

News

September 2008

English Historic Towns Forum
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

Townscape Challenges: Article 4

In 1992 the EHTF's report *'Townscape in Trouble'* threw down a challenge to government and helped to change how we manage Conservation Areas. Sixteen years on there have been enormous changes in the challenges facing our sensitive townscapes, changes which the Heritage Protection Bill must address and which will be the focus of this year's Annual Conference, *'Focus on Townscape: Challenges and Opportunities'*.

'Townscape in Trouble' can claim some credit for the introduction of restrictions to permitted development rights, enshrined in legislation as Article 4 Directions. However, adverse and avoidable changes are still occurring in Conservation Areas and other sensitive places despite this power. Directions are not used as widely as they might be: the process to introduce them is considered by some to be bureaucratic and their scope limited; there is also a belief that they can lead to Planning Authorities being liable to claims for compensation from property owners.

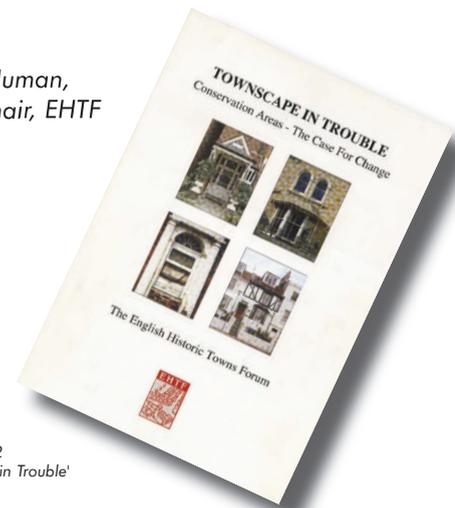
The Forum is working with RPS on a study to review the application of Article 4 Directions. Among the many questions to be asked are: How widely used are Directions? What are the principal features that they seek to protect? How many additional applications are received

as a result of having the Direction? Has the Direction resulted in claims for compensation? How successful are they in achieving protection? What are examples of good practice? Is there a case for a blanket amendment to the GPDO in Conservation Areas?

Moreover, the study should also consider whether Article 4 Directions will continue to find favour in the emerging legal, policy and administrative contexts that will be set by the Heritage Protection Bill and the Killian Pretty Review.

Lichfield, a small Cathedral City with a major central Conservation Area, is an ideal venue to consider the results of the study and reflect on whether townscape is still in trouble.

Brian Human,
Vice Chair, EHTF



EHTF's 1992
'Townscape in Trouble'
publication

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Townscape in Focus: Challenges & Opportunities Annual Conference - Lichfield 8 -10 October

Heritage protection and the principles of conservation are at the heart of new legislation to manage the historic built environment. This conference examines the new agendas and the skills and tools which are essential to build on heritage assets for a sustainable future.

A review of *'Townscape in Trouble'* and research into the use of Article 4 Directions will be the starting point of this

event which will also include input from English Heritage and DCMS on the implications of the Heritage Protection Bill for practitioners.

The Lichfield case study offers a microcosm of all of the topics under discussion and an opportunity for discussion in order to formulate a way forward for the Forum and its Members.

For more details and to book visit www.ehtf.org.uk



Lichfield

EHTF is supported by



Townscape today - challenges and opportunities



A typical unlisted shopfront in a Conservation Area (left), and (right) badly affected by a collection of signs and advertisements which can be installed with the benefit of 'Deemed Consent'. i.e. without permission

Townscape in Lichfield



Lichfield

The Annual Conference this year will take delegates to a small City in the centre of England, to explore in the current context the issues of 'Townscape'.

Dan Roberts, Conservation and Urban Design Manager, Lichfield District Council says: "In common with many market towns and small cities in Britain, Lichfield now finds itself under the developer's gaze. Having pretty much exhausted the potential for commercial development and redevelopment in our major towns and cities, it appears to be provincial settlements that are now the focus of attention.

One of the interesting dilemmas this raises in towns and cities that have not been so thoroughly 'worked over' in the past, during the industrial revolution for example, or through the comprehensive redevelopments of the 1960s, is the provision of contemporary living, services and designs within an inherently historic context.

In Lichfield's case, the Council has chosen to promote the mixed use redevelopment of an area on the edge of the City Centre, defined by a circulatory route created in the 1960s, leaving the historic core relatively intact. An extensive, recently completed repaving scheme in and around the market place has enhanced the traditional public realm, and future developments are proposed in order to balance the offer of shops and services across the City Centre."

We look forward to meeting Dan and his colleagues in October.

