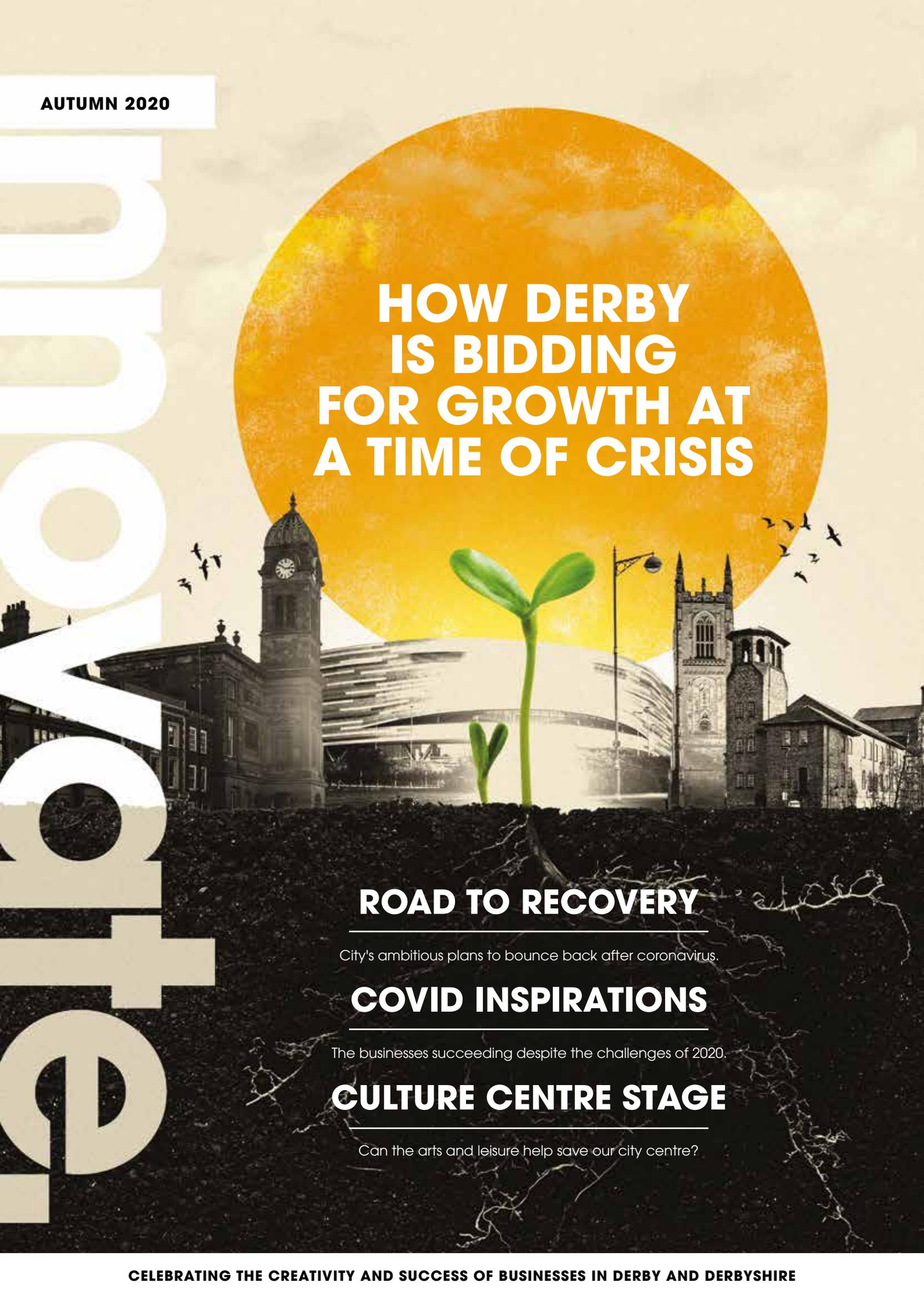


**AUTUMN 2020**



# **HOW DERBY IS BIDDING FOR GROWTH AT A TIME OF CRISIS**

## **ROAD TO RECOVERY**

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City's ambitious plans to bounce back after coronavirus.

## **COVID INSPIRATIONS**

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The businesses succeeding despite the challenges of 2020.

## **CULTURE CENTRE STAGE**

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Can the arts and leisure help save our city centre?

# IT'S A FACT

DID YOU KNOW THAT DERBY WAS THIS YEAR NAMED **THE BEST CITY IN THE UK FOR MILLENIALS TO START A BUSINESS** FOLLOWING A STUDY BY CREDIT COMPANY TOTALLYMONEY?



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COMPANIES AND PROFILE THE TALENTED  
INDIVIDUALS LEADING THEM. ENJOY!**

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**LEADING US  
ALONG |  
THE ROAD TO...**

**RE**

# HOW A WORKING-CLASS KID FROM SPONDON IS DRIVING HIS CITY'S COMEBACK FROM THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

**Paul Simpson will know whether he has done a good job as chief executive of Derby City Council because his mum will tell him.**

The man who took over the job of leading the city just days before Derby and the rest of the UK went into coronavirus lockdown grew up on an estate in Spondon and went to Asterdale School.

Despite working in Milton Keynes, Stafford, Stoke, Walsall and Nottingham, he has never moved away.

He and wife Caroline are happily bringing up children Aaron and Olivia here and his mum and dad, Wendy and Dave, still live in the city.

You can hear his passion when he talks about being asked to lead the authority where he first worked as a trainee after finishing his A-levels.

You can sense his determination when he describes the efforts being made to help Derby recover from the devastating effects of the Covid-19 crisis.

The Simpson family has skin in the game. This is home. This matters.

"I'm a working-class kid from Spondon. I grew up on a council estate and, yes, I've done okay for myself but I like to think that I remain reasonably well-grounded," he says.

"When I was offered the chief executive's role, I went around to tell my mum. Her reaction was, 'Well done. We're very proud of you but you're not too big to have your ear clipped!'"

Hopefully Wendy and Dave will approve of one of the first major projects that their lad is helping to steer as part of the city's coronavirus recovery strategy.

He has played a major role in helping to win government funding to enable the building of a £300m food manufacturing campus on the former Celanese site – the place where Mr and Mrs Simpson senior both once worked.

The scheme will create around 4,500 new jobs and will help Derby diversify its economy and become less reliant on some of its traditional major employers.

It will also transform a 140-acre wasteland where, at one time, 20,000 workers toiled at the chemical plant.

"That's been quite nice, being part of efforts to bring the site where mum and dad both worked back into use," Paul says.

"I remember thinking to myself when I was offered the role that I could never see myself feeling the same way about any other job. You realise how much the city means to you. It's my home town. I'm extremely proud of it and this is a chance for me to make a difference – to do what I can to try to make things better."



The new role is a long way from the trainee accounting technician position that he started in at the council in 1991, having persuaded the then assistant city treasurer, Ian Fraser, to give him a shot.

"He gave me the job. I studied and worked hard. I probably hadn't worked as hard at my A-levels and O-levels as I should have. This was like a second chance and I took it."

Encouraged by the council, Paul took his CIPFA exams and qualified as an accountant in 1998.

Roles elsewhere followed, including three years at PricewaterhouseCoopers, spells with the Ministry of Defence, Department for Education and as a finance director and acting chief executive within the NHS.

In 2017 he was appointed Corporate Director of Resources at Milton Keynes Council, forming a working relationship with Carole Mills, who, after she was appointed chief executive in Derby, brought him back home in 2019 as Strategic Director of Corporate Resources and Deputy Chief Executive.

When Carole announced her decision to retire due to health in March this year, she recommended Paul replace her on an interim basis. His performance in the caretaker role and at interview persuaded the authority to make his appointment permanent – placing him at the head of an organisation with 4,000 staff and a budget of £650m.

"I went through the interview process and then got a text from one of the senior councillors saying, 'Congratulations CEO'. I jumped for joy," he recalls.

However, he was soon brought back down to earth with a bump as, just days later, the country went into lockdown because of coronavirus.

"I didn't have much time to think about it. If you had understood the magnitude of what we were going into, it would have driven you mad," he recalls.

"Originally, our only job was saving people's lives. That was the mantra. It made it quite simple. Those first few weeks were just a blur of organising PPE, food distribution, social care and working with the NHS and the local resilience forum.

"Everyone played their part – the street cleaners, the refuse collectors, the social care staff, the housing staff. We redeployed large numbers of staff to help with priority tasks.

"We commandeered a whole hotel and put homeless people into that. The effort was quite extraordinary."

But even in those early days of emergency response, it was apparent that the city was going to have to devise a long-term recovery strategy to mitigate the impact of a crisis that was hitting Derby deep and hard.

Paul and his team quickly understood that there would need to be action plans developed to boost the local economy, with the city being particularly badly affected because of its deep connections to the aerospace sector, but also to deal with the repercussions in the wider community – on social care, housing and neighbourhoods.

And there was also the challenge for the council itself. How would the organisation get back on its feet, adapt to the 'new normal' and manage an already challenging financial position made worse by the health emergency?

Fortunately, the strength of existing partnership networks in the city meant there was a platform to build on – and progress on the recovery planning was swift and effective.

Paul is keen to acknowledge the "fantastic support" he has received from his team of officers, from councillors and other city stakeholders.

He is playing a hands-on role as chair of the economic recovery task force, harnessing expertise

from both the public and private sectors to deliver a strategy based upon maintaining confidence, diversifying the economy and decarbonising the city.

The task force oversaw short-term interventions to channel millions of pounds of support to businesses who were impacted by lockdown and established a redundancy working group to assist hundreds of workers, including many from Rolls-Royce, who were told they would lose their jobs because of the crisis.

In the weeks since, it has announced plans to launch a £5m growth fund to help local businesses create new jobs, worked to support private investors who are pledging to continue with schemes to deliver more than £450m of homes, offices and other facilities and made a bid for £23.7m of funding for city centre regeneration projects.

The city won £10m from the Government for flood alleviation work that will also create a new city park and provide space for homes and businesses and announced it would build a new performance venue as part of a multi-million-pound transformation of the long-troubled Becketwell area of the city centre.

It was widely congratulated for creating a 330-capacity food and drink court in Derby Market Place to encourage visitors and assist the hospitality sector – taking the idea from concept to execution in a breath-taking three weeks.

And, in partnership with the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership, it convinced the Government to make almost £20m available to deliver the SmartParc food campus on the Celanese site and enable the development of an advanced manufacturing research centre at Infinity Park, creating new direct jobs and helping local businesses develop products and processes with low-carbon technologies.

The city's recovery strategy has been noticed on the national stage and was described as inspiring by

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**

**"I didn't have much time to think about it. If you had understood the magnitude of what we were going into, it would have driven you mad"**



# CITY DETERMINED TO BUILD BACK BETTER AND DIFFERENTLY

**Derby has a proud history as a high-value manufacturing centre but some of the city's historic strengths have left it particularly exposed to the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.**

Aerospace is in our DNA and Derby is home to Rolls-Royce and a cluster of important aviation supply chain companies. The industry has been amongst the hardest hit by the international lockdowns introduced to contain the health emergency.

Rolls-Royce has announced thousands of job losses, locally and across its global operations, and others, such as Incora and Gardner Aerospace, are being forced to cut staffing.

But Derby also faces challenges around low social mobility and from a comparatively weak city centre, where too few people live and there are few offices. As a result, the city centre economy has been over-reliant on retail and hospitality – sectors that were already under pressure even before Covid-19 forced businesses to close their doors and hastened the shift to online shopping.

Research by influential think-tank Centre For Cities estimates that more than 40 per cent of jobs in Derby are vulnerable or very vulnerable as a result of coronavirus and it predicts, gloomily, that the city could be amongst the three worst-impacted areas in the UK.

There is an expectation that the local unemployment rate will rise from around four per cent at the beginning of the year to above 10 per cent – and that it could even climb as high as 15 per cent as the full toll of the crisis emerges.

Derby is, however, rising to meet the challenge.

It was quick to establish an economic recovery task force, harnessing expertise from the public and private sectors, and to devise a strategy with three core aims – to maintain confidence amongst local businesses and external investors, to diversify the city centre and our employment base and to decarbonise the city.

The city is determined not only to build back but to build back better and differently.

“For too long Derby’s economy has been overly-reliant on our major employers. While it is hugely positive that we have such world-leading companies as part of our city, and we are committed to supporting their further success here, we have not been effective enough in encouraging new business start-ups or business growth,” says city council chief executive Paul Simpson, who also chairs the recovery task force.

“Our recovery plan attempts to address this. We will seek to create space for new, high-technology employment and we will create an infrastructure that will better support entrepreneurship.

“We will also seek to strengthen our city centre. We will bring in more

city living and city centre working to complement our shopping and leisure offer.”

City council leader Chris Poulter said the recovery plan had been drawn up very much with decarbonisation as a priority.

“We want to attract businesses who are involved in the low carbon sector. We want to create homes in sustainable settings to reduce people’s travel needs. We want to further mitigate the risk of flooding in the city centre while, at the same time, create a new park and space for more homes and businesses close to the heart of the city.”

The strategy has already persuaded the Government to pledge tens of millions of pounds of central support – paving the way for schemes like the SmartParc food manufacturing campus, which will create 4,500 jobs.

The city has also looked to its own budget to launch a £5m growth fund to help existing local companies take on more staff and will work with private sector partners to deliver a new city centre performance arena.

“While the coronavirus crisis is creating challenges, for health and the economy, Derby is looking forward to a positive future. We are determined to work with the private sector and colleagues in central government to shape a city that will be a truly great place to live, work and relax,” said Councillor Poulter. 



Robert Jenrick, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he visited in July.

It has also had a galvanising effect locally.

"You can see the difference that we are beginning to make," says Paul.

"There's a growing sense of confidence. Things are probably going to get worse before they get better. We have to acknowledge that and not be overwhelmed by it.

"It's about giving people hope. It's a really powerful thing but you have to back it up and

demonstrate that you can achieve.

"Derby has probably not always delivered in the past when we said we would. The time for that has gone. We need cranes in the sky and spades in the ground."

Revitalising the city centre is a huge part of the recovery strategy – with Covid exacerbating existing weaknesses, such as a lack of people living and working in the heart of Derby and an over-reliance on retail and hospitality.

"We can't rely on retail. Covid has compounded the effect of online shopping on the retail sector. We have to have more people

living in the city. We have to have a strong cultural offer. We have some fantastic cultural partners but we have not got the places for them to perform and help bring people in," says Paul.

"There's a massive job for us to change the look and feel of the city centre. It's dull and grey. We need more trees and we have to bring more colour to the city.

"There's not too many cities that have a riverfront like Derby but we have turned our backs on it. People can't see it, get to it or benefit from it."



**“There’s not too many cities that have a riverfront like Derby but we have turned our backs on it. People can’t see it, get to it or benefit from it.”**

The new chief executive is also passionate about improving the local environment – recently trading in his car for an electric bike.

“I have to stand up and be counted. It’s no good me preaching to people about encouraging active transport if I’m driving a diesel-guzzling car,” he says.

“We have a big challenge around climate change which gives us an opportunity to make changes to our lives in a positive way.

“We can build on the fantastic engineering expertise that we have

in the city and work with them to decarbonise the things we make as well as our housing and transport.”

So, in five years’ time, what does he hope the city will look like?

“Full of life,” says Paul.

“More people living and working in the city centre. More people walking and cycling into the city centre from other parts of the city. More space for people to enjoy and more cultural attractions that give people things to see and do

“I’d like to see a city that has emerged confidently from the current crisis, where jobs are being

created and people are living fulfilled lives.

“People being proud of their city would be a success for me.”

While Paul may have his own future measures of success, there are many in the business community who are already applauding the start he has made in the role. We wish him luck in gaining mum Wendy’s seal of approval. ●

# WHY THIS MAN OF THE LAW IS URGING REVOLUTION

## THINK CHAIRMAN OF MAJOR LAW FIRM AND THE WORDS RADICAL AND REVOLUTIONARY DON'T NECESSARILY SPRING TO MIND.

**But David Williams has never been afraid to break the mould - and especially not when it comes to matters as important as the region's recovery from the economic shock of Covid-19.**

Ask him what Derby needs to do to successfully bounce back after the pandemic and the man appointed as interim chair of the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership at the height of the crisis doesn't hold back.

"Derby should develop a radical plan for its city centre - think revolution not evolution. The city will certainly need to look a lot greener than it currently does and it will need to look more entertaining because people are going to need new reasons to want to come into the city centre and entertainment will be key."

His views are delivered with passion - borne from a deep desire to see his adopted home develop and prosper.

He has been championing Derby's cause for many years and acting as a 'critical friend', encouraging and challenging the city to fulfil its potential.

Now he's doing the same across a wider region, helping to steer Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire along the road to recovery from the economic crisis caused by coronavirus.

He had been a board member of the LEP for more than three years and was deputy chairman to Elizabeth Fagan when she was summoned by the Government to help implement its national Covid test and trace programme.

"I got an urgent phone call in June. Elizabeth had been asked to join test and trace in a short-term capacity, helping to set it up, and realised it was going to be a full-time commitment. She asked if I would take on the role of chair of the LEP for this period. There was really only one answer."

It was yet another major appointment for a man already accustomed to donning multiple hats.

His day job is as chairman of law firm Geldards - a business with a proud 100-year-plus history and offices in Derby, Nottingham, London and Cardiff.

He is also chair of consultants East Midlands Business Group and of the Arkwright Society at Cromford Mills.

He serves on the board of governors at Nottingham Trent University and the East Midlands Development Corporation, is a former director of Derby County Football Club and former chair of Derby Renaissance Board.

"I like being busy. I get bored easily and I need a new challenge. I also like being outside of my comfort zone," says David, explaining his willingness to take on so many roles and responsibilities.

"Although I am not local to the area, I have fallen in love with the area. At times there has been a vacuum into which one can step to try to bring the public and private sectors together and I have been there at the right time."

As the man in the right place at the right time to take over the reins of the LEP, he says the first priority was "not to break it".

"Elizabeth has led a very successful restructuring of the organisation and a re-ordering of relationships with the public and private sectors. It was quite challenging as the Government had said that LEPs needed to be private sector-led and ours hadn't been.

"That process had happened successfully, it had settled down and was running well. Priority one was not to break it and to keep it running smoothly in challenging circumstances.

"We had become very credible in the eyes of government for our ability to spend the money they give us and spend it wisely. We had to maintain that. We know that there will be more money coming down the line. We have to be prepared to bid for it and those bids have to be credible and very deliverable."

Evidence of the LEP's standing at Westminster came with the award of £44m from the Getting Building Fund - one of the largest totals in the UK - which will help deliver ten projects to improve digital infrastructure, support skills and careers opportunities and



**"The city will certainly need to look a lot greener than it currently does and it will need to look more entertaining"**

enable a transition to a low-carbon economy as the region kickstarts its recovery from Covid.

Among those receiving cash were the SmartParc and Midlands Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre projects in Derby that will deliver more than 4,500 new jobs, help diversify the local economy and assist businesses to win work in clean technology sectors.

"Given that we only had a short time to bid for the money, being awarded £44m is one hell of an achievement. Our challenge now is to deliver the ten projects and then get ourselves ready for the next round of funding – do we have sufficient projects that are credible, understandable and have been lobbied for?" he says.

Many of the LEP's priorities for shaping the region's economy have been carried forward into the response to the Covid crisis – with one key shift in emphasis.

"We had something approaching full employment but now we need jobs. If Covid had not happened we would have been looking for

schemes that drove productivity, allied to clean growth, allied to social inclusion. Covid has forced us to look for schemes that will drive jobs growth, allied to clean growth and social inclusion."

David believes that the region has been successful in raising its profile with ministers and senior civil servants.

"We know that we are part of the Midlands Engine and that has benefits but it also has challenges in that we can get lost alongside the volume of noise from Birmingham and the West Midlands.

"There's nothing suspicious in that. It's just the fact that Birmingham has a mayor and the West Midlands is a substantial economy.

"But the Government knows far better than it did what our region wants. The ministers that are responsible for our area and our MPs do get it and are very much working to support us."

And that support will be vital if the region is to succeed in repairing the damage done to the economy by coronavirus.

"We have an uncomfortable number of people in lower-paid occupations. All the data shows that they are at greater risk. They bear the brunt of the potential redundancies coming. We have the challenge to replace those jobs but also to uplift them."

The ten schemes to be funded in D2N2 by the Getting Building Fund aim to generate thousands of jobs, as well as boost skills.

Back closer to home, David says Derby's approach to recovery planning has won fans in the corridors of power in London.

"It's certainly been noticed by civil servants and central government that Derby was very fast to develop a credible recovery plan."

He believes that, out of crisis, there is an opportunity for the city to fulfil the potential that he has long recognised.

Will it have the vision – radical, revolutionary or otherwise – to achieve it? This man of many hats will be ready to tip them all if it can. ●



# C H A N G E O F H E A R T



BILL GRIMSEY, RIGHT, SAYS FRESH THINKING AND STRONG LEADERSHIP CAN HELP TRANSFORM DERBY CITY CENTRE, BRINGING NEW LIFE TO EMPTY RETAIL UNITS.



## WHY DERBY WILL NEED TO REINVENT ITS CITY CENTRE TO REVIVE ITS FORTUNES

**“Derby is famous for all sorts of things. Rebrand that place. Turn it into a theme park of surgent activity and get people to come live, work, play there and visit because you’re just plain great.”**

Bill Grimsey is characteristically enthusiastic when discussing the future of our city centre.

He’s still full of the same energy and dynamism that powered his rise from butcher’s boy to head of retail giants such as Wickes, Iceland and Focus DIY.

But he’s not a man to be blinded by his passion after nearly half a century in business.

He knows that city centres like Derby’s face huge challenges. However, he is confident, with the right leadership and an injection of fresh thinking, that they can have bright futures.

Grimsey has published his own review of the UK high street, entitled ‘Build Back Better’. In it he contends that town and city centres will need to see a radical shift in power from central government to local communities if they are to remain relevant and thrive.

He argues that “localism on steroids” is required to turn around their failing fortunes and his report makes a raft of recommendations on changes in leadership, planning and transport – designed to make city centres more green, healthy, sustainable places to visit for experiences and quality of life rather than mass consumerism.

While his study examines the country as a whole, much of what he has found is evident in Derby and many of his proposals for action resonate with those interested in shaping our city centre’s future.

Grimsey recognises there is a certain irony in his new mantra of local and unique.

