

FEBRUARY 2010



HUDDERSFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY

# Newsletter

## Our Town; Our Ideas; Our Future

Kirklees Council launched consultation on its Huddersfield Town Centre Area Action plan in November 2009.

Here is the full response of Huddersfield Civic Society; **Our Town; Our Ideas; Our Future**

1. Kirklees Council is charged with consulting with the public on the future of Huddersfield town centre (Local Development Framework). The council must be mortified to learn about the cynicism and apathy with which the exercise is viewed by the people it serves. This is well documented. In one survey 86.2% of the respondents said that the new plans would make no difference. In a previous public relations initiative, just 89 residents out of 400,000 responded.

2. If the process of consultation is not to be undermined, the council must listen to and work with the Civic Society. It represents all the people of Huddersfield and gathers together those most knowledgeable and most interested. It is significant that in the longer document that the council has produced, (Issues Consultation Nov 2009), the most constructive and interesting parts are in the boxes marked "What you told us already".

The Civic Society has had a significant number of public meetings and debates on these issues.

3. The Civic Society reaffirms its principles:

a) that the economic viability of a town depends on its attraction, and not vice versa. A beautiful and vibrant town centre attracts investment and the visual appearance affects people's attitudes and

behaviour. This is very well established in many published research accounts such as "Streets for All; Yorkshire and Humber".

b) that there should be a strategic vision for the next 30 years at least and not a plan that is dependent on party politics. It is suggested that there should be an outline of possibilities drawn up by a distinguished architect, probably from the continent of Europe that has so much more experience of these things than the British Isles.

4. The ideal town centre, defined for this purpose as within the ring road, should be almost free of all traffic, within the time frame of the Action Plan. There are many examples of extensively pedestrianised areas in other towns and cities which are very successful. Whilst accepting that planners will not want to introduce something so radical, there should be at least a rolling programme, starting with the Market Place and Cloth Hall Street. Some earlier ideas, such as the 'roofing' of shopping streets should be re-examined.

5. There should be new distinctive buildings that draw attention to the town. Such investment has transformed other places. There is plenty of scope for this such as a performance arts building or a conference hall which could be the venue of literary gatherings. There could be a textile museum and a rugby league museum; the kinds of attractions that would bring many people to the town and make the locals proud.

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6. All the buildings of quality should be preserved and sustained. These buildings are defined not simply as Victorian or listed but all buildings which add a unique and interesting visual point to the area as a whole.

7. There is a need for public spaces and attractions in the town centre. Much of the town looks shabby, with a proliferation of signs, adverts, instructions and signals. The look of the town needs urgent attention.

8. Attention should also be paid to the transport infrastructure, both within the town and in terms of connections, like a train service to and from London. There should be park and ride schemes and careful thought given to parking.

9. The implications of a pedestrianised town centre.

- It would entail removing the litter of traffic signs that are so ugly, and force a re-examination of the shop front policy.
- There should be clear public spaces, including one in the Piazza area, created by making more of Queensgate Market hall.
- Advertising pillars should be removed.
- There would be enhanced transport within the defined area.
- Buses would intrude into the centre as little as possible whilst allowing for the needs of the disabled or elderly.
- That there would be ample car parking outside the ring road and easy access to the centre. This means careful thought given to removing the stranglehold of the ring road. There are a number of ways in which this could be done.
- A comprehensive planting scheme could be developed; 'Greening' the town would include creating 'hanging gardens' in the existing bus station.
- Deliveries to shops could be made at specific times; e.g. before 10 a.m.
- The relationship between the centre and the peripheries should be thought through; the idea of distinct 'areas' does not seem fruitful.

10. Dealing with the ring road. Whilst some still deplore its creation, we have to accept it and make use of it.

- Any large scale retail development should be outside the ring road, together with the car parks.
- There needs to be major pedestrian crossing points, like an underpass by the University.
- The ring road could be made one way, which would make it easier to make adjustments to the pedestrian access.
- That there should be a taxi stand and access to the train station on the other side; opposite St. George's Square. A review of the number of taxis required in the town would be useful.

- The large warehouse could be a parking lot and/or the bus station could be relocated here, opening up both sides of the train station.

