

# News

December 2007

English Historic Towns Forum  
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

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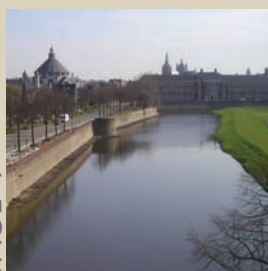
## Newcastle Conference reports

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## Upton Exemplar Project

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## Hertogenbosch - Study tour to Netherlands

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GILLESPIES



## Heritage Counts on Skills



It is vital to attract more young people  
into training for conservation craft skills.

Many more skilled craftspeople and professionals are needed to tackle the challenges faced by England's historic environment. That's the stark message from Heritage Counts 2007, the sixth annual survey of the historic environment from English Heritage.

Speaking at the report launch, Chief Executive Simon Thurley said, "Although those parts of the designated heritage that we can measure are in a better position in 2007 than 2002, this masks the true picture, which includes what is happening to undesignated and locally important heritage and

conservation areas". He added that skills were the key to tackling the main problems facing our heritage: dealing with difficult buildings at risk; erosion of the character of Conservation Areas; pressures of housing growth; housing market renewal; climate change and delivering heritage protection reform.

Good skills training schemes are already being run and funded by bodies like the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Trust. However, despite these efforts and action plans aplenty, not enough additional people are being trained - the number of apprentices and trainees starting in heritage related craft skills has fallen 13% in the last two years.

The challenges are not just in heritage craft skills, of course. Go round any new development and all too often the quality of buildings shows a skills gap in basic construction. Then there is a continuing shortage of experienced conservation officers to deal with proactive and regulatory work. Urban design is in the same parlous state.

Collectively these are the skills that are needed for the conservation and development of place making in our historic towns.

All credit then to Simon Thurley in announcing three initiatives to tackle the shortage: a new three-year graduate heritage training programme; support for training in local authorities to deal with the heritage protection review and additional resources for Inspired!, the campaign for historic churches.

That's welcome, but responding to the challenge in Heritage Counts will require local authorities and industry to invest directly in training. It's nice to get experienced staff off the recruitment shelf, but if the cupboard is bare it's time to plant some seeds and grow your own.

Brian Human, Chair, EHTF

## Chester wins Prestigious IRU City Trophy

The IRU have in recent years awarded a trophy to a European city that has recognised the benefit of coach tourism by implementing policies that favour coach tourism and investing in facilities for those coaches and their passengers.

In 2003 The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK nominated Rochester a city that already held their prestigious 'Coach Friendly Local Authority' award as their nomination and were pleased that they won it. As a result Rochester has seen coach tourist numbers increase by 15% with many more overseas visitors. The important benefits to operators, local business and tourists are clear for all to see.

CPT have over recent years been in meetings with The English Historic Towns Forum to agree a Code of

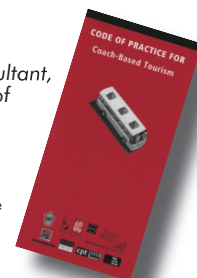
Practice for coach operators, local authorities, tour operators, group organisers and tourist attractions. This was compiled into a leaflet for all concerned. The English City of Chester, a member of EHTF, took notice of these guidelines and, recognising the wisdom of this advice, took the necessary action and in 2006 were also awarded the CPT Coach Friendly Local Authority. In fact they were so impressed with their new coach facilities at the Little Roodee where 4000 coaches visited last year and where £450,000 has recently been invested that they nominated them for the 2007 IRU award which they have deservedly won.

On presenting the award, to the Mayor of Chester, Jim Latham, at Busworld, Kortrijk on 18 October, Francesco Pacifico, President of the

IRU Passenger Transport Council, said; "For many years the City of Chester has been consistently implementing a long term coach management policy covering all aspects of coach tourism. This award acknowledges Chester's long term commitment to provide an efficient and business-friendly strategy, which should serve as a model for other major tourist destinations around the globe".

Bob Pilbeam,  
Coaching Consultant,  
Confederation of  
Passenger  
Transport UK

The 'Code of Practice  
for Coach-Based  
Tourism' leaflet is  
free to download  
from [www.ehff.org.uk](http://www.ehff.org.uk)





## Future of the EHTF Chair

A paper was presented to the AGM in Newcastle on 18 October, which had resulted from discussions at the Executive Committee; Brian Human (Chair) summarised this, commenting that the role of the Chair had become increasingly important as the organisation expanded but this was in parallel with the increasing pressures on local authority officers at all levels. Various options had been explored, with their financial implications. The conclusions and recommendations were discussed and the AGM agreed:

To change Section 5 of the Constitution to read:  
‘.. Officers of the Forum

will normally be full-time employed staff of local authority members. If the circumstances dictate, the AGM may elect as Chair/ Vice Chair an ex-local authority employee of appropriate experience and standing and not currently employed fulltime by a commercial organisation.