“For over 40 years, I spent a career in retail working with contemporaries to change the landscape of town centres and high streets. Together we managed to clone every town in the UK with the same brands. Every high street soon began to look the same and we put paid to thousands of butchers, bakers and candlestick makers,” he recalls.

“But we didn’t stop there. The retail juggernaut of the 1980s was unstoppable and new frontiers beckoned. Deindustrialisation

ensured there were plenty of empty brownfield sites and it was easy to get planning permission. Huge out of town superstores and retail parks were established, sucking the life out of towns.

“As a director at Tesco at the time, we were building 25 superstores a year. Rapidly increasing car ownership created the perfect conditions for vast supersized stores to gobble up market share.

“It’s a bitter pill to swallow when you realise that what you spent your whole life building now needs to be unpicked in order to build back a better place.”

Grimsey says the writing has been on the wall for high streets for some time – and their decline has been accelerated by the coronavirus crisis.

Research by accountancy giants KPMG suggests that high street retail space will shrink by 25 per cent over the next three years but Grimsey predicts it could get worse – and sooner. He and a team of experts have analysed the latest published accounts of every UK major retailer.

“We found almost half were at risk of failure. Since then, shopping centre giant Intu has gone into



INTERVENTIONS LIKE THE BUILDING OF A NEW PERFORMANCE ARENA, FAR RIGHT, COULD HELP REINVIGORATE AREAS HIT BY RETAIL CLOSURES.

**"We need more community businesses on the high street that are invested in their local area."**



administration and many retailers have not paid rent this quarter. All of this points to one unavoidable, inescapable truth. We have to stop keeping a failed model on life support and embrace change," he says.

"The public can already smell this change. Polls show they've become more attached to their local area, enjoyed the fresh air and stronger community spirit. They're getting used to buying online and don't want to jump back into smog-filled traffic jams. "We need to rethink our towns and high streets so they are healthier, greener places – and primarily about people.

"And nor will their *raison d'être* be just about shopping. A younger generation is no longer blindly following rampant consumerism. Studies show millennials would rather spend their money on an experience or an event than buying things.

"The experience economy and a community hub model built around culture, leisure and food will reshape our high streets – with retail no longer being the mainstay. This won't happen on its own, though. There are too many vested interests tied up in a 20th Century model that will resist it. Local authorities will need to resume their role as custodians of place and stop making disastrous investments in shopping centres for speculative returns. Instead, they

should concentrate on building community and embrace a spirit of experimentation. This will drive permanent change and allow us to get to grips with big challenges we've been ducking for years.

"This means government scrapping the most draconian, unfair tax on the books: business rates. Replace it with a straightforward two per cent sales tax that will raise the same amount as before and level the playing field between online and offline retailers.

"It also means reforming the property market, coming up with a formula for a fair rent and introducing community right-to-buy laws to ensure unused or neglected properties are forced back onto the market and can be bought by community trusts or local authorities.

"We need more community businesses on the high street that are invested in their local area. This should reflect a shift from shareholder capitalism, which cares only about maximising returns to its shareholders, to stakeholder capitalism, which has wider societal concerns and prioritises the wellbeing of staff and communities. Unless we accept this now and start planning for the future, our high streets are certain to wither away and die a slow death."

Grimsey speaks positively about Derby's plans to re-energise its city centre and about the city's leadership. But there is widespread

recognition that the challenge here is a big one.

The city centre economy has historically been regarded as weak, with an over-reliance on retail and hospitality and too little office and residential use.

The offer is fractured, with challenged areas lying between comparatively strong locations such as the Cathedral Quarter and Intu, discouraging visitor circulation.

And the loss of the city centre's main performance venue, the Assembly Rooms, in a fire six years ago was another major blow.

Think tank Centre For Cities says that reviving what it describes as "vulnerable" city centres, like Derby's, will take time.

"High streets are made up of businesses that serve their local market, which includes independent shops, chain stores, restaurants, hairdressers and services like solicitors. So, when we talk about the state of our high streets, we tend to be talking about the visible health of this wide range of local service businesses that tend to cluster in the centre of cities. But our urban centres consist of more than this," they say.

"The local services on high streets depend on demand in the local economy, which in city centres is increasingly driven by the incomes of local people employed in



highly-skilled jobs in sectors like communications, marketing, digital and technology, consulting and financial services. These type of firms that sell beyond their market to the rest of their region, nationally and internationally are referred to as exporting businesses.

“These businesses also prefer to locate in vibrant city centres, which are more likely to have good transport and digital infrastructure, strong business networks and many skilled workers within commuting distance. As firms of this type cluster in dense urban centres, nearby high street services benefit from footfall across the city centre – whether for food, drinks or shopping, during and after work.

“So, rather than driving local growth themselves, high street services reflect broader economic activity, driven by exporters located in their city centres. Past attempts to support high streets, such as the Portas Pilots, have, therefore, focused on the wrong aspect of the local economy. Rather, the best way to create resilient town and city centres with strong demand for local services is to encourage growth in high-skilled exporting businesses.

“City centres with more exporting businesses, such as Milton Keynes and Oxford, will be better placed to weather the storm and adapt, while those with fewer exporting firms, such as Peterborough and Derby, will be more vulnerable.”

Centre For Cities advocates a long-term approach to improving skills to equip workers for a high-knowledge service economy.

At the same time, they suggest business rate reform could be used to encourage more office development in city centres.

“In the meantime, the high street does not live or die by its retail offer, and as shown in stronger places, there has been a shift towards restaurants and cafes in high streets rather than shops.

“Weaker cities, with fewer exporting businesses, lack the kind of demand from locals that a restaurant might need but cities should be supported to revive their centres and empty space with different amenities to attract footfall, whether libraries, leisure centres, playgrounds or parkland,” they add.

Commercial property agent Russell Rigby knows Derby’s city centre better than most. He’s spent the last 35 years doing business here and much of the last few months treading the streets, tracking retail occupancy as part of a study for the city council.

His figures show that already a worrying number of retail units in Derby are empty and many more businesses, he believes, are vulnerable to closure.

“We have gone from, at the beginning of Covid, having 80 to 85 vacant shop properties to around 95 when restrictions were lifted in July. But what’s happened since is that a further 26 closed in a period of around five weeks.

“That pace of closure is very worrying. And these empty units are all over the city centre not just in certain areas. As more units become empty you run the risk of blocks of properties becoming empty, which makes it doubly difficult to get someone to rent them,” he says.

“We have to try to arrest that flow by working with those landlords who have local connections to see how we can collaborate in switching some of those empty properties back on, even if, in some cases, that’s with short-term uses.

“Otherwise, by the end of this year, we could end up with 50 per cent of our retail units empty and that would feel like the city centre had shut down.”

Russell’s research shows that around half of the floorspace in the city centre is owned by remote landlords – with no real connection or, possibly, empathy with the city.

“But it’s important that we reach out to those landlords that are local to have some shared ownership of this,” he says.

"We are talking to landlords and property companies who have a feeling for the city centre and a realistic sense of the size of the problem. In the food and beverage and hospitality sectors, there's more of a feeling that leases need to be calculated on turnover."

"If some of these businesses are operating on reduced capacity they can't pay full rents."

Russell says city partners need to work with landlords to identify new start-up tenants and suitable short and longer-term uses for vacant buildings.

But it's a sad reality that some of the city's retail space will never be used as shops again – and some may have to be demolished.

"Derby has too many shops. Some will have to be replaced because they cannot be repurposed or reused," Russell says.

"The presentation of the city centre needs to be thought about – removing buildings, putting micro parks or lungs of green space into the city centre could be a good thing.

"If we are serious about bringing in more office use then we need to think about how we can make the city centre more attractive."

Russell sees encouraging more office use – even with potential changes to people's ways of working post-Covid – as a major priority.

"The city centre has only a third of the office space that Pride Park has. Four and a half years ago it had three-quarters of the space. It has been lost on the back of conversion of office blocks into residential. We have an acute shortage and, therefore, very little office activity of any nature.

"We have to, at pace, try to scale this mini-Everest of pitching the city centre to office users to move to. That's as critical as trying to arrest the retail closures," Russell says.

He believes more also needs to be done to address anti-social behaviour, to animate our streets and to encourage more student use of the city centre.

But he believes the biggest difference could be achieved by declaring the city centre an Enterprise Zone, with business rate deferral and other fiscal stimulus to support its economy over the next five years.



"The city centre is lying prone on its back. It needs a shot in the heart," he says.

The challenge is significant but there are, however, reasons for hope.

The recent demolition of the former Debenhams building is perhaps the greatest symbol of the city's intention to shape a positive future.

It will be replaced with apartments, offices, a public square, hotel and a new performance and conference venue and represents an investment of more than £200m.

The arena alone is expected to create 200 jobs, attract 250,000 customers a year and generate around £10m annually for the city's economy.

Paul Morris is development director with Leeds-based St James Securities, who are behind the scheme.

He says the city council's decision to partner with them to deliver the performance venue shows ambition.

"We have created a great scheme, which will fill a significant gap in the city cultural landscape. Our flexible venue will cater for major music and comedy acts as well as a strong programme of theatre content. The conference and events centre will support the growth of the business community in the region," he said.

"The performance venue is set to 'turbocharge' the entire Becketwell scheme, allowing us to bring forward a new multi-storey car park and hotel and will be key to the future reinvigoration and repositioning of Derby city centre."

Paul understands the need to build confidence - in his scheme and the city centre more generally – and the decision to press ahead with demolition of the former Debenhams building was a statement of intent.

The company is in detailed talks with funders for the the project and hopes to be able to announce their identity soon. They hope to break ground on site in April next year and complete the phase one apartments and public



01/02: IMAGES OF HOW THE NEW BECKETWELL DEVELOPMENT WILL LOOK WHEN COMPLETE  
 03/06: AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION AND INTERIOR VIEW OF THE NEW LANDMARK BUILDING  
 04: NEW HOMES BEING CREATED AT NIGHTINGALE QUARTER  
 05: COMMERCIAL AGENT RUSSELL RIGBY  
 07: THE REVAMPED MARKET HALL

square by late autumn or early winter of 2022.

The firm has signed an exclusivity arrangement with the council over the arena and undertaken 'soft marketing' with major leisure operators – provoking positive response from some of the biggest names in the industry.

Paul hopes that within the next nine months, they will have procured an operator and tied up legal agreements with the council, allowing them to submit a planning application. If all goes to plan, the arena would be delivered by late 2024.

He hopes his firm's development will have a "ripple effect" on surrounding areas – particularly places like St James's Street, which, despite its attractive architecture, is currently blighted by a significant number of empty buildings.

He also believes that "selective demolition" of some buildings should be considered to make space for quality public realm.

"We have to look at this with a fresh

pair of eyes and we have to think big," he says.

In total, around £500m of investment is currently 'pledged' by companies who are already thinking big and have major development plans for the city centre.

Work has already commenced on building 800 homes in a £150m redevelopment of the former Derbyshire Royal Infirmary site by Wavensmere Homes and Compendium Living is continuing with its £100m Castleward scheme, which will deliver a similar number of dwellings.

Derby City Council has also granted planning permission for 200 apartments as part of The Landmark development on Phoenix Street – a scheme that is expected to inject £68m into the city centre economy.

Meanwhile, the city has bid for more than £23m from the Government's Future High Streets Fund to enable a number of city centre regeneration projects – including transforming the Grade

2-listed Market Hall into an exciting venue for food and drink, themed markets, a make-and-trade zone for new entrepreneurs and space for events.

And £10m has been secured from the Environment Agency for flood defence works that will not only protect the city but also free up land for offices and homes and lead to the creation of a new city centre park.

Alongside this, urgent efforts are underway to redraw Derby's city centre masterplan and consider other tactical and strategic interventions.

Will this investment, fresh thinking and focus enable our transformation into Bill Grimsey's "theme park of surgent activity?"

Strap in and hold on tight as we find out – the next few months are likely to be quite a ride! ●



**DAN WILLIAMS**  
 DESIGN FOR THE ERASMUS PLANETARIUM  
 ON CORPORATION STREET.

# PLANETARIUM AMONG STUDENTS' IDEAS FOR RE-IMAGINING CITY CENTRE

**A planetarium and a glass-domed museum of engineering were among ideas for re-imagining the city centre presented by students from the University of Derby.**

The ambitious designs were showcased to delegates at the Marketing Derby Property Zoomit.

Final-year scholars on the Interior Architecture and Venue Design and Architectural Technology

and Practice courses were tasked with creating a masterplan that understood the physical and visual links of a place before focussing on a specific building.

Sites chosen for the students' designs included the Assembly Rooms, Market Place, Middleton House and Cathedral Green areas of the city.

The top ten designs, chosen by university lecturers, were collated into an online gallery and presented, through Zoom, by senior

lecturer Dr Boris Ceranic to the hundreds of attendees at this year's property summit, which was held virtually because of the pandemic.

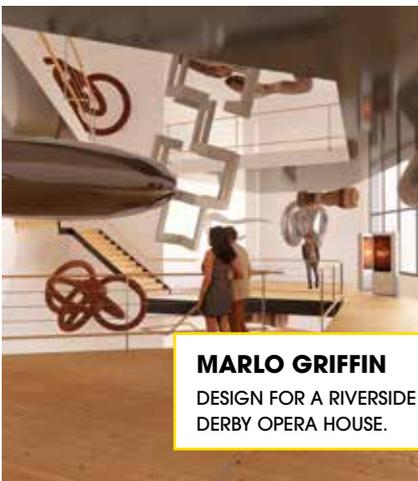
"The maturity and level of passion shown by the students, combined with the architectural and urban design quality and the way it's been presented, is a great credit to the students and the university. In these challenging times for all towns and cities, these designs provide a visual stimulus for anyone with an interest in re-imagining and rejuvenating city centres," said Dr Ceranic. ●



**KERRY VAUGHAN**  
VISION FOR A CULTURAL FOOD MARKET  
AT DERBY MARKET HALL.



**LAUREN HETHERINGTON**  
PROPOSAL FOR A COPPER GARDENS  
DISTILLERY AND BOTANICALS DEVELOPMENT  
OFF SADLER GATE.

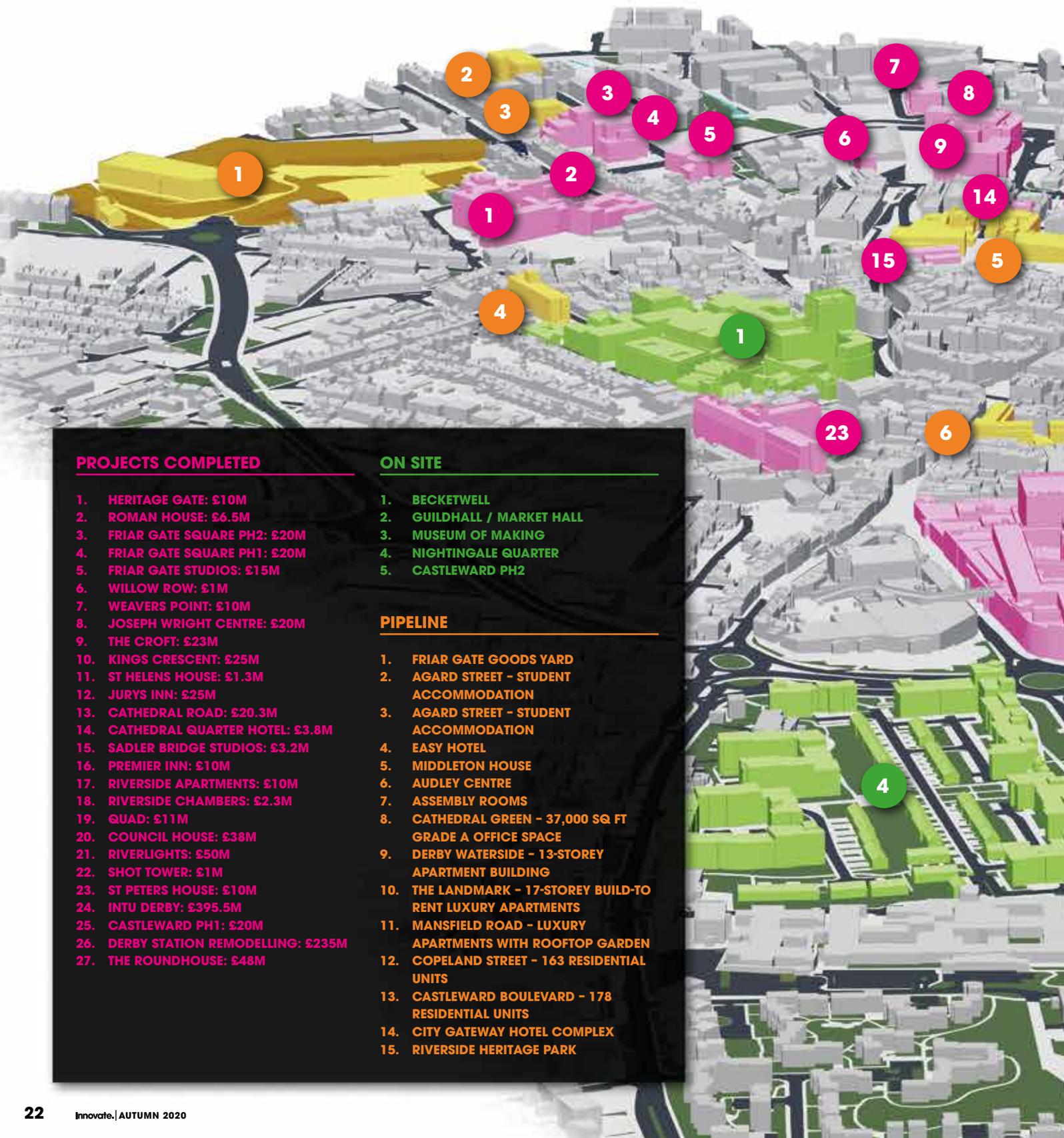


**MARLO GRIFFIN**  
DESIGN FOR A RIVERSIDE  
DERBY OPERA HOUSE.



**REECE SCATTERGOOD**  
INNOVATIVE DESIGNS FOR NEW  
APARTMENTS IN FULL STREET.

# Transforming the city centre



## PROJECTS COMPLETED

1. HERITAGE GATE: £10M
2. ROMAN HOUSE: £6.5M
3. FRIAR GATE SQUARE PH2: £20M
4. FRIAR GATE SQUARE PH1: £20M
5. FRIAR GATE STUDIOS: £15M
6. WILLOW ROW: £1M
7. WEAVERS POINT: £10M
8. JOSEPH WRIGHT CENTRE: £20M
9. THE CROFT: £23M
10. KINGS CRESCENT: £25M
11. ST HELENS HOUSE: £1.3M
12. JURYS INN: £25M
13. CATHEDRAL ROAD: £20.3M
14. CATHEDRAL QUARTER HOTEL: £3.8M
15. SADLER BRIDGE STUDIOS: £3.2M
16. PREMIER INN: £10M
17. RIVERSIDE APARTMENTS: £10M
18. RIVERSIDE CHAMBERS: £2.3M
19. QUAD: £11M
20. COUNCIL HOUSE: £38M
21. RIVERLIGHTS: £50M
22. SHOT TOWER: £1M
23. ST PETERS HOUSE: £10M
24. INTU DERBY: £395.5M
25. CASTLEWARD PH1: £20M
26. DERBY STATION REMODELLING: £235M
27. THE ROUNDHOUSE: £48M

## ON SITE

1. BECKETWELL
2. GUILDHALL / MARKET HALL
3. MUSEUM OF MAKING
4. NIGHTINGALE QUARTER
5. CASTLEWARD PH2

## PIPELINE

1. FRIAR GATE GOODS YARD
2. AGARD STREET - STUDENT ACCOMMODATION
3. AGARD STREET - STUDENT ACCOMMODATION
4. EASY HOTEL
5. MIDDLETON HOUSE
6. AUDLEY CENTRE
7. ASSEMBLY ROOMS
8. CATHEDRAL GREEN - 37,000 SQ FT GRADE A OFFICE SPACE
9. DERBY WATERSIDE - 13-STOREY APARTMENT BUILDING
10. THE LANDMARK - 17-STOREY BUILD-TO RENT LUXURY APARTMENTS
11. MANSFIELD ROAD - LUXURY APARTMENTS WITH ROOFTOP GARDEN
12. COPELAND STREET - 163 RESIDENTIAL UNITS
13. CASTLEWARD BOULEVARD - 178 RESIDENTIAL UNITS
14. CITY GATEWAY HOTEL COMPLEX
15. RIVERSIDE HERITAGE PARK

**Thriving, sustainable city centres are necessary to support successful local economies and to foster a sense of pride and place.**

**The Derby City Centre masterplan aims to help create:**

- A city of choice - with attractive destinations such as the £17m Museum of Making;
- A living city - with a range of residential accommodation and the facilities to support successful city living;
- A business city - with a resilient and diversified local economy and a support system to help companies launch and grow;
- A connected city - where local, regional and national mobility is enabled in an effective and sustainable way.

**Our graphic shows key schemes which are helping to transform the city centre.**





KELLY BARKER AND MATTEW MONTAGUE.

**LEADING ARCHITECTS WELCOME DESIGN EXPERT TO THE TEAM**

A leading firm of architects has welcomed an interior design expert to its team.

Derby-based Kelly Barker, of Just Living Interiors, will utilise her talents to benefit clients of award-winning Matthew Montague Architects.

A member of The Society of British and International Design, Kelly will head up the Longford practice's interior design service.

Managing Director Matthew Montague

said the company worked extensively in the corporate sector but residential was seeing substantial growth. Kelly's arrival meant clients would have the opportunity to integrate high-level interior design from the beginning of every project

"Having Kelly on board enhances our skill set and enables us to offer a more comprehensive service," he added.

Kelly said: "I am excited to be joining such an established and creative practice. They have a great portfolio."



LEMON SIGNS.

**POSITIVE SIGNS FOR GROWING BUSINESS**

Fast-growing sign-makers Lemon Signs are continuing their expansion despite the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Owner and Managing Director Martin Lemiesz says the company is experiencing high demand for its services.

While David Candler and Richard Pettinger have

already been recruited to boost the production and marketing teams, the firm is now looking to recruit more production staff, artworkers and estimators.

Martin said: "Like so many businesses, we fully expected to see a drop in demand during the pandemic but this has not proved to be the case with many of our clients taking the opportunity of lockdown to refresh, improve or renew internal and external signage.

"Our order books are still full and I need to ensure that I can continue to deliver the level of service that our customers have come to expect."

