

News

June 2008

English Historic Towns Forum
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

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Tourism topics for Morecambe Conference

Tourism is an environmental, economic and social fact of life for most historic towns, as the EHTF has said many times before. It is in the interest of these places to maximise the benefits to both the destination and visitors alike. As such, advice like the 'Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism' (DCLG 2006) is very welcome.

A recent initiative that aims to improve our tourism is the launch of Place Making – A Charter for Destination Management by Partners for England. Partners for England is a collaborative exercise owned by all stakeholders and is being taken forward jointly by VisitBritain for VisitEngland and by the South West RDA on behalf of the RDAs. The Local Government Association fully supports the initiative.

The Charter sets out how key organisations can effectively support the development of the visitor economy in a specific area. Organisations are asked to sign up and each will be expected to set out its contribution to delivering the aims of the Charter.

The Charter gives five key principles for excellent destination management: integrate, inform, innovate, invest and improve. Under each of the principles actions for local authorities, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), VisitBritain and the Tourism Alliance are set out in the spirit of partnership.

The Charter identifies sixty-seven specific actions, almost half of which should be led by local authorities, including amongst others:

- Integrate
 - Identify member champions
 - Consider visitors, industry, community and environment (VICE) in decision making
 - Establish management partnerships

- Inform
 - Collect and share intelligence
 - Provide information services
 - Share best practice
- Innovate
 - Produce strategic development plans
 - Link the visitor economy and environmental improvements
 - Use S106 and BIDs to fund placemaking
- Invest
 - Invest in key local authority functions
 - Prioritise public realm improvements
 - Link investment to product development
- Improve
 - Promote quality visitor experience
 - Commit to develop skills
 - Lead by example in customer service.

While this sets a challenging agenda for the local authorities, it is timely in reinforcing the key role they have to play in supporting this valuable industry and linking it to place making and improving the quality offer.

Historic towns, places that are among the most important for the visitor economy, can play a key part in meeting the aims of the Charter. Mention of the public realm is particularly welcome as it plays into so many issues that are at the heart of the Forum's interests, whether it is street design, Conservation Area management or transport planning.

The Charter is welcome. That said, the Forum can take pride in pointing out that much of what it says was anticipated by 'Making the Connections' (1999) and 'Focus on Tourism' (2006).

For details of Partners for England and the Charter visit www.tourismtrade.org.uk/Partners_for_England

Brian Human, Chair, EHTF

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Durham Conference report

**Don't forget the
photo competition
- deadline 30 June.
For details and
entry form visit
www.ehft.org.uk**

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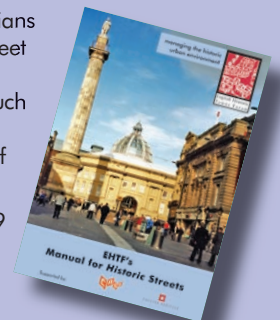
John Lewis Partnership

Manual for Historic Streets now available

Manual for Historic Streets was launched at the conference held in Durham on 30 April. This document, supported by English Heritage and CABE Space, addresses both the Why? and the How? of streetscape management through a collection of articles from experts and practitioners. Edited together, these reflect the principles which the Forum has promoted through its work on transport and public realm management over the past decade and which has now risen up the political agenda. The Forum welcomed the Department for Transport 'Manual for Streets' (March 2007), but believes

that practices which put pedestrians at the top of the hierarchy of street users and which values places above roads can be applied much more widely and can make a positive contribution to quality of life.

Copies are available priced £9 (£12 for non-members) from the EHTF office 0117 975 0459 or via www.ehft.org.uk



Mr Rob Surl:
Transport Planner
E: rob.surl@btinternet.com

Mr Geoff Miller:
Associate Director
E: geoff.miller@dla-architecture.co.uk

Simons Developments Ltd:
Mr Dominic Hayes
Managing Director
991 Doddington Road, Lincoln, LN6 3AA
T: 01522 505099
W: www.simonsdevelopments.com

Julie Howard Partnership:
Mr Howard Duckworth
Senior Partner
15 Hobgate, York, YO24 4HE
T: 01904 792000
W: www.juliehowardpartnership.co.uk

2008 Annual Conference to be held in Lichfield

In 1992 the EHTF's 'Townscape in Trouble' publication caused a stir in conservation circles; it caught the attention of Government and brought about some changes too.

