Hereford Civic Society
hcs
the city's built environment forum

HEREFORD CIVIC SOCIETY

(Registered Charity No. 503504)

Chairman's Report for the twelve months period ended 1st September, 2026

First a note of thanks

This is my second report as chair, having been elected to the role at the October 2024 AGM. I remain extremely grateful to my predecessor, David Fowler, who led the Society so skilfully over the previous five years and my vice-chair Martin Leaton who steps in deftly where my performance is wanting. David remains as Treasurer and in that role he has kept our books most beautifully in order. To Ros Peter, who arranges our varied and interesting meetings and excursion programme, I am profoundly grateful. To Chris Bucknell who secretaries for us and produces our prompt and accurate minutes, a huge debt of gratitude. And to Alan Bucknell who looks after the kit that helps the talks run smoothly and Ben Nash, who joined the Society at its founding 52 years ago, his support to the Committee is also hugely appreciated.

Thank you to the members of our Conservation Planning sub-committee volunteers and our visiting experts: Darren Ray and Christian Montez.
However, I reserve particular gratitude to our members for the support given throughout the year.

Remember our purposes

The Society is established for the public benefit for the following purposes in the area comprising the City of Hereford and its surroundings (the area of "benefit"):

1. To promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit
2. To educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area of benefit and give related advice and information
3. To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area of benefit

and in so doing has the power to promote civic pride; promote/ publish research connected with the society's objects. We act as a co-ordinating body with other community groups who share similar aims. Make surveys/ prepare maps, collect information in relation to any place or building of beauty or historic interest. Hold meetings, lectures and exhibitions.

The core purpose of Hereford Civic Society, in common with all whether affiliated to Civic Voice, (our parent body) or not, is to defend and promote high standards of design and care in the built environment. It is worth reminding ourselves that it is this which underpins the sense of civic pride which most of us feel when we are lucky enough to live in a City as beautiful and richly historic as Hereford.

It is a broad brief which encompasses buildings of all types old and new, together with the contextualising spaces between. So our interests in Hereford and its region are diverse; encompassing history, art, architecture, urban design, transport infrastructure, parks and gardens. This is expressed in our programme of talks and visits to which everyone is welcome whether a member or not. It is also expressed in our work of influence and advice whether through the media or through the formal planning process.

We are always on the lookout for new talent, so if you feel you have something to contribute in these areas, please get in touch with me, Jeremy Milln

Reference and Administrative details

Hereford Civic Society, previously named the Hereford Civic Trust was first registered with the Charity Commission on 16 August 1974. Its original constitution was adopted on 1 September 1973, amended including a change of name on 23 October 2002. Further administrative revisions to the constitution were approved at the AGM on the 19th October 2023.

Management of the Hereford Civic Society

Our **Executive Committee** is responsible for the management and administration of the Society. The Executive Committee elected annually are the charity's Trustees. Includes four officers, who in 2025/26 were:

Chairman	Jeremy Milln
Treasurer	David Fowler
Vice-Chairman	Martin Leaton
Secretary	Christine Bucknell

The Society's revised constitution, agreed in 2023, requires the Executive Committee to have a minimum of two and no more than eight other members. The following were elected at last year's AGM:

Alan Bucknell, Ben Nash

In practice Executive Committee members fulfil a variety of roles including those of membership and company secretary. All members of the Committee give of their time freely and receive no remuneration or other financial benefits. The Committee may co-opt members who attend in an advisory and non-voting capacity. In addition, the Committee has the power to fill up to three casual vacancies occurring between AGMs. Outgoing members of the Committee may be re-elected. Since last year's AGM, the Committee has met on five occasions (13th November 2025; 12th February 2026; 23rd April 2026; 22nd June 2026 and 14th September 2026). Each meeting has an agenda and is minuted.

A **Conservation Planning sub-committee** reports to the Executive Committee. The sub-committee members are trustees David Fowler and Jeremy Milln. Bob Heath and Peter Taylor resigned for personal reasons and we are grateful for their input over the years. Laura Sommerville remains a member of this group. The sub-committee operates by email with no formal meetings at the present time. It is hoped to recruit more members and restart the meetings as this is an effective way of reviewing planning applications in and around Hereford. There is a particular need to support advice for works affecting heritage assets and in conservation areas as there is for highway and active travel infrastucture s schemes.

HCS member Ros Peter arranges our excellent speaker programme. Darren Ray, a skilful designer and draughtsman, continues to help with transport infrastructure producing schemes based on best practice and contemporary learning from abroad, particularly the Netherlands

We welcome members taking on tasks without necessarily becoming a committee member.

