

Harrison Street, Trinity's UK life science real estate JV buys BioCity

BY IPE STAFF | 26 APRIL 2021

Harrison Street and Trinity Investment Management's UK life sciences real estate venture has acquired BioCity Group as part of a £120m (€138m) deal.

Founded in 2002, BioCity is the UK's largest life science incubation business, providing workspace for life science companies, including access to equipment, shared services and training.

The partners said their joint venture has merged BioCity with Trinity's real estate business to form We Are Pioneer Group, a £450m company managing more than 2.6m sqft of science parks and single assets located across the UK.

As part of the deal to buy BioCity, the joint venture is acquiring 12 properties comprising 488,000sqft of science parks in Nottingham, Cardiff and Glasgow, where additional development will take place. These will be managed by We Are Pioneer Group, which will be a separate business from Harrison Street.

We Are Pioneer Group will focus not only on offering purpose-built space but also on supporting an ecosystem that can help its tenants raise investment, attract talent and maintain and expand their presence in the company's science parks.

Harrison Street entered the UK life sciences market in January last year via a partnership with Trinity to buy a portfolio of five properties worth around £250m. The duo at the time also launched Knowledge Factory, a network of science parks tailored to the UK innovation sector.

Paul Bashir, CEO of Harrison Street's European business, said: "The pandemic has put life sciences facilities on the global stage, yet the UK has a distinct supply-demand imbalance that is prohibiting this sector from truly flourishing.

"Creating the first nationwide, vertically-integrated platform gives us the scale and skills to make a real positive impact, working not just with exciting biotech firms but with the many academics and institutions that BioCity has developed relationships with over the years."

Richard O'Boyle, executive director at Trinity, said: "Through the acquisition of BioCity, the new company will not only invest in real estate, but support tech transfer and accelerator programmes, with a scaleable ecosystem linking key universities, public bodies and the NHS with VC investment and many global partners.

“We Are Pioneer Group is the logical next step for our partnership with Harrison Street and it gives them a fully integrated European life sciences platform to rival the scale of what the US has to offer. Many look to Boston, MA for how to accelerate early-stage life science businesses, but the reality is that it is impossible to replicate something that has been embedded for forty years.”

For investors, the joint venture will be better positioned to add scale and identify additional leasing opportunities with leading universities and pharmaceutical businesses, O’Boyle said.