In 2008 protection of the historic environment is once again testing policy makers and practitioners and the many issues in the debate will be explored at this year's Annual Conference. Working with other leading organisations, the Forum is planning to research some of the tools available to practitioners and to ask planners and conservation officers their opinions in order to identify not only good practice but also the gaps.

Climate change, energy efficiency and sustainability were not included in the previous guidance document and must be addressed, but without losses to the historic fabric. Are there things we can learn from historic buildings both physically and through their role in communities?

The whole of the town centre of Lichfield is a Conservation Area and it can illustrate many of the issues facing EHTF Members and is adopting a design-led approach to the solutions. Join us in Lichfield from 8 – 10 October.



Lichfield

Tourism – a quality offer!

Historic towns have always been at the heart of English tourism – both domestic and overseas, and it is vital that, in a global market, policies are in place to retain their competitiveness.

At this conference – to be held at the newly refurbished Midland Hotel in Morecambe – speakers from the Government department and leading national tourism organisations will explore the funding and economic impact issues, look at the cost/benefits of World Heritage Site status, consider the importance of local distinctiveness and of quality and, using Morecambe as a case study, look in depth at examples of regeneration and tourism in partnership.

Supported by



Tom Bloxham, Chair and Co-founder of Urban Splash, which is developing the Midland Hotel, will also address the Conference Dinner

The conference is supported by the Northwest Regional Development Agency

Uniform difference: quality and quirkiness!

Successful destinations of the future will think of the global but act on the local. We must ensure that tourism is environmentally sustainable - and economically and culturally sustainable too. Those who worry about globalisation fear that historic cultural identities will be lost in a 'one size fits all'. But the greatest paradox of the globalised visitor economy is that travellers who can go anywhere in the world, will want a destination experience like nowhere else on earth; that 'something special' – be it a modern cultural icon or living heritage – that makes a destination unlike anywhere else. So, globalisation in tourism is not a threat to the unique, it exists because of the unique.

The future for us all in tourism promotion is a quality product that we can market without the tragedy of all our products being the same. This means common quality assurance schemes; Blue

Flags; Green Flags; star-ratings. Basic common standards that all visitors will expect to see. But that does NOT mean we face an homogenised, identikit visitor economy. Quite the opposite: standardisation means universal benchmarks for products. It does not mean uniformity of products.

Technology offers us a great deal of good and there will be lessons for us to learn from each other on promoting green tourism for the good of the global environment and the local economy. We need quality products with that special appeal.

Stuart Barrow, Public Affairs Manager, VisitBritain



Tourism: Brief Encounter or long term affair?

Community based heritage regeneration

The EHTF conference at the Midland Hotel in Morecambe this June provides an excellent opportunity to explore some of the issues associated with community-led heritage regeneration schemes. The Grade II* Winter Gardens in Morecambe has the chance of a viable future now that it has been acquired by a Trust dedicated to its restoration. Now it has the opportunity to build on good practice achieved elsewhere in the North West region. Here, projects as diverse as the restoration of Gorton Monastery, the refurbishment of Murrays Mills in Manchester's Northern Quarter and BBC Restoration programme winner the Victoria Baths, have delivered innovative programmes of community-led activity and demonstrated the benefits of charitable 'third sector' project enablers.

The well deserved success of these high profile community-led ventures, however, has not been achieved without personal sacrifices and herculean effort. Along the way they have had to overcome numerous pitfalls and taken high wire risks. Today, those with the vision and guts to start their heritage regeneration journeys face new hazards and obstacles as well as many familiar challenges.

To find out more, come along to the conference!

Peter Middleton, Director, L&R Consulting

Winter Gardens, Morecambe



Midland Hotel restoration

Remmers specialist facade repair materials are being extensively used on the restoration of the iconic 1930s Art Deco Midland Hotel in Morecambe, originally designed by Oliver Hill and now being fully restored by Urban Splash.

The concrete frame has been extensively repaired with Remmers Betofix fast curing mortars, the corroding steel protected with Remmers Migratory Corrosion Inhibitor and the entire facade rendered in a bespoke Remmers Glass Render system.

