COLMORE LIFE



AUTUMN/ WINTER 2026

OUR CITY'S NEXT CHAPTER: INTERVIEW WITH JOANNE RONEY CBE, BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CHRISTMAS IN COLMORE: WHAT TO DO AND WHERE TO DINE

colmorelife.co.uk

WELCOME
AUTUMN/WINTER 2026



A message from Michele Wilby, CEO of Birmingham Colmore

As the seasons change and Birmingham's city centre takes on the energy and atmosphere that autumn and winter bring, I'm delighted to welcome you to the latest edition of Colmore Life magazine.

There's a real sense of momentum across Colmore Business District as we close out another busy year in Birmingham city centre. From major business investments and leadership changes to cultural celebrations and community events, the District continues to demonstrate why it remains one of Birmingham's most dynamic places to work, visit and do business.

In this issue, we're exploring some of the stories shaping the city's future. I'm particularly pleased to share our exclusive interview with Joanne Roney, Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council, who discusses the opportunities and challenges facing the city, and her vision for Birmingham's next chapter. As one of the most influential figures in local government, her perspective offers valuable insight for everyone with an interest in the city's future.

We're also highlighting some of the significant business developments taking place across Colmore. We continue to attract investment from leading organisations, and you'll find updates on high-profile moves and growth stories, including Deloitte and other businesses strengthening their presence at the heart of Birmingham's business community.

Of course, no autumn and winter edition would be complete without celebrating everything that makes Birmingham city centre such a special destination at this time of year. From twinkling lights and festive markets to seasonal dining, shopping and entertainment, we've rounded up some of the best ways to enjoy Christmas in Birmingham and make the most of the city throughout the festive period.

As always, Birmingham Colmore remains committed to creating a thriving, welcoming and sustainable district for everyone who works, lives and spends time here. I'd like to thank our businesses, partners and stakeholders for their continued support and collaboration throughout the year.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Colmore Life, and perhaps discover a few new reasons to spend time in the District over the coming months.

Wishing you a successful end to the year and a very happy festive season.

Michele Wilby, Chief Executive Officer

AUTUMN/WINTER 2026
HIGHLIGHTS



THE BIG INTERVIEW: 4&5



BOARD UPDATE: 12



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THEN & NOW: 18 & 19

YOUR COLMORE TEAM

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Chief Technical Officer

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Chief Policy and Governance Officer

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A DAY IN COLMORE

IN THE BUSINESS DISTRICT FOR A MEETING? WHY NOT MAKE A DAY OF IT?



EMAIL CATCH-UP

1 CORNWALL BUILDINGS

Take your laptop to Cornwall Buildings, where a Grade II-listed setting meets flexible, modern workspace. Bruntwood SciTech offers co-working alongside serviced offices and meeting rooms, with membership options available for those who need somewhere to work without committing to a traditional office.

Newhall Street, Birmingham



LUNCH

2 JOE AND THE JUICE

There's a new lunchtime option in the District, with Joe & The Juice now open on Colmore Row. Known for its fresh juices, shakes, coffee and sandwiches, it's an easy choice when you want something quick between meetings. Grab a seat and recharge or take lunch back to the office.

Colmore Row, Birmingham



ME TIME

3 PHENIX SALON SUITES

Take a little time out at Phenix Salon Suites in Two Snowhill, where a collection of independent beauty and wellness professionals brings plenty of ways to escape the working day. Services range from hair, barbering and nails to skincare, brows, lashes, massage and make-up.

Two Snowhill, Birmingham



SHOPPING

4 GREAT WESTERN ARCADE

Make time for a wander through Great Western Arcade, one of Birmingham's most characterful shopping destinations. Beneath its beautiful Victorian roof is an eclectic collection of independent boutiques, bars and retailers. Ideal for finding something a little different.

Colmore Row, Birmingham



DINNER

5 PRIMITIVO

Few places can claim to be as much a part of Business District life as Primitivo. This Barwick Street favourite celebrates an incredible 30 years in the District. Settle in for dinner, raise a glass and enjoy one of those Birmingham institutions that has become woven into the working and social life of the area.

Barwick Street, Birmingham



LATE NIGHT

6 ALBERT'S SCHLOSS

Not ready to call it a night? Head to Albert's Schloss in Chamberlain Square, where the day can easily stretch into the small hours. The lively Bavarian-inspired venue combines beers, cocktails and live entertainment in suitably flamboyant surroundings.

Chamberlain Square, Birmingham

Map courtesy Tom Woolley

BIRMINGHAM'S NEXT CHAPTER

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE, JOANNE RONEY CBE, ON THE CITY'S RECOVERY AND THE OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

Joanne Roney CBE returned to her home city to take on one of the most demanding jobs in local government. As Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council, she has been charged with helping steer the organisation through the aftermath of a Section 114 notice, commissioner intervention and intense scrutiny of its finances, governance and services.

Now, Roney wants the conversation to move towards what Birmingham does next. With a balanced budget, a four-year financial plan and a formidable pipeline of regeneration and investment, she believes the city has an opportunity to rebuild confidence and turn growth into tangible benefits for its communities.

Birmingham has faced a turbulent few years, exemplified by the recent local election results. What gives you confidence that the city is now in the right direction?

The last few years have undoubtedly been challenging for Birmingham City Council, but where we are now delivering for the city is significant progress on addressing the issues that led to intervention and we can offer a more confident era.

Since the Section 114 notice in September 2023, the Council has taken difficult but necessary decisions to improve its finances, strengthen leadership and put the organisation on a more sustainable footing. We now have a balanced budget and a 4 year financial plan. The crisis issues such as Oracle and Equal Pay have been resolved.

Birmingham remains a city with enormous potential. We have one of the youngest and most diverse populations in Europe, world-class universities, strong businesses and significant opportunities for investment and growth.

My confidence comes from people across the Council, our partners and the new administration. There is a real passion for serving Birmingham and a shared determination to build a better future. We still have work to do, but I believe the city is moving in the right direction.

The city centre continues to attract investment, despite significant challenges. What's the Council doing to ensure that growth translates into tangible benefits for residents and works across Birmingham?

Attracting investment into Birmingham is important, but what matters to me is local people feel the benefit from it. Our focus is on turning growth into opportunity by connecting residents to jobs, apprenticeships, skills and training. We have a talent pipeline like no other – 71,000 undergraduates in the city across 5-degree awarding institutions. Too many of our young people are not in employment or training. Alongside businesses, we need to do more to create pathways from schools to jobs by retaining, attracting, and developing the talent here.

I'm pleased to say that we are seeing really strong buy-in from businesses, particularly within the Colmore Business District, who recognise the value of developing local talent and creating pathways into employment for Birmingham residents.



How important is the city centre's success to the wider success of Birmingham's neighbourhoods and communities?

The city centre is Birmingham and the West Midlands' economic engine and has seen some successes, bringing in record investment, creating jobs and attracting major employers, from the Big Four to a growing range of national and international businesses.

A thriving city centre creates opportunities for Birmingham's neighbourhoods through jobs, supply chains, improved connectivity and greater business confidence. Building homes in the city centre creates the buzz needed to sustain the culture and hospitality sectors. Major regeneration of Ladywood will improve the quality of our homes, alongside developing more city centre neighbourhoods and communities.

Many people love Birmingham's energy and ambition, but some raise concerns about cleanliness, safety and the overall city centre experience. How are you addressing those perceptions?

People's experience of a city is often shaped by what they see every day: the cleanliness of streets, the feeling of safety, and how well public spaces are maintained. BCC is now investing more in their services; I want to see improvement.

We're working closely with partners including West Midlands Police, Business Improvement Districts

and businesses to improve standards. We are focusing on targeted enforcement, improved street maintenance, and creating a city centre environment that people feel proud of. Regaining public confidence requires consistent improvements, not simply announcements. Resolving the waste dispute and driving service improvement remains a priority. As we develop and grow the city centre, we need well designed public realm and green spaces which can be enjoyed by all.

Businesses often tell us they want greater certainty. What can the Council do to provide confidence and stability for investors and employers?

Businesses need confidence that Birmingham has a clear plan and the ability to deliver it. That's why we're focused on providing certainty around the city's long-term growth agenda, backed by a strong pipeline of regeneration and investment opportunities. Recent announcements include Birmingham Central Heart and the creation of the East Birmingham Mayoral Development Corporation with extra capacity and single front door for investors and funders.

If someone visited Birmingham for the first time tomorrow, what do you think would impress them most, and what would you most like to improve?

They would see a place that is changing rapidly, with major investment, strong businesses, outstanding cultural institutions, as well as some of the best places to eat in the UK. Most of all, I hope they'd experience the warmth and welcoming spirit that makes Birmingham such a great place to live, work and visit.

What would you say to city centre businesses that feel the pace of change can sometimes make trading more difficult?

I understand why some city centre businesses can find periods of change challenging. Major projects can bring disruption, and that can affect day-to-day trading. Delays to major schemes also cause a lack of confidence and ongoing communication and support to existing businesses is a crucial part of delivering major developments.

This is a globally tough environment for major regeneration, but our city centre schemes are progressing, and new funding opportunities exist with West Midlands





Pictured: Joanne Roney with Birmingham Colmore Community Support Officers Dimitrios Mitropoulos, Zack Palmer and CEO Michele Wilby

CA, so our close working with the Mayor ensures we can continue to support developers and existing businesses.

How would you like Birmingham's national reputation to evolve over the next five years?