**INVICTUS HELPS FIRMS SURVIVE LOCKDOWN**

Cloud-based hosted telephony, provided by Castle Donington-based Invictus Communications, has provided a lifeline for businesses in coronavirus lockdown.

The firm has been working hard to support existing customers as well as providing solutions for new clients who needed to re-structure working practices during the crisis.

Invictus offers a range of telecommunications services, including telephony hosted in the cloud, leased lines, business mobiles linked to the telephony system via an app and competitively-priced energy services.

Managing Director Jonny McPhee explained: "Flexible and secure telecommunications have been crucial to maintain business continuity during the past months and feedback from customers with our hosted telephony in place is that it has been invaluable to maintain operations.

"As soon as lockdown measures were announced, businesses were able to divert calls from the office system onto numerous other lines. Staff have been able to work remotely using the phone system

from a laptop, fixed phone or mobile using a special app and monitoring systems have ensured that calls have not been missed."

Among the businesses to have benefited are Bespoke Inns, owners of The Dragon in Willington, The Boot in Repton and Harpurs in Melbourne.

Director Patrick Hammond said: "Lockdown gave us the opportunity to upgrade our wifi and phone system, which Invictus Communications has completed across all our sites, both inside the buildings and outside.

"An immediate benefit has been that the new phone system has ensured we haven't missed a call for our busy takeaway services during lockdown."

Abode Sales and Lettings, with branches across Derbyshire and Staffordshire, was also able to implement remote working and monitor calls with help from Invictus.

Director Nathan Anderson Dixon said: "Invictus installed the phone system six months ago and it's a good job they did as when lockdown came our staff took their handsets home, plugged them into their routers and were able to work as if they were in the office. It was a God-send!



INVICTUS HELPED ABODE SALES AND LETTINGS.



MILLITEC'S STATE-OF-THE-ART SANDWICH ROBOT.

## SANDWICH ROBOT RISES TO AWARD CHALLENGE

A state-of-the-art robot built by Derbyshire company Millitec has scooped a major honour.

The machine, called *igene*, was named winner of the British Sandwich Association New Product Award.

The robot is designed to make sandwiches on an industrial scale but is completely portable, making it more adaptable to production change requirements.

Millitec Managing Director Richard Ledger said: "The project has been two years in the making, with a dedicated team of designers and software engineers working around the clock

to help bring this concept to life.

"This is just the start of the journey for this type of robot. We're continuously developing both software and hardware to ensure maximum flexibility. When we applied for the award, *igene* was still newly launched and was initially only capable of placing bread onto sandwiches. Now, using state-of-the-art machine vision systems, it can select ingredients and position them in place, place cut sandwiches on top of one another and soon it will even put them into a packet!"

Millitec has seen year on year growth since launching in 2005 and in late 2019 moved to a new £1.2 million facility in Draycott.

## CALE STREET TAKES FULL CONTROL

intu Derby is under new management after real estate investment and finance firm Cale Street Partners consolidated its ownership of the shopping centre, securing full control.

Derby is the first of 17 intu shopping centres in the UK to migrate to new management since the firm entered administration in June. The management and day-to-day operation of the centre will be the responsibility of international property firm Savills and its former Executive Director of Capital and Regional, Ken Ford. In 2019, Cale Street Partners paid £186.3m for half of the centre in a deal funded by the London-based Kuwaiti Investment Office. The latest deal has been completed for an undisclosed sum.

Derby's Economic Recovery Task Force has welcomed the news with the leader of Derby City Council, Councillor Chris Poulter, saying: "We have enjoyed a long and successful partnership with intu Derby's local management team and will be seeking to continue that relationship with the new owners."

A full rebranding project will be undertaken in the coming months.

Ken Ford commented: "The fundamentals of Derby remain strong and I am looking forward to working with the team to develop a repositioning strategy that will ensure the centre can continue its positive trajectory. The centre enjoys high levels of interest from national brands, thanks to its strong catchment and footfall, and our plans will only help further this potential."

He will be supported by the existing centre team to deliver an innovative and agile asset management strategy for the city centre destination.

Adam Tamsett, the centre's General Manager, added: "The centre has proven extremely resilient in recent months, with an occupation rate above 90 per cent and the signing of new brand names this summer including Whistles, The Disney Store and Rickshaw Urban Indian Kitchen. The new management team will help build on this success to develop a new vision for the centre and the onsite team are optimistic about the opportunities that lie ahead."

## STRONG SALES AT CITY HOMES SITE

Wavensmere Homes has reported strong sales in phase one of its Nightingale Quarter scheme on the former Derbyshire Royal Infirmary site in Derby city centre.

Sub-contractors returned to the site in August and the first 125 properties on the development are beginning to take shape.

Buyers have responded positively to virtual tours of the homes being offered by the site's agents.

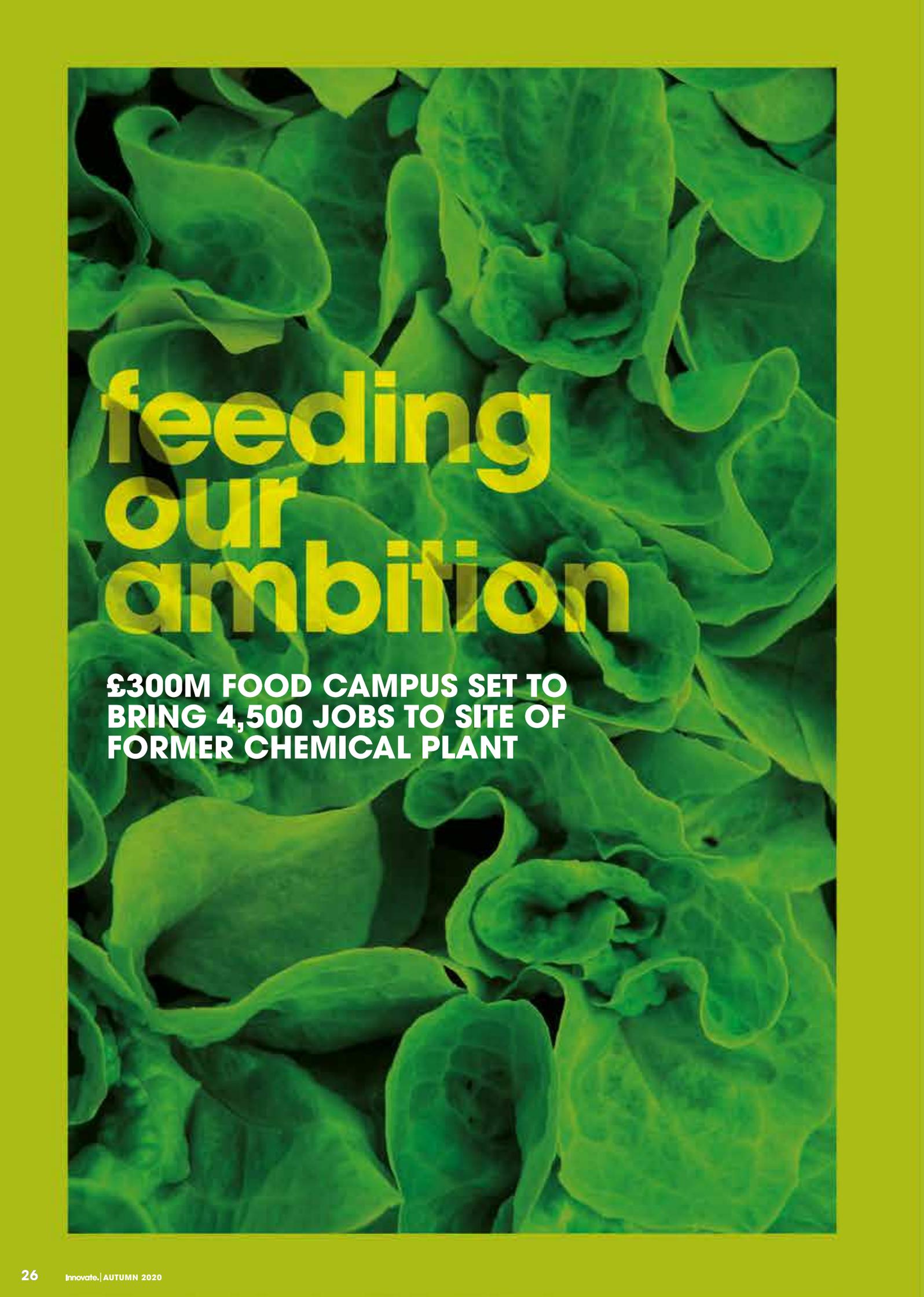
James Dickens, Managing Director of Wavensmere Homes, said: "What's been really important to us is that buyers have felt safe when wanting to purchase a property. We have been working closely with our agents, Ashley Adams, who are based in the city centre, in ensuring that if people

visit their offices, they have the space and the top digital resources on hand to do this."

The 18-acre scheme will be a 'green oasis' for residents, featuring cycle routes, an open-air gym and fitness area, children's play areas and extensive planting. The site's iconic pepper pot buildings will be retained for community use, with residents having access to numerous facilities, including a café, gym, exhibition space and

meeting rooms.

Hannah Kelham, Head of New Homes for Connells Group, whose Ashley Adams agency in Derby is marketing the site, says: "Derby in particular is a hub of industry and confidence is high within the city, which has such great links to the rest of the country. It really is a positive sign for the region that this new development is doing so well."



# feeding our ambition

**£300M FOOD CAMPUS SET TO  
BRING 4,500 JOBS TO SITE OF  
FORMER CHEMICAL PLANT**



THE OLD BRITISH CELANESE SITE IN SPONDON.

**The shrill call of the factory whistle signalled a daily exodus of 20,000 souls - a cacophony of clomping boots through swirls of steam and smoke accompanied their emergence from hours of toil.**

Wave after wave swept along Spondon’s Station Road, past the Moon Hotel and onto a fleet of 100 buses waiting to carry them home.

This was British Celanese in its pomp. It was a symbol of Derby’s industrial might.

For decades, the chemical plant turned out acetate film and yarn, used in packaging and for making ropes, tape, parachutes, balloons, clothing and uniforms.

Until the factory whistle was silenced and the buses came no more.

Over the last decade, much of the giant plant, its five miles of rail track and 15 miles of road has been bulldozed. Just a few dozen employees remain.

The site is largely desolate and windswept – left alone with the ghosts of its past.

But all that is about to change. There is excitement. There is hope. There is about to be a re-birth. And it is called SmartParc.

Its developers promise a £300m “world-class, cutting edge” food production campus where Celanese once stood.

Set over 140 acres, the development will bring together food producers to cluster knowledge and investment, with the aim of reducing food waste, lowering carbon outputs and increasing UK food security.

The campus will include a shared power plant, designed to reduce energy consumption by 25 per cent, and will harness the latest technology to improve productivity by 30 per cent and lower costs by 20 per cent.

It will embrace the latest scientific developments, such as vertical farming – where crops are grown indoors in stacked layers, mitigating the vagaries of the weather and eliminating the need for pesticides.

And, crucially, the project will bring up to 4,500 workers back to the Celanese site and generate further employment in the supply chain.

Buckinghamshire-based SmartParc hopes to be able to start work on the site in the first quarter of next year and welcome its first occupants later in 2021. It estimates that the whole project will be complete by 2024.

Marketing Derby has been working with the company over the past year, introducing them to the area before they selected the Spondon site.

The idea is hugely exciting – so enticing that the Government has pledged £12m funding, through the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership, to help it get off the ground.

The woman driving the vision, SmartParc CEO Jackie Wild, promises it will put Derby “at the heart of the future of sustainable food manufacturing globally.”

“The planned SmartParc campus will combine world-class food production facilities with shared utilities, amenities and services to provide a highly sustainable,



**"Our industry is critical to national security and the prosperity of our wider economy"**

low-cost production base for food manufacturers and new ways to reach end customers while reducing food miles and food waste," she says.

"It will also act as a community hub, with a new food innovation centre and skills facility and planned partnerships with local charities, schools and universities to reconnect people with the food they eat.

"We are delighted to receive government backing for our ambition and look forward to working with Derby City Council, local universities, businesses and communities to share our vision and deliver up to 4,500 new jobs in the area over the coming years."

It was Jackie's background in both food and construction that helped shape the vision for SmartParc.

She graduated from university with a degree in food and business and worked for several years in commercial and operational roles

before joining the main board of a £1.5bn food group.

She then went on to found TSL – a company focused on designing and building food production facilities across the UK, Europe and the US, with big-name brands such as Tesco among their customer base.

She says it was her combined experiences that made it clear that radical change was required within the food industry to ensure it was ready for future challenges.

So, what kind of change is she describing?

SmartParc says the food and drink industry is the UK's largest manufacturing sector, contributing £28.2bn to the economy and employing 400,000 people.

"Our industry is critical to national security and the prosperity of our wider economy," the company states.

"As a world we face many challenges but none more pressing than climate change. Food production contributes significantly to climate change, as well as the depletion of biodiversity. It is also a considerable drain on resources, such as nutrients, land area, energy and water.

"Finding a balance between sustaining ourselves and minimising these impacts is absolutely crucial, which requires a new approach.

"The revolution in food manufacturing can and must be delivered. By working with



AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION OF THE SMARTPARC CAMPUS

Derby City Council, SmartParc will create an environment where food businesses can work together to cluster knowledge and investment, as has been so successfully accomplished in automotive, aerospace, tech and pharmaceutical sectors.

“The food industry deserves the same focus and opportunity to ensure it has the support from government to address the challenges ahead.”

SmartParc says the UK food industry is made up of around 8,000 businesses, operating from 9,500 manufacturing units spread across all regions of the country. Many of the existing facilities are ageing and have limited ability to embrace technology that would allow their operators to increase productivity, reduce costs and adopt new ways of working.

Margins within the sector are challenged due to aggressive pricing strategies among food retailers.

“With average costs of delivering a new facility anywhere between £20m and £50m, it is understandable that, given low margins, many food producers are facing a difficult dilemma.

“This is compounded by food companies’ high demand for utilities and bespoke building designs not being supported by the property investment sector, thereby starving the food industry

of accessing institutional investment as other sectors successfully do to regenerate,” the company says.

“SmartParc has been designed specifically to address the challenges of the industry. By creating a new investment class, food companies can access capital markets to facilitate their investment strategy. The site will be prepared and buildings constructed to suit the process, thereby reducing the risk to their ongoing business.

“A shared central energy system will utilise the latest technologies to reduce energy consumption by 25 per cent but also reduce upfront capital investment as infrastructure costs will be spread over the life of the buildings.”

The sector is also challenged by a reducing labour pool as the UK moves towards Brexit, skills shortages and rising labour costs.

“SmartParc will work with food manufacturers to utilise the latest



**"To do all this with a focus on innovation and low carbon - and create so many employment opportunities - means the project ticks all the key strands of our plan."**

engineering technologies to achieve 30 per cent increases in productivity. This step-change in manufacturing will require less people as productivity increases, however, will offer skilled employment.

"SmartParc is working with some of the UK's leading institutions to deliver this vision. It will be home to education and research facilities to provide a centre of excellence which will keep the UK's world-leading position in food manufacturing and deliver the necessary training and skills," the company says.

"We want to make food a 'cool' career choice. We will deliver an outstanding place to work and be, to ensure that everyone coming to SmartParc achieves their potential whilst creating a sustainable food supply chain."

SmartParc says it will tackle the sector's current, complex distribution process - improving efficiency and reducing food waste.

"SmartParc will operate a central distribution centre to consolidate goods in and deliveries out on site. Manufacturers can combine their ranges to provide a full delivery offer to local communities.

"This provides both a reduction in cost but also significantly improves the sustainability as food miles are reduced by removing a whole step of the third-party consolidation."

The campus will further address sustainability by reducing water use, through optimisation, harvesting and recycling, converting waste into energy and taking steps to reduce packaging through the supply chain.

It also plans to embrace advances in technology such as vertical farming "to create stability in regard of climate change".

It was this commitment to an innovative, low-carbon approach - as well, of course, as the promise of so many new jobs - that made the project so attractive to the

team leading Derby's economic recovery post-coronavirus.

The strategy adopted by the city has three key pillars - maintaining confidence, diversifying the local economy and decarbonisation.

SmartParc's project ticks all boxes.

City council leader and Marketing Derby board member Chris Poulter says the company is a perfect fit for the city's future ambitions.

"SmartParc speaks to everything we talk about within our recovery plan," he says.

"For someone to come in with such a major investment, on a brownfield site, to get support from the LEP, ourselves and Celanese, just goes to demonstrate the confidence in Derby's future.

"As far as diversification is concerned, you can't get much more diverse than a new way of food production compared to our existing strengths, such as building railway carriages or aircraft engines.



COUNCILLOR CHRIS POULTER.



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE PLANNED CAMPUS.

“And to do all this with a focus on innovation and low carbon – and create so many employment opportunities - means the project ticks all the key strands of our plan.”

Councillor Poulter is delighted but not surprised that the scheme has received government funding.

“It’s a significant amount of money but I expect the Government supported it because it’s about jobs, innovation and low carbon. It fits their criteria.”

And he believes the scheme has the potential to create wider UK benefits.

“SmartParc’s plan is to establish the first of this type of hub in the country here in Derby and then develop a network to change the way we deal with food and guarantee food supply in the future.

“They see it as a way of changing an industry that is many times greater in size than the aviation industry, for instance. Their vision is for it to be established and proven in Derby and then rolled out across the country.”

As a long-time Spondon ward representative, Councillor Poulter is particularly pleased to see the Celanese site being brought back to life.

“It doesn’t seem that long ago that thousands of people would walk across the bridge to the site every day. This plan is massive for the area. It’s good for Spondon, it’s good for Derby and it’s good for the region.”

Mid-Derbyshire MP Pauline Latham is also excited by the impact that the scheme could have within her constituency.

Her office is just across the road from the Celanese site and she is looking forward to – quite literally – watching transformation take place over the coming months.

“It’s an ambitious and forward-thinking scheme that I was delighted to support in discussions with colleagues within the Government,” she said.

“SmartParc’s inspiring and radical ideas to reform food production fit well with Derby’s reputation for innovation. It’s a great partnership.”

The factory whistle and the clomping of thousands of workers’ boots along Spondon’s Station Road may be a long-distant memory. But soon they could be replaced with a new noise – of a city celebrating the arrival of an exciting new industry. ●



**DESPITE THE HUGE CHALLENGES OF THE PAST FEW MONTHS, THERE ARE THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO INNOVATE, TO PERSIST AND TO SUCCEED. MEET SOME OF OUR FAVOURITES...**





## DERBY SCIENTISTS HELPING BATTLE AGAINST COVID-19 AROUND THE GLOBE



In the Derbyshire countryside, there is a laboratory where scientists have been at the forefront of the global battle against Covid-19.

SureScreen Diagnostics has been established for nearly 25 years and one of its point-of-care tests is used every two seconds. The chances are that if you have undergone a urine test at a GP's surgery, it will have been provided by the Derby company.

The business is run by the Campbell brothers, David, Alex and Alastair, who picked up the baton from their father, Jim - a ground-breaker who was awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours list for his work in the community and health care.

Jim has pioneered many innovations and began a business to diagnose material failures for major engineering companies. As his company developed, it separated SureScreen Scientifics, which still handles metallurgy contracts, and SureScreen Diagnostics, which is world-renowned for testing.

Because it remains a family business, decisions can be made quickly - therefore, when concerns began to emerge from China about a virus which could sweep the world, SureScreen's team were among the first to react.

Before Christmas, 2019, three months before UK lockdown, the

company's scientists were working on an antibody test for Covid-19.

By the time the British government was announcing its emergency measures, SureScreen had a 10-minute pregnancy-style finger-prick test which would show, with 98 per cent accuracy, whether a patient had contracted the virus.

Embedded into the test strip are antibodies that bind to Covid-19 specific biomarkers, Immunoglobulin G and Immunoglobulin M.

When a sample (blood, serum or plasma) is added to one end of the test, it flows along the test strip and interacts with these antibodies.

If the patient has contracted Covid-19, the biomarkers in their blood will bind to the antibodies on the test strip, leaving a visible test line.

If the patient doesn't have Covid-19, no biomarkers should be present in their blood and no test line will be visible.

Millions of the tests have been exported to 53 states and dependencies and governments and pharmaceutical companies across the globe, who see them as key to understanding the spread of the virus.

They have been used in Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Bermuda,

Bolivia, Bulgaria, China, Columbia, Croatia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guernsey, Guyana, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Isle Of Man, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Kuwait, Latvia, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Russian Federation, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UAE, the UK, United States and Zimbabwe.

Director David Campbell said: "We have a long history of providing innovative point-of-care tests, such as fertility, drugs of abuse and infectious disease tests, into markets all around the world, so it is great that we've been able to use our expertise to help with the global pandemic."

At a time when many firms are having to shed jobs, SureScreen has taken on 30 extra staff to cope with the demand for its tests.

It has supplied many private UK firms and has been in discussions with NHS Trusts following endorsement from esteemed British laboratories at Guys and St Thomas's Foundation Trust and Kings College London.

The rapid test's latest official recommendation has come from

**CONTINUED OVERLEAF**

the Belgian Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products, following a validation study made by the University of Leuven.

Meanwhile, SureScreen's test has been accepted into the French health service's reimbursement scheme. This approval from the government means that it pays for its use of the test in hospitals across the country.

In the UK, private companies large and small have been using SureScreen's rapid test.

These include a care home where 21 people had died before the test was used to offer vital reassurance to staff who were worried about contracting the disease.

David says: "We are proud that our test is being used so widely around the world and helping to understand the spread of infection and save lives."



But it is in the nature of SureScreen's top team to be researching possibilities to create further solutions to help with the pandemic.

Its latest collaboration is with Irish company RoqU, which has created Heath Passport Ireland – a combination of test and app technology to allow access to business, travel, hospitality and entertainment venues.