There are over 9000 Conservation Areas and since 1967 their designation has been the key to trying to protect the most attractive and historic parts of our towns. Have they been successful and is the appearance of Conservation Areas improving or deteriorating?

EHTF stimulated a vigorous debate with the publication of 'Townscape in Trouble', which highlighted the "rapid deterioration and butchery" of fine Victorian residential areas and historic shopping streets. It pointed to a lack of strong planning control over permitted development and the demolition of distinctive architectural features. Since then, planning control in Conservation Areas has weakened (mainly due to the Shimizu and South Lakeland decisions) and Councils have come to rely on education, grants and media heritage campaigns to protect historic areas. The Government responded to 'T in T' by introducing Article 4(2) Directions (which can be used to stop inappropriate alterations that are normally permitted development). However, their declaration is patchy, possibly due to fears of compensation claims and extra workloads and their limits do not give control over minor demolition. Indeed, there is more planning control over the appearance of an inner city speculative development than over a distinctive house in a Conservation Area. It seems as though Conservation Areas remain the Cinderella of the planning system.

As sustainability and heritage become accepted as critical to sustainable communities, will the Heritage Protection Bill redress the imbalance and will Conservation Areas be given the legal safeguards they need?

Gordon Somerville, Retired Head of Planning, Scarborough Borough Council & co-author of 'Townscape in Trouble'.

Characterisation and it's



Lincoln's Cathedral and Museum

Effective characterisation is essential at both local and regional levels to ensure that the townscapes we create are valued both today and tomorrow.

The new regional responsibilities present us with a significant opportunity to ensure that the many examples of local good practice are embedded regionally.

The EHTF, a successful advocate of good practice, now has new allies in the Regional Centres of Excellence for Sustainable Communities. In the East Midlands our Centre is Regeneration East Midlands (REM), which embraces the areas of evidence, funding, skills and design.

The East Midlands has developed a Regional Urban Action Plan. As one of the main urban centres, Lincoln has been an advocate, supporter and participant in the Plan and

Integrated project & heritage management



Simply put, good project management should deliver high quality projects in time and to budget. Where the heritage is concerned however, project management can be an alien function, carried out by professional project managers who do not have a feeling for what they are dealing with.

That may often be the case, and possibly result in a product that isn't quite right.

Similarly projects managed by the 'conservation' profession may also not achieve the right outcome due to poorly practiced project management. This was the one of the conclusions that came from the CIOB Conservation Project Management conference held in London earlier this year.

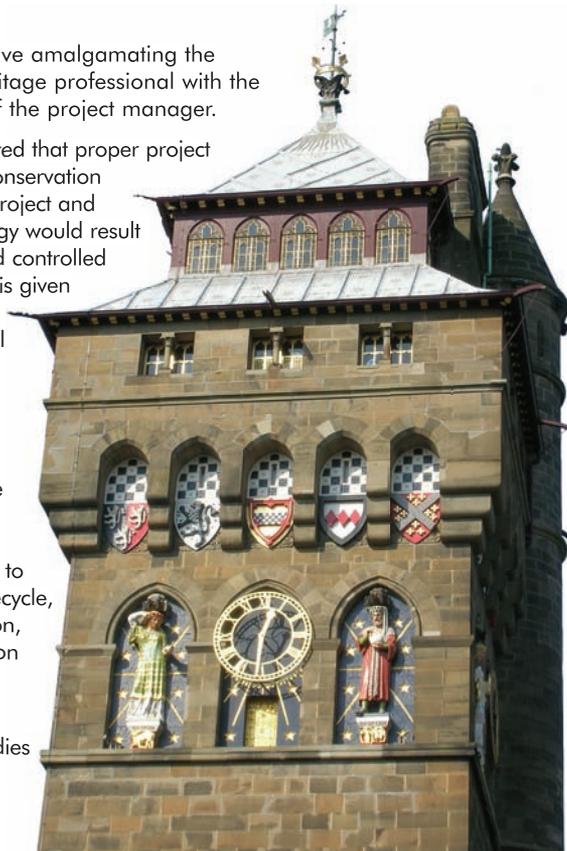
The solution would seem to involve amalgamating the conservation expertise of the heritage professional with the project management expertise of the project manager.

At the very least it should be ensured that proper project management is practiced by all conservation professionals. The integration of project and heritage management methodology would result in all actions being managed and controlled whilst ensuring due consideration is given to economics, use, historic significance and complex technical aspects of a heritage project.

