

RETAIL BID
BIRMINGHAM

Edit

FREE • AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2016

**BID renewal:
Chairman
on why yes
vote is best**

BALLOT LATEST: PAGES 3,4 & 5



The sky's the limit

Stunning Britain from the Air photography exhibition delights city centre visitors



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Retail Birmingham is the Business Improvement District (BID) for Birmingham city centre's retail area and has been supporting its members since 2007, promoting, enhancing and developing the shopping and leisure experience in the city centre.

While the retail environment is forever changing with the challenge of shopping online, the Retail BID firmly believes in supporting the shopping experience delivered by retailers in the city centre, maintaining Birmingham's position as the regional capital for shopping.

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FROM THE EDITOR



Like great architecture, public art is an essential ingredient for an aspirational city centre aiming to attract shoppers, tourists and new businesses.

Art provides individuality, identity and colour to city streets, while provoking lively debate about its appearance or meaning.

So it is encouraging to see 'Birmingham Figure' on John Bright Street, a sculpture passed daily by thousands who might never offer it a second glance, given professional conservation treatment to make it look as bright and bold as when it was first unveiled in 1987 and in doing so bringing it to people's attention.

We've spoken to the conservation expert behind the work for this bumper edition of Edit, along with several department store and centre managers about their aspirations for their businesses and Birmingham. It makes for interesting analysis.

We've also taken a look at The Big Sleuth; the exciting follow-up to The Big Hoot, one of the most successful city centre art and charity projects in recent years.

This is a critical period for Retail BID as it aims to secure your vote for its third term serving the city centre between 2017-2022.

Take a look at Jonathan Cheetham's interview across the page to understand why now more than ever Retail BID is vital as a strategic voice for Birmingham city centre.

Stacey Barnfield

FROM RETAIL BIRMINGHAM



As we now head towards the Autumn, the next couple of months are critical for the retail area in Birmingham city centre. From 19th September to 27th October we will be asking you, our members, to vote for a third term of the Retail BID until 2022.

The BID3 business plan will be distributed soon and it is more important than ever that you vote 'yes' to enable the Retail BID to continue to represent your interests and to protect, promote and further enhance the city centre retail area.

Birmingham is going places at a tremendous rate, we all know of people who come here for the first time or have not been here for a long while and are truly surprised and amazed at what they find. Our aim is to continue to achieve this and to attract more customers and provide an enjoyable Birmingham experience.

We are all immensely proud of the city centre we have today, which will get even better in the coming years and by voting 'yes' for a third BID term you can help make this happen.

The latest edition of Edit is our biggest yet which really demonstrates the fantastic people and businesses we have in the area.

As always, myself and the team are here to support you, so please do get in touch.

Steve Hewlett, Retail BID manager

'There's a buzz about Birmingham now that is as strong as when the Bullring was opened. You can feel it.'

House of Fraser Store Manager Parminder Sahota – Pages 12/13

RETAIL BID BIRMINGHAM – THE NEXT FIVE YEARS: VOTE YES THIS SEPTEMBER

Chairman Jonathan Cheetham talks about the need for the consistent city centre strategy the BID can provide

The Chairman of Retail Birmingham has made a direct plea to city centre businesses to support the BID’s ambition to secure a third term.

Jonathan Cheetham spoke to Edit Magazine just weeks before member businesses are given the option to vote on whether the BID is given a new term between 2017-2022.

The BID business plan for the next five years follows three themes.

The first is delivering the ‘The Birmingham Welcome’ with a safe, attractive and accessible city centre. The second is to continue ‘Business Support and Growth’, representing and networking members for their benefit.

The third is to develop the ‘Birmingham Experience’, taking in projects such as reimagining New Street.

“In recent years the BID has fought for improvements throughout the city with success,” said Jonathan, General Manager of Grand Central.

“It is more important than ever this work continues and is carried out by a body that represents the city centre.

“This city centre is hugely important and influential on the suburbs and throughout the UK and we are a truly international city. This is the core of it, and if that core is not right nothing else is going to be.”

Jonathan described the massive redevelopment of New Street station and Grand Central as part of a mix that makes a city great but believes there is still much to be done.

“The job of the BID is to get involved heavily in the strategy of the city, which it has always done since its inception,” he added.

“The BID is about making the city centre a better place to live, to work and to play.



“It’s quite a simple belief, but quite a difficult task. And for that, you need a consistent approach, because that provides the right environment for businesses to thrive.”

Jonathan has been at the heart of Birmingham’s retail scene since the late 1990s, leading regeneration projects and managing shopping centres, and takes pride in the continued growth in tourism visitor numbers.

“We have gone from being a very visited city, to one of the most visited cities and the reason for that is the comprehensive mix that makes this city a great experience for visitors, businesses and consumers,” said Jonathan.

“Whether it be music, theatre, art, we’ve got the lot.

“We’re most visited because we’re incredibly accessible, and we’re moving.

“People are realising what a great place this is. We need to defend, protect and enhance that. We’ve got to drive this youthful, energetic, international city.

‘I urge all businesses to read the BID’s Business Plan and proposal and vote positively’ – Jonathan Cheetham



“The BID helps to play a part in that.”

Jonathan is excited by the huge opportunities presented by reimagining New Street as a major thoroughfare; a key strand of the BID’s proposed new term.

“What excites me most? The massive opportunities we haven’t touched,” he said.

“New Street has been left unloved while we’ve carried out this major redevelopment of Bullring back in 2003, and then Grand Central.

“It’s important the BID gets a third term to work on this and think strategically.

“All the things the BID delivers are measurable and we want to maintain that impact with the city council.

“We need that influence on behalf of our businesses. We want to be a force that is hugely beneficial for the city and we want to work with it.

“I urge all businesses to read the BID’s Business Plan and proposal and vote positively.”

■ Over the page: Why the city centre needs a BID to work with retailers.

RETAIL BID BIRMINGHAM – THE NEXT FIVE YEARS: **VOTE YES THIS SEPTEMBER**

Why do we need a BID?

WITH RETAIL BID...

- You will remain part of the city centre business community, which has been operating on your behalf since 2007

- You will benefit from £2.5 million invested in additional services over the next five years, including:

- Promotional and advertising campaigns to attract high-value shoppers to our bars, shops, restaurants and service businesses

- Major, city-leading investment in Christmas regional campaigns

- Deep cleaning and chewing gum removal to ensure the city centre looks its best

- Investing in shoppinginbirmingham.com, the online visitor resource with over 12,000 unique hits each month that's free to BID members

- Fewer 'chuggers' operating in the BID thanks to Retail BID's work to gain support for controls, and our future role in monitoring numbers

- Tackling antisocial behavior, business crime and rough sleeping in partnership with Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Police

- On hand support to guide your business through tricky times – Retail BID helped members access almost £1 million in support funding during the building of Grand Central and the Midland Metro, and to compensate for the removal of buses from Bull Street and Corporation Street

WITHOUT RETAIL BID...

- The city centre loses £450,000 investment each year for projects chosen by businesses. Because of this, we would lose:

- ShoppinginBirmingham.com, the BID-developed and managed online website and social media account for shoppers planning their day in Birmingham

- The city centre Shopping Map, a hugely popular shopper product

- Christmas lights on Cannon Street, Corporation Street, and parts of High Street and New Street

- Dedicated events and promotional activity for businesses large and small, such as 'Found' and 'Style Birmingham Live'

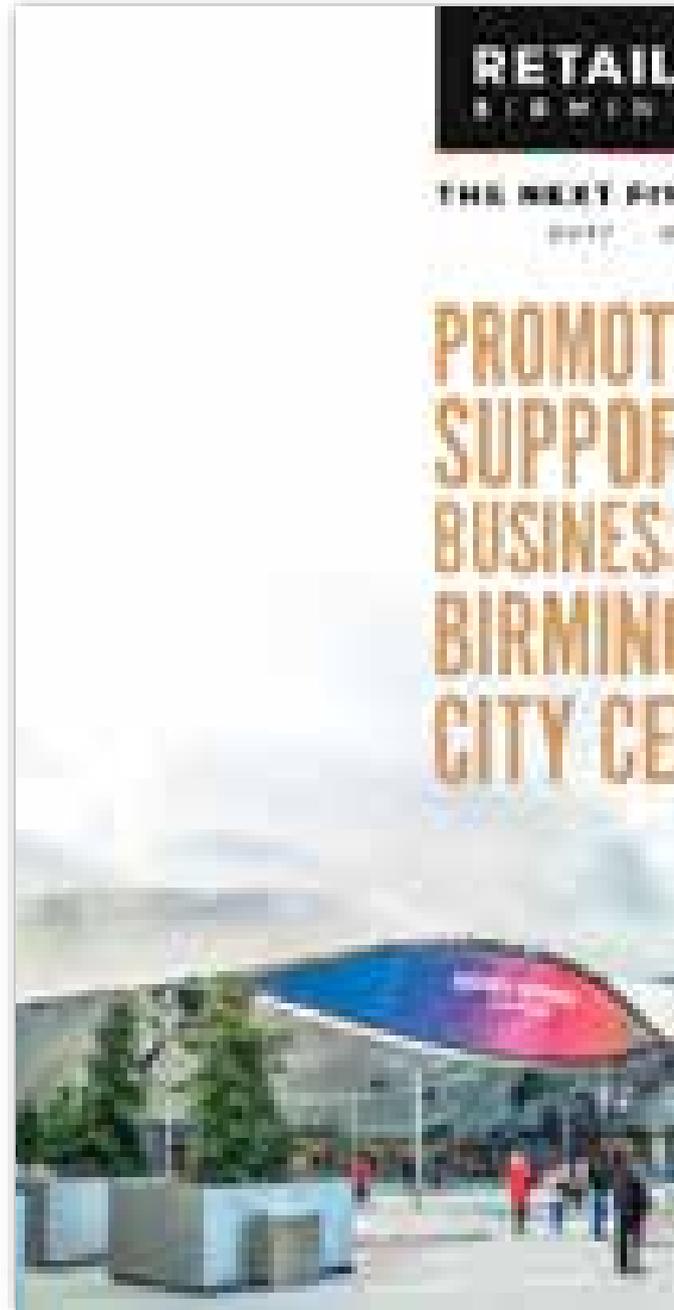
- Deep cleaning and gum removal from pavements

