



CONSERVATION
AREAS WIRRAL

Promoting & Protecting in Partnership

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MINUTES OF THE CONSERVATION AREAS WIRRAL (CAW) 2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on 26 April 2017 at The Lyceum, Port Sunlight

PRESENT: Alan Chape (Chairman), David Allan (Vice Chairman), John Pyke (Treasurer), Peter Bolt, Alan Thomson, Kay Crook, Chris Moore, Elizabeth Davey, Gillian Bolt, Eve Sorrell (Caldy), Mo Rafferty (Barnston), Mary Worrall (Birkenhead Park), Denise Wilson (Frankby), Alan Brighthouse, Judie Collins (Altrincham), Michael Armstrong (Altrincham), Gill Norton (Hoylelake), Pat Jolley (Bromborough Socy), Alexander McMorran (Rock Park), R N Merry (Mountwood), Sheila Leglow (Frankby), Susan Nicholson (Bromborough Village), Eileen Branscombe (Clifton Park), Rick & Vicki Hall (The Magazines), R Hoppins (The Magazines), G Maxwell (Friends of Flaybrick), Geoff Dale (Thornton Hough), Graham Arnold (Birkenhead Park), Diana Lane (Heswall), Maureen More (Clifton Park), Paul Wilson (The Magazines), Glynn Parry (Bromborough Pool), Steve Ferguson (Oxton), Les Spencer (Saughall Massie), Audrey Platt (Wirral Society), Margaret Kalil (Caldy), Eileen Wilshaw (WMBC), Margaret Grundy (Clifton Park), Karen Young (Thornton Hough), Monica & Patrick Toosey (Oxton), Ian Harvey (Civic Voice),

1 Alan Chape welcomed everyone to the meeting and particularly mentioned Clifton Park representatives and those from the Altrincham Civic Trust. He also thanked Port Sunlight Trust for allowing us to use the Lyceum for the meeting. He also mentioned that the Trust have recently won awards from Historic England and Merseyside Tourism for the best small business. Alan also welcomed Ian Harvey, our speaker for the evening, from Civic Voice.

2 Apologies

Gary Pratt (Barnston), Richard More (Clifton Park), Mary Brown (Mountwood), Ian Boumphrey (Mountwood), Robert Lee (Birkenhead Park), John Cocker (Bidston) and Nigel Hayworth (Mountwood), Joy Hockey (Wellington Road), Hugh Battenbury (Wellington Road), Robin Tutchings (Wirral MBC), Jessica Malpas (Wirral MBC), Philip Barton (Friends of Hamilton Square), Rod Tann (Wirral Society).

3 Minutes of the 2016 AGM

These were approved: proposed by Chris Moore and seconded by Paul Wilson.

4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Chairman's Report.

This had been circulated in advance of the meeting but Alan Chape presented it in Powerpoint form.
(Printed copies had been sent out in advance to all members and were available in the hall.)

Additional points included:

a) The launch of the Heritage Trail. Alan thanked Robin Tutchings, Eileen Wilshaw and Jess Malpas and Elizabeth Davey for all their hard work. New Conservation Area maps had been designed by the Council and showed roads and listed buildings as well. The first Trail is the North East quadrant. The other three quadrants would be available this year.

b) Peter Bolt told the meeting about the blue plaque programme which was funded by monies from the Council's Heritage Fund. The first was the Dixie Dean plaque at Tranmere and the second was for Edward Kemp at Birkenhead Park which had been installed at the beginning of April. Peter invited people to offer further names as we hope the funding will continue into next year.

c) Alan said CAW was urging the Wirral Visitor Economy network to reinforce the history and heritage message in their marketing of the Wirral via the Visit Wirral web site. In the recent survey many people had shown this to be the most important factor in visiting the Wirral.

d) Housing: the Council should apparently be building 837 houses per annum, more than it has ever built. Green Belt applications are becoming very frequent. The Council have to submit their Local Plan in September 2017.

Alan feels that the next year will be even more challenging as the Council loses more funding. By 2020 their only income will be Council Tax and Business Rates. While the watchword has been "Steady as you go", CAW want to meet officers more often now to try and work with them on the various issues coming up. Although Port Sunlight has done extremely well, Hamilton Square, Birkenhead Park and Clifton Park are major issues.

Questions:

1 It was suggested by one member that CAW and the CA's needed to be "more aggressive" because there is only one person in the Conservation Department. As Alan pointed out, at least Wirral do have an officer. Some Councils do not have anyone. Alan thought that being more aggressive can actively work against us.

2 On the question of "where did the number of 837 dwellings pa come from" – Alan replied that this is worked out by the consultants, using standard Government formula and methodology.

