Heritage & the High Street: Conference Report

The future high street, according to a recent report by Deloitte, will be lined with coffee shops and internet kiosks: blurring the boundaries between physical and virtual space. The report estimated that four out of ten shops would have to close in the next five years as consumers moved from stores to on-line shopping.

Similarly the report by Mary Portas found the High Street to be outdated and still working in the same way it had fifty years ago. According to Portas, the future involved: relaxing regulations, making town centres more affordable to visit and reforming the way they were managed. Retailers needed to reduce their property portfolios by 30-40%, so surely this raises questions about the viability of the high street.

Living in a time of such rapid change raises questions about how the historic environment can adapt and survive. High streets tend to be a defining feature of historic towns, so if proposals aimed at addressing challenges in the retail industry lead to changes in both policy and practice, what will the likely impact be? If regulations are to be relaxed, how can the individual character and distinctiveness of these valued heritage places be protected and enhanced?

Against this background, in October 2012 the North West Branch hosted a day conference to consider the challenging issues facing the high street. The event was held in the Liverpool Medical Institute and it was chaired by Professor Ian Wray, from the University of Liverpool.

The chair opened the conference by reminding delegates that when out of town retail parks were first developed they were supposedly only going to account for a small increment of retail growth. But in today's climate of austerity, where there is either no growth or only low growth, every pound spent in an out of town retail park is a pound less spent in the high street.

Amongst other initiatives, the North West Development Agency had been proactive in seeking to: brand seaside town; encourage independent traders; and highlight the role of 'pristine historic buildings'. Whitehall has suggested that, with respect to challenges facing the retail sector and other sectors of the economy, conservation and planning controls needed removing or at least 'streamlining'. The country is currently managing decline. Rather than contributing to the problem(s), Wray asked whether conservation was actually part of the solution.

The first half of the morning was dedicated to setting scene by considering Government policy and initiatives. The first presentation, by John Pal from Manchester Business School, was entitled - *The Strategic Context: Planning Policy, Portas, Retailing and the High Street.*

Planning Policy had evolved over the years and there had been various notes, guidance and statements, but now we had the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Pal pointed out that at a select committee meeting the previous year Stephen Wright (from the John Lewis Partnership) had been asked whether views were shared across the retail sector and he said: "If you look at the representations that have been made to the NPPF consultation (by various retail bodies) they are all making a similar point: that the current balance is there or thereabouts. There are differences in emphasis...but the substance is the same." In Pal's view, however, the NPPF supported chain stores and convenience stores.

Pal cited some recent Government publications. *Understanding High Street Performance* (a BIS 2011 report) had referred to an emerging debate about the role of the planning system and its impact on high streets, in which some people argued that it was not strong enough, whilst others argued that it was too heavy-handed.

As part of CLG's policy for improving high streets and town centres, proposals were published (in 2012) *"to re-activate empty shops and reclaim underused street space."* Restrictions that put off start-up businesses from temporarily using empty high street shops would be scrapped to help attract shoppers back to more family friendly town centres... and pop up shops and entrepreneurs would prosper from these high streets changes.

Pal identified the key issues: there was a 'policy train' and towns and cities needed to be on it; Local Planning Authorities needed up to date plans, incorporating the new policies; and everything still remained negotiable in development.

The Portas Review had been commissioned by BIS. Portas had received 1913 responses via the website and BIS had received over 300 direct responses and 500 via SurveyMonkey. The report made 20 responses in six groupings. The most important was getting town centres running like businesses. Other groupings were: getting the basics right to allow business to flourish; levelling the playing field; defining landlords' roles and responsibilities; giving communities a greater say; and re-imagining our high streets. The problem was that representation from the heritage sector did not seem to feature in any of this.

Bids to become Portas pilots were defined under nine 'town types': market town, new town, rural town, coastal town, village, large town, suburban, parade and 'other'. There was no mention of an historic town type and there was no reference to heritage in the any of the bids, apart from two.

Twelve bids had been selected and would receive a share of a £1.2 million package. Pal asked the question whether the Portas pilots would work. People have said it was not about the money, it was about having the support of the Portas team and about the publicity for the pilot high streets. Pal was slightly concerned that a Minister had said that he was "excited about the idea of a television show" based on the Portas pilots, because this seemed to reinforce the idea that reality TV and celebrity culture was becoming ever more pervasive.

