngo being interviewed by BBC radio...

Restaurant facing end of the line

By Steve Dyson

An Asian restaurant on Westside could be forced to close with the loss of up to eight jobs unless the government provides more funding to help it survive COVID-19.

The family-run Vietnamese Street Kitchen was launched in Brindley-place two years ago and it quickly became a popular place for quality fast food for staff from nearby offices and residents.

This success resulted in the restaurant scooping the 'Best Newcomer' trophy in Westside BID's Wonders of Westside (WoWs) Awards earlier this year.

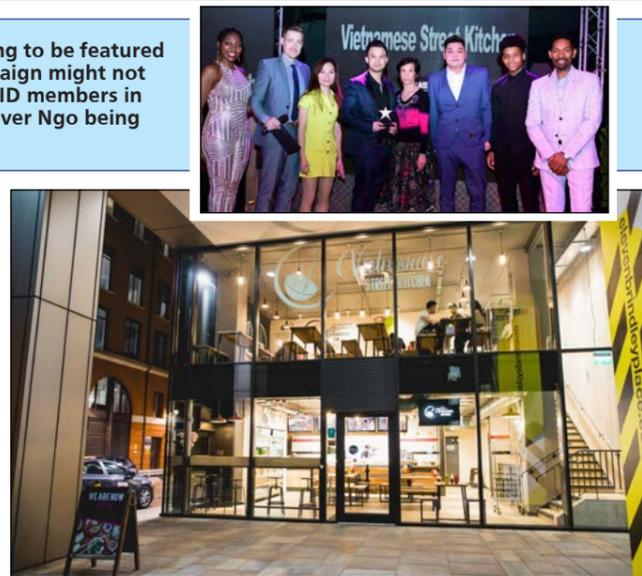
But since the lockdown, the venue itself has had to close its doors to

guests, offering an online delivery service instead, and trade has plummeted.

Oliver Ngo, of Vietnamese Street Kitchen, is one of many business leaders on Westside who is backing the national #RaiseTheBar campaign to enable hospitality, leisure and retail companies to access more financial help from the government.

The lobbying campaign wants the rateable value thresholds for businesses in those sectors to be raised from £51,000 to £150,000, giving them the chance to access £25,000 grants to help survive the COVID-19.

Mr Ngo explained that five of his eight staff were currently furloughed and that the business



■ Vietnamese Street Kitchen and (top) the team at the WoWs.

– which has a rateable value of £54,000 – faced closure within weeks unless it was able to access more financial assistance.

He said: "Since the outbreak in China, customers have boycotted the business and trade has gone down. Our main trade is office lunch trade, and since lockdown lunch trade has died completely.

"Without a government grant or loan we won't be able to survive for long. We are doing what we can to try and support our employees, their families and the local business and community.

"But I'm not sure without help how long we can go. Perhaps another few weeks at best. We need some kind of grant as we don't

qualify for any loans at this moment in time.

"We support local people, businesses and offices, offering customers somewhere different to eat over lunch and dinner, and employing local people.

"We are a family-run business and are not one of the big boys. Businesses like us need the help! It has taken us years of hard work to get to where we are, and we don't want the lockdown to be the end of us.

"To the chancellor Rishi Sunak, I would say: 'We are a small independent family-run business and it has taken us years to build ourselves. Please don't undo all our hard work. We need support too!'"

MAY 14

What impressed everyone at Westside BID was just how determined so many people in the area are to help others...

Food bank is praised for heroic effort

A food bank operating from Broad Street which says it has never been busier than during the ongoing coronavirus outbreak has won the latest #WestsideHero award.

The Blessed2Bless Community Project, based in The Square, has been running its vital food bank service in the area for about 12 months. The charity, which



■ Pastor Lebert Dawkins prepares meals at the Blessed2Bless Community Project, in The Square.

originated in the United States before coming to Britain nearly six years ago, has now extended its help by offering cooked meals to frontline NHS and care staff.

Pastor Lebert Dawkins, who

has previously experienced homelessness himself, said Blessed2Bless was a charity that helps the homeless and those struggling financially.

He said: "The food bank is just on a Saturday but

demand is increasing due to coronavirus. More people are losing their jobs and becoming homeless. We have seen the crisis grow with demand increasing every week."

The strain on our business is just not sustainable for much longer...

■ Celebrated chef Akhtar Islam.

By Steve Dyson

A celebrated Birmingham chef who recently opened an Argentinian steakhouse on Westside has revealed how the COVID-19 lockdown has hit his businesses.

Akhtar Islam, who was already operating the Michelin-starred Indian restaurant Opheem on Summer Row, launched Pulperia in Brindley Place at the beginning of March this year.

But the pandemic has meant that his restaurants have temporarily been shut down, with a particularly drastic impact on Pulperia.

Mr Islam has now warned that the newest venue's continued closure will result in up to 40 direct and

indirect long-term job losses unless the government provides funding for it to survive after COVID-19.

He is just one of many business leaders across Britain backing the national #RaiseTheBar campaign to enable hospitality, leisure and retail companies to access more financial help from the government.

Mr Islam, who was born and brought up in Aston and still lives in Birmingham, said: "We launched Pulperia to the public on 1 March

with great success as we were fully booked for six weeks ahead.

"But we were devastated by the lockdown and resulting closure, after spending nearly £1m on renovations to the property and creating employment for 40 people.

"Sadly, we were unable to furlough the majority of the team at Pulperia as they had only joined us on 28 February so did not qualify for the Job Retention Scheme.

"We paid them their March salary from the business but were not in a position to maintain salaries, so we've had to make redundancies."

The #RaiseTheBar lobbying campaign wants the rateable value thresholds for hospitality businesses to be raised from £51,000 to £150,000, giving them the chance to access £25,000 grants to help survive the COVID-19 lockdown.

This would be particularly helpful to Pulperia as its rateable value is £133,000 which means it has until now been unable to access any grants, and loans are difficult for such a young business.

Mr Islam explained: "We were simply unable to trade long enough to build cash reserves, and so what remains of the business is currently



MAY 14

The rates-grant campaign continued to be of interest to our members and, if nothing else, gave some of the district's leading venues the chance to talk about their experiences...



■ The stunning interior of the restaurant Pulperia, in Brindley Place.

being supported by directors' loans and intercompany loans from my other businesses. But it must be understood that this process then puts undue strain on these other businesses, and it's not something that is sustainable for much longer.

"We have discussed the possibilities of a loan with our bank manager but have been told that they will not be able to support us and so we're trying other banks.

"Hospitality plays a big part in our culture.

"Not only does it create more jobs for every pound generated in sales compared to any other business, but it also gives the city personality and adds value to spaces that would otherwise be left unoccupied," he added.

"I would ask the chancellor to look at the financial benefits to the country that our industry offers, and the wider social benefits.

"The industry supports so many other sectors through its supply chains to external services."



On the right path to a safer city...

■ Broad Street's one-way lanes and two-metre markings have been praised and emulated across the UK.

By Steve Dyson

One of the UK's first pavement markings and signage schemes designed to guide the public how to follow social distancing is being launched on Broad Street, Birmingham.

Westside BID is laying 100 metres of two-way markings on a 60-metre stretch of pavement from the junctions of Gas Street and then along Broad Street to Berkley Street.

