

BRIXTON BID

WE'RE TALKING BUSINESS

Brixton BID is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to strengthening Brixton's diverse business culture. We represent over 650 levy-paying businesses in the local area and work to develop new and exciting opportunities for Brixton.



Jazz in the
Effra Hall Tavern

LUKE FORSYTH

Something in it for all of us



**Michael Smith,
Director of Brixton
BID, says Brixton's
night-time economy
must be nurtured
for sake of the
whole community**

The night-time economy is a key driver of economic and cultural regeneration and a magnet for domestic and international visitors, says the London Night Time Commission.

In Brixton, Transport for London (TfL) reported around 30m people entering and exiting our station in 2015. Other independent footfall figures (Springboard) reported 6 million coming into Brixton between 5pm and midnight in 2015 and 7m for the same period in 2016.

Springboard (independent of TfL) reports just over 17million visitors in 2015 and 19million in 2016. Whichever figures you rely on, a fraction of these visitors would no doubt have come to sample our 13 or more pubs and numerous clubs and live music venues.

Some suggest that at least 33% of all visits to Brixton take place between 5pm and midnight. Whether it's 30 million, 19 million or 17 million annually – Brixton appears to be getting its fair share of visitors.

Employment opportunities

But are we maximising the income and employment opportunities associated with London's night-time economy?

Research shows that the night-time economy contributes £26.3bn a year to London's gross domestic product (GDP) and supports one in eight jobs.

With retail at an all-time low in London should Brixton turn its attention to making the most of its night-time economy? I guess this depends on who is reading this editorial.

Residents in Brixton sometimes see night-time hospitality businesses as a source of problems – noise, nuisance and street urination.

Night-time businesses are struggling like all other small and medium enterprises with: abnormal increases in business rates; increases in pension and wage contributions to staff; property rental increases; and an extra rates contribution to Crossrail – all at the same time.

Nobody yet knows what impact Brexit will have on this section of our economy – beyond the anticipated price increase in supplies.

Lambeth council, constrained by a reducing budget, can only see opportunities to further tax this economy. At the same time, the council seeks to impose licensing conditions and limits on the growth of night-time economy for fear of reprisals from community activists. This approach is not sustainable as you cannot get more tax from less delivery.

Practical partnerships

Night-time businesses have organised under the aegis of the BID to create more significant and practical partnerships with local policing, community groups and licensing services.

Not only have businesses in this sector willingly introduced a reduction in vertical drinking as well as noise reduction and crime reduction initiatives in their establishments, they have also positively contributed to additional policing, additional street cleaning and campaigns tackling the problem of street urination which is clearly more than just a night-time economy issue.

The night-time fare in Brixton appears only to be getting better. A strong culture has been created around identifying and protecting female patrons with improved services and offers to all patrons (more cloakrooms, strategies to reduce mobile phone theft and assaults).

Amy Lamé, London's Night Czar and chair of the Night-time Commission, recognises the vibrant culture on offer to visitors to Brixton.

Against all the odds Brixton's night-time economy is still amongst the best on offer in London – great restaurants, a choice of quality live music most nights, theatre and cinema all via one underground exit.

Let's grow and nurture this economy. There is something in it for us all.



LONDON NIGHT CZAR AMY LAMÉ

Striking the right balance

Having lived in Brixton for over 10 years, I know first-hand that it's a buzzing hub of night-time activity.

What I love about the area is the diversity of its night-time culture – from theatres to night clubs, restaurants to cinemas, Brixton has it all.

As London's first ever night czar, I'm working with venue owners, residents and revellers, night workers, councils, the police and developers to create a shared vision of London as a truly 24-hour city.

We want to take full advantage of the Night Tube, to ensure that all Londoners, can benefit from thriving night-time economies like Brixton's.

Another thing I'll be looking

at is how we can protect London's nightclubs, pubs, music venues and LGBT+ spaces.

I'm working with the Mayor to bring in important planning legislation such as the "Agent of Change" principle. This puts the onus on developers to properly soundproof flats that are built near clubs and music venues so that revellers and residents can co-exist peacefully.

Whether you want to party 'til four in the morning, get to and from work safely or just want a good night's sleep, my job as Night Czar is to bring people together so we can strike the right balance and ensure the capital's night-time economy and culture can become the envy of the world.

NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

SOPHIA: HOOTANANNY

The jewel in the crown

The night-time economy is the jewel in Brixton's crown – it's its unique selling proposition. For the last 30 years everyone – from Spain to Greece – has known Brixton for two things: its West Indian community and its live music.

