UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

Global Urban Research Unit

School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape
Global Urban Research Unit
University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Electronic Working Paper No 7

REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND
The 1993 Thomas Sharpe Memorial Lecture

Previously published in July 1994 as Working Paper No. 37
By Dr John Bridge, Chief Executive
Northern Development Company
Centre for Research in European Urban Environment
Department of Town and Country Planning
Newcastle University
Newcastle upon Tyne

Contact: kim.mccartney@ncl.ac.uk

ISBN NO. 0 905770 27 7

REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND

An issue that has kept many economists gainfully employed for some time, has frustrated many politicians and proved a fruitful area for sociologists and social policy students is the question of regional disparities.

All countries in the world suffer from the problem of regional disparities: that is differences in economic performance, income and employment between regions in a country - the North of England is just a special case of a much wider spread malaise.

This paper examines the past, present and future of the North of England and, in the light of what we know about the Region and its performance - both actual and projected - poses the question - has the North of England got a future?

I studied economics some thirty years ago, taught the subject at University level for a further ten years and have, for the past eighteen years been in the field of regional economic development. Throughout this whole period there has been a continual debate about the role of regions in national economic development, about the sorts of policies that might be applied to rectify regional imbalances and the time that is necessary for any ideas or policies to work.

There has never been any shortage of policies and initiatives. As far back as 1936 the English Industrial Estates Corporation was starting to develop the Team Valley Industrial Estate as a way of providing light industry alternatives to the heavy industrial base of the Region. In 1963 Lord Hailsham came to the North and apart from making the cloth cap famous also laid down the blueprint for the road network we now have in the Region. In 1977 the North of England Regional Strategy Team finally concluded its two year research programme into the Region and produced an analysis of the regional economy that was intended to lead to a strategy up to the year 2000. Unfortunately it is a report which has gathered dust but has a relevance, as will be see later.

More recently, regional issues have started to be looked at in the European Community context, and a recent paper on regional policy from the Commission spells out the concern.

> "Despite major efforts by the member states of the Community the Gulf dividing the regions has not been satisfactorily bridged. The creation of a Single Market encompassing twelve member states has magnified the challenge - it would be quite unacceptable to countenance, side by side in a Single Market, regions with such unequal resources. In a Europe with no internal frontiers, men and money will settle where the environment is most favourable. It is a race for which the strongest regions will be best equipped to win. The Community has, therefore, adopted a better endowed policy to strengthen economic and social cohesion and reduce regional disparities".

I quote this extract at some length to set a context for some of the issues I want to raise. First, the statement accepts that major differences between regions within a country or within the EC as a whole are unacceptable. Second, it is clear that the convergence of regions takes a long period of time and is probably achieved more easily in a regime of high growth rates rather than low ones. In this context, it may be that initiatives started 50 years ago are only now be demonstrating their worth!

I now want to go on and say something about the recent past in the North of England, because I think we need to understand what has happened to the regional economy over the last two decades before we try to make any assessment about what is likely to happen in the future.

First, a simple question of definitions. The North of England covers an area of some 15,500 sq km, with a population of 3.1 million. The Region has 33 local authorities. There are 21 travel-to-work areas in the North, 11 of which have assisted area status covering approximately 85% of the total working population. These areas are also contiguous with the objective 2 areas designated by the European Commission which affords access to funds under the European Regional Development Funds. A wide range of incentives for new industrial developments and relocations have existed in the Region since the early 1960s. These have included grants, training subsidies, advanced factories, prepared sites and infrastructure benefits.

The North of England has suffered from having the highest rate of unemployment in Britain since 1973 and it has been in the top three regions since 1948, when records as we understand them today were first kept. This is specific evidence of the major impact the decline of basic industries has had on the economy of the North. In fact, the North of England has had an industrial base which has consistently been in decline over a long period of time. In coal mining alone the Region has lost over 140,000 jobs since the early 1960s. However, this general decline started to accelerate in the mid 1970s and reached its peak in the early 1980s. As one indicator the North lost 185,000 jobs in manufacturing between 1978 and 1983 and between 1978 and 1984, the regional unemployment rate doubled.

Perhaps the starkest measure of this decline is the fact that in 1975, 35% of non-service employment in the region was in three sectors - coal, steel and shipbuilding. By September 1993, these same three sectors employed less than 2% of the total workforce. Apart from severe unemployment, the decline of the Region's traditional industrial base left a number of other legacies which influenced strategies for development. First, the output of much of the industrial sector went into domestic markets and in addition much of the output was destined for the capital goods markets or serviced industries which supplied capital goods.

