



REGENERATING LONDON –EXAMPLES FOR MAJOR CITIES

26th Annual Conference held on 23rd–24th September 2008
at Beaumont House, Burfield Road, Old Windsor, Berkshire

SUMMARY

To maintain its reputation as a world-class city, attracting both visitors and foreign relocations, London requires continuous investment in its image, infrastructure, property and public realm.

With substantial investment planned over the next 10–20 years, the Annual Conference examined the many challenges involved in regenerating London, and looked at the lessons for major projects. Chaired by Sir Robert Walmsley KCB, Chairman of MPA, presentations covered the recent history and context of London, a planner's vision, security and societal concerns and the legacy of the London 2012 Games.

The problems and resultant solutions involved in London's regeneration could apply in equal measure to any project or programme, and the conference provided a forum in which MPA members could share experience, knowledge and ideas to improve the delivery of future major projects.

The keynote speaker on the opening evening of the conference was Steven Norris, former Minister of Transport, and candidate for Mayor of London in 2000 and 2004. Steven provided an insight into the challenge of regenerating London, reminding the conference of the extraordinary inequality that exists in the city.

Parts of the city are extremely wealthy, London has the highest rate of unemployment in the UK. Six of the ten poorest boroughs in Britain exist in East London: three are involved in the London 2012 Games project and three are adjacent to the area.

The forthcoming Games are crucial for the transformation of East London and will provide a mechanism for regeneration. The money allocated is not just to deliver a spectacular sporting event, but to decontaminate a previously desolate area, to renew the physical infrastructure, and lay the foundations of a platform on which to start the serious work of regeneration in the years following 2012.

However, the challenges presented by regeneration must not be underestimated. For instance, there is a massive demand for people with the skills needed to deliver projects such as upgrading the London Underground and delivering the East London Line Phase 2, Thameslink 2000 and Crossrail – projects to which London is committed and which represent a huge volume of work. It was noted that in parts of London there are people with few job opportunities who could be given the necessary skills to develop a career.

Steven Norris concluded his speech by stressing the importance of a regenerated London, and the role of the civil engineering profession in bringing this about.

The first presentation on day two of the conference on behalf of the LSE's 'Greater London Group', provided an overview of the historical importance of London's major infrastructure projects from the Roman period to the present day.

Some big projects, such as London's 19th century sewerage system, only came into being after the city had grown, while others, such as the railway system, subsequently allowed London to develop and change. In the last half of the 20th century a number of infrastructure milestones, including the delivery of the Victoria Line (1967), the M25 (1986) and Docklands Light Railway (from 1982) brought about rapid subsequent growth.

However, it was noted that successive governments from 1945 onwards failed to maintain and reinvest in the existing inherited infrastructure, particularly the London Underground, the commuter railway system and roads.

There is no question that London, in common with other big cities around the world, will need major projects to secure its future, and the presentation went on to consider what might be done to achieve this. Current plans are tilted towards transport, with projects such as Thameslink and Crossrail and the long-term renovation and renewal of the London Underground.

There is a pressing need for renewed and extended infrastructure and, given the history and density of London, there are complex planning and funding issues which represent obstacles to virtually all proposed major projects. These obstacles were summarised as follows:

- Despite all the efforts of politicians the planning system process remains slow.
- Public resources are hard won, partly because Britain has such a centralised public finance system.
- Government can be committed to individual projects, but Ministers move on in their careers and circumstances change, so long-term commitment to projects on a national scale in London is difficult.
- The UK's centralised system of government means there is competition for money from all parts of the country.
- London itself may be rich, but has virtually no capacity to pay for its major projects; a supplementary business rate would be the new way of doing so.
- The short-term economic uncertainty is itself an obstacle to planning new major projects.

Following a brief overview of its UK business, the presentation from Westfield Shoppingtowns explained how their major development at Stratford City is set to deliver an inheritance before the London 2012 Games.

