

## DESIGNS ON A BRIGHT FUTURE

Architects in Yorkshire have endured a turbulent few years, but with some optimism returning to the property markets, **Ben Pindar** investigates if they are finally back on the road to recovery or still facing an uncertain future

**W**hen the property bubble burst in 2008 few in the industry felt it more than the architects as the construction sector was decimated. Then, in a cruel twist of fate, the government's crackdown on public spending in 2010 delivered another crushing blow, axing the last lifeline many firms had been clinging to.

In the depths of the recession, many projects were shelved or scrapped as market confidence plummeted. With soaring national debts, the public purse was slammed shut and ambitious redevelopment plans were axed.

Despite the double hammer blow, architectural practices in Yorkshire are emerging in a remarkably upbeat mood. And many believe there are opportunities to flourish once again.

The latest Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Future Trends Survey indicated that national confidence has weakened slightly in recent months but, while Yorkshire's practices readily admit it is still very tough, they claim to be seeing an upturn in work and have high hopes for the coming months.

"It has been very hard for everybody in the sector, however, projects are starting to move again and people aren't being as cautious as they have been in the past," says Matthew Jones, a director at Bowman Riley in Leeds.

Emma England, regional director of RIBA, can testify to that: "It is still very difficult out there. Architects have effectively been in recession since 2008 and the industry has suffered terribly. Having said that, we are cautiously optimistic as things are beginning to happen and there's real potential on the horizon."

Abi Van Hoorebeek, practice manager at Swanke Hayden Connell in Sheffield,



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**EMMA ENGLAND**

says they have seen a strong upturn in enquiries, though: "Developers are starting to think about building again – that is a very positive sign for our industry. There is an awful lot sat in the pipeline and all we need is for someone to take the plunge. It's definitely starting to look much more positive."

Retail has remained relatively strong during the downturn, driven primarily by the big supermarkets' relentless expansion plans, but residential and commercial property has been sluggish and the public sector work has all but vanished. "The food stores are still a big

growth area and I don't see that changing any time soon," says Paul Mitchell, chairman of the Harris Partnership. "The office sector is still very limited, particularly in the north, but I expect we will start to see some momentum building in the coming months.

"A lot of big funds are now looking to revive existing schemes and they will need architects to revise the plans because the market has changed."

With regard to regional differences, the Future Trends Survey indicates that work is increasing in the south of the country and practices in London, the south of England, Wales and the west are more optimistic about future workloads than the rest of the country.

In Yorkshire, Leeds is at the forefront of the recovery while Wakefield has the stunning new Hepworth Gallery. Architects in Sheffield and Hull also believe both cities are on the brink of something great. Van Hoorebeek says: "There are more opportunities in Leeds at the moment, but Sheffield will start to pick up soon and it is already starting to look like a city of real importance. The regeneration works in Sheffield have been a real quality product and the plans in the pipeline will help to create really vibrant spaces that are fully integrated into our communities and city life."

Richard Scott of Surface Architects argues that Hull is the city with the greatest potential for regeneration, and is well-placed to bounce back from the downturn. He says: "There is a fantastic opportunity as Hull is ready to grasp opportunities and it has big ambitions. It isn't afraid of being challenged by architecture and has global aspirations. The decision-makers see opportunities in change and the world is changing.



**HEPWORTH GALLERY** Opened this year to critical acclaim

It's all about how positive people are going to be. Hull is very positive and that will become a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Bowman Riley is fully committed to Leeds and will move down the road into new offices at Toronto Square, one of the city's most exciting new developments, next month. Jones says: "We believe you need to be in the centre of Leeds to grow and develop."

Despite the first signs of optimism, the decision to cut public sector spending has been a devastating blow for most practices, which were tied in to a range of multimillion-pound development schemes. The Building Schools for the Future initiative was worth an estimated £2.7bn to architecture practices nationally, but the funding stream was one of the first cuts made when the coalition government came to power.

Scott says: "Most practices are feeling it in one way or another. It is a very serious situation."

Mitchell agrees, but believes it may benefit the industry in the end. He explains: "The cuts are tearing the profession apart and many have been badly affected. However, I don't believe the commercial sector will be affected



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**RICHARD SCOTT**

and it may even benefit. In the long term architects may even find new revenue streams by helping the public sector to save money and uncover new ways of driving projects forward."

