



**Civic Voice Regional Forum Meeting**  
**The Coffin Works, Birmingham – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018**  
**11.00am - 4.00pm**

**Attendees:** Helen Kidman (Chair), Paul Cartwright, Nicola Daniel, Joan Humble, Jane Maggs, Peter Pickering, Karen Rowland.

**Staff in attendance:** Ian Harvey, Sarah James

**1. APOLOGIES:**

Elizabeth Allison, Mary Ash, Richard Bennett, Kathy Fishwick, Tony Fooks, Vanessa Gregory, Andrew Murray, Gavin Orton, Vernon Porter.

**2. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING:**

The draft minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

**3. REGIONAL REPORTS:**

Helen Kidman explained that she had been unable to view any submitted reports and that she will circulate them after the meeting. Verbal updates included:

- The London Plan is currently out for consultation, comments due by 2<sup>nd</sup> March. After consultation, the plan will go straight to examination (different process to other development plans).
- ACTION 1 – Civic Voice to circulate Lichfields' report on the progress of Local Plans in England.
- Beverley Civic Society have had issues with a) Lockton and their understanding of Heritage Open Days for insurance purposes and b) engagement with English Heritage over reviewing Listed Buildings. ACTION 2 – Civic Voice to follow these queries up with Lockton and Historic England.
- NWACT AGM will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> March and will include a guest speaker from the Northern Powerhouse.

**Pursuing Local Heritage Designation**

Nicola Daniel gave a presentation highlighting her experience of trying to set up a list of local heritage assets within the Otter Valley area and the difficulties she had encountered with the process. She explained that the local authority has become unsupportive of taking the list forward, citing problems with a lack of resources and their focus on producing a Heritage Strategy. She asked the forum for advice on how to progress the matter:

- The forum agreed that developing positive relationships with local councillors is key. It is critical to gain political support for the project to enable the local authority to progress it.
- Find out whether you have a Heritage Champion in your local authority and if not, consider asking a local councillor to become one. More info available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/local-heritage/heritage-champions/>
- Approach the Chair of your Planning Committee for advice and ensure your voice is heard at Planning Committee meetings.

**General Data Protection Regs (GDPR)**

Helen Kidman brought the new GDPR to the attention of the group and advised everyone to be aware that this is coming into effect on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018, although there is currently, a lack of detailed information for charities/small organisations. Ian clarified that Civic Voice is currently seeking legal advice and will inform members as soon as available.

## Community Asset Transfers

Helen highlighted a local issue whereby Bradford Council is experiencing a backlog of transferring property to community groups due to a lack of staff to process the conveyancing. Any groups experiencing similar issues should inform Helen.

## 4. BCC ACTIVITY

Helen and Karen Rowland gave a short update on the intelligence they have been gathering around the impact of a loss of conservation officers on conservation areas.

It was agreed for Civic Voice to set up a regular telephone call with the team undertaking the appropriate research on conservation areas.

## 5. CONSERVATION AREAS IN PLANNING

Sarah James gave a presentation bringing the group up to date on the Civic Voice campaign since the previous meeting. She explained that what started as a Civic Voice Conservation Area Audit has now moved forward into a possible programme of training, guidance and support and is making the Civic Voice team think about what could a new “grassroots conservation community” look like and how could we build this?

A presentation of a new website was shared [www.civicvoice.org.uk/conservationareas](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/conservationareas) and Sarah explained that we are considering training in a variety of formats including:

- E-learning, Guides, Webinars i.e. Historic England,
- Workshops, Case studies, Publication.

The group explained that these would all be useful ways to spread the knowledge of conservation areas but should also be a new way for Civic Voice to consider generating income and displaying more enhanced membership benefits.

The group suggested the following to be considered as part of training/guidance:

- A plain English ‘planning jargon buster’
- Explanation of how conservation areas fit within the planning system.
- What tools are available to protect conservation areas?
- Roles of key partners e.g. What do Conservation Officers do?
- How can we improve our consultation responses?

## 6. CIVIC VOICE UPDATE

### Annual Convention 2018

The Executive Director gave an update on the Annual Convention in Birmingham, which included explaining that the RIBA president Ben Derbyshire, Sir Terry Farrell, Laura Sandys, Dame Fiona Reynolds, Ros Kerslake would all be speaking. With this in mind, Ian explained that we want to have an open discussion on the Convention to explore the format for this year, potential venues, and how we could grow the convention by opening up to new audiences.

Attendees were taken on a brief visit to 2 potential venues: the Birmingham Midland Institute (BMI) and the Council House. A discussion was held on return, where the following key points were raised:

- All supported the need for a blend of activities at the convention including talks, key note speakers, tours, workshops, exhibitions.
- There was strong support for an evening dinner. It was suggested to also build time into the convention agenda for informal networking too, ‘opportunities to sit and chat’.

