

News



ENGLISH HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

AUGUST 2004



MODERN SPACES - HISTORIC PLACES

EHTF Annual Conference & AGM 2004

20 - 22 October - LINCOLN

Our Annual Conference this year will explore the Government's 'liveability' agenda in a continuation of our '**Focus on the Public Realm**'. We have a very full programme with contributions from public and private sector representatives and key presentations from Peter Matthew of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Richard Simmons, the incoming Chief Executive of CABE.

Join us at The Lawn in Lincoln where we will explore the many exciting projects taking place in this historic City. The programme will also include our Annual General Meeting, Green Badge Tours, a Civic Reception and informal supper on Wednesday 20th, a choice of walking tours/seminars and a conference dinner on Thursday 21st in the Chapter House of Lincoln Cathedral.

For a full programme and online booking form please see our website:
www.ehtf.org.uk/events.asp or call EHTF 0117 975 0459.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 'MODERN SPACES - HISTORIC PLACES' Annual Conference & AGM
- Report: Slovenia Study Tour
- Seminar Report: 'Focus on... regeneration through public buildings and spaces'
- Tourism and Planning Issues
- 'Focus on... managing rapid growth in historic towns'
- Notes from an easy Chair
- Feature Town: Bury St. Edmunds
- And much much more...



Slovenia Study Tour | 12 - 16 July 2004



A tour of Slovenia was organised by EHTF together with Mateja Hafner Dolenc, General Secretary of the Association of Historic Towns of Slovenia. Fourteen delegates from Bradford-on-Avon, Brighton & Hove, Bury St Edmunds, Chichester, Norwich, Wells and Winchester joined the tour of eleven towns.

At each of the towns we were received with the same generous welcome and hospitality. The general atmosphere of the towns is of tranquility and cleanliness, with a long and well preserved history. Slovenians are proud of their evolution through various dominating powers, Italian, Austrian, Hungarian, German and work hard to maintain good relationships with their neighbours. The built heritage reflects these influences, and is what the Slovenians are striving to promote as a tourist attraction.

Monday 12th July 2004

Arrived in LUBLJANA and met by Mateja and Jasna Pisanec, our guide for the duration, and on the coach to BLED with a boat trip across LAKE BLED in the "pletina" (small wooden boat) to the 17th century Church on the island. Strong rules against any motorised boats on the lake have maintained its cleanliness and tranquility, which reflects in the clear surface and the surrounding mountains and villas.



Tuesday 13th July

To KRANJ for the Mayor's reception and tour of the town, which has a strong association with the national poet - France Prešeren; we were given a tour of his house and presented with a volume of his poems. Then on to TRZIC for a tour of the town which demonstrated a wide

variety of historical architectural styles and the distinguishing features of the trades and uses of the buildings.

On to RADOVLJICA, with its distinctive iron shutters and doors and for a tour of the Bee Museum. KROPA, the next town on the day's tour, was the location of a famous iron works and forge. Nails made in this town were at one time a significant part of the Slovenian economy.



Wednesday 14th July

Off to SKOFJA LOKA, seat of the Association of Historic Towns of Slovenia and a greeting from the Deputy Mayor at the Town Hall and another exchange of gifts, followed by a guided tour of the town and walk to NACE'S HOUSE. This wooden house, with its origins in the 15th century, continues to be maintained by the grand-daughter of the last inhabitant and it demonstrates a wide variety of ways of life over several centuries.

Up until this stage we had been followed by a camera and sound team who were making a 45 minute programme for regional television about our visit and our impressions to date. Drive to KOPER and a rather rapid walking tour of the town, and then on to PIRAN for a tour and another (deputy) Mayoral reception with more exchange of gifts.

Thursday 15th July

A three and a half hour bus drive to PTJU in the east of Slovenia, to meet with the Mayor and the director of the Museum in the Castle who gave a long speech which was televised

for national coverage. Several more presentations followed and then an invitation for us to enter into discussions. We were expected to take a tour of the Castle but this had to be foregone in favour of a tour of the town.

