

# news

FREE

## hereford civic society

Summer 2011

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Hereford Civic Society

c/o Packers House, West Street, Hereford HR4 0BX

### In This Issue

Special Feature – An integrated approach to a low energy, low carbon development for Herefordshire. A pragmatist's view.

Special historic photograph – Festival of Britain, Remember the Skylon.

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Meeting Reports and Future Dates

## future events

### Herefordshire Heritage Open Days



heritage open days

*16 activities and sites in Hereford and surrounding area over four days*

*38 across the whole county*

**FREE ENTRY**

**Thursday 8th, Friday 9th, Saturday 10th  
and Sunday 11th September 2011.**

See back page for details, pick up a leaflet at Information Centres and Libraries or call the county's Museum Development Officer on **01432 383381** or email [sknox@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sknox@herefordshire.gov.uk)

# Preface.....

As a society without political affiliation, my colleagues have banned me from commenting on the recent local elections; BUT we shouldn't forget that the new Council is controlled by the same old group of men that are bringing us the ESG regeneration of the cattle market site; and want a second river crossing.

BUT, let us move forward in a new era of conciliation, attempting to work with the new

Herefordshire Council, as it moves forward reengineering our built environment. Lets encourage them to be better at real consultation, the LDF [Local Development Framework] being the immediate big one.

The argument for the second river crossing will need to be fully presented, with understandable statistics, full consultation and the opportunity for input by individuals and amenity societies.

AND how will the future pan out? This quarter Andrew Simmonds presents his view of how Herefordshire could operate in an environmentally positive way. It's compelling stuff, in my view, and wants studying. JB

## Guest Editorial : Andrew Simmonds

Andy is an architectural designer and sustainable building consultant, having his practice Simmonds.Mills Architects in Hereford. He works closely with local energy specialist, David Olivier of Energy Advisory Associates, on architectural and AECB research projects.

This article attempts to illustrate the possibilities for the County's economic and infrastructure development, in the context of declining fossil fuel and other natural resources, environmental degradation and predicted growing climate instability. I suggest that if we were to take an imaginative and *integrated* approach to our county's future development - informed by scientific principles and examples of successful developments elsewhere – our older selves (our children and grandchildren) would not be wondering what had hit us so hard when looking back at the County from 2050.

### Looking Forward to 2050 - Our Changing Economic Fortunes

*"My concern, like millions of others, is that for the first time for more than a century, the next generation will struggle to do better than the last."* Ed Miliband, Leader of the Labour Party

I also share this concern. In the USA. ex. financier and Post Carbon Institute Board member, Nate Hagens emphasises how fossil fuels have turned us into 'super humans':

*"The amount of human labor that oil and other fossil fuels have been able to replace or allocate to other pursuits is gargantuan. The average human can generate only about 0.6 kilowatt-hours per day from physical effort.... [that's] more than \$300 per kWh... Oil, even at \$110 per barrel, costs us just 6 cents per kWh, or 500 times cheaper than human labor."*

He illustrates how replacing human effort with fossil fuels has been the primary driver of economic riches of the past couple of generations.

### Impact of an unstable climate on our grandchildren

Meanwhile the work of many scientists, including Dr. James Hansen of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies - Earth Sciences Division demonstrates the clear link between fossil fuel use, stability of our global climate and the likely impacts on our children and our grandchildren if we pursue 'business as usual'.

He states that despite overwhelming evidence, governments and the fossil fuel industry continue to propose that all fossil fuels must be exploited before the world turns predominantly to clean energies. Yet he argues that a scenario that stabilises climate and preserves nature is both technically possible and essential for the future of humanity.

Recent newspaper articles on reduced solar activity giving us a 'get out of jail card free' on global warming, appear ill informed: if the decrease in energy from the sun predicted for a few decades to come does occur, we may get a cooling of around 0.3 degrees C, compared to a predicted rise in temperatures under the 'business as usual' scenario of 2 – 4.5 degrees C by 2100. It won't stop the acidification of the seas from increasing CO2 in the atmosphere either. As suggested in a New Scientist editorial in June, "That isn't a new ice age: it's a slightly less severe heatwave'.

### Energy and Economic Development

The UK has not had a coherent Energy Policy since WW2. Yet such a policy is vital – it could create the basis for UK economic prosperity and citizens' wellbeing or it could set in motion an overall decline in the fortunes of the UK.

Past Governments lack of success in this area, combined with the precarious situation we find ourselves in, economically and environmentally, means we really do need to get it 'right'. The consequences of a less than successful policy would appear to be severe - for all of us.

The Hirsch report(1) concludes that; world oil peaking is going to happen, probably within a decade; previous energy transitions (wood to coal and coal to oil and gas) were gradual and evolutionary - oil peaking will be abrupt and revolutionary; there will be no quick fixes, but early mitigation will avoid significant economic hardship and major upheaval. It appears that previous and current UK governments were

aware of this, whilst publicly soothing us, that 'all will be well'....

It is worth remembering that economic activity has historically followed patterns of energy availability, wood, coal, wind(mills), water(wheels), geothermal (spas) and so on. With the discovery of fossil fuels, the localised industries became delinked from local energy sources and fuels. Thus Herefordshire's activities, like the rest of the country, are no longer based on local forms of energy. For the bulk of the County's citizens and businesses this situation cannot be easily, or quickly reversed, given our current levels of population, and the living standards we have become accustomed to.



