

News

February 2008

English Historic Towns Forum
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

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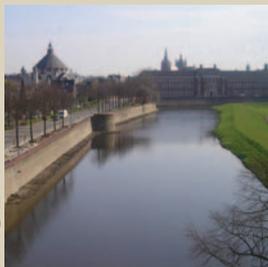
Win a weekend for 2
at The Midland Hotel

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Hertogenbosch -
Study tour to
Netherlands

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John Lewis Partnership

Shopping Places

Where would historic towns be without shopping? Nowhere, in an historical sense, because most of them originated as market towns and centres of trade, for very different goods certainly, but still shopping by another name. Over the years it is trade that has shaped the architectural, economic and social character of town centres.

The importance of retailing cannot be over estimated. Today shopping, as we know it, is the lifeblood of prosperous town centres and is critical in maintaining overall investment in them. It has a fundamental impact on the physical character and distinctiveness of centres; and innovative approaches to retail help to find viable uses for historic buildings. It is important to the quality of life of the users; and successful centres offer services accessible by more sustainable means of transport.

Retailing is one of the most dynamic of the activities that shape our historic towns, so fast moving in fact that planners and conservationists find it hard to keep up. There are complex interactions between several pressures, including: a move away from the traditional high street; the demand for bigger, shop units; the rise of the multiples and the decline of independent traders; vehicle access for shoppers and servicing; the demand for greater control and security; the ambition for more and more places to become sub-regional centres; the imperative to respond to climate change issues; and the need for a sensitive policy framework.

This combination of importance and pressure for change means that those responsible for historic town centres have to face four key challenges in a world where convenience and quality drive providers and consumers alike:

- Protecting the overall character of historic town centres
- Ensuring that town centres are places where people want to be
- Creating new buildings that enhance both the character and experience of the place
- Providing new retailing profitably and successfully.

There are no off the peg answers to these challenges, rather a bespoke package has to be designed to suit the needs of each place by combining a number of tools. Among the tools are: clarity of vision and positive encouragement to investment; durable and consistent national, regional and local policies; sensitive new development based on site selection, building design and mix of uses; and complementary actions, such as town centre management, to maintain quality and distinctiveness. In short, shopping and place making must go hand in hand.

The EHTF's 'Focus on Retailing' to be launched in March will have this message at its heart.

And it's not just the EHTF's view. In its report 'Shopping Places for People', the British Council for Shopping Centres concludes that 'Place-making must be an overarching objective, involving identity and community building through the creation of vital and highly differentiated spaces.'

Brian Human, Chair, EHTF



Cambridge Market Square in the mid 19th century



Cambridge department store opened November 2007

Many publications now free to Members

A total of 12 documents published by EHTF are now free to download in the Members' area of the website. Just login - contact the office if you have lost your id or password - and save or print the pdf files.

Documents available include the Historic Core Zone report and review, many others on traffic

management, retail guidance and more, as well as the two leaflets in the 'Making better...' series and the coach code of practice.

The documents can not only help support your work but may also contribute to training sessions. Visit www.ehff.org.uk to see what's on offer!



CIOB events – Dublin & Glasgow

Conservation project management is the subject of two events offered by The Chartered Institute of Building on 29 February in Dublin and on 4 April in Glasgow*.

EHTF will be working with the CIOB and the IHBC (which is also supporting these events) during 2008 on conservation management issues. The 1992

publication 'Townscape in Trouble: conservation areas – the case for change' will be reviewed and Members' views will be canvassed in order to plan for practical guidance and to influence the expected legislative changes. The EHTF Annual Conference in Lichfield on 8 -10 October will bring this work together and raise

awareness of the concerns felt by many in this field.

See www.ehtf.org.uk for further information and developments on this project.

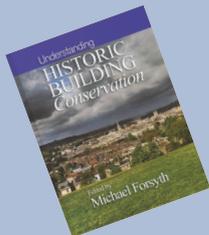
*For further information email vdunn@ciob.org.uk, tel 01344 630798 or visit www.ciob.org.uk


 cityscape
2008

EHTF Chair, Brian Human, will be making two contributions to this year's event at Earl's Court in London. He will be representing the Forum on the panel of experts at 12noon on 26 February and chairing the session at 2.30pm on 27 – 'Visions for sustainable transport to match future sustainable communities'.

