

**civic
society
initiative**

own the future

the report of the
civic society initiative
on the future of the
civic society movement

october 2009

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foreword

It is a time to look forward. The civic society movement has a rich history and a proud record of achievement. Over the last 50 years it has been given a national voice by the Civic Trust. The closure of the Civic Trust provides the chance to reshape and strengthen the movement for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

People are seeking more control over their lives. They are concerned for their quality of life. We all benefit when we can each be proud of where we live. The sustainability of local places is uncertain. Civic societies are at the heart of shaping this future – giving voice to the passion of people for their local place. It is a mission that has never been more important.

This report is the result of the largest survey yet undertaken of the civic society movement. It presents an analysis of extensive debate about the future of the civic society movement and draws together a set of proposals and issues to move things forward. The results show a real demand from civic societies to work together as a movement. They show that civic societies want to be more influential, more rooted in their communities and more effective in the way they work. They are proud of the places they champion and they want others to share in their passion and respect what's important. The report also puts the spotlight on some of the reasons why civic societies are not yet achieving their potential and presents some important choices for the future.

That there is an overwhelming demand for a new national body to champion the movement and support the civic societies will not come as a surprise. There is important detail to be discussed over how it will work and the conclusions of the debate have wider implications than the creation of a new

organisation. They point to an opportunity to realign the way the movement works and thinks about itself so it can be much more influential. They offer a moment for civic societies to shift their outlook. By strengthening local activity, working more beyond their boundaries and connecting their members to the bigger picture they can take their rightful place at the heart of both local and national debates over the future of the places where we all live. New networks will be needed where civic societies can come together. These should be defined by civic societies themselves and not by artificial Government regional boundaries. Civic societies will need to help their members feel part of a bigger movement. A new national body will also have to ground itself in what civic societies need and want, and be core funded and supported by the movement if it is to have the independence it needs and deserves.

I hope this report provokes a lively discussion. The outcome could not be more important. Questions of funding, regions, constitutions and names are sure to be a focus for debate. The lasting significance of this moment, however, depends on the extent to which it shifts the way each and every civic society thinks about itself, its members and the way it works together with others. If we want to be proud of the places of the future then this is the moment when the civic society movement can seize its destiny and own the future.



Tony Burton
Director, Civic Society Initiative

summary

This is the report of the Civic Society Initiative on a wide ranging debate which has been conducted with civic societies across the country and a range of interested organisations and individuals about the future of the civic society movement. It follows the closure of the Civic Trust in April 2009 and addresses the question of what is needed to support and promote the civic society movement in the future. The movement comprises over 1,000 civic societies with more than 250,000 members and is one of the largest in the country.

THE MAIN FINDINGS ARE:

- Civic societies exist in a fast-changing world and need to move with the times and make the most of their opportunities to act positively and ‘own the future’
- The range of activities undertaken by civic societies is extraordinarily diverse and is linked by a universal concern for ‘place’
- Civic societies want to be less reactive, work more in partnership and be more campaigning in their outlook. This is supported by those outside the movement who also emphasise the need to avoid duplication with other organisations and urge civic societies to focus on their strengths and where they add most value and can have most impact
- People become involved in civic societies as volunteers for largely altruistic and not personal reasons. They see the bigger picture
- There is a refreshing openness within civic societies about their shortcomings and their mixed reputation – ageing, negative and out of touch but also locally knowledgeable,

actively concerned about the future and wanting to connect more with their community

- The movement lacks confidence in itself and others can appear to value it more than civic societies themselves
- Civic societies seek a unifying mission and purpose for the movement. This is likely to be based around issues of place, pride, identity and community.

AS A RESULT OF THIS ANALYSIS THE MAIN PROPOSALS ARE:

Civic societies want to be broader based, influential and more dynamic. They want to move from being:

- Separate voices to a collective movement
- Hierarchical to more networked
- Dependent to more independent (especially financially)
- Organised top-down to more federal.

There is overwhelming support for a new national body and one which feels very different to the Civic Trust. The new body should be:

- Campaigning in its outlook
- Responsive to the needs of societies
- Light footed in its use of resources
- Grassroots in its culture and governance.

The governance arrangements for the new national body should reflect charity and voluntary sector good practice.

The new national body should perform three main roles:

- Providing information, support and advice to civic societies
- Facilitating civic societies to network and cluster together
- Being a national lead and voice for the movement which provides inspiration and direction; lobbies and campaigns on its behalf; and raises its profile and influence.

There is a debate over the priority to be given to each of these three roles. The new national body is initially likely to comprise three or four staff, an effective website and a network of volunteers.

The new national body should be England focused and work in partnership across Britain and Ireland.

There is a debate over how civic societies should work together. The current regional structure based on Government boundaries is considered remote and ineffective by some and many are unaware of it or do not participate. Others promote it as the basis for organising the movement in future. Regions also face an uncertain political future.

A more fluid approach to networking and grouping civic societies is proposed. This should be built around the clusters which civic societies naturally form, mostly more local than the regional level. Civic societies should determine where these clusters should be, how they should be funded and consequently whether the current regional structure is needed everywhere.

Civic societies should also group around common themes or areas of interest, such as historic or market towns, ‘core’ cities, or villages.

There is debate over the means to fund the movement. Civic societies want independence

but there is no tradition of fully funding the support they seek. It is proposed that the majority of funding for the core work of the new national body is provided by civic societies and they contribute according to the size of their membership. The fee is likely to be between £1 and £3 per head to support a national body with core costs between £300,000 and £400,000. Transition arrangements will be needed to introduce this change

There should be a review of any new arrangements within three years of the formation of a new national body.

one 'this can't happen!'

This is a moment of opportunity and – as this report will show – a chance for a movement with roots in the 1800s to re-invigorate itself for the 21st century. The Civic Society Initiative was born out of adversity. It sprang from the Civic Trust going into administration on 21 April 2009 and bringing a 50 year chapter in the history of the civic society movement to a close. News of the Civic Trust's closure came as a shock to its many partners. While many of the main programmes – such as Purple Flag and High Street UK – could find other owners and Heritage Open Days was picked up by English Heritage, there was acute concern for the network of civic societies which the Civic Trust helped and represented. The groundswell of support for the movement was palpable, with a real sense that 'this can't happen' and so the Civic Society Initiative was born.

'The groundswell of support for the movement was palpable'

With the promise of a year's financial and practical support from the National Trust, North of England Civic Trust, Campaign to Protect Rural England and Royal Institute of British Architects, Tony Burton was asked to lead a debate to find a way forward. With the support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation he was joined by Ian Harvey as the Initiative's Co-ordinator.

two the civic debate

The Civic Society Initiative was set up to address three questions:

- What is the mission of the civic society movement in the 21st century?
- What is needed to achieve this mission by way of an effective network of local groups and a strong national and local presence?
- How is this organised and funded?

It was also to maintain the existing civic society network (with over 1,000 civic societies and 250,000 members) and promote its value to itself and externally in the meantime.

