

Priceless

Place

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Civic Voice Design Awards

Gloucestershire Services
Northbound

Autumn 2015

Glenn Howells

Graham Powell

Welcomes Local Plan

Chris Phillips

Hereford United

David Thame

Housing queries

Me and My House

David Whitehead

Hereford Now

Station Bridge



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PREFACE



Last quarter our proposals for a county wide eco city gave us wide media coverage, including BBC TV. This was a carefully drafted proposal to inspire improvements to the Local Plan (LP), hopefully now ratified by the time you read this. LPs can be modified overtime and we do need to see some more innovative and forward thinking ideas, including highway design from the Continent. Our proposals, to be

debated at our October meeting, will hopefully inspire our Councillors to get their planners back to the drawing board. So this quarter we felt a less controversial content might be required; but the eclectic group of articles from previous and new contributors all provide some challenging thoughts on their personal specialisms. Neighbouring Gloucester has won the Civic Voice Design Award with a new approach to the motorway service station. See front cover and page 6. As this edition coincides with our AGM, I need to record my thanks to all those who have contributed to our work, not least our contributors to this magazine. It has been another successful year with our mission unchanged.

- to promote high standards of planning and architecture in Hereford and its surroundings
- to educate the public in the

geography, history, natural history and architecture of our area and give related advice

- to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of public interest.

We do this by

- Hosting a dozen meetings each year
- Commenting on planning applications
- Contributing to City wide initiatives including meeting with Herefordshire Councillors and Directors
- Publishing this magazine

More than that we are the inspiration behind the proposal for an Urban Room, inspired by the recommendations of the Farrell Review. A place where all things about our urban fabric are displayed, discussed and consulted upon. We are talking to several organisations all concerned about the success of the City; we are hoping to work together to

create a place for discussion leading to action to improve our great City. More detailed information in Winter Place to be published mid January 2016.

John Bothamley

Contributors

John Bothamley – Chairman HCS, developer and chair of charitable grant making trust

Mo Burns – environmentalist

Gareth Calan Davies – Geographer and transport expert

John Faulkner – Retired chartered civil engineer, chairman of HCS 2003-2006

Liz Morawiecka – auditor and activist

Chris Phillips – Journalist and Marketeer

Graham Powell – Councillor

David Thame – Journalist

David Whitehead – Hereford historian and author

Design & Layout – H. Joof - Lead Designer, D. J. Barker & T. Schoenfeld

NEWS & COMMENTS

Friends of Rotherwas Chapel

Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe of Herefordshire Archives and Record Centre (HARC) and HCS member Barbara Ferris are in discussions about how best to care for this listed building and make it more widely accessible. This is crucial at the present time of

reorganisation for English Heritage, which coincides with the ending of the present contract with a local garage as key-holder.

An English Heritage representative launched the Rotherwas part of Dinedor Heritage Group's 'Dinedor & Rotherwas Explored' Heritage Trail on Saturday 12th September in conjunction with HARC.

The afternoon event at HARC and the Chapel had displays about archaeology, munitions, Rotherwas House and estate.

HCS has held two evening events at the Chapel which is a wonderful space, full of atmosphere for those who believe and those who do not. We all wish Barbara and her associates success and encourage members to join the Friends. More details from

Barbara at barbaraferris@uwclub.net



BID News

Now with their own employees the Business Improvement District is getting going on many fronts; especially shop fronts – covering empty shop premises with photographic interpretations of what could be happening behind the glass! HCS hugely supports this work, wishes it had happened years ago and respectfully refers shop keepers to our article on name display boards in our Spring 2014 edition of our magazine. Here we were inspiring shopkeepers to up their image!

Their two janitors are cleaning the streets, including all those dirty ledges, and edges that never seemed to be dealt with – this is most encouraging. The way in which places are perceived is critical, said a report from the Commission for Underperforming Towns and Cities, May 2015 "A brighter future for our towns and cities".

Branding and the means by which that brand is promoted can be hugely important in capturing attention and securing investment. Great places have their own identity.

A bridge too far

As Herefordians angst over the merits of a new bridge so do Londoners.

Mayoral hopeful Sadiq Khan (Labour) recently said he would scrap the proposed Thames garden bridge crossing if elected to County Hall. With a requirement for £60 million from the public purse towards the £175m estimated cost this looks like becoming a long running saga.