The Glass Render, developed in Remmers Research and Development laboratories to meet the specific criteria of the design team contains over 14 constituents, including 4 types of crushed coloured glass that provide an effect that causes the building to glisten in the sunshine.

The render also contains a waterproofing product which provides long term protection from driving rain and yet is breathable to respect the buildings dynamics.

For more information visit www.remmers.co.uk

A sea change for our historic resorts

If you want to see the most innovative, exciting, bizarre, jaw dropping, elegant, amusing, technologically advanced architecture and built environment in England – there is once place to look – the seaside. Since seaside resorts were invented in the 18th century they have been at the forefront of architectural innovation. As places originally devoted to health, then to leisure and downright excess; they have developed new types of buildings and built environment elements from sea bath houses to piers and a legacy of promenades, exotic tropical gardens and exuberant carpet bedding. The seaside has embraced every style imaginable and invented a few of its own. In many cases the most ambitious structures in new styles were adopted by resorts very early – from

the orientalism of the Royal Pavilion Brighton, to the flowering of international style modernism of De La Warr Pavilion Bexhill and the Saltdean Lido. The seaside has been at the forefront of architectural experimentation and this position is one that the Sea Change grant programme is keen to support, to help restore and find new uses for this unique historic infrastructure and also to support resorts continuing to innovate using quality contemporary art and design. Resorts need to think about what is unique and special about them and continue to preserve and build on this heritage of innovation and Sea Change is a programme that should help many to do just that. For details visit www.cabe.org.uk/seachange

Richard Simmons, Chief Executive, CABE



De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill

Quality

The traditional seaside resort of Morecambe grew following its connection to Lancaster and West Yorkshire by rail in 1850. Morecambe expanded rapidly during the Victorian and Edwardian eras and saw another burst of investment during the Art Deco period.

Faced by the rise in popularity of the motor car and then package holidays to sunnier resorts overseas, Morecambe and other similar resorts, began a decline in fortunes from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. By that time, Morecambe's visitor numbers had dropped to 1.3 million, and many spent little money in the resort. In 1990 markets had changed and we were still selling a resort designed for 1890.

Recent regeneration has been based on quality. The initial work included coastal defence costing £26m and culminating in 2007 with people enjoying sandy beaches again. High quality public art, the Tern project, helped to animate the new promenade and public realm.



From left Seahorse from the Midland Hotel, the Tern Project and Morecambe

Publicity connected with this public art and with the central area regeneration led to a doubling in visitor numbers by 2005 and optimism in the resort's future.

The latest phases of the regeneration work include dealing with conversion of former B&Bs and the £10m redevelopment of the Art Deco Midland Hotel. Much of the public realm has been regenerated and work continues to attract private sector investment. Regeneration continues but the visitor experience is now better, the length of stay has been extended and the average age of visitors has dropped. Quality regeneration brings results.

Jim Trotman, Tourism Manager, Lancaster City Council

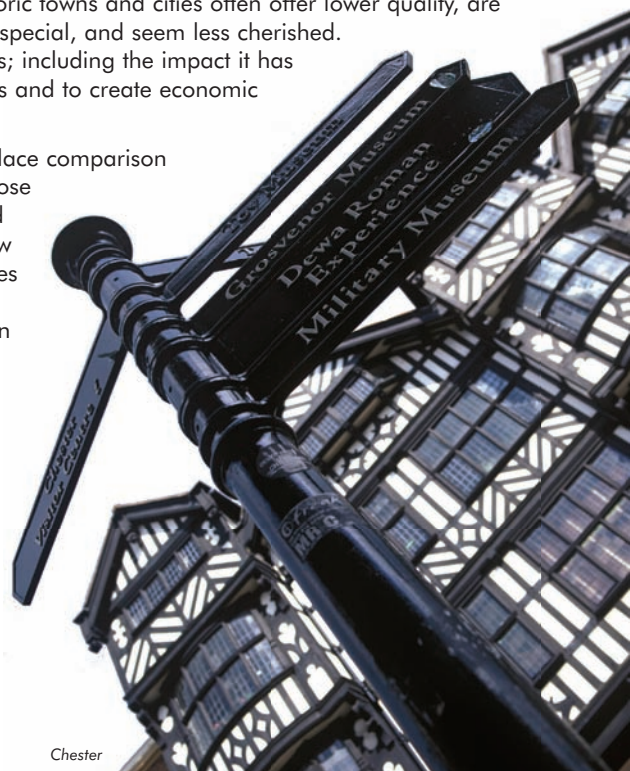
Place quality: creating distinctive destinations

The quality of our historic towns and cities is something that matters, and with its strategic responsibility for developing tourism in the Northwest, the NWDA is committed to making the most of the region's unique heritage.

