

# 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.**



## Eco first for Brixton's Volcano coffee

The Brixton-based coffee roaster Volcano Coffee Works, that supplies a number of local cafés and retail outlets, has launched the UK's first 100% compostable Nespresso-compatible coffee pods. An alternative to poor quality

mass-market pods, they are available in three varieties: "Bold" for a kickstart to the morning, "Balanced" for all-day drinking and "Reserve" with a super-premium Nicaraguan coffee. Available via [volcanocoffeeworks.com](http://volcanocoffeeworks.com).



# High street retail in Brixton – is there a problem?



Recent retail sales on Brixton High Street appear to be no different from recent sales on other high street retail areas across the United Kingdom.

There has been a general slowing of non-food sales, the worst in the last six years. The news, however, is not all gloomy as a cautious Easter boost for non-food sales saw high street retail up by an overall 2.3% in April 2017.

Our high street shops such as Morleys, T.K. Maxx, H&M and Marks & Spencer (to name but a few) have, however, not escaped the general dip in demand for clothing, toys and household appliances and the general shift away from stores towards shopping online.

Increases in business rates and the need to pay a national living wage have all added to pressures on retail.

This retail climate is also

threatening to independent and family-run businesses and favourable to the growth of the discount store.

National retailers such as Tesco and Sainsbury's with their focus on food, although appearing to avoid the tide, are themselves not immune to the general downward trend in high street sales in recent years.

Brixton, unlike most similar areas, has an added generator influencing high street activities and sales – our outdoor markets.

Some are thankful for the absence of the dreaded "shopping centre" in Brixton. The connection between the energy and activities of our outdoor markets and its influence on our high street retail activity is phenomenal.

High energy and footfall in our outdoor markets on Electric Ave, Pope's Road and Brixton Station Road goes hand in hand with increased sales in our high street shops.

The success and survival of high street retail and trade in our local markets appear to be inextricably linked.

One will clearly not survive without the other. Local markets, however, have no choice about

where they trade.

Some high street retailers, on the other hand, have more options and trading opportunities. Department stores have the option of relocating and breaking into new areas.

The group which owns our much-loved Morleys has recently opened another store in the Broadway shopping centre in Bexleyheath.

How much energy and resources will our long-established department store Marks & Spencer put back into Brixton if the going gets really tough?

How much do we know of the local priorities of international companies managing some of these retail establishments. Will they simply move on when the pickings are not good enough?

It is important for our high street retailers large and small to recognise the need to "give back" if our local economy is to be spared the fate of other declining high street areas.

High street retailers who are reliant on local market energy and footfall must be sensitive and able to respond and influence local issues and priorities. The national and

international priorities of many of these establishments should synchronise with local initiatives such as business improvement districts and programmes to address local high street issues such as shoplifting, parking and aggressive begging.

Our high street is changing. A mixed economy is developing with the arrival of some non-traditional businesses. The arrival of Squires & Partners and its army of employees should have some positive influence on our local economy.

It is possible that they will create some local employment and business development.

Specialist companies like Volcano Coffee Works and hi-tech business information company Beauhurst, now in Piano House, in business on or in close proximity to our high street can only positively influence the dynamism of that high street.

Is there a problem with high street retail in Brixton? Not one that the activities in the outdoor markets can by themselves solve.

High street retailers must be available to participate in local strategic plans to improve our local economy.

