

# HEREFORD CIVIC SOCIETY

(Registered Charity No. 503504)

## Chairman's Report for the twelve months period ended 31 August 2024

### Reference and Administrative details

Hereford Civic Society, previously named the Hereford Civic Trust was first registered with the Charity Commission on 16 August 1974. Its original constitution was adopted on 1 September 1973, amended including a change of name on 23 October 2002. Further administrative revisions to the constitution were approved at last year's AGM on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

### Management of the Hereford Civic Society

The Executive Committee is responsible for the management and administration of the Society. The Executive Committee elected annually are the charity's Trustees. Includes four officers, who in 2023/24 were:

Chairman & Treasurer	David Fowler
Vice-Chairman	Marcelle Lloyd-Hayes
Secretary	Christine Bucknell's role is Minute Secretary, membership

communications and includes responsibility for managing the Society's website

The constitution agreed last year, requires the Executive Committee to have a minimum of two and no more than eight other members. The following were elected at last year's AGM:

Alan Bucknell; Jeremy Milln; Ben Nash

Martin Leaton agreed to be co-opted and joined the Executive Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

All members of the Executive Committee give of their time freely and receive no remuneration or other financial benefits. The Executive Committee may co-opt members who attend in an advisory and non-voting capacity. In addition, the Committee has the power to fill up to three casual vacancies occurring between AGMs. Outgoing members of the Executive Committee may be re-elected. Since last year's AGM, the Executive Committee has met on nine occasions. Each meeting has an agenda and is minuted.

A Conservation Planning sub-committee reports to the Executive Committee. The sub-committee members are trustees David Fowler and Jeremy Milln, and members Bob Heath, Peter Taylor and Laura Somerville, who has recently joined us in our conversations. The sub-committee meet monthly (using zoom) and are tasked with reviewing planning applications in Hereford and nearby communities, particularly those in conservation areas, are listed buildings or is a development that affects the setting of a listed building/ conservation area. Darren Ray joins us when road schemes are on the agenda.

We welcome members taking on tasks without necessarily becoming a committee member. Ros Peter arranges our speaker programme; Martin Leaton took on the role of Accounts Examiner until he was co-opted onto Committee. Advancing age and ill health has unfortunately meant that Andree Poppleston (planning sub-committee/ meeting greeter) and Patricia Tierney (membership) have stepped down. In past years we of course had our quarterly magazine delivery team.

We would welcome additional help at meetings, with a member or two taking on a small role (for example) to greet visitors, deal with membership queries, looking after our “bar”, assisting with publicity/ giving the society a presence on social media etc. In 2023/24, the Society had 121 paid up members (2022/23, 130).

## **Charity Correspondent**

David Fowler, 21 Venn’s Lane, Hereford HR1 1DE

## **Bankers**

Lloyds Bank plc 8 High Town, Hereford HR1 2AE

## **Access for all**

There are no obstacles preventing the physically impaired from attending the society's meetings or other events. The Kindle Centre has a lift providing step-free access to the Society's regular meeting room. There is adequate free parking and the Kindle Centre is located within 10 minutes walking distance of the city centre.

## **General Data Protection Regulations**

Our membership records are kept in both paper and electronic form. They contain member’s name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (our preferred mode of communication). We do not retain in either paper or electronic form members' bank account information. Members information is held solely for the sole purpose of communicating with you and is not shared with external parties.

## **Risk Management**

Appropriate insurance cover is in place covering all of the society's activities.

## **Objectives**

The Society is established for the public benefit for the following purposes in the area comprising the City of Hereford and its surroundings (the area of "benefit"):

1. To promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit
2. To educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area of benefit and give related advice and information
3. To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area of benefit

and in so doing has the power to promote civic pride; promote/ publish research connected with the society's objects. We act as a co-ordinating body with other community groups who share similar aims. Make surveys/ prepare maps, collect information in relation to any place or building of beauty or historic interest. Hold meetings, lectures and exhibitions.