The surge in competition has been a headache for surviving practices. With many forced to make two rounds of job cuts – first during the recession and then again as a result of the spending cuts – a lot of architects have taken the



opportunity to establish their own practices, effectively saturating the market. Van Hoorebeek says: "A few years ago we would face a maximum of 20 other bids when we went for a job. Now you are up against 50 or 60 rival bids and it is very hard."

Jones adds: "It is a lot more competitive. A lot of architects who were made redundant have set up their own practices and are battling for the work. We are surviving and we have started recruiting again to ensure we have an unrivalled set of skills."

Inevitably, after such a prolonged period of economic gloom, the market has changed significantly and architects are having to look to new areas for work. Healthcare projects have escaped the majority of the cuts and some practices are actively seeking these schemes; while the resurgence in refurbishment plans in the tired office sector is generating excitement across the commercial property sector.

Like so many other companies across the business spectrum, architects are now looking overseas for lucrative opportunities in the burgeoning markets of Russia, India, China, the Middle East and Brazil. England says there are a plethora of opportunities for architects abroad but while UK companies are very desirable, it can still be hard to break into foreign markets.

"The Arab spring has hurt some of the overseas markets, but there are still some huge opportunities to be had," she says. "It is quite literally a different world, and it can be very hard to break into unless you are a 'starchitect' and can bring a big brand with you. The design expertise of UK architects is really highly valued but we are still struggling to get

## SWANKE HAYDEN CONNELL INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

STOCK BUILDING, JOINER STREET, SHEFFIELD S3 8GW

SECTOR:  
COMMUNITY HEALTHCARESECTOR:  
COMMERCIAL OFFICE FIT-OUTSECTOR:  
MENTAL HEALTHCARE

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## Mansfield Community Hospital

Mansfield

The redeveloped Mansfield Community Hospital, is a landmark for the local community, positioned within the town centre to provide ease of access for both staff and visitors.

The new entrance building contains a café, patient information and administration centre overlooking a landscaped courtyard providing a legible public arrival point. Wayfinding to all departments is orientated from the new entrance building, with its geometry emphasising its role as a hub between hospital and community.

Building expansion elsewhere on the site have streamlined clinical functions, thereby improving patient experience. Existing wards have been renovated to fully integrate new and existing interior environments.

This project was part of the overall strategy for transforming the health delivery system for Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Mansfield District PCT as part of a larger PFI project.

## New Accommodation Project

Sheffield

As part of a multi disciplinary team SHCA helped identify a suitable office building in Sheffield for the relocation of two Government departments. In parallel, they consulted with user groups to develop a workplace brief incorporating new ways of working and a corresponding optimal model layout.

This model was used to inform the selection of the City centre building. SHCA then adapted it to suit the physical site constraints, developing a full fit-out and interior design scheme. Though designed within a modest budget, the interior is stylish yet timeless and the client has expressed high levels of satisfaction after occupation

The project achieved BREEAM 'excellent' and has been shortlisted for Building Magazine's 2010 Sustainability Awards (best office refurbishment category), RICS Pro Yorkshire Awards and Sheffield Telegraph Environmental awards.

## Learning, Development and Conference Centre

Rampton Hospital

The new LDCC at Rampton High Security Hospital is a project commissioned by Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, delivered as a P21 scheme through Laing O'Rourke. Rampton Hospital offers a number of national mental health and learning disability services and aspires to build upon its status as a centre of excellence for both clinical and support services.

The new building provides modern educational facilities for face to face teaching using the latest technology, as well as electronic learning facilities available to all staff. The quality of the facilities was designed to enable hosting of both local and national events, thus promoting the Hospitals status.

The project is assessed as BREEAM very good, with layout and materials designed to form part of the hospital strategic sustainability agenda.

**bowmanrileyarchitects**

## BOWMAN RILEY ARCHITECTS

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, 38 YORK PLACE, LEEDS LS1 2ED

SECTOR:  
RESIDENTIAL/LEISURE



### Trans Gardens

Guwahati, Assam, India

Bowman Riley Architects have designed a 200,000ft<sup>2</sup> luxury residential development with a private Members Club in Guwahati, India.

The residential component is comprised of 5 high specification apartment towers, and the 30,000ft<sup>2</sup> Club House provides the surrounding apartment owners with unrivalled facilities.

The seven storey Club House will provide banqueting facilities, guest apartments, a grand entrance lobby with associated conference facilities, a coffee bar and meeting rooms. A roof-top sky lounge will provide direct access to a revolving restaurant at the very pinnacle of the project. This will be further enhanced by squash courts, a multigym, spa and roof-top external swimming pool.

This c.£50 million project is currently under construction and is due for completion in 2013.

