

T&A column – January 2012

Paul Mackie, Bradford Property Forum

With the fireworks around the world now a distant memory, the new year is always a time for reflection and looking forward.

This year the Property Forum in Bradford will continue to raise awareness of the opportunities our city has in what looks like being another challenging year in our sector and in general.

Twelve months ago my focus was on collaboration among business people, enterprise in schools, a positive outlook for our city and a loosening of the financial constipation that was preventing growth. These issues are still relevant today, not to mention the pressure of housing needs, the debate on listed buildings and the need for more incentives to stimulate growth. Business mood is still good in parts, despite the tough year ahead and the continuing economic gloom, but the uncertainty on future prospects is also adding to nervousness among others.

The key piece of the Bradford jigsaw will be Westfield – who we successfully put before a business audience for the second time – and our focus will continue in encouraging the developer to get to site in 2012. We'll also be addressing that housing problem mentioned above, looking at tax strategies that can help the sector more, and (to use one members' phrase) delivering on initiatives not just networking. I believe, though, that we already do that, with the House of the Future, the Listed Buildings review and closer working with Leeds counterparts all being recent examples.

Positive messages, good news stories, confidence in our ability to support our city with resilient businesses and people will be the language we promote. So with a certain amount of fingers crossed hope The Property forum wish our city and its people well.