Pal explained how the Portas Review raised other issues. There was the question of whether it was just paying lip service to resolving the problems of the high street, or not. The question of pop up shops could also be seen as a case of 'been here before'. Additionally, with the arc lights of publicity it appeared to be another example of the Hawthorne effect: where participants alter their behaviour as a result of being part of an experiment or study.

Pal said that, depending on what you were reading, either Adam Smith or Napoleon Bonaparte first described Britain as a nation shop keepers, but retailing was still a key part of life. Today the mantra was often: price, price, price!

Examples of retail offers were given. The House of Frazer in Glasgow was a big store, whereas the Liverpool shop had a fraction of the footprint, but it carried the full range of good – with next day delivery. The coffee shop Nespresso was cited as an example of a retailer that was 'redefining retail expectations'.

There were three key issues in retailing. The first was about concentration and consolidation – key elements of success in the retail sector. The second issue was the idea that the retailer knew best – for example, depending on the retail offer, retailers would use historic buildings. The third issue was that retailers need to keep pace with constant change – so they were not reducing the number of stores, Pal said.

High Streets have to understand what shoppers are looking for. Customers want destinations - and Liverpool One and the Trafford Centre were cited as examples. Customers like brands with authority they can trust and examples that were given included: Tesco, Toys R Us and amazon.com

The spread of convenience stores was mentioned as another aspect of changes in retailing that had a bearing on the high street: for example branches of Spa have opened in airports and railway stations. Supermarkets are another well established element of the retail sector. A store like Morrisons will offer choice, but Pal asked how many varieties of tomatoes do we need? In retail terms though if a supermarket did not offer choice or if it had sold out customers would go elsewhere and not return.

According to Justin King (from Sainsbury's) towns must shrink and, Mary Portas believed, we could not save the high street. One major UK retailer (not named) had reportedly said: "The high street will sort itself out...market forces will see to that." That would suggest that stores would have to be closed, but this had not been happening so far, it was claimed. Away from the day conference, however, there have been examples of retail chains that had gone into administration in 2012.

None of this provides any clear answers to questions about historic buildings and historic centres, though. There were examples of historic building complexes being developed to offer smaller retail spaces to attract independent traders. The delegates were shown examples of developments by Bruntwood, in Manchester. National chains, such as the big four supermarkets, were also moving into the convenience store market. Location was still key in the retail sector.

Pal finished his presentation by identifying the challenges for retailers, planners and the heritage sector. BIS had identified two challenges: policy makers (at local and national levels) needed to understand the underlying causes of retail trends; and planners needed to remember that no two high streets were the same (despite worries about clone towns).

Pal ended with the urban design maxim that people make places and he felt sure examples would be presented throughout the day.

The next speaker was Graeme Vout, Stockport Council's Town and District Centres Manager. His presentation focussed on Stockport: A Portas Front-Runner.

Vout had been part of the Portas Review, in which town centres had been viewed very much as 'places'. Currently this view is not popular with various critics, but in Vout's view the Portas Review had largely got it right. There had been a considerable amount of interest in Portas from the Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM) and the Institute of Place Management, to name two groups with an interest in places.

Town centres are organic: they evolve. For example ten years ago there were no mobile phone shops, whereas now there was any number of them. Vout showed the delegates a 1680 map of Stockport centre and told them that in Engels's perception (viewed from a train crossing the Stockport viaduct) that the town was a mill town and a 'dump'. In the 1940s the work of traffic engineers saw Stockport re-designed as 'a road' and the River Mersey was culverted. In the 1980s and 90s the Merseyway Shopping Centre was developed where the road was and the old town was side-lined. The period from the 1960s until 2000 marked the golden age of shopping in Stockport. By 2006, however, vacancies were appearing and in 2008/9 the vacancy rate doubled and reached 25%.

In parallel to this, a physical transformation had taken place in the old town. £45 million had been spent on refurbishing buildings and improving the public realm in a heritage-led regeneration scheme.

Stockport's Portas bid focussed on the old town: in particular the Underbanks area. The old town's heritage was implicit in the bid. The old town's heritage was Stockport town centre's unique selling point (USP) and this was what saved Stockport from becoming a clone town.