The bridge has been designed by Thomas Heatherwick, son of HCS member Hugh, who clearly provided an interesting educational background for his son.



D-day soon on offices to homes conversions

Housing and Planning Minister Brandon Lewis has confirmed that an announcement on whether it will extend a temporary permitted development right for the conversion of offices to homes is expected "in the not too distant future".

Lewis said the administration was "looking to make an announcement around the future for permitted development rights relatively soon". He added: "We want to make sure that we get the decision right and make sure we learn from what's happened in the last three years".

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NEWS & COMMENTS



Proposed parkway Station

Worcestershire Parkway Station

Groundwork for the new £22 million station, which will link the Cotswolds and Birmingham to Bristol lines, is scheduled to begin by the spring of next year and open in autumn 2017. Worcestershire Parkway Railway Station will be situated just outside of Worcester City, close to Junction 7 of the M5 near Norton.

The project is identified as a key priority through the county's Strategic Economic Plan, which is aiming to create 25,000 new jobs.

Gary Woodman, Executive Director of Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, said: "We know the difference that improved rail connectivity will make to the County's long term economy, and therefore we prioritised Worcestershire Parkway Railway Station for funding through our Growth Deal.

HCS says – What about our single rail direct connection to London – does not that also merit the highest priority? Visitors arriving at Paddington wanting a train to Hereford are shown a map of First Great Western lines and the infrequent stopping service via Oxford. Newport to Hereford link using Arriva

Trains is not shown on the FGW map! Shouldn't our two MPs be lobbying for this more than road improvements?

Herefordshire in Bloom

Hereford retained its prestigious gold medal in this year's Britain in Bloom competition. George Thomas from Hereford in Bloom praised all those involved in transforming ordinary road verges and roundabouts into vibrant flower beds. Hereford in Bloom, founded 16 years ago, is a group of volunteers committed to ensuring that the growing city protects and enhances its natural environment. The Royal Horticultural Society, which runs the competition, says gold-winning towns and cities can expect visitor numbers to rise by up to 17 per cent.

Cllr Paul Rone, Herefordshire Council's cabinet member transport and roads, praised the efforts of all those involved in making the city bloom. "This is a fantastic result!" he said. It is of concern to HCS that as cuts bite this important work will fall entirely to the private sector.

There will become a time when HC runs and pays for nothing other than social care. Will we then need another administration to coordinate all the donated services and volunteer work? There is already the respected

Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service ably run by Will Lindsay but they are self-appointed, not elected. With the undemocratically appointed members of the LEP we are fast moving to a strange state of democracy.



Hereford in Bloom

Neighbourhood Plans (NPs)

Herefordshire Council still maintains there is good progress on this front as we await the ratification of the Local Plan. But to get these NPs embedded in the planning process still requires much work and local referenda. What is of great concern is that many parishes still haven't started the process, and several have given up!

Bearing in mind that NPs are an integral part of planning we fear that boring developer cul-de-sacs will proliferate.

HEREFORD NOW

Network Rail invited HCS to comment and contribute to the design of the new lift shafts at Hereford Station bringing full access to platforms one and two.

Overall we are pleased with the result although criticise the use of cream painted timber that will require regular

maintenance. Our pictures show the new shaft on platform three and that maintenance is seldom a high priority. We show this not to be sarcastic but to highlight the need for regular attention to maintain a vibrant and pleasant public realm. Why isn't the station within the BID area?!



painter needed



new lift shaft

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LEADERS

David Thame queries our thinking on housing



Group think is very dangerous, consensus is excellent, but how do you tell one from the other? That there is a "housing crisis" is apparently a consensus, not group think. It is rubbish, of course. Outside London there is no housing crisis. If there genuinely were such a thing in Herefordshire you would, by now, have seen something happen on key sites capable of delivering large numbers of relatively low-cost housing – and we haven't.

To pick one example from many, the 2006 approval of 425 homes at Barons Cross, Leominster, might by now be under construction, but the site is as empty as ever. Consent was renewed, or extended, in 2008, 2010 and 2012 – so that's one and a half property booms the scheme has missed. We're in danger of quoting Lady Bracknell.

