



Bristol Property Agents
ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER

www.bpaa.net

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Glass Wharf Temple Quay

THE BPAA GOES PLATINUM

Chris Grazier became only the second BPAA President to serve for two terms this year – the first was St John Hartnell. Chris is a Partner, specialising in Office Agency at Hartnell Taylor Cook

I joined HTC in 1996, my arrival coinciding neatly with the 50th anniversary of the BPAA; and reading the celebration feature in Estates Gazette was the inspiration behind putting together this document to mark our 75th (or platinum) anniversary.

Reading through that 1996 review provides a fascinating snapshot of the concerns and aspirations at the time, along with a reminder of the post-war roots of the Association – described inside by one of the Bristol's property stalwarts, Bob Durie. It also looked ahead at some of the big schemes about to impact on Bristol... including Harbourside, Cribbs Causeway, Severnside and Emersons Green.

This document, I hope, will provide anyone reading it in 2046 with similar insights into a city that has moved a long way in the last 25 years and an organisation facing up to challenges scarcely on the horizon in 1996... such as climate change, diversity, changing working practices and a fundamental shift in our purchasing habits.

How far has the BPAA moved on from 1996? Influencing the planning process was of huge concern at the time, and it's clear that work was underway to put the relationship with the City Council on a less confrontational footing. As you'll read on these pages, while there is still much to be done, we have made major strides since then – not least extending our work with other local authorities in the city region.

The agency scene has also evolved in line with other professional disciplines. Then the commercial market in particular was dominated by Bristol-based firms who did all of the front-end work for many of the big national companies. There were some large characters with strong contacts and a lot of personal influence on the city and control on how it developed.

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Newsletter edition

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Making Bristol succeed

Within ten years, all the national agencies had opened offices in Bristol, or taken over local firms, and fundamentally changed the landscape – not least by introducing a broader perspective. But the BPAA has assimilated their representatives and ensured that all of the agents from all of the agencies, as well as looking after their clients' specific requirements, have a genuine interest in seeing Bristol succeed. While it might have led to the demise of some long-standing names, having these agencies in the city has undoubtedly opened us up to more international investment. UK pension funds do still have a massive influence across the city: you only have to look at how involved L&G now is – and how much they believe in the city. They, and some other big players, are in it for the long term and looking to contribute to the social fabric of the city they are investing in.

Managing good growth

The city has also benefited from the huge growth in professional services, and the decision by many firms to make Bristol their regional base. The exponential growth in the technology, creative and media sector, along with the continuing expansion of our Universities, has also attracted a flow of talented people to the city, gentrifying some unlikely parts of the city along the way and boosting our leisure offer.

For these, and a variety of other reasons, investors now talk about Bristol in the same context as Manchester or Birmingham: we are on a different scale but we can deliver great investments for them.

The perception of what is achievable in the city has evolved too, and it has become a virtuous circle: people have more confidence to invest, the city keeps on improving, their investment is returned and they have the confidence to keep on investing. In his article, James Durie talks about "good growth", and that is something we all passionately believe in.

What's more, Bristol still has its own identity. When you talk to employers, especially those employing young tech-types, the edginess of Bristol really appeals, and we win far more than our fair share of inward investors.

My own firm has been running annual tours around the city for 25 years... showing developers, investors and fund managers the bigger picture. These days there are now far more London-based fund managers on the tours, looking after global interests. I don't think that it's just me getting older, but the people on that bus have definitely got younger... they are the next generation of fund manager and more attuned to what Bristol now has to offer in terms of lifestyle and culture.

A hybrid future

Some changes to the city have occurred because of shifts in public policy. PDR – the Government's response to the national housing crisis – hit Bristol around five years ago, taking out 10% of the office stock almost overnight. As well as removing a tier of property that had been having a corrosive effect on all of the other buildings, it has helped take us further away from being the zoned city left to us by the post-war planners. Swathes of the city now operate 16 hours a day rather than just eight, following on from when many largely redundant offices were converted into student accommodation at the end of the 90s and helped kickstart the area around Queen Square. Next on the agenda is bringing our retail zones into that mix.

In workspace, we're now experiencing the next wave of change: tenants taking less space because of hybrid working but demanding better quality space with more amenities. That is making a huge difference and will lead to the continued upgrading of stock. Looking forward, ESG is now the big driver from occupiers and investors... not just a building's green credentials, but embracing wellbeing too – another concern not remotely in view in 1996.

The challenges ahead

But, as the other articles make clear, as far as we have travelled in making Bristol a prime location to live and work, we still face big challenges... the urgent need for a mass transit system; a continuing housing crisis; the threat to employment land; the impact of climate change... and these things cannot be done in isolation from our neighbouring local authorities.

Another odd coincidence is that 1996 also marked the end of the old Avon County Council and the creation of the four local authorities we have today. While it had been much maligned in its short lifetime, Avon had viewed Bristol for what it was: an interdependent city region. We now have WECA trying to stitch together strategic plans against the inevitable backdrop of each authority having its own priorities and political agenda.

There is a big role for the BPAA in pressing them, as well as the individual local authorities, to deliver solutions. The route forward is by presenting ourselves as impartial experts and helping inform the decision-making process, working with allies such as Business West. I'm proud to say that the BPAA does have a seat at the table and is making its voice heard.

In 1946, collaboration between agents was seen as the key to survival. Some 75 years on and collaboration is still the principal dynamic of the BPAA... but now our focus is on making the city the very best place it can be for all of its citizens.

A LIFETIME IN PROPERTY



Bob Durie OBE is now in his seventh decade in property and continues to run his own consultancy, Duries. He was BPAA President in 1998/99. Here he talks about starting his career in property, the early days of the BPAA and its role in representing business interests in the city.

Agents today might wonder about that, but the enamelled metal signs we had then were hugely expensive to put up. Just after the war there were probably around 500 houses or flats on the market at any one time, and as well as being expensive, it looked terrible in some parts of the city where there are lots of flats. If there are constantly hundreds of boards up, not only does it look awful, but people say, "What's wrong with that road, then?"

Come what may, if you were part of the Association, you wouldn't put a board up on any properties. Of course, it also meant that anyone looking to buy had to go to the local agents to find out what was available. They couldn't knock on the doors and do a private deal...

I joined the BPAA in the 1960s when commercial agents were welcomed and, in those days, it seemed to be mostly about the dinners! It was also an opportunity for agents to exchange information on fee structures: in those days we had fixed fees. That practice was ended by Margaret Thatcher which effectively stopped us being a "profession" and made us into businesses. In those days, you wouldn't take on an instruction if one of the other members was the incumbent – although you'd do joint agency, as set down under the rules of the association.

A changing role

As we moved into the 70s and 80s we also became increasingly involved with the planners – and that's where I became particularly involved. I was wearing two hats at the time, including chairing the development committee of the Chamber of Commerce. I started the quarterly un-minuted meetings with the planning officers and senior officers. The councillors at the time were coming from a different political direction and quite averse to all sorts of developments – even those that would bring jobs to the city – and the executive wanted to know what the real world was doing.

We've been there ever since, talking with the Council for the benefit of the business community. It was a unique grouping when it began and, as far as I know, it's still

unique. Why? One reason, perhaps, is that while Bristol has many big advantages over its regional rivals, as a city we've had stresses and strains due to the lack of infrastructure support from central Government. That's meant we've had to get behind our local authority. With the payback we deliver in terms of GDP you'd think UK plc would invest in us, but there we are.

I'm delighted to see the work going on now between the BPAA and Business West, helping to inform the structural plans for the sub region and ensure that we have enough development in the right places.

I'm still active, working on a variety of projects – notably charitable housing for older people, including advising on intergenerational housing. That's been made more of a challenge because of the housing shortage in our city, which has been with us for many years now.

Looking forward, I remain optimistic. Yes, the lack of infrastructure investment has held us back over the years, but Bristol (helped, in part, by some geographical accidents!) is still a place where people want to live, work and invest.



