



LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 107 November 2011

Special General Meeting and Christmas Social, Wednesday, 14th December

As reported in the September newsletter, there will be a short Special General Meeting on Wednesday 14th December at the start of the Christmas Social evening. A formal notification is enclosed with this newsletter.

Two minor amendments to the constitution are proposed, one concerning the Society's accounts and the other about a repository for the Society's records should the Society cease to exist.

The reason for dealing with these amendments at a Special General Meeting rather than waiting for the Annual General Meeting, is that we would like, if possible, to avoid the expense of having the 2011-12 accounts formally audited. At the 2011 AGM the Treasurer explained that there is no legal requirement for societies with a turnover of under £10k p.a. to have their accounts formally audited, though they must be available for inspection. Our Society has a turnover of approximately £2k p.a. The 2011 accounts were professionally inspected for no fee but this cannot be repeated and to have accounts professionally audited costs in the region of £750. As the accounts need to be presented at the AGM we are proposing to amend the phrase "audited accounts" to "accounts scrutinised and approved by the Committee" at this Special meeting, so that, if approved, the new arrangements can be implemented before the 2012 AGM in June, avoiding the need for the expense of a formal audit procedure.

The second amendment is a "tidying up" operation, reflecting that the Civic Trust (originally proposed to receive the Society's archives, if necessary), no longer exists. It is merely a matter of convenience to do this at the Special General Meeting.

We appreciate that not all members attend the Christmas Social evening so we would encourage members to express their views (for or against the

proposals) by contacting the Secretary, Winnie Clark (details on notification sheet), or via the Society's website (www.lancastercivicsociety.org) where the constitution is also available. Printed copies of the constitution and the appropriate extracts will be available at the door on 14th December.

Civic Voice Event

Civic Voice (our national organisation) is hosting a networking event entitled "Our Common Voice" in Preston, on Wednesday 25th January, 10am-4pm. Griff Rhys Jones (President of Civic Voice) will be one of the speakers. If you are interested in attending, or would like further details, please contact Roger Frankland (tel 01524 541156) or Winnie Clark (01524 33411).

All Party Parliamentary Group on Civic Societies

Local MP Eric Ollerenshaw has joined the All Party Parliamentary Group on Civic Societies, recently established by Laura Sandys, daughter of the Civic Trust's founder Duncan Sandys. This Group should provide a focus for discussion and debate and should raise the profile, and hopefully the influence, of the civic society movement nationwide. Tony Burton, Director of Civic Voice and Freddie Gick, Deputy Chair of the organisation, addressed the first meeting of the Group held on 1st November.

2012 Ugly Walk

The 2012 Ugly Walk will be on **Sunday 8th January** and will look at the Aldcliffe area of Lancaster. It will be led by Roger Frankland.

Please meet at **Penny Street Bridge at 10am** and wear warm clothing and suitable footwear.

Report on October meeting

Dr John Dyer, retired Medical Officer of Health for Lancaster, opened the Society's 2011-12 session with a presentation on "Two epidemics". The epidemics of the title were an outbreak of typhoid in Galgate in 1881 and of legionella (Legionnaires disease) at Heysham Power Station a century later. The Galgate typhoid epidemic was investigated by Lancaster's first Medical Officer of Health and it fell to Dr Dyer, as the District's fifth Medical Officer of Health, to investigate the legionella outbreak at Heysham in 1981.

In 1881 the link between bacteria and illness had not yet been established and it was still believed that foul air or "miasma" was the cause of infection. The then Medical Officer of Health conducted a thorough investigation of the typhoid cases in Galgate, noting the proximity of privies, cess pits and pig sties to the wells which supplied the village with water and the houses where typhoid had occurred. He ordered a well near Makinson's Row to be closed and this stopped the outbreak.

In 1981 a worker at Heysham Power Station died from what was subsequently discovered to be Legionnaires disease. Dr Dyer described the painstaking investigative process undertaken to discover the source of the infection which was eventually traced to an old water-cooling tower. It was a most informative and thought-provoking talk, providing the new season with an excellent start.

Planning Matters

One of the Society's remits is to comment on planning applications of interest or concern. A Planning Group meets to consider relevant applications and formulate a response on behalf of the Society. Given the size of the Society's membership there will be many differing views and we are conscious that the Society's response may be at variance with the opinions of some members. Given the time constraints (for most applications comments need to be made within 3 weeks) extensive consultation is not feasible. We therefore encourage members to submit personal responses to applications of interest and copy them to us (email Anne Stelfox at r.jw.stelfox@virgin.net). These will be considered if the Group also debates the application. If you are interested in planning issues please consider joining the Planning Group - new members are always welcome (contact Anne Stelfox as above or via tel. 01524 823299).

The following representations have recently been submitted to the City Council:

**Application number 11/00852/FUL
Lancaster Girls' Grammar School, Regent Street,
Lancaster
VIth form teaching block with ancillary works**

The proposed building would have an appropriate scale for its prominent site on Queen Street and has been sensitively designed to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in which it would be located. The Civic Society has no concerns with the proposed development.

The only concern is that the design of the building could be undermined by poor quality materials and sloppy workmanship.

Conditions should be imposed on a planning permission, to control materials and workmanship.

