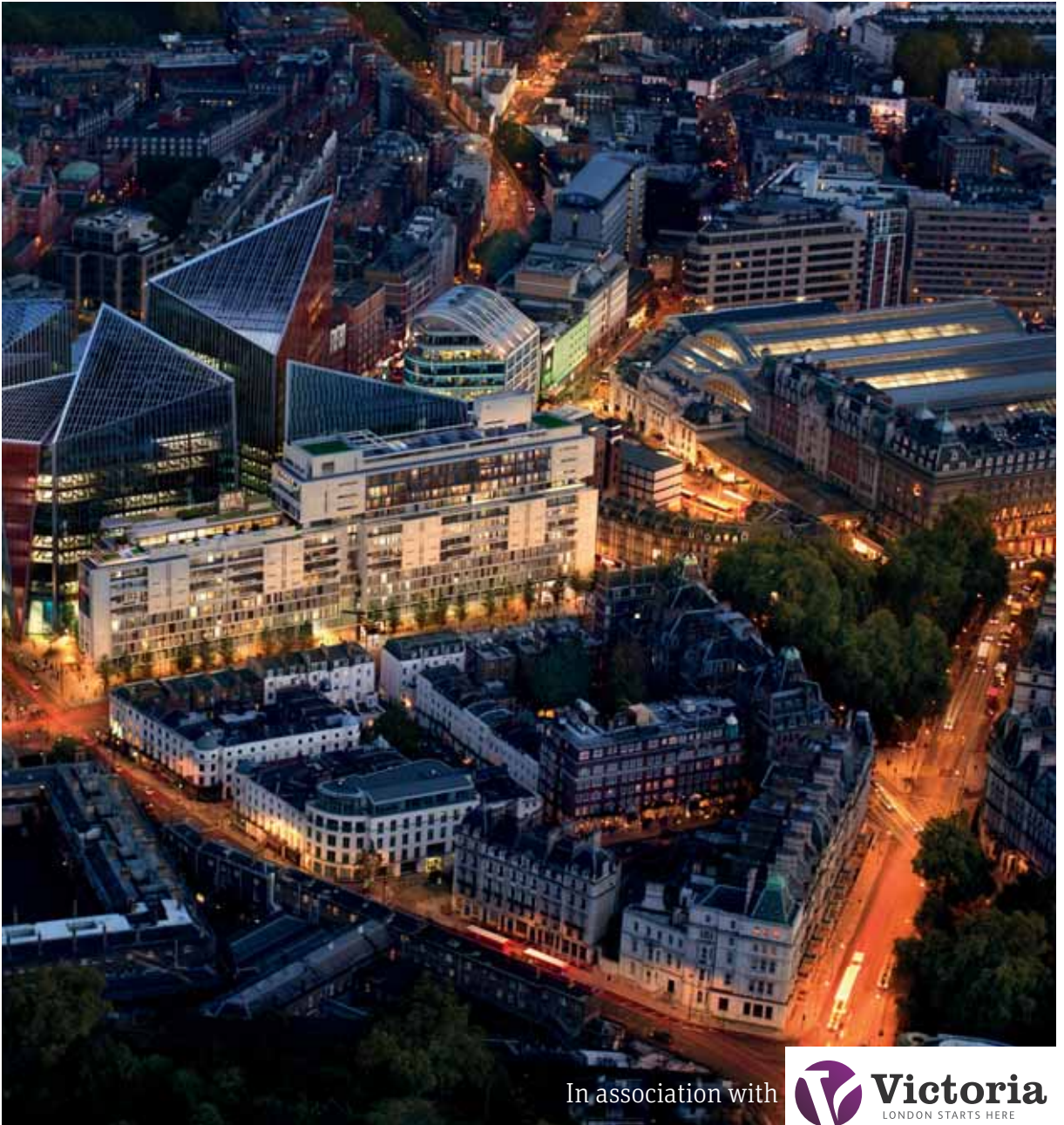


Building the new business capital

Developing districts to accelerate progress in London



In association with



Victoria
LONDON STARTS HERE

BY THE NUMBERS

Victoria transformed

More than **£4bn's** worth of investment is unlocking new office, commercial and residential space in Victoria.

Victoria supports around **43,000** jobs.

