



ODENSE KOMMUNE

# Combined study trip and secondment

## Impressions, inspiration and useful experience



Gateshead/Newcastle and Bristol 11th-15th September 2006



Interreg North Sea Region



WATERFRONT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

# **Combined study trip and secondment**

## **Gateshead/Newcastle and Bristol 11th-15th September 2006**

### **Impressions, inspiration and useful experience**

#### **Introduction and programme**

The programme for Gateshead/Newcastle was arranged in close collaboration with Nigel Padgett in Gateshead.

The programme in Bristol was arranged in collaboration with Richard Holden and Andrew Kelly from Bristol.

We were given a warm reception in both cities, and a relevant, focused and perfectly inspiring programme had been prepared for us. The programme was most detailed in Gateshead, where we spent three days, while in Bristol we were given a brief introduction lasting less than a day to an interesting city where we could undoubtedly have spent more time. There was a lot here that was very relevant and inspiring in relation to harbour development and urban regeneration.

This report describes the impressions we brought home from the trip and the subsequent thoughts we have had on the subject. The impressions have for each city been grouped within:

- Cultural history
- Urban life and attractions

Joint section on business life

#### **Recommendations**

##### **Think Big**

The right decisions mean that when you develop a public offer you need to make it an attraction both in function and architecture. Have high aspirations and ideals. Don't be afraid to say "no" should projects not have the quality you want. (The Sage, The Baltic and the Millennium Bridge are spectacular constructions, attracting people just to see and not only because of the function).

##### **Buy land and buildings**

There are better possibilities to develop with high quality if Odense Municipality owns the land.

Make sure the icon buildings are in public ownership.

##### **Plan and think strategically**

Visual identity, localisation, quality etc.



Angel of the North

### **Create a strategy for preservation of buildings**

Decide which buildings are worth preserving and why – use (some of) these buildings as landmarks and monuments as well as temporary activities.

### **Use art and culture in the renewal process**

Use “arts“ theme to kick-start regeneration. Art and culture attract many people and create life and over time increase the value of the properties.

Temporary activities - use empty buildings now, use low rent to attract “the grassroots”, group similar activities for synergy effect. Co-operate with the local artists and association activities.

*“Use public art to move people around the area, confirm routes, bridge gaps, provide navigation points, make the ordinary extraordinary”, quotes John Devlin.*

### **Create a high activity level**

Many different activities during the day/week attract many different people, i.e. facilitate outdoor activities being able to take place indoors.

### **Create a Visitors Centre**

Use as a rendezvous and information point, where you can tell the story of the harbour, have conference rooms, exhibitions, cafés etc.

### **Use other people’s money**

There are many different possibilities of financing – Fund raising, public-private partnerships, EU, etc.

## ***GATESHEAD***

We started by visiting Gateshead Council and the town’s visitors centre which is situated close to the river and the urban regeneration area which was the focus of our study trip.

Gateshead and Newcastle are two independent local authorities with separate administrations. However, in recent years they have together developed a wide variety of urban development initiatives and cultural initiatives which, for visitors, combine the cultural attractions of the two cities into a strong concept of an international standard. A number of the initiatives are based on public-private partnerships.



Gateshead Visitor centre

**Gateshead Visitors Centre**, which was set up some years ago in a former Gothic church, offers a wide range of information for local residents and tourists about the region and its history, about current cultural events and attractions and about future development plans for the town. The centre also had a small selection of local crafts and quality souvenirs for sale.

## History - cultural heritage

The study trip showed several examples of how the historical element has been integrated into the harbour development. In **Gateshead** it was not a conspicuous focus area, while in **North Shields** the historical aspects were supported by the preserved activities associated with fishing, and therefore a maritime environment had been preserved while also attracting new enterprises into the old warehouses. **Ouseburn**, which was previously a centre for the coal and glassworks industry, was specifically designated as a heritage area, and therefore had a large number of preserved warehouses which had been used to accommodate cultural functions (practice rooms, artists' studios, a children's book museum and restaurants). **Bristol** had far more focus on preserving the harbour elements, perhaps because there was more to preserve at the outset. However, a general problem has been that many older industries have caused massive pollution, which is probably why preservation has not been such an issue.

