

News



English Historic
Towns Forum

ENGLISH HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

DECEMBER 2004



Dr Anthony Streeten, English Heritage &
Tim Pope, ODPM at the Annual Conference.

'HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT: LOCAL MANAGEMENT'

As part of the larger English Heritage HELM project to deliver training and raise awareness of the historic environment, EHTF has been asked to deliver a series of seminars for non-heritage professionals whose work is affected by, and impacts on, the historic environment. The seminars will complement other sessions for Chief Executives and Elected Members, to be delivered by English Heritage, and will emphasise the key role of local authority conservation staff, explaining the need for good resourcing and exploring both the overarching, local and region issues.

English Heritage are at pains to point out that, while conservation staff are not the target audience for this project, it is hoped to build upon the professional training already available to them from a variety of sources in future projects.

Chris Winter and her team will be delivering the seminars between January and March 2005 and look forward to the involvement of many of the EHTF member authorities, as well as representatives of the IHBC, ALGAO and the Regional Development Agencies.

Full details and the programme of seminars will be widely circulated and available on the website in early-mid December.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- HELM Seminar Series
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- Conference Report: 'Modern Spaces - Historic Places'
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- 2005 Event Calendar
- And much much more...

Speed vs Quality

Determining planning applications in historic towns

A delegation of EHTF representatives met with John Stambolliouan and Barry Johnson of ODPM and Steve Bee from English Heritage on 28 October. They made a number of points concerning the continuing challenge of meeting tight deadlines, whilst at the same time trying to raise standards. Of particular importance were resources (staffing levels, workload fluctuations and IT support); skill levels (of both staff and applicants/agents); and procedures (pre-application negotiations, timing of consultations, Section 106 Agreements).

Most agreed that the service was run on a 'shoe-string' and that minor fluctuations could result in a reduction in performance. ODPM was requested to support authorities in raising the quality of submissions, so that valuable time during the decision-making period was not spent chasing and waiting for supporting information.

It was suggested that in cases where S106s are required, the target should be the resolution to permit (this did not find favour with ODPM). ODPM advised that the 8 and 13 week targets are now a given. Developers have referred to the suggestion that contracts be introduced and so this may be re-visited. However, the difficulty is over sanctions for failure to deliver and in identifying which side may be at fault. EHTF representatives generally felt that both Ipa's and the development sector support the

principle of contracts as opposed to time-limited targets.

ODPM has asked Lynda Addison from Addison & Associates to look at the problems around registration. EHTF representatives felt that ODPM could do more to require developers to present better quality applications (eg details, appraisals pre-application consultation etc), and determine a standard for submissions which was beyond the minimum many applicants favoured. If necessary, this should be achieved via new legislation.

ODPM is to consult shortly on a standard application form, also on draft circular advice re S106s. It is proposed to alter the statutory time limit for majors from 8 to 13 weeks (ie the determination time before an appeal can be lodged).

According to Addison & Associates, an analysis of last year's 'standards authorities' found very few examples of majors being held up solely because of S106 Agreements. So far as historic towns were concerned, there was a cultural issue, higher expectations, more consultations, listed buildings referrals etc, which impacted adversely on speed of processing.

EHTF made the point that SPG was a valuable tool in raising the standards of developments, particularly for major schemes, and that there was therefore concern that the new planning system made the delivery of SPG far more difficult.

ODPM confirmed that there would be £170m for Planning Delivery Grant next

year, plus £30M from increased fees. PDG will continue to reward achievement.

For English Heritage, Steve said that it was important to identify those aspects of dealing with applications in historic towns which distinguished them from other places.

The general feeling was that the Government's targets should remain as they are, but that some recognition of the resources put into negotiating majors, and some means of recognising that good quality decisions were acceptable, even if over the 8/13 week deadline, especially if the customer was also satisfied with the outcome. Contracts with some flexibility over the target date were supported in principle.

ODPM mentioned that Ipa's were increasingly looking to charge for pre-application advice and cited Westminster who were charging £2,000 for the service.

EHTF was invited to participate in a meeting between ODPM, English Heritage and the Planning Advisory Service about improvements to the development control service, and in particular:

- Identifying/sourcing/circulating best practice;
- Identifying differences between historic and non-historic towns that affect the dc process;
- Identifying structural barriers within legislation etc which work against Ipa's meeting targets.

