

TALKIN' 'BOUT RE

In a lofty show apartment at Battersea Power Station, experts described the challenges of regeneration and celebrated a man whose vision for urban development 40 years ago continues to play out today. By Alex Horne. Photographs by Dan Burman

As meeting places go, Battersea Power Station could hardly have been more fitting. After taking in sweeping views across the Thames from the terrace, Rob Tincknell, chief executive of the Battersea Power Station Development Company; Richard Beckingsale, regeneration director at Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co; Jackie Sadek, chief executive of UK Regeneration and policy adviser to cities minister Greg Clark; Dominic Grace, head of London residential development at Savills; and Glenn Howells, director at Glenn Howells Architects, exchanged thoughts on Lord Heseltine's approach to urban development, infused with their own experiences in delivering some of the UK's biggest schemes. In the background, one of the iconic chimneys of the power station was being rebuilt, serving as

the perfect metaphor for the discussion, mediated by *Estates Gazette* editor Damian Wild.

Leadership

The round table was prompted by a speech given by Lord Heseltine a week earlier on the future of regeneration at the inaugural *Estates Gazette* Peter Wilson lecture on 25 February (7 March, p144).

A recurring theme was leadership, and Heseltine, with his "passion and downright bloody-mindedness", was the model leader, said Grace.

"He is also a huge property animal and I think it's very important that the politicians of the next generation understand property because those who don't get found out," he added.

But not everyone agreed that the leadership had to come from Whitehall. Tincknell said: "In the early days it was leadership in the private sector that made Nine



Elms happen. I spent three years running around to ministers lobbying for a Northern Line extension just to have people laugh at me, literally," he said.

One person was on his side, however: London mayor Boris Johnson. Most of the panel felt he was a good example of the type of leadership necessary for the future, given Heseltine's long-standing push for a mayoral system. Howells said Johnson provided "the umbrella of leadership needed to create the can-do culture that gets things done".

However, they didn't all agree Johnson had achieved his full potential. Grace said: "The incoming mayor will need to take a more radical US-style, or Manchester City-style approach rather than just nudging the tiller. The powers

are there, such as CPOs, but we need someone who is going to use them to deliver."

Long-term thinking

One thing Heseltine and Johnson have shown in government is a clarity of vision and long-term thinking, something members of the panel felt the industry could use more of.

"Heseltine's involvement in the schemes he championed was long term and spanned across electoral cycles but he was fortunate to be in his career during a politically stable period," said Howell.

Tincknell agreed, saying: "One of the biggest problems for getting projects completed is the electoral cycle." And he added: "The best schemes come when people sit together for a long time with no year-end triggers."

GENERATION



But not all developers can work on a long-term basis and it would be impossible to implement a one-party system, such as Manchester has with its Labour stronghold, across the country.

However, local enterprise partnerships could be a solution. Howell said: "LEPs can be a platform for consistency. It would be an absolute folly if they were changed now."

Owing to the momentum of LEPs, their future seems to be secure regardless of the outcome of the election. However they had a long way to go, observed Beckingsale. He said: "As an industry we seem to have moved away from Heseltine's City Challenge model. With LEPs we're returning to that but we've yet to actually see them come to the fore."

Competition

The City Challenge was a process in which local authorities would bid for central money, and was one of the pillars of Lord Heseltine's model for driving regeneration.

The consensus of the panel was that this model was essential for getting the best out of local authorities and the private sector.

"A competitive process leads to better bids and sharper programmes," Sadek said. "Even I worked on a couple of schemes where we didn't get the money but we still went ahead and did the projects anyway. It's the ultimate private sector leverage."

The current move towards localism and devolution should further stimulate competition, and with

more freedom authorities will be able to make bolder decisions and, in Sadek's words, "stop being supplicant".

Beckingsale, currently working on the 192-acre regeneration of Brent Cross South, NW4, said if councils were more autonomous they would be more willing and able to leverage their powers.

"If you are willing to defer your capital receipts as a local authority you can share in the gains and justify a seat at the table. From then they could say, 'If you want us to use CPO powers we want to see a return', but many have struggled with this," he said.

The panel all agreed that, though some places would do better than others, the march of localism was unstoppable.

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EG REGENERATION ROUND TABLE

WHEN: 3 MARCH
WHERE: BATTERSEA
POWER STATION, SW8



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BATTERSEA
POWER STATION
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