

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

6 September 2021

## GRAND UNION ARTS CIO BEGINS RENOVATION OF DIGBETH GRADE II LISTED BUILDING JUNCTION WORKS

- Grand Union Gallery and Artist Studios is working to secure a new home with Homes England, bringing Grade II listed building Junction Works in Birmingham back into use.
- A total of £500,000 has been awarded by Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership, alongside £25,000 sponsorship from Stoford Development and £150,000 of private funding towards Phase 1 works.
- Phase 1 works see the development of new office space for Creative Sector businesses.
- A further £2.6m is now sought to transform the remainder of the building into a new arts centre for Digbeth.



Image credit: Ronan Hughes (Regional Director, GRAHAM), Rob Valentine (Director for Birmingham at Bruntwood Works), Cheryl Jones (Director, Grand Union), Antia Bhalla (Board Director for Creative Industries and Culture at GBSLEP) inside of Grade II listed building Junction Works. Photograph by David Rowan.

Birmingham art gallery and artist studios complex Grand Union is beginning the transformation of Junction Works, a Grade II listed building on Fazeley Street, Digbeth, Birmingham, thanks to the flexible approach adopted by Homes England in granting the lease, and a funding package comprising £500,000 from Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership's Local Growth Fund and Growing Places Fund, £25,000 commercial sponsorship from Stoford Development and £150,000 private investment.

The first phase of works, starting this summer, will renovate the front part of the building, creating four new office suites for regional creative sector businesses by the beginning of 2022. Homes England has been working closely with Grand Union to pump prime this project. It will eventually see the charity's gallery and artist studios relocate from their current home in Minerva Works.

Junction Works, a beautiful mid-nineteenth century building, is located in the Warwick Bar conservation area, at the junction of the Grand Union and Digbeth Branch canals. It has been empty for several years after suffering fire damage in 2004.

Many Birmingham property sector businesses are providing a huge amount of support and expertise for the project. Bruntwood Works, the workspace and leisure provider behind Cornwall Buildings and Cornerblock in Birmingham, is leading a project team including Associated Architects, DW Consulting, Robinson Low Francis, and Ramboll UK. BPN Architects and Fieldfisher Law Firm have also provided significant support to the project. Construction company, GRAHAM, which has recently completed the renovation of The Grand Hotel in Birmingham, will be delivering this first phase of refurbishment of Junction Works.

Grand Union's fundraising campaign, with a target of £2.6m to undertake Phase Two works, will see the opening of a brand-new public gallery space, cafe, events space and artists' studios in this stunning heritage building.

Grand Union opened in its current site in 2010, providing much needed high quality, affordable workspace for artists and a public gallery that has built an international reputation for presenting cutting edge contemporary art and supporting artists at pivotal points in their careers. Last year it hosted Jamie Crewe's exhibition Love & Solidarity, for which the artist received a Turner Prize Bursary in 2020. Grand Union's Programme Director Kim McAleese has been part of the panel of judges for the 2021 iteration of The Turner Prize launching at The Herbert Gallery, Coventry later this year. Grand Union also has an innovative approach to working collaboratively with communities in the city. They have recently launched a mini documentary about The Growing Project, a community-led growing scheme bringing artists and people who are vulnerably housed to transform unloved spaces into active shared gardens.

Grand Union's Director, Cheryl Jones said:

"This is such an exciting development for our capital project, which will transform our organisation and the opportunities we can offer to people to experience, connect with and create visual art. Collaboration is key to our work at Grand Union and so we are delighted to be working with GBSLEP and so many brilliant businesses in the city's property sector on this project. Their generous investment and support mean we can begin to create a sustainable organisation that is able to provide inclusive cultural activity long into the future. In addition we are proud to be bringing an historically significant and beautiful building like Junction Works back to life."

Tim Davies, Senior Development Manager at Homes England said:

“It is fantastic that this project is now moving into construction, which will result in vibrant activities being undertaken within this heritage building. Reaching this stage of the project is the result of more than four years collaborative efforts led by Grand Union.

Importantly it is the next step in the regeneration of Homes England's landholdings in Digbeth which have the capacity for over 1700 homes to be constructed.”