Stockport was one of the first Portas pilot schemes to be selected, out of three hundred and seventy one pilots in total. It had three objectives, which all focussed on places and aimed to make Stockport town centre: a great place to visit, work in, live in and enjoy. Also, it aimed to establish a unique identity for the town and foster a contemporary re-invention of its unique places.

The challenges in Stockport included: filling vacant uses with exciting new uses; supporting existing businesses; reinventing the market and other attractions; creating venues owned and run by young people; and bringing the centre to life in the evening.

Stockport Town Team committee represents the community, stakeholders and street champions. The bid had secured £100 million with match funding from Stockport BC and a further £100m from other government schemes.

The pilot comprised governance elements and projects. The governance element represented a big change in terms of shared responsibility among the community, creative industries and retailers. The projects included: digital equipment for the restored Plaza cinema; a Plaza/St Peter's Square big screen; a cultural programme development; Seven Miles Out – a digital and visual arts centre/festival; an events programme; support for vintage/specialist retailers; creative industry development space; and signage, legibility and e-presence.

Vout asked why the Stockport bid had been successful. The CLG had highlighted the strength of its bid, but Vout also asked whether it had been the bid (and its projects) or whether it was because Stockport centre was struggling.

Stockport was aware of change, like the impact of the internet, the town was organic. It needs efficient transport links: to deliver good to houses; for deliveries to the shops in the centre; and for customers to reach the retail centre. There was a raft of ideas being considered which included: a connectivity campaign and a business rates initiative – taking advantage of a new government discretionary powers initiative. Vout thought the latter might offer some solutions.

In the decline of town centres, planners were partly to blame and so were traffic engineers. The Portas scheme was not just about shopping; it was about bringing people back into town centres.

The next presentation, by Stephen Proudley of retail property consultants Tushingham Moore, was entitled: *What does the retailer want?*

There were several parts to the answer. Obviously the customer was one element, since people are social creatures and they love to shop. We prefer shopping in-store, because we can get ideas there, whereas you cannot see things in the same way on-line. Brand comes alive in-store where customers can use all their senses. Although on-line retail is a threat, Proudley pointed out that you cannot eat out on-line and even the likes of pizza express was still opening new shops.

Bricks and mortar are also important to retailers. National chain stores make good use of historic buildings. A key element for retailers was buildings in single ownerships, but absent landlords were a problem. Questions about bricks and mortar led Proudley into the notions of character and design. These ideas raises related questions about choosing old buildings or new ones and shop design that highlighted character versus bland design. Old buildings age better, they are more versatile, they are part of a town's identity and people like them. By contrast new buildings could be anywhere. Consequently, the best solution was a mixture of old and new.

The shop front itself was another crucial element and important features for a successful shop front included: visibility; identity; impressing/inspiring shoppers;

heritage buildings incorporating cutting edge design; old buildings offsetting contemporary products.

Shopping was becoming more about experience. Retailers needed to be able to 'push ground' and create an experience. Customer service was also crucial. Proudley said that customer service had been poor in the UK previously, but in shops like Apple and Abercrombie & Fitch the staff were trained to be very helpful. In London, Apple had stores in Regents Street and Covent Garden: both shops were new buildings behind older facades and the former was Apple's European flagship store. Steve Jobs had once boasted that Apple only made four products: all of which could fit on top of a table. Nonetheless Proudley said the average Apple shop raised £40m per year. Apple stores were soon to be joined on the high street by shops operated by Microsoft and Google.

Proudley finished with some case studies. Marylebone High Street, London, was an example of mixed retail and leisure; Merchant City, Glasgow, was a residential and shopping area, which mirrored Covent Garden, but it also included leisure; Liverpool included listed buildings and sought after retail brands in different centres; St Christopher's Place, off Oxford Street, London, was a pedestrianised space offering eateries; in Manchester, St James's Building now included a Tesco Express, Aubin & Mills and a coffee store: the Royal Exchange in London, was the third building dating from 1844, which ceased trading in 1939 and now housed a shopping centre and restaurants.

Historic buildings could create a 'sense of place' and create a whole new district. One example was the Meatpacking district, on the west side of Manhattan, in New York. This area was home to fashion, architects, creative industries, commerce, meat packers and restaurants. It had been brought to life and become a 24 hour area of the city through a mix of historic and modern buildings.