Heritage management requires an understanding of and ability to manage historic significance. An integrated project and heritage management approach ensures that issues related to the historic significance of a building are kept to the forefront during the project lifecycle, from project initiation to completion, and also in the eventual use and on going care of the site.

The EHTF conference will look at these issues and through case studies consider how and why project management decisions are made. It offers the opportunity to explore the benefits of an integrated approach to project and heritage management.

John Edwards, TFT Cultural Heritage & CIOB



Top picture: Cardiff Castle (east elevation of house).
Above: Cardiff Castle restored Clock Tower.
An example of integrated project & heritage management

contribution to regeneration

recognised the importance of testing innovative approaches to characterisation within it. Lincoln has brought together its environmental, regeneration, planning and social sustainability expertise to develop a Lincoln Townscape Assessment and City Centre Masterplan, produced using Enquiry By Design. This aims to ensure that there is a consensual understanding of what is important, what works and why. This work has not only been embedded in the Local Development Framework but also the work of the Local Strategic Partnership which has assumed responsibility for delivery on the agreed vision.

Governance of the Regional Action Plan is delivered by an Urban Partnership Group hosted by REM. It is hugely supportive of the innovative work being carried out in Lincoln and elsewhere, and is seeking ways of incorporating learning into the evolving regional strategies.

The EHTF track record leads me to hope that a solid partnership can develop with the Regional Centres of Excellence.

Keith Laidler, Former Director of Development and Environmental Services for City of Lincoln Council and current Board Member of Regeneration East Midlands

Speakers' power point presentations are available to EHTF Members in the Members' section of the EHTF website. For non - Members a cd compilation can be obtained for a small fee (£10). Visit www.ehtf.org.uk or call 0117 975 0459.

Conference report

Despite the 'teething troubles' experienced, the restored Midland Hotel was an apt location for an event which explored the regeneration of resorts and the revitalisation of tourism in general.



Richard Simmons, Chief Executive of CABE, talked about the aim of 'The Sea Change' initiative and the £45m he had 'in his back pocket' to spend on resort regeneration. **Kurt Jansen**, of the Tourism Alliance, followed with information about measuring the economic impact of tourism. He said that tourism generates £86.5bn per annum but also had added benefits. **Peter Marsden**, Head of World Heritage at DCMS, explained the need to review the UK Tentative List and the costs and benefits of World Heritage Site Status. **Stuart Barrow** of VisitBritain, talked about "quality and quirkiness"; uniform national standards are vital to marketing but it is equally vital to emphasise your USPs, PoDs and ESP!

Phil Reddy of North West Development Agency said that the aim of the Agency was to increase competitive awareness, which was linked to the knowledge of what consumers are seeking, which would inform decisions on the retail, cultural and other experiential components that drive consumer choice.

Jim Trotman & Andrew Dobson of Lancaster City Council explained the changes which had taken place in the town in order to improve its economic and social well being and its aspirations for tourism within the wider setting of the natural and cultural heritage. **Peter Middleton**, of L&R Consulting Solutions talked about seven community led heritage regeneration projects including the Winter Gardens in Morecambe which had at one time played a significant part in the Town's attraction for residents and visitors, and the current project which was the result of a 20 year campaign to restore the building.

Delegates enjoyed guided walking tours to illustrate the local case studies followed by discussions which included the impact of tourism on residents, the role of the coaching industry, the importance of strong leadership, embracing the changes in tourism and the importance of 'place'.

Chair, **Brian Human**, made some concluding remarks:

- the importance of the role of Champions for projects;
- the hard costs and soft benefits which needed to be considered in the decision making process;
- high quality in all aspects must be the goal;
- celebrate the extra-ordinary – treasure what you have and share it;
- places are for people, whether they are residents or visitors.

He thanked everyone who had contributed to the conference, especially NWDA for their support and Lancaster City Council for their invitation.



Delegates on a tour of Morecambe (Tern Project sculpture and the newly refurbished Midland Hotel in the background).



Hello again!

My last contribution to this column was in October 2004, when I signed off with a message that "the strength of the Forum lies in the commitment of its members". That is as true today as it was then.

Now that I'm back for an unprecedented second term as Chair (until about October 2009), I will be helping the Director find a suitable individual to take on the role of Chair. The Constitution was amended last year to enable the Chair to be selected from a wider field than serving Local Authority officers. Therefore if you are interested in being considered as Chair, or know someone who might be, please let me or the Director know.

The influence of regulation on the built environment is currently going through yet another microscopic assessment. I recently attended a workshop to debate the questions posed in the 'Killian Pretty Review', many of which focus on "streamlining the system", widening permitted development rights and generally speeding the process up.