11. There is a need for more public spaces and better use of the existing ones. The Market Place and St Peter's could be enhanced. The Tesco site is one possibility for a new conference centre/hall, also useable to promote the town's musical inheritance from the choral societies and brass bands to the Contemporary Music Festival.

12. There needs to be a new art gallery; perhaps using the old post office when it is vacated or the Britannia building. The splendid Tolson Museum could be re-located into the town-centre.

13. The market places should be fostered and even a new one created in order to attract more temporary events such as food fairs. More special events, such as Sunday street markets, should be pursued.

14. It should be noted that Kirklees Council has a unique opportunity and responsibility in actually owning many of the buildings.

15. Attention needs to be paid to the location of the town by enhancing Castle Hill and avoiding building on the horizons; the trees are essential. The woodlands surrounding the town should be enhanced and more planting should take place on Kirklees lands.

16. There should be good transport links (not just buses) between the centre and the Stadium that would make it easy to get from one to the other; the stadium would then be a good venue for car parking.

17. There should be more prestigious living spaces in the town centre. There should also be a policy to assist and encourage specialist shops.

**The Civic Society looks forward to an exciting outline of the town centre; not a series of general points of the kind presented in the documents. If this happened the public would become engaged rather than indifferent. If necessary the Society could be commissioned to draw up such a plan.**

**It should also be stressed that the Society is happy to produce evidence to support its position. It recognises the expertise within the officers of the council and would like to work with them on behalf of the public, to help the council to draw up plans which will engage all the people they want to have involved.**

## New light on local sundials

In the September newsletter I asked readers for the whereabouts of the nearest public sundial. This followed an enquiry made to Huddersfield Local History Library that was passed to me.

In November I thanked readers and society members for their sundial suggestions but no existing Huddersfield sundials had been found.

I had reported that in 2001 derelict land on Prospect Street, Springwood was transformed into an eye-catching community garden. It featured a sundial, carved in local stone by Huddersfield sculptor David Haigh. Having visited the garden I failed to find it and assumed it was missing.

I wrote, seeking information, to the Examiner. Its publication led to me being corrected by the Chair of the Springwood Tenants and Residents Association; the sundial was still in place. Former Chair, Audrey Annandale told me where to find it. It is made up of engraved blocks set into the ground with the observer as the gnomon.



Prospect Street Garden sundial (author)

Thanks to Audrey and Hazel.

I am grateful to reader Anne C Brook who got in touch with news of two more sundials.

Anne, a student of war memorials, reported a sundial in the churchyard of St Philip the Apostle on Halifax Road at Birchencliffe. This is a WWI memorial which was dedicated on 25 Sept 1937. When most of the original wooden memorial had deteriorated beyond repair it was cleaned and

moved to the present position in a memorial garden in the churchyard in 2002.



St Philip parish war memorial (author)

The St Philip memorial is one of 51 UK war memorials recorded as having a sundial.



North orientated gnomon at Birchencliffe

Anne also supplied fine photos of a sundial on St Mark's Church, Longwood.

The church dates from 1749 so it perhaps not surprising that Joseph Miller, school master of Longwood Free School should have commissioned a sundial for it.

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St Mark's, Longwood (Anne C Brook)

The inscriptions suggest it was made by him in 1749, restored by Benjamin Hanson and Joseph Sayles in 1829 and further restored in 1921 and 1993. The plaque below the dial records that the latter restoration was in memory of Cecilia Womersley 1945-89.

Other sundials I have read of include;

- The grade B listing entry for St Paul's Church, Armitage Bridge states that "Over the doorway is a very large C19th stone sundial with a traceried iron gnomon".
- C. A. Hulbert's *Annals of the church in Almondbury* (1882) recorded; "The old SUNDIAL has been replaced over the door of the South Chapel and bears the inscription " Ut Hora sic Vita, 1682."

Is there any sign of either of these?

Still missing is the 1921 sundial to the west of the bowling green in Ravensknowle Park, made and presented by Alfred Hadaway of Dalton. It rested on a large ice-transported sandstone boulder found at Hillhouse in the deposits above shales in the works of the Huddersfield Brick, Tile and Stone Company, by whom it was donated. Any ideas?