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# No Silver Bullets

- Biomass
- Carbon Capture and Storage
- Nuclear

Previous groundbreaking reports in this area, such as The Centre for Alternative Technology 'Zero Carbon Britain' have arguably placed too much emphasis on the potential for biomass (wood and other plant material) for replacing our needs for heat and power.

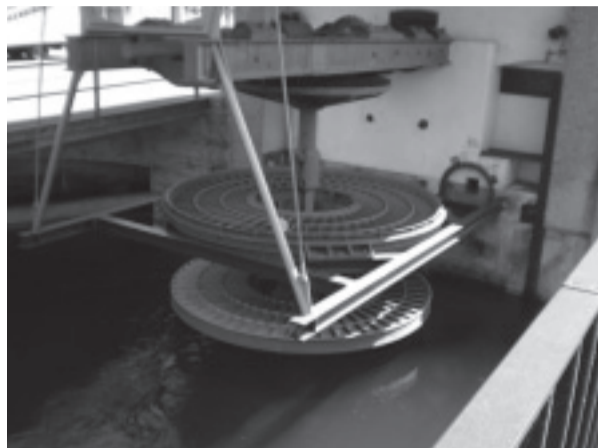
Affordable access to wood fuel, even for rural Herefordians, will be limited by rising costs and falling availability. Increasing wood burning will lead to severe impacts on air quality, which explains why DEFRA and DECC(2) have different takes on the Renewable Heat Incentive, with DECC promoting biomass as 'low carbon' fuel, and DEFRA warning of significant additional health costs for the community, including 540,000 premature deaths/year across Europe. The recent AECB(3) paper, 'Biomass – A Burning Issue' even challenges the idea that burning biomass is 'carbon neutral'.

Whilst oil and gas won't disappear that quickly (relative to 4 year terms of office) prices will probably rise. The social, political and environmental impacts of extracting gas and oil will increase. Endless conflict, and political corruption from nations chasing increasingly hard to extract, diminishing supplies of fossil fuels (or uranium) is not an attractive background for our children to grow up with – or fight for.



Carbon capture and storage - watch this expensive space, or don't burn the coal in the first place?

We must remember that Energy is not the same as Electricity – confusing the terms means confusing the debate. Electricity demand is increasing and government plans to further increase the use of electricity – electric cars, electric heat pumps and so on, underpinned by a combination of many new nuclear power stations and on and offshore wind power. Meanwhile Germany plans to reduce the use of electricity; and cancel their nuclear programme.



Nuclear power has never provided more than 4% of UK total energy as delivered to consumers yet has cost £ billions in public subsidies - and we still don't know how to store the waste, whilst building reactors in risky low lying areas exposed to storm surges. We need to be open to the debate, but arguments for needing a large expansion of nuclear power stations are not yet made, rather they are driven by an Energy policy that has a vision of an 'all electric Britain' – not accepted in other countries - and by powerful commercial interests. In current debates the missing piece of the jigsaw is energy efficiency. In my view the underutilised energy efficiency technologies appear to offer more in terms of economic prosperity (including that of being more fairly distributed) and benefits to communities and citizens, than big shiny power stations and expensive energy in the form of electricity.

## Main conclusions of 'Less is More – Energy Security after Oil'

a report by David Oliver and Andy Simmonds

### Peaks and pollution

The UK has passed its own "peak coal", "peak oil" and "peak gas" and has set itself a legal requirement to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 80% by 2050. However, stronger action than this now appears necessary. A body of scientific opinion suggests that we need to return atmospheric CO2 concentrations to 350 ppm from today's level of 390 ppm.

### Economics

Although we must respond to climate change, and are increasingly concerned over fossil fuel shortages, it is economics which dictates that our energy future will be very different from the past. Most future energy supply systems are much costlier than the fossil fuel systems which have fuelled the development of industrial society. Energy efficiency technologies may compete with/undercut past or present fossil fuel supply, but little else does.

### Confidence of success

The conclusions are in line with what has empirically worked in other countries and regions, especially parts of mainland Europe and North America. The report emphasises the importance of basing our energy future on proven technologies - not on technical breakthroughs which would be useful but which may never happen.

The report questions that current climate change programs can deliver a sustainable and affordable energy system. We need a fresh start, via a policy

which gives energy efficiency in all its aspects a central role. The UK would then stand a better chance of improving current levels of prosperity, health and well-being as fossil fuels run down. It is better to be realistic now about the difficulties of securing sufficient energy supplies after oil, than to continue with policies whose outcome could be unsuccessful.

### Morals, Leadership and Business

The UK was the first country to industrialise. It has contributed disproportionately to worldwide CO2 emissions. So it is especially fitting to suggest that it takes a practical lead in trying to solve the problem.

Aiming for faster greenhouse gas reductions, and achieving them in a more affordable and equitable way, would strengthen the UK economy and improve social cohesion. It offers to position the UK, the first industrialised nation, as a leader and role model for other countries. .

### Democracy & Short Termism

"There is a Greek proverb I wish every elected [federal and state] official would recite before starting any talks about our energy policies and challenges: "A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." LZ Granderson(4)

Simply put, short term thinking can be a serious problem - it always has been, but perhaps never more so than now.

"Tackling climate change, like boosting social mobility, is a long-term challenge. So one of the biggest questions facing politicians today is: how do we get better at tackling long-term problems, rather



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### Glossary

- 1 Hirsch Report, US Department of Energy, 2005
- 2 Department of Energy and Climate Change
- 3 Association Energy Conscious Builders
- 4 America, get real about the high cost of cheap gas - CNN.com
- 5 International Network for Sustainable Energy. [www.inforse.org](http://www.inforse.org).
- 6 World Wildlife Fund
- 7 Passivhaus. German insulation accreditation organisation

So, if we have no silver bullets, and we want to maintain warm homes and continue to use modern appliances and equipment without destabilising the climate and going bankrupt, what's our 40 year plan to achieve a safe, viable, prospering County in 2050?

