



## Press release

Release date: 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008

### ***Nechells Baths sign chief executive as strategy and expansion revealed***

*The Birmingham Foundation has appointed John James as chief executive of Nechells Baths community centre with immediate effect.*

Mr James has spent the greater part of his business life advising organisations both in the public and private sectors, specialising in strategic business growth, acquisitions and joint ventures. Set to expand the role and services offered by the renovated landmark facility, he will continue the charity's work in regenerating this part of the city.

The Birmingham Foundation also intends to play a wider role in helping Birmingham City Council, AWM and the government to meet inner city development objectives as revealed in Mike Whitby's Big City Plan in February..

*Nechells Baths has this week been recommended for a Grant Lottery regeneration award in recognition of its community achievements. The refurbished landmark building, which is owned by the Foundation, provides crèche and nursery facilities – there is a waiting list for both - training facilities, a training kitchen, café, internet café, heritage training workshops, as well as office accommodation for several local not for profit community organisations.*

Local councillors also hold their surgeries there. During the evenings, the facility is home to a host of activities including a youth club, community bingo, and a thriving dance group.

In the last two years, flagship tenants, Pertemps People Development Group, has successfully put more than 350 local, long term unemployed back into work, as well as enabling over 200 local people to gain educational qualifications to enable them to get work or study further.

Commenting on his appointment John James said: "I have been associated with the Birmingham Foundation and its work both directly and indirectly since its launch more than a

decade ago. I am proud to be now heading up what is considered to be the charity's most successful community project to date and play my part in expanding the role and the impact of this centre for the local community.

"I am joining a team that has already made significant progress and will work with them to build on this success. We will focus on increasing community involvement with our day to day activities as well as concentrate on making a longer term impact on the area by continuing to reduce crime and alleviate drug problems in the area.

"On a more strategic level, we also want to work more closely with the city to build in its 20 year vision of tackling regeneration in these areas. The Big City Plan addresses such an initiative and our aims and expertise in this area together with our future objectives for Nechells match well with those of the city leaders."

Acknowledged as one of the country's most successful inner city regeneration projects, Nechells Baths is a magnificent Grade II listed Edwardian building, completed in 1910 which formed part of a general provision of public baths and wash-houses across Birmingham

This city treasure closed in 1995 and fell into major disrepair. Following a £5.5 million refurbishment, with funding from AWM, the Heritage Lottery Fund and ERDF (via Government Office for the West Midlands) this former public liability was restored to its former glory, not as a swimming baths, but as a much needed community facility

Mr James added: "Plans are already being prepared to ensure that the Birmingham business community becomes fully aware of what is happening at Nechells and how they can become involved in short term funding and corporate social responsibility opportunities. There is not a lot of public funding available and like all charity driven projects we need cash, especially if we want to extend our capacity.

Derek Inman, chief executive of the Birmingham Foundation added: "Nechells Baths centre has made a direct difference to the lives of hundreds of people living and working in this area. Visitor numbers continue to rise as the popularity of the centre rises and we are determined to keep pace with this demand by way of expansion and maximum use of all the facilities available.

"John brings a much needed high profile focus to one of the worst areas in the country. His enthusiasm will ensure The Birmingham Foundation continues to achieve the very best for those living and working in some of the more deprived areas in the city, especially Nechells."

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## **Notes to editors –**

### **John James**

John James was educated at King Edward V1 School Lichfield, Bristol University, and the College of Law. He became a Partner and Consultant with the international law firm Hammonds for 30 years and was subsequently appointed to oversee the construction and opening of the College of Law in Birmingham - now the leading provider of legal education and training in the Midlands.

He co-founded (and subsequently became Chairman and Chief Executive of) Birmingham Forward which has over 250 members firms (employing over 60,000 people).

A Fellow of the Institute of Directors, John is former Chairman of the West Midlands branch, retiring Spring 2007, Chairman of the "Get-a-Head" national charity based in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham and sits on the Advisory Board of the Birmingham International Jazz Festival (now in its 23rd year). He is President of Birmingham and a board member of Sport England (West Midlands).

Previous roles include Chairman of South Birmingham Collage, one of the largest Further Education colleges in the West Midlands for over 10 years and director of both West Midlands Arts and of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. He is also a former President of Solihull Rugby Club (Pertemps Bees).

In 2004 he won "Birmingham's Most Inspiring Business Leader" Award voted for annually by the city's young professional community.

### **The Birmingham Foundation**

The Birmingham Foundation is a charitable trust set up in 1997 raising funds from businesses and individuals to promote and support local voluntary / community groups and projects within the area of Greater Birmingham. It serves as a conduit between the region's donors and do-ers and provides support through a programme of constructive grant making for people living within deprived and disadvantaged areas of Birmingham and the Black Country, reaching individuals through small grass-roots groups. During the last 12 months The Birmingham Foundation has awarded more than £3.3 million in grants to more than 900 local voluntary and community projects.

For further information on Birmingham Foundation go to [www.bhamfoundation.co.uk](http://www.bhamfoundation.co.uk)