

## Review: 18<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Forum

The 18th Quarterly Forum meeting took place on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at the Village Hotel on Priory Park. The main guest speaker was John Holmes, Chief Executive of Hull Forward who spoke on “Hull’s Changing Skyline”, an informative and in-depth look at Hull’s ongoing regeneration agenda. It was one of the largest turnouts at a Quarterly Forum with over 144 people registered to attend.

- **Paul Sewell**

The meeting began at 4.30pm with a presentation by Paul Sewell who updated members on the exciting line up for Business Week 2008. He spoke of the need for Hull to promote and celebrate its business achievements and foster a sense of entrepreneurship, especially among the young. The list of speakers at this year’s Business Week includes the highest-profile speakers to date, culminating in the illustrious Sir Bob Geldof but also



featuring Elle Macpherson, George Foreman, Richard Reed (the founder of Innocent drinks) and Gordon Ramsay. Paul dispelled some of the ‘myths’ surrounding the event...

“The guest speakers would be appearing by satellite link” – they will be live in Hull!

“It’s very expensive” – there is a charge for some events but this is to be expected for such high profile speakers.

“The event is moving to Sheffield” – it is staying in Hull!

More information on Business Week 2008 is available at [www.bizweek.biz](http://www.bizweek.biz)

- **John Holmes**

John introduced Hull Forward, the city’s new Economic Development Company which became fully operational on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. He explained the need for a comprehensive city masterplan which formally sets out the strategy for a revitalised city centre reunited with its waterfront and be able to offer quality office space for businesses and a strong retail offering all supported by a strong city centre residential market.

He summarised the progress made on all the major city centre developments such as the transport interchange and St Stephen’s and highlighted the success these projects had been and the opportunities they now offered. The extension to the Humber Quays development was revealed with exciting new developments alongside the river which would include office, residential and restaurant units as well as a 4\* hotel. The proposals and investments being put forward on the Fruit Market site were also illustrated as was the Boom development on the east bank of the river.

John explained the financial investment behind Hull Forward from Hull City Council, English Partnerships and Yorkshire Forward and defined Hull Forward as the organisation which would support development through on the key economic clusters and would be the catalyst to transform Hull into a global economic player.

- **Panel Debate**

Following John Holmes' presentation, members were given the opportunity to question a panel made up of representatives from key players in Hull's regeneration: Nora Galley of Roger Tym & Partners, a driving force behind the city centre masterplan; Richard Scott of Surface Architects who is part of the team behind the Fruit Market and Andrew Horncastle of Horncastle Group & Pure Urban which is behind the Boom development. John Holmes also joined the panel.

- A variety of questions was put to the panel the first of which gave them the opportunity to highlight one thing which would help make Hull a better place and improve its regeneration prospects. Nora Galley said that she hoped engagement between Hull and the East Riding authorities was vital if Hull and its regeneration were to be successful. Richard Scott said that, as an architect, being given the freedom to do what one wanted was always appreciated and he had been given this with the Fruit Market project. Andrew Horncastle wished that apart from Hull City being promoted to the Premiership he would like to see a more supportive Council as he felt businesses were often frustrated with a lack of delivery. John Holmes hoped that people from outside the city would begin to think of Hull as the destination of choice for their business especially from the healthcare, ports or energy sectors.
- Questions were raised about the economic downturn and the impact this would have. Andrew Horncastle acknowledged that this would obviously be an issue but the rental market in Hull was strong and markets do fluctuate. He took a long term view of house prices as he said the market had seen a more or less constant rise since the 1700's!
- John Holmes answered questions on Hull developing a major conference venue by saying it was still very much on the radar especially given the potential new hotels the city plans to host.
- The issue of opportunities for small and medium businesses in the new regeneration areas was raised. The panel agreed that as both the Boom and the bridge leading to it were developed, Whitefriargate would pick up and this would be a good area for smaller shops to set up.
- A show of hands suggested that the audience was split about 50/50 as to whether they felt safe in Hull City Centre at night. Nora Galley said that Manchester had similar problems in the past but since more office workers stayed in town after work and more people were living in the centre things had improved, Hull is heading this way.
- Andrew Horncastle replied to a question on local procurement by saying that he was in favour of this but local suppliers had to be competitive and this was not always his experience from the past.
- Janet Reuben of Visit Hull & East Yorkshire said people were impressed by their visits to Hull. John Holmes agreed that people from outside the city were often surprised about what they found when they came to Hull but added that in the past Hull lacked the physical product to convince visitors Hull was good, whereas now there is plenty to show off.