Thus, the Region found its fortunes closely linked to the trade cycle and given the nature of the goods produced, suffered from the 'early in, late out' syndrome. Second, many of these industries were national industries, which just happened to have a significant presence in the North of England. This had two effects as far as the Region was concerned:

- These industries did not - in the main - establish a significant local supplier base: in other words, their purchasing patterns were essentially national ones and

- they operated large manufacturing units in the North of England, with a distinct lack of non-manufacturing functions, such as research and development, marketing, finance and exports.

The legacy, as these industries declined as rapidly as they did, was to leave a local economy which was bereft of small firms and had very few potential entrepreneurs who might have led off a domestic revival. In addition these traditional industries were by their very nature anti-enterprise: the wherewithal to develop new technologies, new products and new ideas lay elsewhere.

It is not surprising to note, with the above as background, that the Northern Region was hardly adding to its stock of small and medium enterprises at the beginning of the 1980s. Net VAT registrations in 1980 were below 1% - the lowest rate recorded in the UK.

In the early 1980s the North could be characterised as having a rapid decline in its industrial base - leading to high unemployment, a very low rate of company formation, little evidence of entrepreneurial activity and a poor industrial infrastructure. Added to this was the fact that the North was somewhat peripheral to the economic base of the UK and as countries in Europe started to move closer together, it seemed that the Region could become even more marginalised.

So, how could a strategy for regeneration be developed?

Any strategy of this nature has to have as its core policies to create jobs. Essentially new jobs can come from three sources: inward investment, expansion of the existing business base and the development of new enterprise. Incidentally, there is nothing dramatic or revolutionary about this analysis - it appeared in the Hailsham Report in 1963, in the Northern Regional Strategy in 1977 and formed the basis of the plan to set up the Northern Development Company in 1986. It is generally recognised that, except at times of high sustained rates of national economic growth, inward investment is usually the fastest way to secure new jobs and new enterprise the slowest, on the basis that in a local economy with high unemployment and low real incomes, uncertainty is high and expectations low, thus discouraging new enterprise.

Ideally a strategy would combine a mix of these three elements. In the short to medium-term, concentration would be on securing inward investment and using that new investment to stimulate the existing business base. This, in its turn, can lead to more enterprises being created which will, ultimately, lead to a regional economy more capable of self-sustaining growth. To put it another way, to bring about economic regeneration in the North required a strong dynamic. The analysis above showed that the internal dynamic was at the best weak and probably almost absent. The Region did not have a strong industrial base, was not close to major markets and there was little evidence of innovation and new firm growth.

An alternative strategy would be to rely on an external dynamic, the infusion of investment from outside the Region and/or the use of Government expenditure to stimulate economic growth. Government expenditure has been important in the Region in terms of advanced factories, prepared sites, road and rail developments etc. which produced a marketable product while the financial assistance to companies moving into the Region provided the incentive to target investment from both overseas and within the UK. Inward investment creates jobs, but it can have other effects as well. Such inward investment can generate new products, new markets, new technologies, new skills and new management practices. All these benefits have been experienced in the North of England and they have, in their turn, strengthened the local economic base. In this context the attraction of inward investment is not an end in itself but a means to an end. The task for the Region is to use inward investment as a means of developing a strong internal dynamic which can lead to long-term self-sustaining growth.

So, how has the Region fared?

Over the last decade the North of England has secured approximately 10% of all jobs coming into the UK through inward investment. The North contributes less than 5% of national GDP, so the job gain has been particularly significant.

Between January 1985 and September 1993 the North secured over 330 projects from overseas (greenfield, joint-ventures, acquisitions and expansions), which have resulted in over 38,000 jobs directly linked to the projects and a capital spend of over £3 billion. Assuming a local multiplier of one, which most economists would regard as conservative, this means that inward investment has helped to secure approximately 76,000 jobs for the North of England over a nine year period. Equally the impact of this investment on regional employment has been high, both absolutely and relatively, with the North of England outperforming all other regions in the UK, with the exception of Wales, between 1980 and 1991.

So what have been the gains other than employment? Well, of course, the majority of the new employment has been in manufacturing which is clearly substituting for what has been lost. Second, this new investment has opened up new markets and rapidly internationalised the regional economy. As one measure, the North now exports more of its output than any other region in the UK. Third, it has been observed nationally (through census of production data) that value-added per employee for inward investors in typically 40% higher than indigenous industry and capital spend up to 100% higher. So, it can be assumed that both value-added per employee and capital spend in the Region rose faster than the national average. Fourth, this investment has had significant effects on the local supplier base. The Nissan investment in Sunderland stands out as a clear example of what these effects can be.

