

# news

Summer 2010

## hereford civic society

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Main News Stories – Political Changes for Hereford – Widemarsh Street

Butter Market Competition – City Stores Reopening

### Hereford Civic Society

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# future event

## THE REGENERATION GAME

A Presentation by

**Dr. David Thame**

Expert journalist on commercial property, planning and regeneration.

A look at how urban and rural regeneration works and whether it makes economic sense.

**7.30 p.m. Wednesday 27th October 2010**  
**Kindle Centre, adjacent Asda,**  
**Belmont Road, Hereford**

VISITORS WELCOME / FREE ENTRANCE

# Guest Editorial : John Faulkner

Retired civil engineer and project manager and past Chairman of the Society

The word "regeneration" has been banded about for years with different interpretations depending on one's interests, politics and opinions. What has been done in the name of regeneration has produced both outstanding successes and crashing failures. There has been insufficient understanding of both what can be achieved and of the minefields that have to be crossed on the way.

In this issue of HCS News we have brought together a few examples of the good and the bad – hence "Regeneration or Degeneration" – and attempted to draw a few lessons for Hereford. What is clear is that there will be no real regeneration without the

enthusiasm and support of a local authority with a willingness to listen to new ideas and put them into effect. Read the article on Hereford Regeneration Group to see how they were frustrated by a Council that cannot bring itself to listen.

In this issue we show what can be achieved both city wide as at Norwich, schemes that have been disasters like Kidderminster (not forgetting Wrexham and Tamworth which the It's Our City campaign highlighted) and how individual historic buildings have been rescued. In Hereford we are in danger of drifting into a disaster because the

Council has not really understood what has been achieved and the mistakes made elsewhere.

Hereford Civic Society, knowing the potential of Hereford, with its cathedral and historic core, have tried for years to encourage such ideas but to little effect. Why hasn't more been made of our river? Why are developments such as ESG not linked properly with making better use of the assets of the historic core rather than letting it decline? Why hasn't better use been made of external funding as at Norwich. Overall result - Norwich has been put on the map – Hereford just potters on.

## Regeneration or Degeneration?

What are the factors that make or break regeneration? In the articles that follow you will find examples of both success and failure and why this occurred. What is clear is that good regeneration needs a wideawake local authority with initiative, vision and enthusiasm, use of the additional outside funding that can be attracted

and proper integration of the new and the old with good design and layout. However, when physical barriers are not overcome, local traders are not considered or local opinion is ignored then you get degeneration.

### Norwich - A Success Story

For how to regenerate a historic city look no further than Norwich and the achievements of Norwich HEART (Heritage, Economic and Regeneration Trust).

HEART was set up five years ago, with support from Norwich City Council – significantly, Norwich has kept its city council status and not been subsumed into a unitary authority like Hereford. HEART is an independent, private charitable company designed to fill a gap in heritage management and to promote the virtues of cultural heritage both nationally and internationally. Its goals are:-

- to strategically plan, manage and promote all heritage assets in Norwich and
- to act as a best practice model to realise the social and economic value of
- heritage led regeneration world wide.

The Trust's ultimate aims are to get heritage in Norwich working for the maximum benefit of local people, visitors and the local economy and for Norwich to be known as one of the great cultural cities of Europe. This should also be a laudable objective for Hereford and was one of the reasons for the formation of Hereford Regeneration Group – see separate article on what happened to that idea.

Over the last five years HEART has secured £5 million from HM Treasury to develop 12 historic buildings in Norwich into an integrated family of heritage attractions forming an internationally important showcase of urban and cultural development over the last 1000 years. They then secured €4.5million from the EU to continue the project for a further three years in partnership with Ghent in Belgium.



St Andrews and Blackfriars Halls Norwich. Photo Courtesy of Norwich HEART.

Further external grants of £0.75 million were invested in local improvements in historic areas of Norwich. The New Economics Foundation found

that an investment of £0.5 million in the Lanes area of Norwich was likely to generate £17 million for the local economy - just what the historic core of Hereford needs. A further £0.5 million went into feasibility studies and designs to transform local buildings (The Halls) into a regional concert and community events centre.

