

**Question: PS24.02**

**Cabinet – 9 March 2021**

**Re: Agenda item 24 – Bristol Beacon**

**Statement submitted by: John Hirst, Destination Bristol**

In my role as chief executive of Destination Bristol, I would like to make the following comments.

Prior to COVID-19, Bristol's visitor economy was booming and enjoying its best ever year and had smashed past the £1.5b barrier in 2019, the next year 2020 was a different story.

Even at the peak there was so much to be improved right across the board in order to attract more visitors to the city. Bristol as a tourist destination is famous for many reasons and one of the main reasons is music.

It is very important that we continue to have a first class music venue which appeals to a wide range of people, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Bristol Beacon will be the main venue in the future and will bring a wide selection of music and a wide selection of benefits to people from all parts of the city.

In order for Bristol to compete with other destinations in the future, we need to have a wide selection of music venues large and small in our city. Bristol Beacon is the main part of the lineup. The reputation of the famous old venue has been very strong for many decades. It was recognised that the venue was in need of modernisation in order to be able to compete effectively in the future.

I support the current re-opening proposals for Bristol Beacon and very much look forward to the re-opening programme planned for 2023. Bristol Beacon will be a major attraction / major music venue for Bristol in the future.

COVID-19 has hit Bristol hard, we need to respond quickly and positively. The night time economy has been hit particularly hard and we need to do all we can to support the future of what is a very important part of Bristol's visitor economy.

Bristol Beacon will be more than just a music venue in the heart of Bristol. It will be a magnet attracting world class artists, attracting investment and encouraging people from within the city and others from outside to celebrate music in a world class iconic venue.

I do hope that the work continues and the venue is able to reopen as planned in 2023.