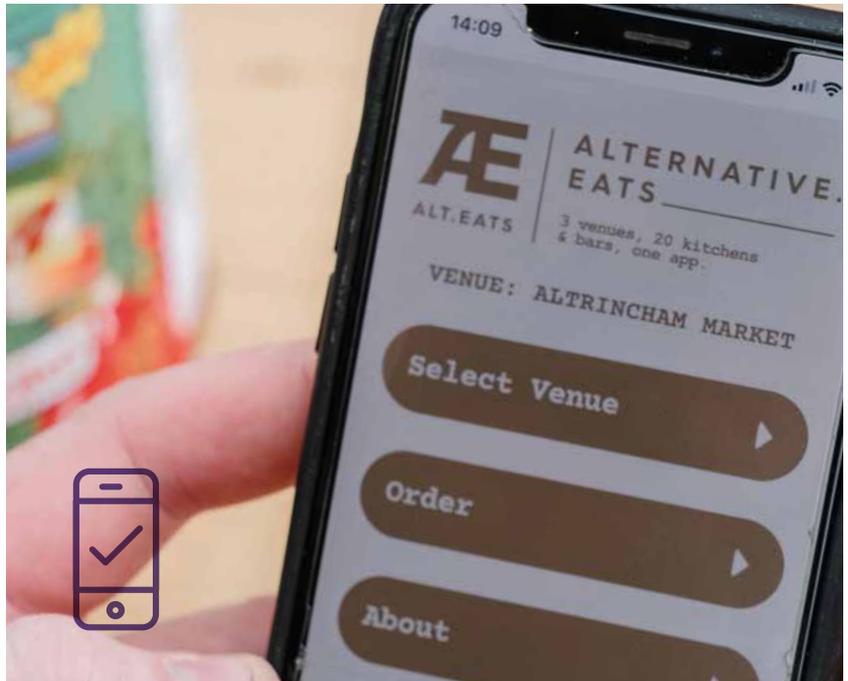
David added: "Rapid testing for Covid-19 is critical to helping us all deal with the virus and we will continue to provide our tests and innovate to help people wherever we can."

During the Covid period or beyond, if there is a path to discovery, it will often begin in the laboratories of SureScreen Diagnostics in Derbyshire.

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TESTS DESIGNED BY SURESCREEN IN DERBYSHIRE ARE HELPING THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 AROUND THE GLOBE

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## APP DESIGNERS HELP SCORES OF BUSINESSES TO TRADE AGAIN AFTER VIRUS LOCKDOWN

Fancy some fish and chips, a pint of beer or ordering food from a table at a busy outdoor venue?

Before restrictions enforced due to coronavirus, there would have been an old-fashioned British solution. Queue.

But a Derby tech company has changed the outlook of many thousands of customers who now turn to an app.

App4, based at Sadler Bridge Studios, came to the rescue of businesses who had struggled to see a way out of lockdown.

These included well-known fish and chip shop chain George's Tradition, which had to close down because it could not cope with telephone orders.

App4 created a bespoke app in a week and quickly the company was selling 3,500 meals a day to hungry customers.

The app allowed customers to order from the full George's Tradition menu and select an allotted time to pick up their food.

This also enabled George's Tradition to maintain social

distancing because of a defined number of slots in each 15-minute period.

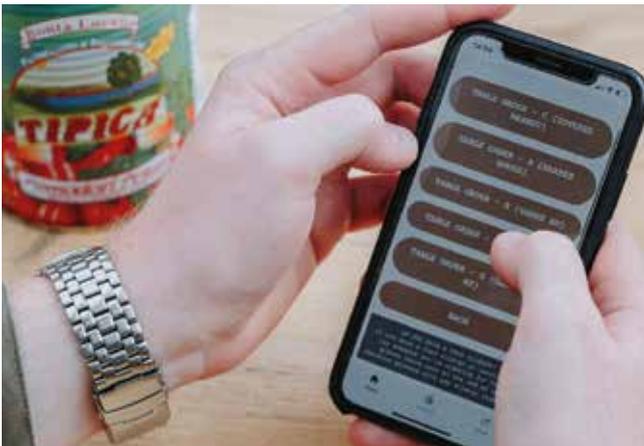
Chairman Andrew Constantinou said the app had worked so well it would result in his business being remodelled after the national emergency.

"I don't see the app disappearing. We are wholly relying on it to produce income at the moment and I now accept that this is very much part of the way forward," he added.

App4 specialises in takeaway apps and its clients include around 100 fish and chip shops across the country.

Managing director Ian Chambers said: "In George's Tradition's case, we worked with them closely to define the specification and, after a couple of very quick modifications, it was working brilliantly.

"We can do these changes because we are not reliant on foreign companies for software – we make all the changes here in Derby with a team which understands exactly what the client wants and needs."



On July 4, people were allowed into pubs for the first time in more than three months and again App4 was keeping the public safe. It was highlighted on national television for devising an app which meant pubgoers could order drinks and food from their seats.

Indeed, WA Pubs chief executive Lee Forshaw believes that evolution, which has taken his customers from cash to contactless card, will now take them to the app.

His chain in the north-west had already been using a bespoke app from App4 which meant it was in place for re-opening.

Mr Forshaw said: "We have to discourage customer movement the best we can but do not want to stop people from enjoying themselves when they are out socialising.

"We think allowing people to tell our staff what they want, pay and get it delivered through an app makes the customer experience better."

Meanwhile, App4 changed the mindset of the owner of a popular Greater Manchester market, who

admitted he was opposed to using technology until it helped him restore his business to near pre-Covid levels.

Around 100 members of staff at Altrincham Market had been put on redundancy notice but almost all jobs will be saved after it reopened.

Its owner, Nick Johnson, said a bespoke app, designed by App4, had been a key factor in the market's bounce back. He said it was also being used at his other sites at Manchester's Mackie Mayor and Macclesfield's Picturedrome and their levels of trade were following suit.

Nick said: "Pre-lockdown, we were feeding 30,000 people a week. We are a busy operation, employing 300 people.

"Our three locations are people-driven, social experiences around food and drink, so our decision was how do we resurrect ourselves using technology – without diminishing the social aspect of what it is to come to one of our venues.

"The app has got us to the closest point where it can happen without undue interference in the interaction

of family, friends and food.

"I had been very reluctant to embrace technology in respect of our business but, having worked with App4 and now operated an app across each of our reopened venues, we have found it allows us to reach a balance of tech supporting the experience rather than tech interfering with it.

"Actually, there are very many octogenarians who are showing they are adept with technology. They realise they are the most vulnerable to coronavirus and can most benefit from the app, which will help keep them remote in a social setting.

"I don't see the app disappearing. We are wholly relying on it to produce income at the moment and I now accept that this is very much part of the way forward." Mr Chambers added: "We are busy helping companies who have been desperate to trade for months. It is excellent to see their business coming back so quickly through the use of technology which they wouldn't have otherwise considered.

"Now they all agree, it is here to stay."



## A VIBRANT SYMBOL OF CITY'S DETERMINATION TO BATTLE BACK AFTER HEALTH CRISIS



It's a project that has come to symbolise Derby's determination to fight back from the economic devastation caused by the coronavirus crisis. The transformation of Derby Market Place into a vibrant venue for al fresco, Covid-safe eating and drinking has been a triumph of imagination, determination and partnership.

And it is helped bring thousands of visitors back into the city centre – providing a vital boost for businesses in the hospitality sector, who were among the hardest hit by the health emergency.

The idea was the brainchild of the Derby Economic Recovery Task Force, which is harnessing expertise from the public and private sectors to drive the city's revival. It felt the Market Place was the perfect place to create an exciting and safe new destination.

Spearheaded by Derby City Council and Derby-based visitor experience experts Katapult, an outdoor dining space was created that could seat up to 330 people, with covered chalets, picnic tables, planting, colourful hoardings and a bar provided by Derby Brewing Company.

Since the doors opened, in excess of 6,000 people have enjoyed the new Derby Market Place offer, utilising digital technology to have food and drink from local outlets delivered direct to their tables.

It's an incredible achievement for a project that, from idea to opening, was delivered within just a few weeks.

This included ensuring concepts were created in accordance with government guidance, artwork was produced and materials, planting and seating were sourced by the opening date of July 25th.

A new website, created by BinaryFold4, was launched within a week, with a booking system from Derby LIVE, a communications plan and social media strategy was devised and delivered by Gravity Digital, graphics and artwork were developed by Katapult and Baby People and AVIT Media created a promotional video and photography to bring the project to life and help attract a wide range of visitors to enjoy the new experience.

Since opening, almost every weekend has been fully booked and more people have come to the city centre to dine out at lunch time and in the evening.

Feedback from visitors has been positive, with social media comments such as: "This is just excellent! More local authorities should be pro-actively supporting the places that make them shine – come on UK listen to Derby!"

Dave Gray, Director of Plant Café, on Sadler Gate, says the project has boosted custom for his business.

"Whilst anything on our menu can be taken away, the Market Place has highlighted that to a new audience and we've had plenty of new customers from it. They are particularly impressed by our range of fully compostable takeaway containers and cutlery. On our side, we're impressed by the speed in which the project was set up and the way in which social distancing procedures are laid out over there."



Councillor Robin Wood, Derby City Council's Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, praised the team that had worked together to launch the scheme so successfully.

"Not only has it boosted local businesses, it has encouraged people to return to the city centre in a way which makes them feel safe and brought some much-needed vibrancy to the area. We plan to build on this success by expanding the what's on offer in this space and I will be excited to see what happens there during the autumn and into winter," he said.



**DERBY  
SWAP  
SHOP**



## CLASSIC KIDS' TV SHOW INSPIRES BRILLIANT NEW IDEA TO HELP BUSINESSES



It was a 1970s kids' TV institution. Every Saturday morning, for six years, Multi Coloured Swap Shop and its team of Noel Edmonds, John Craven, Maggie Philbin and Keith Chegwin, delighted the nation, encouraging children to swap their toys.

Now in 2020, a Swap Shop of a different kind, created in Derby by three companies keen to forge ahead despite the coronavirus pandemic, is helping create new opportunities for small businesses and local charities.

The idea was sparked by Tracy Harrison, CEO of charity Safe and Sound, during a Marketing Derby Business Live zoom meeting. She called for some way for organisations to support each other during lockdown.

Rachel Hayward, of Ask the Chameleon, an award-winning consultancy which writes funding and tender applications, took up the baton.

The solution was clear, says Rachel. "We wanted to create something very simple. An individual, business or charity from across Derby and Derbyshire is looking for something. In return they will provide a swap, offering services or goods."

Rachel reached out to others in the Derby business community, recruiting Dean Jackson, CEO of internationally-recognised sports

apparel brand HUUB – a fellow fan of the Swap Shop TV show – and the creative and design experts at agency think3.

Dean said: "The Covid-19 pandemic has forced us all to live, work and play very differently since the lockdown began on April 23rd. Out the window went the selfish interest to business and work and we were awakened to working together to ensure long-term sustainability and trading success for all.

"Derby Swap Shop was born out of this idea of helping each other, delivering a service and support without cash."

Although the team at think3 are too young to remember the Swap Shop TV show, they took inspiration from its retro feel to create a modern, simple platform in just two weeks

The team primed local business people to create some early swaps and, on May 4th, [www.derbyswapshop.co.uk](http://www.derbyswapshop.co.uk) was launched to a Zoom audience of 40 local business and charity professionals.

The community responded quickly – within the first 10 minutes of going live, 24 new swapsters had created their account. Within five weeks, that number had risen to 100, with 50 live swaps. And, by their third month, Derby Swap Shop had

more than 300 users.

Swaps range from filming support, SEO searches, social media advice, marketing support, legal help and graphic design to translation services.

A regular swapper is Colleague Box's Natalie Bamford. She said: "I loved Derby Swap Shop as soon as I saw it. The concept is simple yet so, so effective. I popped on my swap, which was five of our Colleague Box gift boxes in return for help getting us some PR exposure. Within hours, the wonderful Kerry, from Penguin PR, was in contact and within a week we were splashed across business pages digitally and in print.

"I've since swapped twice more and regularly check the site for the latest swaps. It's a brilliant idea and one that I, personally, am extremely grateful for".

Kerry Ganly, Penguin's PR and social media manager, agrees that the scheme has been a great boost.

"The Derby Swap Shop is such a simple, yet brilliant idea and for me and Penguin PR, it has opened up lots of business opportunities." Think3, equally, responded to a call from Derby Sound, a local radio station, who needed help with their website. In return, think3 received free promotion on the website and in broadcasts.

**CONTINUED OVERLEAF**

Keen to learn and evolve the platform, the team continues to make improvements, introducing daily swap alerts via twitter and a monthly ebulletin. They have also arranged discounts for Derby Swap Shop badge wearers in Bear café and have exciting future plans for wider promotions.

In recognition of their success, the team was shortlisted as a finalist in the Great British Entrepreneur Awards Midlands heats, in the Entrepreneur for Good category, beating off competition from 2,600 applicants.

And they are winning fans across the business community. East Midlands Chamber chief executive Scott Knowles says:

“Derby Swap Shop has created an innovative solution in the Covid-19 environment for small businesses to create new contacts, to easily trade with and support each other and will support the economic recovery of Derby and the wider East Midlands.”

Think3 strategic director Lee Marples says the team are proud of everything achieved so far.

“We wanted to be the catalyst for change and to help small businesses and charity colleagues during this very tough time. A swapping service is such a simple idea but it works.”

In August, a Notts Swap Shop was launched and, in September, a Leicester version followed..

Rachel says: “The impact of Covid is not going away and, whilst that is hugely concerning for us all, we hope that the Swap Shop idea can provide a small glimmer of hope.

“It’s been so well received in both Derby and Nottingham that we want to share this with the rest of the UK as a means of developing our organisations, making new relationships and ultimately surviving. All we need are champions to run the swap shop in their local area and we can provide the rest”

To continue to make Swap Shops free to small businesses and charities, the team are on the hunt for sponsorship and funding.

It’s a herculean task in these testing times but for a bunch that created a swapping service used by hundreds in just two weeks, it’s unlikely to be a challenge for long.



## ENTREPRENEUR CREATES NEW JOBS AMID CHALLENGES OF COVID PANDEMIC

“Whether life is normal, we are living in a recession or pandemic, change is constant. This new world has just pushed us to think harder, change even faster and drive innovation”

The mantra of Kavita Oberoi was never more poignant than during the Covid emergency, which accelerated rather than put on hold planned changes to her businesses.

Kavita is at the head of two very different companies – Oberoi Consulting, which provides clinical audit services to the NHS and pharmaceutical industry, and the Oberoi Business Hub, which supports firms in myriad ways.

When the outbreak struck and lockdown approached, her key concern was to ensure continuity of the two businesses.

Oberoi Consulting’s staff have always been field-based and visited GP practices to deliver clinical audit and IT consulting services but GP practices shut their doors to patients and visitors.

Meanwhile, the call-handling team at Oberoi Business Hub, which answer calls on behalf of 300 different UK companies, were all office-based.

Kavita said: “The virtual receptionists know each client’s business intimately and they had

to be able to provide the same service from home.

“They were a nail-biting few weeks leading up to lockdown. We had previously investigated if working from home was possible and the answer was always no.

“But when your back is up against it you have to think and think again.

“So, we had several meetings with our phone supplier and our IT services provider and, just two days before lockdown, our new systems were tested and we managed to get the whole team set up and working from home.

“Next priority was Oberoi Consulting, which had just won a number of contracts with the NHS and pharmaceutical companies.

“For years, its innovative clinical audit and IT teams have supported GPs across the UK but needed to travel to surgeries in order to gain physical access to their computers.

“Prior to lockdown and Covid-19, a major company strategy for 2020 was to enable remote working with the NHS and GP practices.

“This could only be enabled through a secure Health and Social Care Network (HSCN) connection. Work had started in January on the compliance and extensive new procedures we



needed to put in place in order to gain the access.

"This was no mean feat. It involved working with several internal and external stakeholders and was led by one of the newest recruits to our business, service implementation manager Vivek Patel.

"Finally, we were granted the HSCN connection soon after GPs' practice staff began working from home and accessing their systems just like we would be.

"The HSCN network enables our field team to work with GP practices more efficiently from home and means we can hire the very best of people regardless of where they live because of the remote delivery of our clinical audit services.

"It has also enabled us to get a number of new services up and running. The possibilities are both exciting and endless."

Following the investment in technology to support the Oberoi Business Hub call-handling team, the business faced its next set of challenges.

A number of businesses had cancelled their call handling services as their own trading had been affected by lockdown, with some unable to trade at all.

"Luckily, our client base is diverse, so a smaller number cancelled than anticipated," says Kavita.

"I have learned that a crisis is a time to invest, not to draw in, so I focused the attention of the call handlers on two key activities

"Half of the team were taking inbound calls, while the rest of them worked on research and lead generation. These bore fruit and new clients.

"It wasn't the easiest time but the team worked diligently, digging out opportunities, sending emails and conducting follow-up calls.

"Indeed, for some of our existing client base, our call volumes increased, especially those supporting patients.

"For example, the private hospital and care company Chartwell Group needed to hire 70 staff during the peak of the Covid-19 emergency and Oberoi Business Hub handled the recruitment calls.

"It also came to the aid of The UK Sepsis Trust when the charity began taking calls from those who had survived Covid-19 because the residual effects are similar to Sepsis. Additional technology, provided by Accenture, a world leader in artificial intelligence, was put into place to assist the nursing team to prioritise callers.

"We have seen 100 per cent annual growth in the number of calls we handle and have consequently taken on new staff and are looking to recruit more."

**"Businesses have come out of lockdown much stronger, winning clients and contracts"**

"For a number of our existing and new clients, the call handlers from the Oberoi Business Hub are now seen as the way forward as they face the challenges of the new world.

"As a direct result of thinking outside the box and rising to the challenge, both businesses have come out of lockdown much stronger, winning clients and contracts."

Kavita added: "Financial crises demand greater focus and the need to reinvent. People who adapt are people who come out better. True entrepreneurs thrive in challenging situations."

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OBEROI CONSULTING AND OBEROI BUSINESS HUB HAVE ADAPTED QUICKLY TO SUPPORT EXISTING CLIENTS AND WIN NEW BUSINESS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. PICTURED TOP LEFT IS KAVITA OBEROI

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# HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM LAUNCH EXCITING GIFT BOX COMPANY DURING LOCKDOWN



A shared thought for furloughed workers led Derby married couple Natalie and Adam Bamford to come up with a business idea that would, in just a few months, grow into a mini-phenomenon.

Called Colleague Box, the couple's fast-growing venture is a brand-new letterbox gift service that helps companies ensure that their furloughed workers do not feel forgotten, simply by enabling them to send a delivery of goodies through the post.

"It's a pretty simple idea," says Natalie, who founded the award-winning Derby Days Out, an events listings website for parents and carers in 2015 and sold it three years later.

"And it came about because there was a real need for furloughed workers - and those who were working remotely across the UK - to still feel valued and connected by their employer."

It may be a simple idea but it is thanks to Natalie and Adam's business acumen and keen eye for new angles that Colleague Box has become such a coronavirus business success story.

It started on the couple's kitchen table at their home in Spondon and now they are looking to employ permanent and temporary staff to deal with an increase in demand. They are about to move into their own commercial premises and have even earned praise on social media from former BBC Dragon Theo Paphitis.

And, five months on, Colleague Box has evolved; the pair have created brownie boxes for business meetings, cocktail boxes for virtual quiz nights and, more recently, secured a deal with a global delivery company which will see Colleague Box package up 20,000 pumpkins for employees - complete with carving kit - as a seasonal treat.

"That was an interesting request," smiles Natalie, who has been impressed with the many ways in which businesses are reimagining the Colleague Box.

"We have sourced and will package up the pumpkins in a double-walled box, along with a carving kit and insert. It's for a national competition, which the delivery company are running in the autumn for their employees, and I think it's a great idea!

"The way in which people are using the Colleague Box is so innovative. We've had them used at award ceremonies, where everyone opens the box at the same time to find out who has won the award.

"We love it when the phone rings and it's a company that wants to do something completely custom. We also like to be completely flexible when it comes to contents and work with companies to create their own bespoke box, even sourcing them branded merchandise.

"We received one request from a company who usually hosts a huge party for colleagues in the summer with a barbecue and outdoor bar but, because of the coronavirus pandemic, the annual get-together was cancelled.

"They still wanted to mark the occasion, though, and a 'secret' page was set up on our website where employees could order their own customised Colleague Box - the Craft Beer and Cocktail Boxes were really popular - and they all had a big virtual gathering in the comfort and safety of their own homes."



This Covid-19 success story hasn't, though, been without its challenges. For Natalie, who is mum to Lola, 13, and two-year-old Poppy – plus puppy Pixie – there have been a few pangs of 'mum guilt' as she has juggled a fledgling business with home-schooling.

"I think that every parent has felt guilty at some point, about letting the kids watch TV or handing them an electronic device to keep them occupied whilst sending a few emails," said Natalie.

"I do try to involve the children as much as I can. Lola has been particularly helpful, picking up bits for the boxes and packaging them."

The challenges which most businesses have faced in recent months have been dealt with admirably by Natalie and Adam, who have turned those difficulties into opportunities for Colleague Box.

"I know that a lot of creative businesses have struggled because there are very few members of staff in the office to bounce ideas off," added Natalie.

"But, when your business partner

also happens to be your husband, you're constantly throwing ideas around. Adam and I spark off each other. It can often be difficult to switch off – but then I love what I do."

Initially there was just the one version of the Colleague Box – now named The Original Colleague Box – available. Now there are 24 gift boxes in the collection – all with free delivery to postcodes in the UK – including the new Christmas Box, which comes festively wrapped and jam-packed with seasonal delights, including a hand-written Christmas card, Christmas cracker, handmade Hawken's Christmas gingerbread, a bottle of Prosecco and a Christmas Eve Yankee Candle.

And £1 from each Christmas Box sold will be donated to Safe and Sound, a Derby-based charity which fights child exploitation and transforms young lives.

Each box – priced from £12.99 up to £49.99 for the top-priced premium option – comes complete with company branding and a personalised message.

"Although setting up a business during the pandemic was a risky

move, we launched at a time when supporting people and employee engagement was, and still is, paramount," said CEO Adam.

"The response to Colleague Box, particularly from the people in our home city of Derby and the fellow Marketing Derby bondholders, has been amazing. Good customer service is something which, for us, is so, so important. However fast our business grows, I want to make sure that we continue to excel in this area.

"We are so excited to see what 2021 brings. We're hoping for further growth and can see Colleague Box doubling in size."

Colleague Box offers free UK shipping, whilst packages can be sent abroad for an additional cost. Each box is ordered online and for bulk purchases, Colleague Box offer a secure mass upload option. Packaged using sustainable and recyclable materials, the boxes arrive at the door within a few days.

NATALIE AND ADAM BAMFORD ARE PICTURED, TOP RIGHT, ALONGSIDE EXAMPLES FROM THEIR COLLEAGUE BOX RANGE.