The pilot scheme will be un-



This was the day that Westside started to attract national attention with the unveiling of its pilot plans for helping people stay distanced when Broad Street reopened. This story ended up on local and national radio and TV, and was published in various newspapers...

veiled for Westside BID tomorrow morning (May 20) by Councillor Waseem Zaffar, the cabinet member for Transport and Environment at Birmingham City Council.

As part of the launch, the route will then be trialled for the media by more than a dozen key workers,

to show how the markings and signage will help the general public to adhere to social distancing once businesses in the area begin to reopen.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "These pavement markings have been designed specifically to help peo-

ple easily follow social distancing guidelines.

"Our understanding is that we are among the first areas of a UK city centre to pilot this sort of initiative.

"We hope that the pilot will be seen as a successful way to help businesses in our area to prepare

to reopen, keeping staff and visitors safe when Birmingham's 'golden mile' starts to reopen.

"If this pilot is deemed successful, we will work with the city council to hopefully install similar pavement markings and signage across the entire Westside BID area."

Councillor Zaffar said: "This pilot fits in with our emergency Birmingham transport plan and we will do everything possible to support Westside BID to make this happen."

The pavement markings have been commissioned from signage company Hollywood Monster.

Tim Andrews, of Hollywood Monster, explained that the pavement markings are made of a material called Street Wrap, a self-adhesive vinyl that is shrink-wrapped with heat to the pavement, then covered with anti-scratch laminate to make it hard-wearing.

He said this is expected to last for a period of three to four months, which made it ideal in case something more permanent was needed, or if social distancing guidelines changed.



■ Westside BID general manager Mike Olley helps to put up the new signage around Westside.



■ Shoppers and Midland Metro workers try out the newly-marked footpaths, specially designed to maintain social distancing.



On the day itself, the city council's transport and environment chief Coun Waseem Zaffar was available for interviews, along with BID general manager Mike Olley. From the Birmingham Mail to ITV, and from BBC Five Live radio to BBC Midlands Today, the media world descended...

Safety measures a hit with viewers

Birmingham's 'golden mile' was the talk of the town this week after Westside BID's pavement markings pilot to help guide safe distancing was widely reported in the media.

At the launch yesterday morning (May 20), the BID's general manager Mike Olley and street warden Dimitrios Mitropoulos were both interviewed for regional TV and national radio.

Also interviewed was Coun Waseem Zaffar, Birmingham City Council's cabinet member for Transport, who has given the scheme his full support.

Journalists who gathered to watch Midland Metro Alliance workers trialling the pavement markings included Beccy Wood of BBC Midlands Today, Phil Mackie from BBC Five Live and Hannah Bechelet from ITV Central.

Birmingham Mail photographer Darren Quinton and freelance business photographer Jas Sansi were also there to record the moment in pictures for the online and printed press.

The initiative also made the front page splash in the Birmingham Mail on Tuesday, as well as appearing online at BirminghamLive, ITV News,



various business websites and across social media.

Luisa Huggins, marketing and events manager at Westside BID, said:

"We wanted to show our members, the wider business world, politicians and the general public that we are making preparations for when Broad Street starts to reopen. We all know that everyone's going to have to be careful in the early days, and so we'll be doing everything we can do to help guide them, hopefully giving businesses and visitors confidence when they are out and about on Westside."

"We're not only pleased at how the media covered out initiative, but also that it gave politicians like Coun Zaffar a view of how the BID is prepared to work closely with the city council on making the city safer."



■ (Above and inset top) Coun Waseem Zaffar is interviewed by socially-distanced TV and radio crews in Broad Street.

It's time to get on your e-cargo bike!



■ One of Westside's new e-cargo bikes.

Westside BID has invited local businesses to send in ideas on how they would like to use the free services of two new e-cargo bikes. Birmingham City Council has won a £58,000 grant for the e-cargo bikes from the Department for Transport, and it has asked Westside BID to help it run the scheme. The council is buying 20 e-cargo bikes and trikes for the pilot scheme starting later this year, with the BID operating at least two of them in and around Westside. Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, has already pledged to replace at least ten motorised journeys a week. One purpose already identified is to use the bikes

MAY 26 Back to more normal news today...

for BID staff to travel around the area collecting stories for Westside World, and to distribute the newsletter each quarter. Westside wardens will also use the e-bikes as part of their patrols, potentially offering a combined courier service for BID members. ● Any ideas for e-bike tasks from Westside BID members should be sent to Luisa Huggins at luisa.huggins@westsidebid.co.uk

New tower plan set to transform city skyline

JUNE 3 Good news on future plans for Broad Street today...

By Tony Collins

Westside BID has welcomed the latest addition to the “wave of towers” which is helping to transform the Broad Street skyline for the benefit of the city’s economy.

A planning application has been submitted to build a new 35-storey development in the heart of the city centre comprising a 230-bed hotel and 440 build-to-rent (BTR) apartments.

Plans for the scheme, to be called The Square, have been unveiled by 2020 Living, part of Taylor Grange Developments, which is currently working on five other BTR projects in the city totalling more than £500m in development value.

Other major planned developments recently announced include a 42-storey skyscraper, which would become Birmingham’s tallest residential tower, due for completion in 2022.

Mike Olley, Westside BID’s general manager, said: “We fully support the roll out of these proposals. Broad Street is attracting a wave of towers which we readily embrace.

“The boost to our vibrant economy is welcomed and this is yet another act of confidence in Westside backed up with solid investment.”

Samuel Ginda, director of 2020 Living, said: “We’re delighted to



■ An artist’s impressions of the new ‘The Square’ development.

be unveiling these plans after fantastic collaboration yet again with Birmingham City Council and working very successfully with our team to develop our vision for this well-positioned brownfield site in the heart of the city centre. The Square redevelopment will be a vibrant, highly-managed, amenity-rich BTR product with a big focus on inclusive communities, health and wellbeing.

“We’re really looking forward to delivering this exciting new project alongside all of our other schemes in the city, as this not only provides jobs to the region but our commitment to the regeneration of brownfield sites aiding in the Birmingham and West Midlands housing needs.”

The Square is being designed by

Corstorphine & Wright Architects, whose spokesman Tony Mead said: “The Square has been a really exciting project to work on, with a huge focus on providing an unrivalled amount of shared facilities.”

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, added: “In order to meet our housing demand by 2031 and protect our precious green belt, we need to not only build homes on a brownfield-first policy, but also look to build upwards – not outwards – in town and city centres.

“These plans for Broad Street encapsulate that approach, and I am pleased to see developers rising to the challenge and keeping confidence in the West Midlands market despite the difficult economic times caused by the Coronavirus crisis.”



Virus won't stop us

...the show WILL go on!

Jazz festival rearranged for autumn



By Tony Collins

The coronavirus outbreak has struck a sour note with the annual Birmingham, Sandwell & Westside Jazz Festival.

But in true show-business style, the music will not be silenced for long.

The jazz festival, which is backed by Westside BID and includes performances across the district, has been held annually since 1985.

It provides a largely free pro-

JUNE 4 And then dates started to emerge on the resumption of some real entertainment, with the defiant return of an event which has been part of the city’s cultural scene since 1985...

gramme of jazz, blues, swing and R&B for thousands of people to enjoy every year.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has forced this year’s festival, due to have taken place in July, to be postponed.

But the good news is that festival organisers have managed to rearrange the popular event for the autumn, with the new dates from October 16 to 25.