Proudley finished by making reference to the planned 53 Noma development in Manchester, near the Manchester Arena. The arena was the UK's second biggest venue after the O2 in London and currently the only food offer was a McDonalds. The new development would change the nature of that part of the city.

The second half of the morning considered mixed use case studies. The first speaker was Helen Brownlie from Allerdale Borough Council, in Cumbria. Her presentation was on townscape regeneration, i.e., shop fronts, in Cockermouth - in the wake of the 2009 floods. These floods had reached ground floor ceiling height in some buildings, shop fronts had been damaged and so had some of the roads.

After the floods, interested parties were invited to join a steering group, to address the issue of the shop fronts. The local Civic Trust was invited and discussions were held with shop owners.

The idea was to seize the opportunity and avoid like for like replacements of damaged shop fronts. £50k had been secured from the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund. This was to be used as a top up shop front grant: topping up the money from insurance claims.

The allocation of grants was based on a scoring system, so that poorer shop front designs could be replaced by better designs. Local architects were involved in producing sketch schemes; a public meeting was held for local traders and an exhibition was mounted.

The town received a visit from Prince Charles and after the visit an anonymous donation of £50k was received, to supplement the funding that had already been secured!

A museum group was involved in the initiative. They sourced old photographs of shop fronts in the town and a design guide was produced to show good and bad examples of shop front design. Grants were offered for older style shop fronts projects and for painting buildings.

The question had been asked whether the scheme was successful primarily because of the insurance money that was claimed, due to the flooding. In two years 27 new shop fronts had been installed: approximately 20 of those were grant funded, but 7 were not; and some had no insurance funding or only a small amount. Delegates were shown before and after pictures that highlighted how the high street had been transformed.

So what were the reasons for success? A number of lessons had been learned during the course of the initiative. Firstly the town had looked for opportunities for improvements, rather than accept poor quality replacements. The steering group had been proactive and talked to traders in person. Grants had been targeted and it was found that a little really did go a long way! The steering group had worked because it had been a partnership with a range of skills and influences and there had been a lot of voluntary effort. The meetings had been regular: initially they had been held on a weekly basis. All information, including rumours and gossip, had been passed on and a data-base of contacts had been compiled. As new shop fronts started appearing the power of peer pressure started to take over. The steering group had learned to be persistent, to be cheeky and not to accept the first 'no' as a final answer.

The next speaker was Stephen Smith from Fylde Borough Council in Lancashire; his presentation continued the theme of townscape regeneration by looking at the 'renaissance' of St Annes on Sea

Smith set the context by explaining how St. Annes was as a planned town of 1875, with The Square (the town's main wide street) set at right angles to the sea, providing the perfect conditions for the passage of the wind and rain the town endured. Making reference to the fact St. Annes and neighbouring Lytham were often considered to be two parts of the same town, he went on to highlight some of the common perceptions of 'Lytham St. Annes' as a 'nice affluent place'.

Following this Smith presented a reality check: in 1999 there were 13 vacant shops on The Square, which represented a 25% vacancy rate; and half the shops on Orchard Road, Park Road and The Crescent were empty. In a survey of traders that year, only 15% were confident; 33% were not confident and 26% wanted to move

out of the town. 36% said their trade had declined in the 12 months period 1998 – 1999.

The symptoms of decline were there to see. Being located in a coastal environment, the town centre's buildings with their aging fabric represented a maintenance backlog. The buildings in the planned town conservation area were of a higher design standard, but were more expensive to maintain. This was compounded by the issues of absentee landlords, or individual owners with little funds. The town had slipped into a spiral of decline of poor property maintenance and tenancy problems and there were few if any financial incentives to encourage investment in the town.

The town centre was larger than what was needed. The vacancy rates (already described above) were symptomatic of what was happening in St. Anne's and nationally: key local attractions had closed and high street chains and banks were rationalising their town centre branches across the country; as in high streets elsewhere, there was a growing number of budget and charity shops; the upper floors above shops were vacant; the public realm was deteriorating and there was a general air of dereliction; and in an era of city centres becoming 'destinations' visitor numbers were declining in St. Annes and overall there was a failure to meet consumer demand.

