

2013

Our Review



“What you do is right up my street”

Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

“I applaud Civic Voice for speaking out against the Government’s proposals for changes to permitted development rights”

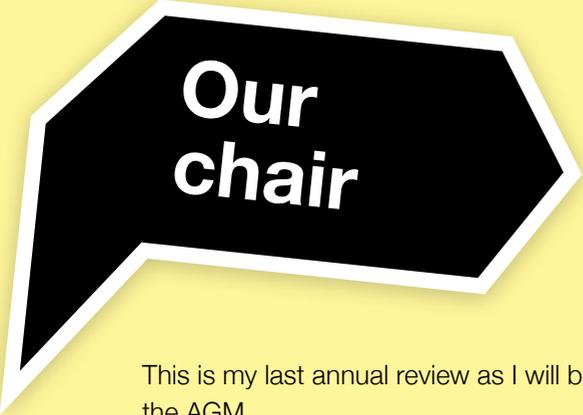
Zac Goldsmith MP

“I am strongly of the opinion that change of use class should rest with the local authority. We applaud Civic Voice for undertaking this campaign”

Roberta Blackman Woods MP, Shadow Planning Minister

“Every civic society should tell their MP to join the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies”

Laura Sandys MP, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies



Our chair

This is my last annual review as I will be stepping down at the AGM.

I believe the organisation we have now demonstrates the effectiveness and need for leadership within the civic society movement and hope that within the first three years, we have been able to demonstrate to industry partners, funders and members the need for Civic Voice. In the last three and a half years I have travelled a lot, met many of you and learned a lot. On the way, we have been lucky to have Tony Burton as our first director, followed by Steve Graham. Griff Rhys Jones has been a tireless and outstanding president. Ian Harvey has become the lynch-pin of the organisation, now ably assisted by Gill Roxborough.

None of what Civic Voice has achieved would have been possible without them. The board have dealt with all the challenges new organisations face and are now ready to move into a new phase. But the most important thanks of all are to all our members, who have contributed to the credibility of the organisation, and who are truly responsible for its success.



Paula Ridley

Chair

October 2013

Our influence



Fleet Society has a visit to Parliament



Civic Day is launched in Parliament



Eric Pickles MP at the Civic Day launch

Our Parliamentary work is essential in ensuring the issues of the civic society movement are heard by the powers that be.

- ☞ We held meetings of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies featuring guest speakers Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP, Planning Minister, Nick Boles MP and chair of the group, Laura Sandys MP.
- ☞ We set ourselves a target of achieving 100 MPs signed up to the group before the end of 2013. Eighteen new MPs joined the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies including ex-minister Andrew Stunell, influential back bencher Zac Goldsmith, and president of the Liberal Democrats, Tim Farron.
- ☞ Find out if your MP is a member by visiting www.civicvoice.org.uk/about/appg/
- ☞ We were invited by Eric Pickles MP to join a panel to hand out £1 million to help champion innovative ideas for the high street.
- ☞ We held meetings with Nick Boles MP, Eric Pickles MP, Culture Secretary, Maria Miller MP and met many other MPs to press the concerns of the civic society movement.
- ☞ We coordinated a campaign response to overturn the Government's planned changes to permitted development rights with Lord True of Richmond and Zac Goldsmith MP.
- ☞ We worked closely with Chris Skidmore MP in setting up an All Party Parliamentary Group for the Green Belt and in campaigning for a 'community right of appeal' to be introduced to the planning system.
- ☞ We attended and submitted questions to a series of Government Select Committee events.
- ☞ We were invited to contribute to several private roundtables by all three main political parties, and have started a process to develop a 'civic movement manifesto' in time for their conferences in 2014.

Our people



Jason McCartney MP and Griff



Griff in Canterbury



Griff (centre) campaigns in Ramsgate

Involving our grassroots membership in the decisions that shape our work is key for Civic Voice.

- ☞ Civic Voice president, Griff Rhys Jones (pictured) undertook major tours of the country in both Yorkshire and Kent meeting civic volunteers to hear their thoughts.
- ☞ Following a survey of Civic Voice members, 80% of members voted to keep the Civic Voice membership fee at the same level for the third year.
- ☞ We established a 'regional sounding board' to bring together representatives from different areas of the country on a regular basis.
- ☞ We reviewed our constitution after a three year period.
- ☞ Our planning panel of civic volunteers continued to provide valuable thinking to our policy work and helped us respond to six major consultations during the year.
- ☞ Our project to write a history of the civic movement was produced and will be launched in later 2013.
- ☞ We organised an awayday for 35 civic volunteers in Birmingham to help contribute to the next steps of the civic movement.
- ☞ We completed a piece of work with funding from English Heritage to undertake a nationwide survey of current community action within the historic environment.
- ☞ We undertook a pilot with English Heritage on a toolkit – Placecheck – with the help of Canterbury, Lytham St Annes and Marple civic groups.
- ☞ We continue to look for new ways to expand and broaden our membership to ensure we truly represent the civic movement.