That's one side of the coin. On the other are the continuing concerns about unsympathetic development on the character and appearance of our historic places. Many of the concerns highlighted in the Forum's Publication 'Townscape in Trouble' (1992) are still relevant today, so much so that the theme of this year's Annual Conference in Lichfield is 'Townscape in Focus'. You will see from the programme that we have brought together some excellent speakers to cover a wide range of related topics around the Townscape theme. So please choose the EHTF Conference as the place to earn your CPD this year. Hope to see you in Lichfield.

Sam Howes

Sam Howes, Chair, EHTF

Anthony Short & Partners:
Mr Mark Mason
Partner
34 Church Street
Ashbourne
Derbyshire, DE6 1AE
T: 01335 340890
W: www.asap-architects.com

Beacon Planning Ltd:
Mr Andy Thompson
Director
PO Box 1121
Willingham
Cambridge
CB24 5WY
T: 01638 572078
W: www.beaconplanning.org.uk

DLG Architects:
Ms Jill Rayson
Partner
11-29 Fashion Street
London, E1 6PZ
T: 020 7426 3630
W: www.dlgarchitects.com

Heritage Initiative:
Mr Nathan Blanchard
Director
31 Station Road
Deganwy, CONWY
Gwynedd, LL31 9DF
T: 01492 583443
W: www.heritageinitiatives.co.uk

Manogue Architects:
Mr Laurence Manogue, Architect
10 College Avenue, Bangor,
Co Down, Northern Ireland
BT20 5HJ
T: 028 9146 9707
E: manogue@ireland.com

Ove Arup and Partners:
Mr Barry Hayes
Associate - Transport Consulting
St James's Buildings, Oxford St
Manchester, M1 6EL
T: 0161 228 2331
W: www.arup.com

Stratford Town Management Partnership:
Mr Gary Barnes
Chief Executive Officer
Winton House, Church Street
Stratford upon Avon, CV37 6HB
T: 01789 299011
W: www.stratfordtcm.co.uk

Bradford Metropolitan District Council:
Ms Christine Kerrin, Team Leader
Bradford Metropolitan District Council,
BMDC Design and Conservation
Floor 8, Jacobs Well
Bradford, BD1 5RW
T: 01274 434554
W: www.bradford.gov.uk

Barrow in Furness Borough Council:
Mr Stephen Solsky
Assistant Director (Regeneration)
Strategy Regeneration Dept
Barrow in Furness Borough Council, Town Hall
Duke Street
Barrow in Furness
Cumbria
LA14 2LD
T: 01229 876359
W: www.barrowbc.gov.uk

Mr Brian Human:
Former Chair of EHTF
Formerly Head of Policy &
Projects Cambridge City Council
E: brian.human@btinternet.com

Mr Colin Easton:
E: cgeaston@btinternet.com

Mr Garry Vidler:
Managing Surveyor - Contracting
E: garry.jules@btopenworld.com

RUDI:
Ms Carey Baker,
Managing Director
Quadrant House
250 Kennington Lane
London
SE11 5RD
T: 020 7091 7894
W: www.rudi.net

Reflections on Netherlands Study Tour

Inspiring architecture, innovative street design and civilized urban living were just three things that impressed everyone on the EHTF Study Tour of the Netherlands. Brian Smith (EAHTR) led 19 delegates on a packed three day (4 - 6 June) tour of Utrecht, Hertogenbosch, Dordrecht, Rotterdam and Delft.

Apart from the sheer pleasure of seeing the towns, the size of the conservation teams, the scope of their work and their involvement in the wider urban environment stood out. The Dutch have recognised the

need for historic environment training to equip fully those in the profession and they are recruiting staff into conservation from architecture and engineering. Management of the heritage is simply given a higher profile than in the UK.

The tour demonstrated an extraordinary commitment by all governing bodies to the restoration and regeneration of their urban areas. People truly care about marrying the past, present and future, about using the DNA of places to create a good quality of life for all.

Brian Human, Vice Chair, EHTF



Bicycle Band: Enjoying the public realm

Strategy Meeting and AGM

As part of the Annual Conference, Members are invited to participate in decisions about the Forum's future and the programme of activities for 2009.

Previous Member surveys have been very successful in determining the views across the broad range of Members and this will be repeated this summer, with the proposals which result being discussed at the Strategy Meeting on Wednesday 8 October, before being presented to the AGM for agreement.

Please see the Conference brochure for details or visit www.ehtf.org.uk.



Lichfield