- Flowers and floral features

- Access to community schemes such as the Retail Crime radios purchased by Retail BID

- No more 'go to' support to help address business issues and offer proactive local management, or update text message system to alert local managers and owners to opportunities and issues as they emerge in the city centre

- The common voice of business disappears, making it tougher to represent your views to the Council, Network Rail and Centro, for example, and during a period when a further £250 million of public sector savings needs to be found



RETAIL BID
 THE NEXT FIVE YEARS
 2016-2021



The front cover of Retail BID's Business Plan for the next five years

What to look out for during the vote process



A sample version of the ballot form

Between Monday 19th September 2016 and Thursday 27th October 2016, eligible ratepayers will be given the opportunity to vote on the proposal for the renewal of the Retail Birmingham BID for a further five years.

The confidential postal ballot will be conducted in line with the BID Regulations by Independent Scrutineer Electoral Reform Services (ERS) on behalf of Birmingham City Council.

The Retail BID served its required 'Notification of Intention to Submit a BID Proposal for Balloting Purposes' to the

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in March 2016.

All eligible businesses with a rateable value of £10,000 or more will be eligible to vote if they are listed as a non-domestic ratepayer within the proposed BID area on the date the Notice of Ballot is published. Each property (hereditament) subject to the BID will be entitled to one vote. Businesses that occupy more than one hereditament will be entitled to one vote per hereditament.

The ballot result will be declared on Friday 28th October 2016.

Ballot papers must be received by the Independent Scrutineer, Electoral Reform Services by no later than 5PM ON THURSDAY 27TH OCTOBER 2016.

BID's brilliant new Found guide hot off the presses

Unique celebration of city's independent businesses supported by high-visibility marketing campaign

The 'Found' guide to Birmingham's independent businesses was released last month and supported by a city-wide awareness campaign.

More than 20 illustrators, artists and photographers were commissioned to take part in the Found project; each capturing the city's independent retailers in their own unique way.

The A5 guide is being supported with a digital and online campaign.

Found has also been promoted by advertisements in popular online publisher I Choose Birmingham and Sixty Nine Magazine along with news coverage in Birmingham Living magazine.

Piccadilly and Great Western Arcades were adorned with flags, banners and floor graphics to help raise awareness of the guide, which has a print-run of 5,000. Partnerships with Independent Birmingham and Colmore BID also helped promotion.

Assia Sohaib, Deputy BID Manager, described Found as the 'must-have' guide for shoppers.

"The guide will be a boost to a sector that is a really important part of the Retail BID," she added.



The Found guide was supported with graphics and banners on Piccadilly and Great Western Arcades



'The guide will be a boost to a sector that is a really important part of the Retail BID' – Assia Sohaib, Deputy Manager

The new £5 note is made of water-resistant polymer

City retailers alerted to 'The New Fiver'

Polymer plastic bank note in circulation in September

Retail BID member businesses are being urged to take note of 'The New Fiver' when it goes into circulation this autumn.

The new £5 banknote is a thin, flexible plastic called polymer and has a number of security features that make it even harder to counterfeit. These include a see-through window and foil Elizabeth Tower, which is gold on the front of the note and silver on the back.

Each new polymer note is expected to last at least 2.5 times longer than the current paper notes, making them better for the environment. This is because polymer is stronger than paper so the notes can better withstand being repeatedly folded into wallets or scrunched up into pockets.

The new £5 goes into circulation on September 13th and is the first of the Bank of England's new series of polymer notes, with the £10 and £20 notes to be replaced with polymer designs over the coming

years. The old £5 goes out of circulation in May 2017.

If, after May 2017, retailers find that they still have old £5 notes they can exchange them at the Bank of England.

The new £5 note will feature Winston Churchill, one of the greatest statesmen of all time and the only Prime Minister to win the Nobel Prize for literature.

Bank of England staff held a special roadshow at New Street Station to explain more about the new note, with leaflets and guides for businesses to take away.

The Bank of England's Banknote Education Team is also meeting with retailers across the UK to talk about the New Fiver. Details of these events can be found at thenewfiver.co.uk

Businesses can also download the 'Bank of England Banknotes' app, which is an interactive touch screen guide aimed at people who frequently use banknotes.



BIKE FEST 2016 ROAD CLOSURES WARNING

City centre businesses are being warned about road closures as part of a one-day Bike Festival that will take place in Victoria Square in September.

The festival, part of the city council's Birmingham Cycle Revolution initiative, takes place on Sunday 18th September between 9am-4pm.

The event is open to the general public and is free to enter.

Members of the public will be able to enjoy watching bike entertainment such as the action sports tour show and Street Velodrome as well as taking part in have-a-go sessions such as Street Velodrome, Flatland BMX & strider.

In addition there will be a fully closed-road 2km family ride taking place on the roads around Victoria Square. The family ride will be open to members of the public of all ages and is free to enter. The route opens at 9am and closes at 3.30pm.

The route will start and finish at Victoria Square with the following roads closed to vehicles; Temple Row, Bull St, Moor St Queensway, The Priory Queensway, Colmore Circus Queensway and Colmore Row.

Pedestrian access will be maintained through the use of multiple pedestrian crossings (with stewards) along the route.

Food and soft drink stalls will be present; however, no alcohol will be sold at the event, which is aimed at families, children and cyclists.

For more information and to see what's on visit birmingham-bikefest.com/



The most recent Birmingham Shopping map

NEW SHOPPING MAP OUT IN SEPTEMBER

Retail BID is printing 150,000 new Birmingham Shopping maps to be distributed across transport hubs, hotels, tourist information offices and city centre venues.

The pocket-sized map will be available at the end of September 2016 and will include all the new businesses that have opened in the last year.

All the major retail and leisure destinations, attractions and services will be shown on the map with grid references and an index to help visitors find their favourite shop, café, bar, restaurant or hotel.

Independents and arcades are also highlighted to show visitors where they can find unique and specialist stores, bars and coffee shops.

Retail Birmingham is working again with Bristol-based planners and designers City ID on the new map.

The Big Sleuth



‘We are really excited to welcome the Big Sleuth to Birmingham. The Big Hoot brought the city centre to life and encouraged people of all ages to explore the city centre’

is on its way to city

Retail BID to support massive charity trail and invest £30,000 in Christmas lights

Retail BID Birmingham will help brighten up the city centre over the coming months by supporting two initiatives.

The BID is contributing £30,000 towards the annual Christmas lights and has also thrown its weight behind next summer's sequel to the Big Hoot.

The Big Sleuth is the second trail created by Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity and creative producers Wild in Art and will see over 100 giant sun bear sculptures positioned around Birmingham.

The individually-designed, colourful, 165cm-tall sculptures will inspire locals and tourists to uncover the city's cultural gems and discover areas they may not have previously explored.

The sun bear is the smallest of the world's eight bear species, making it the perfect choice to help the children's hospital raise vital funds when the bears go to auction.

Funded by corporates from around the region, the sculptures will be brought to life by artists to create the visually stunning trail of art.

Michelle McLoughlin, Chief Nursing Officer at Birmingham Children's Hospital, said: "The Big Sleuth is really important to Birmingham Children's Hospital as not only will it inspire civic pride and give families another opportunity to get active on a free and fun day out, but we also hope to raise over half a million pounds to support the pioneering work we do here each day."



The Big Hoot auction raised thousands for charity, while Temper's Re-Tail owl, sponsored by Retail BID, sold for £18,000



Deputy Retail BID manager Assia Sohaib said: "We are really excited to welcome the Big Sleuth to Birmingham. The Big Hoot brought the city centre to life and encouraged people of all ages to explore the city centre, we are sure the Big Sleuth will also be a huge success."

The hospital charity needs the support

of local companies to take up one of several sponsorship packages to allow the trail to cover as many of Birmingham's 'B' postcodes as possible. Packages start from £6,000.

