

May 2007

ENGLISH HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM  
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

PAGE 2



## 'Traffic management in historic towns'

PAGE 3



## 'Retail development in historic towns'

PAGE 4



## 'EHTF outreach'

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## Heritage Protection for the 21st Century

Six years after the appearance of 'The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future' - the Government's response to 'Power of Place' - comes the much anticipated DCMS/Welsh Assembly Government White Paper 'Heritage Protection for the 21st Century'.

It is based on the core principles of developing a more unified approach to the historic environment, providing an inclusive and accessible system of designation and control, putting the historic environment at the heart of an effective planning system and facilitating local management of the historic environment. Containing much that was trailed in consultation drafts - a unified system of designation, a more transparent and simpler consent system focused on local authorities, the introduction of Heritage Protection Agreements to better manage and streamline consent procedures on large or complex sites - the White Paper also introduces some welcome proposals: interim protection for buildings under consideration of listing; extending protection to items on local lists; and the potential merging of Conservation Area Consent with Planning Permission as a route to restoring pre-Shimizu levels of protection to buildings within Conservation Areas. Sadly, however, it is silent on resources, imprecise on how some proposals will manifest themselves, worrying in its intention to extend the use of Certificates of Immunity, and disappointing in the method it proposes for the protection of locally listed buildings.

The White Paper does look to empower Local Authorities, but this is largely about protection through the statutory process, rather than an increased ability to enhance our historic towns and cities through investment in public realm, in quality design in the highway and other pro-active aspects of heritage led regeneration. In this respect the impact of the proposed changes on the care and management of our historic towns will be limited.

Heralded by some as a once in a generation opportunity to shape the future of the historic

environment, and by others as an exercise in re-arranging the deck chairs, the truth lies inevitably somewhere in between. Clearly, however, anything which helps to raise the profile of the historic environment and establishes it as a key focus of local authority activity is to be welcomed.

Parliamentary time is being sought in the next year to take this forward to a 'Heritage Bill'. In the more immediate future, the White Paper contains three consultation questions relating to proposals on the merger of Conservation Area Consent and Planning Permission, the introduction of a more formal process of pre-application, and the extension of the use of Certificates of Immunity. EHTF Members are urged to respond to the consultation and to read not only the White Paper but the accompanying documents on listing selection criteria and the fascinating Atkins survey of heritage service delivery in local authorities... and, for good measure, to dip into the English Heritage 'Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance' consultation document which is also currently available for comment. These are busy times for the policy makers in the heritage sector!

The White Paper, accompanying documents and consultation questions can be downloaded from the DCMS website at [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk).

Tony Wyatt, Vice Chair, EHTF



Award winning 'New Walk', Leicester -  
part of the city centre regeneration scheme

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## Manual for Streets - a move in the right direction

**EHTF welcomes the new Manual for Streets published by the Department for Transport and Communities and Local Government on 29 March.**

At the EHTF Transport Innovation in Historic Towns' conference held in Shrewsbury on the same day as the launch, EHTF Chair, Brian Human, gave a response to the document. He said that it is extremely welcome guidance and that design and sense of place can now take their rightful place at the heart of how we plan our streets.



together on creative and imaginative street design that will improve the quality of life for everyone.

This is a move from an approach based on standards to one that encourages innovation and judgement, and it brings increased freedom and we must show that we are able to use that responsibly and develop the skills and cooperative working it will demand.

However, the Forum is concerned that the focus of the Manual is on new residential areas. The principles may be applied to other areas, but there is a need for clarity and direction on how we bring this more sensitive approach to high streets and other parts of our towns and cities. It is vital that some of the innovations that have dealt with movement, as well as place, in the heart of historic towns like Shrewsbury and Oswestry are given more prominence by the DfT and CLG and the principles brought into mainstream work.

EHTF is especially pleased to see:

- The principle of reducing the dominance of the motor car
- The recognition of the street as a 'place' and not just as a conduit for traffic
- A design led approach
- The development of a 'Quality Audit', which requires a full range of issues to be addressed in assessing road schemes and will not be dominated by the safety audit
- Pedestrians and cyclists heading the user hierarchy
- The reduction in signs and markings to the minimum
- Reductions in the use of guard rails
- Strong support for Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS)

This gives planners, urban designers, highway engineers and conservation officers a new mandate to work

## New Members

### Mouchel Parkman

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### Mark Robinson

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## 'Transport innovation in historic towns' Conference report

Our marriage to the car has had increasing impact on historic towns over the past four decades and innovation in transport management has been at the heart of the work of EHTF since its earliest days.