Other work by HEART includes producing new interpretive signage for heritage projects, saving the Colman's Mustard Shop and Museum, starting up a broad range of educational initiatives in schools and adult education and regenerating the Wensum River Parkway as a cultural corridor through the city – where is our Wye Parkway?

So as the economy improves the visitors come. Norwich is now the only English member of the World League of Historical Cities and is bidding for World Heritage Site status.

All this shows just what can be achieved in a few years if the support and will is there. Hereford could have done the same given more initiative, enthusiasm, understanding and willingness to listen by the Council.

### Hereford Regeneration Group - A Tale of Frustration

Following Garry Thomas's lecture to the Society in October 2004 a small group set up HRG with three main aims:-

1. To form a Historic Building Trust for Hereford that could tap into outside funding for refurbishing suitable buildings in the city.
2. To encourage the production of a Supplementary Planning Document for the whole city particularly the integration of ESG with the historic core
3. To strengthen Hereford City Partnership (HCP) and establish a Business Improvement District (BID) to support traders in the city.

HRG identified the major problems affecting the city and organised a very successful Symposium attended by Councillors and officers in March 2006 when outside experts were brought in to outline

*Continued on page 3*



Castle Green Training Centre.

Photo, John Faulkner.

## Hereford Regeneration Group

(continued)

what had been done in other cities. HRG then carried out an extensive research programme and identified Norwich as a suitable model for what might be done here in Hereford. Mike Loveday, the Chief Executive of Norwich HEART, was invited to Hereford by HRG in July 2007 to give a presentation on what Norwich had achieved, again many Councillors and officers were present.

No reaction whatever was forthcoming from the council until late that year when it was suggested that HRG should become part of HCP. This they did in summer 2008. Efforts were made to draft a set of Memorandum and Articles that could satisfy the council and still allow HRG to achieve the charity status needed to access external funds. This failed and after increasing frustration with how the council wanted HCP to operate and no sign of a BID being established HRG resigned from HCP in late 2009.

HRG then tried a different route by using the government's Community Asset Programme to restore and find better uses for buildings in the city. They chose the Castle Green Training Centre as an asset which once refurbished could become a major local community centre. HRG put a proposal to the council detailing how this might be done. They asked for agreement in principle that the council would welcome and support such a project so that the considerable time and effort needed to develop it would not be wasted. This was not forthcoming with any degree of enthusiasm. At this point HRG, completely frustrated, gave up and disbanded. A major opportunity has been missed.

## Weavers' Wharf – Kidderminster

Weavers' Wharf is a good example of the so-called regeneration of an industrial site – Brinton's carpet factory. The result is degeneration as apart from the restored Piano Building – see below- and Springfield Mill, now a Debenhams, it is just large car parks surrounded by undistinguished sheds. This 40 acre development – a Centros project but since sold on twice - is about the same distance from the town centre of Kidderminster as the ESG retail quarter is from High Town. There is no ring road in the way just a footbridge over the rather dirty looking River Stour.



Weavers' Wharf.

Photo John Faulkner.

It has attracted Marks and Spencers, Tesco, Next, T Maxx and others from the town centre and has the obligatory MacDonalds and Pizza Hut. So, as in Hereford, there are plenty of charity shops and premises to let in the town centre and a large empty store on the eastern part of the ring road – too far from Weavers' Wharf?

The Piano Building – so-called because its plan shape is like a grand piano – was saved at the last minute by Kidderminster Civic Society campaigning to get it listed rather than it being demolished to make room for a multi-screen cinema.

Another part of the developer's proposals was to build affordable housing on the canal bank opposite Weavers' Wharf, but no sign of that either.

## The Arc- Bury St. Edmunds

The Arc development at Bury St. Edmunds is a good example of a modern and on the whole successful, mixed development in an historic city. It is interesting because there are a number of similarities between it and Stanhope's ESG proposals for Hereford. The populations of Bury St Edmunds and Hereford (35,000 and 55,000) are closely matched, Bury is close to shopping 'magnets' such as Cambridge and Norwich with which it competes as does Hereford with Cheltenham and Worcester.

Bury is clearly affluent and seems to have embraced the centre's pedestrianised shopping streets with gusto. The Arc sits cheek-by-jowl with the town's thriving street market - a big bonus. In contrast, both Kidderminster and Wrexham, have physical barriers: in one case a canal, in the other a ring road, which separate the old-established and the new developer-created shopping areas; this is also Hereford's big headache.