By Summer 1993, Nissan was spending over £300 million per annum in the North sourcing components, supplies and services. Approximately 20 local companies have component or material contracts with Nissan and over £20 million is spent on local facilities and general service providers. In addition, since car production started in 1986, 19 new automotive suppliers have moved into the Region bringing the current total to 23. Almost 2,000 employees in the North East component supplies are totally dedicated to Nissan business and the full development of the Micra through this year and into 1994 will add over 50% to annual expenditure on supplies. Nissan is a major, but not unique, example of the way large inward investment projects can have local multiplier effects.

It is clear, however, that if inward investment is going to be used to stimulate growth at a local level, then that investment has to be "embedded" into the local economy. It was certainly a feature of some inward investment into the Region in the 1960s and 1970s that it had an "enclave" characteristic - that is the plant was sufficiently self-contained for it to have no visible impact on the local economy, other than through direct employment. It was this sort of investment that was often vulnerable as markets turned down which led to the identification of the 'branch-plant' syndrome; companies reducing their capacity at the margins, often in assisted areas such as the North of England.

Inward investment into the North over the last decade has had very different characteristics. First much of the investment - notably from the Far East - has come into the European Community to escape tariff barriers or anti-dumping legislation. This investment has had to meet local content rules which have put a premium on securing components locally. Second, this investment is servicing a European market often from a single manufacturing base: the economies of scale have then resulted in stronger local multiplier effects. This can be compared with the investment patterns in the 1960s when companies developed a plant for each market they served but often centralised purchasing and procurement for all their plants, which allowed little discretion to source locally.

Inward investment has had a profound effect on the economy of the North of England since the mid 1980s especially in terms of the new jobs created, the new markets and products introduced and the new skills and management practices developed.

However, the crucial issue for the future is the extent to which this investment is now embedded into the regional economy and what challenges it poses. At this point a cynic might say, it is all well and good to talk about the benefits of inward investment, but here we are in the autumn of 1993 and unemployment in the North is still the highest in the UK, outside Northern Ireland, our share of national GDP has actually fallen in the last ten years, disposable income - against the national average - has fallen by some 3%, on a number of social indicators we have high levels of deprivation, our levels of educational attainment are some of the lowest in the country and we only have one team in the premier league. Call that progress!

Yes, there has been progress but it has not necessarily been obvious to everyone nor has everybody shared in the benefits. Perhaps at this point I could introduce an analogy which I hope will illustrate the argument I now want make. The decline of the traditional industrial base is like pulling down an old Victorian house. At the end of the day we have a pile of rubble but in there some re-usable resources. To re-build the house we need some architects drawings, a floor plan, some new materials and, of course, planning permission.

We could argue all night about the architects' plans but let us say that the idea for a new house has been around for some time and if you want to check that all you need to do is go back and read the Northern Region Strategy Report prepared some fifteen years ago. What has happened over the last seven or eight years is that, with some new materials (inward investment), we have laid down a firm foundation, but like all foundations not much is visible to the naked eye. The next task is to get the ground floor sorted out and the move on up the house. When finished the house really has to stand two tests. Will it be habitable in by all those who wish to live in it (is there enough room for an extension) and will it stand up to the rigours of the national and international climates which will blow across the Region over the next decade.

Well, let's get to the ground floor.

One of the immediate problems is that, whilst much was achieved in the 1980s, the conditions under which economic regeneration can take place in the 1990s are different. Although the major shake-out of the traditional industrial base took place in the 1970s and the 1980s it is important to recognise that there are still areas where further declines in employment could occur. The most obvious are the residual elements in the coalmining and shipbuilding sectors. Whilst the absolute numbers are not as significant as a decade ago, it has to be recognised that the full effect of a total closure of the North East coal field and the virtual elimination of shipbuilding (excluding some ship repair capability) could involve up to 10,000 further jobs, allowing for some primary multiplier effects. In addition there are also some industrial sectors which prospered in the 1980s which are operating now in less buoyant markets. Prime amongst these is the offshore sector, where up to 10,000 jobs could be at risk if there is no significant upturn in orders for both platforms and topside fabrications. At the same time the chemical industry is continuing gradually to shed labour. This means that (a) there is likely to be a further collapse of the traditional industrial base and (b) unemployment generally is still likely to remain high.