Sam Howes, Previous Chair, 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

MEMBERS NEWS

Members' Directory 2005

The new members' directory is currently being compiled. Letters have been sent to our main contact at each member organisation. If you have not already done so, please amend and return your letter to us.

New Members

We welcome the following new members to EHTF, please add their details to your 2004 Members' directory:

Ian Brocklebank

38 Denison Road, Ealing, London S5 1NU

Cornwall County Council

Peter Sainsbury, Projects Manager
St Clements Building, Old County Hall
Truro, Cornwall TR1 3AY

Tel: 01872 322668 Fax: 01872 322646

Sandy Hamilton

Consultant, Apartment 4, Bordeaux Barn
Rue de Chateau, Bordeaux Vale
Guernsey GY3 5LY

Jaime Hickman

Urban Designer, Warwickshire County
Council, PT&ES, Shire Hall
Warwick CV34 4SX

Jeffrey Keays

Consultant, Jeffrey Keays Associates
25 - 26 Market Place, Newark
Nottinghamshire NG24 1EA

Living over the Shop

Ann Petherick, Project Director
c/o 53 Scarcroft Hill, York YO24 1DF

Heritage Link

EHTF has been invited to join Heritage Link which has become a useful resource for all heritage practitioners - in particular, the fortnightly e-bulletin Update.

By joining together with a collective voice, organisations representing a range of aspects of the heritage environment can influence policy relating to core issues, as well as benefiting from support and information networks.

We look forward to working co-operatively in the future with Heritage Link.

See www.heritagelink.org.uk for more information.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



The AGM was held at the White Hart in Lincoln, on 20 October prior to the Annual Conference. It was attended by 25 representatives of the members and partners. Sam Howes, as Chair, presented the Annual Report and led discussion on some of the items included. He said he was pleased with the progress the Forum had made during his two years as Chair, in particular in relation to raising awareness of the issues surrounding the Public Realm, which had been the focus of much of the work. He thanked everyone who had been involved and made this possible. He also thanked the sponsors/partners for their continuing support which was pledged by Nick Hayward of RPS Planning, Transport and Environment on their behalf.

After some discussion, it was agreed that a new scale of **fees for Corporate Membership** would be introduced in 2005. This would be related to the number of employees, in order to facilitate more involvement by smaller organisations in the private sector. Fees would be roughly in line with the other membership categories. Current Personal and Affiliated members representing private sector organisations would be invited to change to Corporate Membership - which afforded many more benefits - and, in the majority of cases, little or no change in fees.

This proposed scale is as follows:

1-10 employees	£50
11-100 "	£225
101-250 "	£360
251+ "	£500

The proposals in the Annual Report for changes to the other membership fees were agreed as follows:

Full Membership	£360
Affiliated Membership	£225
Civic & Amenity Membership	£50
Personal Membership	£40

Nominations for the membership of the Executive Committee were seconded and agreed.

Members for the forthcoming year will be:

Chair Ian Poole
Honorary Treasurer Bill Cotton

Full Members:

Jeff Clark Brian Human
Nigel Davies David Reed
Philip Godwin Richard Tuffrey
Chris Hargreaves

Co-opted Members (invited by the Executive Committee) would be:

Steve Bee (English Heritage)
Nick Hayward (RPS Planning, Transport & Environment)

Sam Howes (Chichester DC)
Gwyneth Jones (EEDA/CABE)
Michael Loveday (Norwich HEART)
Brian Smith (EAHTR)
Prue Smith (Norwich CC)
Rob Surl (Shropshire CC)

Review the full report at:
www.ehtf.org.uk/admin/getfile.asp?ID=65

It had also been proposed that a better use of resources might be made by replacing the standing Working Groups, each with a Chair, by a 'portfolio' structure, by which Executive Committee members would hold a portfolio for a particular area of interest and who, as well as reporting and keeping a 'watching brief', would convene task groups to carry out research or projects as necessary. This will enable members and partners to sign up to well defined pieces of work with clear aims and outcomes. Portfolios will be agreed at the first meeting of the new Executive Committee which will be held on 26 November 2004, kindly hosted by Colin Buchanan & Partners at their Nottingham Gate offices.

The Honorary Treasurer reported that the budget was in good health, which offered a strong platform to build on. There had also been some investment in technology which continued to improve the delivery of the Forum's aims and objectives.