- Concern was expressed about moving towards being solely a set of talks for a corporate audience with significantly higher ticket prices.
- It was suggested that the convention could turn into 2 separate events; one for professionals and one for members? Joan pointed out that having a mix of professionals and civic volunteers could also be beneficial in exchanging information, getting the civic message out to new audiences and attracting new members.
- Differential pricing was suggested with a discounted fee for members. It was suggested that to help pay for the evening dinner, there could be an ‘event fee’ and an additional ‘dinner fee’ and to potentially promote the convention as a CPD opportunity.
- It was acknowledged by the forum that there is no one ‘perfect’ venue that suits all and whilst the Council House was an impressive and interesting historic building, it was evident that it couldn’t accommodate workshops with a lack of breakout spaces. The forum felt the BMI chimed with our values in supporting a local community organisation and is a significantly cheaper venue, but it was acknowledged that it is ‘a bit shabby’ and would this give the right impression to the movement? Joan expressed concern over the accessibility of the venue for disabled and wheelchair users.
- All thanked Civic Voice for the opportunity to be involved in the discussion.

## 7. CV MEMBERSHIP FEES REVIEW

Sarah James explained to the group that following on from a recent board meeting, the board had agreed not to increase the membership fee for 2018-2019, but to undergo a period of consultation with the membership to look at a wider review of membership fees.

This work could be led by the Membership sub-committee under Phil Douce who could act as the point of contact and dialogue with groups so that members see a Trustee is leading this. The review would be asking/discussing the following questions:

- Different funding options - Levy / Banded / Income models
- What would be the impact of changing any fees?
- Should we just focus on the members who are committed to Civic Voice?
- Associate membership – Pros and Cons
- Membership benefits – is it enough?
- Clusters and Regions - Connecting with Civic Voice and relationship

The review would be finished in time for September 2018 and the Civic Voice Regional Forum would be able to contribute.

## 8. LOCKTON AFFINITY PROGRAMME

It was explained that the reason Civic Voice is discussing this programme of work is in relation to earlier meetings saying that we must provide more “tangible benefits” for members of Civic Voice. The Executive Director explained that developing a relationship with Lockton could give benefits that could help:

- Retain existing members
- Attract new members
- Create loyalty and add real value by providing real tangible benefits
- Generate new revenue streams for Civic Voice

Whilst the forum understood the need for Civic Voice to look at other areas for funding, the group felt that the values of Civic Voice and the movement should be adhered to.

Some members felt uncomfortable for Civic Voice to be introducing a membership benefit that could involve supporting well-known high street corporate brands rather than local shops/independents. It was felt that this was against our values.

**ACTION 3** - The forum agreed for Civic Voice to continue discussions with Lockton but to see if the programme could work in alternative methods and align closer to our values.

## 9. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE FORUM?

Ian Harvey explained that the Civic Voice board had agreed to review and potentially update the Civic Voice constitution. The board had agreed that it would be sensible for any review to include the Regional Forum.

The group had a discussion to consider the purpose of the forum and how it connected and acted as a voice for the civic movement within Civic Voice. It was agreed that stronger communication and networking amongst members can only be a positive thing

It was suggested that perhaps Civic Voice could create individual sub-groups for different policy areas and each region/cluster should identify a contact for each area. The areas suggested included:

- Civic Voice liaison
- Policy and development
- Events and campaigns
- Membership development

It was pointed out by the Chair that to make this group most successful and to help develop capacity in the movement, a different named individual should be sent so that the burden doesn't fall on the same individuals.

It was agreed that as Civic Voice is undergoing a membership review, this item should be added to the Civic Voice Regional Forum agenda in May as the relationship of Clusters and Regions connecting with Civic Voice is a key relationship.

## 10. KEY MESSAGES TO THE CIVIC VOICE BOARD

- GDPR is a continuing cause of frustration for civic societies. We are all waiting for practical information on what we need to do, but none is yet forthcoming. Post meeting, Jane Maggs highlighted a useful website: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/business/>
- There is interest in the potential provision of training to support The Big Conservation Conversation.
- There is a need for a jargon-buster on planning and conservation.
- With regard to the Civic Voice Convention, *all* activities are deemed important - e.g. guest speakers, short presentations, workshops, networking, visits and walks, stands and the dinner.

## 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 11am-4pm - Coffin Works, Birmingham

## 12. ACTIONS

- ACTION 1 – Civic Voice to circulate Lichfields' report on the progress of Local Plans in England.
- ACTION 2 – Civic Voice to follow up Beverley Civic Society's queries with Lockton and Historic England.
- ACTION 3 - The forum agreed for Civic Voice to continue discussions with Lockton but to see if the programme could work in alternative methods and align closer to our values.

Minutes to be posted to <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/about/meetings/>