Last year 78 per cent of visitors stated The Big Hoot was their main reason for being in Birmingham. Collectively, these visitors spent an additional £8 million directly as a result.

The 85 large owls raised £508,035 for Birmingham Children's Hospital, exceeding their half-a-million-pound target.

Michael Dunne, founder of the All Saints retail chain, placed the highest bid of the Big Hoot auction, winning Re-Tail, by celebrated Birmingham graffiti artist Temper and sponsored by Retail BID Birmingham, for £18,000.

Ozzy's Owl by Ozzy Osbourne and his friend Graham Frank Wright sold for £12,500.

For further information about The Big Sleuth, or to discuss sponsorship opportunities, visit www.thebigsleuth2017.co.uk



Topshop and River Island both unveiled their new-look flagship stores on the Upper West Mall in 2015



How Bullring is bringing on the changes

General manager Michaela Moore tells Edit how retailers are meeting demands of discerning shoppers with VIP experiences while iconic Centre expands dining offer

In September Bullring will celebrate its 13th birthday which provides the perfect opportunity to take a look back over the last 13 years and reflect upon the changes we've seen at the centre as we have looked to meet the demands of today's discerning shoppers.

Knowing that our shoppers want a fulfilling experience when they visit us, and importantly one that is differentiated from the online shopping world, we have worked hard to implement a number of initiatives that do just this.

Attracting new restaurants to Bullring to expand its dining offer has been a key element. Our eateries have always been popular, particularly during the lunchtime and weekend periods, but we wanted to deliver a wider and more vibrant mix so that our shoppers could also enjoy an evening out with us. The first phase came

with the opening of Spiceal Street in 2011 with Jamie's Italian, Browns, Chaophraya Thai Restaurant and Handmade Burger Co all launching. And most recently we welcomed Bill's, which opened just a few months ago and continues to be a top performer.

Our retailers have also been heavily investing in their stores. Just last year, Topshop and River Island both unveiled their new-look flagship stores on the Upper West Mall.

River Island expanded into a new 23,000sq ft space giving it the second largest store in the UK, behind its Liverpool branch. The concept store boasts large womenswear, menswear and footwear departments, and the largest kidswear department in the brand's portfolio at 3,000sq ft. It also houses a personal shopping suite, the RI Style Studio, which offers customers



Michaela Moore, left, and River Island's concept store interior, above

BULLRING AWARDS IN 2016

- International Council of Shopping Centre's Best Established Centre in Europe
- What's On Readers' award for Best Midlands Shopping Centre
- Keep Britain Tidy Award
- European Gold Standard Parking Award for Centre and Moor Street|Selfridges Car Parks
- BCSC Purple Apple Awards Merit Winner for Strategic Marketing Campaign: Disco Bull Head
- BCSC Purple Apple Awards Merit Winner for Tactical Marketing Communication: Welcome to Grand Central campaign
- Sceptre Awards winner for Commercialisation Innovation

the ultimate VIP experience where they can book to have a one-to-one consultation with the store's personal shopper. The feedback from customers since the new store opened has been very positive and it was recently awarded the Realys Store Design of the Year at Retail Week's 2016 awards.

Topshop has also invested in its shop fit, upsizing into a 36,000 sq ft unit. The expansion saw the store become its third largest in the brand's portfolio and allowed for a Personal Shopping Suite, which offers a number of services ranging from a 30-minute appointment to find the perfect pair of jeans to a 120-minute complete Wardrobe Overhaul.

As one of the UK's most iconic retail destinations we understand the importance of being more than just about shopping. As detailed in a recent piece of insight carried out by Hammerson, we know custom-

ers now have a limitless choice when it comes to parting with their hard earned cash, and our job as landlords is to ensure that the experience in our centre is unmatched online, or anywhere else for that matter. Functional or bulky transactions make sense online or through click and collect, but customers still enjoy the social interaction that comes with a day out at the shops.

The facilities we provide are also key in customers' experience which is why we continue to invest in our award-winning car parks, toilets and our Changing Places facility as well as bringing new soft seating to our Upper East Mall. We recently installed free phone charging points, which have proved extremely popular with customers, and also welcomed parcel delivery service, Doodle, to the Upper West Mall so shoppers can now collect and post parcels when visiting the centre.

An exciting and engaging events schedule is also important to ensure our shoppers keep coming back. This year it includes shopping events such as Your 5, a fashion-focused activity showcasing products from retailers during new season periods, and the hugely popular, Student Sessions, which sees shops and brands from around the centre offering students exclusive discounts and offers.

The newly refurbished LINKSTREET has proved to be a game changer for this part of the centre, already strengthen-

ing our retail offer by providing the ideal space for new urban fashion retail and lifestyle brands to showcase their products in a dynamic pop-up style environment. Located on the connecting route between Bullring and Grand Central, LINKSTREET is anchored by Pretty Green, the clothing brand founded by Liam Gallagher and has also attracted a great mix local and independent retailers, including Birmingham-based homeware shop, Vincent Van Doodle. Its kiosk on LINKSTREET proved to be so successful the brand extended its stay with us.

'The pop-up concept is a great way to keep the centre's retail experience exciting'

To facilitate this dynamic short term leasing strategy we have been working with specialists, Appear Here. The pop-up retailing concept is a great way to keep the centre's retail experience fresh and exciting for our shoppers and importantly it is entirely possible that each trip to LINKSTREET could offer our shoppers with something new each time.

Already this year our hard work is being recognised, with Bullring scooping seven industry awards over the past six months which includes the prestigious International Council of Shopping Centre's Best Established Centre in Europe award as well as being one of the first recipients of a Keep Britain Tidy award recognising the safe, clean and enjoyable experience and environment we provide our customers with. We were also successful at the What's On Readers' Awards as we were named the Best Midlands Shopping Centre.

‘There’s a buzz about Birmingham now that is as strong as when the Bullring was opening. You can feel it’

House of Fraser Store Manager Parminder Sahota talks about the exciting plans at the popular Corporation Street retailer

The buzz around Birmingham is at the same heightened level as when the new-look Bullring opened.

That’s the verdict of House of Fraser Store Manager Parminder Sahota, a born-and-bred Brummie who has experienced first-hand the Second City’s renaissance.

Parminder is currently overseeing exciting developments at his store on Corporation Street – featuring super-brands like Michael Kors and Armani – as one of Birmingham’s most iconic shopping venues readies itself for the festive season.

And as the city centre continues to evolve, he claims there’s rarely been a better time to be involved in Birmingham retail.



“The city is fantastic – these are exciting times,” said Parminder.

“There’s a buzz about Birmingham now that is as strong as when the Bullring was opening. You can feel it.

“As frustrating as it can sometimes be when there’s lots of construction work happening, I see the long-term plan.

“Birmingham’s a great city anyway, but what’s going on now is going to make a great city even greater.

“I’m a Brummie through and through. I knew Birmingham before the recent investment and development began and it’s great to see what’s happening to the city.

“It’s inspiring and shows the character

of we Brummies. We don’t sit still, do we? We’re down to earth, make things happen, grow and adapt.”

Parminder says Retail BID Birmingham has a pivotal role to play during these changing times and is right behind its vision for a proposed third term, from 2017-2022.

The BID is developing a strategy to create a stronger visitor experience by connecting retail, dining and cultural attractions.

Parminder added: “The Retail BID’s work is important for both small and large businesses alike – 100 per cent support its proposed third term.



House of Fraser Store Manager Parminder Sahota and the iconic store's beauty and menswear floors, above

"It's key to supporting the delivery and success of the many developments in and around the city.

"Birmingham has an amazing retail offering which, coupled with the expanding food and leisure choices, can only be a good thing for attracting visitors."

Parminder, currently putting the finishing touches to plans for this year's Santa's Grotto, says shoppers can look forward to new fashion ranges and improved services ahead of the festive period.

"As I'm sure every retailer will say, our immediate focus is getting ready for an amazing Christmas," added Parminder, who has managed House of Fraser's stores in

Oxford Street, Reading and Wolverhampton, among others, during eight years with the company.

"We've got a few exciting things happening which will be in operation by mid-October.

"We're really proud to be introducing a new Michael Kors handbags department on the ground-floor, to complement our Michael Kors footwear range. We believe it will be a great success.

"We're also introducing a new men's Armani concept on the first floor. Currently, we stock Armani formalwear and jeans, but they'll be creating one department which will combine formal and casual wear, giv-

ing customers a broader range to shop.

"We're also launching one of a new womenswear brand on the third floor, called Maison De Nimes, which is another exciting development."

The second floor's buy-and-collect service – an area that has seen huge growth in recent months – is also being improved.

"There are always products and brands we don't sell in this store but stock online," added Parminder.

"A great service we offer customers is the chance to order online, or at one of our instore terminals, and collect the next day.

"We're now implementing plans to further improve the overall customer experience. Customers want more choice, not just regarding products but the way they shop, and want to be rewarded for it which is why our loyalty scheme is proving so popular."

The new Midland Metro Corporation Street stop, directly opposite House of Fraser, has been another plus for a store which offers a wide range of retail options and services.