'The civic society movement has over 1,000 civic societies and 250,000 members'

This is a report of the debate with civic societies and others to help answer these questions. The work of the Initiative has been based on three assumptions, affirmed by the research:

- The civic society movement needs an independent champion
- The movement needs to be supported as a volunteer network where the voice of individual societies and local groups can be strengthened
- The future needs to be rooted in what the societies want and need to drive the way forward.

The Initiative has taken a grassroots first approach – focusing on eliciting the views of the civic societies themselves to learn about their ambitions and needs for both their own work and the movement as a whole. Important discussions have also taken place with regional groupings of the civic societies and the issue of

their future role was left open to see what civic societies felt. We have also sought views and met with other organisations working on similar issues and with Government Departments and other official bodies.

'The most intensive and comprehensive survey of the civic society movement undertaken'

We have completed the most intensive and comprehensive survey of the needs and potential of the civic society movement yet undertaken and seen the debate led by the civic societies themselves. A summary of those involved in the Civic Debate is provided in Appendix 1. In four months we have:

- Met with 194 civic societies and 305 people in 14 Open Forums across the country.
- Received contributions from 448 civic society members from 267 different civic societies through an online survey
- Received online survey responses from a further 115 people and outside organisations
- Registered the interest of 770 civic societies in the Civic Society Initiative
- Received donations from 135 civic societies to our appeal
- Met individually with over 50 organisations relevant to the movement
- Received over 36,000 hits on our website
- Generated media coverage in most of the national newspapers and on the BBC
- Spoken at a number of conferences and public events.

This is a report of what they have said and their ambitions for the future.

the civic debate

The report looks at each of the main issues in turn. It summarises the results from the survey and picks out some differences around the country. It then draws out the views of other organisations and interested individuals as expressed in meetings and the survey before expanding on some of the important issues raised by civic societies in the Open Forums. It concludes with a set of propositions for the way forward which are based on an analysis of the views and information received.

three it's a fast-changing world

Civic societies exist in a fast-changing world and we have helped debate how they might adapt to the opportunities and challenges this presents.¹

On the upside it is clear that the issues civic societies get involved in matter more and more to people. People's need for roots and their concern for the quality of life in their surroundings only grows. Civic societies are well placed to address the burgeoning interest in localism and community action. With a positive outlook and more community involvement they can 'own the future' and shape the views of others. An ageing and more prosperous population also brings potential benefits in the form of new volunteers. There are more challenges inherent in the growth of the internet, social networking (such as discussion forums, Facebook and Twitter) and the different ways in which communities are coming together and taking action – civic societies need to embrace these changes or risk seeing themselves marginalised.

'Civic societies can own the future'²

People are also expecting more from things that they join and there is a desire for different ways to get involved and volunteer. Committees and formal organisational structures continue to have a role but there is a call for more and different ways to take part. Civic societies will need to strengthen the ways in which they network, taking advantage of what the internet can offer, and also be more agile and responsive to others demands. There are also challenges in the growing diversity of

the population and the lack of civic societies in some, often less prosperous, parts of the country.

The issues with which civic societies get involved are also changing. The nature and pattern of new development is shifting as a result of climate change and a growing population. This is affecting the physical environment and the nature of new building and infrastructure. Local government and governance is also changing with the growing influence of cities, devolution of power, more fluid partnerships and questions being raised about the role of the English regions.

This part of our work identifies 10 key issues which need to be addressed under any future arrangements. Civic societies will need to:

1. Be positive and inspirational in their advocacy of a better future as well as critical of damaging change
2. Connect more with different communities and in new places
3. Use social networks and new media to bring the movement together and engage communities
4. Harness the ageing population and shifting values to generate new volunteers and support
5. Exploit the corporate, government and philanthropic interest in 'community' whilst retaining independence
6. Adopt a flexible approach to organising themselves by geography
7. Change old habits to become more attractive to new members and volunteers
8. Respond positively to the growth of other forms of community action and local groups
9. Demonstrate transparency and fairness in the face of heightened scrutiny
10. Build the case for long term investment in the quality of places and the ability of citizens to shape their future.

1. See the discussion paper 'Looking Ahead: challenges and opportunities for the civic society movement in the 21st Century prepared for the Civic Society Initiative by Tony Burton and Alex Hunt (available online at www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk)

2. Laura Sandys, daughter of Duncan Sandys, founder of the Civic Trust addressing the Ashford Open Forum, August 2009

four what we do

We asked what civic societies do now, what they feel to be most important and how what they do might change by 2015.

WHAT WE FOUND

The range of activities undertaken by civic societies is extraordinarily wide and diverse (see table 1, opposite). It is testament to their creativity, independence and differing needs. Wherever we went we discovered new and innovative ideas and they kept coming.

The universal thread was a concern for place. Everyone gets involved in local planning issues and the role extends well beyond that of local planning 'watchdog'. The vast majority celebrate and champion what makes their place special through blue plaques, open days, talks, visits, town trails, award schemes, publishing, research and more. In so doing they promote civic pride.

'The universal thread was a concern for place'

Many civic societies also campaign for good design and against street clutter and they play a vital role on local forums and partnerships. Some fill a vacuum of expertise and resources in local government or provide a local history archive. Others work closely with developers and many get schools involved. A significant minority get involved in practical conservation: owning, managing or restoring buildings, open space or facilities such as fountains, war memorials, clocks and weather vanes; planting trees and even running shops, museums and a tourist information centre. Newsletters are the most important way of communicating with

members although more and more societies are running a website.

Worryingly, our survey showed less priority being given by civic societies to their own future in terms of fundraising or recruiting volunteers, although there is much activity to recruit members.

When asked what the current priorities should be civic societies clearly indicate that planning applications, conservation areas, influencing local development frameworks, producing newsletters and running lectures, exhibitions and public events are where the emphasis should go (see table 2, opposite).

When asked what new things they might be doing in 2015 it was interesting to learn that there is a real desire from societies to be less reactive and to shape the future, to be less passive and more active, to be dynamic and to generate change rather than rely too much on responding to the proposals of others.

'There is a real desire from societies to be less reactive and to shape the future'

Forward planning, campaigning, transport issues, work with local schools and businesses and more active use of local partnerships come to the fore as the new activities that civic societies most want to do by 2015. And there is a strong desire for a younger profile in those involved and to increase recruitment (see table 3 overleaf).