## SUCCESS IS SWEET FOR ENTERPRISING DOUGHNUT MAKERS



Luxury doughnut maker Project D's brand-new bakery is 11 times bigger than its previous operation and is set to become a central hub for a UK-wide delivery service.

The company is investing £250,000 in new equipment and plans to create an extra 100 jobs in the city, with more units planned for Leeds, Manchester and London over the next two years.

It's an exciting time for the business, which is making a name for itself all over the UK thanks to its handcrafted, brightly coloured and Instagram-friendly doughnuts.

But, without the entrepreneurial spirit of the company's three young owners, there could have been a very different ending to Project D's success story. Prior to Covid-19, the company's business model was based entirely on selling to shoppers and students from pop-up stands at one-off events and kiosks in shopping centres and universities. Lockdown meant Project D simply had nowhere to sell and, after furloughing staff, the company took the decision to go back to basics to prevent the business from disappearing as fast as one of its doughnuts.

"We closed our kiosks a week before lockdown, out of concern for our staff's safety and because everywhere was so quiet; there was no footfall at all," said co-owner Max Poynton.

"We furloughed almost all our staff and sat down to work out what on earth we could do. Although we had money in the bank that would keep us going in the short term, we knew it wasn't sustainable and that there had to be other options."

One idea Max discussed with co-owners Matt Bond and Jacob Watts, was turning the bakery into a pasta-making facility to support the national shortage of dried pasta. But they quickly dismissed this in favour of buying eggs from a local farmer and relaunching the firm, temporarily at least, as an egg delivery service.

The company put out a message to its many followers on social media and within 24 hours had received more than 1,200 orders. Using card readers attached to 2m-long sticks to ensure a safe delivery service, staff were returned to work within a week to keep up with the demand.

Yet this was only the start. Project D quickly realised that it could better serve the community through pop-up stands outdoors and by extending its range to include yeast and flour, which were also in huge demand thanks to the nation's new-found passion for home-baking. Max contacted the police and Derby City Council for permission and was told that, as long as staff were able to maintain social distancing, Project D was free to operate. Within days, fuelled by media coverage and an ever-growing social media audience, Project D was serving long queues of customers and selling out of products on a daily basis.

It received requests from communities asking for them to set up stands in their locations and even found time to give something back, donating 5,000 eggs to Derby Foodbank and delivering batches of 250 doughnuts to the NHS, Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service, Derbyshire Police and numerous care homes.

"We learned a lot about selling eggs, including the fact that you don't make a lot of money, which was why we had to sell different items," said Max.



**Project D have even more reasons to celebrate after being named winners of Marketing Derby's Innovation Week Award.**

The team triumphed in an online vote among bondholders after showcasing their success story in a video presentation.

Fifteen other bondholders were also short-listed for the award. They were: RDS Global, Altered Reality Zone, Orangetheory Fitness, Colleague Box, Barber Dispatch, Derby County Community Trust, Mortgage Advice Bureau, Blue Arrow, Scenariio, the Derbyshire Sporting Joint, Derby College Group, Treetops Hospice, Cathedral Quarter/St Peter's Quarter BIDs, Surescreen and Derby Swap Shop (run by Huub, Ask the Chameleon and Think 3).

John Forkin, Managing Director of Marketing Derby, said it was heartening that, even in the most difficult times, so much creativity and imagination was being displayed by local businesses.

"Our city has a proud history of innovation - a tradition that the businesses of 2020 have continued with distinction. It is this forward thinking and dynamism that gives us great hope that Derby's economy will bounce back strongly from the challenges of the coronavirus crisis."

"We also discovered that people in Derby absolutely love them! Over lockdown we sold enough eggs to make an omelette the size of 20 tennis courts - that's enough to feed the whole population of Antigua a two-egg omelette.

"People queued for hours and were really relieved to see us, such was the demand for eggs and other ingredients. And the fact that they could also buy some doughnuts was literally the icing on the cake for many people - let's face it, everyone needed a treat during lockdown."

Project D sold its eggs and essentials for two months while building up a home delivery service on the side, supplying doughnuts to households across the region, including Nottingham, Stoke, Sheffield, Leicester and Birmingham.

The company has long since returned to making a full-time living from doughnuts again and, importantly, has plenty of working capital to ensure that Max, Matt and Jacob can invest at a time when other businesses are still struggling to get back onto their feet. This investment includes the new bakery and a side venture called

Project Whippy. Operating from a traditional ice cream van, it serves doughnuts filled with ice cream, which are warm on the outside and frozen in the centre, and its most popular line, the Conut, a cone-shaped doughnut topped with ice cream and lashings of sweets and sprinkles.

Max added: "We built Project D up from nothing and although there was huge pressure on us, we couldn't sit back and just hope that lockdown would soon be over.

"Being positive and willing to try something else worked really well for us and the company is now going in a completely different direction to before. We've already hit the sales targets we set ourselves for 2020 and so, from a difficult position, it's turned into an amazing year.

"And we're proud that we were able to support the community during lockdown. We are all Derby people and it was - and still is - important to us to put something back." ●

PROJECT D DIRECTORS MAX POYNTON AND MATTHEW BOND ARE PICTURED, TOP LEFT, ALONGSIDE SOME OF THEIR DELICIOUS CREATIONS



MP HEATHER WHEELER VISITING THE BURNASTON SITE.

## CLIMATE CHANGE EFFORTS PRAISED AT TOYOTA SITE

Work is underway on an extension at Toyota Motor Manufacturing UK's plant at Burnaston, which will allow the company to store an extra 3,500 vehicles on site.

The expansion of its despatch yard, to cover 15 acres, will enable Toyota to store vehicles ahead of their export to European dealerships.

A revolutionary road construction technique called RoadCem, first developed in the Netherlands, is being used on the extension, reducing the need to remove material to landfill.

The civil engineering design for the project has been provided by Rodgers Leask, which has offices in Derby, Birmingham and Bristol. Ashbourne-based Whitehouse Construction is delivering the RoadCem system on the project.

On a recent visit to the site, South Derbyshire MP Heather Wheeler said: "We are all too

aware of the impact of climate change and the need to protect the environment so I was delighted to be invited to see a revolutionary road construction being used to build a new Derby hub at the Toyota site in Burnaston.

"I was very impressed and will be speaking to ministers about RoadCem. I am sure it is the future of road building and hope to see it rolled out across Derbyshire and the UK."

Andy Leask, Director of Rodgers Leask, said: "We are proud to be associated with this project, where we acted as both the design consultant for PowerCem and the civil engineering designer for the main contractor, Whitehouse Construction.

"It's great to see the support from our local MP, Heather Wheeler, for this Derby success story. She makes some very valid points with regard to the future of road construction in the UK and how both central government and local authorities could adopt this technology in the future for their highways networks."

## SUPERSONIC DEALS FOR ROLLS-ROYCE

Rolls-Royce has signed a deal with Virgin Galactic to design engines that would power the world's first supersonic jet since Concorde was retired in 2003.

The company has also announced an agreement to explore the pairing of one of its propulsion systems with aerospace company Boom Supersonic's flagship supersonic passenger aircraft, Overture, aiming to build the world's fastest civil aircraft.

Rolls-Royce North America chairman and CEO Tom Bell said: "Rolls-Royce brings a unique history in high speed propulsion, going back to the Concorde, and offers world-class technical capabilities to develop and field the advanced propulsion systems needed to power commercially available high-Mach travel."

Having designed the engine for Concorde, Rolls-Royce has now penned a memorandum of understanding to work with Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic on a small jet that can fly at 2,000 mph - or Mach 3 - at heights of around 60,000 ft. It is thought the new aircraft will be able to carry between nine and 19 passengers.

In addition, the collaboration between

Rolls-Royce and Boom will involve teams from both companies working in engine-airframe matching activities.

The priorities of this engagement are informed by Boom and Rolls-Royce's shared commitment to sustainability. Both companies recognize that supersonic passenger travel has to be compatible with a net-zero carbon future and the two teams will work together to address sustainability in Overture design and operations.

Simon Carlisle, Director of Strategy at Rolls-Royce, said: "We share a strong interest in supersonic flight and in sustainability strategies for aviation with Boom. We're now building on our valuable experience in this space as well as our previous work together to further match and refine our engine technology for Boom's Overture."

Blake Scholl, Boom founder and CEO, added: "We've had a series of valuable collaborations and co-locations with Rolls-Royce over the past years to lay the groundwork for this next phase of development. We look forward to building on the progress and rapport that we've already built with our collaboration as we work to refine Overture's design and bring sustainable supersonic transport to passenger travel."



VIRGIN GALACTIC'S SUPERSONIC JET CAN FLY AT MACH 3.



## NEW CONTRACT AWARDS FOR RECRUITERS

Sky Recruitment Solutions' dynamic approach to local recruitment has helped it land contracts with fellow Marketing Derby Bondholders Pennine Healthcare and Hodgkinson Builders, despite the economic challenges of Covid-19.

Managing Director David Torrington said: "In the space of three months the country has gone from record employment to virtually the opposite.

"These are tough and uncertain times for a lot of candidates and a lot of employers but, as an established business with an intimate understanding of the local markets, we remain committed to helping the city of Derby and the broader Derbyshire

region in every way we can."

Pennine Healthcare's chief executive, Luke Fryer, picked Sky Recruitment Solutions specifically to help sustain his company's ongoing expansion.

Luke said: "We picked Sky Recruitment Solutions due to their knowledge of this sector and of the local market and, with two of their candidates now in place, we are delighted that we chose to put our faith in them."

Ian Hodgkinson, Director at Hodgkinson Builders, also appointed Sky Recruitment Solutions after hearing a glowing report from a local business associate.

He said: "Sky Recruitment Solutions have listened to our needs and reacted to them brilliantly. They've been very efficient, very pleasant and very professional people to deal with and they've provided a number of first-class candidates. We've now signed an exclusive 12-month agreement with them and I have no hesitation in saying that they are our recruitment agency of choice."

per cent on an industrial placement.

The minister said: "It was wonderful to visit the Derby College Group and to meet some of the pioneering students starting our new T Levels and seeing first-hand how excited they are to be leading the way."

Kate Martin, Derby College Group Vice Principal, who is leading the T-Level introduction programme, added: "We are widely recognised for proven strength in these professional and

## BUS FIRM'S APP IS JUST THE TICKET

Bus company trentbarton has launched an advanced ticketing app to replace its plastic mango cards.

The mango app for smart phones is the first account-based ticketing app from a bus company which calculates the right fare for the customer using scan-on, scan-off technology via a QR code.

Passengers can download the app for free for their Apple or Android devices. Featuring an on-screen balance and online top-up, the app allows customers to add credit, either within the app or at a trentbarton travel shop, and automatically generates a unique QR-style barcode to be scanned as the customer gets on board and when getting off.

Each night the mango system will calculate the right fares to charge for the day's journeys, including the mango discount on single trip cash fares. As well as a daily cap on charges, there are also rolling

weekly and 28-day caps so customers can be confident there is a limit to what they spend, however frequently they travel on trentbarton buses.

The mango app aims to replace more than 100,000 plastic mango cards which are currently active. Existing mango customers can continue using their physical mango card for two months during which they can migrate at any time onto the app, easily transferring any credit from the card to the new service. Customers without a smart phone can still pay by tapping on and tapping off with their contactless debit or credit cards, buy a saver pass or pay with cash.

Jeff Counsell, managing director of trentbarton, said: "trentbarton has always been an innovator and brought new firsts to bus travel throughout our history. Mango was already a ground-breaking fare cap payment method and the app will propel mango into the future."

## COLLEGE HOSTS VISIT FROM SKILLS MINISTER

Derby College Group welcomed the Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills, Gillian Keegan MP, to see how its new T-Level qualification study programmes will be developed.

DCG is the first FE provider in the East Midlands to launch the new two-year T-Level qualifications, which will see students spend 80 per cent of their time in college and 20

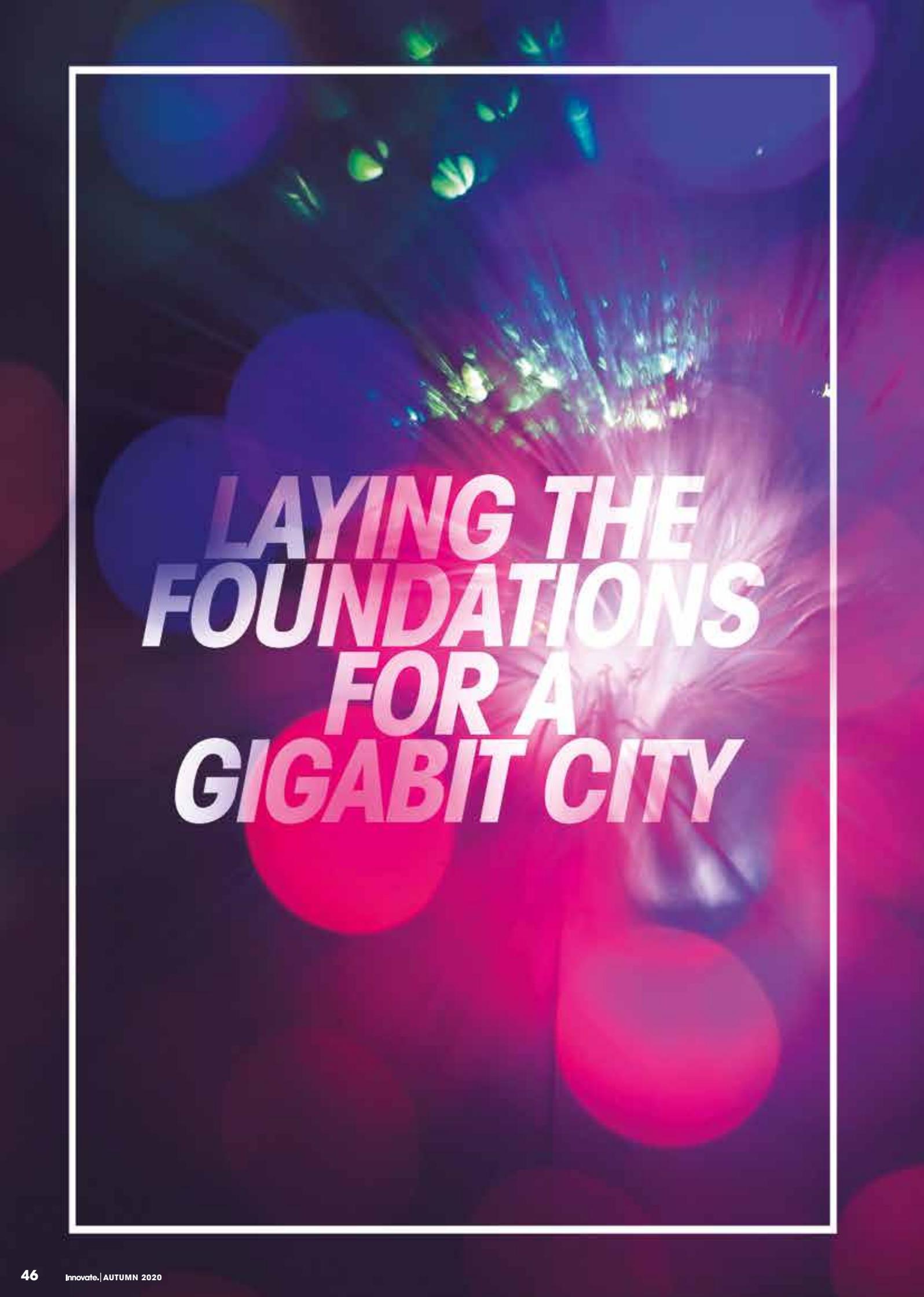
technical subject areas and for our nationally-acclaimed partnership work with employers so we are well-placed to be among the first to introduce these new qualifications."

The Minister met the first students enrolled on the Construction, Design, Surveying and Planning T-Level programme at the Hudson Building on Pride Park, Derby.

After joining in with an ice-breaker activity with the students, Mrs Keegan had a virtual

meeting with a group of key employers in the industry who have been instrumental in developing the T-Level programme with DCG.

The T-Level programmes have been developed in collaboration with employers so that they meet the skills requirements of industry and better prepare students for the workplace with progression routes either straight into work, through degree apprenticeships or full-time university programmes.



**LAYING THE  
FOUNDATIONS  
FOR A  
GIGABIT CITY**



01. CITYFIBRE'S SERVICE WILL BE INSTALLED ACROSS DERBY



02. HIGH FIBRE SPEEDS WILL ENABLE SMART TECH IN HOMES ACROSS THE CITY



03. DOMINIKA WALKER, CITYFIBRE'S CITY MANAGER

**Derby has long had an affection for copper. We cover our buildings in the stuff. Think Market Hall roof. Think Corn Exchange. Think the university law school, colloquially known as the Copper Box.**

**But even our love for the soft, ductile metal is sorely tested when it comes to the internet.**

Because, if you're watching a buffering message instead of that film you were trying to stream, or your Zoom call keeps dropping out at important parts of your virtual conversation, chances are it's down to a copper wire at some point in your connection.

Thankfully, CityFibre is ensuring that such frustrations will soon be a thing of the past and, more importantly, that Derby has a full fibre infrastructure that will enable families and businesses to access life-transforming technologies.

The company is investing £4bn to deliver full fibre internet networks to up to eight million premises across the UK.

In Derby alone, CityFibre will spend a minimum of £45m ensuring that almost every home and business in the city has access to a next-generation, future-proof Fibre-To-The-Premise (FTTP) network that is capable of gigabit speeds – that's 1,000 megabits per second – within the next five years.

It will also allow Derby to better harness smart city technologies such as intelligent street lighting, high-definition CCTV, traffic management systems, increased e-learning opportunities – and even the introduction of autonomous transport systems.

It is sadly ironic that my video chat with Dominika Walker, CityFibre's City Manager for Derby and Nottingham, is being conducted via a copper cable internet connection (at my end) and is punctuated by screen freezes.

It almost makes my question about why Derby should be excited about becoming a gigabit city redundant but I ask anyway and Dominika perseveres with my technical difficulties to provide an answer.

"FTTP is well regarded as the best in terms of connectivity for its speed, near-unlimited bandwidth and reliability. It uses all fibre optic

cables at every stage of the connection from the customer's home or business, with no copper involved. Users will be offered a significantly superior and far more reliable broadband service, capable of gigabit speeds," she explains.

"The events of 2020 have demonstrated how important having good connectivity is. In a short amount of time we've moved from physical to digital – home working, home schooling, access to remote health services and online shopping have become the norm and demand is only set to increase.

"Having a future-proof network that not only has the capacity to power all of these online activities but is far superior in terms of reliability and speed is very exciting.

"With this new, city-wide full fibre infrastructure, Derby will be able to enhance its standing as a globally competitive digital city; transforming the online world at home, increasing productivity, sparking innovation and driving economic growth by creating new jobs, attracting start-ups and enticing further inward investment. It will also play a crucial role in the post-Covid-19 recovery as more and more of our activity moves online."

CityFibre selected Derby as one of its earliest projects, with construction beginning in Mackworth in May this year, and the build has now progressed into the Littleover, Abbey, Darley and Arboretum wards.

"We chose Derby as one of our first 23 cities in the national FTTP programme because of the community's strong tech sector, the council's forward-looking commitment to smart city initiatives and the overall strength of support for the project," says Dominika.

"Other factors included the extent of CityFibre's existing full fibre network in the city, Derby's geographical location and its status as the UK Capital for Innovation, making it a prime Gigabit City.

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## **"Honestly, what's not to like about Derby? It's the best place in which to work, live and study!"**

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"We build our Gigabit Cities on a street-by-street and whole city basis, extending the network to connect everyone without picking just a few areas within the boundary. As a priority, for example, we've already started installing full fibre in all of Derby City Council's social housing premises, managed by Derby Homes, making the council tenants one of the first groups to benefit from this rollout," she adds.

But while evidence of this huge infrastructure investment can be seen with work crews already on the streets, what should users expect when services go live – starting next year?

"Ultimately, the full fibre network can function as a backbone for deployment of fibre to individual homes, providing residential access to ever-richer forms of digital services and entertainment," Dominika adds.

"Once the first sites are connected, internet service providers can begin offering services over the network, bringing new applications, services, features and content to run over what is effectively near-infinite capacity provided by the full fibre technology.

"Every Gigabit City we build unlocks huge potential for

economic growth by enabling 5G and helping businesses compete globally. With innovation unleashed, carbon reduction can be accelerated and health, education and public services can be enhanced – changing lives for the better.

"Gigabit City status will help to boost Derby's digital potential by driving investment, inspiring new business start-ups and encouraging the development of digital skills, as well as future-proofing communications infrastructure and paving the way for smart city innovations."

And just how will a CityFibre-connected home function? Well, according to Dominika, there'll be no more arguing about who is hogging all the bandwidth.

"With a full fibre broadband connection into homes, residents will experience seamless connectivity over all their connected devices – even when they are streaming, downloading and playing all at once," she explains.

"They'll be able to fully embrace the new generation of 'smart home' applications to enhance their daily lives and remote home working will become effortless with instant and reliable access to the cloud."

CityFibre, as the UK's third national digital infrastructure provider, partners with other companies to provide services for businesses and consumers. It has appointed RDS Global, A1 Comms, Gigabit Networks and Mason Infotech as what it describes as 'city champions' for business services in Derby and will shortly announce its consumer partner.

Although it is investing in delivering a premium-level service, users won't be asked to pay premium prices.

"We are working with our partners and they will want to be competitive," says Dominika.

But where Derby should expect to see big numbers is from the economic benefits Gigabit City status will yield.

"Research undertaken by economic consultancy firm Regeneris highlighted that having full fibre connectivity will have a major impact in Derby over the next 15 years," says Dominika.

"It shows that up to £70m could be added to the value of local homes, while smart city initiatives could add as much as £69m locally. Access to full fibre could also unlock £39m in business productivity and innovation, while a further £21m in growth could be driven from new business start-



INSTALLATION IS UNDERWAY

ups, with enhanced connectivity making it easier and less expensive to set up base and run efficiently."

The company is also creating new jobs – thousands nationally and scores in Derby – to help with installation and maintenance of the network.

"We've recently announced the creation of 10,000 jobs over three years, across our national network. Derby is one of the locations that will benefit from this training and recruitment programme," Dominika says.

"It is our aim to create local jobs for local people and we're already working with McCann, our construction partner in Derby, to support this scheme.

"We are committed to offering people careers and not just jobs. That's why we are building a highly-skilled and diverse telecoms workforce that will boost growth, not only in Derby but across the whole of the UK.