On to SLOVENSKE KONJICE, arriving around 5.30pm for another Mayoral reception, this time with a tour of the Art Gallery - which houses some quite prestigious paintings. After a walking tour of the town we drove to the nearby 14th century Carthusian Monastery, a ruin in a beautiful setting and housing a small herbal medicine shop.

Friday 16th July

After an overnight stay just outside of LUBLJANA we arrived in the centre for a brief guided tour of the city, before a meeting held at the Tourism Information Centre with all participants invited to join us, together with the Minister of Culture, Jelka Pirovic.

Sam Howes (EHTF Chair) had prepared a SWOT analysis as we had been asked for feedback on our impressions of Slovenia - in particular management of the towns and the anticipated growth of cultural heritage tourism. There was a good discussion about the infrastructure to support increased tourism, traffic congestion / management, the lack of high quality contemporary buildings, but also with very positive comments about our experiences.

The full report is downloadable as a pdf at: www.ehtf.org.uk/admin/getfile.asp?ID=57

Chris Winter, EHTF

Please Circulate this newsletter among your colleagues

EHTF is supported by

Colin Buchanan & Partners Countryside Properties PLC Donaldsons Gillespies Land Securities PLC RPS Planning, Transport and Environment

Want to join us?

Is the idea of paying large subscription fees putting you off? As a 'not for profit' organisation EHTF makes every effort to keep our fees to a minimum.

We have various categories of membership to suit all types of organisation. Generous discount on all events and publications is given to members. As well as advertising opportunities and listing on our website.

NB. As fees are payable on a pro rata basis you need only pay the remaining 5 months until January 2005. Contact us for more information or join online: www.ehtf.org.uk/membership.asp

MEMBERS NEWS

EHTF AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in the Pink Lounge at the White Hart Hotel, Bailgate, Lincoln, from 5 - 6pm on Wednesday 20 October. All members are invited to attend, please complete the Lincoln Conference booking form online: www.ehtf.org.uk/events.asp

The re-election of the Executive Committee will take place during this meeting. If you belong to a Full member organisation and would like to put forward a representative for consideration, please contact EHTF by 15 September.

New Members

We are delighted to have the following new members, please add their details to your Members' Directory:

Kasia Chmielewska

PhD Student
University of Brighton
88 Sheridan Terrace
Hove East Sussex BN3 5AF

Mike Fenton

100 High Street Great Missenden
Buckinghamshire HP16 0BE

Lancaster Civic Society

49A Moorside Road Brookhouse
Lancaster LA2 9PJ
Tel: 01524 770220 Fax: 01524 770737

Stoke on Trent City Council

PO Box 636 Civic Centre Glebe Street
Stoke on Trent ST4 1RN
Tel: 01782 233730 Fax: 01782 232872
Web: www.stoke.gov.uk

On the Move

Former EHTF Chair, Peter Studdert will be moving to the new Infrastructure Partnership in the Cambridge subregion as Director of Sustainable Communities.

Gwyn Jones, Former EHTF Retail Working Group Chair has moved from Norwich City Council to the post of Regional Design Action Manager at EEDA.

Kevin McGovern, formerly Director at Colin Buchanan & Partners has taken up his new position of Partner at GVA Grimley.

Steve Roper - our thanks to Steve for his work as Chair of The Transport Working Group.

SEMINAR REPORT

'Focus on... regeneration through public buildings and spaces'

Buxton 28 - 29 June 2004



Pavilion Gardens

Delegates arriving on Wednesday evening were given a tour by Andrew Aughton, Chief Executive of High Peak Theatre Trust, of the newly renovated Opera House followed by a Civic Reception held in the adjacent Conservatory at the Pavilion Gardens hosted by Councillor Derek Udale, Deputy Mayor of High Peak and Peter Sloman, Chief Exec of High Peak Borough Council.