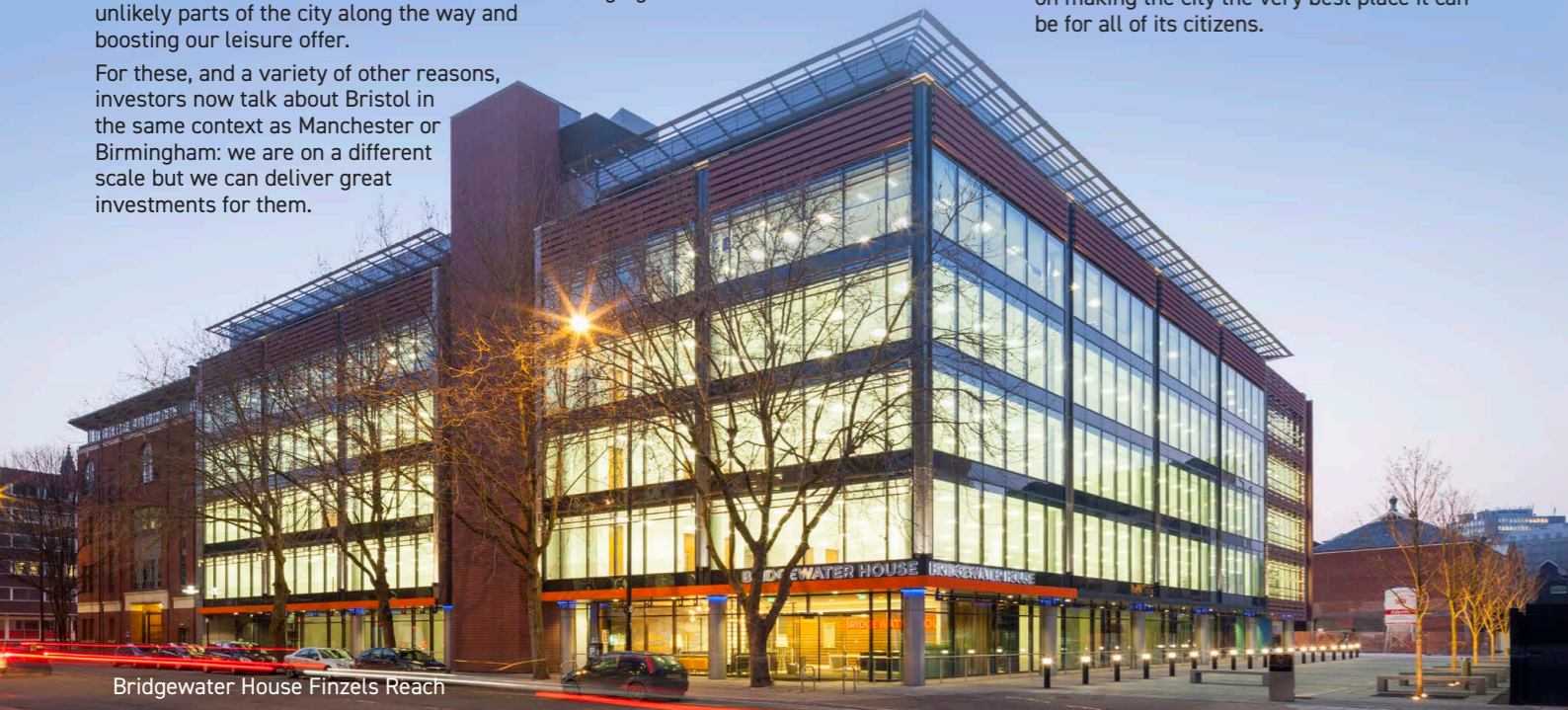
As everyone who knows me will realise, I've been involved in the Bristol property scene for over 60 years now; and, in that time, I have had a hand in many of the developments which have helped shaped the city... some of which are now making way for the next generation of development projects. It has been a hugely rewarding time – although not without its frustrations at times!

I went into property straight from school. The trigger was my mother buying a house in Pembroke Road: I was fascinated by the progress of the purchase and rather liked the idea of estate agency as a career. My father arranged for me to be articled to a firm called Stanley Alder & Price, under a chap called Arnold Perkins, and I started there on the grand wage of 5/2d a week.

I worked there from 2 September 1959 until about 1960 and one of the very first people I got to know was Grant Watson, who had joined the year before and who became a lifelong friend; and (for part of that time) a business colleague too. When I started we were selling all sorts of houses – often at just £250 a pop. I remember selling one in Granby Hill for just £50: you couldn't give houses away up there then. We sold one house in Bishop Street, St Paul's for a fiver.

Moving into commercial

I moved over onto the commercial side, and so didn't join the BPAA at first because, in those early days, it was very much the province of the residential agents. They were originally set up to look after their local interests: to keep the London housing agents out, to negotiate the advertising rates with the local press (the only way to promote your wares in those days); and to stop the practice of putting up boards on properties.



Bridgewater House Finzels Reach

JOINING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE TO GLOBAL EXPERTISE



What were the highlights of your year in office?

The main thing we dealt with were planning performance agreements – not usually part of my day job! We got that largely put into place, with Jo Davis at Avison Young and Gary Collins at the City Council doing a lot of the work. I think it was a good example of City Council/ BPAAs collaboration.

What has changed particularly since you've been practising in Bristol?

While the BPAAs' stance and role has changed since I've been working in Bristol, the character of the City Council has changed more, and our relationship has moved from largely adversarial to collegiate. That doesn't mean to say there haven't been some pretty significant disagreements, and there might be some more to come...

I arrived in November 1985, and there were some big personalities around then: many were Bristolian, and arguably more passionate and driven... and there some bruising encounters between the agents and planning at the time. Nowadays there are fewer Bristolian powerbrokers in the big practices. Then, local firms dominated the market, now it's the global practices.

Is that a good thing, bad thing... or just a different thing?

Does it keep the fees in Bristol? I don't know. Does it support big professional practices in Bristol? Yes, it does. I would say that, probably, the property agents in the city are closer to the heartbeat of global decision making but further away from Bristol-based decision making. But then, the bigger decisions affecting the city are probably now not being taken here anyway. Clearly there's a place for local knowledge. But investors in real estate expect their Bristol advisors to offer the same level of sophistication as they do in the City of London. And that local knowledge is joined to global expertise. The scenery of the professional services market has

Cargo Harbourside



Andrew Hardwick, President in 2007, is a Partner with Carter Jonas. Here he talks about the changing nature of the sector, not least the way it has become less Bristol-centric.

mirrored the changes in global business, so surveying practices are in a similar place to legal firms and often acting for international clients: it's almost inconceivable that international clients would buy Bristol-based professional advice in isolation.

In the 90s we saw local agents being absorbed into the national and global practices, but there is still room for specialist agencies in specialist fields. Going forward will there be lots of multi-disciplinary, smaller local agencies? I'm not so sure. Because it's becoming increasingly difficult to compete at an equivalent level as the big practices at a time when there is a shortage of surveyors with development and investment capability... bright young people have a choice of other careers to pursue.

It's noticeable that some of the bigger firms will pursue non-cognate graduates quite enthusiastically. Probably because they see talented young people not necessarily coming through traditional channels, such as an estate management degree.

What are the challenges looking ahead?

Bristol has done particularly well to present and repackage itself in the last 25 years. A lot of that is to do with the student population. When Unite put students into the middle of town, it made it safer for people to live there. That became a virtuous process. It hasn't had anything like the response from the retail sector that people would be entitled to expect, but I think that will happen.

Today's city centre population is very demanding; probably quite well paid; possibly not car-owning; quite possibly scooter riding; and, demographically, the average age in the city centre will continue to drop. But to be a proper living organism, it's going to have to cater for children too – which it doesn't do too well at the moment. And provide primary medical support, which – again – it doesn't do very well. Bristol is also going to have to find a way to make the city centre more accessible and acceptable to older generations.

Although we've got a good platform as a liveable city, it's probably only liveable to a narrow band, and it's got a long way to go to be balanced.

In order to have ambition and leadership, you need to have a mission that everybody signs up to. There are a lot of agendas out there and you've got to measure benefit for the greater number. Public transport is not a winner at the moment. Clean air is clearly a big issue but it's an incomplete debate. Education is a big one... and while we're in a better place than we were 25 years ago, we're probably only mid table when compared with other cities.

