

# CONCOURSE

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Europe Inspires Leeds City Centre Park idea

Key influential professional and thinkers gathered at Leeds Metropolitan University's School of Architecture and Landscape yesterday for the Once and Future Park Symposium to discuss the idea of a city centre park for Leeds.

The event was organised by Concourse, in association with RIBA Yorkshire and the Leeds Property Forum to progress the thinking about a new city park that first emerged at the Leeds city centre vision conference in January 2008. Since then the council has formally agreed to pursue the idea. The aim of the event was to raise awareness of best practice from European examples with talks by Amsterdam City Builder and Landscape architect, Ruvan Aluvihare and Martin Biewenga, from the award winning Rotterdam based practice, West 8 whose practice has been responsible for new parks in Lille, Madrid, New York and Chiswick.

Paul Hildreth, from the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF) at Salford University, spoke on one of the main themes that emerged from the conference; that of economic justification for green space within a modern growing city, such as Leeds, and the benefits that parks bring to business and citizens.

#### RIBA Yorkshire

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John Thorp, Leeds Civic Architect and member of Concourse who has been working with colleagues on a study of existing and potential within the city centre, also spoke on 'The Leeds Context'. "Today's event has been inspirational and will help the city to



develop clear ideas to distill the meaning and purpose of a city centre park. There are two main ideas that have emerged for me today. The European speakers showed the range and diversity in the provision of green space in cities, from single large spaces to the green infrastructure of route-ways and pocket parks. From Paul Hildreth, we took the notion of 'Whole city thinking' that we need to consider when thinking about a new green space in the heart of the city".

Simon Baker, Chair of Concourse, who had chaired the day, said "The event was a great success. We were delighted with the level of debate from the audience which demonstrates the interest in this project and the importance of the green space for the quality of life in our city."

## **Ends**

### **Editors Notes**

#### **1. Concourse**

Concourse is an independent organization dedicated to the promotion and exploration in all aspects of the built environment. The meaning of Concourse is simple – a board open space for the gathering together of people. Concourse aims to promote the interaction across the whole spectrum of professional activity concerned with art, architecture and all aspects of the built environment.

Concourse aims to raise public aspirations, stimulate public debate and provide opportunities for the public to become involved in making the Leeds city-region an exemplar of best practice. Concourse seeks to achieve this through programmes of workshops, exhibitions and events, delivered by drawing upon the varied professional skills of its academic and practitioner members.

#### **2. Ruwan Aluvihare, Steden Bouwer [City Builder], Amsterdam**

Ruwan gained his postgraduate degree in Landscape Architecture from Leeds Metropolitan University in 1982 after which he joined the Public Works service in Amsterdam as Designer. He is now the Senior Chief designer and City Builder his current projects include the urban renewal project (housing and shopping mall) Waterlandplein in Amsterdam north, Design and guidance for the housing project Richelieu (4000 units) including training programme for local civil servants and students and the City vision and ongoing plans for the Zuidas, as a member of the Atelier Zuidas and (present) Lead design team, a prestigious project in the south of Amsterdam.

Ruvan lectures in Landscape design at Larenstein graduate school and Leeds school of architecture and Landscape and the University of Delft. Since 2000 he has also been the organiser and moderator of the Public open space laboratory in Amsterdam. His published work includes the Plan Amsterdam focusing on areas including function, design and public realm of the city.

### **3. Paul Hildreth, SURF**

Paul advises on cities, regional and local economies, with an emphasis on city regions, regional policy, 'place-shaping', medium-sized cities, urban regeneration, and community leadership and governance.

He is visiting policy fellow at the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF) at Salford University, a CABE Enabler and a member of the Department of Communities and Local Government's (CLG) external policy development panel.

He is also an expert for the Council of Europe, working on local and regional development in central and eastern European countries. He is currently completing a project with the Work Foundation and the Centre for Cities for the Northern Way and CLG on understanding how economies work across city-regions in the North of England.

Recent published papers include: 'understanding medium-sized cities'; 'the dynamics of place-shaping'; 'understanding new regional policy' and 'city links'.

### **4. Martin Biewenga, Partner, West 8, Rotterdam**

Martin received his Masters in Urban Design from the Technical University of Delft, the Netherlands in 1996. Since 1996 he has worked as a project director on large scale projects for West 8, where since 2003 he has been a partner. Biewenga has led international design teams and worked on large scale urban designs, often related to shores and waterfronts such as Watercity near Amersfoort, the Netherlands, and Søndre Frihavn, Copenhagen, DK. Other current projects include the Dublin Campshire and Docklands masterplan and further afield with the Waterfront project in Toronto. His work in the UK includes Project Olive in London and masterplans for Scarborough and Bridlington.

Martin has carried teaching positions at schools and universities such as the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Planning Rotterdam and Amsterdam the Netherlands, Oxford Brooks University and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen. As a well respected speaker Mr. Biewenga has recently given lectures at the Tokyo University, the University of Mexico City and Oxford Brookes, UK where he is an external examiner.

### **5. John Thorp, Leeds Civic Architect**

John Thorp has worked for Leeds City Council in several architectural roles for over 39 years. He has been Civic Architect for Leeds City Council since 1996 – a role which

has included the creation and delivery of a renaissance framework for the evolution of the city and the enabling of high quality design.

The Civic Architect's role has included contributions to the search for new approaches to the collective re-shaping of the city which, in common with others, faces the challenges of transition from a post-industrial condition to the era of sustainability.

John is a member of the 2012 CABI / DfL Olympic Games Design Review Panel and of the CABI Olympic Legacy Design Review Panel. He was a member of the national CABI Design Review Panel for 5 years and a CABI 'Inspirer' for schools.

He is a member of the Leeds Architecture and Design Initiative and 'Concourse' (Architecture Centres Network) - bodies which champion and promote inter-sector and inter-disciplinary working in art, architecture, landscape and public space.

John was awarded the M.B.E. for services to architecture in the Queen's New Year's Honours list, 2005.