

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC SOCIETIES

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the White Hart Hotel, Harrogate at 1pm on Saturday 30th January 2010.

1. Present

Some 47 members and guests representing 25 YHACS member societies. A full list appears at Appendix A.

2. Apologies for Absence

See Appendix A

3. Welcome to Harrogate

Cllr Mrs Pat Jones, the Mayor of the Borough of Harrogate, welcomed YHACS members to Harrogate, noting that this was our 7th AGM visit. She hoped that everyone enjoyed their visit to Harrogate and stressed that Harrogate Borough Council has a good working relationship with Harrogate Civic Society, which was a wonderful organisation. Cllr Mrs Jones had enjoyed the civic society activities in which she had been involved, including unveiling blue plaques.

4. The Future of YHACS

This paper (circulated with the calling papers) was presented by Kevin Trickett.

A number of questions and comments were raised.

Charlotte Hussey of Howden CS stated that they were prepared to pay this year but future years would be subject to review as Howden CS lost money with the CT. She sought confirmation, which was given, that the YHACS exec committee did have the power to raise funds in the manner proposed. The committee had checked the constitution at the November exec meeting.

It was suggested that not all societies have the same flexibility over subscriptions and that it could take some societies 18 months to get into synchronicity. Kevin pointed out that societies need to be proactive in reviewing their fees to a realistic level.

Jim Wildash of Selby CS asked how many societies needed to join for YHACS to be viable. Kevin responded that a number of societies were keen to pay and subscriptions were already arriving. He was confident that optimistic societies will pay.

Reg Levine of Castleford CT pointed out that the size of societies in Y&H varied enormously and William Kirby of Huddersfield CS asked if fee structure could be reviewed in future years.

Barry Atkinson of Whitby CS strongly supported the regional body.

Judy Dixon of Pickering CS said that her committee was reluctant to pay as they knew insufficient about YHACS and had not discussed YHACS fees with members yet. She asked about the thinking behind a flat rate. Kevin responded that £40 pa was about 80p per week and that it was hoped that larger societies would make voluntary donations. Kevin Grady responded that Leeds CT had subsidised YHACS over the years and pointed out that the committee put in all of their time gratis.

Societies have to value what YHACS has to offer and if needed may have to raise funds, for example organise a coffee morning.

Alan Hall from Bradford CS was fully in agreement with this and Sheila Clark from Skipton CS fully endorsed what Kevin Grady had said. It was important that YHACS continued as a cohesive region.

Harold Dixon of Pickering CS objected to the principle of a 'poll tax' and felt that YHACS should be very careful about imposing it. Kevin Trickett responded by pointing out that all societies needed to decide whether to pay it.

Peter Spawforth highlighted the important role of civic societies and YHACS on planning issues and the importance of a regional body for civic societies in Yorkshire and Humber. Smaller societies can benefit considerably from being members.

Barry Atkinson said that smaller organisations can find it very difficult to raise funds, especially sponsorship. Charlotte Hursey of Howden CS pointed out that there were many heritage groups which might be persuaded to join YHACS and suggested that societies might wish to act as advocates to bring in those societies which currently make no contact.

A straw poll concluded that nineteen societies were in favour of paying a membership of £40 for 2010, none were against and two were don't know.

The meeting proceeded to the formal business of the day.

5. Minutes of the AGM 31.01.09

These were proposed by Howard Hughes of Harrogate CS, seconded by Richard Ward of Huddersfield CS and approved by the meeting.

6. Matters Arising.

There were none.

7. Annual Report

Peter Cooper presented the chairman's annual report.

Chairman's Report to YHACS AGM 2010.

This was our tenth anniversary year but this positive achievement was overshadowed by events at national level when the Civic Trust went into administration in April. This news was a shock but came after the Trust lost the Green Flag contract in late 2008. Despite this, it was thought that it would maintain its solvency throughout 2009 but events conspired against this. Failure to attract sufficient funding to the Purple Flag scheme, poor results from the fundraising appeal to the membership, a drop in income from other local authority contracts and an unsuccessful bid to the government's Empowerment Fund meant that even a modest financial forecast for the next few months was unlikely to be achieved. It became clear that severe funding restraints being imposed on local authorities and other potential funders meant that, despite restructuring, the situation was deteriorating rapidly and, after considering all options, the Trustees, of which I was one, with great regret, could see no other option but to seek administration.

This distressing time eventually brought something positive. The goodwill built up by the CT over the years meant that various national organisations stepped forward to see if a new national built environment group could be formed and the Civic Society Initiative was born. We will be hearing a lot more about the CSI later. YHACS has been closely involved in the developing CSI story; we recently participated in a teleconference to act as a sounding board on funding issues. A good number of Yorkshire and Humber societies attended a CSI workshop at the offices of Leeds Civic Trust.