Looking forward 25 years, what one achievement would you like to see accomplished in Bristol?

Probably a joined up, European style, public transport system. The city has done very well on green space; and very good, largely, on managing the water front – preserving the cranes was a real achievement. Perhaps the only thing lacking there now is ships...

BREAKING THE MOULD



Jayne Rixon became the first female President of the BPAAs when she served in 2011. Jayne is a Director of Burston Cook.

How did you enjoy your year as President?

When I was first asked, I was surprised and very honoured. Unfortunately, at that point, my workload was intense, so I had to decline. When I was asked again a year later, I knew I couldn't say no a second time. I really enjoyed being junior and then vice president and even more so, my year as President: I knew I needed to give it 100% and threw myself into my new role. It certainly took me out of my comfort zone on occasions – not least standing up and speaking in front of 650 people at the annual dinner!

Looking back, I feel very proud. It gave me a chance to progress some important matters with the planners, raise issues that I thought were important to the city and support some of my favourite charities too. That was also the year we set up the BPAAs cyclosportive, which is now a very successful event in the BPAAs calendar and attracts a lot of people from a wide range of businesses and is also a big fund raiser.

I also feel very proud looking back to have initiated the UWE student of the year award – which that year went to Shahid Hussain. It has proven a great way to recognise and reward emerging talent, strengthen our ties with UWE and encourage graduates to remain in Bristol. From the perspective of my own business, being President did partly take me away from my role as Director at Burston Cook but certainly enabled me to meet some interesting people within the Bristol business community, many of whom I still stay in close contact with.

Where do you see Bristol going next?

What has become particularly evident during the second part of the pandemic is that, whilst working from home has led to a more flexible working environment, fundamentally we are social animals, and most people like being with other people.

How optimistic are you about the future?

As office agents will tell you, the city centre is still a place where people want to live and work. We all know that the new way of working is changing, and Bristol is certainly leading the way in that particularly with the number of creative, media and tech industries within the city.

But certain businesses still want and need to stay out of town: I have recently been involved with moving the fertility department for example from Southmead Hospital into 13,000 sq ft of former office space at Aztec West and I'm confident that this market has a positive future too.

“The pandemic has made us rethink what the workspace of the future might look like”



Finzels Reach Bridge

25 YEARS OF BRISTOL PROPERTY MARKETING

The way in which we market commercial property has changed significantly in the 25 years since the BPAA celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1996... and even more so since its first meeting in 1946.

The speed of change has been quite remarkable in the last couple of decades, totally transforming the way we communicate and share information. 25 years ago, as we moved on from the days of pasting up artwork and invested in the early Apple Macs, even those of us who were "early adopters" were still reliant on computers that processed large files with glacial speed. If you wanted access to the "World Wide Web", you had to dial up and wait – and wait. Finished artworks were still being sent to printers on the back of motorbike couriers... speeding to meet urgent copy deadlines; your shop window to the world literally was a shop window.

Today, we live in the digital age of superfast broadband, digital PDF proofs and high-performance computers that produce digital marketing brochures, videos, virtual tours, websites – all viewable on your smart phone. It's a far cry from one of the very

first Bristol property websites built in 1999 for a company called Charterfield Asset Management who had just acquired a site on Victoria Street, a site we later branded 'The Paragon' for Cubex.

The way that potential clients and tenants access marketing collateral is unrecognisable from the time when we relied on printed brochures and ads in the property press. Search engine optimisation now makes it easy for potential tenants to find exactly what they are looking for and search data is often used to identify search or shopping habits – so that a potential tenant is sent future property information that will be more relevant. It's not just a faster process but a more finessed one too.

Where next? The virtual future is already here, one where you can sit and experience a football match as if you were actually sat in any stadium in the world – and, likewise, any property. Undertaking a virtual viewing

of a property is simple, safe and time saving, rapidly sorting out the probables from the possibles; and, once VR is even more refined, it will be an everyday property viewing tool, ideal for those that are too far away to travel to the property, perhaps even in another country, or for those who want to view and experience something that is not yet even built.

Who said that property wasn't exciting?

www.kubiakcreative.com



Venue at Cribbs Causeway

INDUSTRIAL'S TIME TO SHINE



Rob Russell, BPAA Junior Vice President, is MD of Russell Property Consultants

I came to Bristol in the late 90s and the role of an industrial agent has not really changed in that time. What has really changed is the market itself. Until a couple of years ago, industrial was the lowest common denominator. Now it's our time in the sun... and Covid has played a big part in that, accelerating trends already in the market and creating huge demand for a wide range of units.

Online shopping, of course, has been the big driver. Suddenly the retailers want units to support their online offer and so do the delivery businesses, as well as all the last mile logistics operations trying to deliver into central Bristol. Now we've got dark kitchens springing up too, along with grocery and specialist food companies delivering to your door... and they all want space.

That has certainly been reflected in rents. They didn't really move for 20/25 years: they would edge up a few notches when the economy was doing well, then drop back during the recessions, then return pretty much to where they'd been before – not even keeping pace with inflation. Recently they have been going up monthly, putting the onus on anyone looking to move to complete quickly or lose out. What was £8 to £8.50psf two years ago is £10 - £12psf today.

The pressure is especially acute in central Bristol where there is now huge demand and no supply – even in traditional locations. And that situation has been exacerbated by tracts of industrial land going to alternative uses, especially housing and student accommodation: industrial simply cannot compete with the land values.

Finding new solutions

Sevenside was coming on stream when I first came to Bristol: it's been a huge success and the ideal location for larger distribution businesses... but it's not where every delivery or industrial company needs to be. The planning policy of driving development there has had a distorting effect on the market, not helped by the continued lack of public transport to get staff to and from work.

The new junction on M49 is the biggest white elephant we have seen in my time in Bristol and let's hope that, between Highways England, South Gloucestershire Council and Delta Properties, they can finish the last few metres and get this junction open to the benefit of all the occupiers at Sevenside – over 6 million sq ft of it!

Increasing densities with offices, residential and student housing could, potentially, play a big part in taking up less land in central Bristol and still satisfy demand for industrial uses. That means going upwards, and we keep hearing about it being the way forward... but planners still seem averse to going above a certain number of floors. I would love to see some high-rise buildings

– as you can find in Leeds and Manchester. If you want more density and deliver all the homes that people talk about for the city, as well as more business space, then we have to go up. Within the industrial market, going up is not an option but we need to protect the industrial area around St Philips, so we have space for last mile delivery and those occupiers that need to be located centrally.

The BPAA role

The BPAA is playing its part in telling the local authority that you can't have all of this industrial land going to residential and student accommodation and leaving nowhere to go for all of the businesses that need to operate in a central location, such as delivery companies – especially if you want to be a "green city". We need to act now, not wait until the situation cannot be reversed, or we're going to have people delivering in from Avonmouth.

They do appreciate what we can tell them, and that way we can work together to make Bristol a city for the future.

Increasingly we are also having dialogues with South Gloucestershire and BaNES, giving us the opportunity to influence the strategic planning process across the sub region: the local authority boundaries are not what occupiers see when they make the decisions on where to locate and it is critical to have this bigger picture.

Certainly, there is ground still to make with North Somerset, which hasn't been so open to dialogue to date. Going forward this is something we really need to address as there are so many key sites there which must not all go to housing, and because the economies of Bristol and North Somerset are inextricably intertwined.

Looking forward it's essential that all of our members – not just those of us on the committee – have a role to play by making sure the right decisions are made when they advise their clients. As property agents our job is not just about getting consents to help our clients make money, but working for the greater good of the city too: delivering sustainable developments which will create homes and jobs for local people, and safeguarding those areas that are important in safeguarding jobs and shaping the future of the city.



Crossflow Cabot Park

ON THE HOME FRONT

What were the big highlights in the market during your year?