Brian Smith presented a report from the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions, which can be seen in full on the website at www.ehtf.org.uk/admin/getfile.asp?ID=66

In conclusion, Sam presented the new 'Prospectus' which outlined the principles, issues and plans for 2005. He hoped it would inspire even more members and others to become engaged with the Forum.

Finally, Ian Poole proposed a vote of thanks to Sam for his hard work as Chair for the past two years and wished him well with all the spare time he would now have.

Retail Guidance

Plans have been in the pipe-line for a while to review the 1997 Retail Guidance document and, whilst much has changed in the intervening years, a great deal of the guidance then advocated still has relevance. However, with a major emphasis in many towns and cities on retail-led regeneration, it was felt that the time was right to examine current issues.

EHTF is not the only organisation to come to this realisation. English Heritage was also formulating plans to review its guidance and has approached us to partner the development of a revised document.

We have therefore agreed that a document - commissioned by EH - focusing mainly on policy will be published and launched at the EHTF conference in Birmingham next April. EHTF will be part of the steering and editorial group for this document, which will be jointly 'badged'. We then plan to publish a complementary guidance document which will address the issues from a practitioners viewpoint - the approach that EHTF is good at and what its members request and appreciate.

'Investing in Heritage financing small town regeneration' Case Study: BUXTON

Our latest publication (no 56), was launched at the annual conference last month. 'Investing in Heritage' is a brief account of the experience of a small towns' success in attracting funding and the delivery of projects on the ground. Retailing at £6 to non-members, £4.50 to Full, Corporate and Personal Members and £5.25 to Affiliated Members, call EHTF to order your copy or order online at: www.ehtf.org.uk/publications.asp.

'MODERN SPACES - HISTORIC SPACES'

Annual Conference : 20 - 22 October - Lincoln



EHTF Sponsors/Partners Exhibiting at Lincoln
Graeme Tully, Donaldsons (left) and
Nick Hayward, RPS Planning, Transport &
Environment (right) with EHTF Chair,
Ian Poole

The conference opened on Wednesday with a tour of Lincoln, led by Green Badge Guides, followed by the Annual General Meeting, a reception and informal supper.

Sam Howes, opened the proceedings, on Thursday, with an introduction to the subject and summary of the work already carried out by EHTF. He restated the main concerns which were:- the lack of a holistic approach, continual erosion of quality and misconceived alterations and "improvements" to spaces and places. The 'Historic Core Zones Project', he said, had demonstrated that:- historic streets deserve special treatment; a great deal can be done within current regulations and local distinctiveness is key.

He went on to define 'liveability' as:- improving the quality of the environment, clean and safe public places and 'walkability' - which allows for greater appreciation of the details of a place.

During the morning, speakers presented the Lincoln perspective, the view of CABE from the new Chief Executive, Dr Richard Simmons, the role of Regeneration East Midlands, the connections with Europe and the University of Lincoln.

This was followed by the launch of the publication which was produced from the outcomes of the Buxton conference held in June - 'Investing in Heritage - financing small town regeneration', (see opposite page for details).

In the afternoon, delegates joined seminar groups to explore the issues of: the economy and regeneration, heritage and conservation and land use and transport. The conference dinner was held in the Chapter House of Lincoln Cathedral.



Lincoln Guildhall

On Friday, the incoming Chair Ian Poole, summarised the preceding day and introduced the subject - 'Delivering aspects of the Public Realm'.

This was explored from the point of view of the private sector, town centre management and the use of heritage assets.

The viewpoint of English Heritage and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister rounded off the morning's presentations.

Ian summarised the key points of the conference and reiterated the Forum's Agenda for Action, as laid out in the Prospectus, which he hoped would address many of these issues. He also thanked the City of Lincoln Council, for hosting the event.

Please read the full report online at:
www.ehtf.org.uk/admin/getfile.asp?ID=67

Chris Winter, EHTF Director

TOURISM ISSUES

Spreading the Word

It is difficult to find a single, accessible source of intelligence on tourism issues, especially since the demise of Insights. One possible answer is The Tourism Network, which is trying to provide practical inspiration, ideas and information. The Network is an independent not for profit industry support agency. Information about events and ideas is published in the Tourism Network Newsletter, which is available direct by e-mail. The Tourism Network is at www.TourismKnowledge.com.