No doubt reasons can be found for slow progress on this particular site – perhaps for any large site; the bigger the site, the bigger the problems of timing, finance, marketing, investment. So let's look at house prices – because one of the key components of the alleged "housing crisis" is the unaffordability of housing.

Official justifications for mass house building rely heavily on the comparison of average house prices (by which they generally mean mean house prices) with average wages (also mean). So – according to summer 2015 posting on Herefordshire Council's website - Herefordshire is one of the least affordable places to buy a house. Prices are 8.1 times the average wage – only Solihull is worse. Compare this with barely 4 in Stoke on Trent. Partly this result is thanks to wages data which doesn't take into account Herefordshire's atypical employment structure (e.g. much family working where total household income is what matters, much self-employment, hence employment is high by national standards, but wages relatively low on average). But partly is about house prices.

Unofficial data seems to support official claims of unaffordability. Go to homes.co.uk and you'll find that the average asking price for a Herefordshire house is £316,880 (with 2,307 properties on the market.).

Rightmove says Herefordshire's average price was £230,266. There are two problems here. The first is that average-as-mean doesn't work well where you have a spread of prices with most hovering around the middle, apart from a few extremely expensive outliers. This is precisely the problem with Herefordshire housing – most of it is middling-priced, but a few Herefordshire properties in out-of-the way places cost the earth – and that pushes the average (mean) way above the price all but a (literal) handful of buyers actually pays. The median – the midpoint around which most prices cluster – is far more useful as a description of what most people experience.

The second is that the perception of unaffordability generated by slightly wonky data is often buttressed by the prices quoted by vendors, not the prices actually paid by buyers (quite different, often much lower). To keep our Barons Cross example, a data search on Zoopla.co.uk of house sales

in Leominster in the last six months (HR6 8—postcode) shows 42 sales, an average price of £146,830 (seven were £100,000 or less.) That's quite affordable. Leominster is more or less the cheapest place to buy a house in Herefordshire.

I don't expect any of this to convince – but it ought to suggest that the idea of "crisis" is at best overplayed. There certainly isn't a housing crisis in Leominster, which is perhaps why the 425-house plan for Barons Cross hasn't been worth developing.

A similar analysis in Hereford and other market towns might come to similar conclusions. That doesn't mean everything is rosy. There may be problems in some areas, at some prices ranges, for some people. Those issues may need carefully targeted interventions – but the blanket "crisis" groupthink isn't helping us find them. The danger is it leads to a sense of urgency which plays into the hands of developers.



Councillor Graham Powell welcomes the Local Plan

We are all aware of the issues that face Herefordshire – a low population in a large area; a general lack of funding for health, education and other services; a shortage of houses and poor career prospects. Many cannot afford to live in the area where they work, and many younger people don't look for jobs in Herefordshire because they cannot earn enough to afford the housing costs. It's a vicious set of circles that the Local Plan will help us to break.

After seven or even eight years, countless consultations, hundreds of

documents and enough statistics to satisfy most people's thirst for a good argument we are finally about to deliver a Local Plan for Herefordshire that can be adopted and implemented.



The Local Plan is a framework around which we can create a thriving county with a sustainable future. Strategic road infrastructure, improved transport links, superfast broadband, fully serviced enterprise sites, a further and higher education offering that delivers a skilled workforce, a choice of housing coupled with good leisure and shopping opportunities will combine to attract investors into the county. Those investors will be further attracted to a county that demonstrates ambition, a positive attitude to change and a proven track record of delivery.

Once the Local Plan has been adopted we can be confident that we will have regained control to prevent unsuitable speculative development, communities will approve their own neighbourhood

continued on page 5

Herefordshire Local Plan
Core Strategy 2011 - 2031

Shaping our place
 Pre-Submission Publication May 2014

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LEADERS

Chris Phillips enthuses on the rebirth of Hereford FC



Chris Phillips

Friday 19th December 2014, Hereford United FC 1939 was officially wound up at the High Court in London having spent years battling debt since the glory days under Graham Turner. It was an appalling sporting tragedy, one that should never have happened and thanks to the incompetence of the owners in charge, the cost meant many hardworking people were left without jobs and without pay. For a short while, it left the City without a football club too. A club that had stood the test of time from 1924 all the way up until its demise in 2014.