The St. Annes on Sea Regeneration Strategy was developed through consultation exercises: questionnaire were used that targeted businesses, residents, shoppers in-store and people on the street; and a public exhibition was organised.

The outcome was a design-led approach involving physical intervention. It was felt that the widespread economic problems could be tackled through good design and intervention in the towns' public realm and its building fabric. The idea was to re-design the town centre and enhance the public realm to turn St Annes into a 'garden town by the sea', in which the built heritage would be conserved and enhanced. With this in mind various documents were produced: an Urban Design Guide; a Town Centre Masterplan and an Overarching Regeneration Strategy.

The work was spread over a number of years. Historic photographs of the retail centre were employed to improve shop fronts. Buildings were adapted to re-establish independent access to the upper floors.

A range of public realm improvements were carried out: The Square was re-fashioned, so it became less open and less windy and desolate, by breaking up the spaces; various features were introduced including pavilions, stainless steel palm trees, urns and low walls – to provide borders and to frame gardens. Street cafes were established, despite the wind, and the evening economy was encouraged.

The Borough Council worked with Lancashire County Council to improve the street lamps and introduce bollards. Car management and street parking schemes were introduced.

Small grants were offered and large private investment began to take place, encouraged by the public realm improvement works. This all created confidence in the town.

Block paving and shared space were introduced with pedestrian and parking areas. This improved the public realm and provided revenue from parking, but lead to increased maintenance requirements. The design of the improvements, the mosaics and the choice of the street furniture were all rooted in the heritage of St. Annes.

The Town Centre Regeneration Programme was executed in phases and it entailed an investment of approximately £2.8m. Some of the works was funded through the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme. The town achieved 3 rounds of funding totalling approximately £700,000 and this was distributed via building refurbishment grants. Approximately £300,000 of funding was secured in 2 rounds of the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme and this was also distributed via building refurbishment grants. There was a further investment of £2.2m in historic garden restoration as part of the Ashton Gardens Restoration Project.

There were a number of positive outcomes: vacancy rates fell year on year to a level that was below the national average; over 4,000 m^2 of new or improved floor space created; 54 FTE jobs; 59 buildings refurbished; 23 new dwellings created; and 11 new businesses started. In terms of value for money, generally £23 of private investment was levered in per £1 of expenditure by the Borough Council and in building refurbishments specifically there was £3.41 private sectored investment per £1 public expenditure.

St Annes turned a corner and the story has continues since 2010. The Open golf championship is coming and almost a £1m of further expenditure on the public realm has been taking place, with £153,000 of this coming from s106 or s278 agreements.

There have been lessons learnt from this experience, success relies on: perseverance, community support, utilising all available planning tools need, confidence and grants leads to development and s106 agreements, but of course future funding will only be able to come from the Community Investments Levy.

The final presentation of the morning was given by Pete Swift, a Landscape Architect from PLANIT on the Value of Public Realm. Swift sought to explain how the public realm could support heritage assets to help give town centres new purpose. Each example was well illustrated through photographs (please see presentation).

The first example given was St John's Blackpool. St John's was located in an 'inland town centre' on a car dominated junction where cars came first, pedestrians second and St John's third. The junction had been re-modelled based on the principle of shared space. In fact it was the biggest shared space outside London. It had been in operation for three years, during which time there had been no fatalities and no injuries.

St John's was not just an exercise in new pavements and art work; it was an example where a place had been created. St John's was a re-purposed town centre: there had been a 25% uplift in occupancy; street cafes had been established; the church itself had seen improvement and conservation works and flood-lighting had been introduced.

A question was raised querying why no 'living things had been included in the public realm improvement works. Swift explained that trees did not grow because the coastal environment was hostile, but he believed that people had brought life to St John's.

The second example was Poynton in Cheshire East. Swift described the place as having been a traffic engineers dream: a main junction with long traffic queues backed up. The town centre had a good occupancy rate, but it was 'not a nice place'. Poynton was now a shared space village in which design and civility had come together.

As part of the process traffic engineers from outside the locality had been brought in to talk to the local traffic engineers: to bring them on board with the proposals. The outcome was something that shop keepers and homeowners alike all loved.

The third example was Altrincham, where it had been important to recognise that: the town centre was not the Trafford Centre; there were questions with respect to car parking facilities; and there was a range of cause for decline in the town. By contrast, Hale was only a mile away but it had no vacancies and no problems!

