

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC SOCIETIES

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the White Hart Hotel, Harrogate at 1pm on Saturday 28th January 2011.

1. Present

Some 48 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 Bill Holt, the Mayor of the Borough of Harrogate, welcomed YHACS members back to Harrogate and hoped we would continue to do so. He said that civic societies and local authorities had a synergy and that on occasion it was right that the civic society called the council to order. He considered the localism bill currently in parliament as a big issue with dangers and benefits. He recalled that some post-war UDCs had been parochial in outlook and made some poor planning decisions. He hoped that localism would not fall for short-term decisions. Nevertheless, the key was to debate such issues, to keep focussed and to be supportive of each other. He stressed that Harrogate Borough Council has a good working relationship with Harrogate Civic Society.

Cllr Holt hoped that YHACS members would enjoy their visit to Harrogate and visit the shops, gardens, cafés and restaurants before returning home.

5. Minutes of the AGM 30.01.10

These were proposed by Kevin Trickett of Wakefield CS, seconded by Joan Nicholson of Castleford CT and approved by the meeting.

6. Matters Arising.

There were none.

7. Annual Report.

Peter Cooper reported:

Last year was a transition year, when we saw major changes in several regional bodies, the creation of a new national civic group and at YHACS a move to funding by members paying a fee. I am pleased to report that last year we had forty paid up members.

Civic Voice was officially launched in London on 17th April 2010. 33 Yorkshire and Humber civic societies have joined Civic Voice, some have joined Civic Voice and not YHACS and vice versa. Our view remains that societies can benefit from being members of YHACS and Civic Voice; there is no conflict. Indeed YHACS has joined Civic Voice as a member and we have had help and support from them in the last year.

In 2010 we attended the launch of English Heritage's 'Places of Worship at Risk' event and were also represented at meetings of the Historic Environment Forum. We supported Harrogate Civic Society by objecting to a proposal to build a large electricity sub station in the grounds of St Wilfrid's Church, Harrogate's only Grade 1 listed building. This was a very unusual step for us as building up knowledge of what can be complex issues surrounding planning applications is often beyond our capacity.

We attended a meeting of Great Grimsby Ice Factory Trust, or great gift for short. They are working to save the ice factory from dereliction by promoting ideas for its sustainable re-use, including an international visual arts venue, a renewable energy educational hub and an American-style micro-brewery. We recently launched our own Buildings at Risk register, working with SAVE Britain's Heritage. We had our usual quota of quarterly meetings, including a meeting at York where we debated the future of YHACS, at Bridlington when we had Graham Bell of North of England Civic Trust and at Selby when a very well-attended meeting heard a talk about the Big Society.

In September we wrote to the Prime Minister about the Big Society. On 14th December I received a reply (which Peter read out to the meeting).

In November, as Chairman of YHACS, I submitted an on-line application to English Heritage for the designation of Scarborough's Cliff Lift as a listed structure. I found the process fairly straightforward, the outcome is awaited.

Towards the end of the year we attended a meeting called by the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire to discuss arrangements for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. We also met with the Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership to see if we could help with their plans to establish a heritage rail trail between Scarborough and Hull.

Our main event of the year was once again Civic Societies Week, held between May and July and launched at Scarborough with guest speaker John Grundy. The outright winner this year was Selby Civic Society with an ambitious week-long programme of events. Second prize went once again to Huddersfield Civic Society and third to Scarborough. Commendations went to Brighouse, Grimsby Cleethorpes and District, Ripon, Skipton in Craven and Wakefield. Allertonshire was highly commended for a project that involved local primary schools.

Minutes have been recorded, newsletters edited, accounts kept, in fact, all the functions of a regional association have carried on thanks to the work of executive committee and YHACS members. Thanks are due to them all, particular thanks go to everyone who helped to keep us going when I was under par. I would also like to thank our outgoing president Peter Spawforth MBE for his work on behalf of the Association. I am delighted to report that Peter has offered to keep presenting the Peter Spawforth trophy!

I have enjoyed my time as chairman of YHACS since I was first elected in 2002. I have enjoyed working with the YHACS committee and alongside the members of many societies. The high points have been many and I feel that we have achieved a

great deal. But great challenges remain as John Grundy said at our Civic Societies Week launch, we don't want to be remembered as the decade that built some nice supermarkets. So I wish the new chairman and his committee the best of luck. There is plenty to do!

The annual report was proposed by Ian Munro of Beverley CS seconded by Tony Leonard of Market Weighton CS and adopted by the meeting.

8. Treasurer's Report

Richard Ward proposed a vote of thanks to Peter Cooper which was unanimously supported by the meeting. Peter was presented with a gift from the members.

Richard Ward presented the accounts for 2010. These were proposed by David Winpenny, seconded by Jim Wildash of Selby CS and carried unanimously.

