



Larger Civic Societies

Notes of a meeting held on 21st April 2017
at Bath Preservation Trust

Attendance

Thomas Sheppard	TS	Bath Preservation Trust
Caroline Kay	CK	Bath Preservation Trust
Barbara Longmore	BL	Bewdley Civic Society
Elizabeth Hulse	EH	Knowle Civic Society
Joan Humble	JH	Blackpool Civic Trust and Civic Voice Chair
Alan Morris	AM	Bristol Civic Society
David Evans	DE	Chester Civic Trust and Civic Voice Trustee
Richard Thurlow	RT	Sid Vale Association
Martin Hamilton	MH	Leeds Civic Trust
Marion Coupe	MC	Lytham St Annes Civic Society
Christine Marshall	CM	Lytham St Annes Civic Society
Chris Winter	CW	Civic Voice Trustee
Ian Green	IG	Oxford Civic Society
Gillian Coates	GC	Oxford Civic Society
Judith Martin	JM	City of Winchester Trust
Alastair Tod	AT	Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

1. Welcome

JH welcomed members to the meeting. TS then welcomed members to the HQ of Bath Preservation Trust and gave a brief outline of the building's role as a museum of 18th century life.

2. Introductions

The participants were asked to introduce themselves and the organisation they represented, to state the membership fee for their society and to nominate another civic society which they felt was doing an effective job. Individual subscriptions ranged from £5 to £30 with £10 to £15 being the most common range.

3. Update on Civic Voice

JH spoke about the work of Civic Voice over the past year giving an overview of the strategic priorities and the continuing work on the War Memorials project.

There were questions from the floor on the way in which Civic Voice consults with member societies on issues such as the response to the current NPPF consultation. Some concern was expressed that societies did not have an effective channel to influence CVs responses. The reduction in frequency of Civic Update was generally welcomed.

4. Bath Preservation Trust

After a short break, Caroline Kay presented the work of Bath Preservation Trust. It was set up in 1934 to safeguard the historic city of Bath in the face of damaging proposals for development and it has continued to campaign against such proposals. It has over 1,400 members. The purposes of the Trust are:

- to encourage and support the conservation, evolution and enhancement of Bath and its environs within a framework appropriate both to its historic setting and its sustainable future, and
- to provide educational resources, including museums, which focus on the architectural and historic importance of the city.

Its success is reflected in the fact that Bath is now the only complete city in the UK afforded World Heritage Site status. The Trust has also acted as a Building Preservation Trust and rescued a number of significant buildings in the city. It owns and operates four museums:

- No.1 Royal Crescent
- Museum Of Bath Architecture
- Beckford's Tower
- Herschel Museum of Astronomy.

The city now faces great demand for development, particularly for housing, and increasing pressure on the road and transport infrastructure. Caroline discussed the development proposals for several significant brownfield sites in the city, many based on redundant MoD sites. The society has a generally positive relationship with the local unitary authority (Bath and North East Somerset) but, like most LAs, they are struggling with inadequate resources.

5. Open Session

The first question considered in the open session was the review of membership fees. There was almost universal agreement that an increase would be unwelcome and would lead to societies questioning their continuing membership. There was a view that CV membership was already much dearer than subscriptions to other representative bodies. DE asked those present how else they felt CV should make up the shortfall in its core funding in the medium term. The idea of basing subscriptions on annual income rather than membership was raised but others pointed out the problems that could be associated with this. The suggestion that societies might be prepared to pay for training courses and similar services was generally accepted. JH assured members that this was a genuine consultation and any decision would be made by societies at the AGM.

A number of societies had concerns about the imminent implementation of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). JH pointed out that the relevant legislation had not yet passed through parliament but it was causing disquiet across the whole of the voluntary sector. Like other organisations, CV was trying to understand the implications and would try to give guidance to civic societies. For information DE circulated copies of an audit of personal data and a privacy notice to members that had been used by Chester CT.

IG (Oxford CS) requested that the publication of CV Board minutes on the website should be brought and kept up to date.

RT (Sid Vale) raised the problems of attracting young people into the movement and asked if other groups had suggestions. Knowle CS had found local Scout and Guide Associations to be very supportive of activities. Oxford CS ran a successful Student Ambassador scheme and had also made good links with local residents' associations who were often younger people. Other groups noted that working with schools had become increasingly difficult because of safeguarding requirements and curriculum pressures. MC (Lytham St Annes) encouraged members to have confidence in the future. If societies do a good job then people (whether older or younger) will join and keep them going.

AT (Royal Tunbridge Wells) raised a concern that the Charities Aid Trust, who provide their banking services, were asking for personal details of all their trustees. Other groups who use the same banker felt that this was an imposition, but sadly necessary.

6. Next meeting

In response to a question from DE, almost all groups present expressed a preference to have another meeting in the autumn that was separate from the annual Convention.

The meeting ended at 3.30pm and members then had a very interesting (and warm) short tour of developments in Bath city centre, kindly led by Caroline Kay.

David Evans 24/04/18