"We have by far the biggest shoe department in the city and a world of bags and beauty on the ground-floor," added Parminder.

"There's also three floors of fashion, the broadest homeware range in the city, three restaurants, a hair salon, a men's barber's and a very successful dentist.

"It's a one-stop shopping experience delivered by a team who always put the customer first – one of the company's core values.

"The Midland Metro extension in itself is great in terms of better-connecting the city. We're happy it's up and running and are encouraged by the customer feedback.

"House of Fraser's standing in the city is as great as it's ever been.

"The city has evolved and we have a number of great department stores – but that's a good thing. It means visitors to the city centre have a greater choice than ever before."

'We've got a few exciting things happening which will be in operation by mid-October'

It's a drink... with a Twist

Chinese cafe owners talk about the growing popularity of bubble tea in Birmingham

The bubble isn't likely to burst anytime soon for a newly-wed Chinese couple making a living selling one of their homeland's most popular beverages.

Jiaqi Wang and Jingyuan Ni, who met six years ago while studying at University College Birmingham, own the colourful Twist café in Ethel Street they opened at the end of 2013.

Their USP is bubble tea, which originates from Taiwan and comes in two styles – milky and fruity.

Not to be confused with an English-style cuppa, bubble tea is a cold or hot drink, with the milky option similar to a milkshake and the fruity version like juice.

Its signature ingredient is small juice-filled balls that pop open in your mouth and unleash flavours, like mango, apple, kiwi and strawberry.

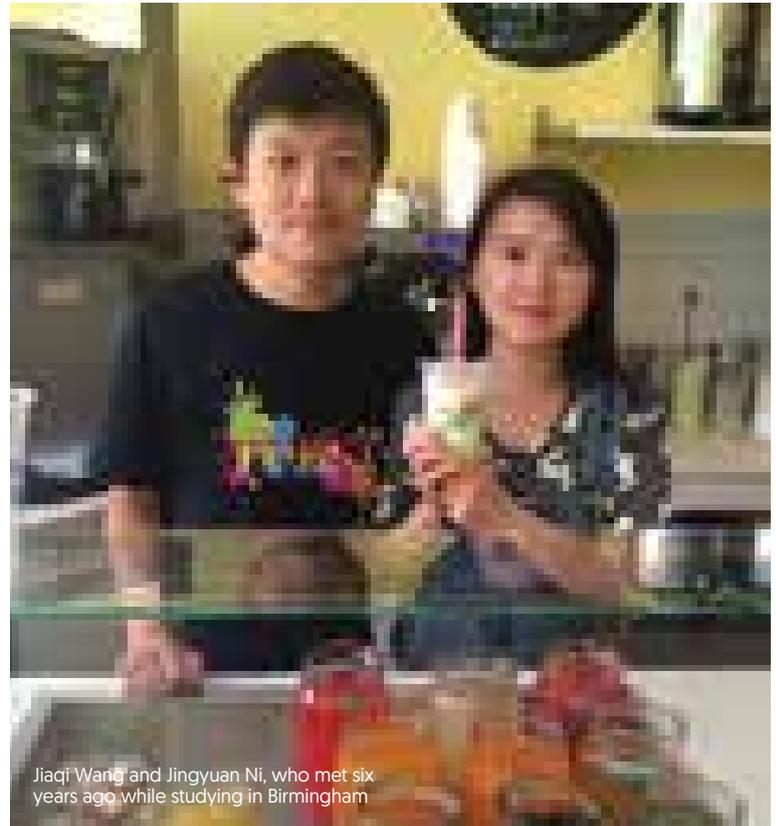
According to Jiaqi, who introduces himself as 'Andy' because locals generally struggle to pronounce his Chinese name, bubble tea shops are as widespread in Asia 'as Costa is over here'.

The drink's popularity in Birmingham is growing, especially among the younger generation.

So much so that the couple, who wed in Andy's hometown of Dalian in February and have a one-year-old son called Xiaolan, are considering opening a second shop near one of the city's university campuses.

Andy said: "After finishing our studies, we wanted to open a shop and considered a coffee house or noodle bar.

"But we decided upon a bubble tea shop as we felt there was a big



Jiaqi Wang and Jingyuan Ni, who met six years ago while studying in Birmingham



Twist's bubble tea options, above, and social media

potential market in Birmingham and the UK in general.

"It's a very young product – it only originated in the 1980s – but it became extremely popular across Asia before catching on in America and latterly Europe.

"New customers come in every day who don't know what bubble tea is. But we explain it to them, give them a sample to try, and the response is always very positive."

Twist's biggest-seller is its refreshing range of fruity bubble teas which, along with the café's fat-free frozen yoghurt with a variety of toppings, are at their most popular during the summer months.

The couple are also considering introducing their homeland's most famous street food to the menu – the Chinese crepe called 'Jianbing'.

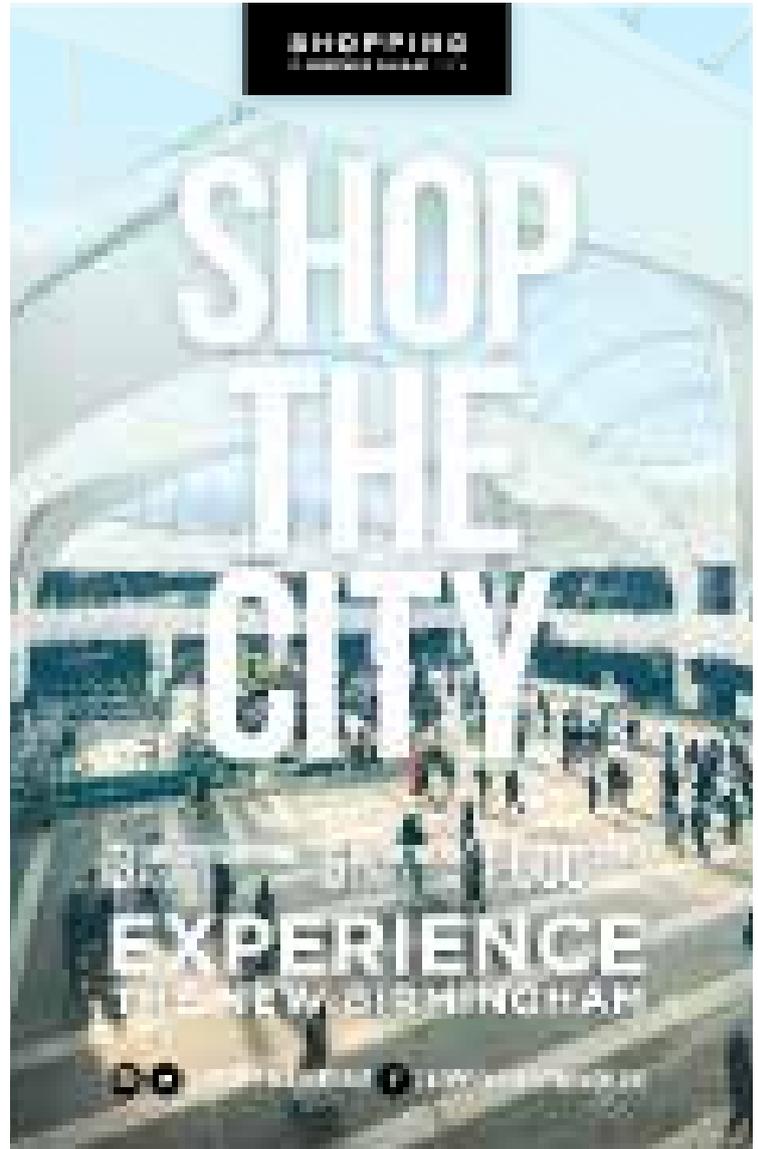
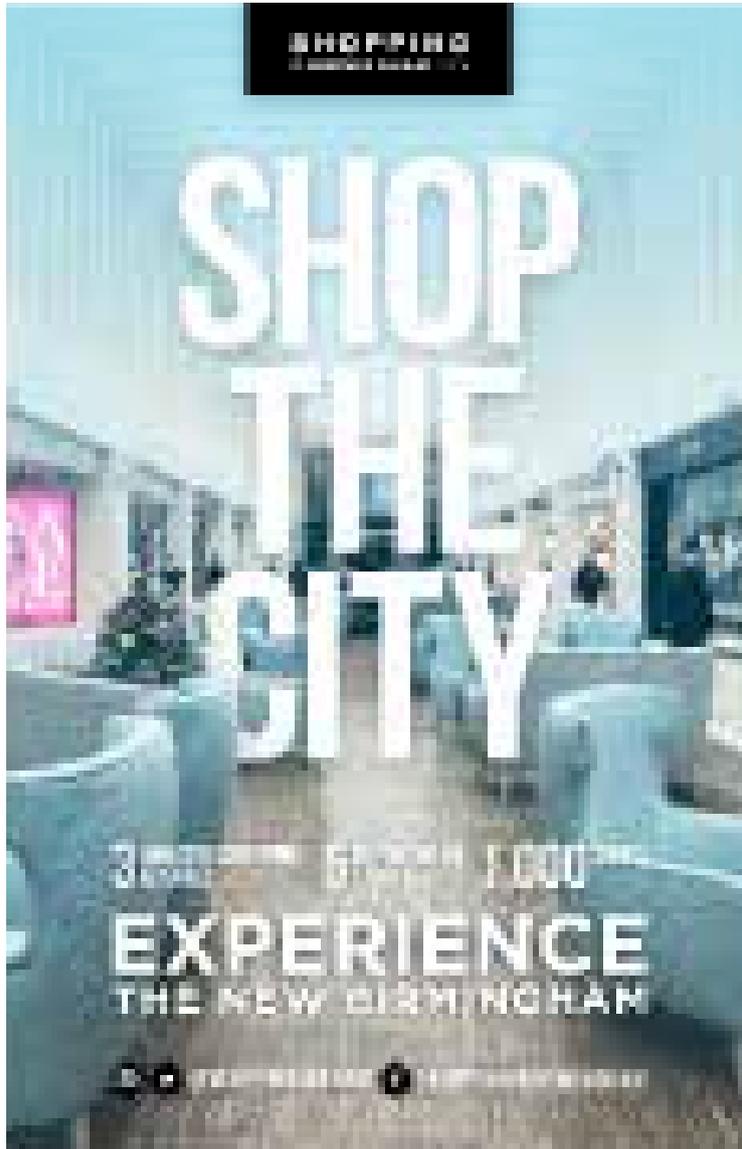
With Ethel Street's array of food and beverage outlets, Andy is determined to make the most of the increasing footfall heading Twist's way.