Historic towns and cities are valuable for many reasons, yet we often take for granted the wealth of history that is accumulated in our urban areas. For many of our overseas visitors, the heritage of our country is a key reason for coming here. Yet many of us would acknowledge that compared to other countries, particularly our near European neighbours, many of our historic towns and cities often offer lower quality, are somehow less distinctive and special, and seem less cherished. This matters for many reasons; including the impact it has on our ability to attract visitors and to create economic success from doing so.

The NWDA is developing a place comparison methodology that will help those responsible for our towns and cities to understand better how they compare with other places in this country and in Europe. The Agency is also investing in research to understand better what visitors want from the destinations they choose. We are working on pilot projects including Chester Renaissance with the goal of raising ambition, improving quality and enhancing the distinctiveness and appeal of our destinations.

Phil Reddy, Head of Tourism Strategy, Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)



Chester

We are trying out new way-marking in Cambridge with the aim of making the City more legible for visitors. The approach follows the now increasingly familiar head-up map displays developed so successfully by Placemarque. I looked at one of the panels recently to do a user test and, yes, it did indeed show clearly how to orientate myself, where the sights are and how to find them. For me they rated a high score on a scale on one to ten.

But standing back for a moment I realised that I was not best placed to make a judgement. I've worked in Cambridge for a long time; I know how to get from St John's College to the Mill Pond, so of course the maps looked clear. There is a problem here: it is very difficult to be a tourist at home, the place we believe we know well.

Walking back to the office I tried to be a tourist. I looked down side streets, peered through gates and scanned upper storeys and changing skylines. I checked street names, looked for changes in direction and picked out landmarks ahead. I took in varied building styles, the rich palette of materials and quirky details. I savoured the aroma of coffee, the spring smell of cut grass and the faint perfume of horse chestnut.

I was taking in the place as a tourist might and, I realised, walking slowly. Many years ago French writer Paul Valery regretted that, "Modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated." And that is all too true of how we experience our towns – we rush hither and thither and don't take time to savour the riches they offer. We need more often to be tourists at home, to value what we have and to challenge the erosion of identity, local distinctiveness and sense of place.



Brian Human, Chair, EHTF

The event in Durham began with dinner at Oldfields, a 'local food' restaurant in the old Durham Gas Company building, at which Alan Young of WSP, who had been closely involved with the Department for Transport's 'Manual for Streets', launched the EHTF 'Manual for Historic Streets'.

The conference on Thursday was opened with a keynote presentation - 'Traffic in historic towns: challenges and opportunities' - by Malcolm Buchanan, Managing Director of Colin Buchanan. This was followed by Ian Poole (EHTF Executive and St Edmundsbury Borough Council) who introduced the evolution of 'Manual for Historic Streets' from the Forum's work on traffic management and the public realm and in support of the DfT guidance.

Examples of the Transport Innovation Fund in Cambridge and the problems with pricing and why Shrewsbury needs a different solution, were followed by the Durham case study. The Durham City Vision and its implications for regeneration in the city, the travel study and the demand management strategy were explained. Transport Innovation Fund objectives, said Roger Elphick, closely matched those of Durham.

Speakers from the City and the County Councils gave

presentations on economic development and tourism issues and local urban and rural regeneration projects.

During the afternoon, study tours looked at various aspects of the Durham case study. This was followed by workshops on coach parking, park & ride, parking, bus management, walking and cycling strategies and car free historic centres facilitated by leading practitioners on each topic.