Westside BID general manager Mike Olley said: “The show goes on, and that’s a real relief.

“Few can recall the days before the jazz festival and despite numerous pressures created by the coronavirus it is a joy that it will be with us again at the end of the summer.

“We understand the reason for the delay, but we hope people will put a ring around the new dates in their diary. It promises to be an unmissable festival and will be well worth the wait.”

The Birmingham, Sandwell & Westside Jazz Festival has gained international recognition over the years, taking place across a range of venues, from traditional bars, cafes and hotels to more unusual locations such as museums,

libraries, shopping areas, public squares, and canals.

The festival will include free Jitterbug and Lindy Hop dance sessions, harmonica and ukulele workshops open to all ages, the famous Texas Harmonica Rumble, a Make and Play Cigar Box Guitar session, a Sketch Crawl and a Barbershop Quartet – located in an actual barbershop!

There will also be an exhibition of jazz festival photography, and a series of talks, discussions, and Q&A sessions.

Coun Ian Ward, leader of Birmingham City Council, said: “The festival is an opportunity to come and see top class live music in clubs, open spaces and bars around the city, and just have a great time.”

And comedian Jasper Carrott, one of Westside BID’s celebrity partners, added: “The cultural side just lifts Birmingham’s standing wherever you go in Britain.

“It’s a renowned jazz festival right in the centre of England that’s been going for 35 years, and no-one can match that.”

● For further information, email admin@bigbearmusic.com, phone 0121 454 7610/7020 or visit www.birminghamjazzfestival.com



■ Enthusiastic supporters Coun Ian Ward (left) and Jasper Carrott.

Farewell Ding-Dong Bell, news legend



JUNE 5 But there were sad times too. Today the BID paid tribute to an old friend...

By Steve Dyson

A celebrated journalist who was an irksome thorn in the side of whichever paranoid councillors were in power in Birmingham for more than three decades has passed away.

David Bell, the Birmingham Mail's former municipal editor, had been admitted to Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley, but took a turn for the worse and passed away peacefully in his sleep, aged 77.

Often known simply as Belly, or in more humorous moments as Ding-Dong Bell, he was a blunt Northerner with a twinkle in his eye who originally hailed from Hartlepool. He started on the Mail in 1976, and during his 31 years there became a legend of regional journalism, his voluminous local government knowledge and remarkable list of contacts holding councillors of all parties to account.

In the latter years of his career, a constant stream of contacts queued to feed him tip-offs over Guinness at the Old Joint Stock, and most drinks were shamelessly reclaimed from the paper on his expenses.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, and who was once a Birmingham city councillor, today reflected on what he said was the "sad news" of Belly's death.

He said: "Love him or hate him – and I liked him a lot – you couldn't ignore David Bell.



Journalist David Bell outside his second home – The Old Joint Stock – and (top) in his younger days.

"He was a strong character and sadly there will be never again be a more challenging and righteous journalist keeping their eyes on local government in this city.

"He was a man of high standards and morality, and he was relentless against those who didn't come up to his standards.

"Some may claim his love for a drink was not always acceptable, but he was a man of his time and a veritable institution.

"Belly was a fearsome journalist who held to account and largely kept in check the best part of a major city for decades."

Tributes also came from journalist Steve Dyson, who first worked with Belly as a reporter at the Mail in 1991 and later became his news editor and finally his editor at the paper.

Mr Dyson, whose company Dyson Media now handles Westside BID's communications, said: "I was proud to have worked with Belly and to have experienced his glorious front-page splashes on the shenanigans of local government.

"These ranged from inter-party affairs to shocking expense scandals, and from appalling wastes of public money to drunken fist-fights.

"There are too many exclusives to list, but a famous one revealed how Birmingham City Council painted the grass green between the airport and the city centre to impress international leaders ahead of the G8 summit in 1998.

"When I was his news editor, the pub was the only place I could find him for his annual appraisal. Newspaper managers were irrelevant unless they bought him a pint and met a few contacts!

"Belly's world was meeting people, drinking with and befriending them, and always extracting their secrets. RIP Ding-Dong."

Restaurant has a crafty way to get diners back

JUNE 8 And in keeping with the new 'reopening' theme, there was good news on one venue's early plans. This story resulted in restaurateur Sam Morgan appearing on BBC Radio 4...

By Tony Collins

A city centre restaurant is reopening the doors to its creative dining pods following the easing of restrictions over coronavirus.

Craft Dining, located beside the canal at the International Convention Centre, is now taking bookings for its outside terrace area which includes three pods named after the founder's daughters, Hope, Lilly and Poppy.

The restaurant, which only launched last autumn, is due to reopen following lockdown from 11 July after introducing social distancing and testing measures.

Founder and group chief executive Sam Morgan said: "We've spent many, many weeks reviewing our procedures to ensure that it's safe to open in July and I am confident we can do that.

"Tables will be spaced two metres apart, hand sanitisers will be readily available and capacity levels will be monitored by staff to ensure there is no overcrowding.

"There will be contactless payments and food will be served with single use items that can be disposed of.

"For added reassurance, we have



Hope, Lilly and Poppy, the distinctive dining pods introduced at Craft Dining, near the ICC.

also introduced new technology to discreetly monitor people's temperatures."

Mr Morgan added that everyone at the family-owned restaurant, whose chef Andrew Sheridan rose to fame on the BBC's Great British Menu, was passionate about the safety and security of its guests and staff.

Craft has removed around 20 outside tables to enable two-metre

social distancing. The pods, which contain a music system and built-in heating, are designed to accommodate up to eight guests but will now be limited to people from the same household.

People will be able to choose from a set menu, the restaurant's classic Afternoon Tea with champagne or a cocktail, or the Cheese & Charcuterie board with a bottle of wine.

In addition, Craft has just launched a new Dine At Home offering for summer with a menu created by the chef Mr Sheridan and described as "big on creativity and bold in flavour".

Collection is available, with delivery services operating within a five-mile radius. Takeaway orders and booking for the outside dining can be made at www.weare-craft.co.uk.

Olley's Oracles: Nightclubs opening will be a

No-one doubts the dramatic impact that coronavirus has had on all our worlds. Who could have foreseen the era of lockdown during the last few months?

To date, nearly 40,000 deaths have been attributed to the virus and, perhaps even more depressing, the "excess death rate" for the period is above 60,000. That, perhaps, is a better indicator of the cost in lives to our nation.

The death count grows but

JUNE 5 Today was also a day for the birth of something new, with the first of 'Olley's Oracles', a blog from BID general manager Mike Olley showing some real thought-leadership from Westside...

this itself may tarnish the fact that this desperate time is coming to an end. On 8 April, a daily high of 1,260 deaths was reported. In the next three weeks that rate was to halve and halve again.

The downward trend is well

and truly with us. It could well be that by the end of June 2020 all may well be close to normal. I am aware that many will be concerned that the trend could be subject to a "second spike". Yet the conditions in Denmark

and Austria, who are both several steps ahead of the UK, indicate that a second spike is not a given. On 1 June horse racing started again, the last race meet being 20 March.

Some year groups in schools also went back on 1 June, and shielded patients – those with acute health indicators – have been allowed out with the rest of the population. All of these are significant and huge steps towards recovery.