In the event that the Executive Committee considered that the Chair should receive an honorarium or expenses this will be included in the nomination details to be considered and voted on by the AGM.’

## Election of Executive Committee Members

At the AGM the following Members were re-elected:

### Representing the Local Authority Members:

Sharon Cosgrove	Oxford City Council
Bill Cotton	Swindon Borough Council
Chris Hargreaves	Birmingham City Council
Sam Howes	Chichester District Council
Brian Human	Cambridge City Council / EHTF Chair
Ian Poole	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
David Reed	Canterbury City Council
Rob Surl	Shropshire County Council
Richard Tuffrey	High Peak Borough Council

Ian Ayris, Newcastle City Council and John Wrightson, Worcester City Council were also proposed and elected.

### Representing Civic & Amenity Members:

Ian Heggie, Stratford on Avon Society & West MASA

### Representing the Partner/Sponsors:

Nick Hayward, RPS Planning and Development

### Co-opted Members:

Steve Bee	English Heritage
Brian Smith	EAHTR
Prue Smith	Project Consultant
Mike Loveday	HEART

David Jobbins (Christchurch Borough Council) and Tony Wyatt (Newcastle City Council) stood down, and Brian Human (Chair) thanked them for their support and wished them well in their new private sector posts.

Brian Human was re-elected as **Chair**, with Sam Howes and Chris Hargreaves as **Vice-Chairs**.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 31 October, the dates for meetings in 2008 were agreed for:

8 February  
16 May  
11 July  
September – tbc if required  
31 October

## Legal Status of the Forum

As agreed in the Business Plan, the Executive Committee had explored the need to move towards a more formal status. After exploration of the options, Brian Human (Chair) suggested that there was merit in becoming a company limited by guarantee and possibly in acquiring charity status, although the latter is less clear at this stage.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Executive Committee:

- takes the necessary steps for the Forum to become a company limited by guarantee;
- explores further the implications of becoming a charity and that charitable status is sought if it will benefit the Forum;
- and the Constitution is subsequently amended accordingly and ratified by the AGM in 2008.
- the Object as set out in the paper presented to the AGM be adopted for the Forum.

## Maximising the Value of Industrial Heritage in H Report of the Annual Conference

In his summary at the end of the conference, Brian Human (Chair) said that it had been wide-ranging and international, demonstrating that this was not a new idea but an ongoing tradition.

The conference began with networking opportunities on Wednesday, and the proceedings were opened on Thursday by Cllr Peter Arnold, Lord Mayor of Newcastle, after which Keith Falconer of English Heritage, looked at the value and relevance of heritage and the benefits of working with English Partnerships and the RDAs, as well as specialist developers, to make the most of opportunities for adventurous change.

Rob Colley, of Drivers Jonas, explained his contribution to ‘Heritage Works’ and the transition from the original economic use of a building to a new economic use, and the importance of measuring indirect value.

Michael Coupe, representing The Prince’s Regeneration Trust, looked at examples of adaptive reuse and the importance of

community engagement. This was a theme which was entertainingly demonstrated by Ian Ayris, of Newcastle City Council, with songs and images which portrayed the perceptions of industrial towns, which often needed to be overcome whilst retaining local distinctiveness and the pride of the people living and working with the buildings. Kate Edwards gave a detailed account of a local example of restoration, regeneration & reuse in the development of the Seven Stories national centre for children’s books. She explained the practical difficulties which had been overcome through passion and dedication and had achieved both the conservation and enhancement in the Ouseburn Valley.

In the afternoon, delegates were offered guided tours of the local projects, followed by facilitated discussions with the expert speakers. The conference dinner featured a local performance artist and poet, Ira Lightman, well known locally for his work at Spennymoor.

On Friday speakers from Europe and each country in the UK



Tyne and Millennium bridges, Newcastle



## Traditional Construction and Eco Towns: Upton Exemplar Project

The Prince's Foundation organised this event in Upton as part of their ongoing Poundbury seminar series. It was held on site in Upton on 4 September and featured speakers from The Prince's Foundation, English Partnerships, Alan Baxter Associates, Pell Frischman, Quartet Design and Cornhill Estates. The event also involved extensive walkabouts of the site and visits to some of the newly completed eco homes.