England, one of the homes of industrialisation, has many traces and artefacts from the age of industrialisation. A clear expression of this is the distinctive buildings from the Victorian era such as the large brick buildings that can be seen in the streets of **Newcastle**. The many bridges that date back to this period bear witness to the Industrial Revolution (bridges across the Tyne: the High Level Bridge from 1850, the Swing Bridge from 1876, the Newburn Bridge from 1893, the King Edward VII Rail Bridge from 1906 and the Tyne Bridge from 1923).

**Gateshead** sprang up and developed on the basis of mining (coal and salt), most clearly symbolised by the preserved coal storage and loading structures with overhead travelling cranes on the river (Dunston Coal Staithes, built in 1890 – one of the largest wooden structures in Europe). This, the



Dunston Coal Staith

largely rebuilt corn silo which dates back to 1949 – The Baltic (originally three equally sized buildings with corn silo, mill and feedstuffs factory) – and other warehouses which were transformed into housing and hotels (primarily on the Newcastle side), as well as the bridges, represent preserved elements from what was Gateshead's heyday. Using these kinds of industrial relics as monuments and symbols for the town can be



The Baltic

an excellent way of promoting it – and to just the same extent as the modern Millennium Bridge or The Sage music and arts centre – while at the same time creating a clear link to the town's historical past. The focus in Gateshead, however, has been to make a shift away from an industrial culture towards a café culture – in the process choosing to largely remove all traces of its industrial history.

**Ouseburn Valley** is a small pocket with extremely well-preserved industrial buildings from the glassworks and coal industry around the Ouse, a tributary of the Tyne. Near the mouth of the Ouse there are still existing companies (such as builders' merchants), and on the harbour front on the Tyne there is also a successful industrial enterprise, Spillers Flour Mill, which produces feedstuffs.

When it was built in 1938, it was reckoned to be the tallest grain mill in the world. A lot is being done to preserve the buildings by giving them new functions, such as recreational art.

**North Shields**, which sits at the mouth of the Tyne where it flows into the North Sea, is an example of original activities having been preserved and combined with newer office premises. A number of fish shops adjoin the harbour basin, which functions as a fish market. Further up river is a huge shipbuilding area that is still functioning but which is slowly being wound up; the site is difficult to preserve as it is hard to find new activities for the large construction halls. Preserving the cranes also presents a safety problem.



Tyneside fish Quays



Tyneside fish Quays

The trip has shown several examples of how it is definitely possible to retain a sense of the history of a place, even though the old buildings are used for different purposes. The danger, if the historical and maritime connection is lost, is that new residential and recreational areas are developed that only use the water surface for views – and which in principle could be placed anywhere. One point is that England has a far greater industrial heritage than Denmark, for which reason we need to look after what little we do have.

## Urban life - attractions

### Investments in art and culture as catalysts for urban renewal and regeneration.

In Gateshead we saw a number of examples of art and cultural initiatives and buildings which have been decisive for the strength and success of the development which has taken place over the past 10 years in the area.

John Devlin, Director, Development & Enterprise, Gateshead Council: “Transformation rather than regeneration” has ensured about GBP 125 million of public investments in the past 10 years to the south of the Tyne compared to ten times as much in private and public investments in the area’s transformation.

1996 was called a “Year of Visual Art”, and supported by a consistent art policy. We saw and discussed a number of significant examples of art in the public arena, from individual works of art placed around the town to signage and the massive statue (the biggest sculpture in the UK) “Angel of the North”, which has become an icon for the whole region. Perhaps a bit like the Odin tower in Odense for a brief time.