"We are also working with an expanding network of national employment and recruitment partners, including the Department of Work and Pensions, Construction Industry Training Board and the Career Transition Partnership, as well as other specialist organisations such as the Women's Engineering Society."

Dominika is loving her role and the chance to deliver such an exciting project in a city that she describes as her second home.

"I'm originally from Poland. I was born in a small and incredibly picturesque town called Wabrzezno. I came to England 15 years ago to study media and communications and have stayed here ever since," she says.

"I think of Derby as my second home - my husband is originally from Derby. I love the vibrancy and community feel of our city. It has a great shopping experience and it's perfectly positioned for all major transport links.

"There's also so much going on culturally, from Derby Book Festival through to Derby Feste and outdoor plays. We're really lucky to have access to three big city parks and so much greenery in Derby. My husband and I are both walkers - no pun intended - so having access to lovely hiking routes and the Peak District is also very handy.

"Honestly, what's not to like about Derby? It's the best place in which to work, live and study!"



THE NEW FIBRE GOES IN



GIGABIT SPEEDS WILL TRANSFORM BROWSING

Dominika's role as City Manager for Derby and Nottingham involves overseeing the project in both cities and managing stakeholder and community engagement.

"This can vary from attending community events to working with local councillors, property developers and speaking at stakeholder events. The role is so varied that there's never a dull moment. I wake up every day knowing that I can make a real difference, helping our communities thrive in the digital age," she says.

"Full fibre has so many great applications and benefits. Today, we know only too well that being able to stay in touch with family and friends, and also work, virtually has never been so important. Knowing that CityFibre can underpin this and make people's daily lives easier and more enjoyable really is the best reward."

She describes her key challenge as ensuring that the benefits of full fibre are properly understood.

"We've been powering our online activity on legacy copper networks for so long, not realising that the speeds we could've achieved have been slowed down by this. There's much faster technology available and there won't be anything better than full fibre for another 100 years, making it entirely future-proof," she says.

With such a compelling argument, there seems little doubt that Dominika and her team will soon be persuading Derby to turn its back on copper and embrace fibre.

Not sure what it would look like on the Market Hall roof though! ●



DOMINIKA WALKER, CITYFIBRE

TIME FOR  
CULTURE  
TO TAKE  
CENTRAL  
STAGE

# WITH CITY CENTRE ECONOMIES FACING HUGE CHALLENGES, ACCELERATED BY THE HEALTH PANDEMIC, A PANEL OF CITY LEADERS MET TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION ‘CAN CULTURE SAVE THE POST-COVID CITY?’

**John Forkin:** Cities are facing an existential threat in terms of people disappearing off the streets and working from home. In Derby, the decline in the city centre, which has been on the cards for some time, has been accelerated by Covid.

A recovery task force has been created. One of the narratives of that task force is that the city centre needs a revolution not an evolution. We can't fix it just by sitting around and waiting but what does that revolution look like?

Recently, Marketing Derby carried out a survey of 400 people in households earning above the national average in the Derby area, so people we need to come into Derby and spend money, and one of the questions asked was what would make you visit the city centre more frequently? Number one on that list, which was 76 per cent, was an enhanced culture offer. Number two, with 70 per cent, was an enhanced leisure offer.

So, the customer is telling us very clearly, if you want me to come back into town, you are going to have to give me something to do.

And, in focus groups that we ran, people quote things like the Knife Angle, Feste, the Museum of the Moon and so on as things they would like to see more of. And, I think the Market Place al fresco initiative is set in that context – a leisure activity which is interesting and worth coming into town for.

There are two or three questions that I would like us to consider.

One is, let's accept things are tough but what is your honest prognosis for the coming year, assuming that at some point the social distancing and pandemic will start to fade away?

Secondly, I'm interested in activity that used to happen that doesn't happen anymore. Is that coming

back or is it changing? What does the new normal look like?

And the third question is around innovations and the customer. What's your analysis of what needs to happen, particularly in Derby city centre, the contributions your organisation or sector can bring to it and what's missing? What do we need to bring in which might just lift the game?

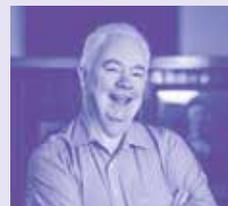
So, I'm going to start with Stella. You have the whole tourism brief, you were one of the initiators of the Market Place initiative, give us your take on the prognosis of the future. Why should people come into Derby?

**Stella Birks:** It's not a new question for me to be asking myself, as you can imagine. I have been in this role for 12 years and, during those 12 years, my job has been to find reasons to bring people to the city of Derby and to identify what we have got that is going to attract people – what makes us different.

I think different is an interesting subject to talk about because 20 odd years ago we all know high streets were completely homogeneous – you went to a city and expected to see the same brands on the high street. That has completely turned around. Now, it's all about unique, authentic experiences.

Our national tourist board has been saying for a few years now that that's what they are interested in, that's what the media is interested in, that's how we attract people by identifying what you have that is unique and different.

I think that, post-Covid, every destination is going to be thinking about that because the industry is going to be more competitive than ever before and those cities that are going to be successful are going to be those that have got it right – and right means authentic and unique.



**Chair:**  
**John Forkin,**  
Managing  
Director,  
Marketing Derby



**Tony Butler**  
Executive  
Director,  
Derby  
Museums



**Stella Birks,**  
Visitor Services  
Development  
Manager, Derby  
City Council



**Peter  
Helps MBE,**  
Chief Executive,  
Sinfonia Viva



**Adam Buss,**  
Chief Executive,  
Derby QUAD



**Robbie Kerr,**  
General  
Manager,  
Derby LIVE



**Steve Slater,**  
Director, Déda



**Mike Wingfield,**  
Riverside Project  
Manager, Derby  
and Sandiacre  
Canal Trust



**Robbie Jones,**  
Insights Analyst  
Lead, Katapult



**Ryan Duckett,**  
Chief Executive,  
Derbyshire  
County Cricket  
Club



STELLA BIRKS CHECKS IN FOR THE COVID-SAFE DISCUSSION

**"There's lots of happenings, lots of single events that encourage people to come into the city. What's also needed is a good infrastructure so that doing cultural stuff is a habit for local people."**

It's about what does Derby do well, what do we have a heritage of, what do we have a legacy of and really playing to those strengths.

We all know we have the opening of the Museum of Making coming up. That's a huge opportunity to identify what Derby's identity is and to really make the most of that. And to use every other festival, every other event to make sure it comes back to that subject of what has made Derby great.

We are a city of makers. There's so much we can do with that theme. There's a huge opportunity to show how that happened in Derby.

**JF:** When you are talking about unique, authentic experiences, if we are looking back, I think people will say there are some fantastic activities happening in Derby. I have named some of them already, I could throw others in of regional or national significance – the book festival jumps into my head and even things like the beer festival and folk festival – but one of the criticisms that was given in the survey and in the focus groups is that it is very siloed.

We have some real excellence but it's not joined up in any way. There are all these things happening in apparent isolation and it's quite difficult for the customer to find out what is going on. How can it be better joined up?

**SB:** No surprises that I'm going to

say strengthen the destination management organisation tools. We have a destination website. We have a destination identity. For a long time we have used as our branding The Orrery, to link it back to Joseph Wright, coming back to that unique and authentic.

We get an average of about 30,000 unique visitors per month and that's with very little resource. When we have something specific happening, we can increase those numbers. But that is a portal for everything. We don't mind who we work with. It's the product we are after and the stronger the product the better the city and more people will come to the city.

One example, the Da Vinci exhibition at the museum, brought lots of people in – it was really great for Derby's reputation to have that exhibition here. At the same time we had Format happening. Again, fantastic quality. But we didn't bring those two things strongly enough together.

If we had signage around the city promoting both of those things, we would have been able to build audiences and swap audiences.

**JF:** Can I throw it open?  
Connection and communication, Peter.

**Peter Helps:** There's so much already here that we can build on. We are the only city in the East Midlands with every art form

represented in it. We have good partnership working.

Because we have all these arts organisations and a reputation for technology, engineering and innovation, we almost need to brand the city a city of creativity or something that brings together the fact that it has a good cultural offer, partnership working and a history of innovation and technology.

**JF:** We are very good at partnership, we are joined up, we have a community, I get all that, but the customer that came to see Da Vinci does not know that Format is going on across the road. So, from the bottom up, it doesn't always feel that way.

**Tony Butler:** I'm going to challenge that because I think there is a myth that it's not joined up. There's a lot of partnership working across the culture sector. It's a lot better than other cities.

I constantly hear this myth that's been expounded that people don't know about stuff, there's poor communication and there's not enough marketing. There were loads of posters about the Da Vinci exhibition. We spent quite a lot of money in producing collateral to put out. So, let's put this myth to one side.

The challenge has been around promoting and marketing and investment in marketing the city as

a destination and I think you are right, Stella, more investment does need to go into that.

There's lots of happenings, lots of single events that encourage people to come into the city. What's also needed is a good infrastructure so that doing cultural stuff is a habit for local people.

You need that mix of events, festivals and big things in the Market Place plus a really good recipe for habitual leisure and cultural usage. It's the habitual culture that we need to work on.

**SB:** I think, as a city, we have undervalued the role that culture can have or the role that the visitor economy can have. Not all the time do people make the connection between a vibrant, thriving city and a city having jobs. We need visitors to come to the city because they will spend in hotels, in restaurants, in cafes.

**JF:** Steve, you wanted to come in and you have fresh eyes.

**Steve Slater:** It's interesting. My very first job was as part of the Glasgow City of Culture machine back in 1988 to support the event in 1990. It transformed the city into a cultural hub and what remained afterwards was a cultured and informed populace that appreciated culture. The impact was really amazing. It's fundamental that culture has to be part of our everyday lives and draw more people.

If you think about your favourite cities – mine is Berlin. It's a creative, stimulating city. It's about what you see, the information that's out there. It's about the people emitting creativity – it's not something that is foreign to them. It is part of their lives.

In Derby, the potential is there. We do have amazing organisations that are connecting. It's about what we do next. How do we make Derby that city that's culturally vibrant all the time, not just in pockets, like Feste? It's got to be a constant thing.

A couple of years ago, I was working in Aberdeen. A similar conversation was happening there. The oil industry dying, unemployment rising. What was the offer Aberdeen had? And arts and culture were one of those things.

They were talking about things like sculptures – an Angel of the North kind of thing that would inspire people. Maybe something like that is an idea.

**JF:** So, while you still have fresh eyes, if your perspective of Derby as a cultural city before you came here was 'X' and now it's 'Y', give us an insight into your take on that.

**SS:** It was always an interesting city. I'm a local guy and grew up close by. All the bands I saw were here. It was always an interesting place to come for music – less so art for me at the time. Now, I do feel

genuinely excited by the potential.

The pandemic has caused us huge amounts of grief but it has given us the potential to rethink and re-imagine.

People who work in creative industries are gold dust for the city because, if the top two asks of the public are culture and leisure, we should be leading on what the city can do

**JF:** Adam was going to come in. You sit on the recovery task force, culture has been put at the heart of the recovery of the city centre, how can we deliver on that?

**Adam Buss:** I'm really heartened by the discussions in the recovery group and part of the reason for that is the sense of partnership that has been renewed within that group. I think that's where the opportunity lies.

Every city around the country is having this conversation. Eighty nine per cent are going to hang their hat on arts and culture to help them through the crisis. We have to find our point of difference.

I have always felt that we just hide our light under a bushel too much. The opportunity and potential here is much greater than some of those other bigger cities because we have the surprise factor, we have resources that others haven't got but we don't necessarily use those resources.



THE PANEL IN FULL DISCUSSION.

There are cities around the world where their industrial bases, where their large employers are very up front and central. One of the most obvious ones to me is in Ryan's world, is Volkswagen's sponsorship of Wolfsburg in Germany, where, historically, they always sponsored the football club and when you go to that city you see VW straight away. They are the biggest employer and they are integral to the leisure and culture offer within the city.

We need to find a way to take the partnership skills that we have got and widen those partnerships so that more businesses are engaged. The events that we talk about that are most successful are generally the ones where more partners are involved – Feste is a great example. Format is a great example.

The second thing is finding those shared opportunities. I used to work in the private sector and one thing that shifted when I moved was the ideas culture. In the private sector I was told you should keep your ideas close to your chest but in our sector we share our ideas all the time.

What it means is, is that when we are looking at those global concerns that a city has, societal concerns, we are sharing our thoughts and concerns with the likes of Toyota, Rolls-Royce, Bombardier, the university and the city council.

The need for people to find a new sense of hope and positivity, we all share that concern. The need for a different type of skills, we all share that concern. The need to improve our education system, we all share that concern.

So, using those concerns that we all want to work on is an opportunity to bring more partners to the table.

**JF:** Ryan?

**Ryan Duckett:** I know we have a few Derby County fans here. We have all been able to watch football on TV over the past few months but you can't beat being at the game. If you look at that compared to city centres, at the moment we can all go online and buy the shirt that we want but you can't beat the buzz of being in the city centre.

What sport had to do when it became more accessible to watch



STEVE SLATER

on TV, what we had to do as an industry was get our experience sorted out – better seating, car parking, signage, food and beverage.

As a city centre, it needs a really joined-up approach across the board to make sure we are getting everything right so you stand out from that online shopping experience – that there's a buzz in the city centre.

But what I would say is that, although I live outside the city in

Yorkshire, I still feel very proud of working in Derby. I have family and friends who, when they come into the city, sing its praises. Sometimes we beat ourselves up about what we have not got rather than what we have.

**JF:** Robbie, you're the new general manager at Derby Live. I'd be interested in your take on this.

**Robbie Kerr:** I think they're all really good points. My view is that culture breeds culture. The more stuff you do, the more stuff comes out the other end of it. That pulls people in.

It comes down to mindset. If the public have the mindset that there's something going on in the city, they will come. The mindset for us is that, instead of us just thinking what's the audience base, what's the customer, it's what is everyone else doing? We talk about the collaborative approach and it's absolutely key. It involves a lot of conversation and we have to look at the horizon before we actually get to the point of coming out to the public.

People coming into the city centre is symptomatic of good process, good conversation, good marketing.

It's far better to have a whole host of talented groups that can work together, that are starting the process - and I think that process is happening. Certainly, with the Market Place, it has felt like that for me. It's better to have that talent

**"My view is that culture breeds culture. The more stuff you do, the more stuff comes out the other end of it. That pulls people in."**



ROBBIE KERR

working together than to not have talent in the first place.

**JF:** Stella mentioned in her opening comments about experience, Robbie, you were on one of the focus groups and made comments about experience, it would be interesting to hear what you have to say about the importance of that.

**Robbie Jones:** What we are missing is a guest-centric approach to how we get people involved in the events we are running.

There's quite a lot of friction in just coming to Derby. We do have a lot of events but there's not something on every weekend. The typical resident goes, 'What is happening this weekend?' If there's nothing, they stay home.

If there is something, where do you park? There are areas of deprivation that you have to walk through to get to attractions. The exit from the bus station is not the most positive. All of these things are places of friction. So, before they get to the Quad, the Market Place etc, they have already had this experience of friction.

Something we focus on at Katapult is the primacy and recency effect – the first thing you experience and the last thing. If the first thing you experience is something negative on the ring road, that's the thing you remember. Then the word of mouth marketing is not going to

happen.

We have a good offer but if the overall experience is not positive, we are going to suffer.

**RD:** That's a good point. If people coming to our matches take an hour to get out of the car park, that spoils the experience.

I went to an event at Quad a few months ago and parked at the Assembly Room car park. The walk down the stairwell was terrible. My first experience coming into the city was not great and that was also my last experience going back up the stairwell to the car.

**JF:** What you're saying, Robbie, is that in the future we cannot see things in isolation. People are judging their experience in terms of place rather than just the thing they came to see.

Mike, you're working on a new leisure experience on the river. Tell us how what you're doing fits in with this picture.

**Mike Wingfield:** I moved here eight years ago and for a long time have been a Derby evangelist. I have some interesting conversations with my colleagues and point people to some of the gems of the city centre.

I live near the city centre. I walk in and immediately come to the Cathedral Quarter. Other cities would kill for architecture like this.

I showed one of my colleagues a picture of Iron Gate and they asked if it was Venice or Paris.

There are so many pretty parts of the city centre. We have all the ingredients but we have been keeping the grapes in the fridge and not putting out the yoghurt. Let's put it all out on the plate.

When we are talking about how we connect everything on the river boat, we have a commentary by David Suchet, the actor who played Poirot, talking about Derby's history - things that, perhaps, we have not always celebrated enough, like John Flamsteed and Florence Nightingale, in the past.

At the same time, we point people towards the Silk Mill and suggest people go and have lunch in the Cathedral Quarter. We are trying to use the river, which is underutilised in its own right, to try to connect all these other things that are happening and, if we all work together in the same way, I think we can really crack this.

**RD:** There are lots of cities in the country with a St Peter's Quarter but there are very few with a Strand or Cathedral Quarter. We probably need to get key stakeholders on board with that.

**JF:** But we also have to be honest about the experience in that part of the city. We can't tell people that they are mistaken about it feeling slightly edgy. We have to



ROBBIE JONES



STELLA BIRKS

change it.

Just to give you a feel of what else people in the survey said would need to change to get them coming back more often, culture and leisure were one and two, as we have said already, and number three was independent retail. I take that, not so much as retail but independent stuff, that's local, provenance and that sort of thing. They are saying give us more of that.

Then there's more green space. Derby is not a very big city but there's nowhere green, there's nowhere to sit down. I think that might be part of the solution to the area you are talking about.

And also, we are talking about more blue space - opening up the river.

And then, interestingly from this group, parking. So, if you are coming into the city centre in the evening to come to an event, you have to pay a significant amount for parking that you don't have to in some other cities.

**TB:** There's a place for being much more interventionalist. That's where

the city council may have to come in. I'm encouraged by the idea of potentially introducing a make and trade zone in the city.

**JF:** This sector is one that has been subject to pretty severe cuts but the customers are saying we want more of that. At the end of the day, there will be a cost to this. We can spend millions on the A52, what about if we spent a tenth of that on culture? Is there a sense that we value this?

**SB:** Absolutely. I'm more excited about my job than I have been for a long time. For the first time, rather than just talking about things we might do, we are actually doing them and committing to them.

We have a culture strategy written. We have a destination management plan. We know we have some great products. There is such a big opportunity for us. We have seen how much attention the Market Place has had. We have plans to move on from that. There's the meanwhile use of the Assembly Rooms. We have space, we have projects and we now have the ambition and vision of the city council to work with partners to make it happen.

**TB:** I have seen a change. During the crisis, I have had a lot more conversations with senior council officers about our business that, a few years ago, I would probably not have had. Whether that

**"There's a place for being much more interventionalist. That's where the city council may have to come in. I'm encouraged by the idea of potentially introducing a make and trade zone in the city."**

channels through to the investment that the city needs in a year's time or two years' time remains to be seen.

**AB:** I would agree with that. There has been a philosophical change but there needs to be practical outcomes as well. Robbie and Stella have been part of something that was turned around in two weeks at the Market Place. That would not have happened previously.

To go back to your point about parking, another real positive, we have been talking to the council about having a suite of parking offers for our customers when they come back so it will only cost you £2.50 in the evening, which is a massive reduction on what it was before.

The philosophy is absolutely in the right place but finding practical outcomes is the next step.

**SS:** We are having another great conversation with the council about converting the top level of the Chapel Street car park into a venue, hopefully. We are combining car parks and art.

What's really inspiring for me is the Derby Well campaign we are running, the well dressing project, which is not something we would have considered in the past. It's low-key and small-scale, small interventions on the street, but

there are so many people coming to the table, offering input into that and wanting to get involved.

It will be very small scale, lovely bits of art in windows and on street corners and that's the kind of thing that, maybe, has a much larger impact long-term than these big events that just drop in and then they go.

**JF:** That's a useful note on which to finish as that's next in line. My summary comments are that the recovery task force principles are maintain confidence, diversify and decarbonise, and these activities and this sector fit that perfectly. The word that occurs to me is opportunity.

There are three things I have taken away. One is this concept of point of difference which Stella opened up with – this unique, authentic experience – and the word experience keeps coming back in the widest context.

We don't necessarily have to reinvent the existing but has the customer moved on? Where is the customer now? Where will the customer be in two years' time?

Robbie talked about a guest-centric approach but this whole thing about we are locked in with the city and this perception of place as much as anything else – maybe more than ever as people have gone into their suburbs and

beyond and they're not really seeing the city as an option any more.

Second was this whole idea of connection and communication. Is the lack of joined-up approach a myth or are organisations maybe connected but does it feel like that to the customer?

And, also, there seems to be an emerging branding opportunity – communication, campaigns, which may get beyond some of the traditional campaigns of the place around trains, planes and automobiles into something different. And maybe picking on the innovation theme and applying it in different sectors.

And last, but no means least, the question we asked, can culture save the post-Covid city? I think the answer is that maybe the only thing that can save the post-Covid city might be culture, leisure and experience if we listen to the customers. So, they have to be at the centre of the recovery.

My challenge to you guys is that the voice needs to be raised, it needs to be clearer in terms of inputs and outputs, the economic impact needs defining and communicating, the culture and place need connecting like never before because the customer is saying please do it. **●**



THE PANEL

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# BUILT TO SUCCEED



**IT MAY NOW TURN OVER MORE THAN £1BN A YEAR BUT BOWMER AND KIRKLAND IS STILL LED BY THE FAMILY OF ONE OF ITS FOUNDERS AND REMAINS TRUE TO A SET OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

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B+K HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME STUNNING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, PICTURED ABOVE, BUT AS THE ARCHIVE IMAGE SHOWS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL FOR DECADES.

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**They are the company that Warner Brothers chose to construct the Harry Potter Experience visitor attraction.**

And with turnover for the last financial year in excess of £1bn and a proud history stretching back almost a century, Bowmer and Kirkland certainly has the magic formula for success.

It involves a careful blend of family values, total customer focus and investment in people and the community.

However, the only wizards in the firm's Heage HQ boardroom are

those of the business variety.

They have overseen delivery of high-profile projects like the FA's National Football Centre at St George's Park, near Burton, the Media City UK development in Salford and the group's biggest scheme to date - the £123m Waterside Campus for the University of Northampton.

Local landmark developments have included the new headquarters for Derbyshire Constabulary and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service and the stunning, golden-domed Derby Arena on Pride Park. They are currently building the new £42m Moorways Sports



Village, with its water park, pools and gym, for Derby City Council.