"Birmingham is flourishing and the next ten years are going to be exciting times for the city," he said.

"We've got fewer people coming to us from the Victoria Square direction due to the diversions caused by the old library being demolished.

"But with the new station, Grand Central and the tram on our doorstep, we're hopeful our area will become increasingly popular."

The couple also sell bubble tea offsite, running stalls at Cannon Hill Park Foodies Festival, Aston University, London Big Foodies Festival, University of Worcester's Biggest Japanese Culture Festival and the Birmingham Thai temple, Wat Santiwongsaram.



Summer lovin'

Extensive marketing campaign targets 60-minute drive-time

City centre shoppers and retailers will have spotted a summer marketing campaign that runs until mid-September.

The Retail BID campaign targets the 60-minute drive-time of the city centre to make sure Birmingham is at the forefront as a key shopping destination in the West Midlands. The campaign includes digital adverts, train panels, outdoor advertising and print advertisements in regional magazines.

New look for public art on John Bright St

Retail BID works with Museums Trust and specialist conservation experts to brighten up booming John Bright Street

A prominent piece of public art has undergone extensive conservation as part of a project to improve the flourishing John Bright Street area of Birmingham city centre.

The sculpture by artist Lee Grandjean, called 'Birmingham Figure', was commissioned in 1987 by the city's Development Department, in collaboration with the John Bright Street Traders Association.

It is part of the portfolio of public artworks managed by Birmingham Museums Trust.

Retail BID worked with the Museums Trust on the conservation project.

The BID is also spearheading a project to deep clean John Bright Street through a programme of pavement jet washing and the installation of a new flower tower to make the area more attractive to visitors.

John Bright Street has seen numerous bars and restaurants open in recent months including The Stable, Cherry Reds, Brew Dog and Turtle Bay, along with plans for a new seafood restaurant called Peninsula Lobster in the historic Futurist Cinema building [see Page 23].

Birmingham-based Mareva Conservation, a practice specialising in the conservation of historic buildings, memorials, sculptures and decorative surfaces, carried out the works on this prominent piece of public art.

The work involved surface cleaning to remove moss and algae growth, dirt,



Retail BID manager Steve Hewlett with Veronika Vlková of Mareva and Paul Barnett, also of Retail BID, at the sculpture

stains, graffiti and gum. Repairs have also been made to the structure involving the removal of old delaminating fills and reinstating areas of missing limestone. Also, an application of a graffiti-proof top coat has been applied to help protect the sculpture for future generations.

The final restoration scheme will be completed in September 2016.

Mareva Director Veronika Vlková said: "I have thoroughly enjoyed undertaking this conservation project and having the opportunity to bring the sculpture back to its original splendid appearance.

"The Birmingham Figure sculpture is



made out of a beautiful Lepine limestone and comprises of three blocks placed on top of one another. It took the artist about 12 months to carve.

“When I first visited the sculpture for an initial assessment it was in a rather poor state. The limestone had suffered deterioration and had also suffered heavily from graffiti. Furthermore, large areas of missing stone were filled with a resinous material and there were multiple coatings applied to disguise the damage.

“The actual work on the piece took our team a total of three weeks with a lot of preparation and research prior to that.

“When we started the treatment the aim of the conservation was to stabilise the sculpture structurally as well as to reinstate the original surface.

“We removed all the old fills and coatings to reveal the stone surface using a number of cleaning methods. With an upmost care it was possible to remove all the fills without affecting the original limestone.

“The new fills are made out of material which is porous and breathable. It imitates the limestone to make the perfect final finish and it is the exact colour as the original stone.”

BID manager Steve Hewlett said: “John

Lee Grandjean's Birmingham Figure during the final stages of restoration



John Bright Street



A Retail BID flower tower

Bright Street is a buzzing, thriving area of the city centre with some great bars and restaurants and we want it to look welcoming and appealing to visitors and residents during the day and evening, which is why we were keen for the conservation of Lee Grandjean's important piece of public art as part of wider cleaning schemes for the street.”

A Birmingham Museums Trust spokesperson added: “Birmingham Museums Trust is delighted to be working with Retail Birmingham to give this area of the city centre a new lease of life. Restoring the sculpture will allow it to be enjoyed by locals and be a fitting welcome to visitors from New Street.”



The new image of Birmingham city centre taken mid-July for Britain from the Air shows Bullring and Selfridges in the foreground, Grand Central in the centre and Broad Street, Brindleyplace and Edgbaston in the distance

Copyright Above All Images / Britain from the Air



Tree-lined New Street runs through the centre of this image,

Air raising images

A passer-by enjoys Britain from the Air during its unveiling in Victoria Square



Birmingham city centre came alive with colour this summer after being chosen to host a prestigious street photography exhibition.

Britain From The Air, which features 100 giant aerial photographs, swooped into the city centre in mid-July for a two-month stay to give added appeal for summer shoppers and tourists.

And such was its popularity, the exhibition was extended until September 11 to give visitors more time to see the stunning photographs.

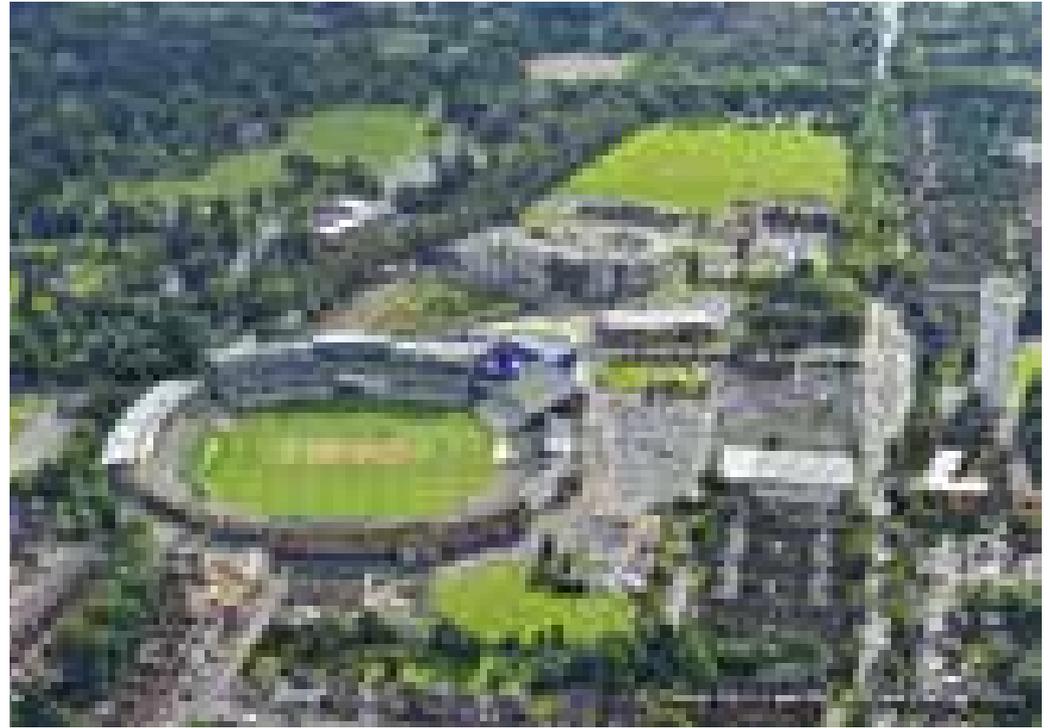
New images of the city centre were also

commissioned to show how the skyline is changing by the day with large-scale regeneration projects.

Retail BID Birmingham played a key role in bringing the exhibition to the city after securing the required sponsorship.