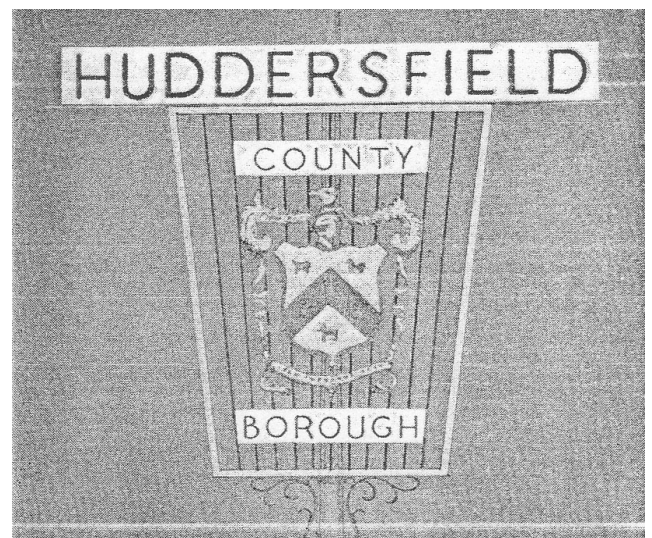
Christopher Marsden

## Town boundary signs- 1952 style

The recent plans and debate on boundary signs for main roads in to Huddersfield are not novel.

In 1952 the Huddersfield Branch of the West Yorkshire Society of Architects (WYSA) sponsored a competition for junior students at the Huddersfield School of Art to design a civic sign to be erected on the borough boundaries on its major approaches.

The winning entry was by third year student Mr Alwyn Hall.



The winning design for a civic sign

At a branch meeting criticism of the entries was made by Mr S M Richmond and Mr J Gordon Berry. The gentlemen were reported in the March 1952 WYSA Journal to have commented on the high standard of the students' drawings.

The Huddersfield Civic Society Newsletter welcomes contributions from all society members and friends of the society. The next edition is planned for mid April 2010. Please send your ideas, proposals, comments, letters and articles to the editor by email to [c\\_marsden@hotmail.com](mailto:c_marsden@hotmail.com) or by post to Christopher Marsden, 106 Lamb Hall Road, Huddersfield HD3 3TJ

# Owning The Future

## – Tony Burton at the YHACS AGM, 30th January 2010

You have to admit that Cold Bath Road isn't a very inviting-sounding address, especially in the depths of winter. And many people look upon annual general meetings as being akin to cold baths – something to be avoided at all costs unless you are a masochist. But Cold Bath Road in Harrogate is the address of the White Hart Hotel, where the Yorkshire & Humber Association of Civic Societies (YHACS) habitually holds its Annual General Meeting. And this year's AGM was special, as it offered a window onto the debate on the future of the national civic movement that has been in progress since the Civic Trust, the former umbrella body for civic societies in England, went into administration in April 2009. For YHACS had secured Tony Burton, Director of the Civic Society Initiative, as guest speaker.

Tony Burton began by pointing out that the civic movement was probably the largest grassroots movement in the country, with at least 250,000 members in at least 1,000 civic societies – and this figure did not include local heritage associations, amenity societies, local history societies and the like. What united the movement, he said, was a sense of pride in the local community and a determination to fight the threats to this sense of pride. But civic societies faced many challenges – organisational, financial, technological and even existential challenges. They needed a central body to give them practical support and advice.

The groundswell of support for the establishment of such a body led to the Civic Society Initiative (CSI) being founded in June 2009. It took on the task of managing the transition from the Civic Trust to a new central body. It had to work fast, as despite generous support from many civic societies and other organisations, its funding would run out in May 2010. So it began to consult widely with civic societies and other organisations on the principles, goals and financing of the new body; the fruits of this consultation were distilled into a report entitled "Own the Future", which can be downloaded from the CSI website (<http://www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk/>).

It was clear from the start that the new body could not be a copy of the Civic Trust under another name; a weakness of the latter body, which led to its downfall, was its dependence on external funding. Nor would the new body have the same regional structure as the Civic Trust; the consultation showed that while some regions were working well (especially YHACS and Greater London), most were felt by their member societies to be remote and not really working for them. These were likely to be replaced by smaller "clusters". Groupings with shared interests – coastal towns, blue plaques, core cities, etc. – were also emerging.