The Arc's developer was Centros, one of the three finalists in the 'beauty contest' organised by ESG. There are uncanny architectural similarities between the Arc and Stanhope's proposals for ESG, not least the louvre-fronted treatment of the terraces of balconied apartments above the arcaded rows of shops. Sales of these 62 studio flats, starting at £99,000, have been brisk. But, there were no affordable units, the developer having apparently negotiated an 'off-set' with the local planners.



The ARC Bury St. Edmunds. Photo Nick Jones.

Focus of the traffic-free £100-million complex is Charter Square, a formal civic space dominated by the rather barn-like £4-million Venue, a live music and entertainments centre being funded and run by the local council.

So are the rival elements happily co-existing in this prosperous and well-preserved town? "Up to a point Lord Copper". The Bury Free Press has had a running correspondence in its columns for several months from established local traders in some of the town's older streets, complaining about the number of units left un-let, vacated by multiples who have boarded the Arc - and that is without the barrier of an inner ring road.

If executives working for national developers are able to negotiate ingenious affordable housing 'off-sets', surely it couldn't be beyond their wit to come up with similar incentives (such as business-rates-free 'holidays') to achieve a more balanced multiple / local trader mix

along these new, bright but rather bland boulevards?

Though Bury's and Hereford's populations and retailing dreams may be closely matched, Hereford's insurmountable hurdle remains the Ring Road. The Bury model would seem to demonstrate that while the proximity of a traditional street market can be a bonus, shoppers and traffic just don't make for a good development mix.

Nick Jones

## Molineux Hotel – Wolverhampton

The Molineux Hotel building in Wolverhampton is a great example of what a local authority can do to rescue a valuable historic building.

Originally built in the 1700s for the local Molineux family the house was turned into a hotel in 1870 and subsequently its large grounds were built over. In 1979 the hotel closed and deterioration set in. Wolverhampton Council attempted but failed to put together a rescue package, and the W. Midlands Historic Buildings Trust and English Heritage got involved to attempt to save this "building at risk". There was then a serious fire in 2003 and finally the Council, with funds from its own resources, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, were able to produce a viable project to convert the building into a records office with a new modern extension housing an archive store. The valuable panelling and plasterwork of the interior has been restored and the building opened in March last year.

In Hereford could there not be a similar adaptation of a historic building such as the Town Hall or Shire Hall to house the County's records and archives? Surely a much better idea than the present intention of moving all the records out to inaccessible Rotherwas.



Molineux Building before restoration.



Photos. Courtesy City of Wolverhampton

Molineux Building after restoration and extension.

## OPINION

Some of these reports make depressing reading and especially the demise of the Hereford Regeneration Group who valiantly tried to persuade the Herefordshire Council to transfer the [Castle Green Centre](#) to a heritage charity. This procedure is now viewed as a positive way to regenerate old and valuable buildings by most enlightened councils.

Colin Dyas of Made succinctly wrote that he considered much regeneration was lacking in quality and context. "Too many strategies, too few leaders, too much confusion, too much PR, not enough

democracy and transparency and insufficient high quality".

Much of it is lacking in quality and context; we have seen red lines on plans mainly drawn by experts, some of which happened, some of which made sense but a lot of which did not.

It's too easy to use the cliché that small is beautiful but integrated improvements retaining both the best and the valid is surely the way forward in these cash strapped times; rather than grandiose schemes where the only assured beneficiaries are the teams of consultants.

JB

# Recent Meetings

## 28th April 2010 – **Delivering Housing in Herefordshire** – Keith Parry.

Keith had recently retired as Housing Enabler with Herefordshire Housing Association after a life working in public housing. He outlined the history of housing since WW I – the high quality Council housing programme of the 1920's, the post WWII housing boom when 300,000 houses were built in 1953, the advent of New Towns, the development of housing corporations and associations in the 60's leading to the 1980 Housing (Right to Buy) Act.

Housing Associations provide social housing for rent or part ownership and are financed 50% from public funds and 50% from loans. Private developers also have to provide fixed proportions of social housing in their developments.