I'd like Birmingham's national and global reputation to become that of a city of strength and success. I want us to do more to retain the over 70,000+ talented graduates we produce, attract new investment and compete confidently with cities like Manchester, Liverpool and London.

The cultural offer in Birmingham already has a national reputation and our work with culture partners is equally important. The recent feedback from the European Athletics which saw 218,000 attendees and 39,000 additional visitors shows our ability and can give confidence that Birmingham has international appeal.

What role do organisations such as Birmingham Colmore and the wider business community play in shaping that story?

This business community is large and diverse, and Birmingham's has more businesses that any city in the UK outside London. They play a vital role.

A city's reputation is not created by its council alone. It is shaped by businesses, universities, cultural organisations, community groups and residents. Birmingham Colmore in particular is a powerful ambassador for the city and is in some ways a microcosm of how we should be promoting ourselves.

The Council has faced intense scrutiny in recent years. What lessons have been learned, and how can businesses and residents be confident that those lessons are being acted upon?

The first lesson is that we must be honest about where things went wrong. The Council did not always get the basics right, whether that was financial management, governance or delivering against commitments, and that is why we faced the scrutiny and commissioner intervention that we did back in 2023.

The second lesson is that accountability matters. Residents and businesses expect a council that is transparent, financially responsible and focused on delivery, and they are right to expect that. We have in place a clear Improvement and Recovery Plan and taken difficult decisions to put the Council on a more sustainable footing. I am confident that businesses and residents are beginning to see the benefits of that progress.

How would you like Birmingham's national reputation to evolve over the next five years?

The fantastic result of the ABID now creates a resource for us to work in partnership with all of the BIDs to really promote this city.

If we interviewed you again in 12 months' time, what result or achievement would you hope to point to as evidence of progress?

Birmingham City Council will be doing basics well again – within the resources we have.

Residents and businesses don't just judge us on strategies and plans; they judge us on whether we deliver the day to day services they need.

Key schemes will have spades in the ground. Our relationship with WMCA will have ensured a strong pipeline that we have confidence in delivering. People will feel more confident that the cranes they see are providing the jobs they need, not just in the city centre, but more affordable homes will be being built, highways will be being repaired, more young people will be in employment.

TO READ THE EXTENDED COLMORE LIFE INTERVIEW WITH JOANNE RONEY, SCAN THE QR CODE:

BRINGING ART TO THE STREETS OF BIRMINGHAM



A great city centre is more than a place to work. Through Colmore's ongoing commitment to creativity through its Colmore Placemaking Working Group, three exciting outdoor exhibitions transform public spaces across the District, bringing culture, creativity and conversation into the heart of Birmingham's business community.

From thought-provoking installations and captivating photography to public art that encourages reflection and engagement, each exhibition is a unique opportunity to experience our city in new and unexpected ways.

Through investment in cultural programming, we're animating public spaces and celebrating the creativity that makes Birmingham such a dynamic place to live, work and visit.



Birmingham Open 26

Returning for a third year, Birmingham Open 26 celebrated the city's emerging artistic community, showcasing an exciting collection of work from artists from Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Following an open call competition in partnership with International Day of Birmingham and Central BID, the competition invited artists to respond creatively to the theme of Birmingham, resulting in a diverse collection of works spanning photography, printmaking, illustration, painting and mixed media.

This year's theme reflected the partnership with IDOB, placing the city's stories, people, culture and global connections at the heart of the exhibition.

With over 150 competition entries, the exhibition offered visitors the opportunity to experience a diverse range of artistic styles, media and perspectives.

Kelly Hadley was crowned as the winner of Birmingham Open 26. Her photograph, A Birmingham Patchwork, impressed the judging panel and secured the competition's top prize – a £2,000 cash prize and portfolio review. Kate Wolf was

awarded the Highly Commended prize for their artwork Wentworth Road Flats.

The competition, delivered in partnership with Central BID and International Day of Birmingham, highlights the exceptional creative talent emerging from Birmingham and the wider region.

The top 10 shortlisted artists' works were showcased at Snow Hill Square throughout September to coincide with International Day of Birmingham celebrations. The public also voted for their 'People's Choice' award from the showcase.

The winners (Overall, Highly Commended and People's Choice) each received cash prizes and professional portfolio reviews to support their artistic careers.

By bringing exceptional artwork into the heart of the city, the exhibition invited audiences to discover new voices, engage with thought-provoking ideas and celebrate Birmingham's reputation as a centre for artistic excellence.



'Triplets' by Bolin Qian, one of the several artworks showcased at the Black History Month exhibition

Birmingham Super Prix 40th anniversary

For one remarkable weekend every summer, Birmingham became Britain's fastest city.

Between 1986 and 1990, the streets of Birmingham were transformed into one of Europe's most distinctive racing circuits as Formula 3000 cars thundered through the city centre in front of thousands of spectators and a global television audience.

Marking the 40th anniversary of the inaugural race, this fascinating exhibition told the story of the Birmingham Super Prix, from the ambitious vision that brought motorsport to the city's streets to the determination and perseverance required to make it a reality.

Presented in Ratcliff Passage throughout September as part of our first-ever Brum Transport Fest, the exhibition explored Birmingham's proud automotive heritage and celebrated one of the city's most memorable sporting spectacles, showcasing the people, passion and innovation behind a truly iconic event.





Black History Month

Throughout October, Snow Hill Square will be transformed into a vibrant open-air gallery as we join forces with Birmingham City University's School of Arts to present a special exhibition celebrating Black History Month 2026.

Featuring work by talented student artists, the exhibition explores the theme of Black Culture through photography, illustration, collage, painting and printmaking.

The selected artworks offer powerful reflections on identity, heritage, community and contemporary culture, highlighting a diverse range of experiences and creative voices.

Free and accessible to all, the exhibition invites workers, residents and visitors to celebrate the stories, achievements and cultural contributions that continue to shape Birmingham's rich and diverse communities.

Black History Month Exhibition 2026.

Date: 1-31 October 2026

Location: Snow Hill Square, Birmingham

Admission: Free



CARS, BUSES AND THE SUPER PRIX:

BRUM ON THE MOVE







Classic cars, heritage buses and the remarkable story of the Birmingham Super Prix took over the city centre as the inaugural Brum Transport Fest celebrated the people, vehicles and ingenuity that put the West Midlands on the move.

Birmingham city centre became a giant celebration of motoring history as the first Brum Transport Fest brought an extraordinary collection of vehicles, enthusiasts and stories into the heart of the city.

Across Victoria, Chamberlain, Centenary and Hippodrome squares, hundreds of classic and heritage vehicles turned the city centre into an open-air motoring museum, from much-loved cars to beautifully preserved buses recalling generations of travel across the West Midlands.

The two-day festival also put the people behind the machines centre stage.













Motoring experts, designers, engineers, broadcasters and enthusiasts joined a packed programme of talks exploring everything from Birmingham's car-making heritage and classic buses to cycling, trams and the dedicated owners keeping historic vehicles on the road.

A special exhibition marked 40 years since the first Birmingham Super Prix, telling the remarkable story of how Formula 3000 racing came to the city's streets in 1986. The anniversary was also explored on stage, looking back at five unforgettable years of racing and the ambition that made it happen.

Follow @ColmoreLife on Instagram for more pictures from Brum Transport Fest.





CHRISTMAS


SANTA AT BMAG

24 STORIES


PASTURE

From Santa visits, skyline dining, candlelit concerts, festive theatre, Christmas parties and a colourful reindeer trail, Birmingham city centre is getting ready for the most wonderful time of the year. Here's our pick of what's happening in and around Colmore this Christmas.

Christmas at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and Thinktank

Get ready for a season of festive family fun as Father Christmas makes his way to Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and Thinktank.

The programme includes Breakfast with Santa, combining a festive breakfast with a visit and gift from Father Christmas, and Santa's Workshop, where children can enjoy a Christmas craft activity before heading into the grotto.

For Birmingham Museums' full Christmas programme and tickets, visit **birminghammuseums.org.uk**.

Christmas in the sky

Celebrate the festive season at 24 Stories, where panoramic skyline views, seasonal dining and warm hospitality come together high above Birmingham.

Available from 17 November, festive menus include a choice of seasonal dishes, optional Laurent-Perrier Champagne on arrival and private dining with some of the best views in the city. Find out more: **24stories.co.uk/christmas**

Fire, flavour and festivities

Fire, flavour and festive cheer take centre stage at Pasture Birmingham.

Situated at 15 Colmore Row, the restaurant welcomes groups throughout the festive season, with three-course menus from £59 and four-course menus from £69. Group dining menus are available from 23 November to 31 December.

To book, contact **birmingham-christmas@pasturerestaurant.com**

Frankfurt Christmas Market

Birmingham's hugely popular Frankfurt Christmas Market returns from 5 November to 24 December 2026, bringing its familiar mix of festive food and drink, traditional gifts and Christmas atmosphere back to the city centre.

This year, however, visitors should expect some changes to the usual locations as ongoing city centre landscaping works are taken into account. The Market will be centred in and around Victoria Square.

Colmore Night Market

A brand-new event, the Colmore Christmas Night Market takes place on Wednesday 27 November. Join the team from 3pm to for an afternoon of seasonal shopping, festive giveaways, live entertainment and a visit from Santa. From 7pm, warm up with free mulled wine and hot chocolate from Colmore as you browse the market stalls and soak up the Christmas atmosphere. Full details will be released on Colmore's channels soon!

Celebrate in style at The Grand

Christmas returns in suitably grand style at The Grand Hotel Birmingham, with festive stays, private parties, dining and drinks throughout the season.