*than taking the easy route and leaving them to future governments?"* Nick Clegg 23rd May 2011

*"Are our structures of economic decision-making fit for purpose? That depends on what the purpose is, of course. If decisions need to be made for the long-term, and if they should take into account a balance of different interests and concerns, which they should, then the answer has surely got to be no. 'Good transition' to a green economy will require changes to the current short-term nature of the political system"* Victor Anderson, One Planet Economy Leader, WWF(6)

Both nationally, and importantly locally, we need to start thinking about our old age, our children and grandchildren much more realistically. We need to look at improving the quality of our understanding about the challenges we face and the quality of our decision making. We need to improve the quality of our local democratic processes, whilst ensuring that

*"defending the interests of young and future generations does not become party political, but continues to be pushed up the agenda of all politicians, no matter what party they are from or what their 'colours' are."* Think 2050 blog

I believe that we could start to make solid plans for mitigating and adapting to climate change, right here in Herefordshire - aiming to demonstrate an affordable and more equitable energy transition. But how do we plan this transition locally, if the national government's plan perhaps does not seem credible, proves to be unaffordable, or doesn't fit the nature of Herefordshire? What if Herefordshire had the audacity to 'lead the way'?

# Less is More – *looking forward to 2050*

I suggest that "Less is More", having taken the most widely informed and integrated approach, offers intriguing possibilities for those living and working in Herefordshire over the next 40 years - so let's imagine what it might look like in our County - as written up in the press.

## 2011 – 2015

Unrelenting media coverage of events in oil and gas producing nations, global and national financial convulsions, and the growing political restlessness of people young and old in the UK provides a vivid backdrop to Herefordians' thoughts, as local politicians, of all parties and their electorates, increasingly appreciate the harsh realities of the Government's policies.

The UK economic situation becomes increasingly difficult, and social and economic inequalities across Herefordshire become more pronounced. Younger people start to realise that engaging with local politics may be the only way to safeguard their future wellbeing.

No major infrastructure projects are started, but exciting plans are discussed to build a new bridge over the Wye - sadly there is no funding available.

However following well evidenced proposals from a number of councillors, trials of hitherto unimplemented measures to reduce traffic congestion are a surprising success, and a campaign to maintain rural bus services combined with innovative community transport schemes is lauded nationally, as an exemplar approach to sustainable and affordable transport.

The business opportunities for the local construction sector, based around low-energy, low-carbon refurbishment becomes apparent. Energy bills soar and colder winters, caused by changes to North Atlantic wind patterns appear to be here to stay. The Government announces that the energy utilities will be regulated, and incentivised to invest in the cheapest measures. Herefordshire businesses, having had the foresight to invest in the skills and accreditation required, are well positioned to compete with the Utility owned Green Deal companies. The market for the Green Deal finally starts to take off, and local campaigns to 'Keep it in the County' encourages householders to use local Green Deal firms – successfully enriching Herefordshire's economy.

## 2015 - 2030

For the 2015 Local Elections Herefordshire's most forward looking political groups combine and gain a majority on the County Council. They immediately start to implement their long planned joint 'Business Green' and 'Transition Skills' programme. The Council form an influential national group with several UK and Continental Local Authorities with similar programmes, including green thinking provincial administrators in China. Sharing experience and expertise the Council develop several innovative financial investment models and trade arrangements, based on a wide range of energy efficiency technologies and products, related skills and knowledge exchange.

Several completed projects for water turbines combining energy production with flood control, habitat creation and tourist features – are recognised as a model for sensitive water power developments across the UK.

The Council limits the number of wind turbines in the county but, contentiously, approves a maximum of five large community owned turbines. The UK starts to suffer electricity shortages against a backdrop of a struggling nuclear programme, beset with cost overruns, technical problems, and protests at nuclear sites – attitudes start to change.

Bids for ambitious low carbon district heating schemes for the Hereford market towns are submitted to Europe by the Council. These bids are successful and the match funding for the laying of hot water pipes in town centres is offset by a charge on privatised utilities, telecoms and entertainment companies laying cables at the same time. An increasing number of town centre flats, houses and businesses have been insulated and are now serviced by low cost hot water district heating – powered by a network of neighbourhood scale Combined Heat and Power units running on a natural gas and Biogas fuel mix. Some towns have invested in installing field scale solar thermal panels to contribute to the heat network.

Herefordshire's accelerated Green Deal programme has increased householder's comfort levels during the colder winters and hotter summers. The county's skilled Green Deal SMEs provide their services to neighbouring counties.

## 2030 - 2050:

As winter power cuts continue across the UK, Herefordshire towns demonstrate their resilience. The networks of heat and power units providing hot water, also produce electricity when the national grid goes off. Increasing numbers of off-gas grid rural homes have been insulated to near Passivhaus(7) levels and stay warm affordably through the cold winters.

The Hereford Times reports that the County is one of the happiest and most stable places to live and work. Top stories in 2049 recount the political developments that led to broader representation, fresh ideas and improved decision making.