This has not overcome the shortage of affordable housing, homelessness and the decline in rural communities. In Herefordshire there are 500 people waiting for houses with only about 15 vacancies a week. More affordable housing is needed in villages but is being restrained by planning and green belt regulations. He was not in favour of high housing densities; he felt people needed space and gardens. What had happened to bungalows?

Keith gave the meeting much to think about on housing and how it affected problems in education and crime. JB

## Letter to Editor

Sir,

In your last issue you reported that the Planning Committee had approved the ESG Link Road. I was there and as democratic decisions go this one stinks.

What took place? Cllr. Hubbard was granted a 6-minute slot, but then had to leave because of his 'prejudicial interest' as founder of the It's Our City campaign. Two members of the public – ex HCS Chairman John Faulkner and local photographer Keith James – each made 4-minute statements to the committee. After a half-hour introduction from the planning case officer there was a so-called debate which, with the notable exception of contributions from Cllrs. Dawe and Matthews, was to put it at its most charitable, pedestrian.

The agenda included comments from 12 of the statutory consultees, but the 83 letters of objection from the public were just summarised as bullet points and the 32-page HCS report merited eight words.

Six committee members (none with direct links with Aylestone Ward) drew attention to the very considerable impact which the road will have on Barrs Court, Bodenham and Southbank Roads. Surprisingly, the two Aylestone Ward councillors – Cllrs Vaughan and Wilcox – failed to attend or send in written statements. The lost opportunity to create a genuine transport interchange as part of the re-modelling of Hereford Station's forecourt, wasn't even mentioned.



## 26th May 2010 – **Working Together** – Chris Bull – Chief Executive Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire

Chris Bull runs both the Council and the NHS Primary Care Trust. As one might expect he wants to 'improve people's lives, their experience as customers, raise standards and provide value for money'.

Since he came to Herefordshire in December 2008, he has removed one complete directorate and merged teams from the Council and the Trust but they still report to their respective boards. He gave few figures to demonstrate what savings are being achieved.

He is a board member of ESG (Herefordshire) Ltd and agreed that the future of ESG and the historic core needed to be considered together. He felt unable to answer questions about the conduct of the company. The arrangement whereby the C.E. of the Council is also a director of ESG spending the Council's money seems an anomaly. At ESG he is pursuing the Councillors' political views but spending Council funds without the usual scrutiny procedures? It must be difficult to act in a conscientious and yet effective way while representing both sides.

Members were left with the impression of someone doing a difficult job but with insufficient powers of authority delegated to him by the Cabinet. JB

Nor were the problems of the 17 local businesses (employing 130 local people) affected by the new road dealt with. Shameful examples are the Rockfield DIY, with 20 full-time employees, and industrial photographer Keith James, who has been based in the same premises on Edgar Street for 40 years. Rockfield's future existence could have been assured by shaving a mere 9m off Morrisons' car park. Mr James' faces his studios being totally land-locked by a three-way junction on the A49, but this was first discussed with him only 48 hours before the Planning Committee met!

Voting was 11:2 in favour with 3 abstentions. I went to see democracy at work; what I witnessed was a tawdry stitch-up in front of a flock of baffled sheep.

Nick Jones

## Editor's note

It is now clear that ESG has insufficient funds to build the whole Link Road. With the scrapping of AWM in the Government's cuts it must be doubtful if even the first section from Edgar Street to Widemarsh Street giving access to the housing and retail areas gets built. Meanwhile the businesses on Station Approach are left in limbo with no certainty of their future. What a shambles.

## Membership Feature

As a farmer a lot of my time is spent alone, often worrying about what new regulation will next impact on my business. But now I have a new interest having been introduced to the Civic Society. Of course I couldn't understand the reasoning behind the Cattle Market move but the Society's monthly meetings don't just dwell on knocking the Council. There have been some very interesting presentations on town planning issues and alike. I've got a new hobby and am fascinated by the way governments and lobby groups manipulate statistics to their own ends. Rush hour traffic problems can be solved by other means than building more roads. Now I have so much more to think about when out shepherding and don't kick the dog so often.

Richard Llewellyn

## 23rd June 2010 – **The New Planning System** – George Goodall FRTPI – Vice Chairman of WestMASA

George Goodall set out the changes proposed by the Conservatives while in opposition and now by the coalition government. The main themes are the transfer of power to local levels and simplification of the planning process. These two simple sounding aims entail some very radical measures and there must be some doubt as to their reality.

