

2012

Our Review



“Nowhere should be without its civic society and no-one should be without the voice you can provide”

HRH The Prince of Wales

“I would like to thank the civic movement for its informed contribution to the national planning policy debate”

Greg Clark MP, planning minister,
April 2012

“Civic societies... what you do is right up my street”

Eric Pickles MP, secretary of state,
Communities and Local Government,
November 2011

Our chair

As I write this, I have just finished reading through the applications for the Marsh Awards, and yet again I am amazed and delighted by the huge amount of work that our members do voluntarily in their communities to define conservation area strategies, make neighbourhood

plans, clear street clutter, widen the scope of Heritage Open Days and generally spread the word about encouraging pride in the places that they and their neighbours live. No choices have been made yet – it will be a close call!

The introduction of the Localism Act and the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework led to Civic Voice and the civic movement together running a well-co-ordinated campaign to successfully influence changes to the bill. This was truly a magnificent effort from members and officers alike.

Despite the many competing alternative activities during June 2012, over 300 events took place for Civic Day during the month with over 150 groups participating. We are grateful to everyone who took part. The future of Heritage Open Days is assured for the next three years, and its future after this is now the subject of debate between the partners tasked with its interim management.

The president of Civic Voice, Griff Rhys Jones, has continued to be a fantastic supporter. over the last year, undertaking a number of civic tours around the country. In March, our founding director, Tony Burton, left for a new opportunity. The board will always be grateful to Tony for his untiring work on behalf of Civic Voice, He brought his professionalism to bear in everything he did, In June Civic Voice appointed a new director, Steve Graham, who we are delighted to welcome aboard.

I am grateful to every one of the board for their work over the year, and sorry to be losing Freddie Gick. We are particularly grateful to Ian Harvey, who ran the organisation from Liverpool single-handedly over our period of change, with not a slip, and with the continued support and enthusiasm of our membership we remain confident about the future.

Paula Ridley
Chair
Septmeber 2012



Marsh Civic Award winner Sue Nicholls (left) with Jo Winyard of Marsh Christian Trust...



...and Marsh Civic Commendation winner Gillian Postill

Strengthened civic societies

- ▶ We provided information and support and ran a help desk which answered over 2000 enquiries from local groups
- ▶ Civic societies from across England came together six times during the year and similar to the previous year, we met over half our member groups face to face
- ▶ A regular supply of information and advice was provided through our bulletins which continue to be well read by members
- ▶ We supported cluster meetings of local groups coming together and exchanging experience and ideas
- ▶ We gave out the first ever Marsh Civic Awards to Sue Nicholls (volunteer) and the Wimbledon Society (civic group). We are thankful to the Marsh Christian Trust for supporting this award.
- ▶ We gave out ten awards to civic groups who participated in Civic Day
- ▶ We organised two conferences dedicated to strengthening civic societies in areas such as fundraising, working with young people, profile raising, finding volunteers and other issues was produced

Raised our profile and influence

- ▶ Saturday 23th June was a highlight (if not wet day!) during the year. Although many events were cancelled, civic groups still managed to run over 300 different events and activities across England
- ▶ Griff Rhys Jones has continued to play an active role in the growth of Civic Voice and has continued to tour the country as our President championing the cause of the movement
- ▶ Griff has also appeared regularly on TV and has had several articles published in his role as President
- ▶ Our work was covered over 100 times in the media, including pieces on the national television and radio news and all the main national newspapers. Individual civic societies have also continued to gain great coverage for the movement
- ▶ We found twitter highly effective in raising our profile and have attracted a strong following with over 3500 people now following us
- ▶ We gave written and oral evidence to the Select Committee dedicated to the National Planning Policy Framework and organised a united campaign for the civic movement against the changes
- ▶ Over 200 MPs were contact direct throughout the year via our campaigns
- ▶ Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State spoke at a meeting of civic societies in both Yorkshire and Manchester
- ▶ Baroness Andrews, Chair of English Heritage, delivered a keynote address to civic volunteers from across the Midlands