We would welcome additional help at meetings, with a member or two taking on a small role (for example) to greet visitors, deal with membership queries, looking after refreshments, assisting with publicity/ giving the society a presence on social media etc or even putting together a newsletter. In August 2026, the Society has 126 paid up members (2024/25, 120).

Charity Correspondent

David Fowler, 21 Venn's Lane, Hereford HR1 1DE

Bankers

Lloyds Bank plc 8 High Town, Hereford HR1 2AE. Current Account
CCLA Fund Managers Limited. COIF Charities Deposit Fund

Access for all

There are no obstacles preventing the physically impaired from attending the society's meetings or other events. The Kindle Centre has a lift providing step-free access to the Society's regular meeting room. There is adequate free parking and the Kindle Centre is located within 10 minutes walking distance of the city centre.

General Data Protection Regulations

Our membership records are kept in both paper and electronic form. They contain member's name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (our preferred mode of communication). We do not retain in either paper or electronic form members' bank account information. Members information is held solely for the sole purpose of communicating with you and is not shared with external parties.

Risk Management

Appropriate insurance cover is in place covering all of the society's activities.

Achievements and Performance: Review of our programme

Meetings and events

We have enjoyed a surprisingly busy and eventful year, the highlight again was the Herefordshire Histories Festival in May, to which we contributed three events and will be pleased to participate as this popular venture returns in May 2027. The 2025/26 meeting programme benefited from excellent speakers:

September 18th Denise North "*Herefordshire Hoard update and new discoveries*"
October 16th 7.00pm Members' social and AGM followed by Penny Platts talking about *Trade and Herefordshire's Market Towns*
November 21st Rt. Hon. Jesse Norman, MP for Hereford & South Herefordshiren "*Hereford, city of ideas: culture, capability and innovation in the 21st century*"
December 18th Elizabeth O'Keefe "*The notorious but remarkably efficient Gurney stoves*"
January 15th Keith Ray "*Offa's Dyke – an Historic First Walk from Sea to Sea*"
February 19th Mike Truelove "*Hereford BID (Business Improvement District) Meaningful Businesses Support*"
March 19th Laura Sommerville "*Lost Buildings of Hereford*"
April 16th Ralph Barber "*The History & Restoration of the Hereford & Gloucester Canal*"
Saturday May 9th – Monday May 25th Hereford Civic Society meetings and events that form part of the Herefordshire Histories Festival:
May 13th "Hereford Quiz" Hereford's history at The Brewery room at The Barrels in St. Owens Street Hereford
May 16th "Hereford History Day" local history supermarket in St. Peter's Church, where we set up a stall with many other local history and heritage groups, talking about their specialism and highlighting their work
May 20th "Herefordshire Quiz" Herefordshire's history at The Barrels
May 21st Colin Richards "*Hereford, its development and industries in the 20th Century*"
June 19th Rt. Hon. Ellie Chowns, MP for North Herefordshire "*Green Vision for Herefordshire"*
July 16th Celine O'Donovan from solicitors Leigh Day "*The Rivers Wye, Lugg and Usk Pollution Claim*"

Excursions

During the past twelve months, we've enjoyed an active programme of visits and trips:

June 2nd Guided visit to Ledbury, including the Tudor Painted Room and the 17th Century Jacobean Market House
July 13th Visit to Jazz house in Harold Street with Bruce Burn and architect. Ollie Steel
July 24th Summer coach outing. "David Austin Rose Garden (home of the National Collection of English Roses) and Moseley Old Hall (NT)".

Talking Point

As many of you are aware, at roughly nine-week intervals the Chair is invited to write an Opinion Piece for the Hereford Times. Following publication, these articles can be found on the Society's website:

30th October 2025: Southern Link Road - flaws and finance
8th January 2026: VLR trams for Hereford
26th March 2026: Agree-athon – better measures than GDP
4th June, 2026: Pride of Place: Newton Farm and Hunderton
20th August 2026: SLR EIA applic

Planning

Providing input to the planning process is a major part of the work of the Society. This is done as cases come up. Conservation & Planning sub-committee has not formally met during the year but operates by phone and email. The Planning sub-committee made fewer representations this year as we struggle to find people willing to do this kind of work. When we make comments to the Case Officer, we endeavour to be positive, to suggest changes that will enhance design/ layout/ appearance/ place making when commenting/ objecting to what the applicant proposes.

As chair I also act as vice-chair of City Council Planning Committee which makes up for the fact we currently do not have a non-voting seat on the Committee.

We also comment on Herefordshire Council's consultations concerned with Planning Strategy both with respect of the built environment and proposals to modify current road designs which have the objective of encouraging active and public transport – principally walking and cycling in urban areas. Member Darren Ray continues to skilfully produce professional quality drawings for us to demonstrate best practice LTN 1/20 compliant schemes to Herefordshire Council.

