



England's leading high technology city



Paxman asks... Why aren't other cities like Derby?



Prime Minister Gordon Brown last week chose Derby to launch his national tour and announce major new initiatives to counter the recession. The PM came to the city with a cluster of ministers including Schools Minister Ed Balls, Innovation Minister John Denham and Housing Minister Margaret Beckett. The group was followed by an unusually large media posse, resulting in wide exposure for Derby, including a special feature on BBC TV's Newsnight and significant coverage in heavyweights such as The Economist.

In the post credit crunch world it is interesting to see how these august bodies are starting to identify that something different has happened in Derby's economy - a possible blueprint for others?

Newsnight suggests Derby as a model for UK



In a major feature, BBC Newsnight's economics correspondent Paul Mason ran a package on Derby saying it was a city with an economy that balances high technology, manufacturing, retail and financial services.

Describing Rolls-Royce as one of the 'last remaining icons of British manufacturing' Mason said that Derby may escape the worst of the recession as it was 'not typical of the average UK city'. Professor Nick Robinson, from Leeds University, said that Derby 'did not depend on low skilled service industries seen in so many other places' and that young people had greater choice of careers.

Following the package Jeremy Paxman questioned Employment Minister, Tony McNulty, and in his usual inimitable style started with "*The question to you then is why the rest of Britain isn't like Derby?*" The minister answered by saying Derby had a different history to that of other places...Jeremy typically looked far from convinced...

PM backs Derby



During his visit to Rolls-Royce the PM praised Derby's resilient economy, especially its high technology driven activity in rail and aerospace. He also found time to comment on the other big story of the day, the appointment of Nigel Clough as manager of the Rams (who he thought would do 'very well').

Gordon Brown said that Derby employer Bombardier "is well placed to benefit as a company which has seen success in technical capability". He wished it success in its bid for a £300m contract brought forward to stimulate the UK economy and he felt it would be 'ideally placed' as the UK's only train manufacturer for the £20billion British 'bullet train' being considered.

At Rolls-Royce, the PM pledged cash to support new apprenticeships at the company as part of a wider £140m scheme. "What Rolls-Royce is doing is training apprentices for smaller companies as well as themselves". The PM then toured part of the massive Derby Rolls-Royce campus.

Rolls-Royce - Britain's most powerful symbol



The current Economist magazine carries a detailed feature on how a resurgent Rolls-Royce is the UK's most powerful symbol of manufacturing. It describes how, in a country that once seemed 'hell bent on leading the way to a post-industrial age' Rolls-Royce and Derby now offers 'a different vision of Britain's future'. The feature described how RR's global operations room in Derby monitors 3,500 jet engines around the world in real time, looks more like a currency-trading floor and is at the heart of a vast industrial enterprise.

The feature argues that today's distinction is not between manufacturing and services, but between low-skilled and high skilled jobs. The designers, salesforce, analysts and financial support staff in at Rolls-Royce in Derby are proof of this it says.

The article outlined the view of Rolls-Royce Chief Executive, Sir John Rose, that Britain needs an economic route map to encourage investment in manufacturing. The benefit can be seen in Derby where wages are well above national average as are local grades in key subjects such as maths and science.

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http://www.economist.com/business/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12887368

And the excellent opinion piece here...

http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12899493

Derby to lead Aerospace Alliance



Having read the above you will not be surprised to read that Derby is using its position as the UK's leading high technology city by initiating an aerospace cities alliance this spring. A number of cities including Bristol, Birmingham and Burnley will meet at the Institute of Directors HQ in London, chaired by Derby City Council. They will look at how to best represent the interest of communities who need greater government support in investment in aerospace, especially related to skills development as well as research and technology.

Watch this space for further news...

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