Looking back at that year's report we saw new rental benchmarks being set in offices and industrial; policy changes on buy-to-let; and the rise of co-working. It was, however, a very turgid year for the housing market, sometimes making it hard to keep the business moving along as well as combining my duties as President! No one was quite sure what was going to be the fall-out from Brexit, and many sellers and buyers simply sat on their hands.

How would you characterise the housing market today?

The market has become particularly heated over the last 18 months as Covid has radically changed how and where many people want to live against a backdrop of housing demand continuing to outstrip supply; now, the best word I can think of to describe the market is "mad".

We are seen as a high tech, high wage economy, attracting people with higher salaries who are often selling homes at well above Bristol prices. We have always seen a steady flow of people from London and the South East moving here, but Covid has magnified that trend as people realise they can do more, or even all, of their work from home.

Bristol is now at top end of the price spectrum of regional cities – helped by its strong tech and creative sectors, great transport links to London, proximity to the countryside and vibrant cultural scene. Are the continuing price rises sustainable? Only as long as borrowing remains so cheap.

“Bristol is now at top end of the price spectrum of regional cities”

Record low interest rates have also fuelled demand, and so too relief on stamp duty. We have also seen many people who had put a planned move on hold because of Brexit uncertainties deciding they've waited long enough. The other longer-term impact of Covid has been to make homes with gardens more attractive, focusing activity onto family homes – especially Victorian houses in places like Redfield and Fishponds. We first saw this in Southville because of its proximity to the city centre, then Bedminster and Totterdown, which are now seen as trendy places to live and where prices have gone through the roof in last five years.



Mark Leese, a Director at residential agency Leese & Nagle, was President in 2018.

Reinventing the city

It's interesting to look back at how, 25 years ago, the regeneration of the city centre was underway: Harbourside brought waterfront living to Bristol and reinvented tracts of the city... the last pieces of that particular jigsaw are now being put into place, as well as stretching into Temple Quarter and Western Harbour.

Supply remains a problem, and we are still simply not building enough houses. Over the last 18 months that situation has been exacerbated by the banks being unwilling to lend money – leading to many development schemes being put on ice. Added to that we now have problems with materials and labour shortages. It's a perfect storm.



Clifton Wood Houses

The letting market has also seen some radical changes over Covid too, with viewings now often done online. Demand here also significantly outstrips supply – the result not only of people not being able to afford to get onto the housing ladder, but also Government policies around buy-to-let taking available properties out of the market. Prices have rocketed: agents are often only putting properties up for an hour, getting in half a dozen enquiries and working with those. They are even seeing tenants offering to pay above the asking price or offering letting agents an introduction fee to put them first on a list...

We are also seeing some consolidation of smaller letting agencies because of the way the fee structures now work, which makes it less attractive than it was four or five years ago.

Changing roles

The role of agents has evolved in the last quarter of a century, not least because of technology. It's far less of a sales process now and more about marketing. You are able to get information to potential buyers much more quickly, and much more detailed information too: video tours as well as a lot more images, helping to sort out the wheat from the chaff. In times like the present

where more than one party is vying to buy, we're working to optimise the process for our client – acting as a trusted advisor – while still making it a fair one for purchasers and not turn it into a Dutch auction.

“The role of agents has evolved in the last quarter of a century, not least because of technology.”

The way we promote properties has changed radically. When I began we would drop off pictures and text to the Bristol Evening Post on a Wednesday and the paper would come out Friday, when we could expect a rush of calls.

Now it's all pretty much online apart from some lifestyle magazines, and that is often about brand awareness as much as anything

else. The three web portals provide us with over 95% of our enquiries, and that also enables us to build future mailing lists. Increasingly we are using social media: we recently spent £20 promoting a £1 million property on Facebook, reached an audience targeted on age and location, were viewed by 4,500 people and had 2,000 engagements – people either looking at the details and images and/or responding.

Details are often shared on social media, helping us reach even more people. Gone are the days of people walking up and down Whiteladies Road and registering with agents...

There was some concern when the Purple Bricks model came in: would this disrupt the agency market? As we are now seeing, they haven't been able to cement their initial gains and are struggling in the current market. It's a model that works well in an average market, but not when it's slow or strong.

So, looking at residential agency in 2021, there's still a future for agencies. We add value; we make it a smoother, less stressful process for the client, we optimise the value and manage the potential buyers. Because people move so infrequently, they still want someone to hold their hand.



RedCliff Back



Paul Baker, BPAA President in 2018, is Head of Planning and Development UK Regions at JLL.

How do you look back on in your year in office?

The thing we did a great deal of work on – and have put even more effort into since – was engagement with the Council. We've now included South Gloucestershire in that conversation – something I put in place and Chris has taken on, because businesses don't see local authority boundaries.

How would you describe the BPAA's relationship with local councils?

We're now seen, certainly by Council officers, as a valuable sounding board for emerging policy. Sometimes there may be a political agenda which we can't influence, but nine times out of ten they will listen... and sometimes we have modified their position.

Part of it is trying to help officers and members, and not just those involved directly in planning, to understand the realities of the market. For instance, when the old JSP was created it had employment land in the wrong places: had there been a conversation with the BPAA prior to that we could have told them where development would or wouldn't work. We're happy to provide impartial information and insights, and without any agenda from the firms that our members work for... something I think that Councils are slowly starting to understand.

PLANNING AHEAD

What do you see as the challenges going forward?

Bristol is having to take on a great deal of new housing with the focus on brownfield rather than green... but how do you juggle that with the loss of employment land? I'm heartened that the ELSNA has recognised the need for protection of existing employment stock and the identification of additional employment land (169 ha) but Bristol City Council's answer currently is "greater density" of employment uses, and mixing the two together in some locations. But is anyone really going to develop two or three floors of employment with student or resi above? It might be happening in London, but not here.

Residential developers think it will impact their ability to sell or let the units while the commercial developer doesn't want anything which will restrict the hours a tenant can operate. If the Council is keen to see this happening, it could play a role in proving the market itself... perhaps funding a pilot scheme... because I don't believe they are going to get the private sector to take that risk.

The other major challenge is getting the Council to recognise the economic benefits of the University: the skills, knowledge and research that they and their partners deliver which make a significant contribution to the local and regional economy and its growth. For the University to continue to grow, and to support the growth of the economy, they need to provide accommodation – and that is no longer just for first year undergraduates. The Council using phraseology like "harmful concentration", and proposing restrictions on the scale and location of accommodation, is not helpful and could force the University to go in the opposite direction, to contract and specialise... with knock-on effects on the economy.

How are other cities dealing with these issues?

I'm not sure they have the same challenges because they have more choice across the city in terms of employment land. Bristol's problem is that they are almost relying on other local authorities to deliver land for new employment space – and for housing, come to that. And if Bristol businesses get forced out from the city centre there is nowhere else to go. Avonmouth/Sevenside for some employers might as well be South Wales.

The City Council thinks that some agents still look at the challenges from a single use perspective. Is that a fair criticism?

I think that's fair... we see it within our own business where an agency team advises a client on what will work best on a site rather than a development team. My response is that, whenever they ask, the BPAA can offer the Council "market experts" (office, industrial, resi, retail) all in the same room, and all from different firms, to look impartially at a site or part of the city. Between them, they'll give a balanced perspective on what would work best. We have made this offer in the past but not been taken up on it to date.

Looking forward, do you see a more fluid approach to property uses emerging?

It's going to have to happen; the only question is the pace. And does the council have the ability to implement what they'd like to see, or indeed resist the market when demand is so high for some uses – such as student accommodation? That said, it does have the power to make a real difference in some locations – Debenhams is a classic case in point – because they own the freehold and can use their stake to shape what happens there. But a word of caution: a balanced approach needs to be adopted. Too long a wish list could lead to viability challenges and the net result could be development stalling and investors voting with their feet.

Are there perceived barriers to investment coming into the city?

Bristol has to find a way through some quite big challenges over the next few years – the biggest of which is flood risk.. If you look at St Philips and along the Feeder, there's the potential for every application to be held up due to EA objections in what is supposedly one of the key growth areas of Bristol...

