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Release 11/01/11

media release

Diverted Giving scheme launched in Victoria in support of the Homeless.

Victoria Business Improvement District launched this ground-breaking scheme to provide funds for The Passage in support of their work to find long term, sustainable solutions for the homeless while discouraging aggressive street begging in Victoria at the same time. Launched for Christmas 2010 this scheme is due to run throughout 2011.

The Launch involved:

1. **Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP**, Minister for Housing and Local Government
2. **Mick Clarke** Chief Executive of The Passage www.passage.org.uk
3. **Ruth Duston**, Chief Executive of Victoria Business Improvement District (Victoria BID) www.insw1.com
4. **Nic Harper**, Chair of Safe & Secure sub committee of Victoria Business Improvement District (Victoria BID) www.insw1.com

Venue

11.45am on Tuesday 11 January, 2011
Reception of Department for Communities and Local Government, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU

About Diverted Giving

The Victoria Business Improvement District (Victoria BID), has funded the development and implementation of the **Diverted Giving** scheme to run over the Christmas period and into 2011, with the distinctive "DG" brand that will be seen across the whole of the Victoria BID area.

The **Diverted Giving** scheme consists of 50 counter top boxes, and four floor standing boxes sited at the key locations, all with great footfall and high profiles in the area:

- Eland House, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU
- Cardinal Place, Victoria Street
- Victoria Coach Station
- House of Fraser in Victoria Street

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The **Diverted Giving** scheme will be maintained by The Passage, whose mission is to provide the resources to encourage, inspire and challenge homeless people to transform their lives.

The **Diverted Giving** scheme encourage people to place money in strategically located boxes rather than giving directly to people begging on the street. Its primary objective is to reduce active begging on the streets while at the same time directing funds to The Passage, with a proven track record of helping vulnerable people find practical ways of building their lives without resorting to begging on streets of Westminster. Working in this way gives people long term and sustainable options that ultimately are targeted to end street begging which provides a very short term solution to long term problems.

On its own of course, the **Diverted Giving** scheme cannot solve the problem of homelessness. It is however, just one of a number of initiatives being funded by the Business community in this area of London. This is one a number of partnership projects being initiated between the Police and the local business community, local retailers, hospitality providers and charities to make Victoria fulfill its potential as a safe and secure destination for both its working and residential population as well as the many visitors whom we want to choose to return time and time again to enjoy its many attractions.

It is hoped that Victoria BIDs **Diverted Giving** scheme will help to promote the area as a more desirable shopping destination by discouraging begging.

As word spreads about **Diverted Giving** the police hope to see a decline in begging. Early feedback suggests that the idea is already spreading to other parts of the Capital. Commander Simon Bray of the Metropolitan Police Service confirms that a ward panel he visited in Soho are very interested to see how this could work in their area. Victoria BID are happy to share their experience of this scheme and other aspects of its Safe & Secure agenda with other London BIDs.

The police officer coordinating this scheme is Seargent Simon Reason who is based at Victoria BID's office. He can be contacted on 0203 004 0788 or by email simon.reason@insw1.com

Contacts at Victoria BID

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- Simon Reason, Business Crime Reduction Officer **020 3004 0788**
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QUOTES FROM KEY PARTNERS

Nic Harper, Chair of Safe & Secure sub committee, Victoria Business Improvement District says:

"The Victoria BID invests over £1.2m per annum into Victoria on behalf of the business community to ensure Victoria is a clean, green and safe destination. The Diverted Giving campaign forms a large part of our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives supporting local charities like The Passage who undertake commendable work within the local area, to assist those who have become homeless and want support to move back into mainstream society. As a major hub in central London, Victoria has historically seen the homeless on its streets, often begging for money to feed their alcohol or drug dependency. Diverted Giving is a way to provide positive support for those individuals most at need by encouraging individuals to make a positive donation at a number of key locations around Victoria. 100% of all donations collected will be given to The Passage to assist in the great work they undertake in the area."