Located on a 40 acre triangle of land within the Stratford City Masterplan, (see diagram below), the Westfield project is a mixed use city centre development that includes retail, leisure and entertainment facilities, together with offices, hotels and residential apartments.

STRATFORD CITY MASTER PLAN



1	Westfield Stratford City
2	Office/Residential
3	Commercial/Hotel
4	Olympic Village
5	Olympic Village
6	Education
7	Environmental
8	Velodrome
9	Aquatic Centre
10	Olympic Stadium

Some of the factors affecting the legacy from an investment point of view were outlined, such as accessibility, large scale initial investment and continual reinvestment, and it was explained that Stratford and its surrounds ‘ticks all these boxes’. For instance, new and improved transport infrastructure will make Stratford City one of the best connected places in the UK.

Westfield’s approach to sustainability was discussed, and performance targets for Stratford City outlined in terms of energy, environmental building design, waste and water. Targets include:

- Reduce carbon emissions by 25% at initial stage, 50% by 2020 and up to 80% by 2050
- A combined cooling heating and power (CCHP) plant to supply 75% of the annual electrical power consumption
- Design, construction and occupation – materials and techniques for low environmental impact
- Minimise the quantity of construction waste produced and sent offsite
- Meet municipal waste targets (recycling target of 30% by 2010 and 33% by 2015)
- Conserve water by limiting consumption, using site-based supply, drainage systems
- Design the water systems to enable a reduction of 30% of the water consumption in residential buildings and 20% in commercial buildings

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Managing and mitigating risk in the Olympic environment is a major challenge: for example, with 750 acres being developed over the next few years there will inevitably be problems with coordination, interfacing and legal arrangements between the parties involved. Lastly, some of the challenges involved in operating the development while the London 2012 Games are in progress were discussed.

WHAT BUSINESS NEEDS FOR LONDON TO BE COMPETITIVE

The UK faces mounting international competition and, as its capital city, London is competing with global cities such as New York, Shanghai and Dubai. London's importance as a global financial centre and the challenges faced in maintaining its competitiveness were discussed by [London First](#).

London contains 12% of the UK population, creates 18% of the GDP and 24% of the total exports, and a successful London is vital to the health of the UK economy. National and local policies must support London's global competitiveness, so that the city maintains its reputation as the best place in which to do business. It is also important that European governments respond well together. To achieve this, good governance at all levels is essential, particularly in areas such as tax and regulation, climate change, fiscal devolution, London governance and planning.

National and London government must also focus on strategic investment in infrastructure, to provide employment and economic activity in the current economic downturn, and to keep the economy moving when the economic climate improves. Transport infrastructure projects such as the Crossrail scheme and improvements to the Underground are key, as is the need for strategic management of London's roads and improvements to London's airports.

Measures to ensure that London's workforce remains appropriately skilled and that unemployment is significantly reduced are an essential part of maintaining London's competitive edge. For example, London First is working with the London Skills and Employment Board to ensure that public training agencies are working to a common agenda and are providing the right training to get individuals into jobs.

Other London First initiatives relate to working with relevant organisations to make London a clean and safe place in which to work and do business. For example, London First is piloting four business studies to see how policing should be tailored to business neighbourhoods.

The presentation concluded with an overview of the London 2012 Olympic Games and some of the opportunities they present, such as improving construction skills through the creation of apprenticeships and the provision of much needed local employment. Reinforcing what other speakers had said during the day, it was noted that in order for the Games to be more than just a successful sporting event, there must be a clear vision of the long-term legacy that will follow on after 2012.

Through the presentations and the group and open discussion sessions, the conference reinforced the range, complexity and interdependency of the challenges facing those involved in London's future and its regeneration.

The necessary resources to ensure success stretch across all sectors and involve engagement with many different stakeholders across the Greater London area. Where the public sector is involved, the Chairman noted that one of the lessons to emerge in carrying a project forward is the importance of linking the commitment of key staff with political leadership.



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