Of course, there have also been scores of other distribution centres, office blocks, supermarkets, schools and student accommodation schemes.

Chairman Jack Kirkland is part of the fourth generation of his family to help guide the construction and development group – one of the largest in private ownership in the UK. His cousins Christopher and Michael are also board directors.

The group's numbers are impressive – 25 companies operating in construction, construction-related services and homeland security across the UK and in the US, more than 1,400 employees and a pre-tax profit for last year of more than £73m.

But the numbers are not the most significant factor for Jack.

"Turnover and size are only important in that it gives comfort to our clients. It means that they know they can trust us with projects. We don't strive to be the biggest. We strive to be the best," he says.

"We grow by being small. We want to retain an entrepreneurial spirit. We don't want a PLC mentality. We want a series of companies where everyone in the business knows that they can change that business and change the lives of themselves and their families.

"We keep the businesses relatively small and if they get too big we split them. It means the managing directors and regional managing directors can make decisions quickly. It's as much those guys' business as it is ours.

"All these people who run those businesses are shaping them constantly. We back people and we see them grow and change and make a difference."

It's clear that Bowmer and Kirkland are passionate about their teams. They invest significantly into training and development, promote good mental health and diversity within the workforce and are rewarded by many employees choosing to spend their careers within the group.

"We hold a chairman's night to celebrate people who have been with us for over 25 years and over 10 years. We ask them to stand up and it's over half the room and it's incredibly moving. I have known a lot of the people we work with all my life," says Jack.

But while their own people are highly valued, the company is obsessive about its customers – and how to delight and retain them. Take a look at the group website and, by sector, it proudly reports the numbers of projects it

has carried out for returning clients – 80 per cent in sport, 68 per cent in industrial, 64 per cent in retail and so on.

"The most important person in the Bowmer and Kirkland team is the client," says Jack.

"We are focused on client satisfaction. We are a family business. We don't just want to be here for the next ten years - we want to be here for 100 years. We build relationships. We have lots of clients who come to us year after year and we want to keep that going. We want to have relationships with people that last through decades.

"We have a reputation that we need to ensure always stays strong. We don't have a big business development department. We get business by doing good jobs, getting people to recommend us and repeat customers."

Maintaining private ownership of the business has played a big part in their success, according to Jack.

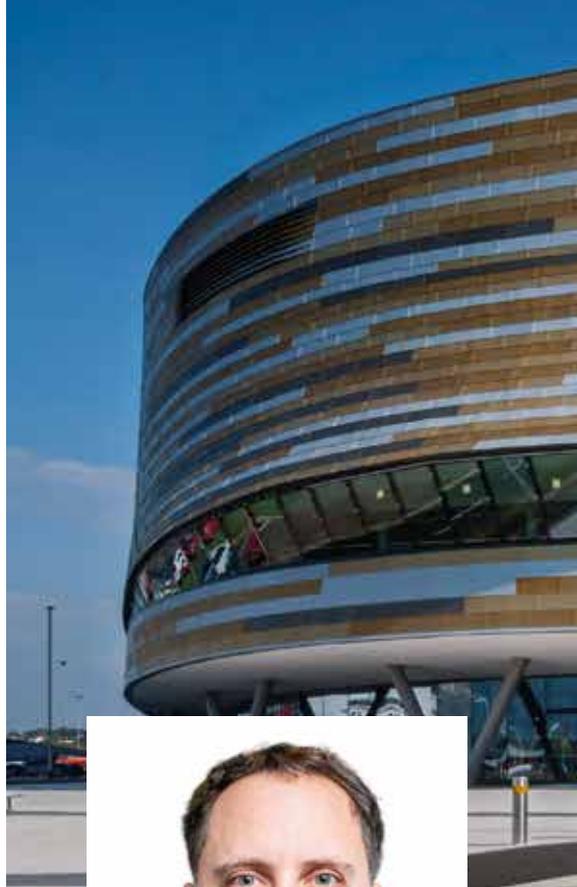
"Staying private is crucial to us. The advantage of a private business is you have speed of decision-making and the ability to control your own destiny. What I also hope a family business ethos does is to provide a sense that we look after each other."

This sentiment is reflected in the values that guide the group's operations. As well as their commitment to clients and their own teams, they take their responsibilities seriously when it comes to the communities where they operate and the supply chain that supports them.

They do their best to employ locally and spend locally when they are carrying out projects.

The social value of projects is measured. As an example, when the group worked on the Basford Hall Campus for New College, Nottingham, £6m – or 22.2 per cent of the total project value – was delivered in social capital. This included creating thousands of weeks of apprenticeship and work experience opportunities for youngsters in one of the city's most challenged communities.

And they have been taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint for more than a decade, introducing clear environmental targets, promoting efficient purchasing and practising sound waste management.



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01. JACK KIRKLAND
02. ONE OF THE EARLY LORRIES
03. 1940S COMPANY DINNER
04. B+K TRAIN



DERBY ARENA

One of their companies, B&K Structures, started life as a steel fabricator but is now the UK's leading sustainable frame contractor and has helped build supermarkets, commercial HQs and large residential developments for environment-conscious clients.

The group powers its headquarters with solar panels, utilises LED lighting and is also considering introducing electric vehicles to its fleet.

This commitment has resulted in a 5.9 per cent reduction in the group's total carbon footprint and an 8.4 per cent reduction in carbon per employee.

Environmental concerns were not so much of a priority back in 1923 when bricklayer Robert William Kirkland, a World War I veteran who had been gassed in the trenches, and joiner Alfred Bowmer first got together to form the company – just a short distance from the Heage site where the group is now headquartered.

Robert's son Jack joined the business as an apprentice joiner at the age of 15 and worked his way up to become chairman in 1955.

His sons John and Robert joined in 1967 and 1975 and still remain with the group as life presidents. They have both played huge roles in the local community – Michael is a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire and John a former director and president of Derby County Football Club.

The fourth generation of Kirklands began to join the business in 2009, when current chairman Jack and cousin Michael were appointed to the board. Christopher followed.

These new custodians have due regard for the legacy that they have inherited.

"A key moment for the company came in the 1970s," recalls Jack.

"At that stage, relations between the Bowmers and Kirklands had become a little rocky. There was a suggestion that the company would be floated on the Stock Market. My grandfather and father decided that they wanted to stay private.

"They mortgaged themselves to the hilt, sold their crane business and bought the company outright."

With the family's deep and enduring connection with its business, surely it was always inevitable that Jack would join the firm?

"When I left university, I didn't know what I wanted to do," he recalls.

"The two things I knew I didn't want to do were live in Derbyshire and work in the family business. And, now, that's exactly what I'm doing. And I love it," he says.

"I grew up with it. I talk about the business with my family as much as I talk about anything else. It's just part of who we are. I don't

just mean with my dad and uncle but with my cousins and young children."

Jack had been forging a career as a lawyer and in private equity away from Bowmer and Kirkland.

"I felt I had to go away and do something first. But when my dad and uncle asked me and my cousins to join the business, as soon as I got into it, I felt I was coming home," he remembers.

"My cousin Christopher chairs our house-building company and runs our real estate in the South East. My cousin Michael is also very involved as a board member and chairs our pension scheme. I think I speak for all three of us when I say we can't imagine doing anything else.

"One of the great joys of my life was working with my dad. I always loved and respected him but I learned so much from him and continue to learn from him. I went around for Sunday lunch last weekend and what did we spend an hour or two talking about – the company!"

Jack joined the business at a difficult time – at the height of an international financial crisis. But, in retrospect, he believes it was the perfect moment to get on board.

"We showed that we were there to help and get through it together. If we had joined in 2006, people would have said, 'What are you doing? There's no point.' But when

you are fighting problems together, it's a tremendous bonding experience."

The group is structured, as far as possible, to mitigate against shocks in particular sectors.

Its construction interests have expertise in multiple areas such as health, education, commercial, industrial, distribution, retail, leisure and sport. If any of those market segments are challenged, hopefully the impact can be offset in others.

Its construction-related services businesses include house-building, decorating, mechanical and electrical installation, interior fit-out and investment and development.

And its homeland security division provides products to help police and national agencies counter the threat of terrorism and crime.

"With construction, we grow organically," explains Jack.

"We now cover the whole of Great Britain and we have followed clients and we have backed people. When they have wanted to set up a regional office, we have backed them and where clients have moved into new areas, we have followed them.

"With construction services, we wanted good, profitable companies in their own right but we also knew that if anything ever happened to our contractors, we had our own people who could go in and finish the job for clients.

"We also wanted to diversify outside of construction as well. In my father's and grandfather's day was had coal screening companies. It's more difficult to build in the winter and people would always want coal.

"More recently we bought a company that manufactured cell doors and that led to us buying more companies within the homeland security space. It's a source of constant, relatively recession-proof business."

The company also retains a stake in some of its developments to generate a source of income.

All of which should mean that the business is as protected as possible from the challenges of Covid-19, Brexit and any other future shocks.

"You control what you can control and are cognisant about what you can't," says Jack.

"I think the pandemic is

accelerating trends that we were already seeing, such as in retail – but we have found that out-of-town retail is seeming to make a bit of a resurgence.

"I think the office market will change but I don't think, by any means, that it's dead. I think people will return to offices.

"A key part of the workload at

**"I'm also very proud of the schools we build. We are creating quality spaces that will be of enormous benefit to the community,"**

the moment are the schools we are building for the Department of Education. They, in some ways, replace what we were doing with supermarkets. We have built more Sainsburys and Tescos than anyone else in the nation. Our school work is an important string to our bow at this time.

"The public sector makes up about 20 to 25 per cent of our workload. But others in the private sector are pushing the button and building. If you can build now, perhaps borrowing cheaply for a building that will be completed in 2021-2022, you are in the perfect position to take advantage of any uplift. We are even seeing that with student accommodation," Jack says.

From the chairman's office window, there are great views of the Derbyshire countryside. But it's not just the beauty of their surroundings that has kept the business headquartered here.

"We have expanded outside of Derbyshire. We have offices nationwide but being based here has a lot of advantages. The geography is great for getting everywhere. Because we are well-known here and treat our people well, we have people who join us from school and college and stay with us for their entire career. That knowledge base is invaluable," says Jack.

"Personally, I find being here has improved my decision-making. When I was in London, I felt I was sometimes caught up in the freneticism of London. Here, I can sometimes have a walk in the countryside with my dogs and then make that call. Sometimes giving yourself the mental space that comes from living in Derbyshire

enables you to come to decisions more thoughtfully."

Jack talks with pride about the projects Bowmer and Kirkland have delivered and says the company puts as much focus on those that are worth £1m as others that might bring in more than £100m. But are there any that have given the chairman a particular sense of satisfaction?

"The University of Northampton –

our largest project to date, where we created a whole new campus for students. I'm also very proud of the schools we build. We are creating quality spaces that will be of enormous benefit to the community," he says.

"A fun one we did was the Harry Potter Experience in Leavesden. It was great for some of our people who became heroes to their kids!"

Jack took his own two children to Twycross Zoo recently, where the company had created a new chimpanzee enclosure.

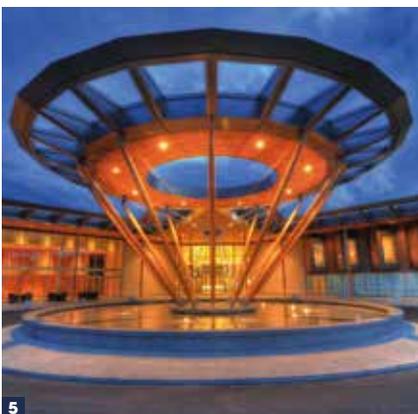
"We needed a specialised steelwork because the chimps spend a lot of time trying to unscrew the bolts," he reveals.

Does he hope that such experiences might persuade a fifth generation of Kirklands to eventually join the business?

"I can't control what my children, who are in primary school, might want to do but my generation are determined that this will be a family business that we will hand over even stronger and more resilient than when we inherited it. That's my job – at the end of my time in the job, the company should be in an even better, stronger place," he says.

And what does Jack think his great-grandfather would make of the business in 2020?

"I think he would be very proud that we are a national company but we have retained our Derbyshire values. I think he would like the fact that we are still in Heage." ●



01. A DEVELOPMENT BY B+K FOR HAMPTON BY HILTON  
02. THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON WATERSIDE CAMPUS

03/4/5. THE FIRM DEVELOPED ST GEORGE'S PARK FOR THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

06. ITS WORK ON THE HARRY POTTER EXPERIENCE MADE STAFF HEROES WITH THEIR CHILDREN

# Blessed with opportunity

## NEW DEAN OF DERBY IS RELISHING HIS ROLE IN A CITY OF POTENTIAL

### **Derby's new Dean has only been in post for a short time but he has big ambitions.**

The Very Rev'd Peter Robinson would like to create a new entrance on the cathedral's east side to encourage visitors and better connect the building to Cathedral Green and the new Museum of Making.

He'd like to develop a broadcast studio as part of plans for a digital church that can take services to worshippers in their own homes.

He wants to build on the success of the cathedral school of music to enhance the city's cultural offer.

But he's keen, above all else, to ensure that the cathedral plays a full part in helping shape a future, post-Covid Derby that meets the needs of its communities and strengthens its links within the county and wider region.

The former Archdeacon of Lindisfarne and his wife, Sarah, arrived in the city during the summer from the north-east.

The parents of two grown-up sons have been delighted by the warmth of the welcome they have received and believe their new home is a place full of opportunity.

"We live in the north of the city and, although I have only been in post for two months, you would have thought we had lived here forever with the welcome we have had. It's been a great neighbourhood to join," he says.

"Derby is a good size - not too large or too small - and I see it as a place where a cathedral and a Dean can make an impact. I see potential wherever I go - potential here in the cathedral, the city district and the Cathedral Quarter."

But the new Dean is also aware that there are challenges to be faced.

"I'm getting an impression of a city centre that is struggling and we share in that struggle because we are in the city centre and there's not enough footfall or creativity, it seems to me, in the Cathedral Quarter at the moment and that impacts on us in terms of our café and shop and so on.

"So, there is something about a struggle going on in the economics of the city centre that we share in.

"I think I also see a city that is sometimes disconnected from its county. That's also true of the cathedral and one of the hopes I have is that we might build those links in a more purposeful way.



THE NEW DEAN OF DERBY IN THE CATHEDRAL



"I'm very struck by the high-powered industry in the city. I'm very sad I'm arriving at a time when Rolls-Royce in particular are having to prune quite drastically in terms of their workforce. But again, I'm aware that every pruning is also an opportunity to support growth for the future."

"So, I think it's an exciting time to arrive in Derby – challenging because of Covid, with restrictions on how the Church can worship and difficulties in terms of how you make contact for the first time with people. But it's a good time to come to Derby. I hope I'm the right person, in the right place at the right time."

Peter arrives in his new role after spending 25 years in the Newcastle diocese. He had been Archdeacon of Lindisfarne since 2008, was chair of the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Education and lead for community engagement in Northumberland.

He worked in the oil industry before being ordained in 1995 – training for ministry at Cranmer Hall in Durham and serving his curacy in North Shields.

He then became priest-in-charge at St Martin's, Byker, where he was successful in bringing together a challenging inner-city community, designing a new church building and attracting a visit from the Home Secretary to showcase the community's achievements.

"I had worked in all kinds of environments but I hadn't actually served in a city centre. I had worked with city centre regeneration as someone who was in the more marginalised communities outside the city centre but I wanted to work in the city centre," Peter says.

The cathedral has played a central role in Derby life since it was hallowed in 1927 and worship has taken place on the site for more than 1,000 years. Peter is determined that the institution should continue to be at the heart of the community for years to come and help encourage conversations on how the city should be shaped to meet future needs.

"I have always been involved in working with different sectors in partnership and I had real excitement about applying for a job where I had the ability to lead a significant organisation in a city that is constantly transforming itself and making itself relevant and fit for purpose," he says.

“Coming into a city centre, being able to lead an organisation that can make a difference, that is well-resourced and can make a contribution to the flourishing of the city and the county was a real motivator for me.

“I see the cathedral as part of the city of Derby, part of the county of Derbyshire, part of the East Midlands. We are very much part of the social, institutional fabric of the setting in which we find ourselves. We are not detached. We are not imposed from outside. We are part of and come from this place.

“I think cathedrals contribute to city, county and regional life in all sorts of ways. We are the seat of the Bishop of Derby, we are a centre for worship and mission and we have the capacity to worship in the public realm seven days a week. We have that capacity to be there open, available and involved.

“We wish to serve the needs of the city, the county and the region by identifying where we can make a contribution and then reimagining our cathedral life to make that contribution. So, for example, we are thinking a good deal at the moment about the cathedral building and how it can be used to help the flourishing of the communities of Derby.

“We are looking very closely about how the building can be used as a venue for performance, for conferences, for festivals - even for formal dinners, prize-givings, award evenings. How can we help people come and enjoy a very beautiful environment here so the cathedral can be a partner in establishing the common good?”

Peter believes the cathedral can make a significant contribution to improving Derby’s built environment and sense of place.

“How does the cathedral help make Derby a really good place to visit? How does it contribute to that sense of wellbeing that we want people to have when they walk through Cathedral Green, visit the Silk Mill or go to look at the Bonnie Prince Charlie statue because there’s just something about the built environment that is just so important,” he says.

And that might mean introducing changes to the cathedral building.

“At the moment we are not meeting those challenges at the east end of the cathedral. I would like to see us open up and create



an entrance so that people can come out of the Silk Mill or from a picnic on the green and then can access the cathedral from Cathedral Green. It’s about helping to shape the built environment and we have to be really open to changing the shape of the cathedral,” Peter says.

“There’s also something about tourism, about pilgrimage and about visitors and one of the great things about Derby Cathedral - over and above the fact it is a beautiful building - is that it’s a house of many stories. For example, the history of Christianity and the history of the locality here.

“The cathedral tells the big story of Derby but it also tells the micro stories - Florence Nightingale, the history of the Cavendish family, the Dukes of Devonshire, Crown Derby, Bess of Hardwick Hall.”

The Dean also wants the cathedral to embrace digital technology to better tell those stories - and to ensure that those who cannot visit the building for worship can still be a part of the cathedral family. That could include constructing a broadcast studio so that high-quality programming can be produced and services and the cathedral’s music better shared.

“We need a new website that is a communications hub, that helps people who are part of the community of the cathedral to communicate with each other but it also has to be an outward facing website and available for those who want to know more about the cathedral and to contact us or access music or resources.

“Covid has had a very profound impact on us. We have only been allowed to hold services again since July 4 but that is in a new world of legalities, health and safety and risk assessments. Like many organisations we have been on such a learning curve.

“Now we broadcast every day, twice on Fridays, and that will increase. We need new IT equipment because it is quite complex broadcasting a service and getting the sound right.

“We want to be able to run a dual economy as we come out of Covid - broadcasting to those who do not yet, perhaps, have the confidence to come out. We are wanting to explore an online Church, reaching a group of people who may visit the cathedral very rarely but may want to worship with us though an online facility.



THE NEW DEAN OF DERBY  
AT WORK IN THE CATHEDRAL

**"Covid has had a very profound impact on us. Like many organisations we have been on such a learning curve."**



"We are placing a new emphasis on recording and building up our own bank of recordings. We are beginning to think more in terms of broadcasting than streaming. We want to move to full digital broadcast capability, even to the point where I think we have to build a studio in the cathedral.

"In the future, I envisage that we might have two broadcast services on a Sunday, as well as a main cathedral eucharist and evensong, one of which might also be broadcast. You are doing two different things there. You are meeting the needs of people in their homes, who perhaps haven't been able to come out, but you also enable people to connect with what is happening in the cathedral. Those are two different dynamics and we have to be able to do both in the future.

"I also think we have got to be able to train musicians in their own homes. In the future it's not just about attending a choral rehearsal here but you will be able to receive training in your own home."

The cathedral is already making a significant contribution to the city's cultural offer. Its hosting of

the spectacular Knife Angel sculpture and dramatic Museum of the Moon exhibition attracted thousands of visitors and gave a sector, battling back after the closure of the Assembly Rooms and temporary shutdown of the Guildhall, a major boost.

"What happened with the Knife Angel and the Museum of the Moon goes back to the questions about values - what sort of communities do we want in Derby? I think they made people think. It was an awe-inspiring encounter but you also had all the thinking and discussion that came afterwards," Peter says.

He is keen to acknowledge the contribution being made by the cathedral's school of music and believes there is an opportunity to further its reputation for excellence.

"We have an absolutely first-rate choir. We have well over 30 choristers - boys and girls. We have a wonderful line of lay clerks. We have a voluntary choir. Our director of music, Alex Binns, is first-rate and we are, at the moment, seeking funding for, and talking actively about, how our music can be a form of outreach - a gift to the city of Derby.

"How can music enrich the life of Derby and the county? What can we do to reach out to those who would like to sing, to make music, but don't have the opportunity? Could we reach out with our music to touch lives in a new way - with the homeless, with schools? Could music play a part in helping individuals and communities flourish? We have a very diverse choir but could that be even more diverse?"

"I would like Derby Cathedral to be known, amongst other things, for the reach and quality of its music."

Peter is also keen that the cathedral engages with the business community and is hopeful that his background in the oil industry will demonstrate an empathy and understanding of the needs of the sector.

"I did a natural sciences degree at Cambridge. I sort of knew I wanted to be ordained but, in those days, you were encouraged to go off and do something exciting before ordination I worked for seven years in research and development for Castrol. That's where I learned a lot of my interpersonal skills - being reprimanded by factory owners for oil prices and so on. I loved it," he recalls.

His commercial background is also helpful in overseeing the work of the cathedral - a multi-million-pound business in its own right.

"Having been in business, the language of strategy, tactics, business planning, budgets, annual reports and so on doesn't really hold any fears for you. In my ordained ministry, I was able to hit the ground running in terms of project management," he says.

"I am keen to engage with the business community. I have had to make the local communities my focus in these early weeks but I love the idea of the cathedral supporting and being able to work with advanced manufacturing technology.

"What is important to the city is important to the cathedral. These are businesses that employ a lot of people. Those are the very same people that come through the doors of the cathedral.

"When you are engaged with nurturing the Christian faith, someone can take real confidence from the fact that you are comfortable in their world as you expect them to be comfortable in your world. I'm comfortable in the world of business. I understand how business works and what motivates it," he explains.