Three Grand Suites will be transformed with festive decorations by Light Up Christmas, while Isaac's is available for private hire from Sunday to Wednesday, with packages from £75 per person.

The hotel's nine event spaces are also available for private Christmas celebrations,

IN COLMORE





including the spectacular Grade II listed Grand Ballroom, which can accommodate up to 300 guests for a seated banquet. For something more relaxed, Madeleine Bar offers Champagne, cocktails and Parisian-inspired small plates. For Christmas parties, contact **sales@grandbirmingham.co.uk**. Visit **thegrandhotelbirmingham.co.uk** for festive offers.

Celebrate Christmas at Birmingham Cathedral

Birmingham Cathedral will once again be at the heart of the city's Christmas celebrations, with a season of music, worship and festive events. The programme begins with the Cathedral Choir's A Foretaste of Christmas on 6 November, while Christmas in Cathedral Square returns on 4 November.

Families are welcomed to the Children's Carol Service and pop-up nativity on 19 December, followed by Nine Lessons and Carols, Midnight Mass and the Christmas Day Choral Eucharist as Christmas approaches. For the programme, visit **birminghamcathedral.com**.

Christmas at the Old Joint Stock

The historic Old Joint Stock is getting ready for a big Christmas as its theatre celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2026.

The festive programme includes the return of Miracle on 34th Street: A Live Musical Radio Play, alongside cabaret, comedy, live music and A Christmas Carol.

For the full Christmas theatre programme, dates and tickets, visit **oldjointstock.co.uk**

Follow the Reindeer Trail

Nine stunning reindeer will bring a splash of Christmas colour to Birmingham city centre this festive season as Central BID's Reindeer Trail returns.

The statues will appear at popular locations across the city centre, including Great Western Arcade, Bullring and Selfridges, creating a festive trail for families, shoppers and visitors to discover as they explore Birmingham.

Keep an eye out for all nine as you make your way around the city.

Full throttle festivities at F1 Arcade

Forget the year-in-review deck and settle the year on the track.

F1 Arcade Birmingham is bringing back The Grand Prix of Parties, combining full-throttle racing with food, drinks and a rather more competitive take on the traditional office Christmas party.

After the racing, teams can continue the celebrations at The Octane Bar with F1-themed cocktails.

Christmas films under the stars

Thinktank is adding some big-screen favourites to its Christmas programme with film screenings inside the Planetarium. On 4 and 5 December, visitors can enjoy screenings of The Muppet Christmas Carol, Die Hard, Elf and Love Actually.

Visit **birminghammuseums.org.uk**

Christmas in the JQ

The Jewellery Quarter will be getting into the festive spirit with a programme of Christmas events throughout November and December. The JQ Christmas Artisan Market returns on 14 November and 19 December, offering two opportunities to browse independent makers.

In Bloom will host its Wreath Workshops on 28 November, 3 December and 5 December, while the Coffin Works Christmas Market will also return (date tbc).The Jewellery Quarter's Christmas celebrations will also include the JQBID Jewellery Quarter Christmas Light Switch On. Full details will be announced soon.

Alex Tross, Partner at Carter Jonas and Kate-Emma Bailey, Partner at Squire Patton Boggs have been appointed the new Board Chairs of Birmingham Colmore.

The move comes as Nicola Fleet-Milne, founder and Managing Director of FleetMilne estate and letting agents on Colmore Row, steps down after seven years as Chair of the Board of Directors.

In her time as the Chair, Nicola has led Birmingham Colmore through a period of significant growth and change, including the development of the Future Business District study in 2020, the appointment of Birmingham's first ever City Curator, a strategic rebrand project and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Southside District, shaping the next chapter of the city's future.

Nicola also led the BID in its successful BID4 (2024-2029) ballot, having won with 98% yes votes, enabling Birmingham Colmore to deliver its ambitious vision for the area, with local businesses investing over £7.5m over five years.

She said: "It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of Birmingham Colmore for the past seven years. During that time, we have delivered significant projects, strengthened partnership working across the city and secured a strong mandate from businesses through our successful BID4 ballot. I am proud of what has been achieved and grateful to our Board, levy payers and the Birmingham Colmore team for their commitment and support."

Alex and Kate succeed Nicola as Co-Chairs of the Board, with Alex previously holding the role as Deputy Chair since 2020 and Kate as a board member since 2021.

Alex leads the Colmore Culture Working Group, responsible for championing Colmore's growing leisure and hospitality scene. He also chairs Colmore's Property Owners and Agents Forum. Kate leads the Safer Colmore Working Group, which advocates safety in the city centre.



Left-to-right: Nicola Fleet-Milne, Alex Tross, Kate-Emma Bailey, Tim Hall and Paul Fielding

WELCOME TO A NEW-LOOK COLMORE BOARD

Speaking of the appointment, Alex said: "I am honoured to be appointed Co-Chair of Birmingham Colmore alongside Kate. Birmingham continues to evolve, and we have a unique opportunity to strengthen Colmore's position as Birmingham's premier business and cultural destination. Building on Nicola's outstanding leadership, I look forward to working closely with our Board, levy payers and partners to support growth, champion our thriving hospitality and cultural offer."

Kate Bailey added: "Birmingham Colmore has an ambitious vision for the future, and I am excited to take on the role of Co-Chair at such an important time for the city."

The appointments reflect Birmingham Colmore's key priorities as the BID prepares for its BID5 ballot.

Readers can hear more from Alex and Kate in the Big Interview in the Spring 2027 issue of Colmore Life magazine.

THE NEW BIRMINGHAM COLMORE BOARD

Co-Chair: Alex Tross and Kate Bailey

Deputy Chair: Tim Hall

Board of Directors: Paul Fielding (Cannacord Genuity), Melanie Williams (DWF Law), Hannah Voogd (HBD), Alison Kilby (Arup), Joanna Lee-Mills

Board Members: Sandeep Shingadia (Transport for West Midlands) and Councillor Raheem Humphreys (Birmingham City Council).

All changes take effect in 2027

FIRST ACCOMMODATION BID GETS A 'YES' VOTE IN BALLOT

In a landmark moment for Birmingham's visitor economy, the city's accommodation sector has voted to establish its first Accommodation BID (or ABID), creating a dedicated industry-led investment model that mirrors successful schemes in Manchester and Liverpool, giving Birmingham businesses a stronger role in shaping the city's future as a visitor destination.

The ballot delivered a clear endorsement from eligible accommodation providers, with 64% of votes cast in favour and 59% of total rateable value voting in support of the 2027-2032 Business Plan.

With 54% voter turnout, the result demonstrates the sector's commitment to working collectively to support destination growth, attract more visitors, increase overnight stays and strengthen Birmingham's position as a leading UK business and leisure destination.

The BID will begin delivering its business plan on 1 April 2027, working closely with accommodation providers, the Birmingham Hospitality Association, the West Midlands Growth Company and wider visitor economy partners.

To find out more, visit birminghamhospitality.co.uk/abid

A CLEANER COLMORE

MAY-JULY 2026 IMPACT



700
hours of litter picking

Supported over
400
instances of anti-social behaviour

66
graffiti and/or sticker removals

135
footway cleans

Interactions with nearly
200
rough sleepers

25,000m2
space deep cleaned by Ramora

SUPPORTING LADYWOOD

THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP



COLMORE IN LADYWOOD

BY KELSEY DWYER, EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER, BIRMINGHAM COLMORE

We are incredibly passionate about ensuring that our success as a business district translates into meaningful support for the communities around us.

Through the work of our Colmore Community Working Group, we continue to strengthen our relationship with organisations in Ladywood, helping to create opportunities, support local initiatives and make a positive difference for residents and children.

One organisation that holds a special place within the community is the Ladywood Community Project, who have celebrated an incredible milestone in 2026: 40 years of serving local people and families.

For four decades, the project has provided invaluable support, activities and opportunities for generations of Ladywood residents. Whether through playgroups such as Wrigglers, family activities, community trips, supermarket vouchers, uniform donations, emergency food parcels, holiday programmes or simply offering a welcoming place for a chat over a cup of tea, countless people have benefited from the project's work.

In this time, the team has supported over a 1000 children and families.

Congratulations to the team on this fantastic milestone!

We're so pleased to have supported the Ladywood Community Project through a range of fundraising initiatives organised by Colmore this year.

• At the Colmore Food Festival in July, face painting once again proved hugely popular with visiting families. In support of the Ladywood Community Project, we invited attendees to make a charitable donation of £1 per child, raising £300 for the charity.

• Our annual Community Games in September brought together businesses from across the District for a day of friendly competition and teamwork (pictured above). With 16 teams taking part and contributing £75 each, the event generated a further £1,200 to support Ladywood's Community Project initiatives and Birmingham Children's Hospitality charity. A huge congratulations to MAPP for being crowned the 2026 champions!

Alongside our donations of uniform, clothing and other essential items – we're so grateful to our wonderful community of businesses who have demonstrated their commitment to those less fortunate.

We'd like to thank everyone who participated in our fundraising activities throughout the year. Your generosity continues to help strengthen the connection between Colmore Business District and the communities we are fortunate to work with and support.

To learn more about our work in Ladywood, visit **colmorelife.co.uk/working-group/colmore-community**

AN UPDATE FROM THE CITY CURATOR



Years in the making, **Birmingham Jewellery Biennial** will launch in May 2027 with an ambitious month-long celebration of the city's jewellery heritage, creativity and craft, bringing makers, artists and audiences together from across the UK.

