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## CELSIUS LAUNCH

28<sup>th</sup> November 2007

Celsius was launched by South London Business on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and, said chief executive Peter Pledger: “This will create a ‘critical mass’, of leading companies who will now have a unique opportunity to network and come together to discuss issues that will benefit the local economy leading to greater job opportunities and more prosperity for all.” It was, he said, a myth that all the biggest businesses in London were concentrated in Canary Wharf, the West End or The City. “There are 112,000 businesses in South London, 89,000 of them VAT registered, and 944 of them employ more than 250 staff. The economy of the London area south of the Thames is larger than many capital cities in the world.” Celsius will limit its membership to just 100 of the top firms who will pay no fee to join and can only become a member by invitation. Chair of Celsius is Carol Bagnald, regional commercial director of HSBC. “We look after some of the largest corporate companies that have an impact on the local economy and the local community. I know how important it is to be able to get information to the highest levels of a company and I’m delighted to be associated with Celsius,” she told the audience at the launch event held at Glaziers Hall in central London. One of the earliest businesses invited to join was Gazprom Marketing & Trading, part of Gazprom – the world’s largest gas company which owns 18 per cent of the planet’s known gas reserves. The global trading office is located on the borders of Richmond and Kingston, employing 150 people from more than 30 nationalities. Gazprom has seen its UK customer base rise from 1,000 to 8,000 customers in just 12 months.

Philip Dewhurst, head of the Russian owned company’s public relations, told the Celsius launch audience: “The support we have received from South London Business has been outstanding. We have offices all over the world but we like it in South London. We plan to grow but we will remain in this area.” He added: ‘We find that at a business level things work in the UK very well for us and I look forward to meeting more businesses in the area. I welcome Celsius.’ Mr Pledger said Celsius members would meet to discuss issues of their choosing, such as transport or crime and security. Research projects would also be established looking specifically at business prospects within the South London region. Chairman of South London Business Sir Bob Scott told the audience: “We have created Celsius so that these leading firms will be able to talk to one another and to make new business relationships. In business terms South London does not punch its weight in the national economy.” By bringing senior executives together through Celsius this would change, he predicted.



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