

News

April 2008

English Historic Towns Forum
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns

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From congestion
charging...

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..to chariot racing

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2nd event of 2008

Transport: Only Connect

Excepting some leisure trips, travel is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Few people get any pleasure from the daily commute crawling to work. The inconvenient necessity of travel now results in almost any debate about design, planning and place being dominated by traffic and transport. But talk has not led to action and Britain suffers the worst congestion in Europe.

The evidence of many historic towns, savaged by inner relief roads and gyratories, shows the folly of trying to build our way out of the problem. Moreover, given the way in which this gives priority to the car, it is increasingly seen as myopic in the extreme: we cannot rely on continued carbon fuel dependent personalised travel.

We live in an increasingly interconnected society and we need to develop a mindset that addresses the challenges sustainably through connectivity, rather than simply through travel and transport. Moving towards connectivity requires a vision of how things might be better, it requires a respect for place and an integration of policies and actions, and it requires leadership and new behaviours. The connectivity mindset must be adopted by politicians, planners and developers alike.

And by the public, us, too! The old behaviours will not suffice: we all need to make, and crucially be given the chance to make, smarter choices and make them with confidence. People need to know that cycling is safe, walking is a pleasure, buses are reliable and comfortable and the boss will be happy when we are working from home.

Brian Human, Chair, EHTF

John Lewis Partnership - EHTF's new Partner



We were delighted to become the Forum's newest Partner in January this year. As a retailer with a strong focus on town centres, we fully support the objectives of the Forum in seeking to revitalise urban centres, contribute to regeneration and preserve the built heritage. Good, appropriate design and investment in the public realm are priorities in all our development plans, as vital elements of creating good 'places' which help to bolster community cohesion and raise civic pride. We look forward to working with other Partners and Members of the Forum.

*Charlotte Cool, Head of Public Affairs,
John Lewis Partnership*

EHTF is supported by

LandSecurities



GILLESPIES



John Lewis Partnership

FOCUS ON RETAIL

Focus on Retail was launched at the Exeter Conference on 26 March.

Copies can be obtained from
EHTF
PO Box 22
Bristol
BS16 1RZ
or visit
www.ehff.org.uk



Don't forget the photo completion!

The deadline for entries is 30 June, so if you can capture, in an image, the unique selling point of your town or city, send a photo – hard copy or electronically – which you think epitomises the character and local identity and you could win a weekend for two, sponsored by Urban Splash, at the newly refurbished Midland Hotel in Morecambe, one of England's fastest growing – regenerated – seaside resorts.

The 12 winning entries will also be featured on the EHTF 2009 calendar.

For details of how to enter see www.ehff.org.uk

New Members

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Parking – the challenges

With over 30m cars registered for use in the UK, proper and effective management of our streets and especially parking is absolutely necessary for our towns and cities.

It is now more widely appreciated that traffic engineering and parking controls can be applied in a manner much more in keeping and more closely aligned to the unique characteristics of the locality they are intended to serve and genuinely enhance the surroundings.

People involved in the design of what is now called 'public realm' or delivering the renaissance of our towns and cities must strive to provide traffic and parking controls which balance the needs for accessibility to these places with the requirement to preserve or indeed restore the original characteristics that attracted the journey in the first place!

Fortunately the art of parking design and management is alive and well in many places and there are some fine examples of best practice in the application of proper and effective parking facilities which support the environment in which they exist or are designed to cater for the particular needs of tourism and visitors and yet preserve the nature of their surroundings.

Extract from an article by Kelvin Reynolds, Director of Technical Services, British Parking Association for the 'Manual for Historic Streets' EHTF 2008

Manual for Historic Streets to be launched on 30 April in Durham

The Forum's second publication of the year will be launched at the dinner prior to a conference looking at many aspects of transport in historic towns – including road charging.

EHTF welcomed the Department for Transport's publication 'Manual for Streets' as a move towards reducing street clutter and unnecessary signage. However, its application was mainly for residential streets and, in the opinion of the Forum, this should be extended to high streets and other streets – especially in historic areas. Our response was to bring together experts and practitioners to offer guidance in

all aspects of the management of traffic and streets to produce a document which looks in depth at the theory and the practice.

The conference - '**Designing for movement: Transport and regeneration in historic towns**' - will look at the strategic approach to traffic management, congestion charging, economic development and tourism issues related to transport, with workshops on coach parking, park & ride, parking, bus management, walking and cycling strategies and car free cities – lessons from Europe.

For details of the document and the conference visit www.ehtf.org.uk

One of the main pressures on historic towns is managing vehicles. Much of the traffic can come from elsewhere, from visitors and others attracted to the town. But much is still caused by local traffic – with over half of vehicles in one study of three English towns on journeys of less than three miles.

Encouraging walking can reduce these car journeys and longer distance car journeys can be reduced through improving public transport. Improving conditions for walking can help with these longer journeys too as it is an important part of public transport journeys.

But, as with other transport modes, encouraging walking needs a more strategic approach and a walking strategy (as part of local transport plans) is needed. These should include:

- the policy context
- objectives of the strategy
- analysis of the problems and opportunities to encourage more walking
- long-term strategy to achieve those objectives
- an implementation programme, and
- targets and monitoring to assess success.