At the Palace Hotel, Chatsworth Room, on Thursday, **Councillor Allan Wells, Executive Member for Economic Regeneration at HPBC**, said that they were not returning to the past, but using historic assets to kick-start regeneration.

Ian Poole, Vice Chair of EHTF, thanked Cllr Wells and said that Buxton offered an ideal example - with its many public buildings and spaces - to demonstrate the importance of the Public Realm and its impact on everyone, which has been the theme of the recent work of EHTF.

Ian introduced **Julia Thrift, Director of CABE Space**, who had launched the EHTF publication 'Focus on the Public Realm' at the 2003 Annual Conference in Bath.

Julia gave a brief update on achievements so far and how CABE Space might support the work of EHTF and others working to improve the quality of public spaces. She recommended recent publications:

- 'The Value of Public Space' - facts and figures to demonstrate the benefits to health, the economy, social cohesion and bio-diversity of good public space;
- 'Is the grass greener?' - eleven cities around the world have been studied and were found to be facing the same problems:- lack of political support, year-on-year budget cuts, anti-social behaviour and lack of training and skills;
- 'What would you do with this space?' - case studies which we might learn from.

Research has also looked at the quality of the environment and its effect on behaviour and concluded: good design + good maintenance + staff presence = less anti-social behaviour.

The 'Manifesto for Better Public Spaces' was included in delegates' conference packs and Julia urged everyone to give their support to this, which would also help to highlight the issues with politicians.

Les Coffey, Director of Policy & Regeneration at High Peak Borough Council, explained the purpose of the regeneration strategy in Buxton, which was to bring sustainable investment and business activity, and the importance of the presence of the University of Derby. Links with Peak District tourism were essential, and although it had been difficult, the Peak District 'brand' had been established.

Conservation-led regeneration, he said, is helping to make Buxton a more attractive place and the Opera House is leading the culture and makes a significant contribution to the vibrancy of Buxton.

Richard Tuffrey, Conservation Manager at High Peak Borough Council and member of the EHTF Executive Committee, explained the details of the Buxton Spa and Crescent projects.

Various schemes were put forward but not until the appointment of the Trevor Osborne Property Group in 2003 has a viable project emerged.

Bath and Buxton are the only venues in UK with thermal mineral waters, both of which were used in Roman times. With a resurgence of the vogue for natural therapies, an attractive range of treatments together with high quality hotel accommodation, will offer a unique opportunity to Buxton.

Professor David Davies, Director at the University of Derby College, Buxton, said that as an educationalist he shared the vision for Buxton which included the development of a new Institute of Tourism and Hospitality. The Devonshire Royal Hospital, he said, was a natural focus for Buxton as well as being a monument in its own right, and offered a unique opportunity to the University and the town.

Bob Hall, Head of Leisure at HPBC, explained the Pavilion Gardens Restoration Project which began in 1997 and was approaching completion. Phasing was a crucial part of the project, mainly due to its impact on local residents and users. In hindsight, Bob said, it might have been done differently. The area has been a 'building site' for a long time, which is not well received, although there is now a recognition in the community of the benefits of all the work that has been carried out.

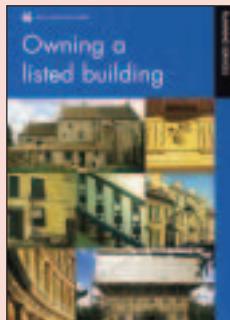
Adam Lathbury, Urban Design Officer, Derbyshire County Council, explained the Market Place Enhancement Project which was a joint project between High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council.

The aim is to improve the quality of the environment and to resolve the needs of all the users, by reducing the dominance of the car, increasing pedestrian space, reflecting the quality of the surrounding buildings and reinforcing the character of the area. Taking cues from historic precedent while catering for modern functional requirements, and to deliver quality materials and reduce street clutter.