Became sustainable and independent

- ▶ 290 civic societies joined in our second year and provide approximately 35% of our core funding
- ▶ We continued our relationship with Lockton (insurance cover), National Trust (free passes), English Heritage (free passes), National Council for Voluntary Organisations (free membership and support); The Co-operative Bank (free banking with interest) and RUDI (free online information on planning and urban design)
- ▶ Our project to write a history of the civic movement was supported by The Townscape Institute and will be published in 2013

Improved the way we work

- ▶ We completed the second survey of civic societies to know more about what they do and what will help most
- ▶ Our trustees met eight times and were hosted by Chester Civic Trust for an awayday
- ▶ Experienced civic volunteers from Peterborough and Chester joined our Planning Panel to provide advice on changes to planning policy and legislation
- ▶ Our Civic Panel of ten like minded national voluntary groups met to provide a sounding board and external perspective on our work

What we did

Our 2nd year

- ▶ A successful second AGM and convention hosted by Sheffield Civic Trust was held in in October 2011 (and rated 4.6 out of 5 by 157 participants)
- ▶ 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
- ▶ Civic Voice acquired a legacy of £14,000 which will be used to fund a leadership programme to identify the next generation of civic leaders
- ▶ Civic Voice secured funding to deliver workshops on neighbourhood planning to over 100 civic societies
- ▶ We secured funding from English Heritage to undertake a nationwide survey of current community action within the historic environment.
- ▶ The first 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 Sue Nichols (Altrincham Civic Society) and The Wimbledon Society
- ▶ Secretary of State for Communities, Eric Pickles MP gave a keynote speech to gatherings of civic societies in Yorkshire and Leeds

Fair Planning Campaign

Civic Voice's biggest activity this year has been the Fair Planning Campaign, following the introduction of the Localism Act and the publication of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, the Government published its long awaited reforms to the planning system in March 2012. Civic Voice and the civic movement together ran a well-co-ordinated campaign to influence changes, resulting in:

- ▶ A reference for Civic Voice eight times in a DCLG Select Committee report (as many as CPRE) querying the Government's changes
- ▶ Thanks from both officials and the Minister Greg Clark MP for the work Civic Voice had undertaken to help strengthen the final document

To achieve this:

- ▶ Over 200 civic societies had a related letter printed in a local newspaper
- ▶ Over 350 MPs were contacted by individual civic societies
- ▶ Over 10,000 individual members of civic groups contacted an MP

This was truly a magnificent effort from members and officers alike, and we are really grateful for your support.



Civic action in Altrincham



Award-winners in Halifax



A blue plaque for Bridgwater



The Hale 'torch' civic day celebration



A heritage trail for Huddersfield



Representing Ripon



Discussing fundraising in Birmingham



Civic Day award winners in Sheffield



Civic scarecrows (and friends), Blackpool



A walk for Worksop

Civic Day

Despite the many competing alternative activities during June 2012, over 300 events took place during the month with over 150 groups participating. We are grateful to everyone who took part, and to Freddie Gick and his group who coordinated the event.

www.civicday.org.uk

Heritage Open Days

The future of Heritage Open Days is assured for the next three years, but after this is unclear. In the meantime, the National Trust, Heritage Alliance and Civic Voice have taken on the responsibility for the management of Heritage Open Days, and the National Trust is supporting a group looking at the future of HODs, chaired by Graham Bell of the North of England Civic Trust and which includes both Paula Ridley and David Lovie from the board of Civic Voice.

www.heritageopendays.org.uk

Civic stories

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

A campaign was launched by **ACCRINGTON** Civic Trust to create a community heritage museum for the people of Hyndburn.

A trail was launched **ALNWICK** Civic Society working with Christians Together in Alnwick to explore 1000 years of Alnwick's heritage. The trail is unique in that it is not just about the buildings, but also the people who shaped them over many centuries!

On the day Mary Portas published her national report on the future of the High Street, **BECKENHAM** Civic Society published a report giving its recommendations on the future of Beckenham High Street.

BERWICK UPON TWEED Civic Society felt that the town did not provide visitors with enough information about the river and the sea – despite the great importance of these features. As such, they designed, donated and installed three interpretation panels on relevant sites.