The conference held on 29 March in Shrewsbury – the location of one of the original Historic Core Zones projects in 1998 – gave delegates the opportunity to explore some of the innovative ideas which have been pioneered by EHTF member authorities and how they are using the Government's 'Transport Innovation Fund' (TIF) to implement strategies for improvement, not only to traffic management, but to the urban environment in which we live, work and play.

Three TIF schemes, in Shropshire, Cambridgeshire and Durham, were presented, looking at controversial road charging options, and detailed case studies of the work carried out in Ludlow and Oswestry to manage traffic at the same time as achieving improvements to the public realm. As the launch in London of the 'Manual

for Streets' coincided with this event, the Chair of EHTF, Brian Human, was able (with the aid of technology and some nifty speed reading!) to give an immediate response to the document which is summarised herein. Visit [www.ehtf.org.uk](http://www.ehtf.org.uk) for the full version.

Copies of the presentations can be obtained by contacting EHTF on [ehft@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:ehft@uwe.ac.uk) or 0117 975 0459. Visit [www.ehtf.org.uk](http://www.ehtf.org.uk) for the full conference report.



Shrewsbury centre

## Streetscape in historic towns - we're getting there!

The state of the streetscape is at last beginning to rise up the agendas of politicians and practitioners. After many years of projects and campaigns, together with other organisations, EHTF continues to pursue this topic – looking at traffic management and the public realm with connectivity. This not only enhances the historic built environment, but there is a growing body of evidence to support the value – in economic and other terms – of investment in the public realm which contributes to regeneration and sustainability.

A workshop was held in January, bringing together experts in the field to identify the guidance already available and what more might be required by EHTF Members to help them to achieve improvements in streetscape management.

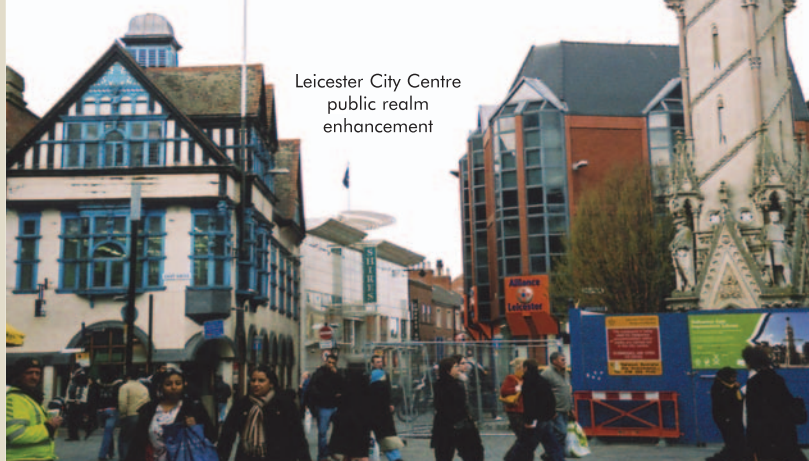
**A conference is planned for 5 July to disseminate this information and research.**

It will be held in Leicester where an ambitious City Centre Public Realm Strategy is in place, looking at all aspects of the City regeneration through coordinated improvements to the public realm.

The watch words are high quality and simplicity - thereby accommodating the diverse population of the City, reducing maintenance costs and ensuring durability – both physically and strategically.

The conference will bring together CABE, English Heritage – 'Streets for All', HEART, and the recent 'Manual for Streets', in order to look at the theories and the practice, with a view to compiling practical guidance for EHTF Members.

Details will be published soon at [www.ehtf.org.uk](http://www.ehtf.org.uk).



Leicester City Centre public realm enhancement



## Managing retail development in historic towns

Since the early 1990s EHTF has produced a series of guidance documents relating to good practice in retail development. The topic continues to be one of significance to our Members and following the publication of 'Retail Development on Historic Areas' in partnership with English Heritage in December 2005, a workshop was held, bringing together key practitioners, in order to explore further guidance which might help Members and others in their decision making.

**To bring together this expertise and to look in detail at a case study, a conference will take place in Bristol on 8 June.**

The Broadmead redevelopment scheme is part of the five year City-wide strategy and area action plan, in an area vital to the reconnection of neighbourhoods to the east, back to the centre. The Bristol Alliance (a partnership between Land Securities plc and Hammerson) and Bristol City Council can offer detailed information about the scheme, as well as a bird's eye view from the 16th floor marketing suite in the adjacent Castlemead building.