Funding is currently only in place for Phase 1, but Adam said that one of the aims was to rationalise materials which would set a framework for future works - there would be no compromise on quality.

After lunch delegates toured the various project sites with guides from the projects and then came together again for a brief discussion with a panel of the speakers. Ian drew the conference to an end thanking everyone involved in making it possible.

A full report of the event is available on our website: www.ehtf.org.uk/admin/getfile.asp?ID=56



Listed Buildings Day

Chris Winter represented EHTF at the 'Listed Buildings Day' held at the Assembly Rooms in Bath on 27th July. Speakers and

delegates explored a range of topics from the history of listing to the practical measures which can be taken by householders of 'ordinary' listed houses and cottages to maintain their properties.

Timothy Cantell, Project Coordinator of 'Maintain our Heritage' explained the Bath Area pilot which was the first maintenance inspection service for historic buildings in the UK. The project originated from a study of the Monumentenwatch, an organisation in the Netherlands which makes annual inspections of historic buildings. The project achieved its aim which was to demonstrate the possibility of setting up and operating such a service, and established that it would be valued by building owners. However, the pilot was only made possible by support from the Bath Preservation trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and English Heritage. It was however thought that the market would not accept the true cost of the inspections, although with a broader cost base and a larger case load, it could be economically viable.

For further information about the project see www.maintainourheritage.co.uk or contact tcantell@maintainourheritage.co.uk. The booklet published by Bath & North East Somerset - 'Owning a listed building' - was also made available and can be obtained from the Planning Projects & Partnerships Team on 01225 477583.

'Building Confidence in High Quality Design' CD ROM



"Building Confidence in High Quality Design" was a highly successful seminar series run by EHTF in partnership with the North West Development Agency and CABE between February and

April this year. The learning outcomes from the six venues and varied case studies have been captured on a cd-rom for use as a training tool for practitioners. It "is intended to help people involved in the planning process to achieve better outcomes in terms of architecture and urban design." (from the introduction by Francis Golding, author of "Building in Context".)

The cd has recordings of inspirational keynote presentations by George Ferguson and Les Sparks, with outlines of the case studies, photos, site plans, lists of positive and negative features, and with easy access to many guidance documents. Conclusions are drawn from the collective experiences and can be used by individuals, for team training sessions, member training or just for reference.

The cd-rom will be available from mid-August from EHTF as part of the publications catalogue priced £7 (with the usual discounts for members).

Tourism Issues

Shining Sustainability

Six local authorities are Beacon Councils for promoting sustainable tourism in 2004-05.

They are all staging a variety of events, including open days on the following dates:

- Tynedale Borough Council 5th October
- Broads National park authority 6th October
- Birmingham City Council, 21st October
- London Borough of Greenwich 11th November
- South Hams District Council 18th November
- New Forest District Council tbc

For more details go to:

www.idea.gov.uk/beacons/round5/?id=openday s2004, or look on the individual local authority web sites.

Protecting Accommodation

The Tourism Group has been approached recently about planning policies designed to prevent the loss of visitor accommodation in smaller hotels and guest houses through changes of use. This can be particularly difficult when the owner argues that the business is no longer viable. If the planning system is to play an effective part the policies must be clear, consistent and underpinned by careful analysis of the local position. There is a good case for bringing together some good practice on this.

An area that can challenge the planners is the question of viability and how it is to be tested. Again there is a case for bringing together good practice. In the meantime planners who are faced by this problem may find that the web site of the Campaign for Real Ale (www.camra.org.uk) offers some good advice.

Fighting as it does pub closures, it sets out a 'Public House Standard Viability Test: Advice for Planners' that could be adapted to apply to visitor accommodation.



Small guest houses may be under threat from changes of use **Brian Human, Tourism Working Group Chair**

Make A Difference

EHTF works hard to keep historic towns at the top of the agenda by lobbying Government and producing and disseminating good practice guidance to local authorities, private practitioners and members of the general public.