On 4 July many pubs in and

sign of life getting back to normal

around Broad Street will be reopening. All will be taking baby steps to ensure staff and customers are safe and well. A nurse, under current circumstances, is the second most dangerous occupation in the UK. A police officer the 27th. Bar staff are number 292 on the list. It appears that if we punters apply a bit of common sense, all will be well.

I therefore welcome the return of the great British pub. But when will nightclubs

reopen? Naturally, the government will have the final say, but matters are now rolling out at a pace.

The desperate health condition coronavirus has visited on the UK is horrid. Yet we are also confronted with an economic catastrophe unless we act intelligently. I see a clear measure of normality revisiting our shores once nightclubs reopen. Nightclubs are a bit more demanding in terms of close contact,

but then they tend to be a lot larger than pubs. I know many nightclub operators and they are more than capable of overcoming most any obstacles. Driven by economics they will develop imaginative and safe ways to open. I feel this could well be August, maybe September, with a bit of care and consideration.

Watch this space – as when nightclubs do reopen it will be a key indicator of the nation getting back to normal.



Westside BID's Mike Olley.

Takeaway in touching tribute to NHS heroes

JUNE 9 And still the heroes kept coming...

By Luisa Huggins

A popular Chinese food venue in Broadway Plaza has won the latest #WestsideHero award for feeding frontline NHS staff.

The modern takeaway has donated around 70 starters and main course meals to the staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to show their support and appreciation for staff fighting the COVID-19 virus.

George Zhao, general manager at i-KRAVE, said hospital staff had told him how tough it had been in the emergency wards in recent months and that the food treat gesture had "definitely lifted spirits".

The committed team at i-KRAVE even put in extra time on the NHS deliveries to make sure they were properly packaged and labelled, with personalised cards on each meal to add a special personal touch.

Mr Zhao said: "We aim to continue this NHS initiative with a second round of free meals once we have more staff back to assist."

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "It's been a pleasure to witness so many businesses donating food and showing their support for the NHS and other key workers."

"It has been an incredibly challenging time for many people – however these random acts of kindness certainly go a long way."

The latest #WestsideHero comes as i-KRAVE has reopened its doors to the public this week (June 8) to



Staff at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital tuck in to i-Krave food and (right) one of the personalised cards.

offer a 'click-and-collect' service and delivery through Uber Eats.

● For more details about i-KRAVE food, visit <https://i-krave.co.uk/> or call 0121 455 0330 to order for collection.



Award hails sales director Ryan as a rising star



Winner Ryan Doyle.

Staff at Broad Street's leading hotel are celebrating the news that one of their top managers has been named as a winner of a top national hospitality award.

Ryan Doyle, the sales director at Park Regis Birmingham, is to receive the 2020 Acorn Award, which recognise 30 of the industry's most talented stars aged under 30.

John Angus, managing director at Park Regis, said "We are all delighted to learn that

JUNE 11 Some of the BID's members had other good news...

Ryan has been named as one of the Acorn Award winners. "There are lots of awards out there, but the Acorn Award is right up there in the top 10 of aspirational awards in our industry. Ryan typifies the fantastic team that we have

and exudes professionalism, passion and desire."

Terry Waldron, executive director of CH&Co, one of the co-sponsors of the Acorn Award, said: "It is so uplifting to hear about the incredible achievements of the 'class of 2020."

"Now, more than ever, it is crucial to recognise industry talent in a year filled with challenges, to continue to inspire and nurture emerging talent."

BID boss: Hospitality sector can succeed with right support

We'll get by with a little help from our friends!



JUNE 24 With reopening only a week or so away, Mike Olley started to shout from the rooftops on what was needed to help venues...

By Steve Dyson

The boss of Birmingham's 'Golden Mile' today (June 24) welcomed plans to start reopening the hospitality sector, but demanded that landlords, insurers and politicians work hard to help businesses recover.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside Business Improvement District (BID), was speaking after the government's announcement that pubs, restaurants and hotels can start trading in a "COVID-secure way" from 4 July. But he challenged landlords to start communicating with their tenants, and said

the insurance industry must start acting properly over business loss claims arising from the pandemic.

Mr Olley also said the regional elected mayor and the city council must now work harder with Metro workers to quickly and efficiently finish the tram extension to make Broad Street more attractive.

And he expects the police to continue to offer support to BID members with a firm but friendly presence on Westside, pointing out that the elected Police and Crime Commissioner has always been keen on supporting businesses.

Mr Olley said: "The government's confirmation that the hospi-

tility sector can start reopening on 4 July is very welcome, and reopen we will. This will be done in a lawful and safe manner. No-one in the trade wants to unnecessarily endanger their patrons, staff or indeed themselves to COVID-19.

"Those that run licensed premises are a bit like airline pilots. They are very much in it together, and by being at the front of the venue – like being at the front of a plane – they are the first to fall victim to error."

"I have said for some time now there are three vital elements to opening up the hospitality sector."

"Firstly, the government needs to give the guidance. That has been done and I can promise you the guidance is enough to get on with matters."

"We now need landlords and insurers to start talking to tenants and those they insure. For many it's a disgrace that landlords have simply not engaged with their tenants."

"The government has given a free pass to rates, yet landlords have too often simply turned their limited line of conversation down to zero. And some insurers have acted with less than uberrima fides – or utmost good faith – a doctrine that should underpin insurance."

"For the Westside area, we also need those responsible for building the tram to get firmly into bed with political leaders to consider how our customers can quickly and safely get into and out of the area."

"I remain hopeful that both the tram builders and politicians will deliver a tram that is right for business, and on time."



Finishing the tram works will be key to attracting visitors back.

MARCH 23 Yet more heroes emerge on Westside...

Mehdi's up all hours to help needy

Westside-based Subway franchise owner Mehdi Bahramchoobin could have been forgiven for taking it easy after the coronavirus outbreak forced him to close his premises.

But Mehdi was having none of it, and instead set about helping the most vulnerable in his community by volunteering to run vital errands for those unable to leave their home.

And now Mehdi has been made a #WestsideHero after clocking up more than 1,000 volunteering hours since he signed up as an NHS volunteer at the beginning of March.

Mehdi, who came to the UK from Iran 11 years ago, was nominated as a #WestsideHero by Broadway Plaza, where he has run the Subway franchise for the last six years.



Mehdi Bahramchoobin.

The 45-year-old, who is married with a son, aged 16, said: "I have always liked to do volunteering work from the time when I came to the UK."

"I had nothing to do because of lockdown, so I thought it was a good time to help vulnerable people by becoming an NHS volunteer."

Mehdi became a Subway franchisee after studying for an MBA at the University of Birmingham.

Carla Scaroni, of Broadway Plaza, said: "It's incredibly important that people like Mehdi get the recognition for everything they do, especially as they are an integral part of the centre and community. We think he's an absolute hero!"

● If you know someone who deserves a #WestsideHero award, email luisa.huggins@westsidebid.co.uk

The big day arrives!

After long months in lockdown, the end is in sight

By Steve Dyson

More than a dozen bars and restaurants on Birmingham's 'Golden Mile' are gearing up to reopen this Saturday (July 4) as the hospitality sector begins to emerge from lockdown.

As many as 8,000 people seeking their first night out in more than three months are expected to descend on Broad Street and the surrounding area, with many venues staggering opening times and others offering booked tables only. Westside Business Improvement District (BID) has called out a top team of street wardens to support what will be the largest concentration of entertainment venues opening their doors across the Midlands.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "We're looking forward to helping to host what for many people will be a chance to get out and meet friends and have a great time in the region's best entertainment district."