The site, originally farmland, was acquired by the local Development Corporation and was eventually passed

on to English Partnerships, the Government's national regeneration agency. In 1997 outline planning permission was granted for a 'traditional' town extension consisting of 1,020 homes, 700 sq m of retailing, a primary school and other local facilities. The scheme was due to go ahead when English Partnerships decided that the original scheme – for which outline planning permission had already been granted – was simply not good enough. Since they had already been working with The Prince's Foundation on a new approach to planning new developments called Enquiry by

Design, they decided to try it out in Upton.

The pros and cons of the project were discussed in some detail and are reported in the full article at [www.ehtf.org.uk](http://www.ehtf.org.uk)

Overall, this was an excellent event and everyone who attended went away filled with inspiring ideas that might be applied in their own home-town.

*Ian Heggie, Vice Chairman, Stratford-upon-Avon Society & West MASA*



Upton

## Historic Towns: Restoration, Regeneration & Reuse. Held in Newcastle 17-19 October 2007

offered examples supporting the theme of the conference. Following Brian Smith's presentation on the INHERIT project which connected Newcastle, Gdansk, Verona and Göteborg, Anders Svensson explained the conversion of an old industrial area in Göteborg. They talked about the key themes of the project: identity and diversity, partnership working and strategic thinking.

The vital cultural associations of the Stephenson Quarter, which had been teased out through extensive research and site analysis, were illustrated by Andy Roberts of Waring & Netts, Architects. He emphasised the importance of working from a strategic overview to the fine detail in order to achieve a successful project. The importance of respecting and recording the past was reiterated by Eleanor McAllister, from Clydebank Rebuilt. Although, she said, people did not want to return to it, but to 'reference heritage' whilst moving forward.

Judith Alfrey, representing CADW, talked about

the project to restore industrial workers' housing in South Wales, which offers a very direct route into understanding how people lived. She was able to admit that sometimes compromises had to be made but that local distinctiveness could still be maintained.

From Ireland, Paul McTernan of Colin Buchanan, made a passionate contribution looking at the Irish Industrial Heritage within the context of the new Ireland. Rapid growth and a booming economy had offered little protection for historic buildings, and the impact of short break tourism was driving a consumerist approach. The emergence of good practice could be seen in the Shannon Navigation case study, but many challenges remain.

Brian expressed his thanks to all of the speakers on a fascinating topic and offered those delegates staying on after lunch further guided tours of Newcastle highlights.

Speakers presentations are available at [www.ehtf.org.uk](http://www.ehtf.org.uk)



## 'Big Sheds' here to stay?

Urban designers have tended to ignore the 'non-places' of towns and cities; those spaces we find along busy roads on town fringes characterised by 'big sheds' and urban wasteland. These 'big sheds' are usually large, cheaply built structures with little architectural merit and scant regard to their context. Yet these are the places many people shop (in retail warehouses and supermarkets), or work (in business / industrial parks). These places are also gateways to many towns and cities, forming a key part of our first impression of the town or city. We have to accept that such places are here to stay, but I believe we can improve them through an urban designed approach tailored specifically to their requirements, and better integrate them into the fabric of our towns.

Some principles that might underlie this fresh approach could include:

- Consider context, existing character and heritage
- Ensure good building lay out in relation to surrounds
- Design buildings to maximise flexibility
- Encourage a mix of complementary uses at a range of scales
- Consider legibility and design for 'viewing at speed' (ie: from a passing vehicle) as well as 'on the ground'
- Carefully consider best arrangement of parking, loading and access
- Pay attention to architectural detailing and landscaping.

I believe urban designers have a role to play in 'big shed' areas and it is time to consider afresh principles for these developments.

*Richard Crappsley, Urban Designer, Colin Buchanan*



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**FURNITUBES**



I've always been very fond of Brighton with its unique combination of raffish bohemia, seaside jollity and Regency elegance, so it was good to see it heading the Forum for the Future's Sustainable Cities Index. Another EHTF member town, Bristol, came third, with Newcastle, Nottingham and Leicester hovering around mid table, but with Hull and Birmingham in the relegation zone.

The index compared the twenty largest cities in Britain against three sets of indicators – environmental impact, quality of life and future proofing - which incorporated thirteen individual measures. The average performance for the seven EHTF towns was almost exactly the same as the average for all twenty across the three individual indicator sets. Overall the best scores were associated with greater affluence, cities focused on service industries and the commitment of leadership and resources. Urban renaissance based on grand projects and iconic architecture did not deliver high sustainability scores.

It's always easy to pick holes in studies of this kind – they do rely on some rather sweeping assumptions. Looked at through EHTF glasses it is disappointing that the indicators did not include measures to reflect the positive contribution to sustainable communities of heritage, culture, design and built environment quality.