Coming up with a mitigation strategy is one thing, but the Environment Agency want certainty of funding to make that happen: that gap is a couple of hundred million pounds, it needs to be bridged and I don't see that happening at the moment. Central Government would be the obvious source of funding on that scale, but we've been victims of our own success.

The priority for so long now has been housing – almost to the exclusion of everything else. The need for a balance of homes and jobs is finally being recognised but there are still tensions.

Height is another area of disconnect between policy and what would deliver on the city's priorities, not helped by the fact that, with some parts of the city, officers are referencing a masterplan which only the stakeholders have seen.

There are also concerns around how we accommodate one of the key demands from residential occupiers that has emerged from the pandemic: the need for outdoor space. This can be addressed by increasing private and public open space; but to compensate, additional height or density is needed... otherwise something else will need to give and more often than not that will be affordable housing – an equally unpalatable option it would seem.

We all recognise that Bristol has a housing problem in terms of affordability. But, there are various ways of addressing that – including shared ownership and different tenures which can add to the mix. However, at present the Council seems quite inflexible on that tenure mix. So, there are plenty more conversations to be had.

Are investors and developers up to speed on what occupiers are looking for in terms of ESG?

Sustainability is a massive issue for every city. Investors are definitely coming round... some developers even more so. But it comes back to pace. Some councils are enshrining zero carbon into policy

but aren't alive to two issues: financial viability and technical delivery. The wider membership of the BPAA can play a part in that: we have on board architects and engineers who are affiliate members, and who can talk about providing the technical solutions while we talk about viability. But collaboration is needed, otherwise policies will be adopted which could – once again – stall development.

How would you like to see the BPAA's role with councils evolving into the future?

Over the time I've been involved, I've seen more people from a different range of firms and specialisms come forward and offer their input – and we can draw on a really rich vein of talent when we need it to lend time and knowledge. When Bedminster Green was being discussed, and members weren't sure about what BTR was or how it would work, we went in under Jo Davis and briefed them. Going forward I see the opportunity to brief members and officers, as well as other organisations, on a range of different topics and emerging trends.



Wapping Wharf masterplan

The message we need to keep getting across is this: don't see us as always acting on behalf of developers, but as expert advisors with the interests of Bristol at heart. After all we are – as we say on our website – "the collective and authoritative voice of the Bristol Property Market... providing guidance, opinion and leadership on the issues affecting the city's future prosperity, as well as working to stimulate inward investment and promote a positive image of Bristol." So let us help shape our city.

"The collective and authoritative voice of the Bristol Property Market..."



NEW FACES

Arthur Severinsen is a Graduate Surveyor with JLL

What drew you into property?

I've always had an interest in the property sector and, having graduated from Cardiff in Business Economics, I decided to take my Masters at UWE in Real Estate Finance and Investment. I looked at Bristol and London for my next stage, but being from Bristol helped me decide to start my career here. I really love the city, I have friends and family here and it's a really exciting place to be with lots of opportunities.

I'm doing three rotations over two years at JLL – the first is in office agency but I'm not sure yet what will follow. Had I not gone into property it would probably have been something in finance or investment. I love the tangibility of the property industry and the creation of space, and I can see myself bringing the two disciplines together and going down the real estate investment route.

How have you found the sector?

More dynamic than I expected and very welcoming. I was told it was very social and very friendly, and it has certainly lived up to that. There's a great atmosphere between everyone – not only within JLL but across the sector. Just what you'd want in a workplace.

How do you see Bristol evolving over the next 25 years?

I see it as a hot spot for tech, a regional powerhouse where firms from London want to have their satellites, and with more and more young professionals coming here. So, offices will do well, and industrial will thrive too. I'm still learning about residential, leisure and retail... but it's a very fluid market, with lots of changes coming over the next few years, so I can easily imagine looking at the whole picture as a portfolio manager.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD



Zoe Willcox is Bristol City Council's Director, Development of Place responsible for planning, sustainable development & climate change and housing delivery, and has been with the City Council since 1988.

How has the relationship between the City and Bristol's property agents shifted in your time with the Council?

When I started – and particularly when I took over as a director – it all felt very adversarial. The BPAA chairs were good but there were quite a lot of the “old guard” amongst the agents. The agents I work with today feel more like partners... stakeholders with an interest in the city.

I have to face a number of directions: as well as the agents I also meet regularly with residents' amenity groups and the neighbourhood planning network; there are also special interest groups, and I'm on the One City Environment Board too. My job is arbitrating between all of these interests and getting the best for everybody. At one time I felt these interests only saw the world from their individual perspective. But, overall, people's understanding of the complexities of the city has improved.

Groups need to speak to each other more and be more mindful of who would be impacted by their approach. It can't all come down to me to offer up the answer.

How can the city address its areas of deprivation?

The Mayor aims to deliver inclusive growth and that, as the city develops and grows, it doesn't leave people behind. There is a geography to this... South Bristol has long been in that situation, but there are pockets of deprivation elsewhere, while some parts in the South are doing very well. But there are also links to educational and health indicators that are embedded not just in the geography of where people live, but in their backgrounds too.

Is the property sector now more realistic with the schemes they come to you with?

Looking at affordable housing, for instance, I have seen a shift. A city will only succeed if it can house those who don't have plenty of money as well as those who do; and although – for instance – a developer may not necessarily prefer to include affordable housing, they do understand that the city needs it and that they have a role to play in providing it.

The climate and ecological emergencies have come right up the agenda in the last few years. Everyone does now recognise that we are going to have to do more zero-carbon growth... so how do we build that into new developments or into existing buildings and infrastructure to make them more resilient to the impact of climate change? That has made the development process far more complex. At the moment I'm particularly looking at the potential impact of flooding: we're not able to bring much more forward in the city until we deal with that.

How can we best meet competing development needs?

We are going to have to increase density and regenerate those parts that aren't efficiently used... and start doing that at a pace. Sprawling out into the countryside isn't the answer, not least because that impacts upon how we get people moving around the city sustainably.

Height continues to be seen as controversial... but look at Castle Park View, which will be 26 storeys high when it's completed. There are places in the city that can accommodate a really tall building, while Wapping Wharf shows that you can get high levels of density in very attractive places without height. I think the city is still finding its way on those sorts of conversations. The bigger challenge is how you get the market to build with more density or height in suburban areas.

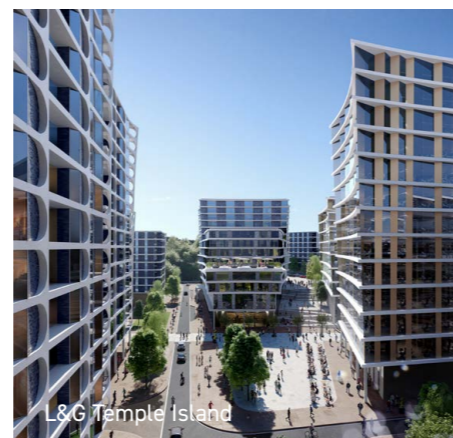
Where is the city going on its retail areas?

The whole way we think about retail has changed and will keep on changing. And certainly, town and city centres are going to have to accommodate more people to live and/or work. Which points to more mixed use... just having retail is not going to be sustainable going forward. People will always want to come into the centres to meet and spend some of their leisure time... we just have to make sure that there's enough there to attract them.

How is the city protecting employment land in the city centre?

This is a good example of trying to find the right balance. There is employment land which is not efficiently used, so we need to look at densification. Some uses may not have a future in a city centre – car show rooms and low value storage for instance. Last mile distribution is a challenge, and it's possible that some of the old retail parks, which have dated, could be homes for them, along with parcel pick-ups, dark kitchens and so on.

The old-fashioned idea of zoning areas has probably gone. And we will have some housing in former employment areas in order to increase our housing supply, but we do recognise that we still need places where people can work.



L&G Temple Island

How is the relationship working out with neighbouring Local Authorities?

We do have to work with our adjoining authorities, particularly on housing and transport, and we're still trying to find a strategic approach. So WECA is important... it's also a route to get money from Government; that said, not having North Somerset as part of WECA makes for an interesting dynamic and creates some challenges. It's never going to be easy because everyone has their own priorities, and you're having to trade. Is the relationship getting better or worse? It carries on... it continues.

