



Bee Bee Developments is a private London-Based, Northern Ireland-owned property development, land-owning and place-making company. It owns huge areas of the Clerkenwell and Midtown areas of Central London as well as major developments in Dublin and in North Northamptonshire, where the previous Governments' Growth Agenda was designed to bring significant change, housing development and uplift to the existing towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough.

Appointed as in-house Head of Communications, Mark Conway acted as 'front man' for Bee Bee in Northamptonshire for two years, during which time the plans of this company and central Government came under the closest possible scrutiny and was largely responsible for changing the prevailing attitude of local people from abject hostility, to advocacy once they became aware of the benefits to be gained from embracing change.



More than 50,000 new homes was mooted for the area and whilst the local authorities had signed up to the national initiative, they had been 'shy' about telling their local audience (and voters) in any detail.



But also

Within three weeks of my appointment, I had taken Bee Bee Developments from almost complete anonymity to Public Enemy Number One – as the ‘evil developers’ behind the plans to concrete over the whole of the green and pleasant countryside in North Northamptonshire!



Public meetings were organised and I was summoned to explain our plans, and there was hostility and eggs, and very little, if any, support from the Local Authorities who had signed up to the major Growth Agenda urban regeneration initiative.

However, by not hiding (which was the response that several colleagues were advocating), by being available, attending meetings, listening to people, and patiently, and consistently explaining our plans and why there were right for the area and for the future prosperity of its residents, we were able to win the argument.

By bringing a co-ordinated approach to the major developments that were proposed, we could demonstrate how the increased levels of house-building would lead to more jobs, better healthcare, more and better schools, better leisure facilities, better green open spaces, thriving rather than failing town centres – the growth would be the best way of ‘fixing’ the area and make it an attractive place for the current and future population.



By connecting every piece of popular development – a new rail connection with London, a new academy, a new 50m swimming pool, a new civic centre and arts facility and a number of major new roads in Corby, for example, with the relatively large numbers of new homes that needed to be built, we were able, in around a year, to turn around public perceptions to the point where there were petitions being raised calling for the growth to go ahead, because the people wanted to benefit from the infrastructure uplift that went with it.



Ultimately, as with so many other Central Government initiatives the money promised to encourage North Northamptonshire to become one of the UK's major growth areas failed to materialise in full and our dreams of coordinating the three tired former market towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough into a single, 'city-class' place, were not to be fulfilled, but all three places are more prosperous today than would otherwise have been the case, and Corby in particular has benefitted enormously from growth and is currently the fastest-growing town in England.





Corby does now have a new railway station and a link to London St Pancras, it has a new 50m swimming pool and a new civic hub; it has a new town centre, two brand new secondary school academies and more to come, it has upgraded healthcare provision and new jobs are starting to be created even in the current economic environment.



And many of the old 'no-go areas of the town are coming down.



I'm proud of what we did in Corby – if you get the chance, go and have a look. Even the original sceptics have a smile on their faces now!