Angel of the North

What made a particularly strong impression was the powerful trinity which has been created close to the water's edge along the quay front and the river Tyne that separates Gateshead and Newcastle: Here, on a several hundred-metre-long stretch along the river's southern bank a key attraction has been created consisting of a new bridge, a new music and concert hall and a large exhibition venue in a totally renovated silo building:

The exciting, beautiful (design, implementation and function) and eye-catching new "Gateshead Millennium Bridge", the new music and concert hall "The Sage Gateshead" as well as the new exhibition venue "BALTIC", which occupies a vast silo building.

## Gateshead Millennium Bridge

Gateshead Millennium Bridge, linking Newcastle and Gateshead over the River Tyne, is not just a bridge. It's a brand and a landmark. It's a way to say, we can make things happen here; this is a good city for developers to invest in!

One can say that it started with "The Angel of the North" in 1998 – a huge sculpture, which suddenly put Gateshead on the map, and marked the start of a new optimism in this rather deprived area. Then came the Millennium Bridge, followed by The Sage – a spectacular concert hall, and The Baltic - an art centre and exhibition hall.



The Millennium Bridge

The Millennium Bridge is an example of how a city, such as Gateshead, chooses to invest in art and culture and consequently attracts development and investment into the area. Gateshead is an area that has changed from an anonymous appendage of Newcastle to a city oozing with confidence.



The Millennium Bridge by night

Because Millennium Bridge wasn't meant to be 'just a bridge' but a brand and a landmark, it was important to do something spectacular. A design competition was launched in 1996 and the bridge was finished in 2000, the millennium year. Money was raised from a number of foundations, among others the European Regional Development Fund and the Single Regeneration Budget.

The winning design team, Wilkinson Eyre/Gifford & Partners, based their project on a simple principle invented by nature itself: an eyelid. The construction has just one major moving part – the whole structure – pivoting upwards like an eye slowly opening to form an arch for ships to pass under.

Gateshead Millennium Bridge is the world's first and only tilting bridge. A multi award winning structure attracting accolades from around the world.

## The new music and concert hall: The Sage Gateshead

The architect Norman Foster's exciting concert hall opened in November 2004 after 10 years of intense efforts to create a permanent home for the regional symphony orchestra. The outstanding architecture stretches 40 metres up on the highest sides of the building, with a large wavy facade dominated by lots of glass and steel and occupying an eye-catching location beside the river. The building is light and open towards the quay and the river, and characterised by a foyer that stretches the entire length of the building. On the inland side it houses a combination of three concert halls (the biggest designed for symphony concerts with seating for 1,650) offering tremendous scope for a combination of symphony concerts, touring concerts and performances requiring sophisticated technology and equipment, music teaching at all levels from children's and music school music to conservatory



The Sage - Gateshead



Inside The Sage



The Concert Hall

classes (26 practice rooms of various sizes), sound recording facilities as well as the town's advanced music library, the "Explore Music Centre", which

is open every day of the week (9.30 - 20.30).

From the outset, the emphasis was on ensuring access and staying open every day from morning to evening. A long light sculpture cuts through from the outside and through the building to create visual coherence, and the centre offers splendid views over the quays and river to the Newcastle side. There is a café and restaurant, an information desk and ticket office. Towards the west on the bank down to the river there is a large amphitheatre.

## Baltic - Centre for Contemporary Art

Only separated from The Sage by open space, a large international arts centre – one without its own permanent collection – has been created on five storeys. The centre has approx. 3,000 sq. m. of exhibition space combined with facilities for working artists, an art shop, a café bar and one restaurant on the quay front as well as an exclusive roof restaurant on the sixth floor.

Since its opening in summer 2002, numerous exhibitions and activities have been staged – all with free entry.





In carrying out this challenging and costly conversion of the three former flour silos and where only the outer walls have been left intact, a new attraction has successfully been created, but one which is placed in a context that preserves and conveys the town's industrial past.