9. Election of Officers

Chairman	Kevin Trickett <i>Nominated by Huddersfield CS, Hull CS and Wakefield CS</i>
Vice Chair	David Moss <i>Nominated by Huddersfield CS, Wakefield CS and Selby CS</i>
Treasurer	Richard Ward <i>Nominated by Hull, Wakefield and Huddersfield CS</i>
Secretary	Helen Kidman <i>Nominated by 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 Winpenny

Nominated by Huddersfield CS, Hull CS, Scarborough CS, Bridlington CS, Leeds CT 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 Cooper nominated by Huddersfield CS Wakefield CS and Hull CS

Was elected unanimously.

12. Any Other Business

There was none.

This concluded the formal business of the meeting.

13. Guest Speaker - Paula Ridley of Civic Voice

Paula Ridley is the chair of Civic Voice. She spoke on the subject of Civic Voice and the Big Society.

Paula explained that she was born in Huddersfield but now works in Liverpool. She is very familiar with the built environment in Yorkshire. She recognised the importance of the Scarborough cliff lift that Peter Cooper had mentioned.

The upcoming Civic Voice AGM is to be in Sheffield.

Paula felt that there was a difficulty in defining the Big Society. There is a need to relate Civic Voice activities to Big Society initiatives to give power to local communities and more public consultation. For example, in future local authorities will have to consult more widely over development plans.

A question arises over how 'neighbourhoods' will be defined and who will lead them – often the government boundaries run down the middle of a street and take no account of a community or neighbourhood.

Civic Societies understand the broad sweep of history and are empowered in a way that many communities are not. Many communities do not have access to the expertise which they need to participate effectively in the Big Society agenda. There is a debate to be had over the proper role of a local authority – there are many different types. They are accountable but some have less democratic legitimacy due to low electoral turn-out.

Paula felt that civic societies are well placed to get involved. Civic Voice is applying to the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Architectural Network to offer support on community involvement in planning. English Heritage see Civic Voice as the 'evangelical DIY wing' of heritage in England. Civic Voice's natural ground is to strengthen local communities on a wider than simply historical agenda.

Paula referred to the launch of the 'Decade of Health and Wellbeing' in Liverpool and quoted Stephen Bailey 'that a good building makes you feel better'. She highlighted the issue in the Liverpool finance area where there are many empty C19 buildings, but many of these are now being taken back into use and it was at last recognised that these buildings are important for the future.

Paula appreciated the YHACS CS Week Awards Scheme and the huge range of activities civic societies undertook nowadays. In some regions joint working had lost enthusiasm and she was interested to see how it worked in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Paula went on to talk about Civic Day, which is a Civic Voice initiative. It will take place on 25th June 2011 but societies can choose another day if that proves necessary locally. The same date has been chosen for Armed Forces day which might be difficult in some places but could be used to advantage. Societies are being encouraged to use Civic Day to raise their profiles.

Kevin Trickett pointed out that YHACS will put forward events for the Peter Spawforth trophy - which can include non-CV members. It focuses committees and brings in new ideas. Societies needing ideas were invited to attend a workshop on 9th February in Sheffield. Alternatively, there are ideas on the Civic Voice website.

A number of people raised questions with Paula on the Big Society and other issues.

HODS

It had recently been announced that Heritage Open Days is to be tendered by English Heritage. Paula confirmed that with the National Trust as leaders, and Heritage Alliance, Civic Voice is part of a consortium which wishes to take over HODS.

A number of societies were not involved with HODS as they were unable to identify buildings to open or other activities, their local authorities organised the main events and some societies felt sidelined. There now appears to be a problem with private houses opening due to insurance restrictions. Guided walks can be useful and some local authorities provide grants for publicity. Some local authorities would be happy to devolve activities to societies.

Planning

A major part of civic society activity is scrutinising planning applications – a major issue in the localism agenda. Problems can arise when the council sides with developers. Big schemes should have Environmental Impact Assessments and Social Impact Studies to address such issues objectively. Heritage Bureaux where developers, councillors, officers, civic society representatives and others can view presentations on planning applications can also help. It was felt that in some large cities, developers did sometimes resort to underhand methods to get their projects approved.

It was pointed out that Yorkshire East Riding has abolished its Conservation Advisory Committee. This was regarded as a retrograde step.

Some societies had requested to become more involved in planning but local authorities failed to respond.

Peter Spawforth pointed out that councils can promote development and that it was down to organisations like civic societies to object, particularly to poor quality plans. They could use the press to publicise these. However societies need to build bridges and not alienate officers by being aggressive.

In future, it was felt that councils would have to listen to societies and offer more pre-application discussions and third party right of appeal if needed. Paula would be pleased to receive any design statements with which societies have been involved. It was noted that to be fully effective they need to be adopted.

Some societies reported that there was a lack of a joined-up approach with conservation areas being reviewed at the same time as a separate group of council officers is reviewing transport strategy.

It was stated that there was a lack of response from local authorities to objections – many small items now dealt with only by officers under delegated powers.