SECTOR:  
COMMUNITY



### Culture Fusion

Bradford, West Yorkshire

Bowman Riley Architects have worked closely with the Bradford YMCA to design Culture Fusion, a centre for the young people of Bradford.

The £7.7 million BREEAM 'Excellent' rated project involves the refurbishment of an existing 6 storey former mill building on Thornton Road with a substantial and modern 5 storey addition to create approximately 3,150m<sup>2</sup> of space.

The completed project will give young people access to support services including NHS clinics, emergency accommodation units, counseling and vocational training; all under one roof. Recreational activities provided include a climbing wall, abseiling, recording and performance studios, gym and dance studios and a rooftop events venue.

Culture Fusion has an anticipated completion date of September 2011.

SECTOR:  
COMMERCIAL



### HML Headquarters Building

Skipton, North Yorkshire

Bowman Riley Architects have recently completed the 100,000 ft<sup>2</sup> Headquarters building for HML in Skipton. The project has just won the prestigious RICS Pro-Yorkshire Commercial Award for 2011.

The project will accommodate 850 staff with an executive suite, a specialist training suite, resource centre, recruitment and human resources functions along with café and restaurant, full servicing facilities, storage and plant.

The BREEAM 'Very Good' rated building is designed to minimise the impact on its surroundings and will incorporate energy saving features such as biomass boilers, rainwater harvesting, solar hot water panels, passive chilled beams, extensive solar shading and photovoltaic cells. The HML Headquarters building also presents the town with a distinctive piece of architecture for the 21st Century, and will be a catalyst for future development within the area.

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involved in the production issues. We are seeing a shift towards local partnerships to help get involved in the production aspect of the business."

Jones admits that breaking into overseas markets has been tough and says Bowman Riley has employed a local architect at an office in India to help the practice cash in on the booming economy. "It's a real chicken and egg scenario. Developers won't take you seriously until you have two or three substantial projects under your belt in their country," he says. "The one thing working in our favour is their love for a westernised approach to design. They have aspirational middle classes in India and want English architects to give their projects a bit of kudos."

Van Hoorebeek says Swanke Hayden Connell had a number of offices abroad, which helped during the recession: "There are great opportunities abroad and their markets have picked up far quicker than here. Picking up overseas

contracts has meant we've been able to use the staff here who have been quieter and it has made us far more resilient during the downturn. There is a real hallmark of quality associated with British architects and we are in demand across the world."

Closer to home, England believes that one of the biggest opportunities lies in prime minister David Cameron's desire to create a Big Society. She says: "Working with communities through the Localism Agenda offers some great opportunities. The agenda is all about community engagement in the next generation of projects and architects are ideally placed to help achieve that."

"Architects have the ability to help communities understand the development process and deal with the planning system. It's a new revenue stream for the sector and we are eagerly waiting to see what happens."

Looking to the future, Yorkshire's architects believe they are on the brink

of great things. Yes, they expect the tough climate to continue, but their message is clear: there are opportunities to flourish, provided they have the drive and ambition to chase them and adapt to the changing landscape.

"In this climate you can't stand still and you have to keep adapting and working hard for new business – if you are doing this you will succeed and emerge at the forefront of the pack as things return to normal," says Jones.

Scott believes the industry is standing on the precipice of an exciting era. But "architects can't sit back and wait for the projects to arrive. We need to look at cause and effect and start initiating projects ourselves. Business is cyclical and if you are passive you will find it painful. When the economy isn't reliable you have to be more creative," he says. "You have to be smart at the minute but I couldn't be more excited. A lot is starting to happen and those who are saying the outlook is gloomy are blind."

## MAJOR YORKSHIRE ARCHITECTURE PRACTICES

Table only contains firms that have completed questionnaires. \*Previous year's figures. Source: Insider research