"We'll be excited to see the reopening of some of our bars and restaurants, and we're pleased that all venues have implemented vari-



And then the reopening of Broad Street was only 48 hours away, with this story appearing in various press, as well as on the BID's own website and social media...

ous social distancing measures and safety techniques to ensure staff and visitor safety remains a number-one priority.

"Estimates of how many people are expected to come out on Westside have ranged from 1,700 to as many as 8,000 – the latter figure being approximately one third of the numbers we see out on an average weekend before Christmas."

"Whatever the final numbers are, as a BID we will be turning out a full team on Saturday that includes our most experienced managers and street wardens."

"We will be working closely with both venues and our partners at West Midlands Police who have assured us they will have the right number of officers ready to help everyone have a good time in and around Westside."

Mr Olley added: "Wherever possible, we would advise customers to plan their night out this Saturday more carefully than usual, booking ahead at venues if they can and not arriving or socialising in too big a crowd."

"This is a tremendous opportunity to show how one of the UK's

biggest entertainment districts can offer their guests a top night out while keeping to the latest safety advice, and we're determined to make it a success."

Bars on Westside that have confirmed they are reopening include The Alchemist, All Bar One, Be At One, The Brasshouse, The Canal House, Figure of Eight, O'Neill's, Pitcher & Piano, Slug and Lettuce, The Soloman Cutler and Walkabout, while The Rocket Club in Broad Street will also be reopening its bar facilities.

Among the restaurants reopening are Bank, Siamais, Pulperia and the FAB Burrito kiosk, while the Hampton by Hilton, Jury's Inn and Park Regis hotels are also opening their doors.

The Sea Life Centre is also reopening for daytime visitors.

Olley's Oracles: As restrictions are eased, we

In the UK during 2018, 1,671 people died in cars and traffic accidents, and 122,635 suffered injuries – some life-shortening, all life-changing.

In Birmingham alone that year more than 200 people died because of road accidents. These are horrendous figures and yet typical yearly averages. And we could stop all this by simply banning cars.

Think of all those lives saved, and all those life-changing



However well things went, the next Olley's Oracles pointed out that no-one should become too complacent...

injuries avoided. But, of course, it's unthinkable to ban cars just because of the horrendous death and injury rates, isn't it?

Now, contrast that with the current pandemic that COVID-19 is creating across

the globe. There is no option to ban that, of course, but we can introduce regulations to defeat the disease.

Politicians determine the rules of the road. They do so to keep death and injury rates to a minimum. We play

our part by sticking to them – and when we don't, that's when we kill others. It feels to me that the government is currently getting the rules and regulations more than right with COVID-19. So why do we have a new local lockdown in Leicester? And I can guarantee there will be more lockdowns, as I agree with the prediction of many experts that we are not even halfway into this horrible disease.

Put simply, people are going



Revellers returned to Westside (above) – and behaved responsibly – as staff in the bars and restaurants adapted to the safety measures of 'the new normal' (below).



have to follow the rules... or else!

to die because of other people. Despite the government and all the other powers that be doing their best, people just won't listen.

More people will die and more lockdowns will occur. Why? Because COVID-19 does not offer instant death or injury, and therefore people (you and I) think we can get away with it. And we're wrong.

I attended a couple of Black Lives Matter rallies in

Birmingham recently. They were undoubtedly great days out with a positive message, and I saw many lovely people in good spirits.

Yet many were ignoring social distancing. Why did they potentially take a newly-acquired disease back home to spread among loved ones?

Meanwhile, I recently watched a gathering of 50 or more people at a close neighbour's to celebrate a child's birthday. This created

the potential that someone at that party would be infected. Perhaps the child whose day they were celebrating won't reach another birthday.

These are harsh but sobering realities. And they remind us that we must all think and do as the government asks over COVID-19 rules.

Follow them and we have a chance. A good chance. Ignore them and you're doing the equivalent of speeding the wrong way up a motorway.



Phew! Despite the world worrying and some cities letting the side down, Birmingham behaved perfectly – especially on Broad Street...

First night was great success

Thousands of visitors enjoyed themselves as Birmingham's 'Golden Mile' reopened for the first time in more than three months on Saturday 4 July.

The boss of one of the biggest entertainment districts in the Midlands said that the vast majority of an estimated total of 8,000 visitors across the day and night had behaved responsibly.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said social distancing guidelines had worked well in the more than a dozen bars and restaurants that had reopened.

He also praised his street wardens, West Midlands Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service for the professional way they dealt with the tiny number of revellers who caused issues – although no arrests were made.

Mr Olley said: "Saturday was a fine day where around 8,000 people attended the area."

"All our venues that opened had good social distancing guidelines in place which respected COVID-19 risks and worked well."

"It was all very different to what we are used to, but it was effective in protecting staff and visitors."

"There were, of course, a couple of individuals who took things to excess but they were professionally dealt with and there were no arrests as far as we understand."

Mr Olley had organised a 'street briefing' at 4pm on Saturday where a full shift of his most experienced street wardens had met with police, ambulance teams and bar owners to discuss detailed plans like door policies and pedestrian flows as the evening was about to get under way.

He added: "we had hoped that things would go well and we were not disappointed."

"It was a good starting point and things can only get better."



Westside BID's Mike Olley.

Numbers adding up to a good start for firms

By Tony Collins

Westside BID is hoping for a significant increase in visitors to Broad Street's pubs, bars and restaurants after correctly predicting the number who turned up on 'Hospitality Day'.

That was the name given to Saturday 4 July, when the hospitality industry finally reopened to the public after nearly four months of lockdown due to coronavirus.

Mike Olley, general manager of the BID, estimated that about 8,000 revellers would descend on Broad Street and Brindleyplace over a 12-hour period last Saturday to mark the reopening of the "Golden Mile".

He proved to be almost spot on, with the actual footfall in Westside on 'Hospitality Day' totalling 8,227 people on the street.

But to put it into context, that figure compared to a footfall of 34,647 people on the corresponding day of 4 July last year. Mr Olley is now looking forward to a rise in visitor numbers, particularly after the Chancellor this week announced a number of giveaways to help boost the vital hospitality sector.

These initiatives include a huge cut in VAT on accommodation, restaurant meals and attractions from 20% to just 5% from 15 July through to 12 January next year.



■ Diners in Westside enjoy their first meal out in a restaurant for months on 'Hospitality Day', July 4.

JULY 10

Do you remember the number of visitors that Olley predicted for the first night back? He only went and more or less guessed the number correctly! The press loved this story – nationally and locally...

prediction for 'Hospitality Day' was based on anticipation from comments on establishments' social media, as well as nightclubs remaining closed and people keeping to their local areas.

He said: "We are now hopeful that the number of people visiting the Broad Street area will continue to grow beyond Hospitality Day, especially now that the Chancellor has announced a boost for the sector with his welcome giveaways."

Another benefit announced by Rishi Sunak was 50%-off meal vouchers worth up to £10 per person between Monday and Wednesday throughout August as part of a new "Eating Out to Help Out"

scheme. In addition, the Government is offering a 'jobs retention bonus' of £1,000 per employee to encourage businesses who re-employ their furloughed workers.