Where are we on developing a joined-up transport system for the city region?

The Mayor has put a lot of emphasis on mass transit and the importance of our transport corridors. In planning terms, if we invest in the transport corridors, we can have higher density development along the corridors and better ways of getting people into the city. The more efficient and attractive the metro buses become, the more likely these will be developed into mass transit system.

How do you plan long term for the future at a time of really rapid change and evolution?

It's never easy but there are some things you can predict: we have ecological and climate change coming up, and (fortunately) a generation coming through who can make the connections and want to be part of the solution.

One of the things also coming along is biodiversity net gain; and, as you get a more densely occupied city, there is clearly going to be a tension in how we improve the ecological value of cities. Along with denser development, how do we get more trees, green roofs and sustainable ways of dealing with overheating...

Any messages you want to pass on to the agents?

Some agents do still tend to be somewhat demarcated – into residential, offices, industrial, etcetera. Sometimes they need to make more effort to understand each other's specialism and have a shared agenda... especially as we become less of a zoned city and far more of a mixed use one, with redundant uses switching over to others more in demand. They need to get better at recognising that a site

shouldn't necessarily be allocated to one use or another, and we need to get better at layering up those uses.

How do you view major investors – like L&G – who are taking a long-term view on their involvement in the city?

We absolutely welcome anyone who's in it for the long haul. The PRS investors, the University, people like Umberslade who have been in it for a long time... not in, build it, and out again. They are genuinely creating places, and the people in it for the long haul are doing good developments. They care about climate change, for instance, because of the potential impact on their investment.

The more long-term developers and investors we attract, the better future Bristol will have.

NEW FACES

*Lizzie Boswell,
Senior Surveyor,
Hartnell Taylor Cook*



I graduated in Real Estate at UWE about four years ago, and did my placement year with Hartnell Taylor Cook – which gave me a lot of valuable experience in investment and agency, as well as going towards my qualifications. I was looking at my options when I completed my degree, including taking some time out, but Hartnell's invited me back because they had some maternity leave to cover – which made up my mind for me!

Since then I've been in the Office Agency team, which is really me. You're out and about a lot, interacting with different companies and meeting a lot of really interesting people.

How have you found the sector?

I recognise that the industry has been slow in the past to take on more women, but even in the time I've been working I've noticed more coming into the sector... certainly in office agency, although not so much in industrial perhaps! That said, you're still going to find a majority of your clients are men and sometimes you're the only woman in the room... but that's

just life and you have to get on with it. It's going in the right direction, but you still want to make sure that companies are employing the right person for the job. Having more women coming forward will obviously help that situation.

How do you see Bristol evolving over the next 25 years?

Covid has obviously changed the way people use their offices, and that's only going to develop further. But there's always going to be a need for offices because collaboration and interaction is essential. Certainly, that's the direction of travel in the city centre, but some parts of out-of-town might shrink a bit, or undergo a change of use.

I live in the city centre and absolutely love it: using a car in the city centre is difficult now, so I've sold mine: I get around on e-scooters or walk and tend to use the pool car when I need to go further afield. I'm probably quite typical of a lot of young professionals in wanting to see the city become more and more green.

MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR BRISTOL

James Durie is Chief Executive of Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Initiative & Executive Director of Business West



How would you characterise your organisation's relationship with the BPAA and the broader property sector in the city?

Land and property are among the main drivers of economic growth; how – and where – it's developed, how it's transacted, is really important to us. We want to be aligned with the people who understand that best, who can advise upon that and are fully up to speed with market trends as well as being able to project forwards... knowing what businesses are looking for.

Coming from a property background has given me a keen appreciation of the interrelationship. Agents are out talking and engaging with external investors and have a really important role to play in the city and, working with us, they can also demonstrate their contribution to the wider business community – not just thinking about their individual client's immediate needs but having a constructive role in developing the strategy that will release the full potential of the region.

The agents are here long term. They want and need a successful city and balanced, sustainable growth and vibrant communities. And they realise that, in the long term, they've got to put something back – and aligning with us is one of the ways in which they can do it. Over the last 15 years or so we have worked closely with each President and those involved in BPAA activities, and our two organisations working shoulder to shoulder makes a powerful team.

I think together we have had considerable impact in influencing decisions on policy, but there's more we can do going forward... particularly in developing a stronger policy around land use, decarbonisation and working with all of the local authorities in our city region. We are at a point of

considerable change and together we can play a role to defend and champion economic interests.

You have worked together particularly on the allocation of employment land locally. How do you feel that is going?

Employment land remains something of a Cinderella issue, so there's still more work to be done to move this up the agenda. Yes, we all know about the trends emerging around hybrid working, but we can't just go on building more and more houses in response to the housing crisis and not properly think about, and properly plan, where people want and need to work.

Transport is another area on which you continue to speak out. Again, do you think we are making progress on that?

All of our member businesses in one way or another see transport and mobility as key issues, and potentially blocking or slowing down their activities. For a long time, Bristol region has sadly lagged behind other cities, and suffered from not having some form of integrated mass transit system which gives people a reasonable alternative to the private car. Publically and privately we all need to be pushing in the same direction, making sure that the people who have the power or the money – or both – recognise what is needed... and that they have us breathing down their necks.

Next summer we have a new Clean Air Zone for Bristol being established. Ongoing, we need to take steps to decarbonise transport, as well as change the ways and frequency in which we move... and in a timescale that business and employers will find uncomfortably fast.

Are we getting the right messages across to central Government?

We need this city region to be on the map with the UK Government, and for them to recognise what the needs are as well as the opportunities. With the current Government we don't have the right narrative around levelling up... looked at collectively we are seen as a bit too successful... and sometimes the private and local public sectors aren't seen as singing from the same hymn sheet.

Our successes hide the fact that here are some real pockets of deprivation, so there is a real dichotomy on how we present ourselves. We need a strong, unified approach... our Universities, our local Government, our business community and our voluntary sector... all clear on what the opportunities and the challenges are. In business we don't have to stick to the same rules as people who have to get elected. We can think long term. We can influence them in a way that is not seen as trying to usurp their power.

You've long argued the need for "good growth" – not least in your 2050 High in Hope "manifesto". What does that look like?

We need growth, not least because we have a growing population. But also, if businesses plateau or shrink they won't employ people or invest. We need this to be the right kind of growth and we need the right business conditions in place to support this. Growth needn't be inextricably linked to increasing carbon, for instance, but aligned with the needs of our natural environment – and drawing on all the talents from our diverse communities.

We obviously need sites where we can increase density, allocate spaces for development and reutilise existing land, especially in the city centre because people will need to live closer to where they work or study. You've got to use land more intensively: as the saying goes, they're not making any more of it...

We talk about "redeeming capitalism", and business can play its part in spreading prosperity. Ultimately, that's about giving those areas currently missing out the ability to access a learning and enterprise environment to make it easier for people to get into work or start their own business. Coming from a certain postcode doesn't mean you are in any way less able to start and run a successful enterprise... but you don't start with the same level of access to opportunity.

Business can help tackle disadvantage and be a long-term force for good – as part of how it operates, not as something additional.

How well is Bristol doing at planning at a regional level?

We have good working relationships with the Bristol Mayor and leaders from adjoining councils, but we have yet to realise the full potential and benefits of having a Combined Authority (WECA), which is chaired by the West of England Mayor. We lobbied strongly for the creation of a region-wide authority: an infrastructure body with an oversight on skills, housing, transport etc and their long-term needs. But, at the moment, WECA and its constituent authorities do not seem well aligned and working together as successfully as business and employers want... and need... to see. That's not been helped by recent disagreements spilling out into public meetings and the fact that North Somerset Council still isn't even part of the Combined Authority.

Following the failure at public examination of the four councils' Joint Spatial Strategy for the West of England, we now eagerly await to see and actively engage on the proposals for the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). This aims to set out the broad locations for growth to meet the need for homes and jobs across our area over the next 20 years. Against a growing population and city region economy this will need to be based on capacity and what is deliverable, allied with the necessary aim to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

A not insignificant challenge lies ahead for Business West and the BPAA to work together on this.