Who could forget Ronnie Radford's goal against Newcastle in 1972 or the win against Halifax at Leicester in 2006 to seal promotion back to the football league under Graham Turner? It was a desperate time. Much was made in what could be done to bring football back to Edgar Street. There was plenty of talk of a phoenix club well before the

final nail in the coffin. Thankfully, even when the club was finally liquidated, a number of hugely passionate businessmen, led by Jon Hale, and along with the Supporters Trust dipped into their pockets to start building a platform and began the start of something special. There was talk, though, following the demise of the old club as to where the newly formed Hereford FC would play. Despite the obvious choice of Edgar Street, that wasn't necessarily a certainty with the Council undecided as to whether the club could sustain the costs of running the ground.

As the debate raged on, some suggested Hereford FC should play outside the city whilst a ground share

with Westfields was apparently mooted. It was vitally important that the club remained in the City and remained a part of the community. Playing in a ground that is literally inches from the newly built Old Market complex provides the opportunity for plenty of families and supporters to shop and invest within the city before going to the ground to watch football. The location also makes it easier for everyone to access. Recent crowds have been astonishing with attendances rising above 2,000.

The support has been utterly remarkable and has helped significantly with the stadium costs. Obviously if the club were not to be based at Edgar Street, we most

certainly wouldn't see gates as big as that and the popularity that we have seen. It's quite simple, the club must remain at Edgar Street well beyond its current five year lease handed down by the Council.

With the racecourse all but gone, we were all afraid Hereford would lose its sporting identity, thankfully it still has it. But it's not just about the identity, it's about the grassroots too. Young people would miss out on the opportunity to see their City's football team and that would be, in my eyes, quite sad. As the famous club saying goes, 'Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall.' Hereford United has risen and now the hard work begins.



Edgar Street

plans to describe change in their local area and put them in control of that change.

The Local plan runs until 2031 and we ought to be thinking about change in five-year chunks – starting with the period 2016 – 2021. What could be reasonably expected to have happened in Hereford City within that window – a refurbished High Town and Buttermarket, a completed City Link Road, a University with faculty building and student accommodation, an extended general hospital, new affordable housing development, a combined police and fire facility, a new transport hub adjacent to the railway station, a thriving Skylon Park, the River Wye as a tourist attraction and much more if we work together and embrace change.

It's not just about Hereford City – the market towns and the rural areas have much to offer and identities of their own that they will want to develop. The challenge, as always, will be develop and deliver as against apathy and stagnation. This is our chance to work together to make sure that Herefordshire has a bright future, with a strong economy and a thriving working age population. By producing this plan we are showing that we will accept change, but more importantly, that we are in control of this change.

Civic Voice Design Awards



Restoration Category

Winner: All Souls, Bolton
OMI Architects

An inspirational, ambitious and innovative regeneration project from the Churches Conservation Trust, ten years in the making, Grade II* listed All Souls in inner city Bolton has been transformed from a run-down and empty church, into a leading example of a modern community space fit for the 21st century. The judges felt it has "a really lovely community story; the person who was responsible for cleaning off graffiti on the building started the whole project and the local community has been behind it all the way."

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AMAZING PLACES OF HEREFORD



Glenview

Me and My Home

I came to Hereford in 1970 and since then I have lived in three houses: a 1965 estate semi at Holmer with 'contemporary' fittings, the sort of things that members of the 20th-Century Society would cherish today; a Georgian terraced house in Edgar Street, lovely proportions inside and out with plenty of small rooms on three floors, ideal for growing children and finally, since

1982, in half a mansion originally called Glenview Hall at 60, Hafod Road.

It was built in c.1888 for Charles Anthony II, the owner of the Hereford Times, but leased to a variety of tenants until 1901 when Anthony is found living here with his daughter Evangeline, together with a servant and a governess. Evangeline was sixteen years old and a child prodigy, becoming a celebrated concert violinist and dying quite suddenly of appendicitis during a concert tour of Germany in 1913. Glenview Hall was

her home for a few years but her father lived at The Elms, on the corner of Aylestone Hill and Folly Lane, where he died in 1919.