Mr Olley said his accurate pre-

Carl Chinn champions Westside on TV

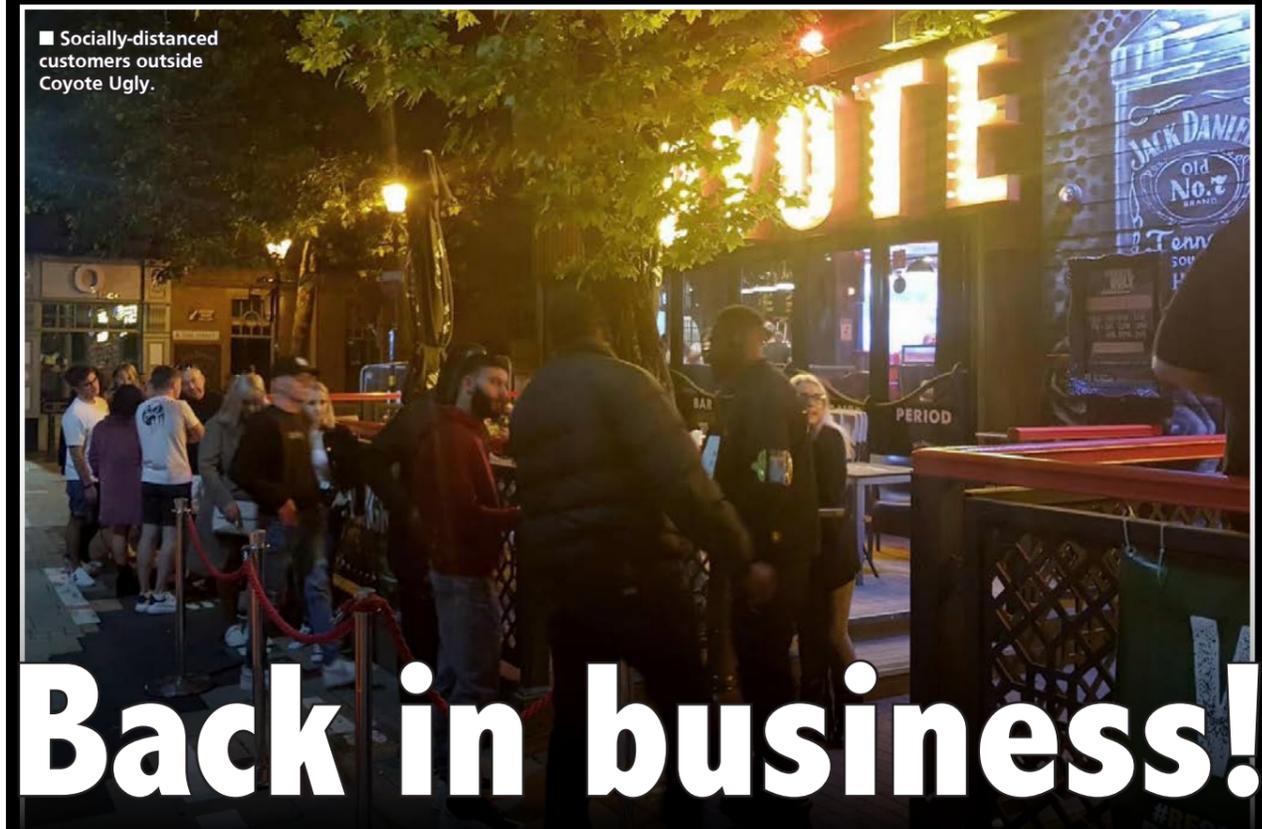
JULY 15

There's nothing like a bit of local history to get folk excited about their city centre! So Westside BID commissioned a special video feature from a favourite face...

Professor Carl Chinn visited the Westside Business Improvement District and filmed a news segment for Birmingham TV, discussing the importance of Broad Street to the history of Birmingham. The video aims to educate people on the history of some of Birmingham's most famous landmarks and the significance they hold in Birmingham's heritage. Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "Professor Carl is a true gentleman and Brummie, who knows the history of Birmingham better than anyone else. It was only right he was the one to talk us through the iconic history of Birmingham, and capture it for the world to see."



One week on, and it looks like Westside is truly...



■ Socially-distanced customers outside Coyote Ugly.

Back in business!

By Gary Young

Bar and restaurant managers on Birmingham's Golden Mile have praised customers for acting responsibly as they reported a promising second Saturday of opening after lockdown.

Just one week after restrictions were eased and bars and venues were allowed to reopen, managers say customers are returning to enjoy the atmosphere around Broad Street and BrindleyPlace.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said he was delighted to see orderly queues outside venues, indicating that businesses were fully booked and in demand.

"It was very encouraging to see that most of our venues were at

JULY 13

By week two of the reopening, orderly queues were forming...

capacity or close to it," he said. "Walking around Westside, I was left in no doubt that Birmingham is back in business."

Dan Wilson, general manager of The Canal House, thanked his customers.

"The response we've had has been brilliant," said Dan. "We were full all day yesterday and it was a really nice atmosphere. The customers were amazing and I'd like to thank everyone who turned up and behaved responsibly."

"People have responded really well to our new measures. We have a one-way system in place and paper menus that can be thrown away after each use. All our staff wear masks or face shields and we are encouraging customers to order via our app."

Steve Emmison, at Velvet Music Rooms, said the venue was restricted to 130 customers at any one time because of the need for social distancing, but added that they had welcomed up to 350 people throughout the day and that at peak times they were full.

"We're pleased with Saturday – we're off to a very good start," he said. "We're only operating table service at the moment and at peak times there were no seats available. We were absolutely full."

"Customer and staff safety are paramount and we're all working very hard to make sure everyone is safe and comfortable. We've got table service only at the moment, with screens at the bar and between our distanced tables, and our customers are going where they are sent."

"When we explain the new rules they follow them, and if anyone forgets we quickly remind them and they're happy to do their bit."

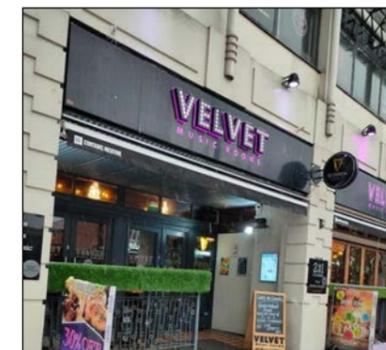
Dave Murphy, at the Malt House pub, said that the bar had only been open since Monday but he was confident that business was already improving.

He said: "We've lost 40 per cent of our capacity because of social distancing but we're pretty busy with the tables we have open. Our trade can be weather driven, but after a rainy week the weather really picked up yesterday and with the Sea Life Centre open again, things are getting better."

"People like to pop in for a pint or a bite as they pass by and we had around 1,000 customers yesterday. We've introduced safety measures like perspex at the bar, table service and we have an ordering app. People can sign up to track-and-trace as they enter and I think it makes everyone feel more comfortable. Confidence is coming back and it's all about getting people back through that door."



■ Visitors enjoy the Westside atmosphere and (right) Velvet Music Rooms was full at peak times.





■ The deserted Grosvenor Casino, which has operated 24 hours a day for the last 20 years.

Silent... for first time in 20 years

By Paula Young

The manager of a top Birmingham casino has spoken of his frustration over his business remaining closed while venues around him are allowed to reopen.