One of the very first projects I talked about after becoming City Curator was Birmingham Jewellery Biennial. Alongside the now well-established Birmingham Light Festival, it was one of two city-wide festivals I wanted to create as part of a long-term vision for a thriving city centre and a programme of major events that would put Birmingham firmly on the map.

This project has been literally years in the making, but it really found its moment when I was supporting Birmingham's successful bid to become a World Craft City for Jewellery and Allied Trades. That was the turning point – the moment the idea gathered real momentum with partners, funders and the wider jewellery community. So it's a real pleasure to finally be able to share more about what you can expect when Birmingham Jewellery Biennial launches in May 2027.

The Festival is a City Curator Project, a role fully funded by Birmingham Colmore but working across the city centre. I have the pleasure of being Festival Director. It has been co-founded by Jewellery Quarter Development Trust and Birmingham City University, and it's fair to say we have a bold and exciting vision for the Biennial! Our ambition is for it to become the UK's leading festival dedicated to the art, innovation and heritage of jewellery.

Taking place every two years, the month-long festival will bring together makers, artists, collectors, students, educators, businesses and visitors in the city that has been at the heart of Britain's jewellery story for centuries. Whether you're a lifelong collector or you're discovering the joy of jewellery for the very first time, the programme will include plenty to spark curiosity. We've got so much in the planning already from exhibitions, workshops, markets and public art installations, to opportunities to get hands-on and make your own piece of jewellery every day of the festival.

By the time you're reading this, our flagship exhibition open call will have closed and we'll be preparing for one of the most exciting milestones yet. Our expert jury alongside our Exhibition Curator, Sophie Morris, formerly of the Victoria & Albert Museum, will be reviewing applications from jewellery artists across the UK in order to select the works that will feature in the inaugural Biennial exhibition at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery next spring.

That's not our only open call either, right now our Events Open Call is open – we're inviting organisations across the district, city and beyond to be part of this major new event for the UK. If you'd like to get involved, you'll find all the details at birminghamjewellerybiennial.com.

Over the coming months I'll be sharing more, but for now I'm simply delighted that, after years of planning (and wrangling!) Birmingham Jewellery Biennial is finally becoming a reality.

Main image: Jewellery pieces by BA Design for Industry graduate Annette Wai from the School of Jewellery

Based in the heart of Paradise, **Cow & Sow** is a premium steakhouse taking customers from grassland to grill, serving English Wagyu, Black Angus beef and Hampshire x Landrace pork alongside fresh ingredients from its own Kitchen Farm.

Jason Turner talks life at Cow & Sow, the importance of knowing where food comes from and why Paradise is the perfect home.

RAISING THE STEAKS



Tell us about your journey into hospitality. What first attracted you to the industry, and how did your career lead you to Cow & Sow?

In truth, I fell into hospitality as my chosen career. I think that's how a lot of people find it. I started young, working in my local pub in Kent in my mid-teens, and came back to hospitality years later while studying at university.

I've worked across many areas of the industry, from nightclubs, bars and restaurants to fast-paced cocktail venues, high-end dining and eventually fine dining.

I've always valued good quality produce, supporting British farming and fresh food. When my boyfriend found Cow & Sow and told me about the brand while we were on holiday, I knew it was the kind of brand I had to work for.

How has your Colmore and Paradise location helped shape the restaurant's success and customer experience?

At heart, we are a small, independent business. The Colmore district and our location in Paradise have helped cement our brand in the city. Both are fantastic at supporting the businesses that call the area home and providing events and entertainment for the local community, something incredibly important to us as a B Corp certified business.

The hospitality industry continues to face increasing challenges. What's the best piece of advice you've received, and what advice would you give someone considering a career in hospitality?

"It's just food and drink." Hospitality can be stressful and we've all had 'passionate' guests. It's important not to take things personally. For anyone considering a career in hospitality, success will not fall into your lap. Be proactive, be productive, ask questions and be passionate about learning.

What's something people might be surprised to learn about you?

During my years with the military, I was lucky enough to qualify in skydiving, lead rock climbing and skiing.

Nowadays, I stick to clay pigeon shooting on account of my back having the structural integrity of a crisp packet.

Tell us about the Cow & Sow Kitchen Farm and your team. Why is being people and planet first so important in hospitality?

Our Kitchen Farm is more than an opportunity to source fantastic homegrown produce and reduce our environmental impact by using organic waste from our restaurants.

As we grow, team members may join us who haven't experienced the countryside, how farms operate or where food comes from. Our head grower Amanda is a fantastic asset and teams from all our venues can assist her and learn from her knowledge.



Producing our own fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs gives us greater control over our supply chain and quality. It also gives us an opportunity to educate and give something back to our team.

Guests are increasingly focused on what they consume, where it comes from, how it's produced and its environmental impact. We have a responsibility to consider this at a larger scale, which is why we're so passionate about sourcing, provenance and our brand relationships.

At its core, hospitality has always been about people, whether guests or employees. Our teams make personal sacrifices every day to ensure guests enjoy memorable experiences. It's vital that we focus on their health and wellbeing, while giving them support and opportunities to develop professionally.

When you're not at the restaurant, where are your favourite places to eat, drink or spend time in Birmingham?

For food, a favourite has always been Sushi Passion in Great Western Arcade. It's my secret spot for a lunch on my own and the food is always exceptional.

To drink, it has to be Passing Fancies. If you want the best example of raw talent and perfect hospitality coming together, it's an absolute MUST visit.

But the day-to-day reality? Give me a meal deal and a night in Missing Bar any day of the week!

For more information on Cow & Sow, or to book a table, visit thecowandsow.co.uk/birmingham



Creating a city centre where everyone feels welcome, supported and safe takes partnership and care. Through our Safer Colmore Working Group, businesses, hospitality venues and community partners work together to ensure Colmore Business District remains a place where people and businesses can thrive.

Birmingham Colmore's on-street teams help keep the District safe, clean and welcoming. Community Support Officers patrol the area alongside West Midlands Police and other partners, while our street cleaning team operates daily, removing litter, graffiti and more.

Need assistance? Contact the duty team on 07572 257 246 Monday to Friday, 7am to 7pm.

Hospitality venues set the standard for customer safety

Hospitality venues across Colmore have achieved a 100% pass rate in independent Ask For Angela UK audits, reinforcing the District's commitment to safety.

Independent auditors Serve Legal visited five randomly selected businesses participating in the nationally recognised initiative: The Old Joint Stock, Purecraft Bar & Kitchen, 200 Degrees Coffee, Fogo de Chão and Gusto Restaurant. All achieved full marks, demonstrating excellent awareness of the scheme among staff and management.

Ask For Angela enables anyone who feels unsafe, threatened or vulnerable to discreetly seek support from trained venue staff. Independent audits ensure participating venues continue to meet the programme's standards and can respond appropriately when help is needed.

Hayley Crawford KPM, Founder of Ask For Angela UK, said: "I am delighted those audited venues in the Birmingham Colmore area have shown such a commitment to people's safety, ensuring their staff know what to do when someone asks for Angela.

"Thank you to Birmingham Colmore, for their support in ensuring the scheme is implemented effectively." The results reflect the collective efforts of businesses that understand safety is everyone's responsibility.

JOIN US TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Be part of the conversation shaping safety in Colmore. The Safer Colmore Working Group is open to member representatives from Colmore-based businesses who are passionate about improving the experience of those who work, visit and spend time in the area. Join us and make a difference: email **john-jo.vonjohnson@birminghamcolmore.co.uk.**

Partner perspective

For businesses across Colmore, Ask For Angela is about fostering a culture of care and ensuring colleagues and customers know support is available.

"At Aparthotel Birmingham, I have implemented the Ask for Angela scheme and dedicated time to ensuring the whole team understands the scheme and feels confident in using it.

"As a member of the Colmore Women's Safety Forum, learning more about VAWG initiatives and safety schemes has given me valuable knowledge that I have been able to take away and put into practice. The scheme has raised awareness within our hotel and beyond, with team members sharing information with family and friends.

"We have also embedded it into our monthly meetings and new starter inductions. With women making up 75% of our workforce, playing a part in initiatives that help protect our team and guests means a great deal to me and my team," Kirstie Orton, General Manager, Aparthotel Birmingham.

Seasonal safety tips

As Birmingham's festive season gets underway, thousands of people will enjoy team celebrations, client events and Christmas nights out across the city centre. A few simple steps can help everyone enjoy the festivities safely.

Plan your journey home: Book transport in advance where possible, share plans with someone and keep your phone charged.

Look out for one another: Keep an eye on colleagues and friends, particularly if someone becomes separated from the group or appears uncomfortable.

Never leave drinks unattended: Keep your drink with you and avoid accepting drinks from people you don't know.

Trust your instincts: If something doesn't feel right, leave the situation and seek support. Colmore venues participating in Ask For Angela have trained staff ready to help discreetly.

Stay aware when travelling: Be mindful when using headphones or phones while walking, particularly late at night, and stick to well-lit, busy routes where possible.

For those enjoying festive events this winter, the message from Safer Colmore is simple: have fun, celebrate responsibly and look out for one another.



POTENTIAL NOT BACKGROUND

Social mobility is about more than opening doors. **Phil Hutsby-Hunt**, Legal Director at mfg Solicitors LLP, draws on his own experience to explore the barriers people face and the small changes that can create a fairer route to success.

I do not remember where I first heard that quote, yet it has stuck with me. I am from what might be politely termed a "low socio-economic background". I have overcome challenges of varying degrees of seriousness to get to where I am today – from struggling to have enough money to eat, to not being able to join in with conversations about skiing or wine when I got my first job in the legal sector!

