Back to the Drawing Board:  
- Bus Station rethink reprieves Benson’s Monument from relocation.

* Approximate land-take of 32m diameter bus turning circle. Excludes works required to re-grade footpaths to park to enable acceptable gradients for disabled access.
New Members Invited!!

Special half-price Subscription offer.

Hexham Civic Society is seeking to increase its membership and hence its influence on the future of Hexham. Please help us by contacting as many of your friends and neighbours as you can perhaps by passing on this Newsletter and/or the recruiting leaflet enclosed with it.

Following the practice of many subscription and service organisations we are offering an incentive to new members. That incentive is 6 months free membership to new members who subscribe by Standing Order. Application and Standing Order forms are at the back of this Newsletter.

Colin Dallison
Membership Secretary
The Chairman’s view

The Bus Station

I hope you all read HCS’s letter in the Courant 27 January. In our Newsletter March 2010 we commented that the apparent reluctance of NCC to put information in the public domain was disappointing and bound to lead to much speculation. Some things don’t change! I had hoped that the recent petition to NCC to keep the bus station on its present site plus the outcry in the Courant letters against the idea of closing the existing bus station and scattering its functions (including moving bus parking onto Priestpopple and relocating bus turning to a new large roundabout at a relocated Benson’s Monument) would prompt NCC into making a statement on the status of the bus station project - a forlorn hope.

In 2009 Tynedale Council signed a “lock-out agreement” with the developer Dysart, effectively setting up an exclusive arrangement for working towards redevelopment of the existing site and relocation of the bus station. This agreement was followed in 2010 by an Exclusivity Agreement to develop Heads of Terms and progressing the development of the regeneration scheme for the site. Despite almost 4 years of the local authority and the developer working together there is nothing of which we are aware in the public domain to show what has been achieved. In response to a phone call a council officer would say only that NCC is working with its partners and the developer to find an affordable scheme.

A diplomat would call this “disappointing”.

We do not object to a well-designed, infill development around the existing bus station. This should include a direct and attractive pedestrian route up to M&S as well as infill town centre uses such as retail and residential. However, NCC is apparently pursuing the sale of the existing bus station site despite having abandoned the Loosing Hill alternative as too costly and not having, as far as we are aware, any proposal for relocating the bus station. It is a fiasco. See article pages 4 and 5.

** UPDATE**

NCC’s Northumberland Public Transport Strategy Consultation Draft states “Future Developments……A programme to upgrade town centre bus stations will be developed to provide safe, user friendly and clean waiting facilities, improved travel information and improved standards of maintenance to deter vandalism. Bus station upgrades will comprise a programme of refurbishment schemes as well as major proposals for Ashington and Hexham Bus Stations integrated with private sector led town centre redevelopment.”

The reported withdrawal of Dysart, the private sector leader, from the arrangement with NCC to redevelop the Hexham bus station site has put in disarray plans for Hexham town centre redevelopment. Assuming the strategy does not change then we are still left with the publicised NCC option (thankfully not yet called a proposal) of replacing the existing bus station with parking buses on Priestpopple. Our critique of this ill-considered option was drafted before the report of Dysart’s withdrawal but we leave it unchanged. This option must be permanently removed.

Cliffhanger - what next for Hexham bus station?
Northumberland Parking Strategy

A year ago we commented on the Northumberland Parking Strategy Consultation saying that the only questions that mattered were:

- Will the proposed strategy improve the functioning of Hexham for the benefit of its residents, businesses and visitors?
- How much will it cost?

The consultation neither recognised nor addressed the first and stated that "The underlying financial principle.....is that any additional costs must be met from additional income from within the service." The resulting Northumberland Parking Strategy V 1.00 July 2010 identifies three countywide management Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). They cover only efficiency and effectiveness of enforcement and financial sustainability, i.e. how many penalties and how much income.

There is a general statement that local KPIs will be developed that will measure the impact of the changes and "will normally include measures of stakeholder satisfaction, car parking usage patterns and that is (sic) measuring the vitality of the location." At a public meeting the idea of monitoring the impact on retail businesses was pooh-poohed by officers on the grounds that retailers would not disclose information and that too many other factors affected shop closures. More disappointment.

For Hexham NCC identifies the priority issues as:-

- Availability of on-street parking spaces (including availability of disabled parking)
- Condition of car parks
- Balance of long and short stay parking
- Illegal Parking - in particular on-street (including pavement parking)
- Town Centre Congestion
- Parking problems on Hencotes (access for both residents and businesses)
- Parking problems on White Cross for residents (hospital staff and visitors parking in residential areas)
- Haugh Lane Industrial Estate congestion - problems with wagons having overnight stays
- HGV parking arrangements in Wentworth Car Park - enforcement and safety of other car park users

NCC has detailed these in a six-page document that it asked HCS to circulate and request comment to be submitted by 2 March. HCS circulated it by email to those members for whom it has email addresses and we already have some comments. Please read it, draw your own conclusions about the real purpose of the strategy and give us your comments for passing to NCC. If you would like more information, contact the secretary.

