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### Media Release

**Date:** Tuesday 17 September 2002

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### ⇒ West End under CCTV spotlight

Today (Thursday 19th September) sees the official opening of the West End CCTV control centre, a major crime reducing initiative between the City of Westminster and the Metropolitan Police Service.

The launch, in the London Trocadero, will be attended by Westminster City Council Leader, Simon Milton, and Deputy Assistant Commissioner Andrew Trotter - head of policing in Westminster.

The £1.2m project, the start up costs of which have been met by a direct grant from the Home Office, runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is monitored by industry qualified professionals day and night. 33 new cameras cover Regent Street, Soho, China Town, Leicester Square, Piccadilly and Covent Garden. The system also has a capacity to grow, to take up to 600 cameras.

The £500,000 annual running costs of the system are being funded by Westminster City Council and key local business partners.

According to official figures, crime costs the local economy up to £300 million each year with 50% of all offences committed in Westminster happening within the new CCTV zone.

Speaking in advance of the launch, Westminster City Council Leader, Simon

Milton said:

"Crime and nuisance can blight the lives of local residents and workers. It has a negative effect on the perceptions of people who visit Westminster from other parts of the world.

"Working in partnership with the Police to reduce crime and disorder and to get better and faster at cleaning up the streets, mending potholes and repairing damaged street lighting are at the heart of our plans for Civic Renewal. This new system will be invaluable to making this a reality.

"I have been greatly impressed by the impact that CCTV can have on reducing crime in other parts of London and around the country. I am confident that this new scheme will play a major part in improving the quality of life for the tens of thousands of people who live and work in Westminster.

"The capacity of the system is enormous and we look forward to welcoming other cameras around the area linking up with the control room and increasing the area we can cover."

Metropolitan Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner Andrew Trotter added:

"In addition to policing operations and crime prevention initiatives, the use of CCTV provides an essential tool in assisting police officers in combating crime.

"The value of CCTV to city centres has been proved time and time again. I intend to ensure, that will be the case for us here in Westminster.

"Half of all crimes committed in Westminster occur in the West End, which accounts for just 5 per cent of the city. We will be using the system to help crackdown on those crime and safety issues which affect the overall quality of life for those who live and work here; drunkenness, threatening behaviour, robbery and pick-pocketing.

"I am committed to ensuring that police officers in Westminster work closely with the project team and we have provided a senior police liaison officer to the control centre to co-ordinate police resources.

"There will be a direct link between the control centre and the two local police stations and police officers will give a graded response to all CCTV monitored incidents. They will also use the cameras to help direct their efforts on the ground.

"Westminster police officers will work closely with the council's Community Protection Department and our new private sector partners to forge a good working relationship to make an impact on the quality of life for Westminster."

In a message of support for the scheme Nick Tamblin, speaking on behalf of Urbium plc said:

"The West End is the vibrant heart of the capital attracting Londoners and visitors alike to its shops, theatres, bars, clubs and restaurants. For those who come here to enjoy themselves the fear of crime should not be a deterrent. We are delighted to support this project which embodies all our aims, to keep this World Class City great."

#### Notes for Editors

1. Launch is at Bar M, London Trocadero, 1130am Thursday 19th September 2002.

2. Media Interviews available between 1100 and 1230 in the control centre.

3. A video of cleared CCTV clips from the West End control centre is available from Victoria Walker, on [020 7641 3995](tel:02076413995).

4. CCTV is a key and effective tool in reducing crime and managing our streets as it acts as a visible deterrent. With the new cameras it is possible to spot and deploy the appropriate response teams to combat these issues. CCTV can be used to identify suspects, to help officers make arrests, warn potential victims and images can be used as evidence in court. Congested pavements can lead to pedestrians being vulnerable to pickpockets, and can push people onto roads. Over 200 million people walk between Piccadilly and Covent Garden tubes each year, which highlights the scale of footfall in the area. CCTV will help identify the dangers and speed up the removal of obstructions.

5. The CCTV control centre has been operational since 1st July 2002.

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