



DIWALI COMES TO THE SQUARE

Several thousand people packed into Victoria Square in central Birmingham earlier this month for the first ever WMCA-sponsored Diwali event.

Diwali on the Square saw performers, businesses, community leaders and artists come together to celebrate the annual Festival of Light.

The High Commissioner of India to the UK, His Excellency Mr Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha, spoke to the crowd at 12 noon to formally open the event.

West Midlands Mayor Andy Street went on to say how important it was to celebrate the diverse culture and traditions of the population of the West Midlands. He said: 'Diwali is a time of great celebration and this

event was for the whole community to enjoy, whatever their faith or background.

'Victoria Square was buzzing and it was a fantastic family-friendly occasion, offering the tastes and sounds of India to everyone who came along.'

Diwali is a five day festival celebrated by faiths throughout the Indian community to mark different historical events and stories but with all of them symbolising the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.

It is traditionally celebrated by lighting lamps and candles in doors and windows of the home, around temples and other buildings, along with fireworks.



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MAYORAL UPDATE

THE MAYOR AND FAITH CONFERENCE



Andy Street will be hosting a conference for the region's faith leaders on 27 November at the University of Birmingham.

Looking to strengthen community cohesion as well as help tackle important issues around homelessness, hate crime, economic growth and health inequalities, the event has been organised by the Mayor to help bring communities together and share ideas.

Andy Street has described the various faiths and related organisations in the region as 'a force for good' that has much to offer. Andy said: 'I am convinced our faith communities and faith-based charities form one of the greatest - and sometimes most under-appreciated - sources of strength, vitality and resilience in our area.'

'The region's faith communities are part of the West Midlands we call home, but are also one of the many ways that this area is connected to the world. I want to get to work straight away to listen, support and discuss how we can work more together.'

The conference will examine ways of working to achieve:

- Unlocking the potential of young people by building new leadership networks
- Reducing homelessness and social need
- Keeping communities safer by tackling hate crime and discrimination
- Finding concrete ways to work together to make the economy work better for the whole community

Andy Street's 17-strong faith steering group was established soon after Andy won the mayoral election in May. Its co-chairs are Francis Davis, Professor of Communities and Public Policy at the University of Birmingham, and Amrick Singh Ubhi, chair of the Council of Sikh Gurdwaras in Birmingham. Anyone interested in attending the conference can register for free at wmca.org.uk/the-mayor-and-faith-conference

MAYORS COME TOGETHER TO BOOST INVESTMENT

The mayors of the UK's three largest city regions got together at Birmingham's New Street station last week in order to call for greater national investment in infrastructure.

Mayor Andy Street and his counterparts Sadiq Khan, from London and Andy Burnham, from Greater Manchester, joined forces to urge ministers to free up more cash for new infrastructure projects.

The meeting signalled the launch of Lord Adonis' Infrastructure Commission report, which looks at the developmental needs of areas across the country and calls for greater, sustainable investment across all parts of the UK.

Andy Street said there was a real symbolism about the report being launched in the West Midlands.

'This could so easily be seen as people thinking the south east is the most important region in the country,' he said. 'The other mayors coming here reflects the fact that this is not the case, and that investment is critical to all of our big city regions and I'm delighted my mayoral colleagues have come here to Birmingham to

see what we're doing. Where there is common cause it's in all our interests to work together.'

Sadiq Khan said: 'The point we want to make is that investment in one region is not at the expense of another. We are making the case to the government that we think there should be greater investment in infrastructure that will lead to increased growth, which in turn means a return on investment. It's a win-win. As mayors across the country we are united in our wish to get increased investment in infrastructure.'

Andy Burnham added: 'We have an opportunity to rebalance the country by shifting the focus of new developments away from the south east. In some areas we haven't had our fair share of infrastructure investment over many decades and consequently our economies haven't reached their full potential.'

For more on the launch of the National Infrastructure Commission report, go to nic.org.uk/news/adonis-tackle-the-three-cs-and-deliver-world-class-infrastructure

TRANSPORT NEWS

GET ACTIVE



Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and Public Health England (PHE) have joined forces to help middle-aged people in the region get healthier and save money with the aid of the new 'Active 10' app and 'Short Hop' fares.

Over 650,000 adults aged 40–60 in the West Midlands do not achieve 10 minutes of continuous brisk walking over the course of a month and are missing out on health benefits, according to a Public Health England paper which reveals people in the UK are 20% less active now than in the 1960s and on average walk 15 miles less a year than two decades ago.