SWINDON Civic Voice was successful in an application to 'Awards for All' (a programme sponsored by the UK National Lottery) grant application. The funds will be used for volunteers to provide training for residents in 'Understanding Local Government' and 'Understanding our Planning System'.

TODMORDEN Civic Society started a project to raise £15,000 to replace two stolen war memorial statues. Funds from Todmorden Town Council, Calderdale Council and the War Memorials Trust, as well as private donations and collection boxes located in business premises around the Todmorden are close to seeing the £15,000 raised.

The **YORKSHIRE** Association of Civic Societies (YHACS) added a bit of 'je ne sais quoi' to their work and appointed a French intern, Maxime Giboulot. Maxime undertook research on the state of the civic society movement in Yorkshire and Humber by visiting some 38 civic societies across the region.

In a busy year for YHACS (see above) the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt. Hon. Eric Pickles MP, spoke at a meeting of the Yorkshire civic societies. A few months later, Eric Pickles also found time to speak to **MANCHESTER** Civic Society.

A community came together to bring about progress and change at the launch of **WORKSOP** Civic Society. Over 70 people attended the launch including local media and the MP.

Our finances 2012

Income

Civic society membership	£60,200
Grants	£133,700
Project funding	£16,400
Other income	£4,400
Total	£214,700

Expenditure

Staff and operations	£119,100
Campaigns, events and activities	£9,400
Governance	£14,400
Other expenditure	£6,300
Total	£149,200

Net result **£65,500**

Funds brought forward from 2011 £84,200

TOTAL FUNDS **£149,700**

The full trustee report and accounts for the year ending 31 June 2012 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 077 0728 6839 or info@civicvoice.org.uk

Facts & figures

Our people

President | Griff Rhys Jones

Chair | Paula Ridley
(Merseyside Civic Society)

Trustees | Freddie Gick, deputy chair (Birmingham Civic Society)
Paul Clarke (Todmorden Civic Society) | David Lovie (Alnwick 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 | Steve Graham, director | Ian Harvey, co-ordinator | Sarah Spurrier, project manager

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 | Royal Institute of British Architects | The Townscape Institute

Who we are

Civic Voice is the national charity for the civic movement in England. We work with a network of hundreds of community-based and volunteer-led civic societies and other groups to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive and to promote civic pride. We believe everyone should live somewhere they can be proud of.

Over 290 civic societies with over 75,000 individual members have joined Civic Voice.

We are a small light footed organisation. As a national voice with a strong local presence we seek to make a difference where it matters. You will find us lobbying in Whitehall and Westminster, campaigning with local volunteers, speaking out in the media, undertaking research, building partnerships and promoting civic pride. We bring local groups together and give them a national voice. We combine community action with sense of place for the benefit of everyone. We talk civic sense.

Our values

Campaigning | Strong in our advocacy and promotion of the cause

Responsive | Focused on the individual and collective needs of civic societies and the civic movement

Light footed | Maximising the use of existing resources and volunteer expertise

Grassroots | With a bottom-up feel and governance

Independent | Unfettered in our views and approach

Reaching out | Involving the whole community and spreading the benefit

Networked | Making the most of the collective strength of the movement

Our vision

Our vision is for everyone to live somewhere they can be proud of. To achieve this we will provide the civic movement with a strong local presence and an influential national voice. We will be active on the national, city and local stage, working in partnership across the UK. Civic societies will perform at the level of the best today and the civic movement will reach more places and benefit more people from all walks of life.

Our reputation and authority will make us the first port of call for anyone seeking to develop, conserve or interpret the quality, beauty and character of our towns, cities and villages or to engage people in shaping their future. We will be a source of civic pride and people will know us for our independence of thought, challenging perspective and positive outlook. We will listen, advise, support and act on behalf of communities everywhere. Communities will know they have a voice and a champion for the place where they live.

Our style

Rooted in local experience | Our work is based on the 'civic sense' of local groups, not ideology

Celebrating place | We look for the positive and provide practical help and proposals which protect and improve places

Front foot | We seek to shape and not respond to events

Engaging | We seek more opportunities for people to get involved both in the way that we work and what we advocate

Making a difference | We focus on what matters to the civic movement where we can add value and achieve change for the better

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



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