The exhibition, free to the public and accessible 24 hours a day, showcases breath-taking and thought-provoking landscapes while telling the story of the UK's geography and history.

Britain From The Air is a fun way for people of all ages, especially families, to learn about the country's history via self-



on display as part of Britain from the Air
 Copyright Above All Images / Britain from the Air

World-famous Edgbaston Stadium, home to Test cricket since the early 1900s, and Cannon Hill Park in Edgbaston
 Copyright Above All Images / Britain from the Air

delight city visitors

guided walks. The trail can be picked up at any point and each photo is captioned with interesting facts covering issues surrounding the man-made features and environmental and geological changes that have created our landscape today.

The exhibition, described by organisers as 'three years in the making', is a joint-project between street gallery pioneers Wecommunic8, the Royal Geographical Society and Craghoppers outdoor clothing, supported by Retail BID.

Steve Hewlett, Retail BID manager, said: "The latest images are simply stunning

and offer fascinating new views of a city centre that is changing by the day. Despite taking shots back in March the change was so drastic we had to re shoot them again at the end of July to reflect this.

"The stand-out for me is the work on Central Library as the new image shows just how quickly the old building is being taken down to be replaced by the Paradise scheme.

"We hope the new photographs give the visitors to Britain from the Air a chance to reflect on how a dynamic, evolving city like Birmingham never stands still."



A mum and her son stop to admire the photography near New Street station



Somerset House on Temple Street

NEW RESTAURANTS FOR TEMPLE STREET

The booming bar and dining scene around Temple Street and Bennett's Hill could be about to welcome two more venues.

Plans have been revealed to renovate Somerset House, in Temple Street, to create two new ground floor restaurants and refurbish the vacant office space above, previously home to law firm Shakespeares.

The building currently houses beauty salon Serenity and most recently Temple Street Social, which closed down last summer.

London-based owner Circle Property plans to revamp the ground floor area and knock through the units so the new restaurants stretch back to Needless Alley at the rear of the building.

Somerset House, at 34-40 Temple Street, was constructed in 1936 for a company called Somerset Buildings and was designed by Birmingham-based architecture practice Essex and Goodman.

Circle Property also owns nearby Cheltenham House, at 14-16 Temple Street, which houses The Botanist and offices above, including Retail BID.



Easy does it for city gym goers

Corporation Street club is hoping for increased visibility with passing trams, explains manager Paul Grice

One of the city centre's biggest gyms is in good shape for the future after the launch of the Midland Metro extension.

Paul Grice, Club Manager of EasyGym Birmingham City Centre, believes the new route will be of benefit to members in the long term as the tram passes the Corporation Street building.

"After all the recent street works, we're hoping in the long term it will be to our benefit," Paul told Edit magazine.

"We still get people who visit us saying 'I didn't know this was here' and that's

heartbreaking to have such great facilities that people don't even know about.

"But with the tram going up and down Corporation Street there will be much more visibility for us."

EasyGym Birmingham City Centre has an extensive selection of free weights, cardio kit and industry-leading classes from Les Mills and Insanity.

Thirty-five-year-old Paul, from Harborne, has spent his working life in a variety of fitness-related roles. He explained how 'hand on heart' this is the best gym he has



Paul Grice, left, among the club's latest cardio equipment and a passing Metro tram, above

'My benchmark is 'would my mum come here and would she be comfortable?' I think she would'

worked at. "I've worked for lots of different companies over the past 15 years and I always say to people, hand on heart, this is the best gym I've ever worked at and I know, 100 per cent, I would join," he said.

"It's got everything you need. We've got a great team that makes people feel welcome.

"My benchmark is 'would my mum come here and would she be comfortable?' I think she would.

"That's the kind of mentality I want to get across to the staff here."

The EasyGym fitness chain is now 15-strong and spans the country, with two clubs in Birmingham – Corporation Street and Kings Heath.

Paul believes the EasyGym approach is changing clients' perceptions of using gyms.

"There's a big perception of gyms, especially when they've got the broad range of equipment like ours, that they're full of super fit people," said Paul.

"That's not the case. There are people of all shapes and sizes and it's nice to be a part of that.

"We have 12 staff here, which includes a couple of personal trainers. Although they work independently they're very much part of the team and we're quite proud of that."

EasyGym on Corporation Street has a broad and mixed clientele, from 9-5 office workers, to students.

"Because of where we are, we have a large 'corporate' and office membership with people working routines around their 9-5 days," said Paul.

"We also have a lot of students here and obviously in the city we have a lot more residential development these days so our membership is quite broad."

Paul explained how the fitness industry has changed enormously in recent years,

and that members are 'much more savvy'.

"Gym consumers know they don't have to go too far to find a deal that works for them, so what we try to do is try to find the balance of offering quality equipment and service at the right price. We've got that mix working well.

"Some gyms do charge a lower fee but the quality and level of support is not to the same standard."

Paul is keen for EasyGym Birmingham City Centre to strengthen ties with the local business community and loans bikes and other equipment for charity challenges and wellness sessions.

"We have link ups with the likes of Barclays and Legal & General for corporate events, where we've visited them and held wellness sessions," he said.

"Then on the back of that we can offer an incentive to become a member of the club."

And what about fast-changing trends in the fitness industry?

"High-intensity workouts are extremely popular here, largely because of the office demographic with people pushed for time.

"People like to have a short, sharp blast and go away feeling good. You can get results in short visits, but I would always recommend mixing up routines."

Meet the Maplin Yodas!



Maplin Temple Street

Tech experts enjoying increased sales, footfall and store standards

The force is strong at Maplin's Temple Street store.

Store manager Kath Whitehouse and her team have increased sales, footfall, conversion and standards over the past few months.

"Our USP is our technical knowledge," said Kath, who has worked for Maplin for ten years but only moved to the Temple Street store in April.

"My team has a diverse range of skills and knowledge and there doesn't seem to be anything about tech they don't know between them. It's like having a shop full of little Yodas!"

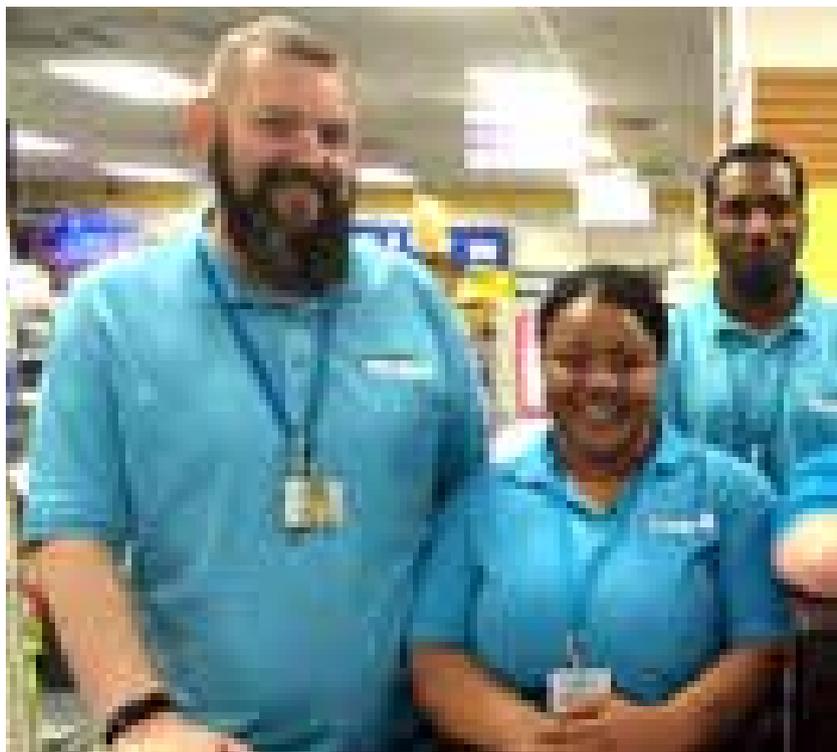
Maplin is renowned for customer service, with a market-leading net promoter score [customer satisfaction measurement] that eclipses even Apple's.

"Once we get customers through the door, we can showcase our expertise and provide solutions for all their tech needs," she said.

"We're number one for service in the industry and are very proud of that. My vision for the store is to make it a great place to work – for colleagues to be engaged and customers to receive the best service possible, at all times."



Kath standing in front of the bus tickets



Kath also operates as a life coach in her spare time and has used some of her skills to implement motivational tools to boost the team and store's performance.

One such method was an exercise she picked up from a book called 'The Energy Bus'.

"I gave each staff member a bus ticket and a letter outlining my vision for the store and asked them to come on a journey with me to make the store and their performance the best it could be," explained Kath.

"I asked them to return the bus ticket if they wanted to join me on that journey.

"It was mainly symbolic, but if they returned the ticket, I knew they'd support me and each other. They all returned their tickets and their commitment has been extraordinary."

Maplin's array of new products and

services has also contributed to the store's recent success.

New installation services for TVs, aerials, satellite dishes, CCTV cameras and alarms have proved popular and are expected to grow significantly in the coming months.