## **Achievements and Performance**

### **Meeting Programme:**

The 2023/24 meeting programme benefitted from excellent speakers:

**September 2023** Tim Hoverd “**Snodhill Castle: Herefordshire’s lost Castle**”

**October** Clare Wichbold “**The History of The Courtyard, Hereford**”  
Also our AGM where we celebrated the society’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**November** Bill Jackson “**Rotherwas Nature Park and Heritage Trail**”

**December** Elizabeth Pimblett “**A morning at The Cider Museum**”

**January 2024** Dr David Marshall “**Apples and People**”

**February** Malcolm Penny “**Brockhampton Manor, Six Hundred Years a Family Home**”

**March** Elizabeth Sempler-O’Keefe, “**900 years of history of Hereford May Fair**”

**April** Philip Hume “**The King’s Writ does not run here: The Welsh Marcher Lordships**”

**May** Angela Williams “**Munitionette’s View: The dangers, the dramas & the day-to-day routine at Rotherwas during WW1 & WW2**”

**June** Merry Albright “**The River Wye - how ecological collapse caused a housing crisis**”

**July** Rachel Price Greenow and Joe Haseley “**Natural Capital and Net Zero on the Duchy of Cornwall Estate**”

During the past twelve months, we’ve enjoyed an active programme of visits and trips:

**September 2023** **Shrewsbury Flaxmill & Maltings** including a boat trip on the River Severn

**December 2023** **A Christmas social** at the Hereford Cider Museum followed by a self-guided tour of the Museum

**March 2024** **Visit to Brampton Bryan Hall** (by kind invitation of Victoria and Edward Harley, Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire)

**July 2024** “**Snodhill Castle site visit**” an operationally active archaeological site

In June 2024, seventy attended the General Election Hustings meeting for the Hereford & South Herefordshire Parliamentary Constituency. All six candidates on the ballot paper had accepted our invitation, however on the evening, neither the Reform candidate (no explanation) nor the Liberal candidate (sent his apologies, a family crisis) were present. John Bothamley presented audience questions and ensured all candidates had equal opportunity to have their opinions/ party’s policies heard.

## **Achievements and Performance (continued)**

As many of you are aware, at roughly eight-week intervals I'm invited to write an Opinion Piece in Hereford Times. Following publication, these articles can be found on the Society's website.

In August 2024, I spoke to members of the Tupsley Women's Institute on the events surrounding the formation of Hereford Civic Society in 1973, with examples of recent planning applications in Tupsley where our representations to the planning Case Officer were reflected in his decision.

### **Planning**

As noted in last year's report, the Society no longer has a seat on the Hereford City Council's Planning Committee, where until the May 2023 local elections, the Society held an advisory non-voting role. Disappointingly this continues to be the case.

I mentioned earlier the work of our Conservation Planning Committee. When we make comments to the Case Officer, we endeavour to be positive, to suggest changes that will enhance design/ layout/ appearance/ place making when commenting/ objecting to what the applicant proposes.

We also comment on Herefordshire Council's consultations concerned with Planning Strategy both with respect of the built environment and proposals to modify current road designs which have the objective of encouraging active transport – principally walking and cycling in urban areas. Member Darren Ray, a keen cyclist skilfully produces professional quality drawings of alternative street designs to those being proposed. These we share with Council Officers, but we wonder sometimes as to whether the Council when they talk about public consultation, they interpret the meaning of "consultation" as being an opportunity to talk about their scheme at the exclusion of listening to alternative, and perhaps better compliant ideas.

Another busy twelve months. The Planning sub-committee made representations on twenty-four planning applications, as well as tracking their progress through the planning system. On a number of occasions, the applicant submits revised plans, resulting in our making a new (second and in one case, third) set of comments.

This year's efforts have been dominated by two planning applications where the planning authority, Herefordshire Council was also the applicant. They are the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery in Broad Street (230385) and the Station Transport Hub (233009). Both planning applications went to the Herefordshire Council Planning Committee.

**Hereford Museum and Art Gallery.** Under the Council's plans, the original iron front entrance gate was to be retained, but not the later railings along the building frontage. During the allotted three minutes we were permitted to address the committee with our concerns, Councillors were persuaded to the view that the railings should also be retained. Our other concern is the commercial viability of this £20m+ project in operation. Will commercial income be sufficient to off-set the museum's day-to-day operating costs, a requirement Herefordshire Council stated at the project's outset.

We have argued that there is insufficient space for the ground floor museum shop, and that the income potential from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor café and catering areas will be undermined by lack of access (narrow stairs and a single six-person lift), particularly when large groups visit. Although approval has been given, we understand the project team are looking afresh at the museum's viability and income opportunities.