Mick Clarke, Chief Executive of The Passage says:

"I'm delighted that the Victoria BID is supporting The Passage. The mission of The Passage is to provide resources which encourage, inspire and challenge homeless people to transform their lives. This scheme is another way for members of the public to support The Passage in achieving that mission, as we work to deliver long term and lasting solutions to the problem of homelessness."

Rt Hon. Grant Shapps MP, Housing Minister says:

"The Government is fully committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society are protected, and with this in mind we've entirely protected homelessness spending at £400m in the spending review, and £6.5bn through the Supporting People programme to help the most vulnerable live independent lives. "But our commitment goes beyond protecting funding.

"That's why we've made a long-term commitment to work closely with colleagues across Government and the charitable sector through the Ministerial Working Group on homelessness, to help us get to the heart of the issues that cause homelessness, so we can be as effective as possible at helping people on the front line tackle homelessness. "It's also the reason I'm giving my full backing to this new scheme to help the homeless in Victoria. Diverted Giving is an excellent way to encourage people who live or work in the area to make a positive contribution to help the most vulnerable people in society. By having donation points at a number of key locations around Victoria, the scheme is a great example of making the most of ordinary peoples' willingness to help people less fortunate than themselves."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT VICTORIA BID – see www.inSW1.com

Victoria BID provides a platform for businesses to work together to improve and enhance the urban context of Victoria. Guided by local businesses and organisations, the Victoria BID team help shape Victoria's future development. A full programme of initiatives, services and events will be delivered by the BID which will complement new proposals for regeneration that will help reposition and strengthen Victoria's offer as a central business district over the next decade.

Key initiatives within the Safe & Secure agenda will be delivered by The Victoria Safer Neighborhood Business Team – a team of police and community support officers (PSCOs) who patrol part of the Victoria district, responding to the needs of the local business, visitor and tourist community. A Business Crime Reduction Officer, **Simon Reason**, is permanently based at BID HQ, driving strategic aspects of policing within the BID area. Collectively, the safer business team will broker corporate relations within the business community, developing and implementing crime reduction initiatives at a strategic and frontline level.

As the collective voice of local businesses, both large and small and across all sectors, we are now underway with a range of activities. Drawing on Victoria's rich and diverse cultural mix, delivering services and opportunities to businesses and organisations, helping to make it not only a better place to work and play but to enhance the SW1 area as a primary destination for visitors to London and as a location with everything needed to encourage growth of the local economy.

ABOUT THE PASSAGE – see www.passage.org.uk

The Passage was established in 1980 by the Daughters of Charity and the late Cardinal Basil Hume, Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, in response to the number of people sleeping on the streets in Westminster.

The Passage is a leading provider of services to homeless people (running the UK's largest day centre for homeless people, based in the heart of Westminster), offering primary services, housing advice, health services and employment and training opportunities. The Passage sees over 200 people a day in the day centre and also provides emergency accommodation and supported housing services.

The mission of The Passage is to provide resources which encourage, inspire and challenge homeless people to transform their lives.

Mick Clarke, Chief Executive of The Passage started his career in the Voluntary Sector as a Youth Worker, and has worked in the Homelessness Sector since 1995. Starting as a volunteer, he then worked as a project worker in hostels and then moved into the area of employment and training, launching Depaul UK's (a national homelessness charity) first training project for homeless people.

This work developed further, including establishing peer education projects, social enterprise schemes and setting up a project called Drive Ahead; offering homeless young people not engaged in any form of education or training the incentive of a free driving lesson for every training week completed on the Drive Ahead course. Drive Ahead has since been rolled out nationally across Depaul UK and Depaul Ireland, enabling the most disadvantaged to access employment and bridging community divides in the Belfast scheme in Northern Ireland.

After several years as Head of Services for Depaul UK, Mick moved to The Passage as Deputy Chief Executive in 2006, and in January 2009 was appointed Chief Executive of The Passage. Mick has a Postgraduate Degree in Management from City University and is a Trustee of Depaul Ireland.



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