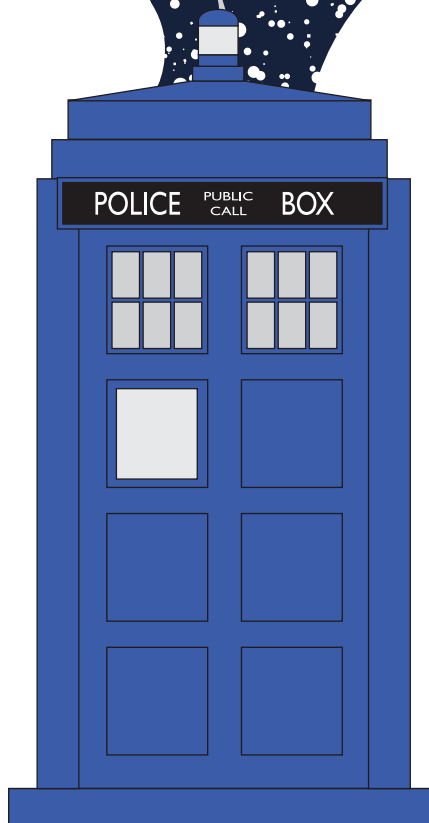


The  
**DR WHO**  
Guide to a Good Regeneration



**Mary Parsons**  
Regeneration & Partnerships Director  
Lovell Partnerships

I can't claim to be a Dr Who fanatic, although there are many in my family across multiple generations. If pushed I would probably say "Tom Baker, followed by Christopher Eccleston".

My interest though was raised a couple of years ago when the Doctor started visiting Park Hill in Sheffield, as I do love a good regeneration and that is a particularly fine example and a development that I am really proud to have played a part in. I have used Dr Who many times as an analogy before for the renewal of places, of bringing somewhere back to life – changing its identity to remain relevant but staying true to where it comes from – different incarnations but the same (two) hearts beating inside.

Equally, Park Hill has lived many incarnations, some not so successful, and has finally reinvented itself to work for a new – but very different – generation whilst holding on to the drivers that were behind its original creation. Placemaking founded on bringing a vibrant community together and offering a better, healthier way of life. It even has a hit west end musical – 'Standing at the Sky's Edge' – that lovingly, but at times brutally, charts its many incarnations and the intertwining of the lives of people that have lived there.

Going back to Dr Who and the last regeneration, I thought it was genius to bring back David Tennant – creating surprise, delight and the promise of great things to come.

That, to me, is a really good regeneration – and one that perhaps offers some helpful pointers as to what 'regeneration' and 'levelling up' really means and how to go about it. So, here's a few thoughts:

## 1. Be ready to meet your foes 2. Keep people with you

– whether it's going into battle with Cybermen, vanquishing the evil genius of the Daleks or preparing for the ravishes of recession and austerity, you know from the start you will have to meet your enemy head on and overcome them at some point. Be prepared – they will appear.

Every now and again a new fiendish terror may appear – whether the 'Weeping Angels' or Liz Truss – that will make you want to hide behind the sofa until they are gone. However, you must just keep battling on, being more creative and entrepreneurial each time to try and overcome them and get back on track. Once upon a time the Dr could escape the daleks merely by running upstairs – then they learnt to levitate to chase him down. However, there's always a solution if you work together to cast aside the paradigms of the past and use what resources you do have to hand to get past them. Always remember you may not be fighting them one at a time and how do you cope if Cybermen and the Ood land together? – or you finally battle your way through planning only to find interest rates have rocketed since you put your initial appraisal together?

– regeneration has so many threads and plot lines to weave together, it can be fiendishly complex. Funding, planning, land assembly, politics, procurement – it is easy to make it so complicated, particularly in the middle bit, that you just lose people. It may have started off great, but it becomes too hard. It's never going to happen. It doesn't make sense anymore. Let's just turn over to something else.

Whilst drawing in references to characters that popped up three series ago will appeal to the minority die-hard fans with an encyclopaedic knowledge, ensuring that someone that just wants to dip in and out now and again and come away with a sense of what is going on, like me, is equally important. If you live in an area undergoing change, you might not want to attend multiple workshops, read through a hundred documents within a planning application and know every detail, but just need to understand what is going to happen and when. You might not care that the delays are caused by planning or funding. You bought into a vision on the promise of something good that would follow – and when it doesn't come, it's human nature to disengage, switch off or go elsewhere.

Throw in new things to keep interest, and the faith, keep your messaging clear, simple and targeted for your audience. Work hard to maintain trust with them because once you lose both of those, they are really hard, if not impossible, to rebuild.



### 3. No one gets left behind

– how many times does the Doctor rush to the Tardis thinking they've saved the world and then realise someone is still trapped and they must go back? How many times are a community hopelessly outnumbered and have their backs against the wall but are helped to safety and the chance of a better tomorrow?

Levelling up should, by definition, mean no one, no community, gets left behind; that the battles fought are for everyone's future not just a select few. It's not ok to say some people prospered whilst counting those that fell further – it isn't counting averages. It's valuing every life there – and that people know you are in it for them.

### 4. Interims can add real value

– David Tennant is only back, I believe, for a few episodes but even as an interim Doctor he is adding real value by drawing people that maybe lost interest back in; creating a buzz and making them excited for what is to come and curious as to what will happen next.

In placemaking terms, interim uses are always valuable tools. They help people understand what is to follow, can start to define a place and make people want to be there again when they perhaps fell out of love with it. They create fresh opportunities for local people, new plot lines, new relationships and help bring, or keep, people together. In short, they create life – and help the future make sense at a time when re-housing and demolition can risk degeneration kicking in before the actual regeneration happens.

### 5. Don't be afraid to look back to where you have come from

– this is perhaps the most important lesson in regeneration for me. Never be afraid to reach back into an area's past to enable it to look to the future.

Just as writers brought back the much loved 10th Doctor to pave the way for what will be a very different 15th (or is it 16th?) understand what people loved and valued most from a place in its past, what made it unique, what made it strong and kept its communities together, and use it to transition to what will happen next. Take things that are loved and familiar to guide people towards a tomorrow that may be very different to what has been before and take the time to help them understand what that tomorrow may mean and for it to make sense for them.

Layer on its generations of history, heritage and plot lines to reassure its current communities that this tomorrow you are offering will be for them, but make sure what comes next is equally relevant for the next generations and for the new challenges they will face. That way your vision for tomorrow can be really radical and bold, transformative and can challenge our thinking, but it will be rooted and will always feel like it belongs, just like the Doctor.

All regeneration schemes are based on decisions at a point in time – a focus to get a place 'back on track', to make it relevant again, connect it back in and help it face a future that can be very different to today. But a place rarely stands still – although sometimes it feels that it has, and that the world just carried on around it. The challenge is creating flexibility and resilience to respond to the inevitable shocks in the space/time continuum whilst having certainty and clear coordinates to guide the Tardis is on its way with confidence that you will get there in the end.

Reaching back to make sure it carries with it everything that made it special in the past to help make sense of its future, always keeping people at its heart – that to me is at the heart of the best regeneration - and I am sure any of the Doctors would agree.

