



**Civic Voice Regional Forum Committee Meeting
The Coffin Works 20th September
1-4.00pm**

Helen Kidman (Chair)	Mary Ash,	Paul Cartwright,	Gavin Orton,
Vanessa Gregory	Kathy Fishwick	Roger Lea	
Jane Maggs	Andrew Murray	Karen Rowland	Susan Spibey

In attendance:

Ian Harvey- Executive Director	Sarah James- Membership Development Officer
Lisa Crisp-Ullah-Civic Voice	Joan Humble – Chair of Civic Voice

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOMES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that she was pleased to see a number of new faces attending which sends a positive signal that people want to contribute to the future of the national civic movement.

Everyone in the room introduced themselves and explained where they were from.

2. APOLOGIES:

Peter Eversden	Richard Bennett	Nicola Daniel	Tony Fooks
Helen Marcus	Vernon Porter	Denise Laver	James Laverack
Alan Morris	Alan Chape	Elizabeth Allison	Denise Laver

3. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING:

It was agreed all action points were fulfilled except Peter Eversden sharing guidance on how best to influence the local plan process system and a document setting out key terms and guidelines about how to respond to a planning application.

VG pointed out on the minutes she was not an associate member. It was agreed to alter the minutes to reflect that VG was explaining the benefits for different categories should be proportionate to the level of members.

4. ANY MATTERS ARISING THAT ARE NOT ON THE AGENDA:

PC Pointed out that planning jargon is a minefield and we would be better off with a glossary.

IH Explained we will be making it easier for members and associations with the new planning pilot training which we will discuss later on the agenda

5. REGIONAL REPORTS

Regional reports had been circulated in advance.

6. CIVIC VOICE ACTIVITIES:



The Executive Director gave a presentation on Civic Voice activities particularly noting: -

1. Membership benefits reviewed and that Civic Voice will be much tighter monitoring these, including ensuring only Civic Voice members sit on committees and that they could be accessed In detail at <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/join/civic-societies/membership-matrix-civic-societies/>
2. Delivered the Civic Voice Design Awards / Masterclass at the Cheesegrater in London sponsored by Rogers Stirk & Harbour Partnership
3. Delivered National Civic Day with over 660 events
4. APPG for Civic Societies registered after election and that Alok Sharma MP has said yes to attending a meeting in the future
5. Published survey of communities in partnership with Historic England on conservation areas
6. Preparing for Annual Convention in Wakefield membership renewals – Insurance, National Trust passes
7. Implemented changes from Civic Voice Review 42 Recommendations
8. Undertaken the Civic Voice Trustee election with Gavin Orton joining the board from October 21
9. Considering training/support to ensure civic societies are equipped to respond to issues within the planning system
10. Explained that Joan Humble, Chair of Civic Voice and the Chair of APPG for Civic Societies are writing to Charity Commission about new guidance being issued

It was explained that the training programme being developed is being created in partnership with West Masa and the first date is scheduled to take place on November 25th at the Coffin Works.

Civic Voice's Chair, Joan Humble finished by saying that we now have a strategic plan in place and the board want to work with all groupings of civic societies including regional associations and country federations to hold partner events so that we can build the national civic movement up as a national force to make the case for the built and historic environment.

7. CIVIC DAY AND THE BIG CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

The Executive Director informed the group that Civic Voice/Historic England/IHBC research into Conservation Areas was launched on national Civic Day – 17th June 2017. The latest results published showing losses of conservation staff was also shared which shows that there has been a 36% decrease in conservation staff since 2006: -

- There was also a discussion about collecting evidence on Conservation Areas and their long-term future. It was suggested that a national call for evidence may be appropriate and this could feed into an APPG debate and Select Committee to help affect positive change.
- Several members of the group highlighted problems with the lack of enforcement and management of conservation areas and the poor quality Conservation Area Appraisals prepared by consultants. Several stated that Local Councils are frequently reluctant to list CAs or other Heritage on the " At Risk" register because it only would highlight their inability to deal with themselves. The group considered that research, somehow, engaging with each of the known Civic Voice members to ask for their perceived " real status" of At Risk Heritage in their areas could be something the forum take forward.
- The group also recognised that a part of the loss of conservation officers was down to austerity but also because conservation was not regarded as a priority. The group considered



how we can work as a movement to use our single voice to make it a priority and make change happen.