We have had the highest rate of unemployment in Britain since 1973 and there is little evidence at the moment that this position will change.

This in itself presents a major problem because, if unemployment is not declining, a perception can easily develop that the economic regeneration efforts are simply not working. The truth is that we have to run hard to stand still and without the programmes that are in place, the Region would be moving backwards: without the hard running and hard work, the North would be a wasteland.

Whilst unemployment in the Region has remained persistently high, the position with respect to national unemployment has changed. Over the past three years, there has been a gradual evening out of the differentials between areas such as the North and North West and the more prosperous regions of the South. The simply facts are that areas not only in central London but in many parts of the South and South East now have unemployment rates which are around or, in some cases, above the regional rate for the North of England. At a regional level it is vitally important to continue to argue that unemployment in the North is structurally based, long-term and immensely difficult to remove, whereas much of the unemployment in the South is recessionrelated. However, it has to be recognised that politicians will not necessarily see it this way. An evening out of unemployment rates could have the effect of diluting regional issues and hence making it more difficult for the Region to put its case at a national level. To pursue our analogy again - we might find it more difficult getting the building materials we want!

Let me return for a minute to inward investment. The earlier analysis suggested that there are two areas where some re-assessment is required. First, it has to be accepted that the inward investment that the Region might secure in the 1990s is not likely to be of the same sort nor of the same volume. The large greenfield investments in the Region in the 1980s came here in response to the need for international companies to be inside the European Community as it moved towards the completion of the Single Market. That investment has now occurred and it would be unsafe to assume that the 1990s will be characterised by such major new greenfield investments: there will be some but the competition will be more severe. As to the sort of investments the Region can expect there is likely to be a shift towards the expansion of existing investments, joint ventures and acquisitions. This clearly poses questions on how the inward investment effort is structured and how it is managed.

As to competition, the North typically found itself in the 1980s in competition with three or four alternative locations. Now that number is more likely to be two or three times higher. It is not only countries in the European Community that have become more active, but also the newly emerging states in East and Central Europe. Equally, a company looking to serve a world market, as opposed to a European one, may well be looking at sites across the pacific rim, South East Asia and Central America as well as Europe. It is this globalisation of production which poses our second problem. Going back twenty years it was quite common for any multinational company to invest in manufacturing capacity in every market it served. So, if in Europe there were eight markets, then eight plants were put up. The need for international companies to operate at world-class manufacturing standards, the intensity of competition within markets and the creation of more uniformity in the regulatory environment have all created a situation today where the whole of the European market can be serviced from one plant and the world from perhaps two or three. This development could have serious consequences for the North of England. Major multinationals are looking right now at their spread of investments in Europe and starting to take decisions about how much capacity they need for the future and where. Quite simply, the Northern plant will have to prove that it is the most efficient to survive!

This sounds like a good time to stop the building and have a tea break - sorry it cannot be done. We are not just talking here about inward investment. All companies in the North of England are working in a highly competitive international environment. These local companies may not be selling into international markets but they may well be selling onto a company that is. Operating at world-class manufacturing standards means that not only has a company got to have competitive cost structures, but it must also insist on such cost structures for its suppliers. To achieve this, many companies are beginning to develop partnerships with their suppliers, operating on an open-book basis, to secure long-term cost reductions but also to secure long-term growth in the supplier chain. This type of effort is now being concentrated in a smaller number of suppliers - in other words, to achieve the necessary economies and growth, major companies are cutting down on the number of suppliers, but providing those that are left with a more secure future. Clearly, there are threats and opportunities here for Northern companies.

NDC recently surveyed twenty companies in the Region, covering a range of sectors and company size. The common denominator was that every company was operating internationally and was looking at its local supplier base. The overall purchasing budget for this sample of twenty companies was over £1.5 billion. These companies currently have 1,823 regional suppliers: 60% intend to reduce the number of suppliers by 1996 and 90% intend to introduce a supplier development programme. The average reduction in the supplier base planned is approximately 45% - this puts 820 suppliers in the Region at risk. This is just one example of the changing environment which could impact on the small and medium sized companies in the Region.

So, we have the foundations in place but there is a lot of competition for the materials we need to finish the house. If we are able to respond to the challenges I have just outlined with respect to increasing international competition, we might be able to complete the ground floor, but what about the upper floors? Those depend on our ability to nurture and grow new companies. The development and growth of indigenous companies is the key issue for the North of England in the 1990s which must complement the continuing drive to secure further inward investment for the Region. There has been some growth in small firms over the last decade but the picture is not entirely encouraging.

