



SARA WILDE  
CHAIR OF MERSEY WATERFRONT

# MAKING THE MOST OF IT

## TURNING POINTS

- 1988**  
Graduated from UMIST with an MSc in management science and took a job as a management trainee with Trinity Mirror in Liverpool
- 1994**  
First big promotion, to sales director for Trinity in Merseyside.
- 1995**  
Set up Trinity Publishing, a new magazine publishing business for Trinity.
- 2000**  
Returned to Liverpool to become deputy managing director of the Liverpool Daily Post and Echo. Eighteen months later she became managing director, the youngest and only female MD of a large metropolitan newspaper company in the UK. She is currently UK commercial director of Trinity Mirror Regionals.
- 2003**  
Took on role of chair of the Mersey Waterfront.

Recently the new glass and steel lobby of the Liverpool Daily Post and Echo building has been home to an information stand proudly outlining the planned regeneration of parts of Liverpool city centre. 'Your Liverpool is Changing,' it proclaims. There is also, however, a bigger stand featuring the strap line 'Live. Work. Invest. Visit.'

That neatly encapsulates the thrust of Mersey Waterfront, which was set up by The Mersey Partnership in 2002 with an investment of £8.5 million from the Northwest Development Agency. Its task is to make the most of one of the Northwest's major assets - as the name suggests, the Mersey waterfront. And not just in Liverpool, but along a 70 km stretch of the river.

Whether or not Mersey Waterfront achieves its goal will be down in part to its chair, Sara Wilde. In her day job she is UK commercial director for Trinity Mirror Regionals, one of the largest publishing groups in the country and owner of the Post and Echo. Her office is upstairs from the gleaming foyer.

Born and bred in Liverpool, Wilde graduated from UMIST in Manchester with a BSc in management science in 1988. She took a job as a management trainee with Trinity Mirror

branding on Waterfront projects, along with cross-referencing other places of interest along the waterfront.

"One of the most important things is recognising that there is a variety of water frontage in the area," says Wilde. In fact, Mersey Waterfront is working on projects as disparate as a cruise liner terminal in Liverpool and a new bridge at Southport's Marine Parade. It's also highly supportive of the fourth grace, the radical new building designed by Will Alsop for Liverpool's grand Pier Head.

Wilde sees the Waterfront's role as a kind of "umbrella organisation" under which all the interested parties can come together. There is, she says, a real sense of "collective ownership of the programme." She is full of praise for her board, but sees her own role as being to contribute some of her private sector experience. "Matters of efficiency and speed, clarity of the strategy and performance management are top of our agenda."

As a young partnership much of the Waterfront's work is understandably still in the early stages. But the end of 2003 saw a surge of activity, including a raft of community based projects, and even before then there were visible signs of its impact. In Southport the new Marine Parade Bridge is due to be wowing visitors from spring 2004, with

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newspapers back in Liverpool and in 1994 she got her first big promotion, to sales director for Trinity in Merseyside. A year later she set up a magazine business, Trinity Publications, which saw her leave Liverpool for London and Birmingham.

But in 2000 she returned to the Northwest, attracted in part by a desire to play a role in the changes she saw gathering pace in Liverpool.

"The waterfront has always drawn me personally," says Wilde. "I think I share that with tens of thousands of other people. It is something that I think is a tremendous asset that over the years has been undervalued."

No longer. Mersey Waterfront has the support of six local authorities, private businesses and public sector organisations such as the Mersey Basin Campaign. The aim is to create a recognisable destination that will draw in tourists and boost local pride. One way of doing that will be consistent

£500,000 contributed towards design enhancements by the Waterfront.

With the Waterfront's help more projects, such as the possibility of illuminating the Mersey as a 'River of Light,' are either already under way or being looked at. Says Wilde, "Within the next 12 months it's very important that we take the talk and the ideas and actually see them happening somewhere."

Liverpool's status as Capital of Culture in 2008 has given the Waterfront a real deadline. Wilde calls it a "fantastic catalyst" for a process of regeneration that was already underway. But she stresses that the importance of the waterfront must go on beyond 2008.

"The waterfront itself needs an on-going care and development programme to make sure that our children and the children after that, look back and can see the waterfront is not only a fantastic asset for people living here, but it is of national and international repute and it is part of the economic revival of the whole area."

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