"And when business struggles, the city struggles and part of the calling of the cathedral is to be present in the struggles of life. So, I'd love to find a way of supporting Rolls-Royce and its staff, who are struggling with the future and what redundancy means. I would hope we could bring to bear practical support and theological reflection and really focus on the care of the individual - the individual who makes the decision as well as those whose jobs are under threat."

In his spare time, Peter enjoys reading contemporary fiction, listening to music, watching cricket and football, mountain biking and playing golf.

However, you sense that his handicap may suffer a little over the coming months given the scale of his plans.

"You can tell I am quite ambitious for the cathedral and its place in the city. I do believe the cathedral can make a difference to people's lives and the way things are," he says.

"I think we bring people together. We create networks. We act as a

hub. I want everyone to be able to connect with the cathedral in the way they want to connect. There's a place here for the most recent asylum seeker, the homeless, those experiencing addiction, right through to the mayors, the chief executives and the High Sheriffs.

"I think when we draw this enormous community together, one of the key things we are offering is a conversation about values, what is important to us. So, I see us making a major contribution about inviting people into a conversation about spiritual capital - what is a good city. What is a good county and how together do we aim to achieve these goals?"

"Partnership is a Christian word. It's about fellowship. It's about relationships. So, I am really committed to partnership working at every level."

So, as he settles into the new challenge, what is Peter looking forward to most?

"I'm looking forward to getting to know people. I'm looking forward to the whole process of reimagining the cathedral's life. For me, leading change and development is what gives me energy and I'm looking forward to starting the consultation process on the life of the cathedral. And I'm looking forward to the cathedral making a difference in the city and beyond.

"We will be engaged in transformation together. We don't have the answers. We have gifts for the process and for the conversation and the outcomes.

"When people talk about what they care about, change happens. If we can have those conversations and do it in a way that we are sharing what really matters to us, that's when fruitful change begins to take place."

I suggest it is, perhaps, serendipitous that Peter has arrived to begin the reimagining process at the cathedral at the same time as the city is embarking on a similar course.

"Let's call it providential," Peter suggests. ●





PETER ROBINSON HOPES TO BE ABLE TO OPEN UP THE CATHEDRAL ONTO CATHEDRAL GREEN.

# BH

## BONDHOLDERS

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# SERIOUS PLAYERS

**DERBY COMPUTER GAME STUDIO  
IS WINNING FANS AND INDUSTRY  
ADMIRERS ACROSS THE GLOBE**

PROMOTIONAL IMAGERY FROM BATTALION 1944 : EASTERN FRONT



BULKHEAD'S CARDINAL SQUARE OFFICES.

**If you want to create the sound of a zombie having their head blown off, apparently you need a baseball bat and a watermelon.**

Joe Brammer is revealing some of the secrets of the gaming industry - like how to make effects realistic.

The chief executive of Bulkhead Interactive also lets slip that the company were close to persuading David Bowie to be the voice of one of its bad guy characters before the star's untimely death.

But Joe's appetite for sharing runs out when it comes to details of the new games his Cardinal Square-based team are developing with their mega-rich Japanese partners.

And despite my gentle probing, on this subject he's more difficult to crack than the puzzle-based games Pneuma: Breath of Life and The Turing Test that helped Bulkhead build their reputation.

We are sitting in a meeting room at the company's cool new suite of offices. The walls are painted a striking red to match Bulkhead's corporate colours.

Except there's nothing very corporate about Bulkhead. They may now employ around 70 staff and have budgets of up to £10m to develop their games but it is only five years ago that the company was formed by a group of graduates who were leaving the University of Derby.

Hoodies and t-shirts are standard workwear. There's a pool table between the desks and a fridge piled high with cola.

CEO Joe is still only 27 and most of his team are younger.

They are proud of their 'indie' routes and the journey they have been on since 2015.

"When we finished university we decided to start a studio and make our own games because at that time there were no jobs in the industry. Most people worked 9pm until 2am in a bar and then at 9am we would make games until 5pm and then go back and work at the Slug and Lettuce," recalls Joe.

"Our first game made us enough money to pay us the minimum wage after a year and then our next game made us enough money to carry on."

The next game, that Joe refers to, was The Turing Test - a first-person puzzler, where the player assumes the role of Ava Turing, an International Space Agency engineer trying to discover the reason behind the disappearance of the crew of a research centre on one of Jupiter's moons.

It has been released for Steam, Xbox One, PS4 and, most recently, Nintendo Switch and has netted the company around £2m.

"Our first game (Pneuma) was just a camera looking at things. Turing Test was another puzzle game but we wanted a story, one character at least and a good guy and a bad guy.

"It's a story and a cinematic experience, where you also solve puzzles as you go through it.

"David Bowie was going to be the bad guy. We got an email saying that David had read the script and

loved it. We wanted to record in the March but he died in the January.

"The guy who played Randyll Tarly (actor James Faulkner) in Game of Thrones was the baddie instead," Joe reveals.

The game received positive reviews and, together with a multi-player, first-person World War II shooter, Battalion 1944, ensured Bulkhead captured the attention of players and those working in the industry. They were an exciting, "dangerously ambitious" new contender with an instinct for success.

"We were our own consumers. We knew what we wanted, so we made what we wanted. We didn't need to rely on user data and research," says Joe.

They did, however, reach out to gamers to get input and financial support during the making of Battalion - utilising crowd-funding platform Kickstarter to boost their development budget by more than £100,000.

Supporters pledged hundreds or even thousands of pounds to have early access to the game and to assist in its creation.

"It's about the connection. People want to feel part of it," says Joe

"It's easy to do when you are your own community. We knew that if we had seen that on Kickstarter, we would have funded it."

In a market where titles like Medal of Honour and Call of Duty were already played by millions, Battalion 1944 referenced back to the designers' enjoyment of "old-style shooters".



"We made a game that was very hardcore and very serious. It meant you had to be good. Call of Duty would baby you a bit. CoD wants everyone to feel like they are the best but with Battalion you need to be the best," says Joe.

The team invested a huge amount of effort into ensuring the gameplay for Battalion was as realistic as possible – even travelling across the Channel to soak up the atmosphere of the wartime battlefields and help achieve a faithful recreation of the streets of Carentan and the forests of Bastogne.

They also utilised advanced techniques, such as motion capture and photogrammetry, to ensure a stunning end result. But Joe reveals there are sometimes also ingenious, low-tech solutions to achieving a realistic outcome.



"If you wanted the sound of a zombie having their head blown off, you need a watermelon and a baseball bat," he discloses. "At times, there's probably less expertise involved than you think. It's about creative solutions to difficult problems."

Battalion's launch is described as one of the best and worst days in Bulkhead's history.

"People loved it. It was uncontrollably big – too big because it broke the servers and people got cross. We weren't big enough to be able to support that. We were a group of kids in Derby trying to build games - not keep the massive infrastructure of a game up," says Joe.

But despite the challenges, Bulkhead were now well and truly on the industry radar.

"Our peers appreciated it. We had had three successes back to back. That is pretty unusual."

Enter Square Enix, the giant Japanese games developer and publisher, which boasts a portfolio of intellectual property such as Final Fantasy, Dragon Quest and Tomb Raider – created, of course, originally in Derby by Core Design.

Square Enix purchased a 20 per cent stake in Bulkhead – allowing the company to have the freedom of independent development but



01. CONCENTRATION LEVELS ARE HIGH.

02. TESTING THE GAMES.

03. THE GROWING OFFICES AT CARDINAL SQUARE.

04. TEAM MEMBERS ENJOYING SOME DOWNTIME.



CEO JOE BRAMMER, BULKHEAD.

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**“It’s about the connection. People want to feel part of it.”**

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with the backing of one of the world’s biggest publishers.

“They injected some cash and bought some shares and we are working on two games with them now. These are big games, with proper funding. We have hired more talent – experienced talent – to work on them. It’s a big step up,” says Joe.

Recruitment is now a key focus for the company, with ambitions to increase the headcount from its current 70 to around 120.

“We have already hired some great people. For the first time in our careers we are hiring people that are better than we are,” says Joe.

However, adding the right talent to the team is not without its challenges.

“Brexit really does affect us. Of our last 10 hires, seven of them have been from Europe. Now we are going to have to get visas. We may have to have a European office. We are waiting to see how it goes.”

Joe says the UK is not creating enough home-grown talent for the industry and he is critical of an education system which, he believes, is geared towards ‘creating shop workers and factory line assembly workers’.

When they do recruit top talent, Bulkhead works hard to keep them happy – the culture of the company encourages ideas and having fun and there is an impressive package of benefits, including a profit-share scheme.

Being based in Derby helps because it’s an affordable city for staff to live.

“Derby is the gateway to the Peak District. You can have a great house relatively cheaply, with a great garden and views. We can provide that work-life balance,” says Joe – although he is also keen to see improvements to make Derby city centre more attractive to potential recruits.

As we chat, members of the Bulkhead team are busy at their computer screens. As well as the two games that the company is developing with Square Enix, they are also pitching another and working towards a release of Battalion on console.

“We are constantly thinking about ideas,” says Joe.

But the process of launching a new game into market can be a long and expensive one.

“From pitching a game and getting it signed and ready to develop, that’s, perhaps, a year. To develop

the game, it could be two years. It could be five years.

“Some games are £500m in development. Some of those go on to make billions. We are still making games under £10m. That’s where we want to be. It’s considered a low overhead but doesn’t feel like a low overhead,” says Joe.

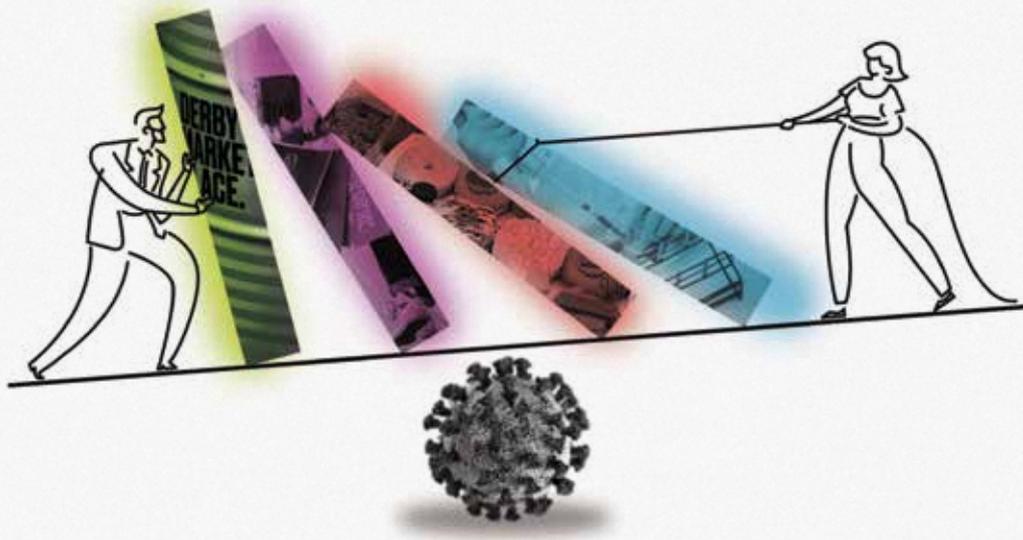
Ask him to cast his thoughts to the future and Joe talks about potential challenges for the industry, such as moving to a Netflix-style model, where players don’t buy games but take out monthly subscriptions.

In the next few years, he hopes to see Bulkhead increase their profile. You get a sense that he regards the still locally-celebrated Lara Croft as fairly ancient history and that he would like to create a new legacy.

He suggests that we may see an announcement about Bulkhead’s new games within the next year but other than that he’s staying tight-lipped on the detail of what comes next.

And I’m not going to press him any further.

This, after all, is a man who, when it’s not being used to whack watermelons, knows how to get hold of a baseball bat! **1**



# Innovation in a time of Covid



**JOHN FORKIN,**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
MARKETING DERBY

## **Pablo Picasso once said that 'every act of creation is first an act of destruction'.**

As one of the 20th Century's most innovative artists, Picasso was most likely referring to the uneasy conditions that led him to breaking so many paradigms in his work, shaping movements such as Cubism and creating paintings that personified the 'shock of the new', such as Guernica.

Picasso enjoyed a long life; he lived through two world wars, as well as a brutal civil war - the catalyst for Guernica - in his Spanish homeland.

I am reminded of course, that Picasso also lived through a global pandemic - the misnamed Spanish Flu - which by 1920 had killed an astonishing 50 million people worldwide.

And yet, the decade that followed that terrible event - which became

known as the 'roaring twenties' - was one of the most creative and innovative in history.

It's hard not to miss the irony that, exactly 100 years later, we are now living through something that previously we believed only existed in history, or in disaster movies - a global health pandemic.

As I write, the Covid-19 coronavirus is causing havoc and destruction across the world. More than one million people have died globally and, proportionally, the UK is one of the hardest hit nations.

We now face a health emergency morphing into an economic one and, although it can sometimes feel hard to believe, the booming 1920s can help us see that normal life will return in a post-pandemic world.

Considering Picasso's quotation today, the 'destruction' aspect is undoubtedly being provided by Covid. The question is will that

destruction lead to creativity and innovation?

For the past decade, the pitch made by Marketing Derby to investors has been firmly anchored on the promise of innovation.

We base this on how, for 300 years, Derby has been a hub of incredibly innovative economic activity; from being home to the world's first factory in the 18th Century, to becoming a global centre for technology in the aerospace, rail and nuclear sectors today.

Our campaign attaches the moniker of the city being the 'UK Capital for Innovation', this magazine is named Innovate and, as a company, we were awarded the Queen's Award for Innovation earlier this year.

It's undisputable that Covid has disrupted almost every part of our lives, with many businesses and communities now facing the existential challenge of mere

survival - and the emerging question becomes how we might use that disruption to shape our future?

One thing I've come to believe is that the businesses that innovate during the pandemic will be the ones that thrive after the pandemic.

I worry for those who have chosen, or been forced into, a type of hibernation and the unavoidable fact is that many businesses will shrink and some will disappear.

Whilst there is no doubt that Covid has revealed some unfortunate characteristics - lazy companies using it as the perfect excuse for poor service, multi-millionaires abusing the furlough system or the jobs-worths who take pleasure in imposing meaningless rules - overall, my experience is that Covid has led to many examples of what is best about the human spirit and community in tough times.

I saw some great examples of this last month when Marketing Derby held our first Bondholder Innovation Week. Sixteen companies made a five-minute pitch, outlining innovations they had introduced during the pandemic, aimed at helping their company respond positively to the challenge.

Their stories were varied but all reflected a creativity, energy and chutzpah that I found uplifting.

The winners, Project D - a new-start winner of one of 2019's Hatch projects at intu Derby - told how they abandoned the furlough offer only one week and diversified into egg and flour distribution, supporting charities and the NHS, and then established pop-ups across the city and beyond.

Amazingly, as they grew services across the Midlands region, they increased the number of employees, bought a company in Leeds and now plan to open a manufacturing plant in Derby, employing 100 people.

This is true innovation during the time of Covid.

It's not just companies that face uncertainty but also communities and places. The decline of town and city centres and the emergence of the so-called 'broken British High Street' is nothing new but undoubtably Covid has accelerated that process in a brutal fashion.



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**"The businesses that innovate during the pandemic will be the ones that thrive after."**

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Suddenly, everywhere - whether the city of London, Derby or Heanor - has lost custom and is having to rethink their future purpose.

According to the respected Centre for Cities think tank, Derby is the third most exposed city to Covid (due to our aerospace and manufacturing based economy - a strength that suddenly becomes a weakness) and yet the city tops the regional table for recovery, with footfall back to 93 per cent of pre-Covid levels. Worryingly, however, city centre shopfront vacancies are rising fast and could be as high as 30 per cent or more by 2021.

We need to remain positive but be honest about the challenge and Marketing Derby is committed to supporting the city and playing a full role, together with partners in the Recovery Task Force, being led by Derby City Council.

It was on their behalf that we recently carried out a large market research exercise with Bondholders to ascertain insight into what might attract people back into the city.

There is plenty of talk about city centre repurposing - but repurposing to what?

The quantitative survey covered many issues but the key question was simply to ask 'what would bring you back into the city centre?'

The answer from the 400 respondents was clear. A greater cultural and leisure offer came top, with 76 per cent and 70 per



cent respectively, followed by a desire to see more independent businesses, a greener city and cheaper parking. Out of 30 options these were the top five.

The message from the customer could not be clearer - 'please give us something interesting to do, in an attractive, pleasant, customer-friendly environment, and we will come into the city centre more often'.

The qualitative focus groups mentioned attractions, such as the Museum of the Moon, Knife Angel, Feste and QUAD, as being such drivers. They also reinforced the need to tackle anti-social behaviour which, if not sorted, will act as a glass ceiling to progress.

The recent Market Place AI Fresco initiative is a clue as to how innovation can help shape that future. This was a genuine public-private initiative, where Derby City Council engaged 40 local companies in its design and delivery, with critical creative input from local company Katapult, who design experiences in attractions across the world.

The resulting offer was decidedly different from previous schemes. It hit all the right buttons and the public reacted incredibly positively by voting with their feet.

There is no going back to a pre-Covid world and innovations - small, medium and large - will be the key that can unlock a vibrant future if only we can channel our inner Picasso... ❶



SOME MEMBERS OF THE TEAM WHO HAVE CELEBRATED 30 YEARS OF BUSINESS AT NIELSEN MCALLISTER

**PR AGENCY'S  
NEW LOOK FOR  
ITS 30TH BIRTHDAY**

Public relations agency Nielsen McAllister has refreshed its brand and launched a new website as part of its 30th birthday celebrations.

While traditional celebrations had to be shelved due to the coronavirus pandemic, the firm, founded by current Managing Director Bob Bushby, enjoyed a virtual birthday party, where the seven-strong team competed in a virtual bake-off

competition. Bob said he was extremely proud of the company he started building 30 years ago and that the first two clients he signed back in 1990 were still with the business today.

"We had some big plans for our birthday year and, when the lockdown was announced, we almost took the decision to postpone our celebrations until next year. After all, 30 years is quite a milestone to reach in our industry and we were keen to shout about it," said Bob.

He continued: "But, with the new website and branding already in development, we decided to celebrate regardless, even though everyone was in separate locations. I was blown away by the effort made by everybody in our virtual bake-off. The results were amazing and it proved very popular – not least because nobody had to share their final creations!"

Nielsen McAllister's new website can be found at [www.nielsenmcallister.com](http://www.nielsenmcallister.com).

**PLAY COMPANY  
ANNOUNCES  
EXPANSION**

Cosy Direct is expanding to new premises to support its ambitious growth plans.

The company, which sells ethical educational outdoor play equipment to schools and nurseries, has agreed a deal for a new £2m warehouse which will double its current capacity.

The expansion will support Cosy, which last year posted an £8.4m turnover, as it sets out on an ambitious programme to grow by a further 50 per cent, increase its export operation six-fold and expand its product range and supply networks.

The company prides itself on its sustainable approach to business, with the majority of its products made in the UK, in order to reduce air miles, and an emphasis on reusing and reinventing.

It's new warehouse is at Fauld, on the Derbyshire/Staffordshire border, and will be called Crater's Edge.

Cosy founder Peter Ellse said: "We're excited about Crater's Edge because it has double the capacity and will allow us to showcase what we are really about in a rural environment.

"The move will also support our ambitious plans to grow our business, which have already started in earnest this year and will see us increase our operations levels, grow our export channels, add more depth to our board and grow our social media teams."

**HEALTH COMPANY  
LAUNCHES NEW  
E-COMMERCE  
BUSINESS**

Pennine Healthcare has launched a new e-commerce business, ARMA Health, to bring hospital quality products directly to the consumer.

Initially specialising in PPE and infection control products, ARMA Health will provide quality hand sanitisers, face masks, face shields, room sanitizers and isolation gowns. All these products are used in the NHS and other major healthcare providers.

The launch has been supported by fellow Derby companies Frogspark and Cactus Images, who have

assisted with website design and imagery.

Luke Fryer, Chief Executive Officer of Pennine Healthcare, said: "We're very excited about launching our new website and firmly believe it offers consumers something unique. A big thanks to fellow Bondholders Frogspark and Cactus Images; they've delivered a fantastic product and on a short time scale. It's been a great Derby partnership!"

Rob Twells, Managing Director at Frogspark, said: "We are very excited to be working with Pennine Healthcare on their new Magento website – ARMA Health. Pennine have wanted to take their offering online for a number of years now, so for them to show

faith in Frogspark to achieve that is fantastic feedback in itself.

"We love creating online experiences, especially when we've got creative freedom and the purpose of the website is as important as the one we're producing for ARMA Health."

Chris Howard, Co-Founder of Cactus Images, said: "Working alongside the team at Pennine Healthcare, to capture the images for the new ARMA Health website and product launch, has been a pleasure.

"Cactus Images are happy to support other Bondholders and, particularly during this challenging time, are glad to be a part of the local support network."

**The  
Last  
Word**

**Derby is ready to innovate and lead the country out of the Covid nightmare. We have seen many crises before but, once again, our creativity, dedication and never-say-die spirit will see us through.**

**Pauline Latham,**  
MP for Mid Derbyshire.



# A HI-TECH CITY FOR 300 YEARS



Marketing Derby is a unique, public-private Investment Promotion Agency which has attracted 5,000 jobs and £500m of capital investment into the city of Derby and county of Derbyshire.

Derby, a compact city - 90 minutes from London St Pancras International - is a hotbed of innovation, set in some of the most stunning countryside the UK has to offer.

Since the birth of the industrial revolution, our community has embraced the challenge of change and - just as we did with Messrs Rolls and Royce 100 years ago, or with Toyota 20 years ago - we roll out the red carpet to those seeking investment opportunities.

We are proud to receive the Queen's Award for Innovation and look forward to creating new relationships to advise and support businesses and investors - whether from the UK or global - in the future.

## Best Foreign Direct Investment Strategy in UK

(Small City category, Financial Times' fDi rankings 2020/21)

## Top Ten Best Places for Business

(The Sunday Times 2020)

## Highest Average City Salaries

(Outside London, NOMIS 2020)

2020



Multi-award-winning iHub opens - the centrepiece of Infinity Park Derby

2016

**TOYOTA**  
MANUFACTURING UK

Production begins at Toyota Motor Manufacturing UK

1992



Rolls-Royce opens in Derby. Now home to civil aerospace and nuclear operations

1908



Train manufacturing starts in Derby

1840



World's first factory, The Silk Mill, now part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site

1721

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