Social mobility is an important topic to me, but what is it exactly? It is the ability of individuals or groups to move up society's hierarchical structure. It reflects the opportunities available for individuals to improve their socio-economic status.

There are many factors that affect social mobility, including but not limited to: income; education; family environment; race; disability; and gender.

Individuals and groups wishing to move up the ladder may find there are barriers in their way. They may not fit the traditional profile of the sector they are entering and may face bias. Moving up the social ladder can bring difficulties itself such as adapting to new work environments and social circles, which can lead to insecurities. It can also lead to financial instability where there is pressure to spend money on education or take out loans for business ventures in order to achieve success.

Improving social mobility often requires change, and those changes don't have to be seismic. Those from lower income backgrounds typically have limited access and opportunity when it comes to further education. Opportunities such as apprenticeships and alternative routes to qualification help those affected.

Initiatives such as blank CVs which remove any indicators of an individual's background, age or gender have helped remove unconscious bias during the initial stages of recruitment.



Access or mentoring schemes are now in place at schools, universities and workplaces that promote diversity and afford opportunities to those from affected backgrounds, providing support and guidance.

Barriers to social mobility will always be present. However, if we want to be considered a fair society we need to provide opportunities to allow those affected a fair chance of success, and the power of small actions should not be underestimated. In short, we can all do our part to ensure that futures are determined by potential, not background.

Phil Hutsby-Hunt, Legal Director, mfg Solicitors LLP



Colmore Row, 1953, by Phyliss Nicklin



Colmore Row today

THEN & NOW

A CENTURY OF CHANGE ACROSS COLMORE: PHYLISS NICKLIN SPECIAL

There's something compelling about seeing a Birmingham street you know well, photographed more than 60 years ago, only to realise how little has changed.

For this special edition of Then & Now, we went digging through one of the city's great photographic treasures: the archive of Phyllis Nicklin.

Through the 1950s and '60s, Nicklin built an extraordinary record of Birmingham; not the grand set-pieces, but the everyday, the streets, buildings and canals. What she left behind is a portrait of a city, taken just before redevelopment schemes that would reshape it for good.

Centenary Square and Baskerville House, Chamberlain Square, Bennetts Hill, Colmore Row and Gas Street Basin all feature. The cars, buses and street furniture give the decade away in an instant.

These photographs might have stayed hidden if not for Dave Oram — the man behind the Brumpic social accounts — who tracked down the collection, digitised it, and shared it with a new generation of Brummies. The archive went on to inspire an award-winning exhibition in Colmore Business District.

Six decades on, Nicklin's photographs remind us that the streets we walk every day have a story and we're just the latest chapter.

For the latest Colmore history and heritage walks, talks and publications, visit colmorelife.co.uk



Bennetts Hill, date unknown, by Phyliss Nicklin



Bennetts Hill today



Gas Street Basin, 1961, by Phyliss Nicklin



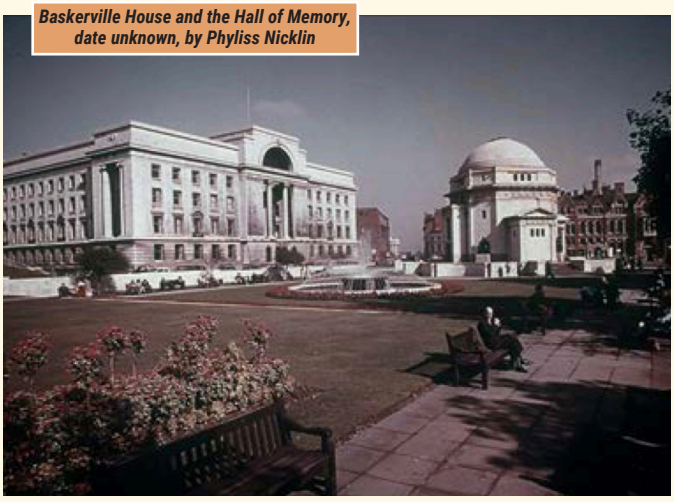
Gas Street Basin today



Chamberlain Square, 1969, by Phyliss Nicklin



Chamberlain Square, 2026, (during Brum Transport Fest)



Baskerville House and the Hall of Memory, date unknown, by Phyliss Nicklin



Baskerville House, the Hall of Memory and Centenary Square today

MOVERS & SHAKERS

THE PROMOTIONS, APPOINTMENTS AND MOVES SHAPING COLMORE'S PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE

As Deloitte settles into its new home at Paradise Birmingham, **Partner Juliet Halfhead** explains why the move is about much more than a new office.



'Birmingham is central to our ambitions'

When organisations choose where to locate, the decision is often about more than bricks and mortar. For Deloitte, the move to Paradise Birmingham reflects a strategic investment in people, clients and the future of Birmingham.

Positioned at the heart of the Colmore Business District, the new office represents a bold step forward for the firm, providing a collaborative, future-focused workspace while reinforcing their commitment to supporting growth and innovation across the region.

We sat down with **Juliet Halfhead, Partner at Deliotte**, to find out more.

What were the key factors behind Deloitte's decision to move into Paradise Birmingham, and what made this location the right fit for your future ambitions?

The Paradise Development embodies the changing shape of the city. This move is about creating the best possible environment for our people and clients.

We want to help people build impactful careers and develop skills they'll need for the future. Our new base gives us a platform from which to continue growing, while underlining our long-term commitment to the region.

How does your new office reflect the way Deloitte employees and clients want to work and collaborate today?

Our new office reflects how we want our firm to work. That is, in a collaborative, connected and outward-looking way. Deloitte is proud to be a convener of leaders from across the public and private sectors, bringing people together to tackle challenges, stimulate debate and unlock growth. This new office provides the ideal environment for those conversations and connections to happen.

What are the biggest challenges currently facing your business, both locally and nationally?

We know the importance of ensuring our firm is equipped to adapt to the future of work. That means continuing to invest in our people, supporting career development and helping clients respond to challenges and opportunities – whether that's technological change or economic uncertainty - with confidence.

What role does Birmingham play within Deloitte's wider UK growth strategy, and how does the move strengthen your presence in both the city and region?

Birmingham is central to our ambitions as a firm. We're involved in some of the most exciting projects that are reshaping the region, including major regeneration programmes. One Centenary Way gives us the perfect base from which to continue that work, while creating opportunities for our people to build careers they're passionate about, in a place they love.

Colmore Business District is home to a diverse mix of businesses and talent. What opportunities do you see arising for Deloitte from being part of this business community?

Across the UK, our firm is strongest when our teams are connected locally, enabling them to build networks and understand regional priorities. Our new office will ensure our people are fully embedded in our business community, opening up opportunities for networking and collaboration.

If you could sum up in one sentence what this move means for Deloitte, your people and Birmingham, what would it be?

This move reaffirms our commitment to the city and region, while cementing the firm, and our people, at the heart of Birmingham's changing landscape.





Jas Sansi Photography

BARCLAYS BUSINESS PROSPERITY INDEX LAUNCH

Business leaders from across the region gathered at Barclays' One Snowhill offices in Birmingham for an exclusive Midlands-focused event exploring the findings of the bank's latest Business Prosperity Index and what they mean for the future of the West Midlands economy.

Hosted by Barclays One Snowhill offices in August, the event brought together senior representatives from business, professional services and regional organisations for a morning of networking, insight and discussion centred on the opportunities and challenges facing the Midlands.

Guests heard from James Meakin, Midlands Head of Mid-Corporate at Barclays, who presented the latest findings from the Business Prosperity Index.

One of the clearest messages emerging from the Index was the strong support among West Midlands businesses for greater devolution. Research found that business leaders see increased local decision-making powers as a key enabler of growth.





The findings reflected a growing confidence in the region's ability to shape its own future, with businesses recognising the importance of regional leadership in delivering economic competitiveness.

Alongside devolution, organisations identified skills development, transport connectivity and access to investment as critical areas that will influence future prosperity.

Meakin was joined by Ranjit Dhindsa, Office Leader at Fieldfisher Birmingham, and Raj Kandola, formerly Deputy Chief Executive of the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce and now the CEO of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce for a panel discussion examining the West Midlands economic landscape.

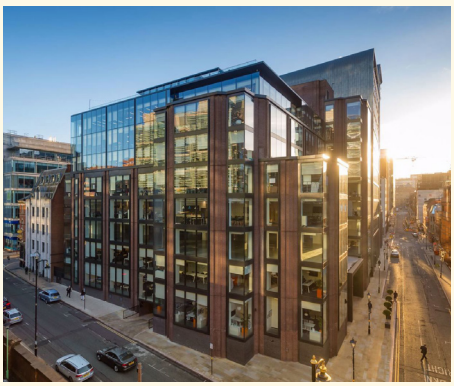
Discussion focused on the challenges businesses continue to face, including skills shortages, economic uncertainty and the need to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with growth ambitions, reinforcing the importance of collaboration between businesses, policymakers and stakeholders in ensuring the Midlands remains an attractive place to invest, work and grow.

BRUNTWOOD'S CORNERBLOCK HITS 100% MARK

Demand for adaptable, high-quality workspace continues to drive occupier activity in the Business District, with Bruntwood SciTech's flagship Cornerblock development on Cornwall Street now reaching full occupancy.