Achieving more walking will inevitably need to address a broad range of issues but strategies need to focus on key levers for change. These can include maintenance, developing a network of safe attractive walking routes (including signage, wayfinding and safe crossings) and ways to promote walking. The involvement of key partners is essential, especially where responsibilities cross over in areas with two tier local authorities.

*Richard Hebditch,
Policy & Campaign Manager,
Living Streets*



Encouraging walking can reduce car journeys

Transport developments in Durham



Durham was the first City in the UK to introduce a road charging scheme

Travel Study undertaken by Colin Buchanan in 1997. These have included the completion of an integrated package of measures including a comprehensive controlled parking zone, the first road charging scheme to be introduced in the UK and the development of three extremely

Durham City Vision is an ambitious partnership project aimed at raising the economic competitiveness and potential of the City as a key driver for regional wealth creation. As part of the aims of '2020 Vision', transport developments are focused on building upon the successful demand management measures that have already been introduced by the County Council based largely on the recommendations of the Durham

successful 'state of the art' park and ride sites in 2006 at a cost of £10m. Complementary cycling and pedestrian facilities are also an essential part of the package.

The road charging scheme continues to reduce traffic significantly in the historic core of the City, including the World Heritage Site. The park and ride scheme is attracting an increasing proportion of

Chariots of tyre

Chester is a City that you might associate more with chariots than a burgeoning coach trade.

Originally a Roman fortress with four main streets, it later adopted a mediaeval street pattern to create a traffic management challenge for the 21st century.

However, history has not stopped Chester from winning a host of awards over the past 12 months from the coach industry, culminating in the prestigious International Road Transport Union European trophy.

Ten years ago the likelihood of Chester achieving such accolades from the coaching world was highly unlikely. The turnaround was prompted by the determination of the City Council tourism team to reverse a decline in coach arrivals by managing its facilities more proactively, and making improvements whenever opportunities and funding arose.

Now Chester enjoys a fine reputation as a City that welcomes the coach trade, built on investment in facilities, a regular series of familiarisation visits and positive, proactive PR

with the coach operators. The future is looking much brighter, especially in a climate where the emphasis is on destinations encouraging eco-friendly travel as the preferred means of communication.

Want to know more? Gerald Tattum explains how Chester went from zero to hero at the EHTF conference in Durham on 1 May.

Gerald Tattum, Marketing Manager, Chester City Council



Chester chariot racing

Problems with pricing – why Shrewsbury needs a different solution

Eyebrows were raised when, in 2006, Shropshire County Council accepted the Department of Transport's offer to part-fund a study of road pricing in Shrewsbury. It was a courageous step, as nobody knew if it would work in a small historic town.

The DfT hoped for a 'quick win', paving the way for charging schemes in larger cities. Shropshire wanted to build on the successful Historic Core Zones project, by further reducing traffic in the town centre.

Working with consultants Mouchel, plans were developed including road pricing, a new relief road and an improved public transport system.

The study forecast big traffic reductions – more than with just a relief road – with more people using public transport. The package showed a good economic return. Whilst public support was hardly enthusiastic, there was an opportunity to 'sell' the scheme on its merits.

The fly in the ointment was cash flow. Due to diseconomies of scale, projected operating costs were higher than expected and there was a risk that the income from pricing might not cover the cost of public transport improvements.

In December 2008 the Council reluctantly concluded that road pricing was not deliverable in Shrewsbury.

Rob Surl, Head of Special Projects, Shropshire County Council



Environmental improvements

m City

commuters, shoppers and tourists who would otherwise have parked in the City centre, enabling more short stay City centre facilities to be provided to support both retail and tourist development.

With the assistance of the Government's Transport Innovation Fund, the County Council is leading a comprehensive transportation study to model future traffic congestion and the implications for the future vitality and viability of the City. Options for further demand management will be considered by the Highways Team in conjunction with Members and the Vision partners, including a possible extension of road charging and the need for additional transport infrastructure, together with further park and ride facilities and other public transport improvements.

Roger Elphick, OBE, Head of Highway Management, Durham County Council

The bus is "the way to go"

Oxford Bus Company (OBC) is at the forefront of bus-based public transport in the UK. It operates attractive, high frequency services within one of the most historically sensitive environments in the country and, through innovation and partnership, has delivered real benefits to users of the City. Approximately half the people using the City centre now get there by public transport.

But why does the company invest in vehicles which are up to 20% more expensive than a standard bus? Part of the answer lies in social responsibility and part in the expectations of the market and a partnering approach to business.

Air quality is high on the agenda in Oxford. OBC has helped by providing services which replace many thousands of car movements, but the company recognises that it must itself minimise its impact whilst carrying on its normal business. All vehicles are fitted with emission control devices and there are now 48 buses and coaches to Euro 5 standard, the largest such fleet in the UK.