Pathfinder type events.

The Pathfinder events run by CT a few years ago were mentioned and Paula noted that these had assisted new civic society leaders on planning issues. CV is looking at how to explain jargon and technical terms and will seek input from societies.

Localism

CV has set up a panel on Localism to advise the CV board on the Localism Bill.

Heritage Champions

These seem to be diminishing in number and influence. Some have no agreed brief and are hence overlooked and forgotten.

CV Membership – barriers

Some societies felt that the cost was a barrier and others felt that joining both YHACS and CV was a duplication. Some large village societies felt that their agenda was the village only and not the bigger picture.

14. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee 2012

YHACS is checking out with other Lords Lieutenant in Yorkshire and Humber as to what is being proposed in their areas. In February 2012 there will be big publicity for events. The press launch is on 7th February 2011.

Kevin Trickett will communicate with members as soon as he has heard more. They are looking for organisations to badge events as diamond jubilee events

Jubilee Day is Tuesday 5th June 2012. The 4th June 2012 will also be a bank holiday.

Events could be used to raise societies' profiles.

15. Buildings at Risk

Six societies had responded so far – any further suggestions should be passed to David Winpenny.

16. Subscriptions

2012 YHACS subs are due. Last year YHACS had 41 member societies. This year 25 have paid up so far.

17. Reports from Societies.

Attention was drawn to a new publication called Yorkshire Real Heritage Pubs, produced by CAMRA. Several societies had been involved.

Sheila Clark from Skipton CS reported a large proposed development on Skipton High Street opposite the Parish Church was causing great concern because of its impact on the town hall. After objections by the civic society and others the council voted against the proposal and the developers were advised to come up with a better plan. They are also setting up a town hall trust to create an amenity centre

June Paxton White from Halifax CT had a number of issues concerning consultation specifically to do with post planning approval changes. Consultation is frequently ineffective. Often for meetings there is a lack of publicity or people are not available to go.

William Kirkby of Huddersfield CS was pleased to report that the shop that they had taken over for CS week had been re-opened as a café retaining many of the original features, following CS assistance.

David Winpenny of Ripon CS advised that their society gave small stainless steel plaques to award winners. He alerted members to the fact that 2011 is the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Sir George Gilbert Scott architect, and there is an exhibition at Ripon cathedral which he renovated, between 16th February and 9th March 2011. David is also making a presentation on GGS.

David Mitchell of Ossett CS explained that consultation can work. His council planned to close a recycling centre to create a travellers' camp but following consultation this proposal was turned down.

Their town hall has been awaiting refurbishment since 1998. Consultation took place three times but was ignored by councillors.

Judy Dixon of Pickering drew attention to the plan to sell forestry and the potential impact on flooding in the Pickering area. It was agreed by Kevin Trickett that the committee would discuss this issue and respond to the Forestry Commission consultation.

18. Dates of next meetings.

2nd April 2011 Venue likely to be Sheffield but to be confirmed and topic to be advised.

23rd July 2011 Skipton

5th November 2011 Beverley Guildhall

Helen Kidman
20th February 2011.

**Appendix A to AGM Minutes
YHACS AGM 28TH JANUARY 2011
WHITE HART HARROGATE
LIST OF ATTENDEES**

Name of society	Attendees
Addingham Civic Society	Jim Robinson, Mike Bolton
Beverley Civic Society	Ian Munro and Barbara English
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	June Paxton-White and Ken Northcott
Harrogate Civic Society	Henry Pankhurst and Peter Hacker
Horbury Civic Society	Joan and Ted Fawcett
Huddersfield Civic Society	Richard Ward, William Kirby
Hull Civic Society	Malcolm Sharman
Ilkley Civic Society	Helen Kidman
Leeds Civic Trust	Lynda Kitching
Market Weighton Civic Society	Tony Leonard
Allertonshire Civic Society	Mary and John Edwards and Dorothy Welburn
Ossett Civic Society	Ruth Amos and David Mitchell
Oulton Society	John Crapper
Pickering Civic society	Judy and Harold Dixon
Pontefract Civic Society	Peter Taylor
Ripon Civic Society	David Winpenny
Scarborough & District Civic Society	Peter Cooper
Saddleworth CT	Lorna Gartside
Selby Civic Society	David Moss and Jim Wildash.
Skipton in Craven Civic Society	Sheila Clark and Ann Wood
Wakefield Civic Society	Kevin Trickett, Michael O'Donnell, Brian Ward and Geoffrey Wood
YHACS	Peter Spawforth, President
Guests	The Mayor of Harrogate Cllr Bill Holt Paula Ridley Civic Voice

Apologies for Absence

Pam Northcott and John Hargreaves Halifax CT
Mike Burke Harrogate CS
David Rhodes
Diane Terry Saddleworth CT
Scalby VT
Sheffield CT
Grimsby and Cleethorpes CS
Richmond CS