The milestone follows a series of expansions and new arrivals at the 116,000 sq ft hub. Among them is long-standing customer HRC Law which has recently committed to an additional 883 sq ft of space on the 4th floor to create client meeting rooms. This has allowed the business to reconfigure its existing space on the 5th floor to provide additional capacity for its growing team, reflecting a broader trend of businesses expanding within their existing footprints. Green energy supplier Bryt Energy and accountancy firm PKF Smith Cooper are also among the customers calling Cornerblock home.

Tom Foley, Head of Commercial at Bruntwood SciTech, said: "Reaching full occupancy at Cornerblock reflects the strength of Birmingham's business community and the continued demand for high-quality workspace."



EY

EY has promoted David Lee, Katharine Williams and Peter Hao to partner in its Three Chamberlain Square office, following the appointments of Tony King and Kris Aspin as partners earlier this year.

Lee, who joined EY in Birmingham in 2011, is UK technology risk leader for the firm's industrials and energy business, helping clients manage technology-related risk and build resilience.

Williams, who joined in 2007, will lead strategy and operations for EY's private equity business across the UK and Ireland, having previously held roles across EMEIA Tax and the firm's global private equity practice.

Hao, who joined in 2021, has been promoted to technology consulting partner, working predominantly with public sector clients.

Separately, Anisha Patel has been appointed head of private and mid-market in the Midlands.

BGF

BGF has strengthened its team with the appointment of Tom Herbert as an investor, adding further corporate finance experience to its Midlands operations.

Herbert will focus on identifying and assessing new investment opportunities, supporting transactions and working with management teams as their businesses develop.

He joins Lewis Building-based BGF after 11 years at KPMG, including five years in its Midlands corporate finance team.

Shakespeare Martineau

Shakespeare Martineau has been appointed to the Government Commercial Agency's Legal Panel for Public Sector, creating new opportunities to support organisations across the UK.

The Birmingham-headquartered firm will provide services across three areas: focused legal support, litigation and disputes, and costs lawyer services. The three-year framework runs until July 2029, with a possible two-year extension.

LEADERS IS EXPANDING
NEW OFFICE FOR PROPERTY FIRM

Property firm Leaders has expanded its Birmingham presence with the opening of a new lettings office in the Business District.

The new Birmingham Central office, on Newhall Street, is the company's third location in the city, joining established branches in Kings Norton and Maypole.

The expansion reflects Leaders' confidence in Birmingham's property market as major regeneration, new transport connections and continued investment reshape the city and support demand for homes.

The Newhall Street team will cover areas including the Jewellery Quarter, Digbeth, Brindleyplace, the Chinese Quarter and Eastside.

A Leaders spokesperson said: "Our confidence in Birmingham has led us to open our new Birmingham Central lettings office, giving us three locations across the city.

"Being based on Newhall Street puts our team at the heart of one of Birmingham's principal commercial centres and close to some of its most active residential and regeneration markets."



SOUTHSIDE DISTRICT
ANNOUNCES NEW DIRECTORS

Southside District has announced a refresh of its Board of Directors alongside the appointment of a new Business Relationship Manager, marking an important next phase in strengthening engagement with businesses across the District.

The refreshed Board brings together senior leaders from across Southside's diverse business community, representing key sectors including hospitality, culture, business, hotels and the local community.

Jon Gilchrist MBE, Birmingham Hippodrome's Artistic Director and CEO, has been appointed as Co-Chair of the Board alongside Dr Steve Ball, the BID's current Co-Chair. Other Board Director appointments include:

Lawrence Barton – the organiser of Birmingham Pride's annual celebration and former Board Chair

Luke Gallimore - Radisson Blu

Yanbo (Rob) Yang – Gyo Curry

Kelly Tipper – The Dragon Inn

Heather Hoskins – Holiday Inn

Han Liu – owner of multiple businesses in Southside District



Pictured L-R: Yanbo (Rob) Yang, Kelly Tipper, Li Keen Chin (Gene), James Wong, Dr Steve Ball, Tom Goodman, Lawrence Barton, Wei Du, Steve Cross, Luke Gallimore, Han Liu.

WHEN AI MEETS THE COURTROOM:
WHY FAMILY LAW STILL NEEDS A HUMAN TOUCH

Increasingly, people facing some of the most difficult moments of their lives are turning to Artificial Intelligence (AI) for answers.

Divorce, child arrangements, financial settlements – questions that once required an immediate call to a solicitor are now typed into ChatGPT at midnight, often in the hope of finding clarity before the reality sets in.



At Davisons Law, Family Law Solicitor Yvette Akonta, pictured, is seeing it firsthand. More clients are arriving at their first appointment already armed with AI-generated information and while being informed is never a bad thing, what AI provides and what a Solicitor provides are different things.

"AI can give you a helpful overview of a process," said Yvette. "But Family Law is not just about information. It's about judgement, strategy and understanding people. No two families are the same and the details that make your situation unique are exactly the details that AI cannot account for."

The risks go beyond gaps in knowledge. AI tools generate responses based on patterns in data, using confident, polished language that can sound authoritative even when it is not. They can produce inaccurate legal information, miss crucial nuances and, critically, tend to agree with the user rather than challenge unrealistic expectations.

In Family Law, those limitations carry real consequences. Financial outcomes depend on a wide range of individual factors. Child arrangements are determined by welfare considerations, not general assumptions. A small detail that AI overlooks could significantly change the outcome of a case.

A Solicitor does more than explain the law. They build a strategy tailored to your circumstances, identify risks before they become problems, negotiate on your behalf and provide the kind of human reassurance that no algorithm can replicate, particularly when emotions are running high.

Family Law also moves quickly. Procedures change, new guidance emerges and staying current is not optional. At Davisons Law, the team works closely with courts and legal professionals to ensure advice reflects the law as it stands today - not as it was when a dataset was last updated.

AI can be a useful starting point but when the decisions affect your children, your home and your future, it should not be the finishing line.

MORE THAN A SKYLINE

Design MEP: The people, projects and partnerships driving a more sustainable Birmingham



Birmingham's skyline continues to evolve, but increasingly the conversation around growth is about more than what we build, it's about how we build it.

From reducing energy demand and embracing renewable technologies to designing buildings that can adapt to a changing climate, sustainability is influencing decisions long before construction begins. For Design MEP, that means considering how a building will perform for years to come.

Birmingham continues to undergo significant transformation through major developments across the city centre. Which projects are you particularly proud of?

Octagon and One Eastside are two of Birmingham's tallest residential towers and standout projects that have helped shape the city's evolving skyline. We are equally proud of work that doesn't necessarily grab the headlines, from Baskerville SEND school in Harborne to projects at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. For us, contributing to Birmingham's transformation means supporting the city across different sectors and communities.

Birmingham's City of Nature Plan sets out an ambitious vision for creating a greener, healthier and more resilient city. In what ways do your Birmingham projects support the wider goals of the City's nature and sustainability agenda?

The built environment has an important part to play. On Octagon, our sustainability team assessed overheating risk and energy performance, helping create comfortable, energy-efficient homes better equipped for a changing climate.

Sustainable design isn't only about reducing carbon. Decisions made at design stage affect energy use, comfort and indoor air quality. Getting them right creates buildings that are more efficient, healthier and more resilient.

Can you tell us about any community initiatives, social value programmes or local projects you are involved in, and the impact they are having on Birmingham residents?

Being part of Birmingham means contributing beyond the projects we deliver. Our team supports local schools and community organisations and shares its experience with the next generation, most recently through a BIM presentation to students at Birmingham City University. Social value is about using our skills and time to make a positive impact.

Collaboration is often key to delivering lasting change. How do you work with organisations across Birmingham, and what have these partnerships achieved so far?

No successful project happens in isolation. The best results come from clients, architects, engineers and the wider design team working towards the same goal. Birmingham has a strong professional community and being based here helps us build relationships across the industry. Those relationships lead to better projects, new ideas and better outcomes for the city.

Having opened your Birmingham office earlier this year, what has your experience of the Colmore community been like, and how do you see your organisation contributing to the district's business community in the years ahead?

Opening our Birmingham office on Colmore Row felt like a natural next step. We wanted to be at the heart of the city, close to the projects, people and businesses we work alongside.

Nine months on, we've enjoyed becoming part of the Colmore community and taking part in the events and initiatives that bring the district together.

It feels like we made the right choice.

Birmingham's ambitions for a greener, healthier and more resilient city will take people working together, sharing ideas and making better choices.

The skyline may be the most visible sign of Birmingham's transformation, but what sits behind it will ultimately shape the city's future.



NEW FUNDING TEAM
FOR LEONARD CURTIS IN CITY

Leonard Curtis has launched a dedicated Funding team in Birmingham, supporting the firm's national growth strategy and reinforcing its commitment to businesses across the Midlands.

The team will operate alongside the firm's well established Birmingham office at Cavendish House, Waterloo Street, bringing together funding expertise, advisory capabilities and lender relationships to deliver integrated support for SMEs and mid-market businesses.

Alison Taylor joins as Business Advisory Lead, bringing extensive experience working alongside companies, providing guidance as a reliable partner through the entire business lifecycle. She will work closely with lenders, introducers and clients in Birmingham to deliver strategic solutions.

Specialist Funding Relationship Manager Jas Mall brings significant experience across invoice finance and commercial funding. Following roles with Independent Growth Finance, Bibby Financial Services and RBS Invoice Finance, he has a strong track record of supporting SMEs through complex funding challenges.

Ed Brown also joins Leonard Curtis as Funding Relationship Manager. Having spent four years at Swoop, he has developed deep expertise in helping businesses to access a broad range of funding solutions and will focus on building relationships and growing the firm's presence across the region.