Table 1
What civic societies do

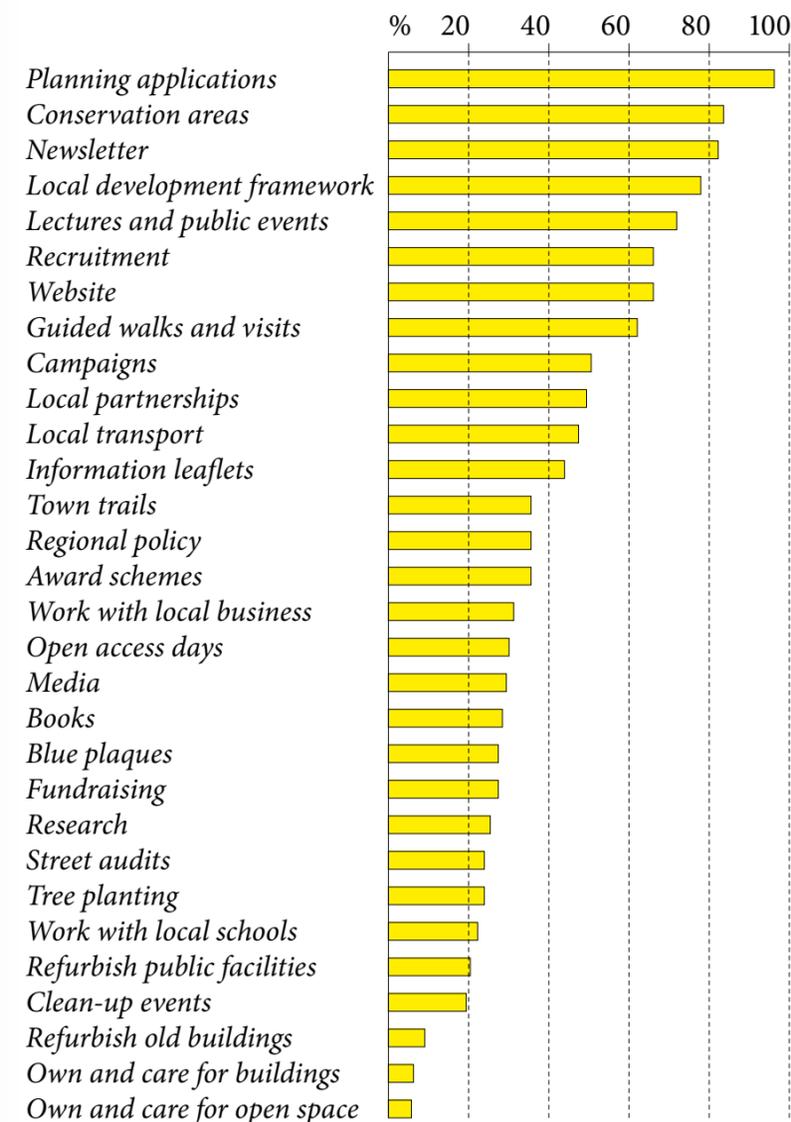
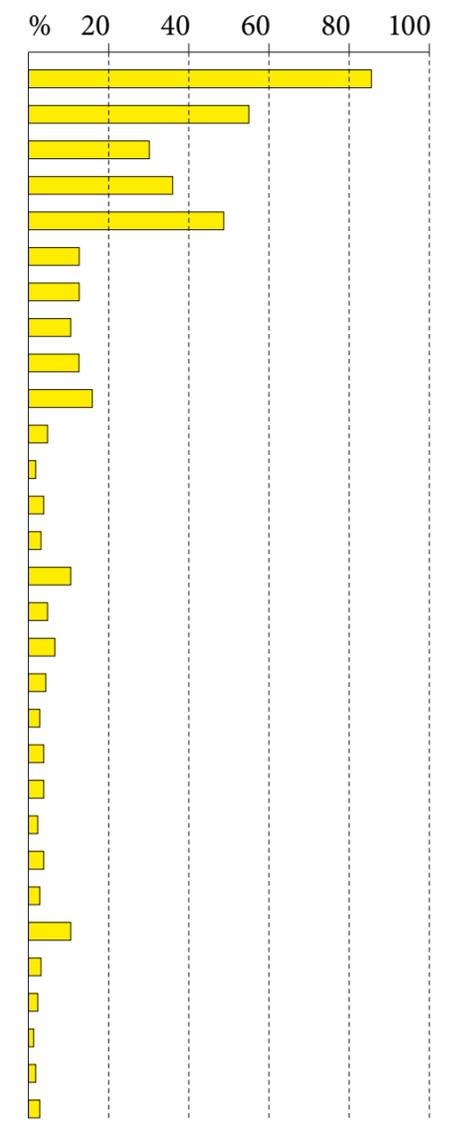
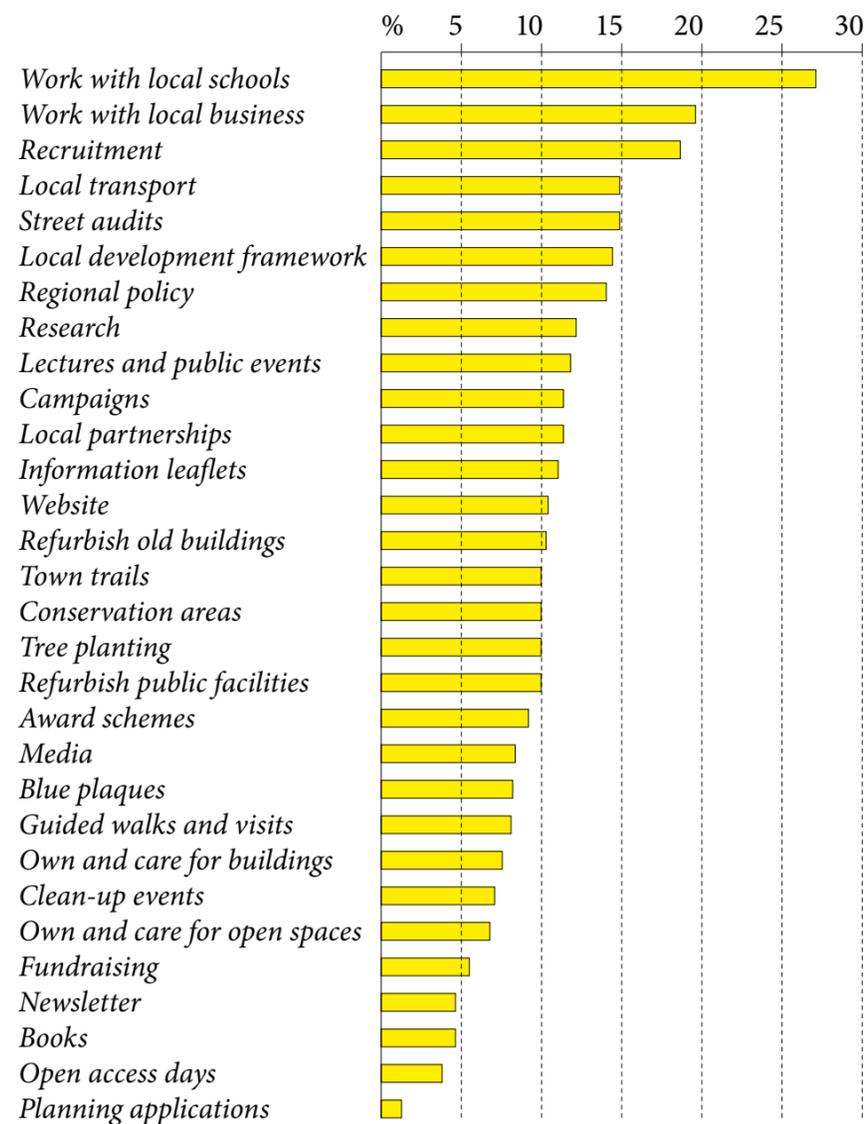


Table 2
What are the most important things your civic society does?



what we do

Table 3
What new activities do civic societies want to be doing by 2015?