PHE's 'One You' physical activity campaign is encouraging adults to build a 10 minute continuous brisk walk into their day as a simple way to improve health – something which has been shown to reduce the risk of early death by 15%. Getting enough physical activity each week can also provide health benefits including a lowered risk of type 2 diabetes (by 40%), cardiovascular disease (by 35%), dementia (by 30%) and some cancers (by 20%).

Transport for West Midlands Managing Director, Laura Shoaf, said: 'It's easy to forget that the walk to and from catching a bus counts as exercise. By walking an extra stop or two you can make sure that you get a daily brisk ten minute walk with all the health benefits that come with that whilst also potentially saving money. By working with Public Health England we've identified several places around the West Midlands where walking those extra stops can get you into the next travel zone and save money.'

METRO AND MORE SCOOP EVEN MORE AWARDS



Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) has been named best in the UK for the second year running after landing the main award at the transport industry's equivalent to the Oscars.

TfWM took City Region Transport Authority of the Year. The award was in recognition of a number of key projects that TfWM had delivered over the last 12 months including;

- Birmingham city centre Midland Metro tram extension, which has seen passenger numbers increase by more than two million
- Collaborative work with Government to put more control of local train services in local hands through West Midlands Rail
- The innovative Bus Alliance working with private bus companies and local councils to secure £150 million investment in new, low polluting buses, new bus lanes and other passenger improvements
- A series of major operations by the region's Safer Travel Partnership which saw recorded crime on the transport network fall by more than two per cent over the year contributing to a drop in offences from 7,500 a decade ago to 2,700 now.

SWIFT SPREADS WINGS

Meanwhile, we are working hard to spread the benefits of our Swift smart ticketing system to areas beyond the West Midlands metropolitan area.

Thousands more bus passengers across the West Midlands now have the ability to use Swift cards to make their journeys cheaper and easier.

Passengers catching buses in Redditch and areas on the outskirts of the Black Country will now be able to have the benefits of using Swift cards on local services operated by Diamond Buses.

Once a customer has a Swift card they are able to obtain their next ticket through one of around 300 Payzones or through the eight Travel Information centres across the West Midlands. Tickets can also be downloaded through the Swift app or from one of 100 Swift collectors located across the public transport network. Swift was launched in 2012 and now sees more than three million journeys a month made on it.



Go to tfwm.org.uk/delivery/swift for more information on Swift cards and tickets.

LATEST

TEDX BRUM



The Birmingham Hippodrome recently hosted more than 1,400 attendees at the fifth Birmingham Tedx event.

The day brought together a host of speakers from the arts to science, architecture to politics, all focused on sharing their ideas and inspiring others to come up with ideas of their own.

Mayor Andy Street opened the event by saying how important it was for collaboration, especially around ideas, to underpin both growth and inclusion.

Showcasing talks from local thought leaders, the event included cross sector initiatives and performances

designed to prompt conversations, encourage collaboration, assert civic identity and inspire communities to unite and orchestrate their own change.

Tedx projects (independently organised Ted events) have grown increasingly diverse since the start of Ted talks back in 1984. But what remains constant is a non-profit approach committed to the accessibility of great ideas and a deeper understanding of the world in which we live, whether it is in Birmingham or Boston, Beijing or Belgrade.

To stream Tedx Brum 2017 go to tedxbrum.com/live-stream-perspectives

GETTING THE WEST MIDLANDS 'ON THE MOVE'

The WMCA has approved a new 'On The Move' strategy aimed at getting more people in the West Midlands physically active.

With above national average levels of inactivity, the West Midlands needs to become more active if we are to reach our strategic aims of reducing the productivity gap with the rest of the UK and reducing health costs to the NHS.

Importantly, our new 'On The Move' strategy makes the important connection between the costs of inactivity and its impact on transport, housing and education.

The strategy also references the huge potential of the upcoming Birmingham Commonwealth Games bid to inspire people across the West Midlands to become permanently involved in physical activity, sport and exercise.

As well as the transport agenda of encouraging cycling and walking, the strategy sets out how policy-makers can support people to be more active in their own homes and gardens and in their day-to-day lives such as while at work or while on their commute.

'On The Move' will be officially launched by Mayor Andy Street in Coventry next month. Meanwhile, for more on the WMCA's well-being agenda, go to governance.wmca.org.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=139

A third of adults



in WMCA are inactive, doing less than

30min 

per week of activity

£ 147m

The Government recommends

150min 

per week of moderate intense physical activity for a health-related benefit