The Civic Society recommends that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

**Application number 11/00885/FUL
St George's Works, St George's Quay,
Lancaster. Phase 1 of Lunesdale East Masterplan**

The demolition of part of the existing building, the part closest to the high level railway line, would not undermine the character of the building and the Civic Society welcomes the proposed re-use of the retained part of the building for office and restaurant purposes.

The Civic Society recommends that planning permission is granted, subject to conditions to control external materials and the design of windows and doors.

Draft National Planning Policy Framework

Much national publicity has been devoted to the debate over the government's proposals to reduce and simplify the planning process, favouring a "pro development" approach to planning applications.

The National Trust has been very vocal in expressing its concerns for the future of the countryside and many other organisations, including our parent body Civic Voice, have also been urging caution. The Society sent a note of concerns to our MP Eric Ollerenshaw and we have received an acknowledgment. Both documents are available on the Society's website

(www.lancastercivicsociety.org) along with the draft National Planning Policy Framework document.

Scotforth Supermarkets: CEP Appeal

The appeal by Commercial Estates Projects against the refusal of planning permission for its outline planning application for a large foodstore (7250m²) plus petrol filling station and hotel/pub/restaurant complex (1890m² plus 400m²) will commence on **Tuesday 22nd November at 10am in Lancaster Town Hall**. Anyone may attend the hearing. Anyone wishing to speak at the Inquiry should attend on the first day when the Inspector will invite those wishing to speak to register.

Further details and documents can be found on the Planning Inspectorate's Planning Portal, (www.planningportal.gov.uk) reference APP/A2335/A/11/2155529/NWF or the City Council's website, (www.lancaster.gov.uk), appeal reference 11/00022/REF.

Letter from Malcolm Taylor

A tour round the Winter Gardens, Morecambe

This year's Heritage Weekend provided an opportunity to make a long postponed visit (to my shame, my first, despite having lived in Lancaster since 1970) to the Winter Gardens. Members of the Civic Society may wonder why a visit to such a well known local icon should deserve comment in this newsletter. Well, perhaps it doesn't, but my reasons will be judged on the following account.

The approach to the Winter Gardens from the car park at its rear is not auspicious. A bleak, large space, distantly landscaped, the bulky forbidding rear elevation to the Winter Gardens, a walk through a dimly lit dismal arcade onto the front, dodging tacky stalls, and contriving not to inhale junk food cooking smells - all added to the impression of a town which has given up on itself. However, things improved on entering the Winter Gardens. Witnessing the heroic struggle to secure the building's survival, we sensed hope and determination: the Trust's obvious love of the building, the extent of the work already achieved just to keep out the weather. Humbling. It is a vast and complex structure.

We had the privilege of being expertly guided into every corner - from the auditorium to the remains of the sea water baths which had once occupied the site. From the entrance foyer all the way up to the

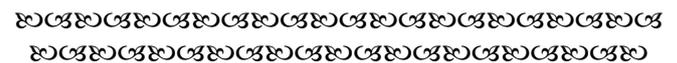
gods, noting on the way a class structure, even within the Victorian working classes, which required the elaborate and ornate decoration to cease above the circle. From the carefully separated men's and women's bars, to the vertigo-inducing seating rake of the gods. Back stage the segregated dressing rooms - chorus girls at the top, big names next to the stage. To see where the flats once hung from the high ceiling. To stand on the stage and imagine facing long-forgotten audiences. To sit in a box (little view of the stage) and to wonder why the occupiers would wish to draw the plush curtains. To hear a roll call of the vast numbers of household-name stars who had played here - from George Formby to Edward Elgar. A place of many ghosts.

Despite the money already raised and spent, we were acutely aware of the vast expenditure still to be found if this currently sad building is to be restored to the music hall in which patrons could spend all day for 6d in the spacious promenade space behind the circle. Restoring the elaborate Victorian decoration will not come cheap, neither will restoration of the ornate chandeliers which lit the auditorium, the remaining lighting, the heating system, and much more.

This is a heritage it would be a tragedy to lose, as it reminds us so vividly, as nothing else can, of the importance of Morecambe as a major seaside destination for working-class Britain. It must be saved. But as what? One cannot foresee a revival of the music hall, and the thousands who would need to patronise it. Whither the Winter Gardens?

*Malcolm Taylor
20 September 2011*

It would be interesting to hear the thoughts of other members on the possible future of this once splendid and iconic building, Ed.



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Members are advised that the membership list is held in electronic form in accordance with the Data Protection Act
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www.lancastercivicsociety.org

LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY

NOTICE OF SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

Lancaster Town Hall (Banqueting Suite), at 7.30pm on
Wednesday 14th December 2011

This Special General Meeting will take place before the Christmas Social and will propose two amendments to the Society's constitution:

1. Section 5 (page 2): Meetings, line 2

Proposal: To remove the word "audited" and substitute "accounts scrutinised and approved by the Committee".

[Reason for this amendment: There is no legal requirement for societies with a turnover of under £10k p.a. to have accounts formally audited and professional auditing fees are considerable].

2. Section 14 (page 3): Winding Up, last line

Proposal: To remove the name "Civic Trust" and substitute "an appropriate agency".

[The reason for this proposal is that the Civic Trust no longer exists].

Members unable to attend the Special General Meeting but wishing to express their views may do so via the Society's website (www.lancastercivicsociety.org) or by contacting the Hon. Secretary, Winnie Clark, 36 Hall Park, Lancaster, LA1 4SH, tel 01524 33411, email: clark4be@btinternet.com