AROUND THE COUNTRY

There are some interesting variations in emphasis in different parts of the country. Civic societies in the London and the West Midlands are the keenest on conservation areas. East and West Midlands' civic societies have the most interest in street audits and Yorkshire's civic societies are the most involved in regional policy and planning. The South East and East of England's civic societies get most involved in Local Development Frameworks and Yorkshire works most with business. The South West's civic societies and those in the North East are keenest on lectures and public events.

Looking ahead to newer activities by 2015, South West and the North East societies place more emphasis on street audits than elsewhere, the North West's societies on recruiting members and working with business, the East Midlands on mounting campaigns, and London and the South West's civic societies on influencing Local Development Frameworks.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Partners and other organisations were frequently surprised and impressed by the range of activities undertaken by civic societies. Equally, there was a concern that the civic society movement needs to add value to the work of others and avoid duplication with the increasingly large number of organisations involved in similar issues. Nationally, English Heritage, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Community Matters, Living Streets, Association of Small Historic Towns

and Villages, Association of Preservation Trusts, Prince's Foundation for Architecture and the Built Environment, Urban Forum, Keep Britain Tidy and Planning Aid were frequently mentioned. Locally, there are overlaps with parish councils, the Transition Towns network, residents associations, branches of national organisations and single issue groups among others. There was a real interest in encouraging organisations to work more closely together and even merge.

'The civic society movement needs to add value to the work of others and avoid duplication'

It is revealing that Heritage Lottery Fund records show that only 91 civic societies have benefited, receiving a total of £1.66 million through 125 grants in the 15 years of HLF's work. Only two awards have been in excess of £50,000 and the average award is £13,300. An additional £3.3 million has been awarded for the restoration of two historic buildings by two civic societies. The scope for making better use of these and similar funds is evident in the range of eligible activity which civic societies undertake.

Generally, others' views about what civic societies did were similar to those of civic societies themselves, with more expectation of campaigning activity.

Looking ahead to 2015, civic societies are being encouraged to extend their involvement of others, work more in partnership, develop relationships with local schools and businesses and get even more involved in open access days. There is also recognition of the potential to strengthen civic societies' campaigning role and work with the media.

what we do

OPEN FORUMS

Civic societies often surprised each other by what they did and there was a thirst to learn more from sharing experience. A number of Open Forums have triggered plans for societies to get together more often. The better resourced societies highlighted the benefits of a permanent base to raise their profile and, frequently, generate income. There was limited recognition of regional level activity beyond those already involved at this level and societies often spoke instead of coming together as groups of counties or other more local clusters. Looking to the future, the Open Forums highlighted the desire for a younger membership and the need to engage in sustainability issues and forward planning through a combination of campaigning and partnership working.

SO WHAT?

The range and diversity of activities undertaken by civic societies gives rise to the following questions:

- How can we provide advice and support on so many fronts?
- How can we share more between societies?
- How does the work of civic societies and membership of the movement relate to other organisations?
- Where do civic societies add most value?
- How do we ensure civic societies give sufficient priority to strengthening themselves as organisations?
- What is the common thread which unites the work of the civic societies and provides the basis for a movement?

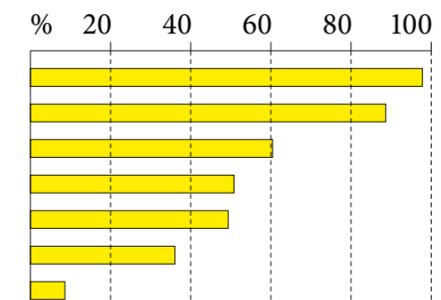
five why we get involved

Civic society members were asked why they get involved and the responses illustrated the altruistic motivations of those who participate most (see table 4, below). There is a fundamental concern for the future of the local area and a strongly held view that the actions of local government and developers need to be watched. Civic societies are also important ways of sharing

the skills and experience of the community by stimulating volunteering. More personal motivations around meeting new people, social activities and learning new skills and about the area featured less strongly, although they may be more important for the members less active in civic society business.

Table 4
Why do people get involved?

- Care about the future of the area*
- Local government and developers need watching*
- Have skills to use for community*
- Good way to meet like-minded people*
- To know more about where I live*
- Social activities*
- To learn new skills*



what we need

the individual contributions from civic societies about what is needed:

- ‘Identify a new role relevant to the 21st century’
- ‘A coherent voice and message’
- ‘A strong image, effective delivery and representation and a strong champion’
- ‘Leadership from a focused national body’
- ‘Better publicity and national co-ordination’
- ‘A charismatic leader, an efficient organisation, a nationally agreed plan and active co-operation between the centre and individual societies’
- ‘A central organisation that pulls all the societies together and backs up their work’
- ‘Change the name’
- ‘A campaigns program which societies can cluster around and feed from’
- ‘Lively George Monbiot-style campaigning’
- ‘County based federations would encourage more linked action and mutual learning than the present over extensive regional structure that is too remote’
- ‘Establish a network of regional bodies’
- ‘Creation of a top heavy and costly central infrastructure must be avoided’
- ‘Transform local societies so they become campaigns for built environment quality’

AROUND THE COUNTRY

The demands for help and support were broadly the same around the country though there is some local variation. The East Midlands’ and North East’s civic societies are most in search of advice on influencing local government and the planning system, Yorkshire societies are looking for web based information and civic societies

in the West Midlands are the most thirsty for information about what other civic societies are doing. Northern societies in the North East, North West and Yorkshire most want to see a clear mission for the movement as a whole.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Partner organisations and others placed most emphasis on having a clear mission and purpose for the movement and stressed the benefits of affiliation to a national body and advice on fundraising more than civic societies. Discussions also indicated a plethora of existing information and support networks already available and the importance of making best use of these through signposting and joint working rather than re-inventing the wheel. There is a demand for the movement to have a much clearer ‘brand identity’ and for it to become much more media savvy and campaigning in its outlook. Partners also identified the importance of involving more people locally as a priority. Their comments included:

- ‘Assert the fundamental values of civic society’
- ‘A clear brand and message showing their value, accessible to all’
- ‘Become much more media savvy using modern techniques’
- ‘National recognition and creation of a new body to lead the movement’
- ‘Work in partnership with other agencies in the sector’

OPEN FORUMS

The Open Forums spent more time discussing the support needed by civic societies and the best way of raising the profile and influence of the movement than any other topic. There are some differences of emphasis from the survey. Participants placed most emphasis on the value of national campaigning and lobbying in supporting individual civic societies and on the importance of networking between them. Advice on land use planning and the effective dissemination and provision of information through briefings and a dedicated website were also identified as priorities.