Members can become involved by joining any of our EHTF Working Groups who help us to make this valuable contribution. If you would like to make a difference, please contact Chris Winter in the EHTF office for more details.

Planning Issues

Making Better Planning Applications

This practical guide, which was launched at the Annual Conference in Bath last October, has proved to be a popular and useful document for many member towns. The leaflet, produced by the Built Environment Working Group, aims to assist anyone who is making an application for smaller scale developments, but the principles set out in it are equally applicable to larger commercial or residential developments.

Covering the initial information required before the application is made, as well as illustrated guidance on site analysis and design statements, Making Better Planning Applications is designed to raise the standard of planning application submissions, saving time for both applicants and Planning Officers. A 'sister' document on Listed Building Applications is already in preparation. Copies of Making Better Planning Applications are available free to member towns, contact the EHTF office; it is also available on-line as a pdf please see:
<http://www.ehtf.org.uk/admin/getfile.asp?ID=44>.

FOCUS ON...

MANAGING RAPID GROWTH IN HISTORIC TOWNS



9 December 2004 - ELY

Issues of traffic congestion and pressures for high density housing development can compete with the everyday challenges of regeneration and revitalisation for small historic towns.

These include:

- How to achieve high quality public art
- How to tackle graffiti
- Visitor interpretation
- Enhancement of public spaces
- Street furniture
- Market place renovation

The population of Ely has recently seen a rapid increase and those involved in the management of schemes and projects to address these will discuss their experiences and explore good practice.

The event will also include a visit to the Cathedral, the Stain Glass museum and Jubilee Gardens.

FOCUS ON THE PUBLIC REALM seminar series

Notes from an easy Chair

Feedback on the new format of 'News' has been positive:- easier to digest, more attractive to read, and more varied in its content.

We aim to build on this positive feedback and would encourage all of you to help by providing short articles, opinions, in fact anything which you believe would be of interest to colleagues working in historic towns all over the country.

For my part let me tell you that a delegation of members had an extremely interesting, informative and enjoyable study tour to Slovenia last month, which Chris has reported on the front page and in detail on the website.

Please keep reading, keep writing - Lincoln promises to be a great Conference, so reserve your places now!

Sam Howes Chair, EHTF

Sam will be representing the Forum at the 'International Symposium on Cultural Heritage' and at the General Assembly of the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions on September 8-10.

He will be joining the platform to discuss the benefits of partnership working and the outcome of our study tours to Estonia and Slovenia.

Discover hidden heritage for free

Thousands of properties across England will open their doors for free during this year's Heritage Open Days, 10-13 September. Heritage Open Days is one of the few chances to see inside both historic and contemporary buildings which are normally closed to the public or charge for entry.

Properties ranging from castles, museums and theatres to offices and factories will open, and events include hands-on activities, exhibitions, concerts, walks and talks on architecture, local history and culture.

Katja Condy, Heritage Open Days Manager, said: "Heritage Open Days is about people and places; it celebrates community and reflects the importance of the built environment to our quality of life."

The national event, which last year attracted over 800,000 visitors and involved more than 26,000 volunteers, encourages people across the country to discover the riches of their local environment. Heritage Open Days is co-ordinated by the Civic Trust in partnership with English Heritage. Full details of all properties are online at www.heritageopendays.org or call 08700 670066.

Who do we think we are? - 'Heritage & identity in the UK today'

"On 13th July, I attended a major event organised by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) at the British Museum which included an eclectic line up of celebs and experts ranging from Melvin Bragg to Billy Bragg.

Interesting insights into 'our' identity were provided by the Director of the British Museum, broadcaster Patrick Wright and Professor Paul Gilroy (YALE). HLF Chair Liz Forgan and Opinion Leader Research Deborah Mattinson then spoke about the work of Citizen's juries and public research into what heritage is. A panel comprising Billy Bragg, writer Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Prof Fiona McLean (Glasgow) and Common Ground's Sue Clifford, and under the direction of Melvyn Bragg talked about their views of a common heritage and identity.