Although Maplin's core range of

electronic components, networking, hard drives and cables remains its biggest seller, introducing consumers to the increasingly popular 'smart home' market is a key

focus. "Being able to control everything using your smart phone is our biggest growth area," added Kath. "Connected homes' is a massively growing industry and we want to introduce the public to a world where all of this tech just works for them, without any hassle.

"People can now turn their home heating on from the train, switch the lights on or off while they're out or even

Being able to control everything using your smart phone is our biggest growth area

Cinema to become seafood restaurant



The Maplin team, from left to right, are: Kath (second right) with Dave, Jules, Shaun and Tom

view CCTV footage while on holiday.

"Security is another big area for us. People want peace of mind to keep their homes and families safe. With the latest smart apps, you can get alerts on your mobile about any incidents.

"We provide installation services for both domestic and business customers. We have new finance options to help spread the cost and can set up business accounts."

Kath is hoping the store's imminent new-look front will also pay further dividends. "The landlord has invested significant sums in upgrading the offices upstairs and our store front will undergo a similar revamp so it is uniform with the rest of the building," she said.

"This will hopefully have a big impact on attracting new customers into the store. Other aims including maximising sales through networking so more businesses are aware of our services and can better understand how we can help them."



The former Futurist Cinema in John Bright Street will open as Peninsula Lobster this autumn

A seafood restaurant is due to open in the former Futurist Cinema in John Bright Street.

Peninsula Lobster will open in September after a £700,000 restoration of the building.

Owners of the restaurant said they were planning to use the historic features of the building when creating a private lounge, bar, separate restaurant, a function suite upstairs as well as a balcony bar where diners can enjoy cocktails.

The cinema, across the road from the Alexandra Theatre, dates back to the

early 1900s and officially opened in July 1919 as one of the oldest cinemas in the country.

It was the first cinema in Birmingham to have curtains and to screen 'talkies'. In the 1920s the city's Alexandra theatre-goers soon became attracted to watching entertainment on the big screen, offered by The Futurist Cinema.

Peninsula Lobster co-owner William Sui told the Birmingham Mail: "The previous lease holders had done a lot of work to hide the original features of the building so when we got

the keys earlier this year it was looking very ugly.

"We've done a lot of work to restore some of the features such as the high ceilings. We have created a very big restaurant but even so we had to create a partition wall and section off the main cinema auditorium."

Peninsula Lobster is described as a high-end seafood restaurant which will serve sharing seafood platters of lobster, crab, creole fish, prawns, calamari, mussels, a catch of the day dish and also steak and chicken dishes.

Suite success for the historic Macdonald Burlington hotel

142-year-old venue aiming to become city centre's leading conference hotel

Macdonald Burlington Hotel plans to build on its reputation as Birmingham's most well-connected hotel by becoming the city centre's leading conference hotel.

The opening of the revamped New Street Station, Grand Central, John Lewis and new Midland Metro stop – all right on the doorstep – have contributed to a successful 12 months for the 142-year-old venue.

And with a fellow historic building, the nearby former Midland Bank building, being refurbished to former glories by tech giant Apple, further business opportunities appear to be around the corner.

In keeping with its developing environment, Macdonald Burlington Hotel has exciting plans of its own, with refurbishment projects planned over the next 12 months.

Bedrooms are set to undergo a make-over, blending period features with a modern twist to appeal to the leisure and corporate markets.

Plans are also being drawn up to refurbish the first-floor bar and restaurant with public areas also receiving attention.

Newly-promoted general manager James Bee now wants to capitalise on the hotel's business growth by establishing it as the go-to venue for meetings, events and conferences.

"We have a range of function suites available for large and small events, with 16 flexible and well-equipped suites," said James.

"The hotel retains a refined ambience from its history hosting heads of state. It's a beautiful Victorian building with character



Newly-promoted general manager James Bee

'People come here because they want to stay somewhere with history and character.. we have plenty of that'

and charm. Our Horton Suite can accommodate up to 500 delegates and has arguably the largest banqueting capacity at any Birmingham city centre hotel.

"You'd have to go to the ICC or Town Hall to book a bigger space and our target over the next five years is to establish the Burlington as the leading conference and banqueting hotel in the city centre.

"We've already got the transport links and layout and I also have an excellent team to work with. They are continually complemented on TripAdvisor for their friendliness and high-quality service."

He added: "Apple opening such a big

store on our doorstep will be a big win for Birmingham."

James has overseen many notable successes since joining Macdonald Burlington Hotel four years ago, including a 30 per cent increase in conference room sales while bedroom sales have risen by over 20 per cent since 2013.

The hotel also achieved the highest level of customer satisfaction two years ago when it achieved the BDRC Continental VenueVerdict Gold accreditation for each quarter.

The venue also plays an active role in the community. Alongside Macdonald



With a modern take on period charm, this is how the Macdonald Burlington's refurbished rooms will look



Hotels regional managing director Derek McDonagh, James ran the Great Birmingham 10k in May while blindfolded to raise almost £2,000 for Queen Alexandra College for people with visual impairment and other disabilities.

It all means one of the city's oldest and most iconic hotels is as relevant as ever.

"I don't think anyone can argue that we're the best located hotel in Birmingham city centre," added James.

"Our guests couldn't be in a better position for shopping or transport. If you walk from our doorstep and immediately catch a train, you can be in London in under 90 minutes.

"With all the nearby developments our city centre location is better than ever.

"We noticed a definite impact last autumn when the entrance to New Street moved around and Grand Central opened. It's had a huge impact on the hotel and local businesses."

The hotel serves 'Birmingham spring water' from its own unique water source – a borehole deep beneath the hotel where underground tunnels, once used to distribute mail across the city, still exist.

Laurel and Hardy are listed among its many celebrity guests, while the hotel was also the venue for Enoch Powell's infamous Rivers of Blood speech 48 years ago.

The Horton family has owned the Burlington – originally called The Midland Hotel – since it opened in 1874 and James claims its rich history will be respected during the planned refurbishment work.

"The hotel's not a modern build so, with anything we do, we will always be respectful of the period," he added.

"That doesn't mean, however, that we've got to kit it out with antique furniture. We can link period and modern to suit current markets.

"Having said that, a lot of people come here because they want to stay somewhere with history and character, and we have got plenty of that."

Mix of new and old in stunning Cannon Street

An eclectic mix of retailers, listed architecture and thestudio meeting spaces with its 'hidden gem' roof garden are helping Cannon Street keep up appearances



Julian Kettleborough,
Commercial Director at
thestudio, above

The new and the old are working in harmony along one of Birmingham's most picturesque thoroughfares, which continues to grow in popularity.

Cannon Street boasts an eclectic mix of retail and business offerings housed in traditional buildings, many of Victorian origin, which have been extensively modified and extended.

A key focal point is thestudio, which has grown into the Caxtongate Phase One development that stretches from Fore Street to New Street and features two listed buildings.

thestudio offers city centre meeting rooms and conference venues – including practical and creative settings – for corporate and private functions.

Its impressive array of 20 spaces, across four floors, caters for anything from training sessions, conferences, networking and corporate events to parties, wedding receptions and dinners for up to 200 people.

thestudio's hidden gem is its roof garden with accompanying communal business lounge, an unexpected haven in the middle of a bustling city.

Julian Kettleborough, Commercial Director at thestudio, said: "We've got a little bit of something for everyone.

"We work with a diverse range of clients, from local corporate businesses, service industries, local government and the NHS to private customers organising a special occasion.

"We have practical spaces for more traditional events but also appeal to clients who are maybe looking for 'a bit of





Left: eness's new cosmetics store and thestudio's meeting spaces offering 'a bit of Google' for the day

Google' for the day. "Google's headquarters is renowned for being innovative and that's an experience we offer, enabling clients to collaborate and get the most out of their day.

"We pride ourselves in being creative. People just don't expect to see a roof terrace, which is ideal for wedding receptions and networking events.

"There certainly aren't many spaces in the city centre where you can bring your work colleagues and have a BBQ."

thestudio's success in Birmingham has enabled the company to branch out into four other major cities, with its newest venue opening in Glasgow in September.

"We have become recognised in the city as an imaginative venue but we're always looking to let more businesses know about what we offer," added Julian.

"People who regularly walk past our front door are still often amazed when they come and take a look inside.

"We're in a great location. To truly appreciate Cannon Street, you need to look above the store fronts. Some of the buildings are really stunning."

Cannon Street was the home of the Birmingham Post & Mail printing house until the early 1960s and was once graced by legendary Grand National winner Red Rum for the opening of Coral bookmakers.

Back to the present and the newest neighbour to founder tenants like Slaters



Menswear and Toni & Guy in Caxtongate Phase One is recently-opened eness cosmetics.

The new retail brand of luxurious and premium body care products has chosen Birmingham and, more specifically Cannon St, to launch its first store.

eness cosmetics Managing Director Justin Clohessy said the location within the Retail BID Birmingham zone had been carefully selected after a year researching Britain's cities.

"With its central location and diversity of culture and ethnic demographic, Birmingham quickly stood out as the ideal location," said Justin.

"The eness cosmetics range has been specially developed to offer something for every type of skin and colour and it felt like a natural fit.