The demand for a national umbrella body was clear from the Open Forums but there was a widespread perception that the Civic Trust had failed to provide civic societies with the advice and support they needed over many years, and an overwhelming desire for a different approach. Most participants also recognised that societies would need to work more collaboratively and provide information and examples to each other and any national body.

There was an overwhelming call for the movement to have a higher profile through better marketing and media work and support from well known figures.

Discussions at the Open Forums also recognised that support and advice does not come free and would need to be funded more by civic societies, although some doubted this funding would be provided. There was also discussion over the extent to which support could be provided regionally, although London and Yorkshire were the only parts of the country where there was wide recognition of the role currently being provided. Many societies recognised

that their own membership fees were low and this did not provide a strong starting point for supporting themselves and a wider movement.

SO WHAT?

There is no lack of ambition for the support needed for civic societies or a lack of suggestions for how to raise the profile and influence of the movement as a whole. The call for a national body is clear, with three main roles – to provide advice, support and information; to help bring societies together and improve networking; and to be a national lead and voice capable of influencing public and political opinion and building partnerships. There is also a near universal call for the movement to be better known and clearer about the common purpose which unites it.

This raises four fundamental questions:

- What should be the balance of priorities for any new national body?
- How should a national body relate to the work of individual and groupings of civic societies?
- How will societies work most effectively together and at what geographical scale?
- How should a national body be resourced and managed?

eight finding the way forward

This review started with the demise of the Civic Trust and the loss of a national umbrella body. It has revealed, however, a wider set of issues to be addressed by the civic society movement. Civic societies have been up front about their own challenges and have high ambitions. Other organisations have identified the potential, value and importance of the movement but also highlighted a need to change and adapt for the future. This section draws together the analysis and makes a series of propositions for the way forward.

There is debate over the detail of what is required but some of the changes are self-evident and near universally shared. Perhaps the most important conclusion is that there is both recognition of and a demand for civic societies to work as a movement. This is evident in a desire for closer working and learning from each other and for a national body.

The analysis reveals a wish to move from being:

- Separate voices to being a collective movement
- Hierarchical to being more networked
- Dependent to being more independent (especially financially)
- Organised top-down to being more federal.

This will require more than the creation of a new national body. It raises some important issues which need to be considered by each civic society on the way they:

- Look beyond their local area to network together
- Connect their members to the bigger picture as well as local issues
- Support and fund a movement.

WORKING TOGETHER

‘Together we’re stronger’ is a truism and no less true for that! The tension between the natural focus of civic societies on their local area and the benefits of sharing and networking with others and feeding experience and examples into a national lobbying and media voice has run through the debate over the last few months. This has been overlain by lively views on the role of regions in supporting societies and influencing policy and debate.

Notwithstanding the existing regional structure, the conclusions of the debate do not suggest this is the only or indeed the best way forward. This is because civic societies cluster naturally together at a more local scale and because there is uncertainty over both the impact of civic societies on regional policy debates and the political future of the Government’s regional structures themselves.

It is clear from discussions with both civic societies and those they choose to influence or work with, that what makes them stand out is their knowledge of and enthusiasm for the local. This is where they add most value and it is where their voice is recognised. Indeed, there is hard feedback that civic societies may not be making a meaningful impact at a regional level and where they feel compelled to engage in strategic policy debates then this is best done by working in partnership with other like-minded bodies rather than organising around the Government’s regional structures.

With rare exceptions, civic societies do not naturally group together at a regional level. Outside London and Yorkshire the demand is frequently for smaller clusters – such as North Thames, Kent and East Sussex, Southern

Comfort (Hampshire, West Sussex, Surrey), Devon/Cornwall/Somerset (outer South West), Wessex (or Inner South West) and Merseyside. Success is most likely to come from encouraging these clusters and supporting more like them, rather than following remoter regional structures imposed by the Government.

It should, however, be for civic societies to decide themselves how best to group and cluster together and fund the arrangements. Whatever their nature, the clusters would be supported by the new national body and be a key way of influencing and interacting with it. In some cases the clusters would match existing regions but in most cases they may not. However civic societies group together it will be important to be much clearer about the role of the clusters (such as the balance between encouraging networking between societies, shaping national priorities and influencing external policy) than the current regional arrangements.

There is also a demand from many societies to work with others that share similar experiences or interests. Village based societies and those from market and historic towns are keen for their voice to be heard and to network more. There are also early moves to bring societies from the ‘core cities’ into closer collaboration. Other themes might focus on issues such as conservation areas or schools.

At the UK level there are well established national bodies in Scotland and Wales and a similar role is played by the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society in Northern Ireland. There is much to learn from and share with these bodies and also with civic societies in the Republic of Ireland. A new national body should focus its efforts on England and work in partnership beyond these boundaries.

A NEW NATIONAL BODY

There is a clearly recognised need for a new national body. The roles it might play and the benefits it might provide for civic societies are readily apparent though their extent and quality will depend on the funding available. It is also clear that there is no desire for a ‘new Civic Trust’.

There are some key principles which can be identified for a new national body from the debate. Civic societies wish it to be:

- *Campaigning*
Strong in its advocacy and promotion of the cause and unfettered in its views as a result of the movement being more independent
- *Responsive*
Focused on the individual and collective needs of civic societies
- *Light footed*
Maximising the use of existing resources and volunteer expertise in the movement
- *Grassroots*
With a bottom-up feel and governance.

A new national body is unlikely to have a single membership system but it will be open to support from other like minded organisations, public bodies, businesses and interested individuals. Its core funding needs to come from civic societies if it is to achieve the independence desired.

The new body should perform three main roles:

- Providing information, support and advice to civic societies
- Facilitating civic societies to network and cluster together
- Being a national lead and voice for the movement which provides inspiration and

finding the way forward

direction; lobbies and campaigns on its behalf and raises its profile and influence.

These roles and the benefits to individual civic societies are summarised in the next column.

Civic societies will need a variety of formal and informal routes to shape the priorities and focus of a new national body. Its governance should reflect best practice in the charity and voluntary sector – including open recruitment of trustees, use of a nominations committee and a small board of 10 members or fewer. The mix of skills and qualities on its trustee board needs to recognise the importance of experience in a range of different types of civic society and it needs a grassroots feel. Civic society volunteers will also need to be able to participate in its work, shaping priorities at a national convention, engaging in the key issues through meetings of local clusters of societies and providing examples and experience for the national body to use in its lobbying and influence.

A new national body is initially likely to comprise three or four staff, an effective website and a network of volunteers. The essential functions will include policy and campaigning; support for the network of civic societies and its development; marketing and communications and the financial, administrative and other support services needed. It will be efficient, responsive and base itself around electronic communications and networking meetings. It will avoid duplicating existing information and resources available elsewhere to voluntary organisations, network well and signpost and interpret what is available for civic societies. It will maximise the use of partnerships for the benefit of the movement and work directly with civic societies and their networks.

Roles of a national body

- Lobbying, campaigning and research
- Partnerships and fundraising
- Leadership and strategy
- Advice and support on planning and policy issues
- Advice and support on civic society campaigns
- Advice and support on volunteer/member recruitment, local fundraising and strengthening societies
- Information bulletin(s)
- Website and use of social networks
- Marketing, profile raising and media
- Support for civic society networks and national convention
- Extending the civic society network.

