



NEWS for 2009 archive

- **December 2009** Does a development professional ever really “switch off”? I spent over three weeks of November and December visiting Sydney, together with a week in the South Island of New Zealand. Sydney is a genuine “world-class” waterfront city with the breadth of roles and functions, the portfolio of iconic imagery, the mix of character area, and a buzz/energy at a scale to which only the most ambitious successful places can aspire. Faults and issues too – problematic urban transport system, areas of deprivation or rather bland dormitory commuterism, and, I suspect, a rather mixed Olympic legacy. The South Island of New Zealand, on the other hand, is the size of England with a population of around one million. My brother and I spent five days walking the Milford Track – an ecotourism exemplar - through the most spectacular mountain and fjord scenery. Creating and supporting successful places; making the most of landscapes and natural assets. Yes - the holiday was a refreshing break after an energetic first year at Third Life Economics; but it also provided inspiration and ideas for two of the major themes which I hope Third Life Economics can develop with clients and partners as we enter the new decade.
- **November 2009** The Annual Conference for the Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) growth area was held on 10th November. The future of MKSM is intriguing. Is it destined to be a “region” or sub-region in its own right? Will it deconstruct itself back into its constituent “places”? Both Government and opposition spokespersons suggested it was up to MKSM roleplayers to decide - which rather begs the question of who mediates/determines when, inevitably, there is no consensus between local roleplayers. My speech to the conference is attached in the articles section below.
- **October 2009** I chaired Luton Gateway's first Developer's Forum on the 8th October in the Grove Theatre Dunstable, attended by around thirty participants from the development industry. The challenges of the current downturn require new models of intervention. Whilst current government and HCA schemes for both the industry (e.g. Kickstart) and for home buyers (assisted mortgages etc.) are necessary, they are clearly not sufficient to catalyse property-led recovery. The forum discussed the need to bring forward new development models (including the ADZ/TIF initiatives) more rapidly; to be prepared to undertake (a greater number of) smaller scale, less bank-reliant developments; and for the public sector to provide intelligence, leadership and bold solutions (e.g. major transport infrastructure and innovative energy solutions) if economic recovery is to proceed, and key issues like the low carbon agenda are to be concurrently advanced.
- **September 2009** It was a real pleasure to meet up again with Andrea Stark and Helen Lax of Arts Council East of England (ACEE) earlier this month. Our get together coincided with the publication of Creative Collaborations 2009-11, the prospectus for the unique alliance between EEDA and ACEE. I think it is fair to say that Andrea and I started this alliance back in 2004, and over the first five years we generated, with £42m of EEDA/ACEE investment, a £110m portfolio of eight Arts Centres of Excellence throughout the East of England. Projects like the UK Centre for Carnival Arts in Luton, Jerwood Dance House on Ipswich Waterfront, the Royal Opera House Production Park in Thurrock, and the other interventions are landmark, legacy investments that will have a major and enduring impact on their communities and the East of England. Creative Collaboration 2009-11 is about using these and other “anchors” to develop a network of “creative economy hubs” across the region. This is central to the “new industries, new jobs” agenda that the UK needs to pursue as we emerge from the downturn; and it is an agenda in which I hope Third Life Economics will make a major contribution to existing and future clients and their communities.

- September 2009** I met a range of regeneration consultancy colleagues at a discussion forum hosted by Regeneration and Renewal in September. It is interesting how current changes in the "real world" impact on the workloads of different types of consultancy practice – large corporates, planning-led professionals, economic, social/community, and environmental practices of varying sizes. The current downturn has seen, not surprisingly, a marked reduction in planning and property-development led work, and considerable pressure on public sector budgets. There is a general concern over the cost and complexity of public procurement exercises. Many in our industry are looking for diversification of both products they offer and markets they serve. Regeneration and Renewal – as probably the leading professional journal in our sector – are right to be gathering this sort of informal intelligence. They hold several such forums throughout the year with different types of interest groups to keep their own thinking and product offers up to date.
- August 2009** Plymouth City Development Company (PCDC) has appointed its new senior management team – Gavin Carrier as Chief Executive; Stephen Hulance as Director of Development; Matthew Cross as Director of Inward Investment and Marketing. Gavin and Stephen started on September 1st and I handed over to them in late August and early September. Coming alongside new appointments as Director of Development and Head of Economic Development at Plymouth City Council, the city is assembling a powerful team to drive the economy forward. I greatly enjoyed my spell as Interim Chief Executive at PCDC and wish Gavin and his colleagues at PCDC and the council well. I am retained by PCDC as an advisor and continue to follow developments there closely. You can read my impressions of Plymouth in the article I penned for the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce which has been placed in the articles section below.
- July 2009** Third Life Economics is delighted to now be working with a number of associates, broadening our offer and capabilities for clients and partners. During June and July we collaborated with Rockpools to assist the Cabinet of a distinctive unitary council assess its effectiveness and identify options for future development. Over the same period, associates from SQW Consulting worked on the Plymouth Economic Intelligence Review as part our ongoing commission with Plymouth City Development Company.
- July 2009** As Chairman of the Luton Gateway development company, I attended the latest "Business Breakfast" on the 1st July at the Riverside Conference Centre in Luton. With around 50 attendees, major business concerns are the perennial transport infrastructure and skills issues. Interestingly, with major investments like the £85m Guided Busway, and the East Luton corridor, and over £300m of BSF, FE and HE capital programmes underway, we might expect Luton businesses to be optimistic. Our challenge is both to deliver these projects effectively, and to ensure they translate into improved experiences for businesses on the ground. The other enduring worry is the often negative image Luton is given in the national media, and this is something the development company will try and assist with later in the summer.
- June 2009** Following the first all-out elections to the new unitary Cornwall Council on June 4th, a Conservative/Independent political administration has been formed. Cornwall is now significantly the largest unitary council in England with no metropolitan areas or large urban communities (the largest "conurbation" - Camborne-Pool-Redruth - has a population of just over 40000). Its GVA per capita remains beneath 2/3 of the UK average, and it is the only area in receipt of EU Convergence Funding. Economic growth in Cornwall is highly contentious, and it will be a challenge for the new administration to find win/win policies and priorities that meet the economic, social and environmental ambitions of this "green peninsula". David is continuing to work with Cornwall's leadership on, in particular, their 'Single Conversation' with HCA, RDA and other partners; on an Economy Green Paper that the council hopes to publish in the late summer, and on the initial business plan of the Cornwall Development Company.