



PRESS RELEASE

**Embargo: Not for publication before
00.01 hours Thursday 22 July 2010**

3/10

GRIFF RHYS JONES BECOMES PRESIDENT OF CIVIC VOICE Griff announces 25 June 2011 as first Civic Day

Comedian, actor, presenter, campaigner and author Griff Rhys Jones is announced as Civic Voice's first President today (Thursday). Civic Voice¹ is the new national charity for the civic movement and was supported by all three main party leaders during the recent General Election campaign².

Commenting on his appointment Griff Rhys Jones said, "I am delighted and honoured to be asked. Local communities want and need to have their voices heard. Local people can help in making the places where we all live more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive. Because they care. Civic Voice is the national spearhead for a nationwide movement that campaigns for better places and that tremendously underrated value - civic pride."

Griff Rhys Jones announced a national Civic Day on Saturday 25 June 2011 when civic societies across England will invite people to celebrate their area and discover more about where they live³.

As Civic Voice's President Griff Rhys Jones has also said why he loves where he lives in Fitzrovia, London because of its history, its variety, the way it is constantly evolving and the commitment shown by local voluntary groups to its future⁴.

Civic Voice has been joined by over 250 civic societies with over 65,000 members since its launch in April 2010. As well as strengthening and developing local civic societies Civic Voice is running a series of major campaigns⁵:

Street Pride – to rid our streets of unnecessary clutter from bollards, poles, signs, guard rails and cabinets

Planning for people – to reform the planning system in ways that put neighbourhoods at its heart and provide better safeguards against abuse

High speed rail – to ensure proposals for a new High Speed Rail line are soundly based and reflect the sensitivity of the intimate townscapes and landscapes through which it passes

Love Local – a public survey to uncover the local DNA of what makes places attractive, enjoyable and distinctive.

Tony Burton, Director of Civic Voice said, “The time has come for national and local politics to respond to the pride people have in the place where they live. With Griff Rhys Jones as our President and through the passion and plain civic sense that comes from committed local volunteers we can campaign ever more effectively for everyone to live somewhere they can be proud of.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Civic Voice works to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive. We speak up for civic societies and local communities across England. We promote civic pride. We are the new national charity for the civic movement and have a strong local presence. We believe everyone has the right to live somewhere they can be proud of. We know how people feel about places because we feel the same way. Civic societies are the most numerous participants in the planning system. Since its launch in April 2010 Civic Voice has been joined by over 250 civic societies with more than 65,000 members. Further information is available at www.civicvoice.org.uk including how to join Civic Voice (£10 individuals) and contact details for local civic societies.

2. David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Gordon Brown supported Civic Voice's Love Local campaign in April 2010 during the General Election campaign – see <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/news/brown-clegg-and-cameron-support-civic-voice-and-love-local-campaign>

3. Read more about Civic Day here - www.civicvoice.org.uk/campaigns/civic-day

4. Griff Rhys Jones explains why he loves Fitzrovia:

"I live in central London - almost on a traffic island in Oxford Street. Twelve years ago, it felt reckless to move my children in to the big smoke, but we are in an un-zoned mixed community like a proper urban village. It works because it has not been scaled up. It is attractive because of its variety. It has night life but not too much and a jumble of building styles that conform to the street pattern and the scale of the plots.

"Fitzrovia has parts of recognized great architectural worth and parts which are 'ordinary' by Central London standards. But there are no such distinctions as you walk through it. It evolved. It blends together to make a safe place that you want to explore at any time of day or night. Big shops, yes, but little shops too. Big offices, but not universally so. Houses, apartments and dead ends for cars so they keep out. Squares and narrow alleys. This is almost impossible to replicate in new build and very difficult to improve by centralized planning. There is always something of a minor, unthreatening nature going on.

"History makes my quarter distinctive. People have lived and worked here since it ceased to be fields three hundred years ago and what an outstanding mix of bohemians, politician, scientist inventors and tradesmen it has been. If they managed to coexist here they should be able to do so anywhere in Britain.

"Silly, but I like the idea that some people thought we were mad. This is the best place I have ever lived. Better than a suburb. Better than a rich man's ghetto. And I am proud that there are dozens of watchful organizations that argue about what happens and care about their Fitzrovia. We are very lucky that they do."

5. More information on Civic Voice's campaigns is available on its website here <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/campaigns>

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