

Anthea Harries

Meet Related Argent's Asset Management Director, who over the past 25 years has been transforming central London's largest estates into innovative, vibrant and inclusive spaces.

“Tell us, how did you get into real estate?”

I grew up around real estate. Coming from a close knit family from the Wirral, Merseyside, I watched my parents buy and sell multiple houses – I think I'd lived in 10 different houses by the time I was 16! I found it interesting how they worked their way up the property ladder to improve our lives. When it was time to decide a university course, my mother insisted that I do a vocational degree – I looked at everything from law to accountancy, but I loved the built environment and knew first-hand what you could achieve from a residential context. I did an estate management degree at

Northumbria University, and had a year at British Rail Property in the middle of that degree. I loved it. I was very focused, very driven and wanted a career where I could do something for myself, and could work anywhere in the world. I'm pleased now, in retrospect, that my mother pushed me into doing a vocational degree because it was the right thing to do for me.

What do you value most about your work?

The amazing aspects of my my role. Every day has something that tests me and puts pressure to drive my own professional skills forwards and that of my team. I have a very broad role

that covers multiple specialisms and different areas of expertise. I always wanted to have more of a generalist approach to asset management – whether overseeing large scale transactional activity or crisis management, all the way to managing community events with business partners as we've just done at King's Cross with Run Kids Run.

If you weren't working in real estate, what would you have done?

There never really was a “Plan B”. I always knew that this is what I wanted to do. Athletics and gymnastics were my two passions when I was younger – maybe if I'd had the physical attributes and the mental strength, I would have been a professional athlete. I hold up Dame Jessica Ennis Hill and Dame Denise Lewis in high esteem!

What are you most proud of in your career?

I've had the privilege of working for Related Argent for the last six years, but one of the things I'm most proud of is having worked on some of the largest central London estates across my career. With my team, we have shaped parts of London for multiple future generations and created places that are inclusive, innovative, special architecturally and that are managed in a way to feel unique, vibrant and lively. Whether working on Broadgate and Regents Place at British Land, St. James at The Crown Estate, or with Manny Davidson on ASDA's diverse London portfolio, and now King's Cross and Brent



Cross Town, I've been able to use my skills to shape London and create some really great places.

Who has been the best mentor to you?

I've been very fortunate to work with some incredible people throughout my career. Dame Alison Nimmo has been hugely inspirational - in terms of her leadership whilst at the Crown Estate, her involvement in the delivery of the 2012 Olympics and the way that she worked as part of a team to rebuild Manchester after the bombings. She has a style of leadership and inspires teamwork and collaboration in a way that is unparalleled. She has been a great help to me since The Crown Estate and continues to be today.

Who do you admire most in the real estate industry and why?

There are so many people - the list is very long and distinguished! Sir John Ritblat, whom I worked with at British Land for 10 years. He could be supportive and kind, but also unapologetic around his expectations for ambition and delivery of performance.

I have been lucky to have some amazing bosses in my time including James Cooksey at the Crown Estate, now CEO of Old Park Lane Management, and Robert Evans at Argent. Equally, the partners and executive directors at Related Argent - Nick Searl, Tom Goodall, Morwenna Hall, Mike Lightbound, André Gibbs. I'm lucky to be surrounded by such brilliant brains.

Everyone has a unique way of putting their mark on

WORDS OF WISDOM

What advice would you give to your younger self?

If I could go back, I would pace myself a little bit more sensibly. Life is a marathon, not a sprint, and it is about spending time with people who genuinely want to support, help and guide you. I would have liked to have travelled more and have worked abroad, which I have never been able to do. Life and children get in the way and make it more difficult - I had four children to look after when I was just starting my career. Try and get that work life balance right and explore work opportunities in other places other than the UK.

What part of your upbringing has been most influential to your career?

The moral values that my parents instilled in me. They both worked hard to give us every opportunity they could. They also showed me the value of having a moral compass and treating people as you want to be treated - that is something that has stood with me. It's a strong ethic to carry with you in this career.

What advice would you give to those looking to build a career in the London real estate market?

Be proactive - attend events, connect with people and use those networking opportunities to find mentors and advocates. Learn as much as you can from the people and parts of the industry that really interest you. Be unapologetic in your curiosity. Say yes to everything!

something and creating an amazing opportunity. I'm very lucky to be in a role where I can touch leaders across different businesses and whom I learn from every day.