To see the range of conferences, seminars and exhibitions and to register for the event go to the Cityscape website – www.cityscapelondon.co.uk.

EHTF Book Reviews



Historic Building Conservation: Volume 1: 'Understanding Historic Building Conservation'

Historic Building Conservation: Volume 2: 'Structures and Construction in Historic Building Conservation'

Edited by Michael Forsyth, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007

The three volume series 'Historic Building Conservation' aims to provide concise, basic and up-to-date knowledge for architects, surveyors and engineers, as well as for commissioning client bodies, managers and advisors, through chapters written by experts in their fields. All volumes include colour and black and white illustrations and drawings, well related to the text, and each chapter includes notes and references with suggestions for further reading.

Volume 1 discusses conservation philosophy and strategic decision making in relation to the understanding of the history of a building. The role of the various conservation professionals is described and the context of the current planning and legislative frameworks outlined. Guidance is also included on writing conservation plans, costing conservation work, contracts, maintenance and the role of building preservation trusts.

Volume 2 explains structural principles and their influence on the evolution of building forms and styles. It describes up-to-date on-site structural survey techniques and advises on structural

solutions and methods of repair in relation to the philosophical principles of historic buildings. Causes of movement, basic soil mechanics and diagnosis of structural failure are explained, and the conservation of a range of different types of construction, such as masonry, iron, steel and concrete is included.

The third volume in this series 'Materials and Skills for Historic Building Conservation' is due to be published early in 2008. This will concentrate on the characteristics and process of decay of traditional materials and will inform on appropriate repair techniques, the sourcing and environmental impact of appropriate materials and their application on conservation projects.

Architectural Conservation, Principles and Practice

Aylin Orbasli, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008

This book principally aimed at students in built environment and related disciplines, provides a comprehensive introduction to the principles and current day practice of architectural conservation. Divided into two sections, the first concentrating on the historical and theoretical basis for architectural conservation in the wider physical, social and international context; the second illustrating the theory in practice, with chapters on management, causes of decay, conservation of individual materials and regeneration, reuse and design in the historic environment. It is amply illustrated with colour and black and white photographs and drawings, and includes a glossary, recommended reading lists, an extensive bibliography and web sources.

Prue Smith, Member of EHTF's Executive Committee

New Members

Durham County Council
Mr David J Warburton
Section Manager -
Design & Conservation
County Hall,
Durham, DH1 5UQ
Tel: 0191 383 4015
Web: www.durham.gov.uk

IHBC
(The Institute of Historic
Building Conservation)
Dr Seán O'Reilly
Director
The Glasite Meeting House
33 Barony Street
Edinburgh, EH3 6NX
Tel: 0131 558 3671
Web: www.ihbc.org.uk

Mr Graham Reddie
The Landscape
41 East Road
Bromsgrove
Worcestershire
B60 2NW

Win a weekend for two at The Midland Hotel

Can you capture, in an image, the unique selling point of your town or city? An image which you think epitomises its character and local identity?



The 2009 EHTF calendar will feature the 12 images which are judged by our expert panel to sum up what is best about

historic towns in our time – so it could be the juxtaposition of a contemporary building in the historic environment, or a sustainable approach to

tourism, the re-use of an historic building or a popular local market – or something else?

The 12 winning photos will be displayed at the Annual Conference Dinner which will be held in Lichfield on 9 October and the overall winner will receive a weekend for two at the newly refurbished Midland Hotel in Morecambe, courtesy of Urban Splash, as well as an invitation to the Dinner to receive the prize.

The deadline for entries will be 30 June; for details of how to enter please see www.ehtf.org.uk.

Designers impression
of the refurbished
Midland Hotel



Revisiting Princesshay, Exeter 26 - 27 March 2008

Having taken its Members to a 'hole in the ground' in Exeter in December 2005, EHTF will be revisiting the phoenix which has risen from it - the highly acclaimed Princesshay retail development. With opportunities to hear from all of the stakeholders in this exceptional project, the event will also see the launch of the new publication from the Forum, which includes contributions from a wide range of experts, offering guidance on retail development in historic towns. For details and booking see: www.ehtf.org.uk

Design issues

There is now a new and integrated approach to the design of retail in our towns.