Anita Bhalla, Board Director for Creative Industries and Culture at GBSLEP said:

"Our cultural organisations are an integral part of the regional economy and here at GBSLEP we are committed to investing in projects that support local growth. Our investment of £500,000 in the development of the Grand Union Gallery and Artist Studios reflects our belief that the creative Industries are a catalyst for job creation.

Cultural offerings are at the heart of a city like Birmingham. They attract visitors and contribute to the wellbeing of our residents. We must ensure our region's cultural organisations are at the heart of economic recovery as well as personal wellbeing as we emerge from Covid-19.

The Grand Union project is another example of how GBSLEP drives sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the region and I am looking forward to seeing the opportunities that will be created as a result of our investment.”

Gerard Ludlow, Director at Stoford said:

“Stoford is delighted to be able to support Grand Union with the development of the Junction Works in Digbeth. It is a significant step in their evolution and we are pleased to see them remain as an important part of the arts community in Birmingham.”

Ronan Hughes, GRAHAM Regional Director, said:

“We are delighted to be working in partnership with Grand Union to deliver this first phase refurbishment project at the Junction Works, which will create contemporary space to fire the imagination of Birmingham’s next generation of creatives. GRAHAM has established a strong presence in the city, and in line with our commitment to ‘delivering lasting impact’, we are looking forward to strengthening our relationships with local subcontractors, community groups and charities in the completion of this exciting project.”

Rob Valentine, Director for Birmingham at Bruntwood Works, said:

“At Bruntwood Works, we're committed to creating thriving cities. Providing the space for creative and artistic hubs to flourish not only enhances the quality of life in a city, it's also an important economic driver for the region.

"We're proud long-term supporters of Grand Union, with a number of artists in residence at our Cornwall Buildings over the years, so we're immensely proud to be providing a permanent home for the team. The transformation of Junction Works will not only provide a high-quality, inspiring base for Grand Union, the project is also helping to connect a community of supporters, and build a future network for creativity, ideas and collaboration."

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## Notes to Editors:

### 1. **About Grand Union**

Grand Union is a gallery and artists' studios complex in Digbeth, Birmingham. It houses workspace for 25 artists and presents a lively programme of contemporary exhibitions and events.

Grand Union is a welcoming organisation, bringing people closer to art and artists. Artistic research and collaboration are at the core of our work. Working with and for our communities, we are committed to developing and supporting quality artistic activity beyond the gallery space.

We support learning and create numerous contexts for art and life to intersect, exploring new sites and contexts for the public to engage with art.

A multiplicity of voices contribute to, and participate in, our programmes and organisation. We believe that art can be a tool for social change, but only when embedded within communities, with and for them.

Grand Union is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation, reg no. 1184473, and part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio.

Grand Union, 19 Minerva Works, Fazeley Street, Birmingham, B5 5RS.  
Gallery open Wednesday – Friday, 12–5pm during exhibitions.  
Check [www.grand-union.org.uk](http://www.grand-union.org.uk) for details.

### 2. **About Homes England**

Homes England is the Government's housing agency created to adopt a more commercial approach to respond to the long-term housing challenges facing this country. The Agency invests in supply and intervenes in the market to help deliver 300,000 homes a year by the middle of the next decade.

Homes England brings together money, land, expertise and planning to accelerate the supply of new homes and address affordability issues in areas of highest demand.

For more information visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england> or follow us on [Twitter](#).

### 3. **About GRAHAM**

Birmingham based GRAHAM is a privately-owned company that specialises in the delivery of award-winning construction, civil engineering, interior fit-out, facilities management and investment projects.

A truly national business, with an annual turnover of £853.3m (2020), it operates from a network of 23 regional offices throughout the UK and Ireland (inc. Newhall Street - Birmingham and Solihull) and employs over 2,200 staff.

Proudly “delivering lasting impact” since 1778, it is currently completing over 100 live projects across a range of key sectors including education, healthcare, commercial, retail, highways and rail.

Notable Midlands schemes include the refurbishment of The Grand Hotel, situated in the famous Colmore Row, and i9 in the heart of the City of Wolverhampton Interchange. GRAHAM is also a long-term FM provider to a range of local councils, including Solihull and Worcester, and provides building and minor maintenance works in support of Severn Trent Water’s operations.

Looking ahead, GRAHAM has a record order book and a healthy £1.8bn pipeline of opportunity.