We like to imagine that Edward Elgar might have attended a soiree with Evangeline at Glenview as he only lived a few doors away. Moreover, as far as I can see Glenview was for a few years the only house on the top of the hill – originally called Harford's Shut – and approached by a private drive from Old Eign Hill. Again with our febrile imaginations we like to think of Charles Anthony as Hereford's equivalent of

Citizen Kane, with Glenview as Xanadu, twinkling with early electric lights in solitary splendour, without its virtuoso hostess, above the artisan city.

Sadly, Charles Anthony had a poor taste in architects, for I learnt a few years ago from my friend Michael Speak, of Leominster, that it was designed by J.H. Elvins, the son of a speculative builder, who arrived from Abergavenny in the 1860s. If only Charles Anthony had chosen William Chick, F.R. Kempson or, best of all, J.P. Seddon, I would have been a happier man. On a good day and with a reasonable budget, Elvins could do something reasonably presentable but at Glenview he played safe and as the Buildings of England states, rather laconically, the house 'is grand enough, but its patterned brick decidedly out of date'. It is more impressive when viewed from the garden where the centrepiece of the façade is dominated by a giant pediment with a bulls-eye window.

The building is very solid and the gasman recently gave-up trying to drill though three courses of blue brick on the ground floor. Most of the fabric is red and yellow Hampton Park brick, closely bonded so that re-pointing has never been necessary, notwithstanding the exposed westerly prospect, which from the first and second floors is panoramic. On very windy nights my children, who occupied the servants' area on the second floor took refuge in the rooms below. They also treated the spikes of the lightning conductors attached to the robust chimneys as a bad omen but in 33 years it has never changed from grey to brown – the sign of a strike. However, I do spend quite a lot of money paying intrepid roofers to push-back wind-blown slates albeit the roof was completely renewed a few years ago. In c.1940 the house suffered a fire and as a result it was split into two – at Christmas I used to send my neighbours a card from 'Glen' and they returned one from 'View'. The division of the 'Hall' created some interesting flying freeholds. One day our youngest daughter's 'A' level revision was interrupted by her ceiling light falling onto her bed as an electrician working

next door cut through an unidentified wire in the ceiling void. The division of the house gave us the principal rooms and a large entrance hall but left my neighbours with a more diverse collection of spaces, much more useful for 21st century living.

My hall was briefly useful for children's parties – as long as coats were worn – and practising the piano – fingerless gloves – but less useful now – except as a picture gallery. An unexpected visitor who had lived in the house in the 1950s said that in his childhood the longest wall was hung with a large picture of a Scottish glen – to complement the name of the house, I guess – too large, he said, to remove from the property. Sadly, it had gone by the time I arrived in 1982. The house tends to be cool in the summer but with a wood-burning stove and background heating it is tolerably warm in the winter until the west wind sweeps in through loose-fitting cellar windows and lifts the carpet in the sitting room. At that point it's time to move up to the piano nobile and watch the TV with the comfort of a gas fire or, as a last resort, go to bed. We miss our fuggy little Georgian rooms in Edgar Street. We have decorated most of the rooms in the house two or three times and filled it with our stuff, which dealers call 'collectables', certainly not antiques. Visitors are either appalled or faintly amused by our enthusiasm for the cheap and curious. It's a sign of insecurity, I have been told. Our children mumble darkly about the problems of clearing the house, when the curators have gone, but the grandchildren seem more sympathetic. One of the main reasons we bought the house was for the garden, which soon doubled in size when we purchased another chunk from our neighbours.

Again visitors either regard it as a picturesque retreat or a jungle but it is a wonderful cordon sanitaire as long as you do not worry about it too much. My son is already finding some solace in the idea of 'Whitehead Towers' a modernist Xanadu as a retreat for 50 or 60 genteel geriatrics. Over my dead body seems an apt epitaph.



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Civic Voice Design Awards

New Build Category

Winner: Gloucester Services

Northbound

Glenn Howells Architects (front page)

The Civic Voice Design Awards are unique in England in that they are a national celebration of good design and conservation projects nominated by local community organisations.

To be successful, projects have to make a significant contribution to the quality of life in our villages, towns and cities. Nominated and supported by local people they are awards from local communities across the country.