Tony went on to explain the issue of funding. Another thing that quickly emerged from the consultation process was a desire that the civic movement should be financially independent; therefore it would essentially have to be funded by its members. After much debate, it was decided that the fairest way to fund the new national body would be by a per capita levy. This would be between £1 and £3 per individual society member; the exact amount would be announced before the new body was launched in April 2010. Tony said that providing the support that civic societies were looking for would cost between £300,000 and £400,000 per annum. In the first year, though, he predicted an income of about £170,000, rising in subsequent years as more societies joined up.

Tony concluded by posing the question "why are we doing this?" The answer, he said, was that the country needs the civic movement; people care enormously about their surroundings and the threats to them can only be fought by civic societies with strong central support. He urged societies to get behind the movement as it embarked on this new chapter in its history.

On 15 Feb. 2010 the Civic Society Initiative announced the name of the new national body: CIVIC VOICE. Civic Voice will be launched at a special event for civic societies in central London on 17 April.

William A. Kirby

# Planning news

by Frank O'Brien

As snow and ice gripped Huddersfield in their vice-like grip, two major projects have preoccupied the Society's attention: the proposed replacement for the Castle Hill Hotel and the Waterfront development for Kirklees College.

Despite its chequered history, the Castle Hill proposal was straightforward for the Society. Once the original hotel had been demolished and the replacement deemed to be contrary to planning permission and also demolished, the site became green belt with all the protection that entails. We objected to the new hotel project as no very special circumstances to build in the green belt have been demonstrated. It would also adversely affect the setting of the listed Victoria Tower and cause damage to the scheduled Ancient Monument: Castle Hill. The unique landscape value and character of the exposed setting of the hill would also be compromised. Vehicle access to the summit has always been a problem and should be discouraged; a much-needed visitor facility would be better provided at the foot of the hill.

The Waterfront development has been much more contentious. We have had more representations against this proposal than any other in recent years. The design is unimaginative and the materials cheap and nasty: dark grey concrete blocks with metal and resin cladding instead of local stone. The college had implied that the site was "shovel ready" when it was not, as outline planning permission had not been granted.

As a consequence, the scheme has been fast tracked: from being launched on December 21st, to being presented to Committee on February 18th has never, in my memory, been achieved more quickly. As a result the awful

design and materials have not had the attention from the planning officers that they would normally have received, the only concession they have demanded is a plinth of local stone on one building: the rest is as ghastly as before. We constructed a water-tight case against the plan and repeated this at the sub-committee. William Kirby made a splendid and impassioned critique of the scheme, and John Lockwood's pertinent question regarding the lack of parking provision caused raised eyebrows and shaking heads among committee members. Only one member spoke in favour of the scheme and all the others who expressed an opinion were scathing in their criticism. We prepared for victory, until the college vice-principal claimed that the money would go to another town if permission were not granted immediately. This had the desired effect: only two members voted against the permission being granted; the rest voted in favour even if they had earlier denounced the scheme. It shakes one's faith in local democracy when councillors behave in this illogical way, but I was not surprised, as Michael Rayner had warned me that the authority was so determined to get the scheme underway that they would permit a Nissen hut to be built. He was correct.

The ridiculous committee decision has created an awful precedent: the future phases of the Waterfront scheme will use the same materials, and other applicants on the edge of the town centre (Asda and Tesco?) will try to use similar cheap facings and quote the college permission as giving them carte-blanche to do so.

An elevation of the proposed Kirklees College by the architects, Broadway Malyan.



# The 2009 seasonal quiz: answers and winner

The quiz asked for the location of 12 figures on town centre buildings.

Richard Ward was place 3<sup>rd</sup> in last year's competition. This year he was the sole entrant and so is a clear winner. Richard's hours of "freezing fun" looking at town centre carvings deserves hearty congratulations and he wins a bottle of Champagne.