The nine Regional Associations, of which YHACS is one, were financially independent of the Civic Trust and able therefore to carry on. We did, however, receive £2000 per year from the Civic Trust and losing this has meant that your committee has had to review our method of working. A paper dealing with this issue, 'the Future of YHACS' was sent out with the papers for this meeting and we will be debating matters arising during this afternoon.

Fundraising was even more of a challenge during 2009 with even sponsorship opportunities drying up and effectively we had to live off our reserves.

However, we kept calm and carried on. Main meetings were held at Barnsley and Harrogate. The main event was our second CS Week held in June and launched at Wakefield with guest speaker Martin Wainwright from the Guardian. The winner this year was Scarborough CS, second prize going to Huddersfield and Third to Ripon. Commendations went to Bridlington, Castleford, Harrogate, Selby, Skipton and Wakefield.

We represented YHACS at some regional events this year but unfortunately my activity in this area has been restricted because of health reasons. We were represented at the national conference in Blackpool in October and also attended a meeting of all the regional associations held in Birmingham. Malcolm Sharman represented YHACS at an event at the House of Commons regarding the future of our region.

This year the Civic Trust Awards ceremony was held in London at the Emirates Stadium.

In our region an award went to the splendid Castleford Footbridge and mentions went to Haworth Medical Centre, Leeds City Museum, New Pavilion, People's Park Grimsby and Rotunda, William Smith Museum of Geology, at Scarborough.

In March we had the Paving the Way weekend here at the White Hart with over forty delegates present from Yorkshire and Humber societies and others even further afield. In November we had our YHACS 10th Anniversary lunch in the splendid surroundings of Ashville College, Harrogate.

During the year we carried out a survey of subscriptions charged by our member societies. This revealed that the average individual membership rate in our region is £9.

We said goodbye to Katie Stewart who is now responsible for 'Communications, Economic Drivers and Innovation' at the new Leeds City Region. We thank Katie for all the good work she did during her time with us and wish her good luck in her new position.

We welcomed David Moss from Selby and David Winpenny from Ripon as new committee members. This was also our first year with a President and we have been very pleased to have Peter Spawforth batting with our team.

Once again all the association's varied work has been done efficiently, most of the year without a fully functioning chairman. None of it would get done without the hard work of a wholly voluntary committee, most of whom also hold responsible jobs within their own societies. Thanks are due to them all.

The chairman's report was proposed by Mike Burke of Harrogate CS, seconded by Kevin Grady and carried unanimously.

8. Treasurer's Report

Richard Ward confirmed that the accounts (copies circulated) had been audited and signed. He explained this year's expenditure to the meeting. Peter Cooper thanked Richard Ward for his efforts in preparing the accounts and presenting them in a cogent manner.

The accounts were proposed by Richard Ward, seconded by Cyril Oliver of Bridlington CS and carried unanimously.

9. Election of Officers

Chairman	Peter Cooper <i>Nominated by Huddersfield CS, Hull CS and Wakefield CS</i>
Vice Chair	Kevin Trickett <i>Nominated by Huddersfield CS, Wakefield CS and Bridlington CS</i>
Treasurer	Richard Ward <i>Nominated by Hull CS, Huddersfield CS and Wakefield CS</i>
Secretary	Helen Kidman <i>Nominated by Ilkley CS, Wakefield CS, Hull CS and Huddersfield CS</i>

All were elected unanimously.

10. Election of Executive Committee

Mike Burke
Kevin Grady
Cyril Oliver
Malcolm Sharman
David Moss

David Winpenny

Nominated by Huddersfield CS, Harrogate CS, Selby, Bridlington CS, Hull CS and Wakefield CS

All were elected unanimously. Any potential executive committee members are invited to express their interest in serving to any existing member of the committee, at any time during the year.

11. Election of President

Peter Spawforth MBE *nominated by Huddersfield CS and Wakefield CS*
Was elected unanimously.

12. Any Other Business

There was none.

This concluded the formal business of the meeting.

13. Guest Speaker Tony Burton of Civic Society Initiative

Tony spoke about CSI and the future of the civic society movement.

He said that the sudden demise of the Civic Trust had been a surprise not only to societies but to many of the bodies which were keen to establish a successor organisation to support the civic society movement.

CT had never been firmly established financially. For its first thirty years it had been endowed by benefactors but thereafter there had been ongoing financial problems. Early last year CT had lost the contract for Green Flag and significant local authority funding had dried up.