Matt Rudd, general manager of the Grosvenor Casino, in Broad Street, is delighted that the Government has given the green light for the leisure and entertainment industry to begin opening again with appropriate safety measures – but is concerned that no date has been given for casinos to open.

Matt, who has worked at the Grosvenor for six years, said: "It's soul-destroying to see this place empty. This is the first time in 20 years that we haven't had any customers or teams in the building so it's a very eerie atmosphere and not what we're used to. We want to get customers back through the doors, get the team back in and make things vibrant again."

"I'm adding my voice to thou-

JULY 16 But while some good news was emerging, the BID was still happy to support venues who needed more help...

sands of others by asking government to allow us to reopen our casinos as soon as they possibly can. "I've looked around what else is happening here in Birmingham and am delighted that we appear to have gone the extra distance to ensure that customers will receive the safest possible welcome and experience when we're finally allowed to unlock our doors."

When the lockdown was announced in March, Matt was forced to put 73 members of staff on furlough. In the days that followed, the Grosvenor took a key role in the local response to supporting frontline NHS staff, emergency services and other vulnerable groups by providing and delivering hot meals through the Blue Light Card scheme.

The Grosvenor then began preparing for reopening.

Matt added: "We know that customers will rightly expect to feel safe when they return, and we've completed the widespread provision of social distancing measures and signage, and the installation of Perspex dividers on gaming tables, slots and electronic roulette terminals."

"Hand sanitisers have been delivered and protective equipment is in place for customers and colleagues. We've got new Covid-secure measures in place for the handling and cleaning of gaming chips and cards, and the ID requirements we now have will ensure we are fully compliant for the government's track and trace programme."

JULY 23 The BID was also keen to share a little culture, while at the same time helping to raise money for a venue in need...

Singing out to support Crescent

Talented amateur vocalist Joanne Brookes is not just singing for her supper – she is performing to help safeguard the future of her local theatre.

Joanne is a member of The Crescent Theatre which, like all other theatres around the country, has been forced to close during the coronavirus lockdown.

But the 23-year-old Asda worker, who is due to play the starring role of Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz, decided to put her mouth where her heart is.



■ Joanne Brookes.

Joanne, who studied musical theatre and drama at university, has been a member of The Crescent for just over two years, but says: "The Crescent means so much to me personally and the thought it wouldn't make it through the hardship that these last few months has brought is just heartbreaking."

Joanne performs the songs in her home in Oldbury and loads them onto her own YouTube channel each evening at 7.30pm, together with a 2.30pm Sunday 'matinee'.

In all, she will be performing nine songs on her favourite 1950s theme, starting with Dame Vera Lynn's We'll Meet Again. Other songs in her 'Save the Crescent' programme, which is due to end on Saturday 25 July, include Crazy He Calls Me by Billie Holiday and Get Happy by Judy Garland.

Joanne has so far raised more than £1,000 from her singing efforts. You can donate to her Save the Crescent fund by visiting: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/singtosavethecrescent>



JULY 16 The BID interviewed Matt Rudd for a short video highlighting the Grosvenor's plight and produced a striking interactive 360 photo of the eerily-deserted casino interior to be used to raise awareness of the issue on social media. Within days the ban on casinos opening across England was set to be lifted... but the relaxation was later postponed for two weeks.

New faces bring great experience



■ New Westside BID directors (from left) Matt Rudd, Debbie Challoner, Alex Hough and John Angus.

By Luisa Huggins

A high-powered group of directors has joined the ranks at Westside BID, bringing a wealth of new experience to the senior team.

The BID's directors, who together make up the leadership board, are comprised of a variety of key influencers from hospitality, retail, banking and leisure.

And the four new directors who have just been added will greatly add to that expertise as the BID looks positively towards the future.

The new directors are John Angus, managing director of the Park Regis hotel, Debbie Challoner, manager of the Sainsbury's store in Brindley Place, Alex Hough, community manager of Alpha Works, and Matt Rudd, Grosvenor Casino general manager.

Mr Angus, who is also chairman of the Birmingham Hoteliers' Asso-

JULY 30 With its eyes ever on the future, Westside recruited four experienced new directors to help guide the BID's strategy...

ciation, said: "I have worked within the district at the Park Regis hotel for several years and I am pleased to bring my knowledge to the board to help develop the travel and tourism sector within the district."

Ms Challoner said: "I have worked within the area for over a year and I have seen the many benefits of the street wardens and other BID services on a daily basis. The additional features the BID provides helps to keep the area clean and safe."

Ms Hough said: "I'm extremely pleased to be joining the Westside BID team. They do great work within the area and I'm pleased to

be a part of it and help watch the district continue to develop."

And Mr Rudd added: "I have worked within the Westside district for 19 years and have watched the area grow from strength to strength. I'm pleased to be joining the board and being a part of the Westside team."

The group of new directors has been welcomed to the board by Mike Olley, Westside BID general manager. He said: "Having these new faces will help to bring a diverse range of knowledge, expertise and experience. We are really looking forward to working with them."



JULY 16 And now the time had come to invest in video to draw more people back to the city centre... Westside BID worked with Birmingham TV to create an advert showcasing key attractions within the district. Luisa Huggins, media and communications manager at the BID, said: "We are extremely excited to relaunch the district as lockdown restrictions begin to ease and hospitality and leisure businesses begin to reopen. Producing the commercial with the team at Birmingham TV was an effective way of sharing the message with the wider public."

JULY 31 As more and more venues reopened on Westside, the BID used the government's 'Eat Out to Help Out' discounts to market its members' offerings...

Offer to set your mouth watering...

Pubs, bars and restaurants across the Westside BID district are gearing up for a once-in-a-lifetime culinary treat aimed at giving a much-needed boost to the hospitality industry.

The government-funded 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme starts on Monday 3 August and will continue over the following four weeks until August 31.

Participating venues will offer a 50% discount on food and non-alcoholic drinks, up to a maximum of £10 per diner, every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday throughout the month.



So far, 16 restaurants, pubs and bars in the Westside BID area have signed up to take part. They are: All Bar One; Bank Birmingham; Canal House; Hilton Garden Inn; Mr Mulligans; O'Neill's; Piccolino; Pitcher and Piano; Pulperia; Siamais; The Alchemist; The Brasshouse; The Bull's Head; Velvet Music Rooms; Vietnamese Street Kitchen and Yorks Café.

People can use the scheme as many times as they like during August, and the discount applies to all diners in a group regardless of the number. There is no minimum spend. ● Full details about the scheme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-a-discount-with-the-eat-out-to-help-out-scheme>

While we've been chafing in lockdown, Olley's Meet the oracle of Broad Street

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on our lives.

Part of that has placed many of us as 'working from home', and many managers are coming to terms with the fact that people are often more efficient in the comfort of their own homes.

Simple management tools allow for greater supervision. And for many, working from home is a better option that works. Not for all, but for many.

Indeed, one in five of us could well largely disappear from the office and therefore the area the office operates from. Yet will this have a negative impact on our city and local centres?

I would argue not. Birmingham has a current housing crisis and an immediate demand for at least 90,000 homes. Largely for our young.

We also have a burgeoning and unmet student accommodation demand. The market will step in and supply both these needs.

Much of it will be in Westside, building on the youthful nature the area has offered for many years now. This will also be driven by the adjustments in the property market resulting from a largely generational shift to home working. As a good percentage of the more seasoned of the work force change to home working, this will leave space to be filled by the new generation.