Our 3rd year

Based on member feedback, we launched a new regular e-newsletter 'civic update' aimed at giving more regular insight to our work.

- Over 15,000 members of Civic Voice enjoyed a free day out to a National Trust and English Heritage property as part of their Civic Voice membership.
- A successful third AGM and convention hosted by the Coventry Society was held in October 2012 attended by 140 delegates from across the country.
- 76% of members rate Civic Voice good or very good in Civic Survey 2012, while two thirds of civic societies believe they are well connected with other civic societies.
- We organised a leadership course for 12 civic volunteers from across England.
- We now have nearly 5,000 people following us on twitter and are pleased over 50 civic groups have now joined twitter.
- The second Marsh Christian Trust awards for volunteers and civic societies making an outstanding contribution to the movement were presented at the AGM. These were awarded by Civic Voice to Elaine Smith (Blackpool Civic Trust), and The Highgate Society.
- Our work has continued to be covered in national media, including via BBC News. Civic societies were able to generate huge coverage for national Civic Day.

Planning success

Our biggest campaign of the year was against the Government's changes to permitted development rights, which members voted for at last year's AGM.

- Over 10,000 individual members of civic groups contacted an MP to express concern at the changes
- We communicated with dozens of MPs to brief them on the issue
- Over 200 civic societies had a related letter printed in a local newspaper
- We were featured in national newspapers The Sunday Times, Telegraph and the Daily Mail
- Over 375 MPs were contacted by individual civic societies

The result? We were able to persuade the Government to significantly amend its original proposals, thus stopping a free-for-all in development across the country. This was truly a magnificent effort from members and officers alike, and we are really grateful for your support.

Heritage Open Days

Civic Voice, the National Trust and Heritage Alliance have joint responsibility for the management of Heritage Open Days and during September 2012, over one million visitors were able to enjoy a day out visiting castles, country houses and churches!

The future of Heritage Open Days will depend on the continued support of the civic society movement. It is a fantastic celebration of our nation's love for the local historic environment and a scheme that Civic Voice is proud to be involved in.



Canal campaigners in Marple



Certificate winners in Camden



Some helping hands in Hale



Mary Creagh MP with Wakefield plaque



A wonderland in Chesham



Keeping Nantwich tidy

Civic stories

Civic Day

Civic Day is a key initiative to help demonstrate the benefits of being part of something bigger and to help strengthen groups.

On 23 June over 200 community groups across the country organised close to 350 activities to interest and engage people in their local area. This is the largest civic activity yet organised and is generating enormous enthusiasm as well as demonstrating the creativity of civic societies. Some highlights included:

- ▶ Being launched by Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP at a Parliamentary reception attended by MPs from across the House.
- ▶ Leader of the House of Commons, John Bercow MP, launching the Buckingham Society Civic Day.
- ▶ Camden Civic Society working with local school children to nominate 'local heritage assets' as part of our Local List campaign.

On average, groups were able to recruit eight new members per Civic Day activity, and it has become the central date in the Civic Voice and civic movement calendar. From what started as an idea, to a national event, is a clear demonstration of members' enthusiasm for it. Since we started Civic Day, over 1,000 events or activities have taken place across the country. Societies have captured this event with their debates, discussions and surveys, and are very much making it their own.

Civic Day 2014 will be on June 21st – put it in your diary now!



Restoring outdoor furniture in Fleet



Artworks unveiled in Cockermouth



Walkers in Mitcham



The Addingham groundbreaking gang

Civic societies provide the heartbeat of the civic movement. Here are just some of their achievements during the past year.