A vision was created with four key ingredients: extending the evening economy; creating a boutique retail offer, the Big Box Park development; and supporting Altrincham's workforce. Each key ingredient was based on successful examples from other parts of the country focusing on what it was that had made the ingredient in question work so well in each cited example.

The vision recognised that Altrincham already had an historic market and historic buildings of merit. The town was an established leisure and cultural destination with a coffee culture. However, high street repair would require public and private partnership and joint venture agreements. The old listed hospital building was to be given to developers, for example.

The first step was to identify key streets and use social media questionnaires as a basis for a SWOT analysis. From this action plans were developed identifying what to bring back and which buildings to refurbish etc. Market Street was one key street and was described as the home of old bollards – the place where Broxap bollards went to die. Market Street also suffered from visual clutter in terms of signage and barriers. Key spaces were identified too and their strengths and weaknesses highlighted.

Swift explained that overall the aim was to create a new badge for Altrincham town centre: to make it 'a modern market town'.

The morning programme finished with a question and answer session. The chair identified some key points that had been identified during the morning including: the fact that Portas Review had made no reference to heritage; by contrast, it had been identified that the private sector appreciated listed buildings; and the point that public money was running out had also been made. The question was how to create a climate of vitality and confidence for investment, as had been achieved in Cockermouth.

In the discussion it was suggested that good consultants went back to talk to communities and this was good practice. It was also suggested that local policy was only 'the stick', whereas the carrot was also important: funding was needed and influence and/or persuasion was vital. It was pointed out, however, that shop managers would do what was commercial, so they would only be persuaded to adopt ideas if they could be shown to work and if they were not expensive.

After lunch there were three walking tours on the theme of high streets in action: giving delegates the opportunity to look at the issues in relation to specific locations in Liverpool city centre. One tour went to Liverpool One, which was the largest example of 'mega-retail-led regeneration' in any European city centre, when it was under construction. The tour focussed on urban design issues in large scale redevelopment, re-using abandoned street patterns and new building design alongside existing listed buildings. A second tour went to Bold Street, which had long been the city's home to specialist niche retail traders, for delegates to see how this aspect of 'the high street' was faring in the current economic climate. The third tour focussed on Renshaw Street and Lime Street. Delegates had heard how city centres tend to be continually evolving, but with the development of Liverpool One close to the river-front, the Renshaw Street-Lime Street axis had found itself on the inland periphery of the retail centre. So this tour gave delegates the opportunity to see how such areas could adapt to the dynamics of the changing city centre.

The second half of the afternoon began with the IHBC NW Conservation 2012 Awards Presentation. This year's winner was the Florence Institute in Liverpool (aka the Florrie). The Florrie had been a local landmark and a former boys club. After closure, dereliction and a fire it had been restored and now served as a community hub and social centre. A team including Friends of the Florrie, the architects and the Local Authority's Buildings at Risk Officer attended the presentation and received the awards on behalf of the community. (For photographs showing the work, please see the presentation.)

The final part of the afternoon was dedicated to 'practicalities'. The first speaker in the session was Ged Gilbert: the Chief Executive of City Central Business Improvement District (BID) and the Commercial District BID (both in Liverpool). Gilbert's presentation focused on the City Central BID. He set the scene by saying that the city had suffered extensive damage in World War II, but that in recent times it had re-invented itself.

Heritage was integral to the Liverpool brand, with the two Premier league football clubs and the Beatles taking centre stage. Within the city there were many important buildings and landmarks including: the Anglican cathedral, the Roman Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King; the Chinese Arch; and St George's Hall and plateau. The launch of the 2008 European Capital of Culture had taken place on St George's plateau and in September of that year on an adjacent site outside Lime Street Station a fifty foot high green spider called la Princess, designed by la Machine, had first appeared before promenading through the city's streets.

The city's riverside Arena Convention Centre had given Liverpool a music venue and conference centre. The city had needed a music venue and since it had opened top stars wanted to play there, Gilbert said. The city centre was home to the annual Matthew Street Festival and the Town Hall also hosted civic events.