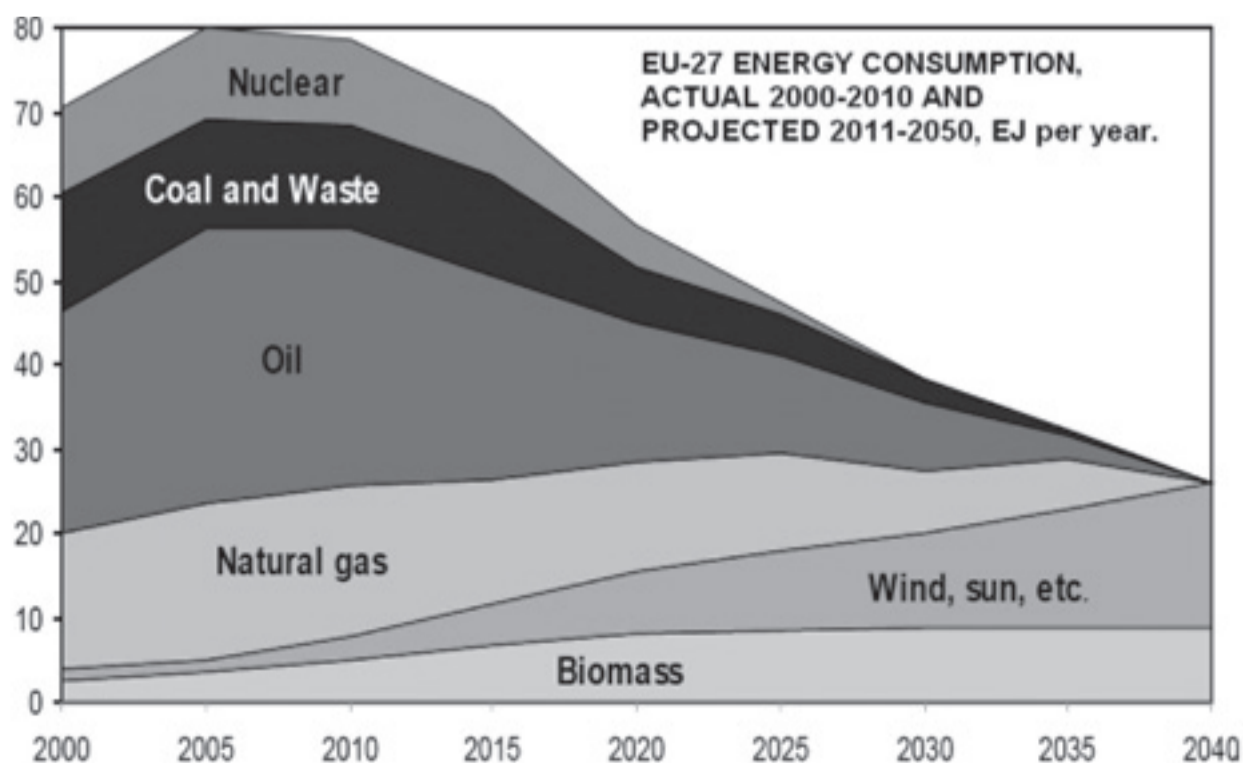
In 2050 the UK's Devolved Administrations Group Leader presents Herefordshire Council with the UK's most prestigious award for the County's inspirational, democratic, evidence and science based energy forward planning – and for having the audacity to demonstrate a better way forward.

## OPINION

It's fair to say I'm a bit greener than I was having read this amalgam of fascinating thoughts. But I still feel, as I believe most readers will, that this energy dilemma will get resolved by others and can I influence it anyway? However here is a man with a mission, and some interesting forecasts but where is the detail? Don't we want a more business like approach? What are the sums? How many wind turbines? Will everyone have solar panels? Until the environmentalists behave like hard nosed capitalists, I fear we won't get the necessary momentum to save our planet.

JB

A possible vision of a 100% Renewable Energy Supply in 2040 for the EU



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# Dr D's Dismal Diagnosis.....



**E**conomics is, famously, the dismal science. Dismal not just because it's laden with sleep-inducing jargon, and because it has a dismal record of predicting booms and busts, but dismal because there's something peculiarly bloodless and depressing about the way it approaches our lives. The "rational chooser" at the

heart of economic theory feels like an unpleasantly paired-down version of a real person. We listen to economists and ask ourselves: are we really just price optimisers on legs? No, of course we aren't. So we leave economics to the freaks and the geeks, and instead we talk about design, and urban living, and sustainable communities. In other words, cosy things, that feel more human.

This is a big mistake. Take the economics out of planning, architecture, and urban design and you've lost the rationale - and probably lost the plot. For instance, look at the current trend towards so-called

"small format" stores - the trend developers Stanhope are riding to secure tenants at their version of Hereford's Cattle Market retail scheme.

John Lewis, House of Fraser and Debenhams, the big anchor tenants in prospect, normally opt for large department stores typically above 100,000 sq ft (for comparison, a football pitch is about 58,000 sq ft). Yet the latest trend is for smaller stores - 40,000 sq ft or thereabouts as retailers move into new smaller markets in an effort to sustain turnover and grow brand awareness.

Retailers know that they are suffering both from the (recessionary) slide in sales since early 2008 but also thanks to a longer-term problem connected with consumer habits and market saturation. Since 1990, consumer spending has grown appreciably more slowly than consumer incomes and the trend is getting worse. Figures from Verdict research and official sources suggest disposable income will fall by about 1.5 per cent this year, with retail sales rising by 1 per cent. This looks grim, but positive, until you realise that inflation is running at something over 4 per cent - so retail spending is in fact falling sharply compared to incomes.

