



Civic Voice

Manifesto 2020–2023

Our vision is for England to be a country where every individual can say ‘I am proud of where I live’

We want to see Civic Societies at the heart of every community

This manifesto is launched 50 years on from the Skeffington Report, which found that at a time of unprecedented house building, communities felt that planning was ‘done’ to them rather than with them. 50 years on, with similar development pressures, communities still feel powerless.

A survey¹ of Civic Voice members found that 80% of people feel that developers do not effectively engage with the community and 72% said the same about local authorities. Recent research undertaken by Grosvenor Britain & Ireland also found a significant distrust of the planning process within communities. Just 2% of the public trust developers and only 7% trust local authorities when it comes to planning for large-scale development.

Civic Voice’s ambition is to move away from ‘confrontation to collaboration’ and from ‘consultations to conversations’. The country urgently needs to build millions of homes but if we can ensure communities are meaningfully involved in the process, we can finally start putting communities at the heart of new development.



CHRIS FORSEY



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1. Civic Voice online survey was undertaken January–April 2019

1

Create a more 'accessible, balanced and collaborative' (ABC) planning system with communities at the heart

If communities are engaged earlier and meaningfully it will:

- Speed up decision making
- Increase confidence and trust in those decisions
- Connect people to their community, increasing civic pride.

To achieve meaningful participation in our towns and cities, the next government needs to adopt the ABC of planning:

A

1. Ensure that every local authority has an up-to-date local plan in place, supported by a non-technical summary, highlighting the key facts of the plan.
2. Utilise existing and emerging technologies to form a 21st century future-ready planning system.
3. Require developers and local authorities to provide a clear summary of how the community's feedback has informed decision making.

B

1. Give community representatives a meaningful voice at every stage of the planning process, including, introducing a 'pre-application community consultation' stage and a limited community right of appeal.
2. Increase the time community representatives can speak at planning committees to a new national standard of at least five minutes.
3. Make sure planning committees have the appropriate skills and training to ensure balanced, non-party political decision making.

C

1. Give local authorities the powers they need to enable their town and city centres to prosper by rolling back the expansion of permitted development rights.
2. Strengthen Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs) so that they set out how the local authority and developers will be expected to meaningfully engage with local communities on planning.
3. Broaden the role of neighbourhood planning into wider community plans which set out the community's vision and ambitions for the area. Ensure that plans remain community led.



2

Move towards a citizen-led, participative model of governance for our towns, cities and villages

Civic Voice's ambition is to move away from 'confrontation to collaboration' and from 'consultations to conversations'. This should be a continuous conversation, not just one every four to five years when local elections start. 'Just voting' once every few years is no longer enough to run a modern society. We need to equip citizens to become more active participants in our towns and villages. Doing this will help create pride and commitment to the success of our places.

To achieve this, the next government needs to:

- Encourage local authorities and developers to sign up to the principles of the International Association of Public Participation.
- Start a national 'community conversation' about the role of deliberative democracy and encourage the use of citizen assemblies to bring together citizens to talk about issues facing society. Citizen assemblies are particularly effective when discussing a clearly defined issue.
- Make it easier to establish town and parish councils in an urban setting.
- Ensure that all Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have a mechanism for meaningful community input to shape local spending priorities.
- Introduce an 'Office for Public Participation' to oversee standards and consistency in public consultations. For major developments it would be an independent 'honest broker' to carry out the pre-application consultation with the local community.



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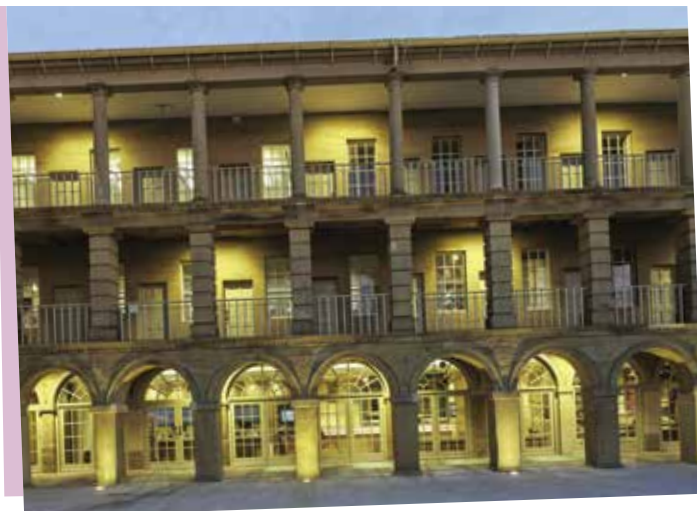
3

Ensure local authorities have the appropriate resources and proper powers to enhance the historic environment to make better places

The country urgently needs to build millions of homes. If we can ensure communities are meaningfully involved in shaping the future of their towns and villages, we can create a country where every individual can say 'I am proud of where I live'.

To achieve this, the next government needs to:

- Ensure every local authority has an up-to-date local plan with clear policies in place to conserve and enhance conservation areas and the wider historic environment.
- Make sure that every conservation area has a dedicated enhancement strategy, supported by a conservation area advisory group which follows best practice.
- Require every conservation area appraisal to be updated every five years.
- Ensure that every local authority has the appropriate in-house built environment professional expertise, as determined by local circumstances, to ensure good quality decision making.
- Give all councils funding to appoint community planning officers with the appropriate skillset to work with communities and rebuild trust in the planning process.



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Registered in England no. 7142946
Charity registration no. 1134476
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This document is intended for MPs and parliamentary candidates, campaign workers, journalists and researchers who want to find out more about what the civic movement wants from the next government.