"I spent a great deal of time in Birmingham and felt very excited about the Cannon Street outlet being our first, as well as our office. During this time, we also struck a real affinity with the City, so it just felt right.

"Lower Cannon Street has some big name retailers like Jigsaw, White Stuff and the soon-to-open Bravissimo, and it also is the thoroughfare to the financial quarters, ensuring daily footfall."

eness cosmetics promises affordable, high-quality products, for all skin types, that have completed the company's 'Love Your Earth' ethical and sustainable journey, which ensures they contain no harmful ingredients to the user or planet.

"We only opened early August but we're delighted with the response so far," added Justin. "Footfall into the store is building and word is quickly getting out that our products are the best around – but at a price well below that of the bigger brands.

"We hope to open our second store in Birmingham prior to Christmas, as we believe it to be right for our brand."

We're working together to make the city prosper

M&S High Street Store Manager and Retail BID board member Paul Denning explains how bosses are sharing ideas to drive footfall and improve the visitor experience

Having launched and led department stores across the UK, Paul Denning returns to Birmingham brimming with ideas to help the city centre prosper.

Paul has worked for M&S for more than 18 years in a variety of shop-floor and management roles and has opened new branches in Scotland, the north west, Malvern and Bristol.

He returned to M&S High Street in October 2015 as Store Manager, having worked there 16 years ago.

"It's been really enjoyable being back," said the 44-year-old.

"I worked in the High Street store back in 2000 when Bullring was being built.

"To come back after all these years and see the city the way it is today I was completely taken aback.

"There are some parts of the city that are very familiar but other parts that have changed significantly such as Bullring and Grand Central.

"It's a really exciting time to be in the city."

Paul sits on the board of Retail BID and is keen to collaborate with the city council and other store managers for the benefit of the city centre.

"All the department store managers met

for lunch and one thing that's clear is that we're on a journey in Birmingham.

"Having all the big stores within walking distance is a huge attraction and we have a job to do as retailers in making sure the outer areas of Birmingham such as Solihull and Coventry are aware we have that presence in the city centre.

"That's our biggest challenge."

Paul welcomes a proposal as part of Retail BID's proposed third term to build on the city centre 'visitor experience', which encourages shoppers to dine,

enjoy cultural centres and spend longer in the city centre.

"On top of the retail offer you have the food and leisure attractions. There's lots to leverage on so we're doing work as a group of managers to work on this.

"We want to build that relationship. Between us we have a lot of experience and hundreds of ideas to drive that footfall."

Paul believes accessibility into the city centre is something that needs addressing.

"I still get people saying to me 'it took me hours to get here'. That's a real issue," he said. "We're working closely with the BID and the council to get us to a position where the city centre becomes a lot more accessible.



"Once people get here they're really happy, it's just the getting here that's the problem."

M&S High Street neighbours the Primark Pavilions development and shares four entrances with the building, which are now closed for works to begin.

The retailer does not plan to re-open the entrances to the new Primark as the store benefits from three main entrances at the front of the building in addition to the rear entrance from Moor Street, which Paul describes as 'sufficient'.

"I'm excited about Primark opening next door. I see it as an opportunity," said Paul.

"I think it will drive footfall, even though it's a different style of customer.

"The challenge will be during the building phase and how we minimise disruption over the next 12 to 18 months while they carry out the work."

M&S Store Manager Paul Denning, above, and architects' impressions for the new Primark Pavilions, which neighbours M&S, above left





He believes retailers need to be more inventive to make sure traditional high street stores do not fall victim to online growth.

"We're going through a huge change in how people shop," he said.

"A large part of that means more people turn to online, but we still have our core shoppers.

"Our footfall to this store is between

90,000-100,000 each week and it's still a big driver for us.

"As we become more inventive with click and collect or next-day delivery, it's a no-brainer that is the route we're going down – to make shopping more accessible and easier.

"There is still a huge amount of our customers who want to come in and try the products, and to feel the products.

'There is still a huge amount of our customers who want to come in and try the products'

"And also women love to shop! There's something in the social side of it all; coming in, having a browse with friends, going for a coffee or a bit of lunch, you will never lose that.

"Our food business continues to grow and our ability to introduce new products and innovate is second to none.

"I'm biased, but the food is phenomenal!"

Global cuisines on offer at Martineau Place



Ever-expanding food choices include global tastes from Caribbean, Europe and Middle East



La Vera's wood-fired pizza oven offers an authentic taste of Italy

The hunt for global cuisines has got shoppers making a beeline for a Birmingham shopping centre.

The ever-expanding food choices on offer at Martineau Place include tasty treats from the Caribbean, mainland Europe and the Middle East, plus a specialist vegan café.

But it's not just the eclectic mix of retail and food outlets that is attracting customers to the centrally-located shopping mall.

Martineau Place has also become a hive of activity for worldwide gaming craze Pokemon Go!

The hustle and bustle of a typical shopping day around the centre is regularly punctuated by whoops of joy as 'trainers' catch Pokemon on their smartphones.

"We've had quite a few more people

coming into Martineau Place because of Pokemon Go – it's encouraging people to take a look around," revealed Centre Manager Michele Jones.

"The last time I counted, we'd got Poke-Stops at our Corporation Street entrance, Rush Hair, Greggs, Burger King and under the canopies in the inner mall. I only know this because I've ended up playing it myself!"

Catching Pokemon can work up an appetite and the array of independent food outlets located in the inner mall justify Martineau Place's 'Eat and Taste the World' tagline.

The wood-fired oven pizzas at La Vera offer an authentic taste of Italy and have been earning rave reviews, including within the esteemed column inches of The Guardian.



Pride of place within Perugia-born Rakan Kteishat's restaurant is the £25,000 Mam oven – nicknamed the Ferrari of pizza ovens.

Shoppers can sample Lebanese food at Shawarma City, Caribbean cuisine at Talk of the Town and Portuguese dishes at Nata Café. Vegan-friendly options can be found at 3 Threes Coffee Lounge.

"We've got some really diverse eating options," added Michele.

"We've got a nice blend of bigger chains like Burger King, KFC, Greggs and Caffè Nero and independents like Wok & Go and Yum Yum Chicken.

"La Vera sources fresh ingredients from Italy and has been getting excellent reviews.

"The independents have got extremely loyal customers who keep coming back because they like what they eat.



"It's just a case of getting the word out as much as possible about the great food they're serving."

Built in the 1960s and redeveloped in 2001, one of Martineau Place's biggest misconceptions is vast in size.

Originally developed in the 1960s and refurbished in 2001, Martineau Place is much bigger than it first appears, spanning the prime city centre area bordered by Corporation Street, Bull Street, High Street and Union Street.

Boots and the Staybridge Suites Hotel are the biggest tenants within the centre's 404,000 square feet of retail space.

Other stores like Sainsbury's, Deichmann, Poundland, CEX and Argos underline Martineau Place's 'Shop, Eat, Stay' billing.

"We've got a little bit of everything," added Michele, who is also excited by the transport revolution taking place in Birmingham.

"The new tram route in Corporation Street is now making us accessible to shoppers from Wolverhampton and Birmingham's outer suburbs."

Following the recent transfer of Unis Internet Lounge from Pavilions to Martineau Place, further developments are afoot.

A statement from asset management company Ellandi said: "We are in advance stages of feasibility studies into reconfiguring areas of the scheme for three or four tenants who have expressed keen interest."

The Bull Street view of Martineau Place, left, and Centre Manager Michele Jones, below left

FAMILY FUN AT CENTRE

Martineau Place puts on events, like family fun days, to attract footfall – and one such venture earned the centre a Guinness World Record.

In 2014, staff joined forces with the Help Harry Help Others charity to create the longest chain of beads ever made, stretching a whopping 9,500-metres.

"It was something Harry Moseley had wanted to achieve, so it was a proud moment to help his mum Georgie pull it off and raise money in memory of such an amazing, selfless boy," said Michele.



Bulling In love with the new Kate Spade collection that's just arrived at @cadenzza_jewellery.



Liquorstore_est New drop of Women's Clarks Original Trigenics for AW16! Here is the black suede version.



twistcafeuk Welcome PokemonGo players to Twist. We have #pokemonstop in Ethel Street. Play it with a #bubbletea

142

Years the Macdonald Burlington Hotel has been accommodating Birmingham city centre visitors

STORY:
PAGES 24&25



24

HOURS
A DAY

Visitors can see the stunning Britain from the Air street photography exhibition

STORY:
PAGES 18&19

23,000

SQ
FT

The size of River Island's expanded flagship store at Bullring

STORY:
PAGES 10&11



RETAIL BID
BIRMINGHAM

Edit

IN NUMBERS

£700,000

Being spent transforming the former Futurist Cinema into a seafood restaurant

STORY: PAGE 23



27

OCTOBER
2016

Deadline for the opportunity to vote on the renewal of Retail BID for a further five years

STORY: PAGES 4&5



1987

The year John Bright Street sculpture 'Birmingham Figure' by Lee Grandjean was originally unveiled. The artwork has been restored for future generations

STORY: PAGES 16&17