These figures are all averages, and all very debatable, but the trend is clear enough. In short, for the last twenty years we've been spending less (as a proportion of our income) on stuff, and spending more of the less we spend in the online world. Demand for shops at the Cattle Market turns on this analysis and the assumptions that underlie it. Nobody thinks - not seriously - that consumers are suddenly going to stop wanting TVs, microwaves, this summer's fashions, or the latest cool electronics kit. But it's not clear they are going to want them anything like as much as retailers hoped.

In the end it all depends what assumptions you make about consumer behaviour now, and in the next five to ten years. If the UK economy doesn't revert to its high-borrowing high-spending "normal" very soon, lots of retailers - along with the developers who build for them, and the investors who fund the developers - will have more than egg on their faces. If the UK does revert to trend we have a problem of another kind. Either way it will be dismal.

## Planning Matters.....

Here we list recent planning applications and any action that our executive committee has taken. Our Society is concerned about the built environment and we peruse all new applications and assess against a schedule of criteria. When we feel applications justify a comment we submit a letter to the Planning Department. These letters are shown on our web site and are the opinions of the committee at the time of the letter.

**To view plans on the web go to [www.ukplanning.com](http://www.ukplanning.com)**

Click on 'select another council' (highlighted in blue)  
Click on Herefordshire Council  
Click on 'Search applications' (on the left hand side)  
Scroll down to 'Application Number' and enter the relevant six figures

**110489**  
19 Commercial Road. Change from restaurant to Take Away with three flats above.

**110751**  
16/17 Church Street. Upper floors to be made into self contained flats. The ground floor is a restaurant.

**110797**  
Aldi stores, Whitecross Road. Extension of existing food store and glazed canopy. Aldi first applied in May 2008 and were refused permission because of the building materials they wished to use. It was thought that "rendering" was not suitable in the Eign gate area. There was an appeal which granted permission in August 2008. Although this is a new application, there appears to be little difference to the first application.

**110709**  
31 Eign Gate. This is the old saddler shop. A previous planning permission was granted. This application is for 2 x 1 bed apartments and 2 x 2 bed apartments. The retail area and shop front are retained. There is to be an entrance from West Street.

**102216**  
26 St Owen's Street. Convert 1st and 2nd floors to 2 flats. This was once Marchants grocery till early 1970. The upper floors were residential then. The warehouse and yard on East Street, which received planning consent for 10 x 1 bed flats were related to the business.

**110911**  
17 St Peter's Street. Fire damaged listed building. Grade II. To be rebuilt using all possible original materials. Ground floor retail shop; 1st floor training; 2nd floor, storage. Greater use of fire resistant materials. Architect Hook Mason.

**110919**  
Campions, Greyfriars Avenue. 21 apartments with parking by Jamieson Associates to be developed by Riverside Construction Ltd. Mainly 2 bed apartments on pilotis. HCS has commented because of this important gateway location. Details on our web site.

**111020**  
48 Edgar Street. Reinstatement of north bank of Widemarsh Brook. The brook was excavated in 2003 by the council giving rise to some problems to No 48.

### Criteria used when considering new planning applications

Architectural / design merit  
Suitability of the scheme / design in relation to its context or surroundings  
Layout of interior spaces and suitability of circulation routes  
Design relating to use and functionality  
How the character and structure of the scheme relate or convey its intended use  
Sustainability credentials (materials sourcing, water use, energy consumption, waste minimisation)  
Construction and detailing  
Civic contribution - social, cultural, environmental or economic benefit to the local community

**110995**  
Hampton Grange, nursing home. These plans are revised. The proposal is "to reduce the levels of the new blocks; turning the roof line towards Hampton Park Road; to reduce the bulk of the proposed new building. The gable features are accentuated by stepping the façade away from Hampton Grange"

**111053**  
60 Aylestone Hill. Change of use from residential to dental surgery with new access and parking which covers most of the back garden and the felling of some trees.

**111080**  
48 St. Owens Street. Conversion of 1st and 2nd floor to 7 x 1 bed flats. This was the restaurant Arte. HCS is commenting. Concerns include fire access and separation, disabled access to residential units, and the major timber structure between units.

**111036**  
The Cider Mills Plough Lane. Road exit improvement from mills. Formation of temporary car park for council.

**110948**  
Ambulance station. New work shop and fuel tank.

**111195(O)**  
100 Grandstand Road through to Highmore Street, conversion of 3 commercial units into residential dwellings and construction of 2 new dwellings.

**111242/L**  
1 High Town, 2 external illuminated fascia signs and 2 non illuminated. Modification to internal lay out to provide better means of escape.

**111261**  
St Martin's Primary School, link corridor and canopy

**111215/L**  
Green Dragon, 300mm telecom dish to be fixed to existing antenna pole on rooftop.

**111346**  
Wessex garage. Change of use to storage and distribution unit.

**110754**  
49 Frederick Ave. 2 storey extension, revised drawing

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**111311**  
St Martin Leisure Pool. New Entrance, reception, café, gym. Reorganisation of internal space and cladding of north elevation.

**111353**  
122-124 Widemarsh Street. Play Planet. To remove existing condition and allow use of vacant 1st floor as martial arts school.

### NEXT ISSUE - MAIN FEATURE

#### TREES IN HEREFORD CITY AND THE COUNTY

The recent National Ecosystem Assessment and the Natural Environment White Paper in England both highlight the need for more trees and woodland to underpin the delivery of 'ecosystem services' such as climate adaptation and water management, and as a foundation for a healthy economy. What does this mean for Herefordshire? Why do we need more trees and where should they go?