They are not the usual industry awards where professional give awards to other professionals. Each year the Civic Voice Design Awards will recognise projects from up and down the country that have achieved a very high standard of design and has made a positive

contribution to the quality of life in the local community.

Matson residents and community partners came up with the unique idea of making the M5 motorway immediately adjacent to Matson a route to income, training and employment for local communities by developing Gloucester Services into an embassy for Gloucestershire. Gloucestershire Gateway Trust teamed up with Westmorland, who own and run the only independent motorway services in the country, to deliver this vision.

The judges were unanimous in recommending Gloucester Services Northbound as winner of the New Buildings category and also the clear overall winner of the Civic Voice Design Awards 2015.

PLANNING MATTERS

Southern Link Road – Increasing Congestion or Delivering Housing?

Herefordshire Council expected their planning application for the Southern Link Road (Ref 151314) to be approved early in August 2015. Despite submitting 107 documents the information was incomplete.

The archaeological survey of the route area had not been done and no waste plan existed, despite the project disturbing over 31.2 hectares of the highest grades of agricultural land and 1.4 hectares of woodland.

Already over 100 letters have been received by Herefordshire Council. Of the few letters of support one is from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Chairman, Graham Wynn, who wrote in August 2015: "It will promote economic development by unlocking the barriers for both housing and economic growth, including the future growth of Hereford Enterprise Zone". Like others, have the Marches LEP been misled over the benefits of the Southern Link Road?

The Council's consultants, Parsons Brinkerhoff, clearly state in the planning application that "It was acknowledged that the assertion in the exhibition that the new road will unlock barriers to development of the Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ) and further housing development is misleading, as the location [of HEZ] would never have been chosen and approved if significant barriers to development existed". The consultants' reports show that the road increases journey times on the A49, increasing air, noise and light pollution and reducing walking and cycling. It would be hugely damaging to the natural environment and the amenity value to South Wye. So why is Herefordshire Council trying to get this single carriageway road approved ahead of simpler, sustainable transport solutions that could tackle congestion



Margate Harbour Steps

Civic Voice Design Awards

Public Realm Category

Winner: The Harbour Steps, Margate
East Kent Engineering Partnership and Mike Humber

Stepping up to the challenge of visitor decline and a resultant downgrade in environmental quality – Margate's Harbour Steps sea defence scheme proves that you can turn functional into a feature, by creating a stunning landmark which has helped transform the sea front, protects the town from sea flooding, and provides a meeting place for locals and visitors from which to savour Turner's seascapes.

in South Wye for a fraction of the cost? The road is really about increasing housing developments around the rural periphery of Hereford City. This is why the Marches LEP letter makes reference to the road supporting housing growth. We are told that the economic prosperity of Herefordshire depends on building houses, as the Council needs the New Homes Bonus to compensate for further cuts in the central government grant. However, new housing here would be above and beyond the thousands already planned in the Council's Core Strategy to 2031. Also Herefordshire Council owns two agricultural small holdings that lie on, or within 1km, of the chosen SC2 route – Ashley Farm (85 acres) and Veddoes Farm (76 acres). The future of these, and other Council owned farms, is to be decided by the Cabinet, on or after 5th November 2015. What an opportunity to capitalise on farmland by selling it as development land with good road access? Just in February 2015 Taylor Wimpey's agents submitted plan proposals to the Examination of the Core Strategy for 1,200 homes at Grafton saying "The Grafton site has the potential to be contained by the new road as an extension westwards of the B4399.