A very wide ranging discussion covered issues such as the BNP hijacking Englishness and the point that the English are in fact a very diverse rather than homogenous nationality - the language itself has over 50 linguistic roots. The second session was kicked off by a roller coaster presentation, which was scripted as an interview but turned out to be a monologue, by Ruby Wax on an American's view of the English. Prof Harry Goulbourne (South Bank), Philip Dodd (ICA) and Cultural consultant Maureen Mackin then developed the discussion into areas of multiculturalism and racism.

Finally the media finished off with offerings from Big Brother /Restoration's Peter Bazalgette and writer Tristram Hunt about how media do and can represent heritage. Although this was substantially more about the philosophy of identity than heritage in any other sense it provided an interesting introduction to the HLF initiative."

Michael Loveday, EHTF Executive Committee Member

'Dark Tourism: Where do you Draw the Line?'

The Tourism Society in partnership with Lancaster City Council and EHTF will run this half day conference in Lancaster Town Hall on 4 November 2004. This subject has recently appeared on the tourism degree curriculum and yet much of the industry remains unaware of it.

EHTF Tourism Working Group Chair, Brian Human will be among the speakers. Contact The Tourism Society for more details Tel: 0207 4882789, Email: flo@tourismsociety.org or view their website: www.tourismsociety.org

Feature Town: Bury St Edmunds

Taking a Medieval Masterpiece into the 21st Century

The historic market town of Bury St Edmunds was described in a 1994 Department of the Environment report on the vitality and viability of town centres as a 'medieval masterpiece'. The town centre was originally laid out in the 11th century by Abbot Baldwin from the adjacent Abbey and has remained relatively untouched ever since. But time does not stand still and the town is at the centre of a region which is being asked to accommodate significant housing and economic growth. St Edmundsbury Borough Council recognises that this growth will bring with it the need for better shopping as well as leisure and cultural facilities. Accordingly, the Borough Council has entered into a development partnership with Centros Miller to redevelop the former Cattle Market site which is situated next to the main shopping area. Since 2001 work has progressed on preparing a masterplan for the site which would deliver a retail led scheme including a new Debenhams' department store, a new public square and a multi-purpose venue to seat 500 people. The masterplan has in fact been commended by CABE in their recent publication "Creating Successful Masterplans".

Centros Miller have employed the internationally renowned architectural practice of Hopkins Architects and recently submitted a planning application for the development to the Borough Council. Apart from Debenhams' and the multi-purpose venue, the scheme includes car parking, including underground parking, 56 one and two bedroom apartments over the other proposed shops and a new shopping arcade linking the site with the traditional shopping centre and market place on Cornhill.

Construction work is planned to commence next year with the whole scheme being completed by 2007.

For further information on the scheme visit www.burysteds.org.uk. For information on St Edmundsbury Borough Council visit www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk



B RITAIN HAS SOME OF THE MOST HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN EUROPE AND WITH A RICH AND VARIED HERITAGE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE PROTECT IT FOR THE FUTURE. WHILE A GREAT DEAL OF WORK AND RESTORATION IS ONGOING IN MANY OF THE COUNTRY'S HISTORIC BUILDINGS THE AREA OF FIRE SAFETY AND PROTECTION IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED. CHESHIRE FIRE SERVICE, CHESTER CITY COUNCIL AND ENGLISH HERITAGE, IN PARTNERSHIP, ARE HOSTING A 2 DAY CONFERENCE ON PROTECTING OUR HISTORIC TOWN CENTRES FROM FIRE AND IMPROVING THEIR OVERALL FIRE SAFETY. OUR HERITAGE IS IMPORTANT, HELP SAFEGUARD IT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS BY JOINING US.

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TEL 01606 868810



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