3 Les Spencer, for Saughall Massie, suggested that local political support has been vital to the various campaigns undertaken by the Saughall Massie Village CA and encourage others to engage with their councillors. Other CA members agreed that their own councillors had been very helpful on occasion.

4 Altrincham Civic Trust suggested that we should develop better relationships with the developers. They have found this to be of real value when discussing applications for new developments. Hoylake have also engaged with the developers regarding planning applications in their area.

5 Alan Brighthouse, an Oxtan Liberal Democrat councillor attending the meeting endorsed the approach that CAW had taken.

6 Disappointment was expressed about the fact that Planning Officers often do not appear to listen to people's concerns about proposed developments. Alan Chape said that the CA Management Plan was vital and regular review was also needed. He also expressed concern that some CA's still did not have Management Plans in place.

6 Treasurer's Report

John Pyke had circulated copies of the Accounts and thanked the societies that had donated last year to the CAW fund. The Grant fund had now been used up. £919 was showing from WBC for the plaques and also half the cost of producing the "Living in a Conservation Area" leaflet. Expenditure included the postage and printing of the papers for the AGM. JP also acknowledged and thanked Clifton Park and Barnston CA's for their generous donations, given to him very recently.

The Accounts were approved: Proposed by Peter Bolt and Seconded by Chris Moore. Unanimously carried.

7 Amendments to the Constitution

JP went through some minor amendments including adding the word "Heritage" to our purposes. We also need to create an associate membership so that various groups who share our Aims & Objectives can also join.

Amendments proposed by John Pyke, seconded by Les Spencer. Unanimously carried.

8 Committee Members

Lizzie Heywood from the Port Sunlight Trust has stood down from the committee. The remaining members were offering themselves for re-election and this was voted upon en bloc. They include: Alan Chape, David Allan, John Pyke, Peter Bolt, Kay Crook, Elizabeth Davey, Chris Moore, Audrey Platt (representing Wirral Society), Alan Thomson.

Proposed by: Margaret Kalil, seconded by Les Spencer. Unanimously carried.

9 Alan Chape closed the AGM meeting and introduced Ian Harvey from Civic Voice. His presentation was based around the Big Conservation Conversation – following 50 years since the first Conservation Areas were introduced in 1967 by Duncan Sandys, following the Introduction of the Clean Air Act 1955, the founding of the Civic Trust in 1957. (*See the full summary following these Minutes.*)

This was followed by a presentation from Elizabeth Davey on Hamilton Square and the present issues facing the Square. (*See the full summary following these Minutes.*)

The meeting closed.

Gillian Bolt

3 May 2017

Key points from Ian Harvey's presentation – speaking on behalf of Civic Voice

The Big Conservation Conversation Celebrating 50 years of Conservation Areas

"Planning authorities are working under very difficult conditions at the moment with recent legislation increasing workload, shortage of space and staff and not being helped by the general effects of cutbacks in spending". (Said by Duncan Sandys in the Civic Trust Annual Report 1969)

(Lord Duncan Sandys – the Minister of Housing, Introduced the Clean Air Act in 1955, was the author of a private members bill – the Civic Amenities Act 1967 that led to Conservation Area designation. He

encouraged local authorities around the country to consider protecting land around their towns and cities by the formal designation of clearly defined green belt. He also founded the Civic Trust in 1957.)

(His aims: "To preserve beauty, to create beauty and to remove ugliness". These were the aims that Duncan Sandys, then MP for Streatham, set out in his Private Members Bill that in the fifty years since has led to the creation of nearly ten thousand Conservation Areas across the United Kingdom, established and maintained by the tireless efforts of millions of our fellow citizens ever since.)

No single factor is responsible for the threat to CA's, We need Recognition of their importance by national government, Resources to allow local government to manage areas effectively whilst Local Authorities need to fully accept the Roles and Responsibilities they have in updating appraisals and managing areas for the long term. Research has been conducted by many groups and Civic Voice joined with Historic England to survey civic volunteers about the importance of conservation areas. Civic Voice also believes that a Review of the legislation is needed and they will be publishing a manifesto for conservation areas in 2017, asking for amendments to the legislation.

60% of Conservation Area societies are consulted about planning applications in their area.

6% of all Conservation Areas are "at risk".

33% of Conservation staff has been lost from local government since 2007.

Less than 50% of Conservation Areas have a management plan.

(Apparently nothing has changed for 50 years)

During 2017 (supported by Laura Sandys) the civic movement will be raising awareness of Conservation Areas and your support is needed. They ask you to sign up for their newsletter and they want communities to come together and say "My Conservation Area Matters". This will be the theme for next year's Civic Day when they will be encouraging civic societies to go out and celebrate their local Conservation Area.