- ▶ After a long campaign, British Waterways (now Canal & River Trust) finally entered into discussions with **MARPLE** Civic Society about Marple Wharf and its future.
- ▶ **PETERBOROUGH** Civic Society published a book, Peterborough and its Villages in Detail, with a Foreword by Griff Rhys Jones.
- ▶ **BLACKPOOL, HALE** and **OXFORD** civic groups all had the opportunity to present their work from Civic Day to Eric Pickles MP at a Parliamentary event.
- ▶ **CHESTER** Civic Trust published a book as part of its 50th anniversary.
- ▶ **CAMDEN** Civic Society worked with local school children to nominate 'local heritage assets' as part of our Local List campaign.
- ▶ Volunteers in **LEEDS** have begun an ambitious project to survey the condition of 1,000 of the city's Grade II-listed buildings.
- ▶ The **RICHMOND** Society has launched a photographic competition: The good, the bad and the ugly.
- ▶ The **YORKSHIRE** and **HUMBER** Association of Civic Societies featured a talk from Gary Verity (CEO, Visit Yorkshire) about how the world's greatest cycle race – the Tour de France – will start in Yorkshire on 5th & 6th July 2014.
- ▶ **BATLEY & BIRSTALL** Civic Society secured a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for a project on allotments with the overall aim of helping to renew interest in allotments.
- ▶ The **CANTERBURY** Society launched 'Canterbury in Vision' a report representing the views of 16 community groups across Canterbury.
- ▶ **MERSEYSIDE** Civic Society celebrated its 75th anniversary with a series of lectures and a major event for national Civic Day.
- ▶ **LONDON** Forum members were entertained in memorable style by Mayor Boris Johnson to celebrate the Forum's 25th birthday.
- ▶ And thousands of civic activities up and down the country!

Our finances 2013

Income

Civic society membership	£54,000
Grants	£18,500
Project funding	£91,700
Other income	£4,300
Total	£168,500

Expenditure

Staff and operations	£146,400
Campaigns, events and activities	£45,300
Governance	£23,500
Other expenditure	£1,100
Total	£216,300

Net result **£-47,800**

The full trustee report and accounts for the year ending 30 June 2013 is available on our website [Civic Voice > About > Official documents](#)

Our Treasurer, Martin Meredith, can answer any queries on Civic Voice's financial matters. Please contact him on 0151 707 4319 or info@civicvoice.org.uk

Funds brought forward from 2012 £149,700
TOTAL FUNDS **£101,900**

Facts & figures

Our people

President | Griff Rhys Jones

Chair | Paula Ridley
(Merseyside Civic Society)

Trustees | Freddie Gick, deputy chair (Cheltenham Civic Society)
John Bothamley (Hereford Civic Society) | Paul Clarke (Todmorden Civic Society)
John Kershaw (Manchester Civic Society) | Helen Marcus (Heath and Hampstead Society)
Martin Meredith, honorary treasurer (Chester Civic Trust) | Neil Sinden (Friends of Epping Forest)
David Tittle (Coventry Society) | John Walker (Canterbury Society)

Staff | Ian Harvey, campaigns manager | Gill Roxborough, co-ordinator

Our thanks | The civic movement is indebted to the following for their support in establishing and running Civic Voice | Campaign to Protect Rural England
Department for Communities and Local Government | English Heritage | Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Jennifer Howells | Marsh Christian Trust | The Townscape Institute

Our future

In the coming year, we will continue to build on the success of the first three. We have demonstrated we can campaign effectively to make the voice of the civic movement heard.

We will continue to choose our campaigning priorities carefully, work with our allies and mobilise our membership to influence those in power. Civic Voice is an organisation that listens very carefully to its members, but we know that this is not always apparent. We want to make the mechanisms by which members steer the organisation clearer, creating more opportunities for members to contribute to creating policies and setting priorities.

We will continue to help civic societies to help each other. Using examples of successful campaigns and activities, and stories from societies that have transformed their fortunes to draw lessons that all societies can learn.

An important priority is to move towards a financially sustainable model of operation with our core income coming from within the movement. This means maintaining a lean organisation whilst finding imaginative ways for civic societies and their members to contribute more and persuading more societies to join. It has been a tremendous achievement that around two-thirds of the viable civic societies in the country have joined Civic Voice and that new ones choose to join each year, but we want to make sure that every civic society worthy of the name is part of the national movement.

The Trustees of Civic Voice



Support us

JOIN YOUR LOCAL CIVIC SOCIETY

By becoming a member of your local civic society you are joining a movement of people who take pride in their area

JOIN CIVIC VOICE

Civic societies, individuals, businesses, community groups, town and parish councils are all welcome to join Civic Voice

VOLUNTEER

We are a small organisation with a big agenda. There is a host of opportunities to get more involved by volunteering from home or in our Liverpool office

DONATE

Every donation will help support and strengthen the civic movement across England

LEAVE A LEGACY

If you share Civic Voice's vision then please consider leaving a gift in your will. With the advice of a solicitor, writing a will or changing it in order to include a gift to Civic Voice is very simple

**CIVIC
VOICE**
talking civic sense

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