The foundation of this success is its exemplar people development strategy, framed within a culture of Fairness, Inclusion & Respect. It was the first contractor in the UK to achieve Investors in People (IIP) Platinum and IIP Wellbeing accreditations and continues to invest in a range industry-leading training, wellbeing and mental health programmes.

As a responsible, sustainable contractor, GRAHAM has also aligned its CSR strategy to the UN Sustainable Development Goals to help achieve its ambitious social value and environmental targets.

For more information, visit the website: [www.graham.co.uk](http://www.graham.co.uk)

#### **4. About the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP)**



GBSLEP is a partnership of business, public sector and further and higher education. Its mission is to drive sustainable economic growth across the city-region, creating jobs and improving the quality of life for everyone.

The GBSLEP area spans nine local authority areas: Birmingham, Solihull, East Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, Lichfield, Tamworth, Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest. It is home to over two million people, an estimated 1,038,000 jobs, and an economy worth £46.8bn.

Since 2010, the government has awarded GBSLEP £433 million to invest in a range of projects to grow the local economy. These include transport infrastructure, skills development, business support, innovation, and cultural and creative assets. GBSLEP is on course to secure more than £300 million of additional public and private investments, which will create a further 29,000 jobs and 7,000 new homes.

Since 2010, more than 162,000 new private sector jobs have been created across Greater Birmingham and Solihull. Last year, the area generated a 2.9% increase in economic growth – making it the fastest growing core city LEP in area in the country. More than 7,000 businesses have been supported by the GBSLEP Growth Hub in the past two years.

#### **Local Growth Fund**

Local Enterprise Partnerships are playing a vital role in driving forward economic growth across the country, helping to build a country that works for everyone. That’s why by 2021 Government will have invested over £12bn through the Local Growth Fund, allowing LEPs to use their local knowledge to get all areas of the country firing on all cylinders.



The government is committed to making the Midlands an Engine for Growth in the UK, increasing economic growth and improving the quality of life for everyone. The Midlands is home to over 10 million people and over 815,000 businesses. Its economy is worth £237 billion. So far the government has awarded £1.9 billion in three rounds of Growth Deals across the Midlands.

## **5. About Bruntwood Works**

Bruntwood Works, blends work and lifestyle to create spaces that encourage interaction and create communities. We are firmly embedded in our towns and cities, with a strong presence in the North West, Yorkshire and the Midlands. It's workspace, retail and leisure is people driven, design led and socially responsible.

It creates, owns and manages over 5m sq ft of inspiring workspace environments. It offers everything from individual coworking desks and meeting rooms to fully managed offices and retail spaces, all in superb locations across Manchester, Cheshire, Leeds, Liverpool and Birmingham to help businesses thrive and grow.

The portfolio includes spaces such as Bruntwood Works' Pioneer buildings [Blackfriars House](#), [111 Piccadilly](#) and [Bloc](#) in Manchester, as well as [The Plaza](#) and [Cotton Exchange](#) in Liverpool, [Booths Park](#) in Cheshire, [West One](#) in Leeds and [Cornerblock](#) in Birmingham.

Bruntwood Works promotes a better work-life balance with access to a range of wellness, retail and leisure facilities within its buildings, And it owns, operates and manages [Afflecks](#) and [Hatch](#), along with 1m sq ft of retail and leisure space. In 2019 the business formed a joint venture with Trafford Council to take over ownership and management of Stretford Mall and Stamford Quarter.

Its customers can access a unique network of resources and expertise, including business support through its partnership with Enterprise Nation and a host of events to encourage connections. Its wellness partnerships include FORM, Bode Clinic and Altius Healthcare.

Bruntwood Works actively collaborates with its partners to bring about real change. This includes partnering with ambitious and ground-breaking arts and cultural organisations, in addition to committing a minimum 10% of its profits each year to environmental, civic and charitable initiatives through Bruntwood Group and the Oglesby Charitable Trust - these include Manchester International Festival, bluedot festival, Leeds Digital Festival and SoundCity.

It is also committed to a sustainable future and the Bruntwood Group was the first commercial property partner to sign up to the Green Building Council's Net Zero Carbon Commitment pledge, which aims for new buildings to be net zero carbon by 2030 and older buildings the same by 2050.