What has the BPAA done for Bristol?

Local agents offer unparalleled insights and intelligence into what the market, and investors especially, are thinking. Planning is seen a real barrier to growth and the BPAA has also had a significant role in improving the way in which the local planning development control system works by informing and influencing that process – and I think it's been more powerful because agents have been able to work collectively and alongside senior planning teams. They have been at the forefront for generations of bringing very significant investment into the city, attracting institutional and other investors. That said, I think there's still room for improvement, and together we can influence policy and make Bristol and the wider region an even better place to live, work, visit, invest and study in.

Where would you want to see Bristol in 25 years' time?

By the 100th anniversary of the BPAA, I'd want to have seen the Bristol city region realise the incredible potential it has got. And that's about making the whole of the city successful and for the BPAA helping create great places and spaces for people to work, live, learn and play. It's also about tackling head on some of the issues around climate change, air quality and flood protection – particularly the latter right now, as so many parts of the city centre could be affected... including some key sites earmarked for future development. While we have a technical solution for that, we don't yet have a financial one: the problem has been kicked down the road somewhat, and that is already acting as a barrier to development because the EA are raising objections.

I'd always encourage agents to get involved and take a wider interest in efforts to make Bristol a better place to be – and not just with what they do on a day-to-day basis, as it adds to what they are about. I'd want my old industry being on the front foot when it comes to being great corporate citizens – and they can do that through Business West and the Bristol West of England Initiative.

"We must aim to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030."



Habourside Festival

2021: A MARKET SNAPSHOT

Chris Grazier analyses how the unprecedented challenges created by Covid have impacted upon the Bristol property market, and how agencies have risen to those challenges.

As we went into the pandemic, it's fair to say that everyone in the sector assumed the worst. But, while not everyone has escaped unscathed, the market has turned itself around and some huge positives have come out of the experience which will have a fundamental impact on the property sector into the future.

One of the first casualties of Covid was retail. Despite of business support and furlough payments, the sector was the first to show signs of serious stress. And yes, some players have definitely either pulled in their horns or been permanently lost to the High Street. But those with a good online offer blossomed – and the businesses delivering the goods gobbled up a huge amount of space... driving up rents and encouraging a wave of new developments to come forward. As Rob Russell says in his article, industrial is now having its long-awaited moment in the sun!

The pandemic also served to accelerate a trend already in motion: the shaking out of retailers from many secondary and tertiary locations. That will unleash a wave of units being changed to residential or other uses, in turn generating more footfall in the locations where retail and leisure remain. The implications long term for suburban High Streets, as well as Broadmead, could be profound.

We also learned that employees can be trusted to get on with their work at home. And, after the first lockdown, the assumption was that we would be needing a lot less space into the future. However, by the time we had weathered the second one, it was clear that workspaces still have a huge part to play within organisations, not least in maintaining the mental wellbeing of many employees, and that hybrid working was likely to be the model for the future.

That in turn has accelerated the flight to quality, with occupiers keen to provide employees with the best possible experience while they are in the office. That is having a fundamental impact on the property stock in the city, and the significant uplift in values we are seeing almost certainly won't drop back and will encourage landlords to invest in further refurbishments.

That step change in values of quality refurbished space is also influencing the new stock coming through; shored up by a relatively constricted pipeline, it is leading to ever higher quality there too – greener and more expensive to build, but commanding higher rents. It's a virtuous cycle, improving the city's office stock as a whole.

The drive towards more flexible leases is also continuing apace: younger, dynamic tech businesses want less commitment because their growth trajectory could be steep, and they are prepared to pay for that. Landlords, meanwhile, are becoming increasingly confident that they will be able to re-let into the future and are prepared to accommodate greater flexibility.

Alongside all this, we are seeing a burgeoning Life Sciences sector in the city region, with companies spinning out from our Universities and needing specialist, flexible lab and bench space, and making us look anew at the sort of workspaces we need for the future.

Arguably the only part of the market not particularly impacted is out-of-town offices: the rental gap between North Bristol and the city centre, which has widened significantly in recent years, kept on rising, acting as a brake on refurbishment and new development.

There is, however, the prospect of Filton, where YTL are focussing on place making: eco systems in their own right can demonstrate how out of town locations can work because low density sites have the ability to build in amenity. There are also some new refurbishments coming forward, such as Aztec 1000, which are more aligned with the city centre approach and might provide a much-needed new benchmark. I think this market will rise to the challenge in the next few years.

So, a lot of lessons learned, and plenty of positives going forward. But how did agencies themselves perform during the pandemic?

I believe that the surveying industry has really proven its worth and helped prevent a drama turning into a crisis. Yes, we've helped our agency clients – especially in industrial and retail – respond to the unprecedented pressures they have found themselves dealing with. But perhaps even more credit should go those in property management.

With Covid, we entered unknown territory in many respects: our role has been to help landlords adapt and survive, and we've seen our colleagues in those departments run off their feet doing just this. This part of our work really came into its own during the pandemic and it's arguable that we could not have managed to do this 25 years ago, say, when that level of expertise simply didn't exist.

Difficult times can not only test your mettle but also prepare you for future challenges. I think our industry is in a better place now than it has ever been to serve its clients.



800 Aztec West

HOW CAN WE BECOME A MORE INCLUSIVE INDUSTRY?



UWE Riverside View

Simon Price

A big part of the BPAA's role going forward isn't just talking about D&I but doing it. There are a number of initiatives which we are working on with other organisations including Business West which, hopefully over my term as President and beyond, will help the organisation and the property industry in Bristol to make a positive impact in terms of inclusivity.

It helps because property is now such a varied and exciting industry – this must be our moment to make a real difference. Talking to students at “A” level stage, non-cognates and even earlier in the education system will hopefully encourage a wider range of people to consider property as a career choice. This must include greater promotion of property and the wide range of disciplines it offers across all sectors of society. There is already growing evidence within firms in Bristol that things are beginning to change... and it's the start of the process.

“Property is now such a varied and exciting industry”

Over recent years, the property sector has moved on (somewhat) from an industry largely dominated by white males from advantaged backgrounds. But it still has a long way to go to fully reflect society and draw on the talents of all parts of society. We ask past, current and future presidents how we best achieve that.

Chris Grazier

It's fair to say that property is one of the last bastions when it comes to diversity. The gender balance in, for example, the legal profession, is far better than it was a decade ago and we definitely haven't made the same strides.

Being more diverse and inclusive is not about “doing the right thing”. If you look at the talent currently being lost because they don't come from a certain background, it means we can't truly reflect society or the clients we serve. That said, the industry is beginning to adjust and, hopefully, 25 years on, it will look very different. I would encourage people to not play safe and to take a chance – don't just appoint younger people coming through simply because they “look like you” or come from a similar background.

The work we are doing with UWE can play a key role in that, by firms being prepared to take on, give experience to and mentor people from different backgrounds. In my own company it has certainly helped us – as an SME competing with multinationals – to have young people on board with different perspectives... avoiding group think, responding to challenges differently and able to find new solutions. You have to recognise it as something which benefits the business – not just a “charitable exercise”.

I think there's a big role for the BPAA going forwards, to work with groups in the community to seek out talented young people from different backgrounds. We need to bring the next generation through – and ensure we retain more of the very talented people from all around the world going through our local Universities... many of whom leave the city when they graduate.

Andrew Hardwick

In my day, diversity was coming from a comprehensive or grammar school. And, when I started, there was probably no more than one woman in most of the professional practices in Bristol. And I will be reminded by Bridget that, if anyone thinks it is representative now, they are wrong (Bridget is my wife, and Partner at Carter Jonas).

I don't think it's resistance...it's more malaise. There's a long way to go and it needs to be addressed because it clearly concerns our clients: we are representing a world where corporate organisations have been forced, many times, or at least educated by shareholders, to diversify. So, it would be an act of folly for the surveying profession to think that it doesn't apply to us.

“When your client base diversifies, professional advisors have to follow.”

It would be good for surveying to lead on the issue.