# Let's Find a Home for the Skylon

**W**ITH the nation's attention focussed on local government elections, an electoral reform referendum and the royal wedding, it was perhaps inevitable that the 60th anniversary of the official opening of the Festival of Britain in May 1951 should pass almost unnoticed.

Apart from the superbly refurbished Royal Festival Hall, nothing remains of Herbert Morrison's modernist expo, once located on a semi-derelict 11-hectare riverside site in front of Waterloo Station. 'Borrowed' from a 1943 RSA proposal to celebrate the centenary of the Great Exhibition of 1851, the 1951 exhibition's theme was changed by the post-war Labour government from a Victorian valedictory to a 'tonic for the nation' morale booster.

This summer, the Southbank Centre has mounted a multi-media exhibition in the Festival Hall's new basement Museum (*The Museum of '51; until 4 September; 10.00-22.00hrs daily*). As well as archive newsreels, clunky documentaries, memorabilia and an evocative recreation of a 50's middle class family sitting room (or 'lounge' as they were then known), the exhibition is packed with architectural goodies, including a wealth of material devoted to the Skylon.

The subject of an open design competition which attracted 150 entries, it was won by Philip Powell and Hildalgo 'Jacko' Moya, aided by the Austrian

structural engineering genius Felix Samuely. Five years earlier, the young architects had pulled off a stunning coup by winning the competition for post-war London's largest experimental public sector housing scheme, in Pimlico, later known as Churchill Gardens and now enjoying listed building status.

The Skylon was fabricated in Hereford by Painter Brothers, who had won the prestigious contract in partnership with British Callenders & Cables. The 3.6m braced steel sections were part-assembled in Painter's Mortimer Road works, and transported to London on a fleet of articulated low-loader lorries.

Redolent of *Eagle* comic's Dan Dare adventures, the fascination for the South Bank's 8 million visitors was that the rocket-shaped Skylon appeared to be suspended in space. Samuely had convinced the designers (both former students of his at the Architectural Association) that the 72m-high structure could be 'floated' 15m above ground on just three prop-supported cables, with three further anchor cables attached to its upper body. At 28 tons, it was remarkably light and so posed little risk of being blown off its cradle. The Festival's most eye-catching landmark was not, in fact, cylindrical but had a tapering 12-sided profile, with its skeletal sub-structure ingeniously concealed behind satin-finished horizontal aluminium louvres, back-lit by night.

## Brief life

The Skylon must surely rank as the architectural masterpiece with the shortest life span. On assuming power from Labour the year after the Festival closed, Winston Churchill ordered the tower's destruction, on the grounds that it was a socialistic totem. Along with the aluminium roof cladding of the Dome of Discovery, the dismantled Skylon was sold to a west London scrap merchant.

Three years ago, the former President of the RIBA Jack Pringle launched an initiative to get a full-size replica of the Skylon erected on the South Bank, in time for this year's 60th anniversary celebrations, though sadly nothing came of the idea. In its pomp, the Skylon dominated the London skyline; if re-erected on the same spot today, the replica would inevitably be overshadowed by Marks & Barfield's glitzy 135m high London Eye. So why shouldn't Hereford 'pick up the baton' and return the Skylon to its original home? Perhaps a half-scale replica, set in a public space within Allies & Morrison's Stanhope retail development? Still in business in this city after more than 90 years, Painter Brothers would love to get involved. Over to you Hereford Futures! Nick Jones



The illuminated Skylon, flanked by the Dome of Discovery (left).

Photo courtesy Design Council Archives, University of Brighton

## New Cattle Market opens

Our Hereford born chairman was asked to undertake an architectural criticism of our new cattle market. This is what he wrote:

### Compare the Markets.com

After its long city centre history knowledge that the Hereford cattle market was to trade for the very last day was broadcast to me via a twitter-feed. You may be forgiven for thinking that within the void of cyber-space a banal 140-character-twitter-feed is no big-story. However, for anyone with knowledge of the cattle market's back-story, sight of the newly built livestock market on the edge of the city, and a sense for Hereford coursing through their veins – it is a twitter-feed tinged with sadness. As the replacement livestock market is even more banal than the twitter-feed.

The old cattle market did offer trader synergy with the city centre – the new market is a remote out of town experience; the old cattle market was an architectural celebration of Herefords traditional agricultural barn aesthetic – the new market is no architectural celebration at all; the old cattle market was meant to be a regeneration opportunity – the new market is an opportunity lost.

As a student of architecture coming from Hereford I recall being impressed by a cattle market project in Broken Hill, Australia – a striking opportunity celebrating agricultural design; putting the town on the map it was a bold statement from a community connected to its agricultural heritage believing it had a future in agricultural excellence.

When the new Hereford market was just a concept, I mentioned to the Leader of Herefordshire Council, who happened to also be in farming, that this was an opportunity for Herefordshire to establish a market centre of excellence. I encouraged the bringing about of a global centre of excellence, which would be able to hold its own in food science, animal husbandry and seed spin-off enterprises in agriculture and food technology. Such a benchmark project for Herefordshire has sadly fallen through the fingers of local government.

The new market project, imagined through PFI, has let Herefordshire down and the commissioning client body has let it happen. The project has been seen as a least-cost, fast-track project enabling development of ESG. It is not a project that solves congestion or allows the farming industry to flourish. This new market is a statement that no one cares about agriculture anymore. It is a utility-experience, a hygiene safe. structurally economic shed, a lorry accessed easy in and out detour off the Roman Road.