Many of the City's recent enhancement schemes, including the harbourside development, the Legible City initiative, Millennium Square, Temple Quay and the spectacular Valentine and Pero's bridges will be of interest to practitioners looking for examples of contemporary design in an historic context.

Details of the conference are available at [www.ehtf.org.uk](http://www.ehtf.org.uk).

## Bristol retail development

"Cabot Circus is a 1.5 million square foot mixed use development in Bristol City Centre. It is the biggest and most exciting development ever seen in the West of England.

Cabot Circus is being developed by Bristol Alliance, a joint venture between Land Securities plc and Hammerson. It is at the forefront of the new breed of retail-led schemes. Instead of offering the predictable fare of anodyne shopping malls, Cabot Circus is bringing the re-development of a series of blocks in Bristol City Centre, each with different architecture, and fronting onto new pedestrian streets which are open to the fresh air.

At high level the blocks, each designed by a different architect, are loosely connected by a floating

glass roof which protects visitors to some parts of the scheme from the worst of the weather.

The Bristol Alliance has also worked hard to create exciting and interesting spaces between the buildings. George Ferguson, past President of the RIBA, and a local to Bristol, applauded this achievement. From the Circus itself, underneath the glazed roof, and surrounded by grand buildings housing the new Department Store and 3000 seat cinema, the other end of the scheme has an open intimate space around Quaker's Friars with its scheduled ancient monument; across the scheme, the variety of streets will bring back life and feel to the public spaces of Bristol City Centre."

Steve Wehrle, Bristol Alliance



Designer's impression of Quaker's Friars

## FEATURE TOWN: Bristol

'Bristol has always had a very strong sense of varied and distinctive communities and places across the city. It is important that whether people live, work, shop, be entertained or simply relax in the City Centre, that they feel a sense of identity and belonging, as well as being in a place which feels special – this is what we must aim to capture in the plans and strategies for directing change'.

Bristol City Centre strategy and area action plan 2005 – 2010.

This vibrant city will be explored as part of the EHTF conference examining retail development in historic towns on 8th June.



Broadmead, Bristol

## The retail dividend - can historic towns take advantage of the current boom in retail led regeneration?

"Now is the time for historic towns to take a proactive approach to improving their retail offer. Figures released by BCSC in April show that there are 4,700,000 sq m of retail floorspace in the pipeline but a large percentage of this is in major developments in the top 100 towns and cities.

More than ever, locations are competing to differentiate themselves and offer shoppers an enjoyable experience. Retail is the focus of these new developments but, different from previous decades, shopping is being designed with a new enthusiasm for quality of design, is embracing the concept of mixed uses and is providing the economic driver of deliverability and sustainability.

The problem with this is that smaller, historic locations, by standing still will

be left behind and miss out on this opportunity. The economic success of our historic towns is fundamental to their long term performance and survival.

The new approach to design and layout of shopping centres is to consider a better integrated solution so that the proposed development not only supports itself but recognises that in smaller locations it is the performance of the whole town that is the key attractor. In doing this we must understand what retailers need – in coping with cost inflation and price deflation they need efficient and bigger floorplates. They cannot compromise on this as they need to compete and will simply go to other towns.

Local Authorities can deliver this by championing high quality design and

supporting CPO processes to ensure the right projects are taken forward. What shoppers want from towns is the same as they get from shopping centres – good access, cleanliness, security and a managed and varied shopping offer. In this regard significant steps are being taken to encourage independent traders as part of a managed tenant mix in an increasing number of locations.

Our historic towns possess one of the key requisites for future successful town centres – 'character'. A positive approach to new retail facilities, building on this, will give them an economic future too."

Andrew Ogg, Managing Director of architects Leslie Jones and Past President of the British Council of Shopping Centres.

The delivery of the project depended upon both partners appreciating the 'bigger picture', and on occasions, compromises had to be made provided they did not impact upon key objectives. The result is a fully let scheme which has helped to maintain Canterbury's position in the regional shopping hierarchy and one which has already won several awards."

Kim Bennett  
Head of Development Services  
Canterbury City Council



Whitefriars, Canterbury

## Musing from the Chair

What do people see in their mind's eye when they hear the phrase 'English Historic Towns'? I can't be sure, but I would guess that pictures of cathedrals, castles, classical terraces and black and white flash across the screen of their mental PowerPoint. What they don't see, perhaps, are people going about their daily business.

