



TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT ***for the year ended 28th February 2022***

Harrogate Civic Society (the Society) is a registered charity, no 501055.

The constitution provides for the charity to protect, preserve and enhance the character, amenities and environment of Harrogate and its environs by any such means as are deemed charitable.

The Society is managed by a board of trustees (the committee), appointed in accordance with the constitution at the annual general meeting.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The committee has worked hard in the last period to deliver a programme of activities to members and to keep them informed of issues affecting the town. Activities were hampered by two "lockdowns" in the reporting period and restrictions placed on people meeting, arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The following is a summary of our activities:

Events:

- A talk on the social history of New Park, parts 1 and 2
- Information stand provided at the Harrogate & District Allotment Federation Show
- A guided walk around Pannal
- Visit to York Gate Gardens, nr Leeds
- Assisting at re-launch of New Park Visitor Centre
- Consultation evening on Station Gateway proposals
- Christmas Social held at St Wilfrid's Church
- A talk about Andrew Carnegie held at the Harrogate Carnegie Library
- A talk about the Stray

Plaques:

Two brown plaques were erected in the year:

1. To commemorate the life and work of Margaret Rutherford
2. To commemorate the life and work of artist, Jean Georges Simon

HODS:

- Heritage Open Days were organised at a number of venues in and around the town and attracted record numbers of visitors.
- Guided walks were held around the Valley Drive area and town centre, assisted by members of the History sub-group.
- A new sub-group has been formed to steer HODS for September 2022

Newsletters:

- Seven newsletters were published with copies being sent electronically to the majority of members and with printed copies to those without email facilities. Printed copies are mostly delivered by hand to reduce postage costs.



- The future of newsletters has been discussed by the committee to decide on frequency, format and distribution methods. It will not be possible to return to posted, printed copies on a regular basis within the existing membership fee.

Development & Planning:

A small group, including two retired architects, have examined a substantial number of planning applications. The following statistics give an indication of their hard work.

(Last year's figures in brackets.)

<i>Applications considered</i>	279	(227)
<i>Responses</i>	82	(71)
<i>Consultations invited by HBC</i>	37	(24)
<i>Decisions made where we responded</i>	132	(57)
<i>Good decisions in our opinion</i>	62	
<i>Regrettable decisions in our opinion</i>	22	

The sub-group spent time debating the planning proposals for the former Debenham's site and the final application. Following a meeting between representatives from the developer and members of the sub-group, we made representations, some of which were incorporated into the application.

Station Gateway:

This much publicised proposal involved a considerable amount of discussion by the full committee as well as an open meeting with members to discuss proposals and a site meeting with the Project Team from North Yorkshire County Council and Harrogate Borough Council.

Our recommendations were issued as a report in November 2021 and we were represented at the Executive Committee meeting of Harrogate Borough Council who debated the proposals in February 2022. We will press for a consultation role during the detailed design stage, particularly with regards to Station Square proposals and have recently been involved in a workshop to develop a Design Code for the Town Centre.

Devolution:

We continue to take an interest in this subject. We submitted a detailed response to the consultation in Summer 2021 and have maintained a dialogue throughout the process with the Chairman of North Yorkshire County Council. Now that the structure of a new unitary authority has been decided we have expanded our dialogue with the Borough Council to make sure we fully understand the effect of the likely creation of a Town Council.

We are presently involved in ascertaining what assets are in the ownership of the Borough Council and County Council that should rightly be transferred to the ownership, or management, of a new Town Council.

Links:

During the year we commenced a series of meetings with local societies and organisations to build up a better understanding of each other's roles in the town and to identify areas where we can work together. This has been very successful and has already enabled us to invite other organisations to speak at events and to provide articles for newsletters.

Many members from these link organisations have joined our Society.

**Publicity:**

- We have had two double page articles in the Harrogate Advertiser and numerous other quotes on topical matters.
- The Stray Ferret has also publicised some of our activities.
- A Facebook group page was started in the autumn and is enabling us to share our work with an increasingly large sector of the local community

Website:

- A new website www.harrogatecivicsociety.org was compiled and launched in 2021 and is rapidly becoming the source of up to date information of our events and activities. It also contains a number of articles written by the History sub-group.
- The Plaques website www.harrogateplaques.org receives an increasing number of visitors, providing an instant source of historical information about the town.

Committee:

The Committee met monthly and along with members of the sub-groups, attended an “Away Day” in October 2021 to reflect on the Vision and Strategy formulated in 2020 and to consider the future direction of the Society.

It is increasingly sharing its responsibilities between the four sub-groups: Communications, Events, History and Development & Planning.

FINANCE:

The accounts and balance sheet are appended to the report. Regular revenue was up due to an increase in membership, driven by our publicity campaigns and the new website.

Some expenditure was up on last year as easing of Covid restrictions meant more face-to-face meetings and events recommencing.

The larger IT expenditure was due to renewing website costs for 2 years, whilst the higher publicity cost was due to purchasing physical items to promote the Society which, as noted, has increased membership subscriptions.

As the activities of the Society increase, it may be necessary to review our membership fees. A questionnaire has been distributed to members to seek their opinions on this matter.

Public Benefit:

The Society aims to represent the views of its members on key matters affecting the town and its environs and via its links, communication channels and external meetings, is able to meet the Society’s objectives as set out above. In conclusion, the Trustees believe that the year ended 28th February 2022 has been a successful one. This is a direct result of the enormous amount of hard work by committee members and sub-group members, all serving in a voluntary capacity.

We are grateful to them and to all our members who continue to support the work of the Society.

Susan Amaku and Stuart Holland, Co-Chairs