Visitors Count

The DCMS has started publishing monthly statistics of visits to museums and galleries on its website. The Department wants operators, tourism managers and planners to use the figures to assess trends and build on successes. The details are at www.culture.gov.uk.



DCMS now publishes monthly figures on visiting museums

The United Kingdom Tourism Survey (UKTS) 2003 results have been published and show a mixed picture. Domestic trips have stagnated, while inbound visits have grown; good weather favoured outdoor attractions, but those indoors suffered; country parks moved ahead, as did heritage centres. See details at www.visitbritain.com.

Brian Human
Tourism Working Group Chair
Cambridge City Council

The Association of Garden Trusts Conference

'This Green and Pleasant Land: The Case for Sustainability in the Historic Environment'

I joined delegates from local authorities, the private sector and voluntary organisations for the annual conference of the Association of Garden Trusts at English Heritage's Lecture Theatre in London, on 15 October. Proceedings got under way with a highly entertaining and thought provoking slot from John Gummer MP. He started by touching on a subject close to the Forum's heart - the motor car and, in particular, the need to tame the servant that is becoming the master in our environment. Gummer was particularly supportive of the recent work in Birmingham to reclaim space from the car for other users, suggesting that the transition "is one of the great achievements of modern times." He also referred to the density of development in urban areas, suggesting that cities work because they are close packed and people live "hugger mugger" in them. The high densities are relieved by open space in the form of roof gardens, balconies and corner spaces. High buildings provide pointers, statements and landmarks within a city, just as long as there is not a mass of high buildings and no opportunity to view them. In supporting high density living in towns and cities, Gummer suggested that the UK looks to the United States too much for good practice and that there is much to learn from Europe. In summing up he was not complimentary to the garden city movement.

Delegates also heard from Deborah Lamb (Director, Policy & Communications, English Heritage) and Peter Matthew (Head of Liveability and Sustainable Communities, ODPM), who reflected on the work achieved so far on the Government's liveability project and the future work of the initiative and, in particular, the importance of good quality space in towns and cities in raising the quality of life. The afternoon session consisted of further presentations from specific case studies, rounding off a worthwhile and thought provoking day.

Ian Poole, EHTF Chair
St Edmundsbury Borough Council

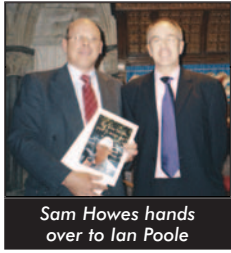
'Dark Tourism - where do you draw the line?'

Brian Human, chaired this half day event in Lancaster on 4 November, which explored the increasing attraction of tourists to sites of death and disaster.

The event was organised by the Tourism Society and supported by Lancaster City Council and EHTF. It offered the opportunity to raise awareness of the Forum's work among a wider audience with an interest in tourism and, in particular, the publication - 'Making the Connections - A Practical Guide to Tourism Management in Historic Towns' (see www.ehtf.org.uk/publication_report49.asp).

For more information see
www.tourismsociety.org

View from The Chair



Sam Howes hands over to Ian Poole

This is my first 'view' since taking over as Chair of the Forum in October and I can't help reflecting on how the Forum has grown and developed since I first got involved, working with the Retail Group back in the early 90's. The Forum has become an organisation which is respected as a fount of knowledge and good practice in dealing with matters in our historic towns and cities. This is no more apparent than our partnerships with English Heritage and CABE to deliver training events.

As I take over as Chair I am conscious that we must not become a victim of our success. The Forum relies heavily on member local authorities allowing officers to contribute to our work and I am fortunate that my employers at St Edmundsbury Borough Council recognise the benefits that being involved with the Forum can bring them. Not just in the publicity which the Council gets, but also in bringing back examples of good practice from other towns and cities to solve problems at a local level. During the next couple of years, one of my priorities will be to bring new faces into working with the Forum, either as members of working parties or to contribute to one-off time-limited projects. This new blood will ensure the Forum's work is sustained in coming years and that the work of the Forum continues to reflect the priorities and issues facing the membership.

I cannot finish without thanking our outgoing Chair, Sam Howes, for all his work over the last couple of years. It is not until you take over that you realise just what a difficult act he is to follow. Sam has left the organisation in good shape and has been a major contributor to the recent growth. One of my challenges is to continue this growth.