At Cityscape, Professor George Hazel, a transport planner, stressed that cities are for people; places where people exchange goods, ideas and experiences. Anna Coote, from the Healthcare Commission put the health and well being of people at the heart of sustainable development and stressed the need to involve local people in decision making. Landscape architect Nigel Thorne described sustainable communities as inclusive places where people want to live and work and, crucially, where people want to stay.

I took the same message from the meeting of the Heritage Forum in March. Delegates welcomed the White Paper on Heritage Protection for the 21st Century for the clarity about heritage protection it should bring to non professionals. David Lammy, Minister for Culture, emphasised the importance of inclusiveness and community engagement. Gregor Hutcheson, National Trust, speaking about the History Matters initiative, stressed the need to engage people in the history-heritage-culture debate and challenged conservation professionals to be open and embracing as well as professional and expert.

The Forum has never been an organisation that cares about only the fabric: its work on design, conservation, tourism, transport, retailing and the public realm demonstrate a commitment to communities where people do indeed want to live, work and stay. That involves working with those communities.

It also requires leadership. Andy Kershaw, recently on the fabled Desert Island playing his discs quoted a BBC music producer as saying, 'We're not here to give people what they want; we're here to give them what they didn't know they wanted'. We too should be in the business of helping people to higher aspirations for their towns and cities.

Brian Human  
Chair, EHTF

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Forthcoming events hosted and supported by EHTF

- 17/18 May Irish Walled Towns Network conference  
Youghal, County Cork
- 7/8 June 'Retail development in historic town centre and city centres:  
Why? and How?' - Bristol
- 13 June 'The visitor economy and the public realm' - London
- 28 June EHTF 20th Anniversary Celebration Dinner - London
- 5 July 'Streetscape in historic towns – the theory and the  
implementation' - Leiceister
- 17-19 October Annual Conference 'The value of industrial heritage'  
Newcastle

For details please see [www.ehtf.org.uk](http://www.ehtf.org.uk) or call 0117 975 0459

## Cityscape 2007

EHTF was asked to partner this event and spent over a year in consultation with the organisers IBE Ltd, to encourage more interaction at the event between public and private sector practitioners.



EHTF stand at Cityscape

I was surprised and delighted by the amount of attention generated by the EHTF stand, which was shared by sponsor/partners Land Securities plc and RPS Planning, Transport & Environment. With colleagues, we were kept constantly busy answering queries about our work and offers to work with us in the future. It is our aim to translate these contacts into new members and partners for projects now and in the future.

The business card competition was won by Mouchel Parkman, who have free Corporate Membership for one year.

The Reception held on the evening of 28 February to begin the 20th Anniversary celebrations was very well attended and it was good to see many old friends as well as to make new acquaintances. The

highlight of this event was the presentation, by the organisers IBE, of a large cake adorned with the EHTF logo, which was cut and distributed with great ceremony!

Sponsor/partners Gillespies and Colin Buchanan were also represented at the exhibition with independent stands.

As part of the whole event EHTF was pleased to Chair a conference on 'Designing & Planning for Sustainable Communities' and to hold its own seminar entitled 'Historic Towns: maintaining identity and place' which offered the opportunity to showcase some of the work we are currently engaged in.

We have already been asked to participate next year, but this will of course be decided after an analysis of the benefits of the additional exposure.

**My thanks go to everyone who helped to support this event, both on and off the stand.**  
Visit [www.ehtf.org.uk](http://www.ehtf.org.uk) for a full report of the Seminar. - Chris Winter, Director, EHTF

## EHTF across the borders

As I reported some time ago, after a successful liaison with colleagues in Ireland, a reciprocal membership agreement between the Irish Walled Towns Network and EHTF has been established in order to facilitate further exchange of information and good practice.

EHTF has now reached out north of the border with a series of meetings on 15 and 16 March with colleagues working in the heritage sector in Scotland. Whilst visiting Glasgow and Edinburgh I was able to begin to see how the historic buildings and environment in Scotland are protected and enhanced, and to discuss ways in which we might share experiences.

There are several organisations and institutions with responsibility for the various aspects of heritage, although there is not currently an organisation which corresponds to EHTF, that is, a point at which all the disciplines and sectors come together.

Everyone I spoke to was enthusiastic about working more closely with us and the Annual Conference, to be held in Newcastle in October looking at the value of the industrial heritage, will offer an opportunity for some meaningful exchanges. - Chris Winter, Director, EHTF



Glasgow  
Cathedral



Edinburgh Holyrood  
Parliament Building