



TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT **for the year ended 28th February 2023**

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.

Day to day we adopt the strap line: *Celebrate our past, Enhance our present, Shape our future*

The Society is managed by a board of trustees (the committee), appointed in accordance with the constitution at the annual general meeting. The committee are assisted by a number of sub-groups, generally chaired by a committee member but with society members assisting.

The Committee:

The following are members of the Committee and hence Trustees:

Stuart Holland (*Chair*)
Susan Amaku (*Vice Chair*)
Angela Fahy (*Secretary / Membership Secretary / Chair of Events Sub-group*)
Chris Dicken (*Treasurer/Webmaster*)

Andrew Brown (*Planning & Development Sub-group*)
David Siddans (*Chair of Communications & PR Sub-group*)
Henry Pankhurst (*Planning & Development Sub-group*)
Nigel McClea (*Chair of History Sub-group / Links Coordinator*)

The *Minutes Secretary* is Wendy Cross

Granville Simpson, a longstanding member stood down during the year and we are grateful to him for all his hard work on behalf of the Society.

During the year we were saddened by the death of Malcolm Neesam, the eminent Harrogate historian, one time committee member and a great supporter of the Society. We were pleased to have been able to support the launch of his final work: *Wells and Swells* shortly before his passing. Tributes to Malcolm were published in the July 2022 newsletter.

The Committee meet monthly, currently in Woodland Methodist Church Hall. As part of review of our governance we have prepared a code of conduct for trustees.

It is increasingly sharing its responsibilities between the four sub-groups: *Communications & PR, Events, History, and Planning & Development*, who meet separately, but report back to the committee.

All the current committee members have agreed to stand for re-election.



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The committee have worked hard in the last period to deliver a programme of activities to members and to keep them informed of issues affecting the town.

The following is a summary of our activities:

Events:

Talks

- The New North Yorkshire Unitary Authority by *Wallace Sampson and Cllr. Graham Swift*
- Schooldays in Edwardian Harrogate by *Paul Jennings*
- The Harrogate Convention Centre, its purpose and future by *Michael Constantine*
- A zero carbon future for Harrogate by *Jemima Parker*
- Blind Jack of Knaresborough by *Bernard Higgins*

Visits

- Allerton Castle
- A "Behind the Scenes" visit on the eve of opening the Great Yorkshire Show
- Information stand at the Harrogate & District Allotment Federation Show
- Christmas Social held at St Wilfrid's Church

Plaques:

The following were erected in the year:

- An updated plaque at The Club, Victoria Avenue
- 9A Royal Parade, the home of Pickersgill Palliser, founder of the Harrogate Advertiser
- Louis Copé, Parliament Street
- 19 West Park (now the West Park Hotel)
- The Chapel – Grove Road

A small sub-group has been set up under Chris Dicken to formulate a strategy for the future development of plaques to people or places of historic interest.

HODS:

Heritage Open Days were organised at a number of venues in and around the town and attracted a record numbers of visitors. Guided walks were held around the Duchy area and town centre. Organisation was by a new Civic Society member to whom we are grateful. The booklet was sponsored by Harrogate Spring Water and Springfield Healthcare.

Newsletters:

Six 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. We are grateful to the Editor who works so hard to produce an interesting, informative and colourful newsletter.



Development & Planning:

Once again sustainable transport schemes have occupied a lot of time for the Civic Society. These principally concern measures to improve travel on foot and by cycle, except that pedestrians may not see any benefit or indeed feel disadvantaged.

Phase 1 of the **Otley Road cycleway** between Cold Bath Road and Harlow Moor Road was completed. In April 2022 we walked the route in both directions. Much as it would have been good to be able to detect improvements compared to the initial engineering drawings that we studied carefully (more than 3 years previously) our fears were realised. The route is very complicated for cyclists to the point that we observe that most are simply using the road. It is hazardous for pedestrians because much of its length is shared with cyclists or only nominally separated from them.

We attended a stakeholder meeting in May regarding **Phase 2 of the Otley Road Cycleway** between Cold Bath Road and Beech Grove, which was modified to go only to Victoria Road due to the extremely narrow width available near Beech Grove. This was followed by a consultation on revisions to Phase 2 but the result was similar to the complications/problems of Phase 1.