The area generates an estimated **£3.1bn** in gross value added annually and **£1bn** in tax revenues.

Victoria is projected to add **1,300** jobs per year up to 2036, bringing in an extra £100m in GVA and £30m in tax revenues per year.

Just **2,900** people live in Victoria – half the borough average of population density – and 39 per cent of residents are over 45, making the population older than much of London.

Victoria is of great strategic importance to London: an estimated **75 per cent** of station users travel on to jobs elsewhere across the city.

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City Hall and BIDs can work together to promote London

Rajesh Agrawal, deputy mayor for business, argues for closer ties between the Mayor's office and Business Improvement Districts for the economic health of the capital



The Mayor's ambition for London is to ensure that every Londoner shares the benefits of living in this great city, that as the prosperity of our economy rises, so do living standards, and that "good growth" is promoted and encouraged in all sectors and places.

Affordable and quality housing, clean air, better and reliable transport, employment opportunities and safer places, are central to the Mayor's vision for "good growth".

London's Business Improvement Districts can play a key role in this agenda. Come autumn 2018 there will be 60 BIDs based in 19 London boroughs across high streets, town centres and industrial areas. The BID network has huge potential to help shape economic development and we at City Hall are keen to ensure we actively engage with this vast business community to achieve the Mayor's ambition.

Despite having existed for a relatively brief time, BIDs have become a driving force in many parts of London where the changes they have instigated have had an incredibly positive impact. Throughout London, BIDs have made significant and tangible differences to areas like increasing footfall, improving staff retention, place-based marketing and promotion, and facilitating business networking. Many BIDs are going even further, and leading a whole host of innovative projects. I want to foster an ever stronger relationship

between City Hall and BIDs, not least because their potential to innovate can help ensure the Mayor's objectives are achieved.

In April 2018, I participated in the *New Statesman's* round table on local government leadership, which was co-organised in partnership with Victoria BID. At that the event I highlighted that through the Mayor's ambition and the work of the London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP), there are many areas through which our relationship with BIDs can be strengthened. In particular I would like to see how we could join efforts to support London's small and medium sized business community through the Growth Hub; the expansion of affordable work and commercial space; developing exciting and innovative employment initiatives; and engaging businesses who are ready to export to new markets through the Mayor's International Business Programme.

In the Autumn the Mayor will be launching the Good Work Standard, an initiative that aims to help London become the best place in the world to work, as well as the best to do business, by helping employers to adopt best practice and achieve high standards in areas such as fair pay, workplace diversity, flexible working, health and wellbeing, ongoing skills development and employee voice. I hope also to work with BIDs in promoting these aims which bring benefits to both businesses and employers, and to our city's economic and social strength.

The potential of BIDs is significant and as the number of BIDs increases in London, the greater and stronger our relationship has to be. I look forward to welcoming BIDs back to City Hall for our next BIDs summit, following the success of last year's event.

Victoria BID and the *New Statesman* hosted a series of timely round tables to create a dialogue between businesses and key public bodies on the challenges and opportunities facing London

Creating a seat at the table for London business



Victoria is changing. Historically, the area has been one of transience; people passing through on their way to somewhere else. But with the considerable investment and improvements made in the area in recent years, it is changing. As the Westminster City Council City Plan stated at the end of 2016: “Victoria needs to become a place, not simply a place to pass through.” That vision is starting to become a reality.

To strengthen links between private and public bodies, Victoria BID and the *New Statesman* hosted a Local Government Leadership series. A round table was held in February on policing, attended by Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime Sophie Linden, Metropolitan Police representatives and Victoria BID business members. The attendees discussed how businesses could communicate more fluidly

with the police and local authorities to make themselves, their employees and London safer in the face of terrorist threats, anti-social behaviour and petty crime.

Victoria BID is eager to advance the pro-business agenda that is so crucial to the development of the central London. For the final event in this series, Victoria BID and the *New Statesman* hosted another round table in April, inviting their members to meet with the deputy mayor for business, Rajesh Agrawal. The participants discussed how the private and public sector, particularly governing bodies, could work together to improve the London experience for businesses, and help to grow the capital’s thriving and diverse economy.

