

How Glasgow's media quarter could win the city an international audience

To an outsider familiar with large-scale regeneration projects, the Pacific Quay glass appears half full. That person would likely perceive an area with the potential to become a waterfront of high quality and a major activity zone within the city – akin to London's Docklands and South Bank, New York's Battery Park, Helsinki's Arabianranta, and even Mediacity at Salford Quays.

Each of these high-quality in-city developments arose from the blight of deserted shipyards, dilapidated docks and empty, deteriorating warehouses. Even midway through the development process, none could assure success. Conscious and concerted effort, however, carried them over the five to 15 years of development.

A significant amount has already been achieved in the Digital Media Quarter (DMQ) and its environs on Pacific Quay, Glasgow. BBC and STV are located on the site along with a range of other broadcast and media businesses, the Science Centre and academic faculties including Glasgow

A coordinated and collaborative approach is needed to drive forward Glasgow's Digital Media Quarter, says Danny Meaney

School of Art's Digital Design Studio, while Film City Glasgow, a hugely successful initiative, sits adjacent to the DMQ. The land preparation is largely complete, as are the bridges and streets. The northern bank of the river hosts a convention centre and music venue (the SECC), the Riverside Museum (the UK's first building designed by Zaha Hadid), and the new Foster designed National Arena will open there by 2014, the year that this area will host many activities of the Commonwealth Games.

As a result of our study the geographic boundary of the Digital Media Quarter (DMQ) at Pacific Quay will be redrawn to include the north bank as well as the south bank of the River Clyde. Set in a UK context, this is a critical development as scale is an important element of cluster development in the creative and digital industries. By adopting the wider definition of 'media' to include applications outside the entertainment sector and by including the north bank of the river, then Glasgow has a much better chance of



achieving scale in activity and depth of talent and thereby being noticed and taken seriously by key decision makers in industry and in policy development.

Moving into the future is about building on the physical assets and human capital that are already here and giving Pacific Quay that push off the tipping point at which it now stands to achieve its true potential.

A coordinated series of actions are now required for Pacific Quay to capitalise on the momentum and goodwill observed during this study. In the report, we build our recommendations around the delivery of a number of interwoven and complex action areas:

- ◆ Policies are required to support the cluster development over five to ten years to bring it to maturity
- ◆ Land use, information and



If we cut public spending we'll be going against the advice of leading economists, finds **Clare Goff**

Amid the uncertainty of the coming year one thing seems guaranteed: public spending will be cut. How deep and wide the cuts will be depends on who takes up the reins after the general election, but the consensus is the current level of public sector debt is unsustainable.

A growing number of economists, however, argue cuts to public spending are not only unnecessary but dangerous.

Ann Pettifor is one of them. The force behind the Jubilee 2000 campaign to end developing world debt, she predicted the credit crunch.

While politicians of all hues testify to the dire state of our public finances, she argues that, at around 60% of GDP, our current level of debt is far lower than it has been.

'After the Second World War government debt rocketed to 250% of GDP,' she points out.

Far from leading to a tightening of purse strings, public spend rose during the post-war period. In 1945 Labour built the NHS and poured money into housing and education. As it spent, so public debt began to fall.

'The only way that debt will be brought down is economic recovery, which can be generated by public spend,' she says. 'If a man is employed earning £25,000 the government gets revenue from him. If he is unemployed he costs a great deal.'

Cutting spending when the economy is so fragile risks leading the UK into a prolonged depression, she argues.

Will Hutton, executive vice-chair of the Work Foundation, is similarly scathing about the obsession with cuts. 'Too much ground is given to the budget deficit. This is poison,' he said during a speech at last month's Core Cities event.

Public debt will peak next year, he says, but, while acknowledging the need for lower debt levels, he argues this should not be prioritised before more urgent needs.

Both Mr Hutton and Ms Pettifor argue the focus on cuts is diverting attention from more pressing issues, specifically climate change and growing unemployment. They want to see the downturn turned into an opportunity to restructure finance and rebuild our economies.



communication and facility development plans need to be coordinated

- ◆ Excess space must be used effectively in major sites, coupled with provision of new low-cost accommodation in the short term and market-driven development as the economy picks up

- ◆ Organisations within the cluster need to be transformed and re-energised to align their business models with 21st century digital media and the cluster must work as a living laboratory

- ◆ The supply chain should be built from the bottom up through business networks and innovation forums

- ◆ Training, education and learning programmes should be used to build the talent pool

Above all, Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow's civic leadership need

to affirm the value of the cluster for the Scottish economy and the important contribution of the area's physical development for the city's overall rejuvenation; and express this sentiment in policy and investment priorities.

No one organisation can make the cluster successful, rather its success depends on many active partnerships. Therefore a single agency needs to have the clear mandate and authority to move this project forward, working in conjunction with a wide array of government, private and institutional partners.

A dedicated staff is required to facilitate these partnerships, to champion the project on a day-to-day basis over several years, and to enable all who can contribute to the cluster's success to make their contribution in collaboration with others.

Glasgow's revamped quayside – a chance to restore the creative reputation of the city

DMQ has high promise for success because it builds upon considerable accomplishments of the past decade. The area has already begun to emerge as a significant innovator of media content and technology and in some respects is further advanced than Mediacity, which is still under construction.

On this basis, we believe Pacific Quay can become a key node in the UK's media network that looks outward to the world and restores pride in the area as a place where creativity, innovation and the innate skill of making things can once again position Scotland on an international stage.

- ◆ Danny Meaney is managing director and founder of digital media and technology consultancy firm New Media Partners.

'Future prosperity lies in our ability to adapt to the demands of the knowledge economy... building the infrastructure to research, develop and market new technologies and boost skills.'

The former is calling for the creation of a national innovation system to help the UK adapt to the needs of a knowledge-intensive economy. Preliminary findings of a report on the knowledge economy to be released by the Work Foundation next month show 85% of job losses during the last year were from unskilled manual labour, compared to 7% from knowledge-based jobs. Predicting that employment will not have returned to 2008 levels even by 2016, he says aggressive spending cuts could prolong unemployment even further.

Future prosperity lies in our ability to adapt to the demands of the knowledge economy, he says, including building the infrastructure to research, develop and market new technologies and boost skills.

'Get it right and we will have a 30-40 year renaissance. Get it wrong and we'll be flat on our backs,' he warns. 'We need to develop the growth story.'

Ms Pettifor also argues the length of the recession will depend on the path we now choose to take. The

downturn should be used as an opportunity to halt the 'financialisation' of our economy and invest instead in its decarbonisation.

She is co-author of the *Green New Deal*, which urges investment in low carbon infrastructure to create jobs, generate revenue and kick-start the economy.

The recent green shoots of growth in the economy have seen a return to business as usual and to the values that created the crash, including the 'venality of the financial sector'. She calls it a 'phoney period' which cannot last long. As politicians focus on spending cuts and reinstating finance and consumerism, the redundancy of current ways of working is becoming increasingly apparent.

'I know what can happen when whole populations are gripped by ideology,' she says, having grown up during South Africa's apartheid era.

Today's economic orthodoxy has, she says, a similar grip on the power brokers of the world. Consensus is growing, however, that its days are numbered.