He was clear that the CSI has to be put on a sound financial footing from the outset. It has the potential to be a broad based body of some 1000 organisations with 250,000 members. The CSI needs to be able to speak out independently.

The Civic Trust had been formed in the Fifties in a period of massive change in terms of the built environment as post-war regeneration swept away many good buildings along with poor quality and war damaged properties.

Smaller scale regeneration continues and there is a need for an organisation which is capable of dealing with those challenges.

Tony felt that people's expectations are changing and that many more people want to put down roots and create an identity for themselves, moving away from traditional forms of communication and politics toward Facebook. Members of all kinds of organisations were now demanding higher levels of service and were more aware of how their donations were being spent.

Civic Society members have a huge variety of interests. They now need to be more politically aware. The government itself has said that it wants a 'healthy civic society' the movement must be able to speak 'civic sense'. Civic Societies are the largest organisations involved in responding to planning applications and policy issues

The CSI was set up to address the opportunities and risks. The first stage was to have many discussions and network meetings with societies and stakeholders. There had been over 100 responses to the 'Own the Future' document.

However, there is a fear that more societies will close. Some societies self inflict their poverty and are their own worst enemies. They lack the confidence to debate effectively and are isolated from their communities, have elderly committees who lack flexibility. Despite all this, a huge amount is being done.

Two questions came out of the consultation exercises.
How do societies work together?
What national voice is needed?

Working together

The position of the regional associations varies. Some societies found them cumbersome while others such as Y&H and the London Forum continue to thrive. It is for societies to decide and in some areas sub-regional clusters or themed groups are beginning to emerge.

National Body

There is overwhelming support for one. Societies and stakeholders want it to campaign and lobby, to be responsive to and support civic societies. It must be independent, regardless of from wherever the funding is coming. The new organisation must inspire and respond to what is happening.

Funding.

To meet the aspirations of the movement an income of £400k per annum would be required. The new organisation will start small and build confidence with a requirement of £170k for the first year of operation. This means a fee of £1-3 per head. In those societies where there are large numbers of life members there is a need to define how they are counted. There may be a cap for large societies and consideration will be given to weighing any voting arrangements. Trustees and officers will be sought shortly. The public launch will be on a Saturday in April. CSI funding runs out in May and transitional funding is being sought. The new name will be announced in about 10 days.

Tony ended by reiterating that

- Civic societies need a national voice
- There are many places which still need attention and improvement
- There is a need for a strong national body, good regional arrangements and successful local societies.

There were a large number of questions:

Barry Atkinson of Whitby CS asked if CSI had a sufficient mandate - say 30% - of societies as he felt that CSI was moving in a fixed direction. Tony Burton replied that 921 societies had registered which was more than had been members of CT; that the process undertaken had been seen as exemplary, that CSI is setting up a democratic process and determining as little as possible.

The location of the new organisation was raised. Tony Burton indicated that some presence in London was essential in order to be able to lobby and influence the relevant organisations but the main base could be elsewhere, maybe in donated office space as a present.

Judy Dixon of Pickering CS said that they have not participated in the debate but felt that £1 per head was quite reasonable but they didn't know that other societies had other streams of income. She also expressed concern about insurance cover. Tony Burton explained that cover via Bluefin would only be available to societies which were members. There will be two packages - 'light' and 'comprehensive'.

Howard Hughes of Harrogate CS asked about CT's manpower and what was proposed. Tony Burton advised that CT was really an amalgam of projects which were funded from a variety of sources and there will be little comparison with the future organisation. CT had had about 30 staff and a turnover of £3m annually, much of which was against contractual activity.

William Kirby thought that many societies would adopt a 'wait and see' attitude and not come on board immediately. Tony Burton felt this would be very unfortunate approach and success would then depend on other funding sources. £170k was de minimis. He would like as many societies as possible to join. William Kirby felt that the new organisation must stress the benefits of membership.

John Edwards of Allertonshire CS pointed out that CSI were building a 'black hole' because £1 per head would not provide sufficient funding. Tony Burton stated that he could not tell how big that black hole was but it was therefore important that societies joined as soon after the launch as they could.

Harold Dixon suggested the name 'Caring Initiatives for Vicinity in Citizenship'.

Cynthia Fowler asked why were the CT Awards continuing and why did CSI not amalgamate with English Heritage as this might bring members a better benefit than a day out at a National Trust property. Tony Burton pointed out that the CT Awards had been acquired by a former employee from the CT's administrators and was completely separate from CSI. Amalgamation with other organisations would not provide the needs of the civic society movement. English Heritage is a government agency. It is an important partner but not a merger option. They are supporting HODS but the civic society movement is not simply a heritage body.