Thirty five years ago, OBC began a partnership with the far-sighted Local Authorities to control traffic in the central area: this led directly to the first Park & Ride scheme, and now the bus is "the way to go" for many in Oxford. OBC has adopted a business model based on a high quality product – buses with additional leg room, air conditioning, easy access, smartcard ticketing – whilst the City and County Councils have concentrated on creating and maintaining an environment in which commercial bus services can flourish. The end

product is there for all to see.

Louisa Weeks, General Manager, Oxford Bus Company



The Oxford Bus Company operates high frequency services within an historically sensitive environment

Musing From the Chair

'Charles does it again: skyscraper boom a rash of carbuncles, he tells architects.' So shouted the headline in the Guardian report on the 'New Buildings in Old Places' seminar held in St James's Palace on 31 January. Eye-catching stuff on an important matter, but to the exclusion of a lot of thoughtful consideration of how we deal with building the new among the old.

Prince Charles talked of building a heritage for tomorrow, building beautifully in a modern way, using better design to improve lives and offering training that 'encourages young people to put their souls into a place'. He asked if there was a case for a 'Slow Architecture' movement.

At the Seminar, Hank Dittmar called for a move from building for fashion to building for nature; and Baroness Andrews wanted smarter, sustainable homes to last a lifetime. Simon Thurley challenged developers to think long term and promised new tools in the search for a common language to analyse context. Alan Baxter stressed the link between lifestyle and sustainability; and Trevor Osborne talked about making and managing places.

It was a day about a shared vision, about partnership, about 'valuing sustainable urbanism'. What a pity the headline emphasised only the conflict.

Brian Human, Chair, EHTF

How to care for places and people ...

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation - the UK's professional body for historic environment conservation specialists - is undertaking a consultation on conservation skills and services, particularly exploring local planning authority services. Called 'How to care for places and people: Towards a common standard in historic environment conservation services and skills', it brings together activities, skills sets, local authority corporate structures and outputs, and potential impacts from forthcoming changes in legislation. The IHBC is especially keen to receive responses from all areas of local authority involvement in the historic environment.

The consultation runs until 2 May 2008.

For details visit: www.ihbc.org.uk.

Consultation document:

www.ihbc.org.uk/news/docs/people_place_consult.pdf

Responses and opinions should be sent to:

skillsconsultation@ihbc.org.uk

EHTF events



Durham

Durham	30 April	Dinner to launch the 'Manual for Historic Streets'
Durham	01 May	'Designing for movement: Transport and regeneration in historic towns'
Morecambe	18 - 19 June	'Exploration of tourism in the 21st Century'
Lichfield	08 - 10 Oct	Annual Conference including: review of 'Townscape in Trouble', conservation management and the skills agenda; presentation of the 'USP of historic towns' photo awards.

Retail development in historic towns & cities case study: Princesshay, Exeter



The first Forum event of 2008 began with the launch of 'Focus on Retail', the latest in the series of guidance documents for practitioners. This was launched by John Thompson, Chair of the Academy of Urbanism, at a dinner also attended by the Lord Mayor of Exeter. This was followed the next day by a tour of the new Princesshay retail development at the heart of the historic City.

Representatives from the project stakeholders - Exeter City Council, Land Securities, English Heritage and WSP - then gave accounts of the scheme from their perspective, with helpful lessons for delegates who might be planning retail development in their towns.

'Focus on Retail' is available from the EHTF office and a full report of the conference with speakers' presentations will be available on www.ehtf.org.uk

Princesshay, Exeter

Cityscape 2008



Brian Human, Chair of EHTF, gave a presentation to the seminar on sustainable transport at the Cityscape event at Earl's Court on 27 February

Brian Human, Chair, EHTF

EHTF book review

Managing Built Heritage: The Role of Cultural Significance
Derek Worthing & Stephen Bond, Blackwell Publishing Ltd 2007

A clear understanding of what makes a place significant, and the potential vulnerability of that significance is key to the effective management of the built cultural heritage. 'Managing Built Heritage' examines the management of the built cultural heritage through the use of the concept of cultural significance, how this is assessed and how it can inform management strategies and processes, particularly at times of change. Whilst the approach is both analytical and reflective, the book uses examples from all over the world to illustrate particular issues, look at current approaches and draw out best practice for policies and procedures to ensure effective management. This book will be useful for both specialists in built cultural heritage and managers of portfolios that include listed buildings or buildings in conservation areas.

Prue Smith, EHTF Executive Member, and Consultant



EHTF Director becomes an "Academician"

Chris Winter, Director of EHTF, has been invited to join the growing number of Academicians, by John Thompson, the Chair of the Academy of Urbanism. This formalises the partnership between the organisations which share many aims and objectives.

EHTF has been asked to invite its Members to take part in the new initiative - UniverCities - which will be launched at the Founder Congress to be held in Sheffield on 14 -16 May.

"UniverCities will bring together Cities, Towns, Neighbourhoods, Streets and Places from across Great Britain and Ireland to develop shared methodologies that will provide new insights into underlying social, cultural and environmental orders."

To attend the congress please contact sr@academyofurbanism.org.uk



John Thompson,
Chair, Academy
of Urbanism



Fusion - a Grade II listed chapel wrapped by contemporary office space
Developed by Buccleuch Property, designed by Ryder Architecture

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