2005 Programme

Plans for the work programme and supporting events for the coming year are well under way. These will include:

HELM Seminars - two in each of nine regions from January to March. (see separate article for details)

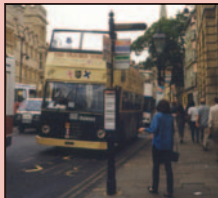


Retail led regeneration in Birmingham, 21 April, with a keynote speech by Les Sparks - a founding member of EHTF, CABE and EH Commissioner who remains deeply interested in the evolution of the city of Birmingham. It is also planned to launch the English Heritage / EHTF retail guidance document at this event.



In early June we will visit **Newcastle & Gateshead** to explore the use of **heritage assets** in the **regeneration** of the Tyne-side towns. Bridges, iconic buildings, historic public spaces and buildings have, and will continue to, shape their development and renaissance.

All aspects of the 'public realm', which EHTF has concentrated on recently, can be seen in the various stages of influence on large and small regeneration projects.



We are delighted that **Oxford City Council** has agreed to host the **2005 Annual Conference**. This will be an opportunity to see how this eminent city has developed strategies to deal with the issues surrounding high density and congestion, whilst retaining the city's distinctive character. The conference and Annual General Meeting will take place in October.

The **skills deficit** has been recognised by Government and many other bodies as a major constraint in the heritage environment. Throughout the programme of events it is our aim to support learning either directly through the HELM training seminars or indirectly by information exchange and dissemination. We plan to base our final event, in November/December in the South West, around this issue, offering practical advice on topics vital to the sector.

This edition of 'News' is available to print or download from our website as a pdf: www.ehtf.org.uk/admin/getfile.asp?ID=68

'The Place of Dwellings: Local Identity in a Fast-Track Age'

The incoming Chair, Ian Poole, and Director, Chris Winter, were invited in September for discussion with the **Prince's Foundation** to explore the potential synergy of our two organisations. We then received an invitation to the conference on 18 November, at the Prince's Foundation in London at which Bill Bryson (now famous for his advocacy of the English 'local identity') and its greatest advocate, HRH The Prince of Wales, were to be the keynote speakers. The attendance of HRH was veiled in secrecy and Ian and Chris were security vetted but still admitted!

This offers the opportunity to raise the profile of EHTF. It also increases our credibility and, therefore, our influence on policy makers regarding the issues of importance to our membership.

EHTF has been invited to partner a number of conferences in the Foundations' programme for 2005 and 6. Places will be offered to EHTF members.

Feature Town: Canterbury



Pilgrims have been flocking to Canterbury since Thomas Becket was martyred in 1170 and the city still pays host to millions of visitors each year. These days they come not just for the rich heritage of the medieval city and the World Heritage Site around the Cathedral but also for cultural events, quality restaurants, and, of course, shopping.

Maintaining the character of the historic city, whilst still accommodating new development to maintain its economic vitality and sub-regional role is, of course, a key challenge. In recent years the city council has worked with a range of architects and developers to implement a number of redevelopment projects to enhance the city, and the results have been impressive. The high density, but low rise, housing development at Station Road West is widely regarded as a very successful brownfield scheme following the principles of PPG3. Within the city walls, further high density housing developments have been successfully knitted into the existing built fabric, together with shopping developments at the Longmarket and, currently under construction, the large scale Whitefriars scheme which is replacing post-war redevelopment with a new street pattern and a sympathetic scheme of shopping and commercial uses with residential flats above.

Heritage Lottery money has been used to enhance the beautiful Dane John Gardens in the city centre, restoring the park to its former glory while, nearby, plans have been agreed in principle for the former Tannery site where a mixed development comprising more than 400 houses, a hotel, shops, wine bar and riverside walk is due to be commenced by Bellway Homes soon.

Within the old city walls the council works hard to enhance the character of the shopping area with appropriate street furniture, quality paving materials, a rigorous maintenance and cleansing regime, comprehensive parking controls, in conjunction with a successful Park & Ride service, and effective planning controls, including the compulsory purchase of a derelict listed building in the heart of the High Street. All this creates an attractive, vibrant, bustling and traffic-free environment for the benefit of residents, visitors and local businesses.

Come and pay us a visit soon!

David Reed, Director of Community and Environment Services
Canterbury City Council

If you represent a Full Member organisation and would like us to feature your town in 'NEWS', please send a short article (150 words) and an image (300 dpi, tif) image to EHTF by email to ehf@uwe.ac.uk.