Susan Spibey from NWACTS was in favour of city region clusters.

14. Civic Society Week – Kevin Trickett

CS Week 2010 will take place between 29th May and 4th July with a high profile launch event to be arranged for the end of May. The objective is for societies to raise their profile locally and engage with groups of people who are not traditionally civic society members.

Details will be coordinated by Kevin Trickett.

Kevin asked all societies to provide a working email address for their CS Week contact in order to reduce the paperwork to a minimum.

There was no restriction on events but innovative societies would be judged favourably.

15. Society News and Views.

Mike Bolton from Addingham reported that the village's new playground at a cost of £71k was about to open. The project had taken 18 months. It will be handed over to Bradford Council for insurance and maintenance.

Howard Hughes of Harrogate asked for any feedback on skateboard parks. There is the possibility of creating one in Harrogate in the Valley Gardens. HCS had been asked to comment on the plan and asked if anyone had experience of issues which such a project raised. Several members had advice regarding siting away from residential areas, lighting, noise, underage drinking and the need for regular police presence. Howard thanked members for their comments.

June Paxton-White of Halifax CT reported a problem with redeveloping listed buildings due to a recent change in regulations. They had been successful in preventing the demolition of a library building only 25 years old. They were involved in a project to find a suitable use for a C16 pub room which saw the founding of the Halifax Building Society.

Sheila Clark from Skipton CS reported that the council wish to sell the town hall in Skipton which is causing concern. The society celebrates its 50th anniversary next and is planning how to commemorate this.

Charlotte Hursey of Howden CS is seeking artists, designers and suppliers of materials to be able to create some pavement art based on the outline of the R100 airship to depict the actual size.

Mike Burke advised that if any societies wanted to view the Royal Hall he was able to assist, or alternatively they could visit the Royal Hall website.

Concern was raised that the composition of the meeting did not include any people from ethnic minority backgrounds. It was pointed out that YHACS was working with the Regional Forum BME Section and had BME speakers at the 2009 AGM.

Peter Spaworth (President) stated that societies have the strength to voice their views on planning direct to the press and public more quickly and effectively than planning officers.

Peter Cooper advised societies that the Environment Agency is consulting on flood planning and if interested, they should seek to participate.

Helen Kidman
30th January 2010

**Appendix A to AGM Minutes
YHACS AGM 30TH JANUARY 2010
WHITE HART HARROGATE
LIST OF ATTENDEES**

Name of society	Attendees
Addingham Civic Society	John Walmsley, Mike Bolton
Bradford Civic Society	Alan Hall and Mandy Oates
Bridlington and District Civic Society	Cyril Oliver
Brighouse Civic Trust	John Culpan
Castleford & District Civic Trust	Reg Lavine, Joan Nicholson and Betty Wood, Sandra Wright
Halifax Civic Trust	Pam Northcott and June Paxton-White
Harrogate Civic Society	Mike Burke, Howard Hughes, Ian Brown
Horbury Civic Society	Joan and Ted Fawcett
Howden Civic Society	Charlotte Hursey
Huddersfield Civic Society	Richard Ward, William Kirby
Hull Civic Society	Malcolm Sharman, Ken Baker Cynthia Fowler
Ilkley Civic Society	Helen Kidman
Leeds Civic Trust	Linda Kitching and Kevin Grady
Market Weighton Civic Society	Tony Leonard
Allertonshire Civic Society	Mary and John Edwards
Ossett Civic Society	Ruth Amos and David Mitchell
Pickering Civic society	Judy and Harold Dixon
Richmond Civic Society	Fred L Wood
Ripon Civic Society	Sheila and David Winpenny
Scarborough & District Civic Society	Peter Cooper
Selby Civic Society	David Moss and Jim Wildash.
Skipton in Craven Civic Society	Sheila Clark
Wakefield Civic Society	Kevin Trickett, Michael O'Donnell, Brian Ward
Whitby Civic Society	Barry Atkinson
YHACS	Peter Spawforth, President
Guests	The Mayor of Harrogate Cllr Mrs P Jones and Mr Brian Jones Susan Spibey NWACTS Dr Tony Burton CSI

Apologies for Absence

Henry Pankhurst Harrogate CS
David Blackburn Bradford Building Preservation Trust
Dorothy Welburn Allertonshire CS
Ken Northcott and John Hargreaves Halifax CT
Helen and Frank Kirk Forest of Galtes Society
Peter Tapscott South West region
Peter Eversden London Forum
Peter Colley NWACTS
David Rhodes
Grimsby and Cleethorpes CS
Beverley CS
Richmond CS Delete
Tony Fooks CTSE