The Director finished by stating that events celebrating 50 years of conservation areas are being organised by the national civic movement and said Civic Voice was keen to organise and speak at even more events.

- September 21st Stamford (Joan Humble speaking)
- October 3rd London (Ian Harvey speaking)
- October 4th Canterbury (Ian Harvey speaking)
- October 7th Bristol
- November 9th Birkenhead (Ian Harvey speaking)
- November 11th Coventry (Ian Harvey speaking)
- November 15th Chester (Joan Humble speaking)
- March 2018 Southgate (Ian Harvey speaking)

Action: Civic Voice to undertake some research to try and identify further what impact on a local level the loss of conservation officers is having on the historic environment

Action: To invite David White and the Deal Society to share their experience of a community led conservation appraisal with the Regional Forum

Action: To share London School of Economic Research on the Value of Conservation Areas

8. LOCAL HERITAGE LISTING

Kathy Fishwick from the North West informed that group that a new local group, CAST (Community Assets Standing Tall) had been awarded £49,400 by HLF to carry out a project on production of a list of local heritage assets, with a view to including them in the Local List. CAST did not consult with any of our local history or community groups before doing this.

All were in agreement that the fact that HLF has granted this incredible sum of money (the breakdown of which we do not know) seems to be a real game changer.

A discussion followed on Local Listing and it was agreed that:-

- The value placed on local listing varies considerably between local authorities. Societies should propose properties for Local Listing and report any difficulties to Civic Voice.
- Local Lists adoption is very patchy and in some places progress is extremely slow.
- Societies should try and get closer to decision makers and build relationships with councillors and explain the benefits of a Local List as “the local view of what’s important”

Action: Civic Voice to explore with contacts in HLF about the background to this project.

Action: Civic Voice to promote and highlight the importance of Local Heritage Listing to project the historic environment.

9. MEMBERSHIP DECLINE AND THE FUTURE OF THE MOVEMENT



Helen Kidman chaired a free-flowing discussion exploring the possible reasons for this and the group moved into a workshop setting with additional notes for that session.

10. KEY MESSAGE FROM THE MEETING TO THE CIVIC VOICE BOARD

CONSERVATION

- There is evidence (or is it just perception) that listed buildings are deteriorating due to lack of finance and lack of intervention by local authority planning staff. (See work to be done on Conservation officers and CAs at risk.)
- There is an opportunity for Civic Voice to encourage societies to promote C20 buildings for listing.
- We need to identify and review the research already undertaken on the economic value of conservation areas as a means of promoting them to residential and business owners.
- The next Regional Forum meeting(s) will have a theme - The impact of lost Conservation officers and this should be promoted wide to civic societies by representatives for feedback.

MEMBERSHIP

- We need to consider what Regional Associations can do to reverse declining civic society membership
- The regional forum would like to try on line networking but this will need infrastructure.
- Many of us now have new MPs and societies should be encouraged to go and meet them and to sign up for the APPG for Civic Societies now it is back up and running.

11. ACTIONS/FEEDBACK TO CIVIC VOICE BOARD:

- a) Action: Civic Voice to undertake some research to try and identify further what impact on a local level the loss of conservation officers is having on the historic environment and to ask the APPG for Civic Societies to hold a meeting on this issue and to write to the Minister.
- b) Action: To invite David White and the Deal Society to share their experience of a community led conservation appraisal
- c) Action: To share Historic England London School of Economic Research on the Value of Conservation Areas and to invite someone to speak at a future meeting
- d) Action: Civic Voice to explore with contacts in HLF about the background to the Local List project.
- e) Action: Civic Voice to promote and highlight the important of Local Heritage Listing to protect the historic environment.

12. FUTURE REGIONAL FORUM MEETING DATES

All meetings to take place at Civic Voice's Head Office in The Coffin Works, Birmingham

- 14th December 2017 (11am – 4pm (with lunch provided)
- 6th February 2018 (11am – 4pm (with lunch provided)

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