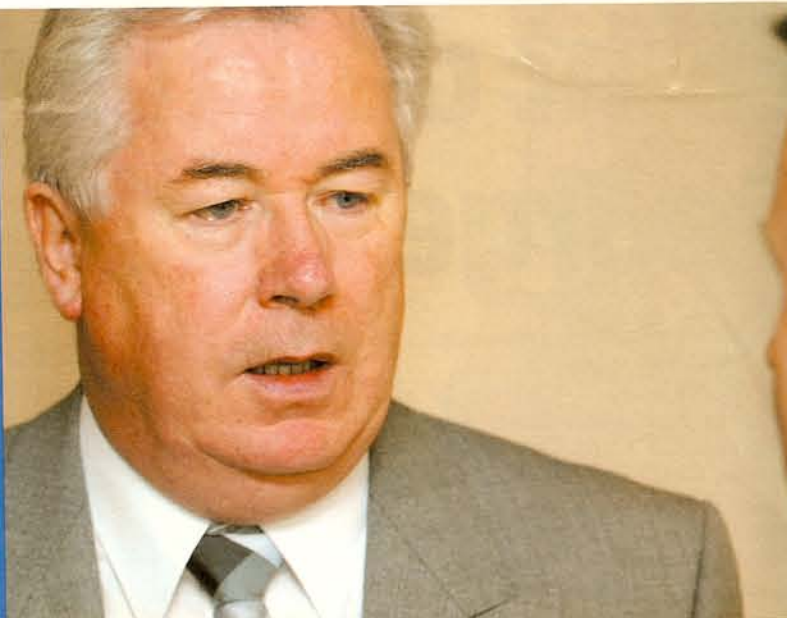


It's good to talk

The last instalment of coverage of a Shopping Centre round table debate, organised by Corporate Speak, covers the environment, maximising mall revenue and the forum's thoughts on the greatest challenge currently facing the shopping centre industry



The forum was asked: do schemes and management do enough to minimise the impact of the business on the environment? Do they work with retailers on these issues and offer guidance? Areas such as waste management, energy control and recycling best practice could all be promoted in a shopping centre.

"The environment is very important for us," said Paul Wray. "We have extensive practices in place to promote good practice, although there can be a danger of overburdening the property manager.

"We have annual competitions where we award best centre manager, environmental awards, etc – for example, turning all the lights off when certain areas are vacated. The managers who've won are proud."

John Prestwich pointed out that environmental measures are costly to initiate and are not that cost-effective, but are rather more about best practice. "Despite that, ACR Commercial Property have still adopted, and continue to support, all relevant policies," he added.

David Revill said most management effort was directed towards making money. "The environment is not top of the agenda," he remarked. "The investment community doesn't care."

Philip Evans brought the discussion back to earth by commenting that

BCSC preaches an environment-friendly policy: "Managing agents do recognise the value of such policies even though there can be a high outlay for little perceived gain.

"There are real benefits, such as measuring output in terms of electricity used, and measuring things where you can see reductions. The rewards come after a lot of hard work.

"There are the ISO 14000 standards which represent and involve more than energy-saving policies and waste recycling. It can extend to all sorts of items – like the stationery used, type of electricity, water, even to the way the toilets are flushed."

"Not all centres have an environmental policy," said Gary Burrows. "We obtained the necessary capital investment from the landlord

to cover the purchase and installation of solar panels. It was not cost-effective to bring the service provider into the loop. Usually the landlord will spend the money in these situations."

Peeter Pargma related the case of a retailer with a policy whereby all waste packaging and cardboard was bundled up and passed to head office. "Many retailers buy into this approach," Pargma said. "But some have still to come on board. All the waste was transported to a plant where it was compressed into blocks which were then burned in a power station to produce electricity."

Martin Jones pointed out that such arrangements depend on the volume of material shipped. "Centre managers have to take control," he said. "You need a team of five or six to do a milk

run, compressing material after separating into relevant types and sizes. You get £30 per tonne of compressed cardboard. Some schemes can afford the necessary equipment, others can't."

"There are storage problems for cardboard too," said John Kelleher. "And you only get £12 per tonne at Christmas for example, when there's glut on the market."

Consensus was reached on the issue of energy consultants being employed to bulk-buy gas and electricity for defined periods. "But the whole issue has got to make sense for everybody," said James Turner.

The discussion turned to maximising mall revenue. Do managers/surveyors do enough to realise the potential of mall space? consumers want more or less choice and do retailers want retail merchandising units?

"Maximise the mall," Turner exhorted. "This means more than deploying mall carts, though. Some per cent of monies generated from non in-mall shops derives from carts."

"There's definitely a cross-over between clutter and adding true value. They can become breeding grounds for new retailers. Bringing new retailers on short-term lets, vacancies or carts, is a good thing

Evans said centres should be

The dramatis personae ... those taking part

- Gary Burrows, centre manager, Broad Street Mall, Reading
- Philip Evans, board member, BCSC
- Martin Jones, md, Europa Facilities Services
- John Kelleher, centre manager, One Stop, Birmingham
- Peeter Pargma, md, Pargma Portfolio Management
- John Prestwich, partner, ACR

Commercial Property

- David Revill, director, Boulton Group
- James Turner, md, Balmain Asset Management
- Paul Wray, associate director – retail group, Hermes
- Pat Morgan, editor, Shopping Centre
- David Bradshaw, debate organiser, Corporate Speak