EHTF Chair, Brian Human summed up the conference with key messages:

- Historic towns are the seedbeds of innovation
- The need for Champions of the Street
- The need to be bold to meet the challenges – to take risks
- The importance of partnerships, linking the issues and a broader vision
- Local solutions for local places
- Visitors should be given the incentive and confidence to explore and to engage with a place

Visit www.ehtf.org.uk for a full report of the conference. Copies of the presentations are available to download from the Members area of EHTF's website or on a cd, price £10.

Irish public realm conference

Two members of the EHTF Executive Committee recently travelled to Youghal in Ireland to take part in a two-day conference focusing on the Public Realm in Historic Environments. Ian Poole from St Edmundsbury Borough Council spoke about the new 'Manual for Historic Streets' and his experiences in implementing the Historic Core Zone project at Bury St Edmunds and Mike Loveday from the Heritage, Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART) spoke about the economic benefits of investing in public realm improvements. The conference attracted delegates from across Ireland, where major investment is starting to take place in public realm improvements. Other speakers included Ben Hamilton-Baillie, who spoke about Shared Space, and Kathy Wimble from Newark and Sherwood who talked about her experiences in Newark-on-Trent.

It was a return visit to the town for Ian having represented the Forum at an Irish Walled Towns Network conference there last year. He was also invited to visit Lismore, the Irish home of the Dukes of Devonshire since the 16th century. The visit reinforced the problem that so many small historic towns are facing at the moment, a car dominated public realm, day visitors to the castle not contributing to the local economy and local shops being unable to compete with larger shopping centres, issues that the Forum has been tackling for a number of years.

Youghal



CABE scholarship

Former EHTF Chair and current Executive Committee Member, Ian Poole from St Edmundsbury Borough Council has been awarded a CABE Space Travel Scholarship for 2008. He is one of a handful of "scholars" selected from over 60 applicants and will be travelling through the summer to examine the design and maintenance of streets and squares in historic towns and cities across Europe. He will be visiting Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, France, Denmark, Sweden and Norway in a series of trips between now and September. His findings should be of interest to many EHTF Members and a report on his finding will be published later in the year.

EHTF towns short listed for Academy of Urbanism Awards!

As a recently appointed Academician, Chris Winter, Director of EHTF, was invited to join the Awards panel to short list the 1300 nominations for the five categories for the 2009 Awards. From the short lists of 10 in each category, three were announced at the dinner held in Sheffield on 15 May. The winners will be announced, after a rigorous judging process by the Academy, at the event in Liverpool on 25 - 27 November.

At the Founder Congress in Sheffield, the Academy's **UniverCities** programme which aims to bring together local authorities, Universities and the private sector in towns and cities across the UK to share good practice and to work together towards good 'urbanism'.

As urban centres for many centuries, EHTF member towns can illustrate many of the attributes which policy makers and strategic managers are seeking to emulate in pursuit of the sustainable communities agenda. Members of the Forum interested in finding out more should see the Academy of Urbanism website – www.academyofurbansm.org.uk.

EHTF members short listed were:

NewcastleGateshead
Chichester D C
Brighton & Hove C - North Laines
Oxford C C - Oxford Castle
Birmingham C C - Jewellery Quarter
Nottingham C C - Lace Market
RB Kensington & Chelsea - High St Kensington
Craven D C - High St Skipton

Great City
Great Town
Great Place
Great Place
Great Neighbourhood
Great Neighbourhood
Great Street
Great Street

Investing in Heritage – a guide to successful urban regeneration



The INHERIT report has now been published by EAHTR following three years of working in partnership with the cities of Belfast, Newcastle upon Tyne, Göteborg, Verona, Gdansk and Ubeda. Copies of this useful and timely report have been sent to all EHTF members.

The report explores the value of heritage, looks at different approaches to heritage led regeneration and identifies the social and economic benefits that can be achieved. It endeavours to understand the underlying processes involved in investing in heritage and to identify the key ingredients leading to success.

The key success factors identified are based on 19 detailed case studies, supplementary examples of good practice from across Europe, and an evaluation of EU regional policy in the field of cultural heritage.

The guidance, while aimed at helping local and regional authorities to realise the full potential of heritage as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of their towns and cities, will have relevance to everyone working in the field of Cultural Heritage.

INHERIT is an interregional project partly funded by INTERREG 3C. Copies of the report can be ordered from the INHERIT website - www.inheritproject.net (p&p charged only).

Brian Smith, EAHTR