

# Lipton warning over Cabe 'divorce'

Ex-chairman says 'something's gone wrong' since Design Council merger

David Rogers

Former Cabe chairman Stuart Lipton has said merging the design watchdog with the Design Council was the wrong idea.

His intervention comes after its axed director Nahid Majid said

this week Cabe does not have enough experienced staff to meet upcoming targets on self-funding.

Lipton told BD that "something's gone wrong" with Cabe since it was merged with the Design Council last year after the government said it wouldn't bankroll it any more.

He added: "A marriage with the Design Council is not a marriage made in heaven. Are the two compatible or is a divorce coming?"

But Lipton, who was the group's inaugural chairman for five years, said a version of Cabe



"I'd like to see government appreciate that good architecture is good value" Stuart Lipton

needed to survive to keep clients, especially the government, on their toes. "I'd like to see government appreciate that good architecture is good value," he said.

Majid repeated claims that Cabe doesn't have a future because

"it doesn't have the right skilled people" to sell the money-making services it needs to survive.

"We needed expert delivery staff and those would have to come from the private sector. It just doesn't have the expertise in dealing with private sector firms. It didn't have business expertise, that's why they brought me in. My concern was that we needed more delivery staff."

She said it had a revenue target of £680,000 for the 2012-13 financial year and claimed it was about halfway to meeting it before

she was dismissed four days after returning from a holiday.

Cabe has signed a dozen deals with clients including Wandsworth and Lewisham councils and Majid said the group had "positive" discussions with private developers including Stanhope, Argent, Lend Lease and Quintain.

But the chairman of Design Council Cabe, Paul Finch, said the group was on an even keel. "We are entering 2013 in good spirit and with a more robust structure than a year ago, with a growing list of local authorities

and others committing to our services and with a staff team that has the necessary attributes to deliver a convincing programme."

Majid said Finch had not spoken to her for weeks before she left but Finch said it was "a matter for regret that we have parted" and added that her probation period had been extended after chief executives were changed in the autumn. "Sometimes things don't work out and the best option is to start afresh," he added.

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## Squire's new Shell Centre puts on a South Bank show

A team of architects led by masterplanner Squire & Partners is set to submit plans to overhaul the Shell Centre site on London's South Bank.

The proposals have the existing Shell Centre at their heart and include seven

buildings by KPF, Patel Taylor, Grid Architecture and Squire & Partners, while the landscaping and public realm is being designed by Townshend Landscape Architects.

Chelsea Barracks developer Qatari Diar is working with

Canary Wharf Group on the scheme, which will see 75,000sq m of office space created.

The plans also include retail units, restaurants, cafés and 790 new homes. Chicheley Street will be widened to open

up the approach to the London Eye. A new square and on-site energy centre is proposed, along with a new pedestrian link to Waterloo station.

The development is scheduled for completion in 2019.

## Crossrail needs planning strategy, argues Farrell

Britain has no strategy for developing successful new urban centres around Crossrail's stations, Terry Farrell warned the London Assembly this week.

The new and rejuvenated stations will attract development and have the potential to create new town centres, he said, citing London Bridge and Canary Wharf as examples.

But this is not being guided by any strategy because Britain has a reactive approach to planning, he told a London Assembly inquiry into the future of town centres.

"It's hit and miss," he said. "We are still not planning for the implications of Crossrail. Proactive planning is not what we do in this country."

"When it does work is when the private sector owns a lot of the land around the station — for

example, Broadgate, King's Cross, Paddington. But that doesn't always lead to a successful town centre. Paddington still lacks the quality of being a town centre, whereas King's Cross has worked."

Farrell said Crossrail and High Speed 2 would strengthen existing town centres and have the potential to create new ones at places like Old Oak Common in west London, where he is already working.

"You ignore the potential of transport at one's peril," he said.

Other countries, such as Hong Kong where the transport authority controls the stations and the land around them, take a far more strategic approach, he added.

Shopping centres like Westfield and Bluewater were examples of how single private-sector developers were often more suc-



Crossrail stations like Paddington can create new urban centres.

cessful than the public sector at creating new places, he said.

This was not a sinister modern trend, he said: Marylebone High Street was a success because it had largely been in single ownership since the 18th century.

"Masterplanning from the public sector's point of view has not been very successful. I don't know what the answer is," he said.

Labour Assembly member Val Shawcross described the Cross-

rail stations, which are currently under construction, as a "string of pearls across London".

But she added: "I can't put my hand on my heart and say there is any planning going on to shape the impact of the rising land values. Why can't the mayor tell us he has a masterplan going on at every one of the Crossrail stations?"

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## Foster sees Asian turnover rise by 4%

Asia continues to be Foster & Partners' biggest single market with the firm putting a hike in revenues down to the number of countries it trades in.

Turnover from Asia, which includes Hong Kong and China, was up 4% to £52.1 million with growth in Europe, the UK and South America helping to offset falls in the Middle East and North America.

In his chairman's statement, Norman Foster said: "Looking back over the year my main emphasis has been leading the growth of the practice and its activities into North America and South America with important visits to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. This is in addition to one major Asian trip focused on the work of our Hong Kong office."

He added: "A recurring theme in these annual reports is my continuing strategy to encourage diversification. This can be in the range of services that we can provide, the scope of our building types and the geographical spread of our work."

Foster, who is 77, said he still takes an active role in the running of the business. "I continue to be the senior link with our studios in



Norman Foster  
Main emphasis this year has been leading growth into North and South America

Madrid and New York, as well as London, engaging directly with the local team, our clients and potential customers."

He added that he attends monthly client meetings on both coasts of the US.

Group revenue at the company was up by 1.4% to £161.5 million although underlying operating profit was down 7% to £46 million.

But £36.5 million in finance costs, including interest racked up on loans made after the business was restructured in 2007, again clobbered pre-tax profits which halved to £5.5 million in the year to April. Finance costs in 2011 were £36.2 million.

The salary of the highest paid director, who is not named but believed to be Foster himself, halved to £920,000.

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## Surprise announcement of Royal Opera House finalists

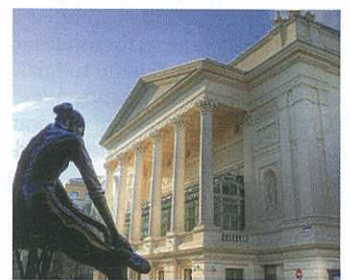
The board of the Royal Opera House made an unexpected decision last week to cut a longlist of seven down to two.

Wetherford Watson Mann Architects and Stanton Williams Architects were named as finalists in the Open Up competition. Other longlisted firms included Amanda Levet Architects, Caruso St John, Jamie Fobert Architects, Diller Scofidio & Renfro and Heatherwick Studio.

The news "surprised" the architects, which had not been expecting a decision for weeks. "We didn't think we'd hear until the new year," said one practice.

A spokesman for the Royal Opera House confirmed there had been a change in the competition schedule and that it is "likely" that it could change again to accommodate a new CEO.

A winner's announcement is



Opera house: schedule change.

scheduled for February but current chief executive Tony Hall is leaving to become director-general of the BBC in March.

The Open Up project aims to make the entrances and street-level public areas more open and inviting. Work is also planned to develop existing spaces.

Hall said: "We were extremely pleased by the richness and variety of the submissions received."