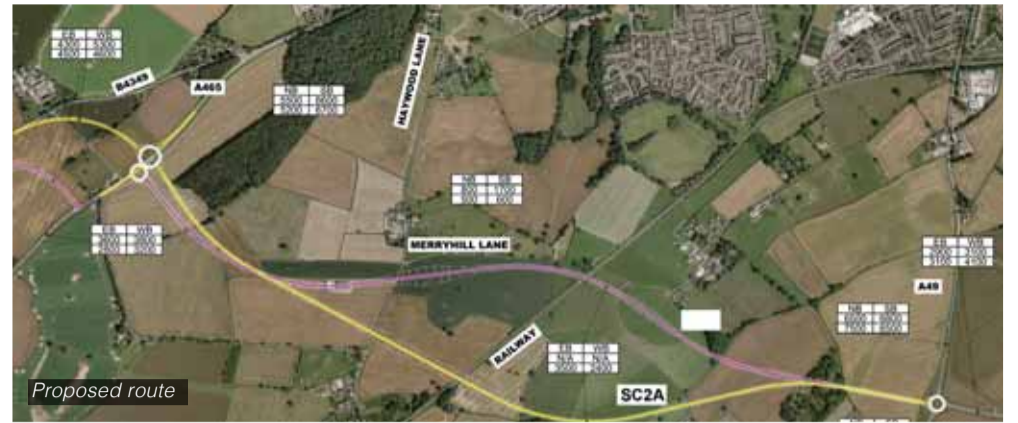
Associated contributions from development could therefore assist in contributions for funding Section 1 (Southern Link) of the route." It is the view of many that this "Road to Nowhere", that does nothing to tackle traffic congestion across the South Wye area, would be a huge waste of money and harm the environment in the process. The missing support information for the planning application should be available very soon, requiring a second public consultation, possibly from 6th October to 5th November, with a Planning Committee meeting provisionally scheduled for 2pm, Monday 23rd November 2015.

You still have time to make your views known by writing to the planning officer responsible, K Gibbons at Herefordshire Council or emailing kgibbons@herefordshire.gov.uk quoting ref P151314/F.

Liz Morawiecka

Two Bulls

Readers of the Hereford Times might have read of our exasperation that we are to have another bull sculpture in Hereford. In spite of a very scanty planning application approval was given for local and other adornments to the Old Market. Two bulls in one ring is a disaster. The Old Market development has brought more people to Hereford, let's celebrate that but work together as one place. Nikki Tyler's proposal for an alternative piece celebrating John Tarant – the Ghost Runner – should be considered and might be more appropriate or, possibly, David Hatton, the artist.



Highlights from HCS monitoring of planning applications include:

ASDA has withdrawn their application to build a filling station at the Belmont Road roundabout.

Bovis applied to build up to 135 houses at the foot of Aylestone Hill next to the Lugg Meadows. Thanks largely to a local residents group ALMA, with support from HCS and others, the application was rejected by the planning committee. Bovis appealed but the Inspector has rejected their appeal.

Following the success of the major campaign to stop the construction of a new fire station at the Working Boys' Home in Bath Street the Fire Authority, having originally maintained that Bath Street was the only site that met its requirements, has now joined with West Mercia Police and submitted an outline application

for a new combined Police and Fire headquarters. The proposed site is north of the football ground on the corner of the new link road and Edgar Street. From the information available this should be a satisfactory solution.

HCS is keeping a close eye on the Church Commissioners' proposed major housing development at Three Elms. This site is one of the housing developments proposed in the Draft Structure Plan. The Inspector's report on this Plan is due in the near future.

There have been a number of welcome proposals for using shops, or the space above shops for residential accommodation; but also an increasing, and not so welcome, trend for more houses being used for multiple occupation with a minimum of facilities.



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MEETINGS

17th September 2015 - Improving the Wye, Mike Williams

Mike Williams is Catchment Officer for the Wye and Usk Foundation, the organization that works to improve fishing and wildlife over the whole of the Usk and Wye catchment area. He described their work to improve the runs, spawning, hatching and catches of salmon and trout and the state of the rivers. By removing natural obstructions such as falling trees, clearing river banks and adding fish passes to existing weirs they have opened up long stretches of waterways where previously there had been no access to migratory fish. The benefit has been seen in increased catches following a long period of decline.

The chemical state of the river was also a matter for concern, with phosphate levels reaching critical levels especially on the Lugg. This was due both to discharges from sewage works and drainage from agriculture, particularly the disposal of large amounts of chicken manure from the many chicken sheds in the catchment. Soil erosion is a major problem with large quantities of silt entering the river particularly from potato and maize cultivation. Improvement of sewage discharges was in the hands of Welsh Water, who have a programme of improvement for the 2020-25 period. The Foundation was working closely with farmers and persuading them to adopt farming practices, such as protection of river banks by fencing off animal access and provision of

alternative water supplies. This not only reduced erosion and silt run-off but also brought benefits to the farms. A lively question time followed.