It's a fact of life and has to go way beyond lip service. It's got to be sincere and genuine, otherwise people from a non-traditional background won't pursue a career in property because they don't feel it's where they belong. That will leave the surveying profession weaker and out of step with the wider business world.

Paul Baker

Interestingly, from a committee perspective we are doing well on gender diversity compared with our membership, but from a wider D&I perspective it remains a real challenge. We face it as a firm... and it has to start with education. We set ourselves targets, but there are simply not enough people from diverse backgrounds in the industry.

“It has to start with education”

And it's where the RICS needs to do more, because it's the whole education piece and maybe BPAA could do more too. But it is not just about promoting the property industry to University students it needs to start much, much earlier. Zoe Sharpe of Dandara, a member of the BPAA, spoke passionately and eloquently in her recent presentation as one of the EG Future Female Leaders about her experience talking to primary school-age children...that's where we need to start.



Back to 2011 and the inaugural Student of the Year award. Shahaid Hussain with Doug Wood, then Senior Vice President of the BPAA and Jayne Rixon, President.

Jayne Rixon

The property industry has been perceived for many years as a bit of “an old school network”. I've broken the mould by being female and coming from a state school, but other moulds remain to be broken.

It's disappointing that, in the 75 years the BPAA has been going, that I have been the only female President... but not a surprise, bearing in mind how few women there were previously in the profession – particularly those getting to a senior level. It's a difficult balancing act for women who might have taken a career break to juggle work with running a busy home life with young families. Sometimes it leads to them not returning to the profession. I have had first-hand experience with juggling the two, so I know just how difficult it can be.

On a positive note for the BPAA, there are several women currently in the profession locally who are very strong contenders for running as the next female President in the not too-distant future!

When I started in the profession in 1992, I was the first female surveyor to be employed by Alder King. At that time women only represented 8% of the profession, and very few were in senior roles. Now 31% of people in the industry are women, and it's about a 1% increase year on year... but we are still lagging behind the legal profession where more than 50% are women.

In 2003, I also chaired the southwest branch of Women in Property at a time when there were only 70 members: I believe it is now about 350. A few of us went into schools and colleges to mentor 16–18-year-old girls to provide career advice. Most of them didn't know what a Chartered Surveyor was! I was able to discuss what my job entailed and encouraged some into a profession they knew nothing about. Talking to those girls, some from very different backgrounds, about how varied and interesting our industry can be, made some of them realise that “we could do that”.

My message was “I've done this and so can you”. Several, I'm delighted to say, went on to join the profession.

Women can be very creative, they're good listeners and have very good people skills, so are often well suited to the property industry. Some 60% of our professional team at Burston Cook is female and we are the only firm in Bristol with an all female office agency team.

More people from ethnic minorities should also be encouraged into our industry: there is no doubt that there is a pool of talent out there that we can tap into.

“Now 31% of people in the industry are women”



BPAA Annual Dinner 2020

The BPAA is not just about work: each year, members organise a host of social events, giving a chance for members to build their contacts, develop relationships... and enjoy themselves.

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF SURVEYING



BPAA Cyclosportive 2018



BPAA Boules 2015



BPAA Tennis 2013

The events - from cycling and quizzes through to tennis and boules - also serve to raise large sums of money each year for the charities selected by the President.



BPAA Annual Dinner 2020



BPAA Quiz Night 2009



BPAA Golf Day 2017



BPAA Drinks Party 2019



BPAA-FBE Bristol Zoo 2017



Women in Property - BPAA 2020



BPAA Past Presidents Meeting 2021

THE LAST WORD...

Simon Price is currently Senior Vice President of the BPAA and takes over the reins in 2022. He is Partner, and Head of Agency, at Alder King. Here he talks about how the industry is changing, along with the people coming into it, and how the BPAA can embrace those changes.



3 Glass Wharf



Like many of the others sharing their experiences and views in these pages, my career in property was in its early days when the BPAA celebrated its 50th anniversary. I've seen some major shifts in the industry and our membership in that time, many reflecting society as a whole. But even more change lies ahead; and, looking at how fast things have accelerated in the last 18 months, it promises to be an exhilarating experience.

Sustainability, environmental issues, wellbeing and community... those were topics being discussed by just a few people 25 years ago. Now everybody is focusing on them, and we are brilliantly positioned to be part of the solution and make a difference.

In our role advising investors, developers and occupiers, we are uniquely placed – able to add our input on making sure that the buildings going up today will be fit for the future and meet the changing priorities that occupiers have for them. Sustainability, efficiency, greater flexibility, wellbeing, more amenity, a greater sense of community... there are so many strands coming together at the same time.

If you look at 4, Glass Wharf, the latest major new office start in the city for example, the site was bought about three years ago with an existing consent.

Through the pandemic, the new owners have evolved the scheme into a “post-Covid” design and secured a revised consent. Features now include making the ground floor more open to the community – with a café, exhibition area, auditorium, fitness suite, pop up kitchen for guest chefs and significantly enhanced cycle storage and shower facilities in the basement.

Such a wide range of features have never previously been incorporated in a top-end building. The pressure is coming from all directions – occupiers, developers, investors – and they're all trying to achieve the same thing, which is exciting for the market.

Putting the BPAA at the forefront

The 50th anniversary edition in 1996 talked about wanting to do more with the local authority and grow our influence. And, over the last 25 years, the BPAA has done just that.

Bristol and the BPAA has always been held up as a fantastic example of what can happen across the regional cities with collaboration. If you look at the issues in store for the city – land allocation, future land use, clean air zone, infrastructure changes, potential vehicle charging – all of which will impact upon how Bristol will operate as an economy, it's essential that the BPAA is at the forefront of those discussions.

I'm looking forward in my year in office to working with my colleagues in the BPAA and further strengthening the ties with local authorities. I'm also keen that every member of the BPAA has access to what we're discussing. Disseminating that information across the membership is really important.

The benefits of us working with the local authorities are being felt by our clients too: by understanding the LA's position much better, we can advise clients earlier and in a more educated way in the design and application process. And, whilst we are

often in competition with each other in one way or another, the big, big benefit of the BPAA is that, when we need to, we come together. We put aside that competition for the greater good of Bristol. You can't see that happening in the same way in other regional cities... and that's what makes the BPAA unique: that collegiate approach.

Bristol continues to compete with other regional cities, and if we can present a united face to the rest of the market, and show how collaborative we are, that has got to be a massive benefit.

That gives us a huge and growing advantage, and you see it when you talk to occupiers, investors and developers from other cities – especially London: I've never seen this level of interest in my 30 years in the Bristol market. We are outperforming other regional markets, and I do believe that the BPAA's collaborative approach and its work with the Councils is part of that success story.

Stars of the future

If you look at the 1996 anniversary edition, many elements of what the Association wanted to achieve then have been achieved. I hope that if anyone reads this in 2046 they will recognise that we were keenly aware of the major issues facing us as a city and as a society, such as D&I and ESG, and were coming up with ways to meet the challenges as well as take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead – and showed the way for other cities to follow.

I genuinely believe that it's a really exciting time in the property industry in Bristol. And when Chris Grazier and I speak to students coming up through UWE, looking to attract the next generation of talented people to stay and work in the city, we can paint a really dynamic picture of an industry that has a very significant role to play in delivering the world they want to live in.

Looking at the people now coming into our industry, I think there are some real stars of the future offering great enthusiasm and new ideas. When I started, it was all about the deal, but now there's a much broader approach and a wider range of skills required.

Looking forward, we need to engage much more closely with the younger elements of the membership and take on board their insights and perspectives as well as harness their energy. The enthusiasm I see in these youngsters coming forward makes it critical that we engage and give them the opportunity.

That excitement, that opportunity, is greater in Bristol than perhaps other locations. The city is performing on many fronts – and people are noticing it. The opportunities here are enormous.



Halo Finzels Reach

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Total BPAA membership is approximately 300. Of these, almost two thirds are Full Members and the remainder are Affiliate, Student or Honorary Members.

Application for Membership should be made via the portal on our website

www.bpaa.net

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