Together, the team will be based within the Business District and will focus on connecting businesses with the right funding and advisory solutions, drawing on the firm's extensive lender and introducer network and working in close collaboration with colleagues across restructuring, legal and advisory.

Ward Hadaway

Birmingham law firm Ward Hadaway has appointed Chris Piggott as partner in its employment team.

Piggott brings more than 30 years' experience advising employers, from SMEs to large corporates, across sectors including recruitment, financial services and further education.

He is train-the-trainer accredited and has delivered HR and workplace training for a range of businesses and is recognised by Chambers and Partners and Legal 500 for his experience in TUPE, staff reorganisations, injunctive relief and restrictive covenant matters.

Colmore Partners

Colmore Partners is entering its sixth year in business with further investment in its people, clients and long-term growth plans, following a series of new appointments and the expansion of its office space at the Imperial and Whitehall building on Colmore Row, Birmingham.

The firm has recently welcomed three new financial planners to the team, including Michael Hulse and Aidan Bennett, who joined earlier this month. Michael brings nearly 25 years of experience in financial services and will be based in the Birmingham office.







Bennett, who has worked in the sector for nine years and became a planner in 2020, will support the firm's continued growth across Manchester and the North of England.

Earlier this year, Colmore Partners also appointed Imran Kalam, who has already played an important role in strengthening the firm's presence within the Birmingham business community.

The company has also strengthened its paraplanning team with the appointment of Oliver Giles. At 21, Giles has already built a strong foundation in the profession, having entered financial services through an apprenticeship before being named Financial Services Administrator Apprentice of the Year at the CII and PFS Apprenticeship Awards in 2025. He has since successfully progressed into paraplanning and has now been with Colmore Partners for three months.

The appointments reflect Colmore Partners' commitment to attracting and developing a broad mix of talent, from professionals at the start of their careers to established advisers with significant industry experience. The firm said this continued interest from high-quality candidates is a positive indication of the culture it has built over the past five years.

Trowers & Hamlins

Law firm Trowers & Hamlins has recruited partner Paul Scott to its dispute resolution and litigation team in Birmingham.

Scott is a construction litigation specialist, with significant adjudication, arbitration and litigation experience. He has a track record of delivering successful outcomes in contentious construction matters, with significant recent experience complex and high value 'post-Grenfell' cladding claims; professional negligence actions; and subcontractor disputes.

A qualified lawyer of 12 years, he joins Trowers from Gateley.

He said: "Trowers & Hamlins is a firm renowned for its national litigation practice and strong reputation in the construction litigation sector and I am excited to be joining the team, bringing my experience to make a valuable contribution for further growth across the West Midlands and beyond."

West Midlands Buses

Mayor for the West Midlands, Richard Parker, has invited bus companies to bid for the first publicly-owned bus services on the region's roads in more than 40 years. It marks a major milestone in his policy to bring buses back under public control.

The first wave of franchised contracts covers Coventry, North Birmingham and Walsall. Contracts will be awarded early next year, with services launching in October 2027.

Under the franchising model, already used in London and Manchester, the West Midlands Combined Authority will directly control routes, timetables and fares. It will pay contractors to operate the services. This replaces the current deregulated system, in which private operators set their own routes and fares. The WMCA is also buying a fleet of buses and depots, to make it easier for smaller or out-of-region operators to bid.

Parker said the move was a decisive step towards fixing a bus network that had served private interests over passengers for too long. He called on operators of all sizes to compete for the contracts.

DISTRICT PROFILE:
JAS JOHAL, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, CGI

HOW CGI IS LEADING THE NEXT GENERATION

You've built a successful career in technology and delivery leadership. Can you tell us about your journey to becoming a Business Development Director at CGI, and what continues to motivate you today?

My technology career began almost 30 years ago by chance; I was inspired by a mentor to embrace new opportunities while balancing family life. After 25+ years at CGI, working across the IT lifecycle in a variety of roles and industries, I now work as a Business Development Director. I believe career growth comes from embracing challenges, continuous learning, and saying yes.



CGI was recently recognised with the Mentor Team of the Year award for the third year running. What does that achievement mean to you personally, and how important is mentoring in developing the next generation of talent within the business?

Winning Mentor Team of the Year recognised something I'm passionate about: helping others grow. Mentoring creates opportunities, leads by example, and builds resilience. I'm proud CGI supported Envision's initiative, with colleagues inspiring young people to build confidence, realise their potential, and become the next generation of leaders together every day.

Leadership in the technology sector is evolving rapidly. How do you approach leading teams through change while maintaining a strong focus on people, wellbeing and development?

I create an environment where people feel supported to embrace change rather than fear it. I encourage my team to say yes to new opportunities, knowing they'll have the support to learn and grow. By leading with empathy, investing in wellbeing and mentoring others, I help build confident and resilient teams.

As someone working in Birmingham's business community, what excites you most about the future of the city and its growing reputation as a hub for innovation and talent?

I've lived in the Birmingham area for over 30 years and am passionate about its future. Our universities produce exceptional talent and innovation. I'd love to see more graduates stay, bringing their ideas and skills to local organisations and helping Birmingham strengthen its position as a leading business and technology hub.



NEW ITALIAN RESTAURANT: PONTE NOW OPEN

A new addition to Colmore Life's fantastic dining scene, Ponte brings authentic Italian flavours, handcrafted pasta and contemporary design together under one roof.

The name Ponte, meaning 'bridge' in Italian, reflects the personal journey behind the restaurant and connects three places that have shaped owner Tomasso's personal journey. It begins in Pontecorvo, the small Italian town where his family story has its roots, before crossing to the UK. Hull then provides the next connection, a city whose bridges have long linked its landscape, before Tomasso's new chapter in Birmingham on Newhall Street.



Three places, connected by one name. Ponte reflects a journey that is Italian at heart, but shaped by the places and experiences encountered along the way.

Located at 58 Newhall Street, Ponte is built around a passion for fresh, high-quality ingredients and traditional Italian cooking. Handmade pasta is a defining feature of the menu, with dishes freshly prepared to offer diners a genuine taste of Italy.

While food is at the heart of the Ponte experience, plenty of thought has also gone into creating the restaurant's distinctive identity. Its striking branding was created by Purple Wave Graphics, which developed Ponte's visual identity from the ground up.

The elegant interior has been brought to life by Selekt Design, led by Katie Kors. The carefully considered scheme combines contemporary style with a warm and welcoming atmosphere, providing the perfect setting for Ponte's Italian-inspired menu.

Ponte is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 9pm and Saturday from 10am to 10pm.

For more information, including menus and opening times, visit **ponte-restaurant.eposnowonline.com**

STICKS'N'SUSHI COMING SOON TO PARADISE



Award-winning Danish-Japanese restaurant Sticks'n'Sushi will be opening at Paradise this autumn as the estate's newest hospitality offering.

The group will be taking a 6,392 sq ft unit on the ground floor of Three Chamberlain Square, facing onto the new Ratcliff Passage public realm.

The new operator will be the first leisure venue at Three Chamberlain Square, a building with a unique, low carbon design, and accreditations that underlines its holistic commitment to sustainability and workplace wellbeing.

It will bring a whole new offering to the city and the Paradise estate, which is already home to Dishoom, Albert's Schloss, Rosa's Thai, F1®Arcade, La Bellezza, and Cow & Sow.

Founded in 1994 by half-Japanese, half-Danish, brothers Jens and Kim Rahbek, and Thor Anderson in Copenhagen, Sticks'n'Sushi is one of Denmark's most established and respected restaurant groups – with sites in Denmark, Germany and the UK.

The new restaurant will span an expansive ground-floor space with an adjoining terrace, large bar area and private dining. With room for up to 250 guests, it will accommodate both small and larger groups for drinking and dining in the heart of the city.

Designed by Danish practice OEO Studio – known for its work on Noma Kyoto, and more recently, Sticks'n'Sushi Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen – the space will draw on Japanese architectural principles while incorporating Scandinavian design.

For more information visit **sticksnsushi.com**



MONEY MOVES THAT MATTER

SMART FINANCIAL HABITS FOR A STRONGER FUTURE

Whether you're starting your career, climbing the professional ladder, or planning your next big life milestone, the financial decisions you make today can have a lasting impact on your future.

From ensuring you're adequately protected if the unexpected happens, to making the most of pension contributions, managing pay rises wisely, and preparing to buy your first home, building financial resilience is about more than earning more money.

In this article, members of Birmingham Colmore's **Next Gen Working Group** share practical insights to help young professionals make informed financial choices, avoid common pitfalls, and lay the foundations for long-term financial wellbeing.

Daniella Campbell, Chartered Financial Planner, Forvis Mazars

TOPIC: UNDERINSURANCE

Underinsurance occurs when the protection you have is insufficient to meet your needs if the unexpected happens, such as being unable to work through illness or injury, being diagnosed with a serious condition, or dying unexpectedly. As life evolves, financial responsibilities can change too, so protection should be reviewed and updated alongside your circumstances.

A helpful starting point is to ask: what would happen financially in each scenario, and could I cover any shortfall myself? Many people consider holding cash as an emergency fund, but overlook the importance of their ongoing income so it is helpful to consider who relies on you financially.

A common mistake is that many people assume their workplace benefits will provide enough protection. While employer-provided benefits can be valuable, they may not meet your needs and often end if you change jobs. As such, a good rule of thumb is to review your cover at least annually, or after major life events such as getting married, having children, changing jobs or taking on additional borrowing.

By focusing your budget on protecting the risks that would have the greatest effect on you and your loved ones, a small amount of planning today can provide significant peace of mind and financial security in the future.