3rd October 2015 - h.Energy festival

A very successful annual h.Energy festival, celebrating the latest in sustainable living took place in early October, with the theme – ‘Changing the Story of Herefordshire’. “This was a chance to find out more about the inspiring ideas, opportunities and technologies developing around Herefordshire” said Kate Gathercole from New Leaf, coordinator of h.Energy.

The weekend’s highlights included the Queenswood Autumn Festival on Saturday 3rd October. New Leaf, with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, are partners in a successful bid to take over the future management of Queenswood County Park and Bodenham Lake – so the jointly run NL/HWT autumn festival was a precursor to all the exciting activities to come in the future hosted by this partnership. A key event this year included the nationally respected British science writer and broadcaster Colin Tudge, founder of The College for Real Farming and Food Culture, who joined an inspirational group of local speakers to present a series of talks. Other good speakers included the remarkable Diana Morgan-Hill who explored her personal story of change with Hay Festival’s Andy Fryers, respected economist and ‘master

at joined-up progressive thinking’, Andrew Simms, and Simon Fairlie, editor of The Land magazine. In all, nearly 60 free events took place across the county over the 3 days of the festival. With exciting woodland and community events, bus tours and cycle rides around local eco-homes, energy saving businesses showcasing new ideas, clothes swaps, repair cafés and local growing activities – there was something for everyone.

To know more about h.Energy and New Leaf’s plans for 2016, or how you can get involved in all year round projects, go to www.herefordshirenewleaf.org.uk. As Kate Gathercole explained “The ultimate objective of h.Energy Week is to demonstrate that using renewable local resources, avoiding waste and reducing our energy bills is just common sense”.

kate@herefordshirenewleaf.org.uk

Sister Societies

We meet regularly and all societies welcome visitors. Information on talks and news from:

Kingston History Society

www.kingstonhistorysociety.com

Ledbury Civic Society

www.ledburycivicsociety.org

Leominster Civic Society

www.leominstercivicsociety.co.uk

Ross-on-Wye Civic Society

www.rosscivic.org.uk

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Forthcoming Events

All meetings at the Kindle Centre, by ASDA, Belmont, Hereford HR2 7JE. 7.00pm refreshments for a 7.30pm start (unless specified otherwise)

Thursday 19th November 2015

Tim Hoverd, Archaeological Projects Manager with Herefordshire Council Highlighting recent progress in archaeological investigations surrounding the Neolithic and Dark Age periods, including sites near Hereford.

Thursday 17th December 2015

J L Wallin, Curator of the Coningsby Hospital Museum

Tracing the site’s history, including the story of the Knights Hospitallers, Knights Templars and the Crusades.

Thursday 21st January 2016

Gordon Wood, local author on the history of Herefordshire railways, with particular reference to the construction of the Hereford-Worcester line.

Thursday 18th February 2016

John Clark, Development Director at Herefordshire Wildlife Trust Conserving wildlife in an expanding urban environment – threats and opportunities.

Thursday 17th March 2016

Ian Archer, Chief Executive of The Courtyard

The Courtyard’s activities and expansion plans, including facilities for other Hereford community organisations.

NB Meeting to be held at The Courtyard – usual timings

Thursday 21st April 2016

Nigel Jeffries, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust Impressive commercial venture almost lost in history – a vision increasingly becoming reality thanks to the H&G Canal Trust.

OPINIONS

Report says LEPs need staff and clearer status

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) could play a critical role in devolution to cities and regions and in promoting economic growth, but their potential is being held back by their unclear status and unfamiliarity with town planning, as well as a lack of personnel, a new study by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has concluded.

The first comprehensive analysis of the roles of all LEPs showed that they have considerable potential to work

across different policy areas such as planning, and to shape strategy and implementation from housing to employment across local authority boundaries.

But the analysis by the RTPI highlighted that LEPs operated with an opaque remit and lacked firm institutional foundations. This limited their effectiveness as brokers of cross-boundary, strategic planning issues, the report found. HCS has long felt that the undemocratic nature of LEPs needs to be addressed and a more transparent modus operandi established especially when rate payers’ funds are expended.



We promised this lovely drawing by a member of Sketchers Blackburn last quarter - let’s all get drawing Hereford?

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the letters, reviews, news and features in this issue are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the members of Hereford Civic Society.

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