Benefits to a civic society

- Use of logo and name to bring authority
- Access to insurance arrangements and other national contracts/discounts
- Tailored information bulletin(s)
- Information and advice hotline
- National convention
- Participation in national campaigns
- Influence over national lobbying priorities
- A voice at a national level
- Involvement in special interest groups
- Advice and support on fundraising and recruiting members and volunteers
- Access to good practice and lessons learned in other civic societies
- Support for civic society networks
- Selected support on casework
- Selected support on strengthening societies.

THE FUNDING QUESTION

Funding has been the ‘elephant in the room’ throughout much of the debate. Civic societies clearly want an independent movement in charge of its own destiny. The loss of the Civic Trust to the vagaries of external funding decisions is just one symptom of the dependency problem. With public sector funding getting much tighter over the next few years such problems can only get worse. Yet, civic societies have no strong tradition of funding the support and services they demand and contributed under £70,000 to the Civic Trust through affiliation. A new national body could require £300,000 to £400,000 of core funding to meet the needs expressed by civic societies. This circle can only be squared by civic societies supporting the movement more.

Civic societies need and deserve more from a new national body. Equally, they must confront the fact that the movement will only be independent and provide the support they seek if they are willing to fund it. The civic society movement is unlikely ever to follow the route of other mass membership organisations, with a central membership system giving access to the funds from membership fees and professional fundraising that supports organisations like CPRE which also have a national and local presence. Yet, it is one of the largest mass movements in the country and could be tapping much more into the depth of support in its own membership.

The principle of each society contributing according to its membership has been proposed before and it is a sound one. There are practical difficulties to resolve and transition arrangements will be needed but it provides an equitable basis for funding the way forward. It would be for civic societies to determine how to raise the funds and

whether to pass the cost on to their membership.

The level of the fee depends in large part on the quality of support desired and the degree of independence which civic societies seek for the new national body. £1 per head will provide basic information services and communications with all civic societies but the capacity for lobbying, campaigning and more dedicated support for civic societies will be limited unless funds can be found elsewhere. This will mean the movement is not independent. £2 per head will give more independence and the opportunity to provide more tailored support for civic societies and their clusters as well as a much more influential and high profile campaigning and lobbying voice. £3 per head will provide true independence and influence and the capacity to strengthen and extend the movement and raise its profile in the manner desired.

The fee could be introduced in a phased way. Civic societies would additionally have to decide on their financial contribution to any cluster or grouping with other societies below the national level.

A new national body would also seek funds for projects and some core activity from a variety of other sources – eg. charitable trust, corporate, partnerships, Government, individual supporters – but this would, by its very nature, often be project based and should not provide more than a small element of core funding if the national body is to be independent.

The arrangements should be reviewed within three years of the establishment of a new national body.

All of this will require a leap of faith from within the movement. We cannot establish the new body without the funding it needs and so cannot demonstrate its value. We hope in a small

finding the way forward

way that the Civic Society Initiative has already begun to demonstrate the benefits of being part of 'something bigger'. We know that this is what civic societies are asking for – and together we can now make it happen.

nine next steps

This report is the summary of a debate. It reflects the arguments and evidence from civic societies and others about the best way forward for the civic society movement and establishes some parameters and principles for how the future might look and some proposals for the way forward. Its conclusions need further discussion. We need to know whether there is agreement around the broad direction of travel and hear views on the proposals before putting a proposition to the movement.

Five issues stand out which would benefit from more input and you are particularly asked for feedback on:

1. Whether the principles of the movement (collective, networked, independent, federal) and a new national body (campaigning, responsive, light footed, grassroots) are sound.
2. The balance of priorities for the work of the new national body between representing the movement, supporting societies and helping societies network together.
3. How civic societies can best network and share experience – including the proposals to build this around clusters of civic societies and thematic issues rather than Government regions.
4. Defining the common thread uniting the civic society movement – founded on the importance of place, pride, identity and community.
5. The balance between securing independence for the movement and funding it through contributions from individual civic societies on a per capita membership basis.

appendix I

who was involved?

770 civic societies have expressed an interest in the Civic Society Initiative and we have over 2,100 civic society contacts.

448 members from 267 different civic societies responded to our online survey.

115 people from other organisations, partners or with an interest in the movement responded to our online survey.

Our website has received over 36,000 hits at an average of 279 a day.

We held 14 Open Forums between 11 July and 15 September involving 194 civic societies and 305 people in:

- Blackpool – 32 people
- Liverpool – 15 people
- Beeston – 28 people
- Chester – 19 people
- Leeds – 16 people
- High Wycombe – 28 people
- Cheltenham – 16 people
- London – 45 people
- Newcastle – 9 people
- Ashford (Kent) – 31 people
- Portsmouth – 28 people
- Bath – 12 people
- Birmingham – 12 people
- Exeter – 14 people

The Open Forums involved the following civic societies:

- Abingdon Civic Society
- Ainsdale Civic Society
- Ambleside Civic Trust
- Association of North Thames Amenity Societies
- Atherstone Civic Society
- Aylesbury Society
- Banbury Civic Society
- Banner Street Residents Association
- Bath Preservation Trust
- Battersea Society
- Bedford Park Society
- Beeston Civic Society
- Berwick Upon Tweed Civic Society
- Birmingham Civic Society
- Blackheath Society
- Blackpool Civic Trust
- Bloomsbury Association
- Bollington Civic Society
- Boston Preservation Trust
- Bournemouth Civic Society
- Bradford Civic Society
- Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust
- Bridlington and District Civic Trust
- Brighton Society
- Bristol Civic Society
- Brixton Society
- Broadstairs Society
- Bromley Civic Society
- Brompton Association
- Buckingham Society
- Bullbridge and Sawmills Area Civic Society
- Buntingford Civic Society
- Burton Upon Trent Society
- Camden Society
- Canterbury Society
- Cheltenham Civic Society
- Chesham Society
- Chester Civic Trust
- Chichester Society
- Chippenham Civic Society
- Cirencester Civic Society
- City of Durham Trust
- City of Rochester Society
- City of Southampton
- Civic Trust South East
- Colchester Civic Society
- Coleshill Civic Society
- Corsham Civic Society
- Coventry Civic Society
- Cumbria in Bloom
- Darlington Civic Trust
- Dickens Countryside Preservation Society
- Dover Society
- Dronfield Civic Society
- East Midlands Association of Civic Societies
- Enfield Society
- Exeter Civic Society
- Fareham Society
- Faversham Society
- Federation of Lancashire Civic Societies
- Federation of Sussex Amenity Societies
- Fields of Abingdon
- Finchley Society
- Fleetwood Civic Society
- Formby Civic Society
- Fortis Green Association
- Friends of ARG
- Friends of Blackheath Park
- Friends of Lewes
- Friends of Liverpool Monuments
- Gateacre Society
- Gidea Park and District Society
- Gosport Society
- Gove Society