The Baltic

### Living cultural heritage

In the Ouseburn area near the mouth of the Ouse, one of the Tyne's small tributaries, lie some of the region's oldest industrial buildings. They are situated in a hilly area which is intersected by three notable and historic high-level bridges, and the site along the narrow river's meandering course almost constitutes a small time capsule. The river course is strongly influenced by tidal waters, so the question is whether sluice gates should be re-established which can optimise the conditions for sailing and boat moorings. None of the buildings here are still used for their original purpose, but a number of them are partially preserved and being transformed to house new functions. Many of these activities are of cultural interest:

For example: "Seven Stories" (the national Centre for Children's Books) is housed in an exciting seven-storey building with a café, exhibition facilities, a bookshop and offers the space, equipment and adult staff to bring to life the wonderful world of children's books. (An English counterpart to our own cultural centre for children "The Tinderbox", but focusing on all English children's authors and illustrators.) "The Biscuit Factory", which used to be, as the name suggests, a biscuit factory, but which is now an art gallery on two floors, characterised by quality and diversity as well as a restaurant. Elsewhere in the area there is a large equestrian hall, the artist-run "Art Works Galleries", several cafés and a couple of pubs and "Ouseburn Farm", where a visitors centre has been set up. Focusing on recycling and ecology, the premises have been recently fitted out for teaching and to serve as a springboard to visiting the area's rich industrial history. The building also has a schools service with a nature and history guide.



Seven Stories

### New initiatives with authentic roots

*"The dawn of a new era, reflecting the area's past into the future"* is written on the front of the project brochure on top of a very picturesque sunrise with the area's largest lighthouse – which has just been pensioned off by new technology – in the centre of the image.



The Tyne by the North Sea

We spent an afternoon briefly visiting the area around the town of North Shields, far out where the river Tyne flows into the North Sea. Here, there are two large and prominent lighthouses, quays and the remains of a military fortification. For several hundred years the area competed with Newcastle further up river, but was especially well known as home to a large fleet of fishing vessels and its fish-processing industry.

As part of an urban renewal and regeneration project that strikes a fine balance between open-air museum, market place and busy town life, a run-down area is being renovated and revitalised, where local resources are playing a key role.

We visited the two areas selected for preservation and urban renewal: “The New Quay” (project launched 1990) and “The Fish Quay” (which was first started in 2003 after an extensive survey showed solid local support for urban renewal here).

## ***BRISTOL***

### **History - cultural heritage**

**Bristol** exemplifies a prosperous area that is to some extent better at taking care of its cultural heritage and focusing on its links to its port. Here, the city is characterised by far more preserved elements. It has been possible to find alternative functions for the old warehouses without demolishing them and embarking on excessive rebuilding. The boats in the water and the relatively large number of harbour features such as shipyards, cranes, railway tracks and, in particular, a couple of maritime museums, all mean that the historical element beside the harbour is very tangible. The old warehouses are now largely used for recreational or artistic purposes, which perhaps do not have any direct links with the harbour basin over and above the views.

### **Urban life - attractions**

We had a brief but intensive visit to Bristol city centre. A large city on England’s south-west coast with a rich and varied cultural heritage and with an exciting city centre with numerous historical buildings, gardens, squares and memories from the heyday of the British Empire, including the lucrative trade and expeditions to the colonies and “The New World”.

Bristol’s harbour front does not face the sea directly but comprises a long canal system with gates and an inner harbour with quays, narrow canals, harbour-related industrial works, docks, shipyards, storage facilities and warehouses etc. The majority of these installations and areas no longer serve their original function, and large parts of the harbour are being developed as part of urban renewal and regeneration projects. We were given a short but informative tour of the harbour by boat and formed an idea of the plans and the potential that exists for regeneration and development in the central harbour area.