Last year we responded to applications at Elmhurst on Venns Lane, the enormous housing scheme proposed next to Lugg Meadows off the Ledbury Road, and to other large out-of-town housing schemes at Credenhilll, Holmer and Lower Bullingham. The 1650 house development SW of Leominstsre which exercises our friends at Leominster Civic Society even came o our radar. We continue to work with the Community Land Trust on its scheme for repair and adaptation of 25 East Street, a Georgian mews coach-house currently in poor condition.

Hereford City Masterplan

A City Masterplan was produced by Land Use Consultants, Phil Jones Associates and Element Urbanism in draft in November 2022 with a view to going to public consultation in the spring of 2023. We felt the City Masterplan, which recognised the need to enhance the experience of visiting, living and working in the City by restoring its sense of place as a green and historic city, was a sound and useful document with lots of well-articulated projects to bring it about. However, the new political administration felt it was too progressive and cancelled it. Eventually it commissioned a new masterplan, albeit with more of a focus on facilitating car use, this time from consultants The Urbanists https://theurbanists.net/ At the time of writing (October 2026) this has still not been consulted upon.

Transport

We have been less involved with active travel schemes than in earlier years as Herefordshire Council has proved reluctant to engage. The scheme for the Holme Lacy Road is currently (Oct 2026) being built out but to a scheme drawn up in 2022 which failed to benefit from the Society's earlier work. Much the same comment applies to the Transport Hub at the Railway Station which we continue to feel was a lost opportunity to deliver on a safer more future-proofed design which genuinely allowed for building transit capacity while properly sheltering passengers as well as inducing meaningful modal shift to non-car modes.

The Civic Society takes no collective position on the Council's proposed western bypass, but does caution against putting all the eggs into the one very expensive basket as the current Council administration seems minded to do. Transport works best when it offers a mix and provides people who cannot drive, do not wish to drive, or cannot afford to drive, with viable and sustainable options.

Financial Review

The Income and Expenditure for the current year (page 1) shows a surplus of £1102 (2024/25, a surplus of £720).

£696 has been transferred from the society's reserves into the designated fund to celebrate the Society's 50th year. An illustrated booklet is in preparation setting out the circumstances that led to the Society's founding, the high and low points of the past fifty years and future aspirations. We had planned for it to be published in 2024. We now expect the book launch will take place in 2026.

In response to Lloyds Bank introducing charges on what was previously a free charity current account, the society opened an interest earning deposit account with CCLA (Churches, Charities and Local Authorities) with the objective of earning interest to offset future Lloyds bank charges. This strategy has provided a net benefit of £183 to society in the current year.

Page 2 sets out the Society's balance sheet. Net assets total £6099, of which £6846 is in cash as it includes £691 belonging to the West Midlands Amenity Societies Association (WMASA). This sum is shown as a liability as this money has been deposited with ourselves enabling WMASA to avoid paying monthly bank charges in an otherwise dormant account). Hereford Civic Society is a member of WMASA, a regional grouping of civic societies in the West Midlands who meet thrice yearly.

In Note 4 on page 4, we have set out the Society's proposed budget for the 2026/27 financial year.

Future Plans

Membership of National Organisation

Hereford Civic Society is a committed and active member of Civic Voice (the national organisation for the Civic Society movement) and their West Midlands Regional Group (David Fowler is their Treasurer). The society is also a member of the Urban Rooms Network.

We will continue to liaise/ and endeavour to work with colleagues in Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye Civic Societies on shared projects.

Members' Subscriptions

We propose that members' subscriptions for the coming year and for 2027/28 will be unchanged at £15 (single); £25 (for two living at the same address). Our revised Constitution, which came into effect in October 2023 requires the approval at the preceding AGM, for changes to members' subscriptions – hence the proposed resolution at item 9 on the Agenda.

Visitors attending our meetings made an increased donation of £5 (resolution 10 on last year's AGM meeting Agenda), up from £3. This did not dissuade attendance. The number of non-members attending our meetings during the year (109) represented a 53% increase over those made in 2024/25

Web site and publicity

We plan to create a separate area of our website for Planning Applications on which the society has commented. It is also an intention of the coming year to refresh our display materials.

Award Scheme

The Award Scheme for the Built environment was subsumed into the Hereford Times Community Awards as Herefordshire Council effectively withdrew its interest, we hope only temporarily. This meant we ran just the one category but alongside an environment award, we felt the sponsorship (done jointly with Hereford City Council) made it worthwhile.

Jeremy Milln
Chairman