- Great Budworth Amenity Society
- Greenwich Environmental Trust
- Guildford Society
- Hammersmith and Fulham BPT
- Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association
- Heath and Hampstead Society
- Herne Hill Society
- Hertford Civic Society
- Hexham Civic Society
- High Wycombe Society
- Highbury Fields Association
- Hinckley and Bosworth Civic Society
- Hitchin Society
- Hoyle and District Civic Society
- Huddersfield Civic Trust
- Hythe Civic Society
- Ilkley Civic Society
- Isle of Wight Society
- Islington Society
- Kent Federation of Amenity Societies
- Kidderminster Civic Society
- Kingston upon Thames Civic Society
- Lancaster Civic Society
- Leeds Building Preservation Trust
- Leeds Civic Trust
- Leicester Civic Society
- Lincoln Civic Trust
- London Forum
- Lytham St Anne's Civic Society
- Maidenhead Civic Society
- Margate Civic Society
- Market Harborough Civic Society
- Marlow Society
- Marple Civic Society
- Merseyside Civic Society
- Metropolitan Gardens Association
- Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage Civic Societies
- Morpeth Civic Society
- Mossley Hill Residents Association
- Muswell Hill Association
- Neston Civic Society
- New Folkestone Society
- Newbury Society
- Newent Civic Society
- Newport and District Civic Society
- Newton Abbot Civic Society
- North East Association of Civic Trust Societies
- North of England Civic Trust
- North West Association of Civic Societies
- Northumberland in Bloom
- Norwood Society
- Nottingham Civic Society
- Odiham Society
- Otley Conservation Task Force
- Outer South West Association of Civic Societies
- Oxford Civic Society
- Oxford Preservation Trust
- Oxton Society
- Hertford Civic Society
- Pendle Civic Trust
- Petersfield Society
- Pinner Association
- Plymouth Civic Society
- Pontefract Civic Society
- Portchester Civic Society
- Portsmouth Civic Society
- Putney Society
- Radlett Civic Society
- Ramsgate Society
- Reading Civic Society
- Reigate Society
- Richmond Society
- Romsey and District Society
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society
- Salisbury Civic Society
- Selby Civic Society
- Shedfield Society
- Skipton Civic Society
- South East Bayswater Association
- Southborough Civic Trust
- Southwell Civic Society
- Southgate District Civic Trust
- Spalding Civic Society
- St Albans Civic Society
- Stamford Civic Trust
- Staffordshire Civic Society
- Stratford on Avon Civic Society
- Stratford Society
- Streatham Society
- Stroud Civic Trust
- Sunderland Civic Society
- Sutton and Cheam Society
- Sutton Coldfield Civic Society
- Sydenham Civic Society
- Taunton and District Civic Society
- Tewkesbury Civic Society
- Tiverton Civic Society
- Tonbridge Civic Society
- Torbay Civic Society
- Tottenham Civic Society
- Vale of Evesham Civic Society
- Vauxhall Society
- Wakefield Civic Society
- Wallasey Society
- Warminster Civic Trust
- Wavertree Society
- Weald of Kent Society

- West Derby Society
- West Midlands Amenity Societies Association
- Westcombe Society
- Westminster Society
- Wetherby Civic Society
- Whitby Civic Society
- Wickham Society
- Wimbledon Society
- Wimbourne Civic Society
- Winchester Civic Trust
- Wirral Society
- Wiveliscombe Civic Society
- Worsley Civic Trust

We held discussions at the Civic Trust South East Autumn conference in Guildford and East of England Civic Societies AGM and conference in Kings Lynn.

We participated in meetings of Civic Trust South East, Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies, South West Association of Civic Societies, North West Association of Civic Trust Societies, regional chairs and a meeting of UK civic societies involving Scottish Civic Trust, Civic Trust for Wales, Ulster Architectural Heritage Society & North of England Civic Trust. We also met with and received representations from a number of individual civic society volunteers and activists and regional chairs.

We participated in numerous meetings including the National Planning Forum, Urban Design Group Annual Conference, Launch of English Heritage's Heritage at Risk, Launch of Campaigning is OK! in House of Commons by Novas Scarman, Agencies Co-ordinating Group, Sustainable Development Commission – Breakthroughs for the 21st century conference, Keep Britain Tidy – futures and scenarios workshop, National Trust hosted discussion on the future of the civic society movement, Launch of Heritage Open Days, Alliance to Promote Democracy, Heritage Lottery Fund: Heritage Today – time to talk workshop.

We met individually with 52 organisations, usually at Chief Executive or Director level:

- Alan Baxter and Associates
- Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages (ASHTAV)
- Bluefin insurance
- Cabinet Office – Office of Third Sector
- Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)
- Charity Commission
- Civic Trust Awards
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)
- Commission for Rural Communities
- Communities and Local Government – Democracy and Participation
- Communities and Local Government – Planning
- Community Development Foundation
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Development Trusts Association
- English Heritage
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Fundraising.co.uk
- General Public Agency
- Groundwork
- Heritage Link
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Heritage Open Days
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Homes and Communities Skills Academy
- Institute for Historic Buildings Conservation (IHBC)
- Institute of Community Cohesion
- Keep Britain Tidy
- Living Streets
- London School of Economics
- National Trust
- Natural England
- North of England Civic Trust
- Novas Scarman
- Office of Public Management
- Planning Inspectorate
- Prince's Foundation for Architecture and the Built Environment
- Prince's Regeneration Trust
- Public Realm Information Advice Network
- Red Foundation
- Royal Society of Arts (RSA)

- Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)
- Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts
- Sustainable Development Commission
- Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)
- Tree Council
- Transport for London
- Urbancanda
- Urban Design Group
- Urban Forum
- The Wildlife Trusts

We are grateful to the following 135 civic societies who have donated to our appeal so far:

- Addingham Civic Society
- Barnsley Civic Trust
- Basingstoke Heritage Society
- Bath Preservation Society
- Beccles Society
- Bedworth Society
- Beeston and District Civic Society
- Berwick Upon Tweed Civic Society
- Bewdley Civic Society
- Bexley Civic Society
- Blackheath Society
- Blackpool Civic Trust
- Bournemouth Civic Society
- Bradford Civic Society
- Bramley Village Society
- Brewood Civic Society
- Bridlington & District Civic Society
- Brighton Society
- Bristol Civic Society
- Brompton Association
- Buckingham Society
- Bury St Edmunds Society
- Cambridge Preservation Society
- Castletown Heritage
- Cheltenham Civic Society
- Chesterfield Civic Society
- Chichester Society
- Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre
- Chippenham Civic Society
- Chislehurst Society
- City of Durham Trust
- Civic Society of St Ives
- Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society
- Cokerforth & District Civic Trust
- Colwyn Bay Civic Society
- Corbridge Village Trust
- Cymdeithas Aberaeron Society
- Deal Society
- Dover Society
- Dronfield Civic Society
- Ealing Civic Society
- East Bergholt Society
- East Dulwich Society
- Eltham Society
- Elton Society
- Enfield Society
- Epsom Protection Society
- Fareham Society
- Farnham Society
- Formby Civic Society
- Friends of Lewes
- Frome Civic Society
- Gidea Park and District Civic Society
- Great Budworth Amenity Society
- Greenwich Society
- Guildford Society
- Harbourne Society
- Harrogate Civic Society
- Harrow Heritage Trust
- Hartford Civic Society
- Heath and Hampstead Society
- Hitchin Society
- Hove Civic Society
- Howden Civic Society
- Hoyle and District Civic Society
- Huddersfield Civic Society
- Hunstanton Civic Society
- Hythe Society
- Ilkley Civic Society
- Ipswich Society
- Isleworth Society
- Kent Federation of Amenity Societies
- Kew Society
- Kidderminster Civic Society
- Kings Lynn Civic Society
- Kingston Upon Hull Civic Society
- Kingston Upon Thames Society
- Knightsbridge Association
- Leamington Society
- Lechlade and District Civic Society
- Leeds Civic Trust
- Leicester Civic Society
- Maidenhead Civic Society
- Market Harborough Civic Society
- Market Weighton Civic Society
- Melbourne Society
- Milton Conservation Society
- Molesey Residents Association
- Mossley Civic Society