Bristol Millennium Square



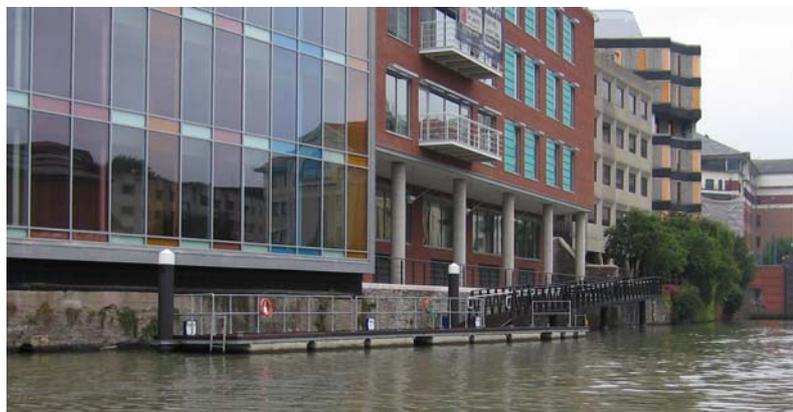
An old crane saved for the future



Railway tracks along the dockside



Room with a view



Example of access to the water

### **Bristol as the focal point for celebrating the bicentenary of England's famous son**

It was interesting to visit Bristol and see how, in 2006, the city was the focal point for the bicentennial celebrations of one of its most important "Empire builders" – the gifted engineer I.K. Brunel, who built bridges, railways, large ocean-going steamships etc. We came and saw what was happening, remembering how Odense celebrated its own world-famous citizen, Hans Christian Andersen.

"Brunel 200" celebrates his life, time and works with exhibitions, publications, guided tours, specially signposted routes, art projects, competitions, debates, media programmes and much more that combine historical focus with modern communication and presentation methods and a desire to create Brunels of the future: creative individuals preoccupied with finding innovative solutions to the challenges and opportunities of the time.

Brunel attractions of special interest include the museum ship "SS Great Britain", which was built at Bristol's shipyard as the first large ocean-going emigrant ship and which, after a long and turbulent life, was spared being broken up on the Falkland Islands and brought back to the city's docks and transformed into a high-quality interactive museum experience.



The museum "SS Britain"

### **Art in the public space**

Bristol has a written art policy. Without being able to look at the results of this in depth, we could nevertheless get a sense of the possibilities and perspectives of focusing so precisely on quality in architecture, in the artistic decoration and in urban design.

### **Spike Island**

One of the most recent initiatives in the regeneration of the harbour is the decision to establish a national centre for creative art in the former factory buildings and tea packing warehouse near the harbour on "Spike Island". We visited this place and got a first-hand impression of the work involved in creating exciting workshop facilities and fitting out 70 low-cost studios for local artists with exhibition facilities and 15 offices and workshop areas for independent creative companies. Work commenced in 1998, and it is in this way that Bristol is investing targeted and ambitious efforts to develop and strengthen the options available in the city for local creative resources in collaboration with them.

### ***BUSINESS LIFE***

Neither in Gateshead nor Bristol have the current harbour front developments taken place because of any particular focus on business development. It has been decided to focus on cultural activities and improving existing buildings worthy of preservation and on constructing new buildings. The cultural activities are primarily based in these buildings, consequently creating an environment which gives the citizens and visitors to the cities special experiences. These initiatives have resulted in a flow of people to the very different harbour fronts, but which at the same time has created demand for the products and services of these cultural enterprises (galleries, concerts/music, cafés,

restaurants, souvenirs etc.). In Bristol, we also saw examples of open workshops having been fitted out for artists, which also generated a certain amount of pedestrian traffic. In other words, it is culture and experience that initially create demand, and which in the longer term are expected to generate further demand for other types of services and products. However, there was not a great deal of clarity about this.

The lesson must be that, in Odense, we must create traffic/flow via culture and experience so that in the longer term we can create demand which in turn generates more varied demand and thereby commercial activities at the Port of Odense. In this way it should be possible to create synergies between culture and business which will ensure an active and interesting harbour area with a sound economy for all users as the economic and development potential will be too weak if everything was staked on either one or the other i.e. on culture or business.

We could add that some major companies (Lloyds) in Bristol had established themselves in extremely large and striking buildings on the harbour front. A bit like in Odense (the law firm Focus Advokater, Nørgaard Mikkelsen etc.).

Almost none of the former traditional “harbour companies” could be found on the harbour fronts. These had usually moved further out into the harbour beyond the city centres, or no longer existed.



Café's and restaurant's by the water



Life on the water



Saving the history



A pedestrian platform by the water