Firm	Location	Y&H architects	Y&H partners/directors	Y&H staff	Number of projects	Major projects
1 BDP	Sheffield	44	11	81	58	Hestington East Campus, University of York, 28,500 sq m, 600-bed halls of residence, c£68m Southmead Hospital, Bristol, 110,000 sq m approx, £280m approx
2 Hadfield Cawkwell Davidson	Sheffield	41	7	105	345	Surrey Satellite Technology R&D building, Surrey Research Pk, Guildford, 4,500 sq m J Sainsbury - new store, Slough, 9,800 sq m, n/a
3 Aedas	Leeds, Huddersfield	21	8	132	850	Cliffe Hill Primary School, Halifax, 2,185 sq m, £5.5m Middlesborough school (BSF), 36,485 sq m, £72.3m
4 P+HS	Stokesley, Leeds	18	6	52	71	Primary Care Centre, Houghton-le-Spring, 7,500 sq m, £25m Nottingham Hospital Oncology Centre, 3,500 sq m, £15m
5 Bond Bryan	Sheffield	18	5	50	28	Joseph Rowntree School, York, 12,045 sq m, £28m Newcastle University - King's Gate, 8,000 sq m, £22m
6 Bowman Riley	Skipton, Leeds	16	4	51	150	HML HQ, Skipton, 100,000 sq ft, £18m Residential apartments and clubhouse, Guwahati, Assam, India, 230,000 sq ft, £50m approx
7 DWA	York	15	7	34	49	Haxby Care Home, York, 4,100 sq m, 6.5m Amberwood care home, Cheltenham, 3,350 sq m, 66 bed, £6.7m
8 Harris Partnership	Wakefield	13	6	51	100+	Broad St Plaza, Halifax, £22m Travelodge, Hull, 80 bed, £2.5m
9 HLM	Sheffield	11	4	51	33	Chaucer Business & Enterprise College, Wordsworth Av, Sheffield, 7.6 hectares, £2.6m University of Sheffield Arts Tower refurbishment, 7,200 sq m, £12m
10 Ingenium Archial	Leeds	9	4	29	220	Refurbishment of Market Street Arcade, Leeds, 30,000 sq ft, £3.6m Extension to Harrogate Conference Centre, 35,000 sq ft, £9m
11 AXIS	Sheffield	9	4	20	100+	HSBC branches, nationwide, 100+ branches, £10k-£1m Gateway Plaza, Barnsley, 50,000 sq m, £42m
12 WCEC	Chesterfield	8	4	80	100	Penistone Market, Penistone, 8,000 sq ft, £1m Morrisons store, Kirkby in Ashfield, 60,000 sq ft, £10m
13 Robinson Design	Shipley	8	5	38	70	Hope Academy, St Helens, £25m Mixed-use scheme, Hull, £70m
14 Acanthus WSM	Leeds	8	2	22	25+	The Beeches, Tadcaster, 50 apartments, restaurant, coffee bar, retail units, £6.6m Student studios, Sheffield, 129 studios, £6m
15 DLG	Leeds	8	2	20	100+	Rudding Park Hotel And Spa, Harrogate, 48 bedrooms, spa, gym and library, £7m The Majestic, Leeds, £1m approx
16 Architecture519.com	Leeds	8	3	20	18	Centenary Quay, Southampton, 5 acres of 'brownfield regeneration', £17m Brampton, Cambridgeshire, 49 acres of 'brownfield' regeneration, n/a
17 Stephen George & Partners	Leeds	7	3	12	45+	Siemens - turbine facility/office HQ, Teal Park, Lincoln, 78,000 sq ft/48,000 sq ft, £11million Marks & Spencer - distribution facility/offices, Rooley Ln, Bradford, 1m sq ft/57,000 sq ft, £30m
18 Browne Smith Baker	Leeds, Hull	7	4	12	55	The Stages Academy - hostel, training and enterprise centre, Middlesbrough, 48 bedsits and apartments, £4.5 million The Crossings - hostel, training and enterprise centre, Great Union St, Hull, 46 bedsites, £4m
19 Cartwright Pickard	Leeds	7	4	10	14	High Fisher Gate, Doncaster, 8,189 sq m, £9.5m Wakefield civic offices, 11,576 sq ft, £15m
20 SALT	Beverley, Scarborough	5	3	12	47	St John's Youth Centre, St Georges Rd, Hull, 460 sq m, £1m Whitby Marina on shore facilities, 380 sq m, £700k
21 Darnton EGS	Leeds	4	3	45	100+	Marks & Spencer Gemini, Warrington, 2,500 sqm, £18m Creative arts building, University of Huddersfield, 5,500 sq m, £14m
22 Swanke Hayden Connell	Sheffield	4	1	12	5	Rampton Hospital, learning development and conference centre, Retford, Nottinghamshire, 8,400 sq ft, £2.8m Scarborough Spa and South Bay redevelopment, 96,100 sq ft, £6.6m
- Careyjones*	Leeds	20	5	60	100+	Candle House, Granary Wharf, Leeds, 160 apartments, 22 storeys Yorkshire Water Offices, Clarence Dock, Leeds, 60,000 sq ft