Scheme examples in the pipeline such as Grosvenor Developments Liverpool One and Quintains Wembley Regeneration, show the now mainstream approach to mixed uses, the incorporation of public space and a commitment to achieving high quality architecture and public realm.

The strong desire for schemes to be unique and reflect individual places has been a strong reaction to a consolidating number of major national retailers, and while special efforts have been made to promote local traders and to attract a mix of new and

international retailers to projects, the real pressure and opportunity for placemaking and differentiation lies with the design and the designers.

Retailers' requirements and pressures need to be understood and accommodated, rather than resisted, if we are to maintain viable and vital economies in our historic towns. It is the satisfaction of these design requirements, efficiently and effectively, that generates the values required to deliver the quality of design, which is demanded.

The overall acceptance, by funding institutions that mixed use is the only way forward has also enabled us to deliver true

pieces of townscape and appropriate urban scale with new additions, contrary to the single use developments of the past. This also means extending the economies of our towns into the evening and changing the social nature of towns by increasing the resident population.

In fact it is the historic towns that present the best opportunities for placemaking and differentiation through a respect and a positive approach to the retention and repair of the fabric and heritage of our towns.

Andrew Ogg,
Managing Director, Leslie Jones

Princesshay - the Exeter experience

The birth of a coordinated retail development did not occur until the early twentieth century, in North America. In the relatively short time since, however, the form and style of such developments have been a dynamic which is constantly changing. This is particularly true of the developments now coming forward in Britain, in the early twenty-first century.

Some would argue that the covered mall is an alien insertion into the historic fabric of our towns and cities, and it is true that some malls do turn their backs on the rest of the city centre. Many commentators would also wish that shopping centres were more successful in linking to the rest of the city centre ensuring permeability.

The changing nature of town centre regeneration schemes has however brought new opportunities. As the drive towards mixed use schemes has increased, so the industry - from planners to developers and architects - have embraced the 'New Agenda', with open streets and spaces, and

diversity in design as opposed to the monoliths of old.

From 2000 Exeter has worked collaboratively with Land Securities, their architects, English Heritage and CABE, to deliver mixed use development to a contemporary design.

The EHTF conference will showcase the completed Princesshay which was 95% let at opening. The scheme received critical acclaim from English Heritage's Urban Panel as "an exemplar of how major regeneration schemes can enrich the fabric of major historic cities in delivering urban design and architectural excellence of the highest quality".

Delegates will have the opportunity to consider the challenge and opportunities accommodating large scale developments in sensitive locations.

Stephen Wehrle, *Property Director, Land Securities and John Rigby, Director, Economy & Development Exeter City Council*



Princesshay

Princesshay, Exeter – the evolution of a streetscape-based retail scheme



Princesshay

The new Princesshay in Exeter was opened on 20 September 2007 to much acclaim. An open streetscape based area with 60 shops, cafés and restaurants anchored by a new flagship Debenhams, the layout of the scheme owes much to the historic street patterns and underlying archaeology into which the scheme was stitched.

Over 10 years in the making, the current streetscape-based scheme was not always the one envisaged, but the contextual analysis and conservation area studies commissioned by Land Securities and Exeter City Council set the pattern of the retail centre required by the city. At the same time masterplanning progressed to assess the appropriate configuration of the required retail space. It soon became clear that only by a bold and dramatic change in access arrangements would the opportunities in the scheme be maximised.

To free up the maximum area for development a new access into an existing basement car park was driven down across Southernhay. This also required the closure of through traffic in this conservation area, thereby removing around 6000 vehicles per day from the commercial centre. In turn this new access arrangement permitted pedestrianisation of all of the central retail development area opening up once again tranquil walkways along the historic city wall. A further key to the opening up of the scheme was the provision of walkway linkages from the business district in Southernhay, through the middle of the new scheme to the High Street. Early completion of the required highway infrastructure then enabled development to proceed with relatively little disruption to the city centre through the 36 month construction period.

Ian Awcock, *WSP Development & Transportation Consultants*

Earlier this year I was sitting on the Campiello del Remer overlooking the Grand Canal in Venice, when a young American woman approached me.