Two items that stand out are the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC).

RSS were largely housing targets imposed by regional authorities on local authorities. The RSS was supposed to work in harmony with The Regional Economic Strategy but much uncertainty surrounded both.

The IPC was designed by the last government to 'fast-track' the planning process for nationally important projects such as power stations, motorways, and high speed rail links with decisions reserved to the Secretary of State. It is being scrapped because of its expense and the apparent denial of local people having a say in developments in their areas.

New government proposals also include removing domestic gardens from the 'brownfield' classification, introducing the right of 3rd parties to appeal against a planning decision and re-introducing the 'Retail Needs Test' for new developments, but will these survive the raft of Statutory Instruments, Directions and Departmental Circulars?

See "The New Planning System" by George Goodall, on [www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk/members/news.php](http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk/members/news.php). HP

## Next Three Meetings

### Wednesday 28th July 2010

Annual Walkabout – Walking the City Walls – Led by Peter Gwatkin, City Guide. Meet at Greyfriars Car Park, Greyfriars Avenue. 7.00pm

### August. No meeting

### Wednesday 22nd September 2010

Shire Hall. Committee Room 1. 7.30pm  
Youth Involvement in Local Societies – Alex Hampton Smith, local youth campaigner

### Wednesday 27th October 2010

Kindle Centre, ASDA, Belmont Road. 7.30pm  
The Regeneration Game. A look at how urban and rural regeneration works and whether it makes sense economically. – David Thame, experienced reporter on commercial property, retail and regional regeneration

## HCS Contact Details

Our web site [www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.herefordcivicsociety.org.uk) continues to provide latest news and downloads of all our reports and lobbying efforts.

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## Disclaimer

All work is the responsibility of the named writer or the editor and all views expressed are personal and not necessarily the view of the Society.

# News...

## Political Changes in Hereford

Since the election we have a new MP and Jesse Norman gives his views on the future of Hereford while in the Council a new grouping – “It’s Our County” has been formed.

## A Vision for Hereford

Hereford is a gorgeous place—think of the Cathedral, the river, the ancient city centre, Castle Green, that wonderful setting in lovely and largely unspoiled countryside. And the city is full of talented and creative people.

But perhaps for these reasons, there is little consensus as to what the city stands for. It hangs suspended between different ambitions.

My own view is this: Hereford should be a beacon for the arts, for local traditions and for a good life—and that these form the basis for sustainable economic renewal.

That means developing a genuine regeneration plan that covers the whole city, not just Edgar Street. It means a far greener approach, which emphasizes public transport, cycling and walking, attacks litter, opens up the river and plants thousands more trees. And it means a wiser housing strategy, which enhances the city’s infrastructure rather than tacking it on as an afterthought.

Longer term, we need a second river crossing, a Herefordshire university, better rail links, wireless broadband, a new football ground, a Shire Concert Hall, better youth facilities and a more empowered City Council. And lest we forget, a fairer deal on public funding. The new Government’s policies, which include scrapping Regional Spatial Strategies and passing housing strategy back to local authorities, should help with all this.

I have long been an admirer—and member—of the Civic Society, which has a vital role to play in the city’s development. Based in a new constituency office in Broad Street, I greatly look forward to working with the Society on these issues.

Jesse Norman MP

## New Plan for City

Hereford City Council have started an ambitious project, to give everyone in the City a chance to help form the policies and priorities for the Council for the next five years. Using the Parish Plan model, the Council has engaged Community First to run training sessions for local people to get involved in running neighbourhood groups. Supported by Herefordshire Voluntary Action these groups will hold meetings and carry out research to see what local people want in their areas. Parish planning has never been done on this scale before. The timescale is challenging, as the Council are determined to publish before Spring 2011. At a launch event in the Bishop’s Palace eighty people from all parts of the City heard presentations on how and why this will be done. If you want to get involved contact Pauline Striplin, Project Coordinator, 01432 262970 or paulines@comfirst.org.uk.

