

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

# **DESIGN UNVEILED FOR BIRMINGHAM'S NEW AIDS & HIV MEMORIAL**

**A brand new memorial has been announced for Birmingham's Southside, as the city celebrates the start of its largest Pride celebrations to date. The Birmingham AIDS & HIV Memorial (BAHM) will stand tall in Hippodrome Square, to recognise those lost and still living, following the 1980s AIDS pandemic.**

A project developed and backed by a host of community leaders; the memorial is set to be a six-metre-high sculpture that features two heart-shaped ribbons entwined. It will be located in the heart of the Southside District, which is famed for its support and celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The project has been founded by three local businessmen: Andrew King, Garry Jones and Phil Oldershaw, who are leading a programme of fundraising, profile-raising and education around the iconic symbol that they hope to construct by June 2022. Teaming with local sculptor Luke Perry, who is known for his monumental sculptures of underrepresented people, the design has been created by local artist Garry Jones. He comments:

*"The heart-shaped red ribbons represent two figures entwined, as if embracing and supporting each other. They represent the dual entities of HIV and AIDS: the past and the future. They symbolise remembrance of those we have lost to AIDS, whilst also celebrating those able to live with HIV today".*

Standing unashamedly tall at approximately six metres, the monument will serve as a reminder of the work that still needs to be done to educate; helping end both stigma and discrimination. It will be located in the newly-developed Hippodrome Square in Southside, which is currently under construction, with the ambition of launching in time for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Reimagined, and inspired by the recent NTA's 'Best New Drama' winning series 'It's A Sin' on Channel 4 (written by Russell T Davies), Garry joined forces with Phil and Andrew in March this year. During the consultation process, the trio gained significant support from community leaders and notable figures across the city and beyond.

Birmingham City Council Leader, Councillor Ian Ward and Ambassador to BAHM, Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, have voiced their approval. In addition to Dr Naomi Sutton, a sexual health consultant who's featured on E4's 'The Sex Clinic' and Lord Michael Cashman MBE, an actor who in 1987 featured in the first gay kiss on a British soap, EastEnders. Founder of Stonewall, a politician and LGBTQIA+ Activist, Lord Cashman has also joined Andy Street and Dr Naomi Sutton as a BAHM Ambassador.

Councillor Ian Ward said: *"HIV and AIDS have affected so many people in Birmingham over the last 40 years and far too many families have lost loved ones. Those forgotten victims should be remembered, and I support the campaign for a permanent memorial."*

He was joined by Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands and Ambassador to BAHM, who commented: *"It is wonderful to see this permanent memorial being proposed, and I wish the team the very best in bringing these ambitious plans to life."*

Members of the BAHM team will be taking part in this weekend's Birmingham Pride celebrations (24-26 September) and walking in Saturday's parade through the city. Dr Naomi Sutton will be appearing on the main stage and there will be a 'Birmingham AIDS & HIV Memorial' fundraising stand to visit, ask questions and get involved.

The team have already raised in excess of £15,000, of their £160,000 target to make the project happen, and this weekend marks the launch of their official campaign for the city to get behind them.

Lawrence Barton, Chair of Southside BID and Festival Director of Birmingham Pride, adds: *"We are thrilled to have been instrumental in finding the right site for this memorial, to commemorate many of the forgotten victims of a pandemic the world did not want to recognise. Southside, as a heart for minority communities in Birmingham, such as the LGBTQ community, is the perfect place for a focal point like this: somewhere our community can gather and remember those we lost."*

To find out more and support the Birmingham AIDS & HIV Memorial project, visit [www.bahm.co.uk](http://www.bahm.co.uk) or you can [donate online](#).

## **ENDS**

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## **Notes to Editors**

After watching 'It's A Sin', written by Russell T Davies on Channel 4 and 4oD, it took Garry Jones back to when he was 21 in 1981, which led into the arrival of the AIDS pandemic. Like many others, it got Garry thinking that there was nothing in his home city of Birmingham by which we can remember those 'we have loved and lost' to this terrible disease. After a post on Facebook to see if others were keen on a memorial, it was soon obvious from the hundreds of people responding and commencing fundraising that the Birmingham AIDS & HIV Memorial was a must, and the BAHM campaign was born.

Garry got together with Birmingham Pride co-founder Phil Oldershaw, and owner of The Fox pub, Andy King, to form a fundraising group to gain traction and see this through. This campaign has now built incredible momentum with support from; Birmingham City Council, The Public Art Gateway Group (PAGG), Southside BID, numerous LGBTQ+, key figures, and other businesses onboard. It is also with delight that we have partnered with the 'Saving Lives' HIV Charity, founded by Dr Steven Taylor, who were quick to offer support and resources, including their registered charity.

Garry Jones is an artist living and working in Birmingham. He studied theatre design at the University of Central England, graduating BA (Hons) in 1997. In 1999 he was invited to deliver the first Birmingham Pride workshops and parade. He subsequently set up his own company "Off our Trolley Carnival and Community Arts" in 2003 and since then has worked successfully on projects across all art forms. He was project coordinator for World AIDS Day, Birmingham from 2009 to 2015. Garry designed the memorial based on his "Heart Ribbon" the community adopted back in 2009.

Phil Oldershaw is a Birmingham entrepreneur and local presenter, known for co-founding (1997) and delivering 'Birmingham Pride' (14 years) and developing the 'new' Nightingale Club 1994-2005. He also co-created The Loft Lounge and led the way for Southside BID creation, Southside Regeneration and the Purple Flag Award, to name a few. Phil has been an activist for the LGBTQ+ community, striving for equality and diversity. Since coming out in 1989 he has raised over £300,000 for charity. A committed networker, media presenter and supporter of his city, Phil received a 'Services to the City' Award in 2011 as a thank you from the Lord Mayor's Parlour for his efforts and dedication.

Andrew King is a local businessman, very much at the heart of the community. Since coming out early 90s, Andy has created businesses with heart that are very much community led. His business 'The Fox' has been heavily involved in Birmingham Pride and the LGBTQ+ community, offering a safe space and a friendly service to all that arrive. Andy is also passionate about remembering those we have lost over the years and creating a piece of memorial artwork to capture important moments in time.

Phil Oldershaw said "This memorial is long overdue and is something the community had broached prior. However, a resurgence following the viewing of '**It's A Sin**' and the arrival of another virus named '**COVID-19**' has reminded people how differently people were treated from the 80's onwards, from an unknown deadly virus called AIDS. Some families, governments and everyday people turned their backs, resulting in so many sadly dying alone. We witnessed, and we remember, those living and those passed".

Garry Jones said "The time is right to address the 'The Forgotten Pandemic' and those who were lost, many of which had no funerals or gravestones; this will be our tribute to them, somewhere we can gather to remember them. The memorial will also act as a symbolic reminder that HIV & AIDS hasn't gone away although, it doesn't need to be the killer it once was. If you are HIV Positive, on treatment, you can still live a normal life, becoming undetectable and untransmittable to sexual partners as long as you stay on medication. I hope the memorial will help end stigma & prejudice to people living with HIV and for it to become a symbol of hope for the future".

To find out more, visit [www.bahm.co.uk](http://www.bahm.co.uk) and follow the project on [Facebook](#).