'Is that a guidebook in English you're reading?' she asked.
 'Yes', I replied
 'What's that bridge?'
 'The Rialto.'
 'Is that the same as the Bridge of Sighs?'
 'No, that's over by San Marco.'
 'Why's the Rialto famous?'
 I mention dates, Andrea Da Ponte, The Merchant of Venice and so on.
 'Gee, thanks, cool'

While it was nice to do my bit for Anglo-American relations, it was the sort of exchange that makes me jaundiced about tourism and the wisdom of people buzzing from one honey pot to the next ticking off 'must see' destinations.

It came to mind as I followed the rather tetchy debate about funding for tourism following the Comprehensive Spending Review. Ken Robinson on behalf of the Tourism Society captured the spirit of frustration: "DCMS funds to VisitBritain would be cut by a further 20% in the run up to the Olympic Games, at the very time when Britain is under the greatest international competitive pressure.....[and] the reality almost everywhere is diminishing budgets and a reduction of LAs involvement in tourism."

The EHTF champions the role of the public sector in supporting destination management to try to make tourism more sustainable, so any reduction in its commitment is regrettable. A recent study from the University of Surrey on the public understanding of sustainable tourism reinforces this. It shows that there is an expectation that government has a greater role to play in reducing the environmental impact of tourism. There plainly is a need for this public (voters!) expectation to be impressed on all elected representatives.

But tourists are Januslike. Participants in the Surrey study showed some resistance to changing their own behaviour for the sake of the environment: "it was something peculiar that only serious environmentalists would do." Like reading a guide book and being able to identify an iconic building in one of the world's most sublime cities, I suppose.



Brian Human, Chair, EHTF

2008 Conference programme and 'early bird' booking offer

To help plan financial and time resources for the coming year, we are offering an early booking opportunity for the 2008 events, with an additional 5% discount for Members, until the end of February.

Go to www.ehtf.org.uk and click on the 'early bird' booking offer for the events detailed below:



26 March Exeter: Dinner to launch the new EHTF retail guidance document

27 March Revisiting the **Princesshay retail development** – lessons for historic towns



30 April Durham: Dinner to launch the 'Manual for Historic Streets'

1 May Transport management strategies for historic towns



18/19 June Morecambe: an opportunity to stay at **The Midland Hotel**, the refurbished art deco hotel and to explore sustainable tourism in the C21st



8 – 10 October Lichfield: AGM, Annual Conference and Dinner. A review of 'Townscape in Trouble', conservation management and the skills agenda; presentation of the 'USP of historic towns' photo awards.

Full details of the programme will be published 6 weeks before each event.

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Study Tour to Netherlands

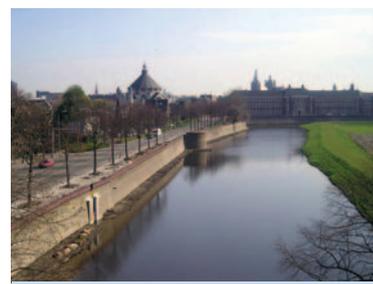
In partnership with the European Association of Historic Towns & Regions (EAHTR), we are able to offer Members an opportunity to explore the management of historic towns in some of Europe's beautiful cities!

Details of the trip planned for June 2008 are being confirmed and Members have been invited by email to make an expression of interest in order that dates and bookings can be firmed up. We are not asking for a financial commitment at this stage but a realistic expression of interest, after which you will be sent the details and asked for a non-returnable deposit of £75 per person to confirm your booking.

The proposed programme will begin with delegates meeting in Amsterdam at mid-day on Wednesday, leaving you to choose the best means of travel from the UK for you. Proposed visits and presentations on shared space and other topical issues include Utrecht, Hertogenbosch, Dordrecht, Delft and Rotterdam.

Bed and breakfast accommodation, coach travel in the Netherlands, returning to Amsterdam on Friday late pm, with all bookings and administration will be in the region of £275.00 per person. Two dates are being considered, 4 - 6 June or 11 - 13 June; to indicate your interest please send an email stating your preferred date to ehff@uwe.ac.uk

The 'best fit' date will be chosen by the organisers and you will be contacted in the near future.



Hertogenbosch, Netherlands