Questions:

- 1 Are England's Conservation Areas being safeguarded and enhanced?
- 2 Are Conservation Areas afforded enough protection?
- 3 Are local authorities adequately resourced to enhance their local Conservation Areas?
- 4 What is the future for Conservation Areas?

Let's have a Big Conservation Conversation to discuss them!

Civic Societies can be part of the solution:

- 1 They are a fount of local knowledge – history, contacts, etc.
- 2 They have continuity
- 3 They can organise community based organisations & consultations
- 4 They are able to work with planners, conservation staff, developers and property owners as "honest brokers".
- 5 They can help with Conservation Area appraisals
- 6 They can be the "eyes on the ground"

What can you do?

- 1 Help to set up a Conservation Area Forum or a Heritage Forum in partnership with the local authority. Meet your MP.
- 2 Produce a series of Conservation Area leaflets to raise awareness of individual areas.
- 3 Seek funds for a number of Conservation Area Interpretation Panels.
- 4 Work with residents' groups to improve the appearance and tidiness of Conservation Areas.
- 5 Assist the local authority with Conservation Area appraisals and management plans.

Programme of events

The Sandy's Lecture 2017 will be given by Dame Fiona Reynolds who is the former Director General of the National Trust. She will be talking about the Fight for Beauty and will be a key feature in the Big Conservation Conversation.

They held a Parliamentary Debate on 7 March, hosted by Baroness Andrews, the Vice President of Civic Voice. Another talk was given to Conservation Experts on 31 March by Laura Sandys, Vice President of Civic Voice and Daughter of Lord Duncan Sandys whilst Simon Thurley, ex Chief of English Heritage, is giving a lecture in June on 50 years of Conservation Areas.

In August Griff Rhys Jones will be speaking at the BBC Countryfile TV event.

21 September – Conference in Stamford, Lincs.

October – Manifesto for Conservation Areas at Civic Voice AGM.

This is not about refusing development:

18 Schemes were shortlisted for Civic Voice Design Awards and 10 were in Conservation Areas.

Now is the time to say "My Conservation Area Matters" !

Key Points from Elizabeth Davey's talk on Hamilton Square

Wirral's Jewel in the Crown?

Hamilton Square is the largest Grade 1 listed Victorian Square outside London. There are 62 Grade 1 listed buildings and the Grade 11* listed former Birkenhead Town Hall.

When designated the objectives were to preserve the historic character, formal setting and sense of enclosure; to retain the unity of design and elevational treatment of the buildings; the preserve the wider setting of the Square by controlling the design and scale of new buildings outside but visible from the Square.

Many of the features in Hamilton Square mirror those in Gillespie's work in Edinburgh.

In 1994 the Conservation Area was extended to include period property along Argyle Street, Hamilton Street and Market Street to provide a complementary "visual envelope" to the main Square. The additional objective was to secure renewed economic, residential and leisure activity within the area. Seven modern flats were created in a former pub in 1995.

However, car parking restrictions deter visitors. There is inappropriate development, bus stops that are "out of use", facades are being allowed to deteriorate, the square appears to be situated within one of the most economically deprived zones in Wirral, rubbish is allowed to collect in the basement stairways, bushes grow amongst the debris.

The Square is on the English Heritage “Heritage at Risk Register” with the Condition quoted as being “very bad”, Vulnerability shown as “medium” and Trent “Deteriorating”.

There are several interested parties including the Friends of Hamilton Square, CAW, Wirral Council, Birkenhead First (BID), Historic England and the Council’s ambitious plan of “Wirral. Well Made.” This talks about Woodside as a new waterfront destination, Birkenhead Town Centre as a modern business and civic quarter and Hamilton Square *“We’re making a new place” where a “visually stunning and vibrant heritage district – an attractive residential neighbourhood with a creative commercial, retail & cultural offer complementing its unique ambience and architectural character. The Square can be home to a thriving residential community with over 250 residential units, 3,600 sqm of commercial, leisure and cultural space.”*

An additional opportunity is offered by the Historic England’s “Heritage Action Zones” project which has just awarded money to 10 areas in England and which is proposing to offer more in the next tranche. This could provide a co-ordinator to deliver a programme as well as funding for individual properties or wider area based schemes.

There is a real possibility of a tourism trail as we already have the Woodside Ferry, the U Boat story, the Trams and the Transport Museum as well as the Wilfred Owen Story and the Shore Road Pumping Station.

Elizabeth finished her presentation with some examples of satellite dishes on the front of the Grade 1 listed buildings and other examples of wonderful architectural detail which are under threat.

“If we cannot protect the best what future for the rest?”