Their city centre accommodation will be practical with little emphasis on space. The spatial needs of the coming generation will be fulfilled by different work and socialising environments. Coffee lounges and spacious unconventional office accommodation will supplement and complete their needs.

I see the swish new tram that's arriving very soon all the way to Five Ways as presenting a dynamic shift in the feel of the area.

Wider pavements will present fresh opportunities for our businesses. The feel of the area will become more bohemian. The wave of residential skyscrapers that are emerging and planned will add to the spectacular skyline and feel.

Whilst we may fear change, we know from our experience of it that things only ever get better.



Will money apps make us 'appy?'

With the imminent reopening of pubs, restaurants, coffee houses and the rest of civilization, one issue we need to be cautious of is the increasing demands not to use cash.

This means becoming aware of the plethora of untested IT solutions that are currently hitting the market. IT solutions that eliminate cash are not only hungry for your money but are perhaps even ravenous for your data. Are we ready for them?

Entering the marketplace at the moment are a significant number of digital companies. They are all offering technically savvy-sounding solutions to avoid the use of cash.

But beware of what you sign up to. Can all these newbies be trusted?

Simply put, can these digital companies be trusted with your data? For data is what they are really after, as much as your money.

Payback time is so taxing

To pay for the COVID-19 crisis, the UK government borrowed £55.2 billion in May alone, more than the nation's income for that month.

That sounds awful, but – let's be honest – most of us haven't a clue what that means, have we?

The inevitable outcome of the current position is higher taxation, which is how the government earns money. There is no other fix.

The magic money tree does exist, but it offers no long-term relief.

Governments may increasingly lie about the fiscal position to adopt populist positions rather than admit the truth of our financial situation...

Why do we allow that, given there is only one possible outcome?

We all know deep in our hearts that we get what we pay for, so what is wrong in a politician telling us we are probably having to pay more tax?

Sadly, only more taxation will keep our nation in a healthy, lightly regulated condition. Do we want honest politicians?

been setting the world to rights...



The seat of all wisdom!

When I think about how efficient face masks may or may not be, the flushing of toilets gushes to my mind. Bear with me while I explain!

When you flush a toilet, not all the contents are forced down and away through the waste pipe. Instead, the water crashing into the bowl atomises parts of what's there, and some of this atomised waste mix sprays up and out.

Indeed, it has often been suggested to me that one should always put the seat cover down before flushing. But presumably, if this advice is taken, the ring of daylight seen in the gap between the toilet seat and cover simply acts as an actuator like the nozzle on an aerosol. This results in a resurgence of the atomized mixed contents, spurring them

even further out and around the immediate area. I simply shudder at the thought.

Therefore, is placing a mask over your face any different? Doesn't much of your breath inevitably sneak out around the often-ill-fitting sides or simply through the fabric over your mouth and nose? I must admit I don't know the detailed science behind this. Indeed, the more that COVID-19 continues, the less I seem to know about most things. And I am not alone.

On the 23 March this year we were told we had to stay in for three weeks to save the NHS. Eighteen weeks later, the NHS remains saved, the 'Nightingale Hospitals' turned out to be a waste of money (a good waste of money, maybe) and we are still

in a partial lockdown. Now we learn we're going to have to wear facemasks in shops. Is this also to save the NHS? I'm not sure.

But why do we have to wear face masks? A recent government publication stated that "evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you..."

Confused? You bet! The politicians can't make their minds up and the science seems difficult, at best. Could it be they are making it up as they go along? Surely you would not run a nation like Great Britain in such a manner?

All I do know is that gentlemen should definitely raise the seat before standing at the toilet, and should lower them once they are finished. Why can't COVID-19 guidance be as simple as that?

Brum's arts scene needs support too

Last week Boris seemed to push a very positive button. He made the wonderful provision of £1.57 billion to help with the future of theatres, galleries and museums.

Candidly, one of Boris's boys admitted this will not save the entire sector. A shame, but realistic. But what was not made clear was how Birmingham's museums and arts galleries won't be getting a penny of this funding.

Places like London's Royal Albert Hall and various national galleries will certainly benefit. But not the arts and museums in dear old Brum.

The media reported that 'arts leaders' are happy about this. I bet they are, as it ensures their healthy salaries keep appearing.

But there's not a penny to support the comedy clubs on Broad Street, or our cinemas. One can only presume that comedy clubs, cinemas and the like have the wrong kind of cultural offerings.

Some might say that public money does not go to what the public want and therefore use in high volumes.

It goes where Boris, his ministers and their entourage go.

To read all of Olley's Oracles, visit westsidebid.co.uk/olleys-oracles/

Cashing in on trust and confidence

It's tricky to know if Theresa May, when she was Prime Minister, was right or wrong to say there was "no magic money tree". But to my thinking, she must have been confused.

Confused and misled by none other than Adam Smith, the much-favoured economist who wrote the best-selling *The Wealth of Nations* back in 1776.

Adam Smith suggests that before we had money, we had barter. That's a big fat lie. Barter will have occasionally existed, but it had no depth of traction.

The truth is that before money, society worked off trust and confidence.

I'm prompted to mention this by someone asking me: "Where is the government getting all this money to pay for lockdown?" In practice, it just prints some more really, so it's not really magic.

The Bank of England will tell you only 4% of all our money is physical, in coins and notes, and 96% of our money is held electronically.

If we have trust and confidence in our system, all is fundamentally well. You may not like Boris Johnson, and you may not like Keir Starmer.

But neither as Prime Minister is going to provoke few if any to take up arms and seek to unravel the democratic process that puts them there. And that's because we have trust and confidence in our system.

Let us not forget the even greater strength of our wonderful system is its resilience to take many a joke against it. Therefore our government, and all governments, will print more of that stuff we have trust and confidence in, called money.

We will continue to make the odd joke about Boris and Keir, but still have trust and confidence in them. Whereas poor Theresa's denial of the magic money tree may well have helped to see her off.

How the BID kept Westside in the limelight through lockdown

Making the headlines

BirminghamLive

Broad Street and Brindleyplace braced for 8,000 revellers on Saturday as venues reopen

Police and ambulances line Broad Street amid fears for 8,000 revellers

This is what Broad Street looked like on a well behaved Super Saturday night

Birmingham nightlife boss calls for clubs to reopen this summer to help city 'return to normality'

Premier Edgbaston shopkeeper's fury after customer 'swaps new phonecards for old'

Watch - Broad Street floods AGAIN after another water main hit during tram build

Express & Star

Birmingham's 'golden mile' boss calls for unity

Project Reopen has been a success, say Black Country pub firms

Manager urges Government to let casinos open doors

Midland Metro extension works resumes in Birmingham

New Birmingham restaurant won't survive without Government aid

The Birmingham Press

News, views and comment from Birmingham and beyond

Call to re-open Broad Street clubs

Brothers sing the Brasshouse blues

Virtually real jazz festival announced

Birmingham nightlife business continues to improve

Boost for Birmingham's 'golden mile' as venues reopen

Broad Street gets ready for re-opening

Re-opening of hospitality plans welcomed by nightlife chief

City entertainment area boss looks to future

Birmingham casino boss urges government to let business re-open



The new social distancing signage in Broad Street was covered by the Birmingham Mail (above) and ITV Central News (below).

Take a look: First images released of social distancing markings to be used in Birmingham

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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