

Top 100, 2008

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PLAN FOR OPPORTUNITIES:
Michael Tallett-Williams,
chairman and MD Lincoln
Financial Group

City businesses need to 'play an active role'

Michael Tallett-Williams is managing director of Lincoln Financial and also chairs the bi-monthly Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company Business Forum. Here he explains why it is vital for the city's existing businesses to play an active part

"THE Business Forum provides opportunities for the business community to help shape the city's regeneration, ensuring the interests of all the main industrial and commercial sectors are represented, and helping the GHURC achieve its objectives.

There are around 20 active members and we keep membership under review so that it remains representative of businesses within the GHURC area.

The economic prospect for the next few years will be tough with the credit crunch having an impact for some time. While dealing with this, we must also plan for the opportunities that the GHURC will bring to the city.

It would be all too easy to keep our heads down and not contribute to the regeneration and the proposed changes, but this would be a very big missed opportunity.

Business in the city has to continue to happen throughout the regeneration and where possible it is essential that steps are taken to protect existing businesses and work with them through this period of time.

As some of the Magnificent Seven sites leading the city's regeneration start to become a reality, we want existing businesses to join in and contribute to the growth we expect to be delivered.

While not specifically part of the GHURC agenda, in my view there is also a big risk that Gloucester may end up without a main line station with regular services that is essential to business. The current debate about possible new stations and their proposed location sometimes appears to ignore this risk. Personally, I think that the issue of location should be a second priority to providing a good, regular service.

The GHURC must also help to achieve the balance between developments at Gloucester Quays and the regeneration across the rest of the City centre.

Gloucester Quays will regenerate an under-utilised part of the City and create new jobs

and businesses.

It will attract many visitors who should be encouraged to enjoy the rest of what the city has to offer.

Our job in the business forum is to help set out the steps that need to be taken to get the longer term benefit.

Business should help the community hold the GHURC to account for delivering an overall programme that produces a real change for the people of Gloucester. Just building new shops, offices and houses will not be good enough."

■ The GHURC Business Forum is seeking more representation from the city's leisure and retail sectors.

Find out more about the regeneration by visiting www.gloucesterurc.co.uk or call 01452 782990 to find out more about becoming involved in the GHURC Business Forum.

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