Once completed the whole plan, including input from the business community will guide future growth and the direction of the Council. Previously the Council has worked from a Forward Plan devised by its members, which has led to major investment in children’s play areas, support for the city centre through Christmas lights, Hereford in Bloom and more recently to discussions with Herefordshire Council about contributing to improvements to the street scene throughout the City. By working through the City, ward by ward, the Council will involve local people in a new way.

## It’s Our County

The beginning of June saw the launch of a new political party in Herefordshire. It’s Our County has been formed by three of the Independent Councillors on Herefordshire Council (Cllrs. David Benjamin, Mark Hubbard and Julie Woodward and it is backed by members of “Herefordshire 1st” and “It’s Our City” campaigns)

They state that their objective is to bring greater honesty, clarity and transparency to the workings of the Council, to take party politics out of local politics and put Herefordshire first. The development of the group has come directly from people’s exasperation at the way party politics dominate the way the Council is run and the culture of secrecy and control that has developed in the administration of the county.

Of particular note is the new group’s position on both the ESG project and the “growth agenda” that are being pursued by the current administration. The new group wishes to offer the electorate an alternative view at the next election as it believes neither of these two agendas has the backing of Herefordshire people.

A meeting at the Shire Hall on 3rd June elected a caretaker Executive Committee and adopted a constitution and further meetings to introduce the party are planned for the market towns and rest of the county.

## Mind Your Step

Widemarsh Street repaving to meet the standards set up by Ben Hamilton-Baillie in his Streetscape Design Strategy for the city centre, is now taking shape and is clearly going to be a great improvement but do mind those shallow curbs which too many people are tripping over. Put in to help the poorly sighted they seem to be producing too many broken bones and bruises. The council is having to look again.



Widemarsh Street – New Look.

Photo John Faulkner.

## Planning News

There are several recent planning applications (number of application given) which members may wish to look at and comment on:-

In Tower Road the 1930s bungalow at No 44 to be demolished and eight flats proposed (100947) and the Carlan Rest Home to be made into two semi detached dwellings (100600)

A large modern, angular new entrance and café at the Art College in Folly Lane (101162)

A major extension of two storeys and a separate new three story 32 bedroom block at Hampton Grange Nursing Home, Hampton Park Road (101158)

Reinstatement of a carpark at The Warehouse, Gwynne Street (101212)

The proposal to alter the listed 19th century shop front at 35/38 Widemarsh Street (ex Rutters) has been rejected but the scheme for a large care village on Faraday Road has been granted.

## Butter Market’s feast of ideas

In Victorian times, the employment of architectural design competitions for civic buildings was very much the norm. It would be hard to find a surviving 19th century town hall or library in Britain today that hadn’t been a competition winner. Both Hereford Library and the Butter Market were successful subjects of competitions in their day. Sadly, we seldom use the system now – the shed-like monstrosity due to rise on Roman Road as our new Livestock Market being a prime omission. The Courtyard Arts Centre (by Glen Howells) was the city’s last competition winner – and that was more than 10 years ago.

After constant pressure from the Society over many years, Herefordshire Council finally saw the light, with a national two-stage competition for refurbishment ideas for the Butter Market, administered by the RIBA, being launched just after Christmas. Thirty-four entries were received by the 3 June deadline. The architect Kevin Murphy is chairing the team of assessors, charged with selecting four schemes to go forward to a second stage. The council is expected to exhibit these four designs (why not all of them?) later this summer, with the theme of the showcasing of locally-produced food in modern surroundings likely to find favour with the jury. NJ



New Market Hall, Accrington.

Courtesy Quarterbridge Project Mgt. Ltd.

## “Shaping Our Place”

According to the planning department the results of the consultation on the Local Development Framework- the so called “Shaping our Place” should be available on the council’s website in the next few weeks. Log on to [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/corestrategy](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/corestrategy). But, is it all worth it when Regional Spatial Strategies and allocated housing targets are being scrapped. Maybe we should forget the LDF, think again and decide what Herefordshire really wants

# More News...

## 50, Commercial Street

At the rear of this listed shop there is a fifteenth century hall and in 1861 this became the headquarters of The Society for Aiding the Industrious which was set up by the Rev. John Venn to help the poor of Hereford. It was extended and became a soup kitchen. Since then it has been a Temperance Hall, a dance studio, tattoo parlour and a music shop. Recently it has been standing empty and the window space has been used by 'art360' to display artwork and showcase the work of local charities.

art360 was set up by two ex- students from the Art College with the aim of providing community events and display areas for new artists and to improve the city centre which at present is blighted by too many empty shops. They have used the windows of several vacant premises for interesting displays. They see 50, Commercial Street as an opportunity to establish a permanent location that could become a community asset for the city; it could be an art gallery and display area, venue for music, performance and art workshops all complementing the Courtyard and Art College.