Beech Grove and Lancaster Road was made a **Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN)** on an experimental basis. Opinions were divided on this of course, but due to the fact that Traffic Orders were not in place the restrictive barriers were removed.

Station Gateway – a revolutionary scheme to promote active travel including reducing the width of Station Parade plus many other interventions. The Civic Society has had many meetings with officers and responded to various consultations on the topic but despite requests to the contrary, we have been unable to continue engagement with the project team.

We have also responded to two planning applications in connection with the scheme. One was a minor reduction of a wall just through the One Arch and the other, the demolition of the “Tempietto” in Station Square. Considering that Station Gateway is a traffic scheme, it seems odd that changes to the Public Realm as North Yorkshire Highways term it, are strictly necessary.

It seems Phase 2 of the Otley Road Cycleway has been abandoned and the Beech Grove LTN may or may not be revived. Station Gateway is a much delayed project – what of the future? Potential improvements for cyclists on Victoria Avenue, the A59 into Knaresborough from Starbeck and on Oatlands Drive are likely to be under discussion. We have commented to the Highway Authority that the character of Victoria Avenue must be respected. We shall continue to discuss all such schemes with the new North Yorkshire Council.

Our response to recent planning applications of concern continues. Andrew Brown has recently taken over the task of searching the Council lists of valid applications to decide which ones merit further study. We have a growing number of interested members who have joined our planning group. This is particularly helpful regarding future planning policy because the new North Yorkshire Council is obliged to have a Local Plan in place within 5 years and so work will have to begin straight away.



Provision for a 5 year supply of housing land has to be maintained. Currently the supply is very healthy for Harrogate District at 7.3 years. We are still waiting for a reserved matters application on the Harrogate Spring Water expansion plan that was approved in outline in 2017. They held a public consultation last July to which we responded, the main sticking point being, what compensatory land and planting will be offered. There is much concern regarding housing development to the west of Harrogate, not only in terms of numbers and infrastructure, but also the energy efficiency of the dwellings. Along with Zero Carbon Harrogate, we see the need for planning policy to catch up with concerns about global warming and promote better standards of insulation and means of energy production for new homes.

This past year, we studied **275 Planning Applications**, 27 of which were consultations from the Council. Responses were sent on 110 of these. The Council decisions in relation to our responses were 45% good, 15% fair, usually because some helpful modifications had been, 15% were withdrawn which leaves 25% that we had hoped would have been decided differently.

The team that studied the applications was (as last year) Henry Pankhurst, Andrew Brown, Peter Hirschmann and Barry Adams to whom we are very grateful.

Devolution:

This subject has developed rapidly over the year and a small sub-group became the ears and eyes of the Society to try to follow events.

The Chair made a statement to the new Area Committee of the proposed North Yorkshire Council which was well received. The message we conveyed was that the Civic Society wished to be actively involved with the new North Yorkshire Council through consultation, particularly the future planning process.

Links:

A couple of years ago the committee decided upon an experiment: to link with other organisations operating in and for the benefit of the town, to better understand their purpose and ambitions, and to offer support and encouragement where we could, while taking care always to retain our independence. The results have been remarkable. We have encountered a level of enthusiasm simply not anticipated.

Many of the events noted above have been a result of these links.

Perhaps most spectacular of all has been "Harrogate on Film" - a joint commission by us and the Harrogate Film Society from the Yorkshire Film Archive with two sell out performances this year and two to be held later in March that are already sold out.

A similar initiative with the Harrogate Amateur Dramatic Society saw the research and publication of *The Royal Walk*, a guide showing connections around the town with Royalty. This was generously funded by Harrogate Borough Council as a Platinum Jubilee event.

We now have contacts with nearly 40 link organisations and the list is still growing.

**Publicity:**

We have had substantial coverage in the Harrogate Advertiser and The Stray Ferret. A Facebook group page continues to share events.

History Sub-group:

This has been a busy and successful year for the sub-group towards our aims as set out on our creation: *to research, record and communicate the history of Harrogate*.