Jay Dhaliwal, Chartered Independent Financial Adviser, Chase de Vere

TOPIC: PENSIONS

Over the last 10 years working in financial services, I have seen many people underestimate the impact of starting their pension savings early.

A simple, powerful step is to check how much you and your employer are contributing. Some employers will match contributions above the minimum level, so it's worth ensuring you're taking full advantage of the benefits available to you.

If you've recently received a pay rise, consider increasing your pension contributions by just 1% or 2% as the power of starting early is significant.

Contributing £200 per month from age 30 to 68 could build a pension pot of around £272,000, assuming 5% annual investment growth before charges. However, waiting until age 40 could result in around £147,000 – a difference of approx. £125,000! This is an illustration only and actual returns could be higher or lower.

For higher and additional-rate taxpayers, pensions can be one of the most tax-efficient ways to save, so before the tax year ends on 6 April 2027, it's worth reviewing whether you're making the most of the pension annual allowances.

Reviewing your pension funding may help you maximise available tax reliefs and strengthen your retirement plans.

Katrania Lowers, Chartered Financial Planner, Colmore Partners

TOPIC: LIFESTYLE CREEP

Lifestyle creep is something that gets us all. We've lived off a salary for years, get a pay rise, our expenses increase in line with that new salary and all of a sudden, we're left wondering how we functioned on less!

Often we have wanted something but haven't quite had enough spare cash to afford it and so you tell yourself, "When I earn more money, that's what I'll spend it on". The money has already spent before it's been received! And let's be honest, if you've functioned without a gardener before the pay rise, you can most certainly function without one after the fact.

I'm not saying anything is wrong with spending your money on the things you want, but for a lot of people it's at the sacrifice of saving for their future or building up an emergency fund to protect them from financial ruin.

I find budgeting really helps. Working out essentials vs discretionary spending. It



Daniella Campbell,Jay Dhaliwal, Katrania Lowers and Declan Fitzpatrick

puts things into perspective and allows you to see where your money is actually going. Immediate gratification tells us we need everything right now and that we don't treat ourselves enough but if 70% of your budget is going on discretionary expenses then I think you're treating yourself plenty.

What I personally do is split any pay rise or bonus between future me and fun me. I retain 40% of my bonus or pay rise because heck, I've worked for it. But I also know that money governs how I live my life and the things I'm able to do both now and in the future – so I don't get lost in shortsightedness – and I allocate 60% towards savings and investments.

Increasing pension contributions is something that's non-negotiable for me. My employer offers employer match up to a certain amount. If I don't take advantage of that, I'm giving up free money. Work out your budget, overcome myopia, and find out if your employer offers pension matching. The next time you get a pay rise, you know what to do with it. Future you will thank you!

Declan Fitzpatrick,
Private Banking Manager,
Handelsbanken PLC

TOPIC: BUYING YOUR FIRST HOME

Getting onto the property ladder can feel like a distant goal, but there are steps you can take today to achieve it sooner.

Start by checking your credit score and taking steps to improve where possible. Avoid payday loans and other forms of high cost short term borrowing as these could affect how lenders view your finances. Completing a detailed income and expenditure analysis will help you understand how much you can comfortably afford each month.

Whilst there are mortgages with a low deposit available, saving a larger deposit can improve your position and may open more doors to different mortgage options. First time buyers could also consider opening a lifetime ISA.

Your employment circumstances matter too, consider how long you have been in your current job, and whether you have passed your probationary period, as most lenders will want to see evidence of employment stability.

Research the area where you want to buy. Look beyond the property itself consider transport, schools, amenities, how easy is it to get to work? This research can help you decide whether the area and property are right for you and your budget.

Remember, your deposit is not the only cost. Depending on your circumstances you may benefit from stamp duty relief, but you should also budget for legal fees, valuation, and other mortgage related costs. Once you have the keys consider furnishing and settling into your new home. This may mean reducing other spending such as holidays or social activities.

Finally, if you're considering buying a flat, check whether it is leasehold or freehold. If its leasehold look at the remaining lease term, service charges, and cladding issues. These factors can affect affordability and your ability to secure a mortgage.

Getting onto the property ladder rarely happens overnight, but taking these steps today can put you in a much stronger position when the right property comes along.

This article is for general information only and does not constitute financial advice. We recommend seeking independent professional advice before making any financial decisions. Investments can fall as well as rise in value, and you may get back less than you invest. Tax treatment depends on individual circumstances and may change. Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

Jay, Daniella, Declan and Katrania are members of Birmingham Colmore's Next Gen Working Group, which exists to help young professionals thrive by creating spaces and experiences that foster connections, learning, and confidence. The result is a vibrant, supportive District where young professionals feel connected, empowered, and ready to succeed, ensuring the next generation feels at home in Colmore.

2027 IN

From world-class sport to a brand-new celebration of Birmingham's jewellery heritage, 2027 is already shaping up to be another major year for the city. Here are seven events to put in the diary.

Chinese New Year – February 2027

Birmingham will welcome Chinese New Year in February 2027, with the new year beginning on Saturday 6 February. Full details of the city's celebrations are still to be announced, but the annual festival has become one of the biggest dates in Birmingham's cultural calendar, attracting 30,000 visitors to Chinatown and Southside.

Birmingham Jewellery Biennial – 1–31 May 2027

Birmingham's first Jewellery Biennial will take place throughout May 2027, bringing a month-long celebration of jewellery, craft and design to the Jewellery Quarter and wider city centre. The festival will feature exhibitions, installations, activities, workshops and special events showcasing leading British and international creatives alongside up-and-coming makers. Visitors will also have opportunities to discover and buy jewellery and even make pieces of their own.

The Biennial follows Birmingham being named a World Craft City for Jewellery and Allied Trades in May 2025, recognising the city's craft heritage, maker community and commitment to the future of the industry. Co-founded by Jewellery Quarter Development Trust and Birmingham City University, the new festival will celebrate more than 250 years of jewellery making in a city that has produced everything from the FA Cup and Wimbledon trophies to The Queen's Birthday Honours medals.

AJ Bell Great Birmingham Run – 2 May 2027

Thousands of runners will once again take to Birmingham's streets when the AJ Bell Great Birmingham Run returns on Sunday 2 May. Described by organisers as the Midlands' biggest running event, participants can choose between the Birmingham Half Marathon and 10K, with many taking part to raise money for good causes.

Both events start and finish in the heart of Birmingham, taking runners past some of the city's best-known landmarks, with music and entertainment adding to the atmosphere along the course. The event sold out in advance in 2026 and earlybird entries for the 2027 edition are already open.

Colmore Food Festival – Friday 2 and Saturday 3 July 2026

A firm fixture in Birmingham's summer calendar, the Colmore Food Festival will bring the city's food and drink scene together in the city centre. The free-to-enter festival offers visitors the opportunity to sample affordable mini dishes from local traders, bringing restaurants, bars and other food and drink businesses together in the heart of the city.

The festival is designed for everyone from dedicated foodies to those simply looking to try something different, with a range of stalls showcasing the District's food and drink offer.

Invictus Games Birmingham – 10–17 July 2027

Birmingham will welcome 550 wounded, injured and sick service personnel and veterans, together with their families,



for the Invictus Games from 10–17 July. Competitors from 25 nations will take part in 12 adaptive sports, with the Games placing recovery, resilience and the power of sport at the heart of the event.

Events will take place at the National Exhibition Centre and Sandwell Aquatics Centre. Birmingham's connection to the recovery of service personnel includes the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine at



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Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, alongside links to the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall and ongoing recovery support and family accommodation at Fisher House.

The Ashes at Edgbaston – 8–12 July and 20 July 2027

It promises to be a huge summer of international cricket at Edgbaston, with both the Men's and Women's Ashes coming to Birmingham. England Men will face Australia in the third Test of the five-match Rothesay Men's Ashes Series from Thursday 8 to Monday 12 July, as England look to win the urn outright for the first time since 2015. The match will also be the first Major Match Day with Edgbaston's new Dennis Amiss Stand and Radisson RED hotel open and operational.

Australia return to Edgbaston just over a week later when England Women play the final ODI of the Metro Bank Women's Ashes Series on Tuesday 20 July, which will also be the final match of the multi-format series. Edgbaston's international summer will later conclude with England Men facing New Zealand in the first ODI of their series on Tuesday 14 September.

Ozzfest at Villa Park – 2027

One of rock's most famous festivals is coming to Birmingham in 2027, with Ozzfest confirmed to return at Villa Park. Launched by Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne in 1996, the festival travelled around the world until 2018 but has never previously taken place in the city where Black Sabbath formed.

Villa Park provides a fitting home for Ozzfest's return. The stadium hosted Black Sabbath's historic Back to the Beginning concert on 5 July 2025, Ozzy Osbourne's final live performance, just 17 days before his death. Ozzfest will form part of another major year celebrating Ozzy's legacy in his home city, coinciding with Ozzy Day events. Further details of both events will be announced soon.

Keys to Colmore – 15–30 September 2027

Discover the District in a new way through Keys to Colmore, a special programme running in September 2027.

Keys to Colmore will unlock unique experiences, hidden gems and opportunities to connect with the people, places and stories that make the area one of Birmingham's most vibrant destinations.

Taking place over two weeks, the initiative will celebrate the culture, heritage and community spirit of the Colmore district. Further details will be announced soon, but attendees can look forward to an exciting programme that highlights the very best of the city's cultural, commercial and civic heart.

Your Colmore Business District

Map