Gilbert referred to the Main Retail Area (MRA) and the Strategic Investment Framework. Liverpool One was cited as an MRA 'recent scheme'. The scheme involved £1bn of private sector investment in a 1.6 million square feet mixed use development which incorporated: retail space, including three anchor stores; leisure space, including three hotels, a multiplex cinema and an urban park; 465 residential units; a new bus station; and it had created 5,000 new jobs.

Gilbert said that Liverpool was now fifth in the national retail league tables. Delegates on the Liverpool One walking tour had been told earlier that in 2000 the city had been "in 17th position and dropping!" According to Gilbert Liverpool One was complementary to the pre-existing retail core, rather than being in competition with it.

Liverpool also had a vibrant cultural and visitor economy, generating £2.6bn a year, which meant it ranked third in country - behind London and Edinburgh. This was something that could not have said before.

2012 was the centenary of the Titanic disaster. Even though the liner had never sailed to Liverpool, the headquarters of the White Star Line had been based in the city at the time and hence the Titanic was registered in Liverpool. To mark the occasion, in 2012 Liverpool commissioned the 'Odyssey of the Giants' by Royal de Luxe, to tell the story of a little girl's missing uncle, using giant marionettes of a little girl and a diver that paraded through the city's streets.

Paul McCartney had recently performed at Anfield football stadium, making use of another iconic Liverpool venue since the Arena was too small for this particular event. The city's night time economy was another important dimension of the local economy, with bars and restaurants to be found in the Cavern Quarter and the Ropewalks area. The city had earned a purple flag award and been dubbed "Britain's best nightlife destination" (Trip Advisor) and "UK's friendliest city" (Conde Nast Traveller).

This all underlined the fact that Liverpool was now a major destination in terms of its retail offer, its cultural and visitor economy and its night time economy.

The City Central BID was about many things. The mission statement highlighted the importance improving the environment and its objectives to keep it safe and clean. The BID was about partnerships and working with key agencies to achieve its objectives. The BID was about events, animations and the use of public space and these initiatives were attracting large amounts of sponsorship. The BID name was not used for branding, instead a strap line was employed: "City Central: the heart beat of Liverpool."

Gilbert finished by citing some successes: in improving public perception and rising footfall in the retail area. The city centre annual perception survey had shown a significant improvement in public perception, in the six years leading up and including 2011, regarding: street cleanliness and feelings of safety (both in the daytime and the evening). Monthly footfall figure were available for the main retailing area for the period of 2007 – 2011 inclusive, with January figures tending to be in the region of 4 million and rising during the course of each year to reach between 5 and 7 million in December of any given year.

Liverpool's economic growth (in Gross Value Added (GVA) per head) had been healthy too: rising from around £11,500 in 1999 to just above £20,000 in 2008. By comparison GVA per head in the UK had gone from being £1,500 per head higher in 1999 to being £2,000 per head higher in 2008, than in Liverpool, whereas the Liverpool figures had risen faster than the figures for the 'wider Liverpool' region during the period, growing from being about £1,500 per head above the latter in 1999 to being around £2,000 per head above them in 2008. Liverpool's GVA per head had overtaken the North West figures too over this period: GVA for the North West had grown from around £12,000 per head in 1999 to about £18,000 per head in 2008. (To see these on a chart please see Gilbert's presentation.)

To continue on this path of economic growth partnership was important and getting firms to buy in was crucial; it was also about delivering the 2012 business plan and facing the challenges to come. Although the presentation was not specific to heritage and the high street, it did attempt to address a wide range of challenges currently facing city centre retail cores, through the vehicle of a case study of Liverpool Central.

The final speaker was Kelvin Reynolds, Director of Policy and Public Affairs at the British Parking Association (BPA). Reynolds proudly introduced himself as a traffic engineer, in

reference to comments made by some speakers in the morning, about the work of his profession. He gave delegates a brief synopsis of his career and an introduction to the BPA.

Reynolds presentation was called: *People, Places and Parking!* He began by looking at the issue of parking charges and who was saying what. He provided two quotes from the Portas Review: *"Local areas should implement free controlled parking schemes that work for their town centres and we should have a new parking league table."* and *"Cars are an intrinsic part of the way many people shop and so many of our high streets aren't catering for our 21st century shoppers."*

In Reynold's view there was no such thing as a free parking space: someone was always paying for it. The question was who would be paying for these so called free parking spaces that Portas was advocating: Council Taxpayers, Business Ratepayers or landowners? Why should the person using the service not be the one who paid?