As I mentioned earlier, the traditional industrial base was not conducive to small firm development but gradually as this base was eroded away new firms did emerge. Between 1980 and 1991 the North increased its stock of firms by 21% (from 39,000 to 47,000) but the nation did better - just over 33%! As an absolute minimum the Region as a whole must get up to the national average. How can we do this? First, we need to continue to encourage people to start new businesses, but do it in such a way that fewer fail than has been the case in the past. Second, and this is more important, we need to see more companies progressing beyond that crucial start-up phase to become mature, high growth, high employment companies. Unfortunately this Region does not have a good record in developing this sort of company as research done here in Newcastle by Professor Gallagher at the end of the 1980s showed.

If the Region is to secure growth of more SMEs and the creation of more new starts, it is important that there is a clear understanding of the types of services and their delivery which are needed to achieve this position. Basically, the processes by which companies are formed and developed can be broken into three distinct phases:

> INTEREST: At this point individuals, groups of people are seeking advice on how a business proposition can be developed. The ideas may be at a very rudimentary level or may be the subject of some initial business planning.

The most important issue is that access for the would-be entrepreneur should be hassle-free and local. Equally, it is reasonable to argue that the level and quality of service should be the same across the Region.

<u>DEVELOPMENT:</u> Once a business plan has gone through an initial screening process and some consideration has been given to developing a full business plan, the idea moves to the implementation stage, where individuals need help with starter premises, finance, technical and marketing support. As these services are by their very nature more sophisticated, it makes sense to concentrate them in a smaller number of outlets and it can be assumed at this stage that the individual using the services is likely to be more willing to travel greater distances to achieve what they want.

<u>GROWTH</u>: As small companies successfully complete their first stage of development, it is important that they are introduced to higher value-added services, which will support second-round and third-round development. Such services would include international marketing, exports, product development, new markets, finance, management development and training as examples. Typically this level of service could be provided at a regional level.

The challenge from the above is clear.

Small to Medium size Enterprise development in the 1990s is going to take place in an environment which is more competitive than that experienced in the 1980s and a premium will be placed on ensuring that survival rates for SMEs are improved. This implies that whilst support should continue to encourage the overall growth of the SME market, by ensuring that the growth of new starts is maintained, the main emphasis must lie in providing the environment and services which ensures that more SMEs move through the development phase to become fast-growing in companies, operating in international markets with a good record of product development and innovation. The foregoing analysis suggests that support for business development and growth should be at three levels (regional, sub-regional and local) and in structuring this support care should be taken that individual organisations do not compete unnecessarily in the provision of services nor provide overlap across these three levels.

In summary, on this point, local business support needs to concentrate on providing easy access for would-be entrepreneurs and operate within a network which will ensure that any initial interest is not allowed to evaporate or diminish because the support is perceived to be fragmented and of varying quality. So, the priority at a local level needs to be about quality of provision and consistency of provision across local areas. The existing base of companies is one of the Region's biggest assets. A priority must be to develop these companies, many currently serving local markets, into companies servicing national and international markets. To do this effectively, companies exhibiting real growth potential need to be identified and then receive appropriate and focused support. The growth of the existing company base will in its turn encourage more people to enter the market which will lead to the long-term objective of the North of England - to achieve self-sustaining growth.

Lest this be seen as head in the clouds stuff, just consider this. There are about 50,000 companies in the North of England. If each of these companies were able to expand sufficiently to take on three more employees over a five year period, unemployment in the Region would virtually disappear.

It should not be surprising that many other regions in the UK are going through exactly the same thought processes and have come to the same conclusions, so we have, in the North of England, to be faster and better.

So far we have talked about building our regional house, knowing that materials are scarce, but we have not said much about how the completed property will stand up to wear and tear in the national and international marketplace. Will we have negative equity in ten years time or will we be riding high on the property boom, with people flooding in to take a slice of the action? Nor have we said much about some factors within the Region itself which could conspire against the completion of this grand project.