Here are the buildings and street names of where the twelve figures can be found:



**A** Cooperative (1927 extension), New Street; **B** Somerset Buildings, Byram Street; **C** Dixy Chicken, 19 Cross Church Street; **D** Library, Princess Alexandra Walk; **E** Cooperative, New Street; **F** Kirkgate Buildings, Westgate; **G** St Peter's Gardens from Byram Street; **H** Lion Chambers, John William Street; **I** Estate Buildings, Railway Street; **J** Estate Buildings (Westgate & Station Street Corner); **K** Waverley Chambers, Kirkgate; **L** Caffé Latino, 60A New St (all photos by Christopher Marsden 2009).

## Your certificate is here

The December issue of the newsletter brought you the news of the society's second prize in the Civic Society Week Awards. The actual prize certificate is held by the secretary.

Enjoy this photo of it.



## Society meetings and events

You are welcome at these forthcoming Huddersfield Civic Society meetings in Room F035 at Kirklees College, New North Road:

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010, 19:45 Annual General Meeting** with "True North. In praise of England's better half". A talk by Martin Wainwright, Northern Editor of *The Guardian* and son of a former Colne Valley MP.

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2010, 19:45 Business meeting**

The society's summer trip will be to Hull on the second weekend in June, hosted by Hull Civic Society. The day to be confirmed nearer the time.

The evening trip on August 2nd will be to Dewsbury, following a "Blue Plaque Trail" to see whether we can gather ideas for Huddersfield's planned trail.

# Another view – Kirklees Council’s planning alerts

Kirklees Council offers an alerts service.

Kirklees alerts are free messages sent to your mobile phone or email account, telling you about issues that you are interested in. When you register for Kirklees alerts, you can choose which topics you'd like to receive messages about. All the messages are free.

Amongst the choice of alerts available are planning alerts.

The service is available through the council’s website, where it says “We can tell you when we are inviting comment on planning applications and when decisions are made. If you tell us what you want to know, which area, ward, application number or applicant we’ll keep you posted.”

This promise of a service to keep citizens aware of matters that are of interest or concern to them is a wonderful idea; “All the messages are free. Share with us what matters to you and we will keep you posted. You only need to tell us once and we’ll simply send you what you want to know via an email or text message.”

In an online form you can choose planning applications by a variety of criteria:

<input type="checkbox"/> Application Number
<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant/Agent name
<input type="checkbox"/> Location (Area, Street, postcode or part-postcode)
<input type="checkbox"/> Ward



Two new planning applications have been submitted and two decisions have been made

**Options Back**

I have been registered for a several full post codes since 2006 and currently registered for nine postcodes.

I have found the service to be a disappointment for the whole period I have been registered.

- Planning applications for my postcodes are made but I have not received notifications of them. This has included both minor advertisement applications and major applications such as the Queensgate Revival planning application.
- The system cannot cope with planning applications in a post code area if the application cites an office elsewhere. An example is the Piazza shopping centre. Applications for the centre give the post code for the centre’s management office at 23 Princess Alexandra Walk (HD1 2RS) even if the application is for King Street (HD1 2QE).
- Sometimes I get an email but not the text message, sometimes I get the text message not the email.
- I get alerts about decisions made for which I have not received submitted alerts.

To resolve this I have made dozens or representations to the council. I have emailed, phoned and met council staff. I describe the problem. The council has yet to demonstrate that the system can be trusted yet the council fails to acknowledge the chronic issues.

I would really appreciate a working service.

I would be pleased to hear from you if you have registered for planning alerts and welcome any news of the service you receive. **Christopher Marsden**

[Images from www.kirklees.gov.uk](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk)

## YHACS announces 3rd Civic Societies Week

Following the success of the 2nd Civic Societies Week, it was announced at the YHACS AGM that the 3rd Civic Societies Week would be held in the period 29 May - 4 July 2010. That probably sounds like a long "week"... but the idea is for civic societies to choose one week in that period that suits them best. Apart from anything else, this will enable members to go "week-hopping" to see what other societies are doing!

There will again be a launch event and the whole shebang will be co-ordinated by Kevin Trickett, President of Wakefield Civic Society and vice-chair of YHACS, who says that innovativeness will be specially prized this year. So let's get our thinking caps on!

**William Kirby**