Making any real connection between food excellence and agriculture is difficult in the UK, the world is right to mock British food heritage and whilst agriculture in the UK is only a small percentage of GDP the agricultural industry has lost its lobbying power to call for anything better.

Sad then that a banal tweeter-feed records Hereford's new market banality – no longer an agricultural community to be celebrated through purposeful design; but a community that is instead promised a Waitrose. Stranger still that it will be a Waitrose that extols the virtue of farm and food traceability.

In Herefordshire compare the markets dot com is not simple but given our heritage it should be.

**Garry Thomas** BA [Hons] AADipl. RIBA

*Our Autumn edition will include a more formal critique of the building, and a sheep farmer's view of whether it is fit for purpose.*

## Hereford City Plan

At the end of May Hereford City Council published its Hereford City Plan. The Council had the laudable objective "to be more active in the City and wanted to be sure that they were really representing the views of the people who live there". They commissioned a community led planning project from Community First and Herefordshire Voluntary Action.

Through consultation, questionnaires, meetings and "Planning for Real" events across all the seven wards of the city, the project team gathered together information from residents, on the problems and priorities that they felt the City Council should address, in regard to Community Facilities, Crime and Safety, Environment, Health, Housing, Traffic, Transport and Work and Education.

This has produced a large number of very detailed comments, which are all tabulated in the overall and ward reports, and there is certainly plenty for the newly elected Council to get its teeth into. The next stage is the production of an action plan for each ward.

The ability of the City Council to actually do anything is affected by the fact that the money and action needed is controlled by the County Council – how much can the City Council persuade Herefordshire Council to do what is necessary? There must be considerable limitations on what it can actually achieve on its own, and it will require a more robust interaction with Herefordshire Council than we have seen in the past. Also what is not clear is how the City Plan fits in with the Local Development Framework (LDF) at present being developed. Only time will tell.

Local Authorities are being encouraged to support initiatives which are community based, and as the report says "This plan provides a chance to do just that".

## Localism latest

Two new "Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners", out of 40 allocated by the Government, are Leominster and Golden Valley who will each receive £20,000 towards developing a local plan. Let's hope the plans result in real progress to meeting the objects set out in the LDF – pity that hasn't yet been written.

## Living Villages – a Big Society initiative

As the Localism Bill goes through its third reading in the Lords, the Tories ran a Living Villages seminar on 24th June.

Led by John Jarvis, new Leader of Herefordshire Council, and supported by our MP, there was an impressive debut performance by new Councillor Graham Powell. Elegantly tied and suited, Powell has been an active campaigner for improved broadband coverage in Herefordshire. He is driving the reversal of top down policies and has been appointed to bring connection with the real world, advising Phillips, who remains in the cabinet. Powell does not give the impression of being a man happy to have his strings pulled. The Council appears to want to deal with the 'Localities' (there are 9 in Herefordshire), rather than the 134 parish councils. But the parish councillors, who don't even like talking with their neighbours, wish to remain in their silos (I suspect of the grain variety and can hardly blame them). Poor Powell, a former dynamic telephone magnet, creating mobile networks across the developing world, bringing communications and fair access to the underprivileged; now facing a more daunting challenge - 'Developing resilience and sustainability in Herefordshire'. And this must be all within the policies set out in the LDF (Local Development Framework) but HC are not even submitting it to Government for approval until Spring 2012!

## Sustainable development

The Government has resisted moves to include a definition of sustainable development on the face of the Localism Bill when it was debated in Parliament. Baroness Hanman, the minister who leads for the Department for Communities and Local Government in the Lords, warned peers that such a move risked creating what she termed "a lawyer's paradise". June 2011

## Civic Day at Castle Green

A sunny 25th June saw our society celebrate Civic Day with a couple of stalls at the Castle Green Summer Fayre. "How well do you know your city?" was, for most, an embarrassing occasion trying to recall the location of beautifully photographed ironwork throughout the city. Prize winners are listed on our website. Visitors recorded their views on whether the City should have more trees, and several read stories to young and old alike, extolling the virtues of good civil architecture.

## Truro development - another ESG?

A planning application has been submitted for a major shopping and housing development in east Truro. The multi-million pound scheme, called the Truro Eastern District Centre, would see a Waitrose supermarket located on a 19 hectare site near the city's cattle market as well as 98 new homes, community allotments and a waste recycling centre, plus a 1,300-space park and ride car park. The proposed project is a partnership between Cornwall Council, the Duchy of Cornwall, Waitrose, and local food producer group The Taste of Cornwall.

## Recent Meetings

20th April 2011 – **Holme Lacey Campus** – Rob Dunn

A stimulating talk about our local agricultural college, which has over 500 full time students and 800 part time ones, instructed by 31 staff and 13 support workers. With its own organic farm of 500 acres, Pound Farm sets the highest standards for good husbandry. Agriculture is one of the biggest industries in Herefordshire, when all aspects are included, and Holme Lacey is especially known for blacksmithing.

A grand redevelopment plan might have been scuppered by the recent Grade II listing of the Bower House, a Georgian mansion used as offices.

What is galling is the national funding process and the planning restrictions of redevelopment on the existing footprint of the college buildings. Apparently the extent of funding is calculated differently for refurbishment and new build.

The sale of the recently listed house, demolition of the existing sub standard facilities and "development in the open countryside" is surely the way forward; but we have to bend the rules to get there. Surely a case for the support of Sir Ben Gill?

We are a rural county and must maintain the highest standards of agricultural education, and preserve our nationally respected establishment.