There's a huge amount to celebrate and we don't want to lose any of it. The rate variations locally make no sense. In some cases, rates will rise 70 per cent in others 100 per cent. Coming at the same time as the minimum wage rise and pensions changes, plus 20 per cent VAT, makes it very challenging. Costs like £120k a year extra mean that businesses might have to pass the burden on to customers.

To keep our venues means a lot of work and Lambeth council should support local pubs and clubs by making them "assets of community value" which makes it more difficult to force a change of use.

Small to medium sized businesses employ Britain. Government is calling the shots on how we run our businesses, yet we employ 12 million people.



MATT: THE WHITE HORSE

There is an underlying current of uncertainty

Compared to other areas of London, Brixton stands out because of the people who actually live here.

They like Brixton. They like going out in Brixton and meeting each other and having a good time. There is a real sense of community in Brixton and the night-time economy plays a big part in that.

In recent years Brixton has become a lot more competitive and you have to run a good venue to survive.

The White Horse does well because it doesn't take itself too seriously. On Saturday night people come to party and let their hair down and



the next day we have families coming in for Sunday lunch and to relax with the papers.

We are part of that new generation of community pub that doesn't define itself by being one thing or another.

But there is an underlying current of uncertainty. We do not know the council's vision for the future and how we fit into it.

Obviously, we enjoy what we do and would love to continue being part of the community. But we are maxed out in how we do things to make our business work. We are open until 3am at the weekends and – due to the turnover this creates – our rent and new business rates are extremely high (67% increase). If the hours were to change the business would not be able to meet these fixed costs.



ALAN: SW9

A place to feel safe and comfortable

Since the *Brixton Bugle* first drew attention to the planned closure of SW9 as part of a hotel development, the support of our customers, near and far, and particularly the neighbours, has been overwhelming.

It's really touching to see from comments online what the bar means to people who come here and how much they enjoy it – from families, to women who say they

feel safe and comfortable when they come here alone.

It will be a devastating blow when the doors close.

Lambeth council seems intent on ripping the heart out of Brixton which is a disgrace.

Thanks to the greed of others, Brixton will soon be a soulless place where once there was character!

ELLY: MARKET HOUSE

Tough times and tough decisions

Market House is an independent pub/late night bar in the heart of Brixton. It carries on in the tradition of its predecessor, Living Bar, as a lively all-inclusive venue with a fantastic line up of DJs on a Friday and Saturday night.

We have seen in the last few years a great influx of people coming to Brixton for a night out and Market House and the local economy have benefited from this.

However, the down side of being a popular place is that



we have seen many venues close due to astronomical rent rises, and business rates have followed suit.

Add to that minimum wage rises, pension provision for all staff and the increasing difficulty in recruiting staff, particularly since the Brexit vote, and what you have is an economic environment in which small independent businesses will struggle to compete.

So, tough times and tough decisions ahead.



LOUISE AND TONY: CLUB 414

We're more than half way there now

One of the first late night venues in Brixton, Club 414 has welcomed many from all over the world to party in Brixton on Coldharbour Lane for three decades.

The night-time economy has and always will attract people after dark to play, party and enjoy their free time. The Mayor of London has seen and calculated a great advantage that the night-time economy can play to create a 24 hour city.

Lambeth has a unique opportunity to become the lead in this vision. Come on let's do this, we're more than half way there already.

JONNY: SEVEN AT BRIXTON AND THREE EIGHT FOUR

Another big cost to swallow

We share the concerns raised by Michael and echo his comments on working together to ensure we have a safer, more vibrant and successful night-time economy.

We place conditions in our venues to ensure that guests are safe, are served responsibly and leave in a quiet and orderly manner.

It's disappointing to see such a big increase in our business rates bill. We were hoping the increase would be eased in gradually, but have seen a 47% rise overnight.

It is another big cost to swallow for ourselves and others in Brixton.

Combined with big rent rises and product and service price increases, the business rates increase contributes to a huge rise in static costs over 2017 so far.

I fear that rises such as these will impact both the daytime and night-time economies in Brixton



– especially the independents – and are likely to discourage further start-up businesses like ourselves.

We are working really hard to ensure that these costs are not passed on to our guests, this includes a lot of meetings with suppliers and shifting products and services where we can.

Although we set our own targets on other areas – like in-house training scores, staff and manager development, and guest ratings – our big target is achieving profit.

Unfortunately, all other targets are null and void if we don't make a profit!