And how has that influenced your leadership style?

I'm keen for everyone to drive their own performance with my support, and that they see strong leadership through clarity of our roles and responsibilities. I'm all for delegation, supporting as part of a team and being testing when I need to be.

With DEI becoming an ever more prevalent topic in real estate, what would you change about the industry?

We have made material inroads in terms of DEI, from how people are getting into real estate, their backgrounds, their gender, their race compared to when I started out in this industry nearly 25 years ago. When I was on the RICS UK and Ireland board, our focus was to facilitate entry into this industry from a grassroots level. School children are not aware of the different forms of real estate specialisms (i.e. engineering, surveying, investment management . . .) Unless pupils as early as year 9 understand the depth and breadth of the industry, it makes this difficult. I am a massive advocate for promoting a career in real estate. You can take any qualification and work anywhere in the world with it. I have a strong view that you get to where you are based on skill and merit. Getting into schools earlier and making universities accessible is critical to giving everybody the best

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opportunity. As future employers, we must support these universities and colleges in getting their students into work. Related Argent doesn't have a graduate programme, but we give people opportunities to come in for work experience, so that they can then move forward with Related Argent on their CV.

What is making you laugh or smile the most lately?

It's a collection of little things – from seeing my Labrador rolling in a puddle of mud, he's golden and he came out entirely black – that made me laugh; or finding my 18-year-old son dancing in the bathroom thinking no one was watching! I love sitting in meetings with people and getting to share little jokes or anecdotes – when you're working in a fast-paced environment, making time for those small conversations is really important.

What is something not many people know about you?

I enjoy giving back to the community. I have two school governor roles and am a trustee with the Shuttleworth Trust, a charity that promotes education and skills in the aviation, automotive and agriculture industries. I've also spent many years standing on the edge of a rugby pitch being an England Rugby first aider, dealing with dislocated fingers, broken wrists, concussion, or various other injuries that come out of a sport like that. I find it really rewarding ■ ”

What impact would you say the King's Cross development has had on the surrounding community? What is the future of the estate?

King's Cross is not just about the physical impact, which, in itself, is amazing – it is also about how the regeneration project has brought people together. We have created eleven acres of open space for everyone in the local community to come to, whether that's to enjoy the Granary Square fountains, to take part in an exercise class on the Canal Side Steps or to visit our jam-packed programme of free and affordable cultural events and art installations. We have created jobs for the local community through KX Recruit – placing more than 1,500 people since its inception in 2014. We have also seen a significant impact on children, through the two schools on site and our programme of child-friendly activities, such as Run Kids Run. We're approaching the final phase of development and the estate will soon be complete. We will continue evolving and adapting to cater to the diverse needs of the 19 million people who come to experience King's Cross' charm each year.

Coal Drops Yard has focused on supporting independent designers and artists since it opened. Why was that so important, and how does it make the area stand out in London?

At Coal Drops, we wanted to create something that's the best of the British High Street and the side street, pulling together creatives in fashion, food and beverage to create something unique and bespoke. However, coming out of the pandemic, customers' expectations have changed. People want a shopping and dining destination that is more accessible for all. We've listened to the public and are now pivoting to a more inclusive offering with wider diversity of choice and price points. Coal Drops should be at

the heart of the community, whether you work in King's Cross, you visit it or you live there.

How can you future proof retail and in particular the independent retailers from another downturn or from these shifts?

Related Argent did a very good job at supporting struggling retailers during the pandemic. The "E Class" use, which has taken over from the former use classes, enables retailers and restaurateurs to use their space much more dynamically and respond to what customers need. Landlords and owners must be more receptive to trends from consumers and we like to support the retailers in trying to create destination stores that are going to have a point of difference. If we can do that through the buildings and the environment we create, then they will be much more successful over the long term.

Where do you expect to see most growth in London?

We've just been through a very difficult cycle and we're still in it macroeconomically. Post pandemic, we have seen a strong return to the office and focus on quality. London is leading in delivering exceptional buildings and places that have long term sustainable ethos and will deliver exceptional product for businesses in this global capital. We have a strong "place market": outstanding infrastructure, retail brands that still see London as a destination home. We have a growing residential market including an appetite for more BTR. We're in a great position to capitalise, but we need stability, politically and financially to give further confidence for people to invest in London and the UK.