Agrawal kicked off the discussion with some opening remarks, outlining his key responsibilities as the person tasked with helping “the

Mayor to understand the needs and requirements of businesses based in London”. He was keen to discuss “how we can make it more equitable ... 27 per cent of London’s population is classed as being ‘poor’, which is shameful.”

The chief executive of Victoria BID, Ruth Duston, provided the participants with a brief overview of the “transformation” of the Victoria area – “£4bn of investment in the last decade” – and the significant role of the BID in that process. “We are the custodians of the area and the key driver behind a lot of the changes.” Duston wished to field opinions on Brexit and the available talent pool, and business rates amongst other important topics.

The chair opened the discussion to the rest of the table, starting with the subject of Brexit. Chief executive of New London



Architecture, Nick McKeogh, stressed that it was important “people feel comfortable towards London and view it as an open and welcoming place” to remain an attractive location for international talent.

Tej Parikh, senior economist at the Institute of Directors, suggested that employers might be missing “what’s beneath our nose”, and should be courting talent closer to home. “[Maybe] London can help alleviate some of its issues if it’s better connected to the regions and there is a more open dialogue.” Dianna Neal, head of economy at culture and tourism for London Councils, concurred. “[After Brexit] it’s not going to be so easy to import that talent, so how do we get homegrown talent to really deliver what London’s businesses need?”

Pippa Campbell, business manager at the Ambassador Theatre Group, stressed that it was the “unknown

around the workforce and recruiting” that was alarming businesses. Roger Payne, head of business continuity at World Remit, argued that the insecurity around passporting was his greatest concern.

Agrawal responded to these points with City Hall’s position: “We need access to the single market, including passporting. Having that tariff-free trade [like the customs union] is very important.” In regards to attracting international talent, he reflected on his own experience of arriving in London as a young entrepreneur, having never left his native India before, and how welcomed he felt. “Perception is hugely important. If people lose confidence in London it will be detrimental.”

John Gill, director of business development at Network Rail raised the importance of a steady talent pipeline through apprenticeship programmes, particularly for big industry like rail. “We’ve always had a regular income of apprentices and trainees throughout, and we’ve relied on them.”

However, John Moola, head of business development for the Taj Hotel at Buckingham Gate, wanted to understand “how the apprenticeship programme will benefit us” and asked for an update on the Mayor’s Good Work Standard, a framework for what constitutes “good work”. Agrawal responded that the standard was still out for consultation, but that it will recognise “employers who are promoting things like fair pay, flexible working hours, diversity” and try to roll these qualities out, making London more “equitable”.

Attendees discussed changes to business rates in London; historically local authorities have collected business rates, the income from which is fed into a central

government pot to be redistributed around the country. However, the Greater London Authority (GLA) is currently piloting the retention of 100 per cent of growth accrued through business rates income, to be spent on the city.

Nick Judge, director of Kennedy Wilson, complained that “Westminster get their seven per cent back – very little goes into business.” He pointed out that, as business rates are based on retail property value, small companies get squeezed. “Business rates are not working – we need to raise taxes somehow.”

Duston agreed that businesses were increasingly expected to “fund infrastructure projects, to help the public sector.” She said that part of the problem was “there are very few forums in which business has the chance to actually change policy”. Now that the rates were being retained, she argued that businesses should “be at the table, having a voice in that whole process”.

Nigel Hughes, estate surveyor for Grosvenor and chair of Victoria BID, stated during the concluding remarks that Victoria BID “are the voice of businesses. There’s a view that we are not heard, or we are not listened to,” expressing a wish for a greater degree of interaction with local authorities. In his final comments, Agrawal conceded that “City Hall needs to engage and reach out more. Most businesses are too busy running the business [to engage]. [Therefore] it’s our job to reach out.”

Victoria BID remains committed to discussion and cooperation with public bodies to make sure the voice of business in London is not drowned out, especially as the country progresses through a negotiation period that will have major implications for its members, and the wider business community.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are crucial drivers of the improvements that London needs. Ruth Duston, chief executive of Victoria BID, explains why their voices need to be heard



The custodians of change



Wandering around Victoria today is a very different experience to what it was ten years ago. Multi billion pound investment has transformed the area from being a tired district dominated by government buildings and civil servants to a vibrant and enticing place. Most recently the opening of Land Securities' Nova development confirms Victoria's reputation as a true destination teeming with shops, bars and restaurants, incorporating businesses and relaxing open spaces.