25th May 2011 – **Herefordshire's Historic Mills** – Alan Stoyel

Many pictures of mills, had us all intrigued, during this informative lecture which went from the technical to the aesthetic. The less efficient undershot wheel, less than 20 per cent efficiency, to the overshot, at 70%; then there is a turbine style which is rare in the county.

We were surprised to hear, though, that there are more than just flour mills in Herefordshire. Many farms had their own, seldom used, for grinding corn for their own consumption; fed by narrow leets often across several fields. We were reminded of the higher water table a couple of centuries ago, before extensive field drainage systems, so what appears as a pathetic flow now could well have driven a modest wheel.

Lubrication of the wooden gears made from pear, apple, beech or hornbeam would have been minimal and itinerant stonemasons would have reground the stones.

The 1695 Navigation Act put paid to mills on the Wye, although there is still some evidence of their existence and the weirs, at Fownhope.

Every year, over the second weekend in May, a large number of mills are open to the public – [www.nationalmillsweekend.co.uk](http://www.nationalmillsweekend.co.uk) - for more information. Next year there will be many more visitors, especially from our society.

22nd June 2011 – **The Saturation of Supermarkets** – Peter Wynne-James

A life time as a consultant to the retail industry, Peter commenced his fascinating lecture with a film he made in 1972, depicting the new retail style of Carrefour in France. At Parly2, the now familiar pattern, with two large anchor stores and malls of smaller shops without fronts, allowing a fluid movement of shoppers. Essentially a new style, making shopping a family affair with a vast range of products; catering for all tastes, including men! It was him who inspired Asda, and others, to develop out of town superstores!

But now he is worried by the over supply, and the demise of our town centres. Particularly, he is concerned about the conduct of the major retailers, providing little real supporting evidence with their planning applications, and the lack of research that planning officers undertake to test the validity of these approaches.

In Hereford the retail floorspace is spread between Tesco 26%, Sainsbury's 21%, Asda 18%, Morrisons 13% and the rest 22%; the Competition Commission flex their muscles at the 60% level.

And inevitably to ESG, which Peter considers a mistake. None of the audience approve the modus operandi of the big retailers; but all but three are regular supermarket shoppers.

### Herefordshire Heritage Open Days

Part of the national scheme ([www.heritageopendays.org](http://www.heritageopendays.org)) allowing access to buildings and places not normally available.

#### Here is just a SAMPLE of what is on offer

Somewhat out of the ordinary and especially arranged for Heritage Open Days is the Hereford City Walls Walking Tour when you can learn all about the city's medieval defences and hidden military history with urban archaeologist, Nigel Baker, on Sunday 11th September, 2.00pm. meet front of Hereford Cathedral. Bookings on 01432 260692

The Guild of Guides will be leading a walk about the hauntings of Hereford which will take place in the evenings, at 7.30pm, on Thursday 8th and Friday 9th September. meet Discover Herefordshire Centre. Bookings on 01432 274904 or [wendsoi@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:wendsoi@yahoo.co.uk)

Garnons is a privately owned house in Byford, not usually open to the public but on Friday 9th and Sunday 11th September you can visit the house and gardens and go on a guided tour at 10.30am or 2.30pm.

St Francis Xavier is an often overlooked church in the centre of Hereford on Broad Street which will be open on Sunday, after mass, for any visitors who wish to see the star-studded 60 foot high, domed roof. Several other fascinating churches are new additions to the HODs family: Longworth Chapel, St Mary's Church in Much Cowarne, the Moravian Church in Leominster and St Mary the Virgin Church in Elton with its T A Knight connections. A Year in the Orchard has inspired the Herefordshire Orchard Heritage Walk and Talk on Thursday 8th September at 2.00pm and Friday 9th September at 6.15pm with an optional extension to listen and look for bats afterwards, starting from Bodenham Lake Nature Reserve Orchards.

The Burgage hall in Ledbury will host an illustrated talk on Lady Henry Somerset by author, Ros Black, at 2pm on Saturday 10th September, and an exhibition about the outbreak of WWI. The historic Friends Meeting House in Ross welcomes visitors to see both the building and burial ground dating from 1675. Local Historian, Mary Sinclair-Powell will be giving a talk on Saturday 10th September at 7.00pm and also leading a walk from the Market House Visitor Centre earlier on, meeting at 10.15 for 10.30am start and ending with tea and cakes. Bookings on 01432 260692

For a complete list of Herefordshire openings - pick up a leaflet at Information Centres and Libraries or call the county's Museum Development Officer on 01432 383381 or email [sknox@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sknox@herefordshire.gov.uk)

### Forth coming events

#### Wednesday 28th September 2011

7.30pm Watershed, Wye Street, Hereford  
'Herefordshire's Year in the Orchard'  
Presentation by James Bisset,  
Officer for Parks, Herefordshire Council

#### Wednesday 26th October 2011

7.30pm Watershed, Wye Street, Hereford  
AGM followed by "Skylon Remembered"  
A discussion 60 years on from the Festival of Britain

#### Wednesday 23rd November 2011

7.30pm Watershed, Wye Street, Hereford  
'High Comfort, low energy building & refurbishment'  
A talk by Andrew Simmonds,  
Partner Simmonds.Mills, Architects

#### Wednesday 14th December 2011

7.30pm Watershed, Wye Street, Hereford  
'Hereford City, A landscape History'  
Illustrated talk by David Lovelace,  
Landscape Historian



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Please send membership information, subscription rates and an application form to:-

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Return to: Andree Poppleston, 33 Breinton Avenue, Hereford HR4 OJZ

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