1. Membership: during the year the Group welcomed two new members: Kevin Hales and Simon Kent to join Nigel McClea (chair), Chris Dicken, Paul Jennings and Terry Williams. It was decided to keep the membership at six to ensure an active group. The Group, however, welcomes input from other Society members.
2. Website: several additions were made to the various series (*Aspects of Harrogate Past, Down Your Street and Harrogate People*) and other sections updated where necessary. Members are welcome to contribute.
3. Railway exhibition: this was held at the station itself to celebrate its 160th anniversary and was largely the work of Group member Terry Williams. This generated enormous local interest and was extended, to include a private show for Society members.
4. Schools liaison: following an enquiry, Paul Jennings gave a talk on school days in the past to children at Coppice Valley Primary School. History Essay Prize: having not succeeded last year, and following advice from schools, this has been offered again to year 7 children. Three schools have now actively promoted the prize with children. It is to be named in honour of Malcolm Neesam.
5. Enquiries: during the year individual members responded on behalf of the Society to several enquiries from the public on matters of local history.

Website:

Our 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.

We regularly monitor website statistics and average 600 visitors a month to the main website and 150 a month to the plaques website.

FINANCE:

The accounts and balance sheet are appended to the report.

Our regular revenue was marginally down on last year, but not of any concern. Administration and event expenditure was up on last year as we returned to normal face-to-face meetings and a full programme of events.

The higher publicity cost was due mainly to a reprint of the popular Plaques leaflet/map.



Unfortunately, our current account now attracts bank charges. This has become standard practice at most banks for club or charity accounts.

The society was instrumental in organising the launch event for the late Malcolm Neesam's Wells & Swells book, generously sponsored by Hornbeam Developments, who kindly donated the excess monies to Society funds.

The interest rate on our savings account has recently been increased and along with switching to a better account will provide an increase in income on next year's accounts.

MEMBERSHIP:

We have had over 80 new members join us in the calendar year 2022, bringing our total membership to 330. Because of this increase, more frequent events, emails and newsletters we are looking at ways to improve our membership administration.

The most important step is to move to, as proposed, a single annual renewal date of 1st May. At present, membership renewal is on the anniversary of the member first joining which means that each month we have to identify who was due to pay that month, who has not paid, and then to send email reminders (and letters to those who do not use email). Our new system will be much more efficient.

We organised two new members evenings at The Club, which gave us the opportunity to welcome and meet the new members, and to discuss how they would like to get involved in the Society's activities.

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 2023 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.



Appendix A: Balance Sheet

Harrogate Civic Society

Income & Expenditure Account 2022/2023

12 Months to 28th February 2023

Income	2022/23	2021/22
Membership	£3,142.00	£3,258.00
Gift Aid	£464.65	£410.39
Bank Interest	£178.03	£109.22
Donations in	£342.36	£273.90
Events in	£700.00	£245.00
Cash Back	£0.39	£8.56
Donation for W&S	£2,000.00	£0.00
Total Income	£6,827.43	£4,305.07

Expenditure	2022/23	2021/22
Admin	£727.40	£396.76
Insurance	£286.24	£286.24
IT	£475.39	£610.15
Newsletter	£485.09	£306.81
Events Out	£1,023.09	£501.29
Plaques	£14.49	£182.40
Subscriptions	£70.00	£70.00
Publicity	£527.24	£417.20
Donations	£0.00	£0.00
HODS	£0.00	£0.00
Bank Charges	£88.22	£0.00
W&S	£1,468.82	£0.00
Total Expenditure	£5,165.98	£2,770.85
Excess (deficit) of income over expenditure	£1,661.45	£1,534.22

Balance Sheet as at 28th February 2023

	2022/23	2021/22
Assets		
Fixed Assets	£0.00	£0.00
Current Assets		
Cash	£7,810.90	£8,320.48
HBC restricted Grant	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Mike Hine Legacy	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
Reserved funds		
Current Account Total (Virgin Money Bank)	£10,810.90	£11,320.48
Reserves		
Savings Account Total (United Trust Bank)	£20,553.51	£20,375.48
Total Assets	£31,364.41	£31,695.96
Liabilities		
Creditors	£32.00	£2,075.00
Cheques to be cashed	£50.00	£0.00
Total Liabilities	£82.00	£2,075.00
Net Worth	£31,282.41	£29,620.96
Increase (decrease) in net worth	£1,661.45	£1,534.22

Accounts checked & approved by:

Date: 7/3/2023