**Station Transport Hub.** On this planning application, HCS worked in partnership with Rail and Bus for Herefordshire (R&BfH). Hereford City Council also objected to the plans. We met Jesse Norman on two occasions. He suggested we seek advice from Active Transport England (ATE), a government agency responsible for making walking, wheeling and cycling the preferred choice for everyone to get around. Their objective is for 50% of trips in England's towns and cities to be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030. Hereford has a long way to go to meet this target.

ATE responded by lodging an objection to the Council's plans, highlighting the inadequate provision of secure cycle storage, and the inappropriate design of the City Link Road in front of the station from both a cyclists' and pedestrians' perspective. ATE's initial letter objecting to the scheme was subsequently withdrawn, but they made clear that planning approval must contain conditions requiring the final design to address the shortcomings set out in their original letter of objection.

We and R&BfH in addition objected to the lack of capacity, only four bus bays for terminating services with no provision to accommodate services currently using the nearby County Bus Station whose closure is widely predicted; bus bays located on the fringe of the site furthest away from the station entrance; absence of catering facilities for waiting bus passengers; inadequate secure/ covered cycle storage.

In addition to objecting to ARUP's design, we submitted our own design for the Station Transport Hub. Key features included provision for buses to stop by the station entrance as now, reinstatement of the forecourt canopy at the front of the station, a glass curtain wall enclosing the area under the canopy to provide a covered/ dry waiting area for bus passengers, with access to a service counter at the rear of the Platform 3 station café, toilets and the provision of electronic information boards indicating times for arriving/ departing bus services. Our design included a separate glass clad building to provide secure storage for cycles, referencing examples of similar facilities located adjacent to several London Underground stations.

At the Council's Planning Committee, two Councillors agreed that the outline designs prepared by HCS member Darren Ray were preferred to those prepared by ARUP. Unfortunately, the two Conservative Councillors were not successful in persuading their colleagues to vote against the ARUP scheme. We await sight of ARUP's revised plans that addresses the issues raised by Active Travel England, a prerequisite before work on site can commence.

## **Hereford City Masterplan**

There has been little to no public feedback to these consultations since the new Local Administration came into office in May 2023 which is disappointing.

## **Transport**

We are aware that opinion within the Society is divided on the merits of having/ not having a bypass. However, there is almost unanimous support for pedestrian/ cyclist friendly active transport measures.

## **Financial Review**

Page 1 of the accounts, sets out the Income and Expenditure for the current year which resulted in a surplus of £228 (2022/23, a surplus of £1,242).

£400 has been transferred from the society's reserves (we propose doing the same next year) into the designated fund to celebrate the Society's 50<sup>th</sup> year. An illustrated booklet is in preparation setting out the circumstances that led to the Society's founding, the high and low points of the past fifty years and future aspirations. We had planned for it to be published this year. We now expect the book launch will take place in early 2025.

Page 2 sets out the Society's Balance Sheet. Net assets total £4,277, of which £3,437 is in cash. Our Gift Aid claim will be paid shortly (£387) and annual subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> September, meaning the society is financially in good health.

On page 4, we have set out the proposed budget for next year in Note 4.

## **Future Plans**

### **Membership of National Organisation**

Hereford Civic Society is a committed and active member of Civic Voice (the national organisation for the Civic Society movement) and their West Midlands Regional Group. The society is also a member of the Urban Rooms Network.

We will continue to liaise with colleagues in Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye Civic Societies.

### **Members' Subscriptions**

Members' subscriptions for the coming year will remain unchanged at £15 (single); £25 (joint).

### **Web site**

We plan to create a separate area of our website for Planning Applications on which the society has commented.

## **A Big Thank You**

Thank you to members and supporters of Hereford Civic Society for your support, not only during these past twelve months but throughout the five years that I have been your Chairman.

Thank you to our Conservation Planning sub-committee volunteers – Peter Taylor, Bob Heath, Laura Somerville and Darren Ray for your excellent drawings.

Ros Peter for inviting interesting, informative and entertaining speakers

Martin Leaton for accepting our invitation to join the committee

and not least, to fellow members on your Executive Committee

David Fowler, Chairman

10<sup>th</sup> October 2024