Let's look at some of these internal issues first. There are clearly concerns in the Region about the overall quality of the infrastructure in terms of roads, rail connections, telecommunication provision, industrial site provision, derelict land clearance and each of these is significant in its own right but there is one issue which is more significant than any other and that is education and training. We have to admit that the North is at the bottom of the pile, or close to it, on a number of measures, relating to educational attainment and skills. The process of economic regeneration I have just described to you could grind to a halt if companies, and public agencies for that matter, cannot secure the competencies and skills that they need. Let me provide one example. Each year for the past four years NDC has polled all overseas investors and asked them their opinions on a number of subjects including labour recruitment and skills. Two points emerge from the data collected over the last four years. First, whilst there is a generally high rating for the quality of labour in the North, the lowest ratings occur in the technical and skilled worker categories. When companies were asked about present and future shortages, skilled engineering and technician occupations were the ones identified more than any other, with typically over 60% of respondents expressing concerns. This is an area where, in particular, the role of the Region's Training and Enterprise Councils will be vital.

There are two major external issues which are inter-related. I referred at the beginning to the perceived peripherally of the Northern Region both in the context of the UK and the Community as a whole. There are concerns at a European Community level that there will develop a strong economic zone within the Community, variously described as a blue banana, sausage etc., with a potential wasteland around the edges. One way of countering this is to develop alternative trade patterns within Europe as a whole and this is why the Northern Arc strategy, linking as it does Ireland, Scotland and the North with Northern European ports, is so essential.

The second issue is to ensure that Government and Government policy recognises this peripherality, notably in the overall application of resources and the ways in which policy is organised. The North does not always derive benefit from national policies which just happen to be applied in the Region; what we need are policies that recognise a regional strategy and are tailored to the needs of the Region. This is true across the whole range of Government policies but is clearly most relevant from my point of view in terms of policies related to industry and employment.

So, has the Region got a future? In terms of the re-building that has gone over the past ten years and the clear commitment from people within the Region, the answer to that question is yes. But there are a lot of obstacles to be overcome and I do believe that we need a new national policy framework for the regions, which recognises that individual regions are different and therefore require differing policies. I think that is a view Thomas Sharpe would have concurred with.

About Thomas Sharpe

He was appointed a Lecturer in Architecture at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1937 and Reader in Town Planning in 1943 and was enormously influential in the setting up of what was the first undergraduate planning course in the country, closely linked with landscape design. He was President of the Town Planning Institute.

He was always concerned to reach the public with his ideas. His consultancy reports are clear and accurate and his *Town Planning* 1940 and *The Anatomy of the Village* 1946 were both published by *Penguin.* Also he joined John Betjeman and others in producing the *Shell Country Guide* - Sharpe doing Northumberland and a joint North/Durham.

Thomas Sharpe was an extraordinarily influential writer and practitioner stretching from his publication of *Town and Countryside* in 1932, *English Panorama* in 1936 to *Town and Townscape* in 1968, with numerous consultancies in some of the most important cities in England - *Cathedral City* - a plan for Durham 1944, *Exeter Phoenix* 1946, *Oxford Re-planned* 1948

Dr Sharpe's widow, in his memory, established funds to enable a biennial public lecture, sponsored by the Department of Town and Country Planning at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Northern Branch of the Royal Town Planning Institute, a Design Prize for students in the Department of Town and Country Planning, and a contribution to the Department's Seminar Library.

About Dr John Bridge

The 1993 Thomas Sharpe Lecture was given on 25th October, by **Dr John Bridge** Chief Executive of the Northern Development Company, since 1988.

NDC is a private sector/public sector initiative set up to co-ordinate and develop programmes which lead to employment growth in the North of England. It is the largest agency of its type in the UK and in 1991 was named as 'European Development Agency of the Year'.

John Bridge was born in Lancashire and educated at Lancaster Royal Grammar school and Durham University, where he obtained a BA in Geography, before travelling to the United States to take an MA in Economics. He returned to Durham University to lecture in Economics and also became a Fellow in the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, where he completed his PhD on banking developments in the Lebanon.

In 1975 he left academic life to take up the post of Head of Research and Industrial Development for the North of England Development Council in Newcastle. In 1985 he moved to Leeds to become the Chief Executive of the Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association 1985-1988. In his work since 1975, John Bridge has been closely involved in the process of regional economic regeneration, devising programmes to attract new employment into old industrial areas.

John Bridge is Chairman of the Northern Regional Management Centre, sits on the Boards of the Northern Engineering Centre, Teesside Tomorrow, The Newcastle Initiative, Birtley Enterprise Management, Teesside University and the Childrens' Foundation and has close links with Government, industry and the academic sector in the Region sitting on many Committees and ad hoc bodies. He is also a member of the European Government Business Relations Council.