Parking is for people, Reynolds explained, and he outlined his thinking. If parking provision was designed with people in mind it would work, but if it was designed with cars mind it would not work. These ideas were based the principles that it was people who drove cars and that every journey was different. As a result, in just the same way as people were unique, so was parking.

Reynolds probed a little deeper by asking whether or not people thought parking should be free. He suggested that if we thought it should be, then we would need to decide the criteria under which we thought it should be free. Should parking be free for everyone, for example, and should it be free for parking everywhere? Alternatively, should there be specific criteria for free parking, for example? Should free parking only apply to disabled drivers, motor cycles, and/or green vehicles? If so, would free parking apply to one or all three? Should free parking apply to any other people, vehicle types or circumstances? What had seemed like a simple question had quickly become very complicated. As a throw-away line Reynold's cited the statistic that 94% of parking outside the home was free anyway.

The next issue to be put under the microscope was parking league tables, which had been mentioned in the first quote (from Portas). The notion of parking league tables raised questions like: what would they achieve and how would they work? Would people drive to a town where parking was cheaper, for example? What would league tables measure? Would they tell us how good a car park was or how safe it was? Surely these latter points referred to what was really important about parking.

These questions led Reynolds onto the idea of the 'parking paradox'. This paradox states that since everyone hates congestion and since everyone hates delays to their journeys, why do people hate parking control and management? The suggestion here was that people cannot have it all.

Parking is simply a means to an end; it is not an end in itself. The quality of car parking provision in a place is important to drivers, when they are there. Logically, this leads to the question of regulation. Regulating parking is not about regulation for its own sake: it is about making the best use of available space; and managing car parking is about avoiding congestion.

Reynolds cited the example of Aberystwyth, which he dubbed the Aberystwyth debacle, in which parking wardens were phased out for a number of years – resulting in business leaders complaining about parking problems in the town. This example underlined the need for regulation. Reynolds also pointed out that it was easy to avoid receiving parking tickets: drivers just had to make sure they did not park where they were not supposed to and make sure they paid when they had to.   Only 10% of drivers received parking tickets, he said, but

they kept complaining. It was an example of how you can please some of the people some of the time, but you cannot please all the people all the tie, he said.

The BPA believed in putting customers at the heart of parking. Reynolds put up a slide headed: Can't Pay? Won't Pay! He wanted to focus people's minds on what the real problems might be, in a given car park.

Under the question 'Can't pay?' the following examples were cited: no change; no card; no phone; and instructions - i.e., was it clearly explained what to pay and where and how to pay it? The point was that car parking managers needed to make it easy for people to pay.

Under the heading 'Won't pay!' the following issues were considered: avoiding paying and why should people pay? The issue of avoiding paying raised the question of whether this was deliberate theft or stealing or whether it was it just an example of taking a chance. In terms of whether people should pay, two scenarios were given: why should someone pay to park at a hospital and why should they pay to park at University? In an attempt to answer the first of these questions the example was given of Scottish hospitals where parking had been free. This had caused chaos, Reynolds explained, with car parks being full of health worker's cars. Free parking near shops was a similar situation. Where this was the case, the car parks ended up being full of shop worker's cars and in some cases commuters' cars too. These examples showed why there was a need to manage parking.

So managing parking was about ensuring quality and availability; but it was also about safety. Currently there were about 5,000 car parks in the UK with safe parking awards - "Park Mark" for example. In total there were approximately 50,000 car parks in the UK: so the issue of safety was still a work in progress.

Reynolds ended his presentation with a nursery rhyme aimed at the Portas Review: *Mary Mary quite contrary, how does your high street grow? With decent shops and fine backdrops and all the cars parked in a row!* Certainly parking was an important question in the future of our high streets, but there was not always an easy answer in terms of providing the right levels of quality, safety and availability.

The chair summarised the day by saying that heritage mattered to the future of the high street, but it was not being fully realised. The days of big public funding have gone. He thought that eventually that would change, but until then we faced difficult times. On the positive side, though, difficult times could lead to new ways of thinking.

With that in mind, the chair ended the day with a quote normally attributed to Sir Ernest Rutherford, the famous New Zealand physicist: "We have run out of money. It's time to start thinking."

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