As I walk around Victoria now, not only am I struck by just how much the area has changed but I also have a huge sense of pride in how the Victoria we see today is the product of significant collaboration – a partnership approach to regeneration and transformation. The local Business Improvement

District has played a crucial role in stewarding and guiding the area, its partners and places, to maximise the positive impact of the investment the area has received. While much progress has been made locally in Victoria in recent years, the BID's work continues – improving the mainline railway station is the next big priority and the BID's role is pivotal in bringing the right parties to the table, building the business case and lobbying for investment.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are not-for-profit companies which come about when local businesses within a defined geographical area vote to improve their district. They raise investment funding through a small levy on businesses, and can work to leverage in additional public and private sector funding to deliver ambitious projects. I was involved with the



development of some of the first BIDs in London and the 60th BID in the capital goes to ballot this summer, which would see a new BID created around Westminster. Every day I see first hand the impact BIDs are having in London's evolution – in my view BIDs are now powerful custodians of large swathes of central London, representing the views of thousands of businesses, lobbying on major issues and helping London remain the leading global city that it is.

Victoria BID was established in 2010 out of a business ballot and in 2015, its business members voted to renew the BID with a resounding 85 per cent yes vote. Our core aims are to make Victoria a better location to work, live in and visit, representing the voice of businesses in the area. We execute work programmes defined by our partners, and for

eight years we have been chasing that sense of place in the area, and we think it's starting to take hold.

As a team, we are very proud to have taken such a central role in the transformation of Victoria. In recent years regeneration projects in London have had a shift in focus away from isolated developments, to "the bits in between"; improvements in the public realm that solidify the area as a whole.

BIDs in London, including Victoria BID, have been pioneers in this method. Working with the knowledge that unrelated buildings alone do not make a locale – public spaces are an important part of making a neighbourhood gel together – Victoria BID has adopted a holistic approach to district improvement that benefits office workers, visitors, residents and commuters alike.

We define our priorities by listening and responding to the challenges and needs in the area we represent. As well as improving the public realm, it has become increasingly necessary for Victoria BID to address issues relating to safety and security that are of paramount concern to businesses in the area. Wider political and economic forces are felt within Victoria, the steep rise in homelessness has had a significant impact on our streets, and the spate of terrorist attacks in the capital last year have meant that we are supporting businesses of all kinds to keep their employees, customers, and clients safe.

Making sure that security and safety is a priority is not just for peace of mind for those living and working in Victoria, but is also crucial for giving off the right impression: that London is a safe and secure place to visit. BIDs are awake to the importance and value of London's reputation as a welcoming,

international, vibrant city, and are working hard to make sure that doesn't diminish in the wake of Brexit. It's a strategic agenda, and Victoria BID, along with the other BIDs, is pushing it.

Since the referendum, we have been active supporters of the Mayor of London's #LondonisOpen campaign, aimed at promoting London as open for business from around the globe. The political and business community are well aware of the inevitable effect that Brexit will have on people's perception of the city, and have come to the conclusion that we will have to work even harder to attract the top talent, tourist trips and overseas investment that is integral to London's economy.

As such, any idea that BIDs are focused only on local operational projects to keep the streets clean, for example, or to reduce petty crime, should be cast aside. They are, of course, concerned about those issues, but they are also part of a London-wide tactical effort to keep the city at the top of its game. The private sector is playing a bigger and bigger role in the stewardship of the capital, and we are the voice of that action.

BIDs act as catalysts for the involvement of business in London's development, providing a vehicle for the collective lobbying required to make sure the private sector's voice is heard. However, the improvements are felt not just by businesses, but by a cross-section of London. Benefits are being reaped by local and regional government, visitors, employees, residents and London as a whole. I have seen the results of collaboration between BIDs and local and national government; this collaboration must continue. The value of BIDs in driving progress is indisputable. When their contribution is recognised and embraced, the full force of businesses can be utilised for the better.



TRANSFORMING VICTORIA

POWERFUL & STRATEGIC

Victoria BID: area champions and custodians, delivering tangible benefits for businesses, employees, visitors and residents

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