

Second meeting of urban experts to discuss shape of things to come



Discussion topic: the Island City Portsmouth has one of the highest urban densities in the UK.

A group of about 120 urban experts and decision-makers will gather in September at Guildhall for the University's second Industry Breakfast.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Graham Galbraith, Flick Drummond MP, internationally acclaimed architects Elad Eisenstein (Mecanoo) and Jason Syrett (Allies and Morrison), as well as Dr Bev Lucas of Portsmouth City Council will lead the debate on urban regeneration. The event is organised by Professor Steffen Lehmann, Director of the Cluster for Sustainable Cities.

The debate will focus on strategies and ideas about the regeneration and activation of public space, including Southsea waterfront. Portsmouth has developed over the last 20 years into a knowledge-based city, and the question is: what needs to be done to meet the urban challenges of this 'New Portsmouth' in the 21st century? What kind of public space network will best support the urban innovation and development required?

The experts are also asked for their views on how best to release the potential of collaboration between industry, local government and world-class research expertise at the University.

Guildhall is a suitable venue as the listed building itself has significant potential to change from a traditional venue as the 'future heart of the city', together with the forthcoming development of the University Quarter.

Professor Steffen Lehmann said: "The quality of public space, its connectivity and walkability is of great importance for Portsmouth. There are now evidence that walkable streets can boost the local economy: people who walk to a town centre are likely to spend 40 percent more in the local economy than those arriving by car." He noted: "If there is strong pedestrian connectivity within a city, it allows residents to move easily and conveniently from one part to another, with ease and safely, including on bicycles. Our students would also benefit from this. But if there is disconnect, or if connectivity is weak, it means everybody end up using the car and avoid walking or cycling. Portsmouth has a flat environment that makes cycling an easy alternative way of getting about; and that the existing building stock offers plenty of great opportunities for adaptive reuse", he pointed out.