It would be interesting to see a modification of the technique applied to a wider range of historic towns and cities outside the top twenty biggest. The general findings of the study suggest that many historic towns would perform very well, especially if heritage and design factors were included. This would surely reinforce what we have often claimed – that our medium size and smaller historic towns are great places to live and work, places that can show the rest of the country what sustainable communities are like.

  
Brian Human, Chair, EHTF

Dear Members

York City Council are looking at an innovative housing scheme for around 100 homes. The Council is keen to introduce a degree of bound gravel surfacing to the carriageways which will be primarily for cars, although weekly refuse wagons and other serving traffic will also travel along the street.

If you have experience in the use of 'bound gravel' as a surfacing material for carriageways rather than in pedestrian areas please contact: richard.bogg@york.gov.uk richard.bogg@york.gov.uk

If you have a question that you would like to put to our members in the letters section of our newsletter or website please email ehtf@uwe.ac.uk

If you think of Worcester as a sleepy Severn-side county town, think again. Worcester's ambition is to become recognised as a first rank university and cathedral city. Place-shaping and balanced development is at the top of the City Council's leadership agenda. Effective inter-authority collaboration on emerging Local Development Frameworks and city centre masterplanning underpins our approach to harnessing accelerating growth and achieving the vision.

The Regional Spatial Strategy currently proposes up to 32,000 new houses for south Worcestershire by 2026 and, as a designated 'new growth point', Worcester is expected to deliver additional housing in the medium term. Given the city's tightly drawn administrative boundary and extensive flood plain, a significant proportion of its future housing will be developed in adjacent parts of Malvern Hills and Wychavon districts. Local debate about growth issues is increasing now that the councils have started an issues and opportunities consultation as they progress towards an LDF Joint Core Strategy.

The future city centre is already taking shape. Current headline developments include housing-led mixed use redevelopments underway on the former manufacturing site of Royal Worcester porcelain and at Diglis Basin, where the Worcester & Birmingham canal meets the River Severn. At the northern edge of the city centre the rapidly expanding University of Worcester has planning permission for a new city centre campus on the site of the old Royal Infirmary. On an adjacent site the university, County and City Councils are partners in an ambitious PFI scheme to create a combined academic and public library, customer services centre and local history resources facility.

Further potential and pressure for major development is beginning to materialise. The cumulative potential for transformational place-shaping over the next twenty years is probably greater than at any time since the railway first came to Worcester.



Sir Edward Elgar - Proud of it's past but moving foward

John Wrightson,  
Head of Urban Environment,  
Worcester City Council

## New Members

**Architectural History Practice**  
Mr Neil Burton, Director  
29 Mount Pleasant Villas  
London, N4 4HH  
T: 01483 208633  
W: www.architecturalhistory.co.uk

**Furnitubes International Ltd**  
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Marketing Manager  
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Tel: 020 8378 3202  
W: www.furnitubes.com

**Ryders Architecture Ltd**  
Mr Tony Wyatt  
Strategic Projects Group Leader  
Generator Studios  
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Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 2LA  
T: 0191 211 5624  
W: www.ryders.com

**Mr Edmund Simons**  
47 High Street  
Kniver, South Staffs  
DY7 6HE

## Study Tour to Netherlands

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

Details of the planned trip are being confirmed and members are invited to make an expression of interest by email in order that dates and bookings can be firmed up, after which a non-returnable deposit of £75 will be required.

Two dates are being considered: 4 – 6 June or 11 – 13 June 2008.

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.

Proposed visits and presentations on shared space and other topical issues include Utrecht, Hertogenbosch, Dordrecht, Delft and Rotterdam.

Bed and breakfast accommodation, private coach travel in the Netherlands, returning to Amsterdam on Friday late pm, with all bookings and administration will be in the region of £275 per person.

Please email ehtf@uwe.ac.uk subject: 'Netherlands' by 21 December 2007 to express an interest, we will then be in touch with further details.

**Other projects and events for the coming year** are currently being developed. We hope to be in a position to confirm the following in the near future; see the website for details.

**Cityscape 2008:** contributions to the conference and seminar programme, February 27 - 29.

**Retail Development:** launch of a guidance document and return visit to Princesshay, Exeter in March.

**Conservation Area Management Plans:** further training in partnership with UWE in April.

**Transport Management:** parking, road charging, Park & Ride, modal shift, ULTRA & PLT systems are all possible topics for exploration in Durham in May; including: -

**Streetscape:** launch of a guidance document on the theory and the practice with contributions from experts in the field.

**Tourism Management:** resort regeneration, sustainable tourism, the Cultural Olympics opportunity, Government support for tourism and more, to be explored at the newly restored Midland Hotel in Morecambe in June.

**'Townscape in Trouble':** have the conservation issues raised 15 years ago been adequately addressed and what are the new issues challenging our members? in October.