The property, having been replastered internally and hopefully retaining the historic features is at present on the market.

Are there benefactors out there, public or private, who can help them attain their dream. Just contact [www.art360hereford.com](http://www.art360hereford.com)

## Bringing High Town Alive

A foreign visitor once observed that Hereford's High Town has something of the Venetian piazza about it. Irregular in shape, fed by no fewer than six pedestrian arteries and enclosed by a myriad of architectural styles. At the beginning of this summer, like a magical crop of field mushrooms, the Guardian Hay Festival's elegant timber-framed box office suddenly appeared one sunny Monday morning in front of the HSBC bank building; would that all temporary structures which pop up in High Town were as graceful. The recycled oak framing was erected by Oakwrights, the sedum roof (complete with bamboo rainwater gutters) was laid by local green roofing materials specialist. Vella and the pavilion was designed by RRA.

NJ



Venice comes to High Town.

Photo Nick Jones.

## Walenty Patel at Point 4

Point 4, the smart new complex of buildings at the Royal National College now has a dramatic metal sculpture/fabrication by Walenty Patel. It is called '4 Runners' and is based on a painting called 'Frantic' by Sarah Withers an ex student at the College



Point 4 Royal National College.

Photo John Faulkner.

## St Luke's School Wolverhampton

As we reported in the last issue St Luke's school in Wolverhampton has won Herefordshire architects Architype a Civic Trust award. It has now gained a further award, this time from the Royal Institution of British Architects. The school has classrooms grouped round a central space with no corridors and according to the teachers, is a pleasure to work in. It is light, airy and has exceptional environmental features with controlled solar gain and timber roof shingles.



St. Luke's School.

Photo Architype.

## City Stores Reopening

Rather than empty shops being taken over by charity and "under a quid" stores, there is at long last some better news about the future of the Chadds and Woolworths sites. The Chadds building is to be reopened by The Entertainer, a national chain of toyshops and Peacocks is moving into the ex Woolworths store in Eign Gate. Not quite John Lewis or Debenhams but this should help the city centre.

## Next Edition's Editor and Feature

Nick Jones is an architectural writer who came to the county from London and has lived here for nearly 20 years. He is a regular contributor to the HCS Newsletter – see his article on Bury St. Edmunds in this issue. The theme for the next Autumn/Early Winter edition will be "Design Quality"

## English Heritage

English Heritage has published two reports that are of interest to both Hereford and the county. The first is guidance to local authorities on how to conduct Historic Area Assessments on designation of conservation areas and area action plans. Sounds like just what the historic core of the city needs.

The second is "Caring for Places of Worship" on the state of Britain's 14,500 listed places of worship. Hundreds of the country's historic churches are in need of major repair and the future is bleak unless enough money can be raised – not going to be easy in the present economic situation.

Both reports can be found on the English Heritage website [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

## Rotherwas Cycleway "The Greenway"

The route of the proposed cycleway from the city centre over the river to Rotherwas has been changed. Originally it was intended to use the existing Welsh Water bridge but this has apparently met problems and a new bridge will now be built. Costs have not been given but funding for the greenway and new bridge will come from sustainable transport charity Sustrans, Herefordshire Council and additional funds received after the county was selected by the government as a "New Growth Point". Design is now in hand and planning permission is to be applied for. Meanwhile the Council says it is consulting with local residents and of course, as always with "the stakeholders"!

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## Footnote

"If people took as much trouble to preserve decent simple houses in towns as they do to preserve views and downs in the country, if people were as anxious to have abolished vulgar buildings covered with beams and whatnots in various repulsive shades of red brick, if people were as anxious to abolish these as they are anxious to preserve the bluebell and the lesser stitchwort, England might even yet have a chance of being as beautiful as it was."

Sir John Betjeman 1937