who was involved?

- Newbury Society
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Civic Society
- Newport and District Civic Society
- Odiham Society
- Oxford Civic Society
- Oxford Preservation Trust
- Oxton Society
- Peterborough Civic Society
- Petersfield Society
- Plympton Civic Society
- Pontefract Civic Society
- Portchester Civic Society
- Portsmouth Society
- Potters Bar Society
- Reading Civic Society
- Reigate Society
- Repton Village Society
- Retford Civic Society
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society
- Salisbury Civic Society
- Sandwich Society
- Selby Civic Society
- Sheffield Society
- Skegness Civic Society
- Sleaford & District Civic Trust
- Stamford Civic Society
- Stowmarket Society
- Sydenham Civic Society
- Tonbridge Civic Society
- Tottenham Civic Society
- Wakefield Civic Society
- Walton Society
- Wareham Town Trust
- Wavertree Society
- Weaverham Trust
- Welwyn Planning and Amenity Group
- Wetherby Civic Society
- Weybridge Society
- Whaley Bridge Amenity Society
- Wickham Society
- Wigan Civic Trust
- Wimborne Civic Society
- Windsor and Eton Society
- Worcester Civic Society
- Wymondham Heritage Society
- York Georgian Society

appendix 2 main survey results

An online questionnaire was completed by 563 people between 18 August and 30 September. 448 were members of civic societies and 115 were members of interested organisations or members of the public.

The main results from civic society members responding are as follows:

GENDER, AGE AND GEOGRAPHY

	%
Male	81
Female	19

	%
Under 18	0
18 to 25	0.2
26 to 35	1.2
36 to 45	4.3
46 to 55	11.2
56 to 65	38.3
66 to 75	33.3
76 to 85	10.8
86 or more	0.7

East Midlands	10
East of England	8
London	12
North East	3
North West	13
South East	20
South West	8
West Midlands	9
Yorkshire and Humber	13
Other	3

WHAT YOUR CIVIC SOCIETY DOES

	%
Planning applications	96.7
Conservation areas	83.8
Newsletter	82.8
Local development framework	78.8
Lectures & public events	72.5
Recruitment	66.6
Website	66.1
Guided walks & visits	62.8
Campaigns	50.4
Local partnerships	49.9
Local transport	48
Information leaflets	44.2
Town trails	35.8
Regional policy	35.5
Award schemes	35.5
Work with local business	31.5

Open access days	30.4
Media	29.9
Books	28.5
Blue plaques	27.8
Fundraising	27.5
Research	25.6
Street audits	24.2
Tree planting	24
Work with local schools	22.4
Refurbish public facilities	20.7
Clean up events	19.8
Refurbish old buildings	9.4
Own & care for buildings	6.4
Own & care for open space	5.9

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?

	%
Now	
Planning applications	85.2
Conservation areas	55
Lectures & public events	48.9
Local development framework	35.9
Newsletter	30.2
Local partnerships	15.7
Campaigns	12.7
Website	12.7
Recruitment	12
Award schemes	11.6
Work with local schools	10.9
Guided walks & visits	10.2
Open access days	6.4
Local transport	4.5
Work with local business	4.3
Media	3.9
Fundraising	3.6
Street audits	3.4
Blue plaques	3.2
Town trails	3.2
Refurbish public facilities	3
Regional policy	2.7
Books	2.5
Own & care for open space	2.5
Tree planting	2.3
Clean up events	2
Research	1.8
Information leaflets	1.6
Own & care for buildings	1.6
Refurbish old buildings	0.7

For new activities in the future

Work with local schools	27.3
Work with local business	19.7
Recruitment	18.8
Local transport	15
Street audits	15

Local development framework	14.5
Regional policy	14.1
Research	12.3
Lectures & public events	11.9
Campaigns	11.4
Local partnerships	11.4
Information leaflets	11.2
Website	10.5
Refurbish old buildings	10.3
Town trails	10.1
Conservation areas	9.8
Tree planting	9.8
Refurbish public facilities	9.8
Award schemes	9.2
Media	8.5
Blue plaques	8.3
Guided walks & visits	8.1
Own & care for buildings	7.6
Clean up events	7.2
Own & care for open space	6.9
Fundraising	5.6
Newsletter	4.7
Books	4.7
Planning applications	1.3

WHY DO YOU GET INVOLVED IN YOUR CIVIC SOCIETY?

	%
Care about the future of the area	98
Local government and developers need watching	89
Have skills to use for community	60.7
Good way to meet like-minded people	51.2
To know more about where I live	49.9
Social activities	36.2
To learn new skills	8.8

WHAT SUPPORT WILL MOST HELP YOUR CIVIC SOCIETY?

	%
Information on influencing local government	44.5
Advice & support on planning	40.5
Clear mission and purpose for movement	34.7
Advice & support on external funding	33.8
Website information and case studies	32

Information on what other civic societies are doing	31.8
Advice & support on recruiting members	28.2
Affiliation to a national body	25.3
Support from national lobbying	19.2
Information & resources on campaigning	19
Advice on constitutions and insurance	13
Advice & support on recruiting volunteers	12.8
Advice & support on IT and websites	10.7
Advice & support on media and communications	9.2
Guidance & support on national campaign priorities	9.2
Templates for websites, press releases etc	4.5
Advice & support on managing membership details	1.3

A full breakdown of these results is available from www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk



**civic
society
initiative**

The Civic Society Initiative is led by Tony Burton and co-ordinated by Ian Harvey. We are grateful to everyone who has supported our work on behalf of the movement. Special thanks go to the North of England Civic Trust, National Trust, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Royal Institute of British Architects, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, English Heritage and all those who stepped forward in the civic society movement's hour of need. Our lasting admiration goes to the civic society members, volunteers and activists who have contributed so much to the ideas in this report and who show such dedication and determination on behalf of the communities and places they champion.

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