It is difficult to draw any conclusion other than, despite any warm words to the contrary, Big Brother NCC is out to issue as many tickets and make as much money as possible. This is not a strategy that will attract shoppers and visitors to Hexham.

Station yard development (Hexham Train Station)

Not all the news is bad. We welcome the reported plan to regenerate the station yard and look forward to the opportunity to comment positively on a planning application. See below under "Retail".

One of the listed structures in the Station Yard complex.
The minutes of NCC’s West Area Committee meeting in November record that Anne Pickering presented a petition stating “We, the undersigned, want the Hexham Bus station to remain where it is, We would prefer it to be renovated”.

Your editor was at the meeting and reports the petition to have been well-argued and forcefully presented.

Since then The Courant has reported that the consultants’ recommendations of moving the bus station to Loosing Hill cannot be afforded by NCC who instead are talking about a bus pull-in on Priestpopple by the elegant listed Nicholson Portnell building and having buses going up and down Battle Hill to turn round at Benson’s Monument (referred to as the “on-street” option). We consider this ridiculous and objectionable on a number of grounds. If NCC cannot come up with a better idea it must retain the bus station on the current site and make such improvements (toilets, waiting area, safe turning circle, etc.) as it can afford. Stick at it, Anne, you deserve an award!

One of the reasons given for moving the bus station is that it does not comply with the bus operators’ safety requirements and necessitates reversing and other manoeuvres. Such non-compliance is clearly not significant enough to prevent continuing use of the bus station. (Is NCC indemnifying the bus operators against their liabilities in this context?) If a turning circle is a major concern, it could be solved on the current site.

Notes of the Hexham Bus Station Project Group state that buses “...need a 24-25 metre radius for a bus to turn around.” Forget that NCC cannot tell its radius from its diameter: a 25m diameter turning circle could be accommodated on the existing site if Abbey Press were removed.
ly buses, into the town and to ensure the services can operate efficiently and safely in the town.

- Provide improved linkage with the Marks and Spencer site at Maiden's Walk

These two statements of objectives are compatible and acceptable as far as they go, but they do not pay sufficient attention to provision of bus facilities. The “on-street option” is clearly contrary to most of them. Parking buses on Priestpopple alongside listed buildings will not enhance Priestpopple’s appearance, would not be in keeping with the character of Hexham, and having buses travel up and down Battle Hill, perhaps the narrowest and busiest street in Hexham, cannot ensure safety and efficiency of bus services. The listed status of the Ropery has been cited as one of the problems but the "on-street option" would add at least two more listed structures: Benson’s Monument and the Park gates.

Unless NCC can come up with a proposal for buses that satisfies fully all the stated objectives and the interests of bus users, the scruffy bus station must stay where it is and be modernised and renovated.

MARKET PLACE

We received only one objection, (a phone call), to the proposals in the last Newsletter to make the Market Place a shared space, greatly reducing or even removing car parking. One could deduce from the history of ideas for this space, as detailed in our previous Newsletter, that there has been wide support from both local government and the public for proposed changes. The "Wellness Survey" conducted last year by Central Tynedale Community Forum suggests that such support still exists. One could conclude from the responses that:

- the survey's respondents are appreciative of the built environment and wish it to be protected, and
- there is an interest in and support for taking action to enhance the attractiveness of the Market Place and the heritage aspects of Hexham.

Plans to achieve the above would therefore be welcomed by the majority. NCC should recognise in their assessments of applications and of other ideas for changes to the natural and built environments that these objectives reflect the wishes of the community.

It is also relevant to look at the responses to CTCF's on-line request for people to rank issues they considered important to them. The 5 issues listed by CTCF were: Council Spending 2011-2012, Hexham Market Place space, Hexham Market Place use, Big Society, and Community Planning. On 9th October there had been 20 responses. Of these 5 put a Market Place issue at the top (of which 2 put Market Place issues both 1st and 2nd) and a further 4 put one 2nd. That's 45% saying that the Market Place is one of their top two priorities. While this small number of opinions is not statistically robust, it does seem to support taking action on the Market Place.

The Market Place is the historical commercial heart of Hexham which dates back to its market use before the 12th century and which was formally granted its market charter by Henry III in 1239. That this very historic space should be degraded to a car park (despite providing only some 20 parking spaces) really damages what should be the attractive heart of Hexham. Getting rid of cars would so easily achieve a very special amenity space at Hexham's heart for residents and visitors alike. There is no hard evidence that it would damage trade, though there are unsubstantiated opinions that it would.
Hexham Abbey's Conservation Management Plan (CMP)

The Abbey's Conservation Management Plan, recently put out for consultation, states that the setting of the Abbey should be preserved and enhanced. It includes as one of its actions "....to limit the visual impact of cars and car parks on the setting of the Abbey and its former claustral complex."

While this relates to parking within the area covered by the CMP and hence under the control of the Abbey, it shows that the visual impact is a matter of concern strongly suggesting that the adverse impacts of parking and traffic in the Market Place must be addressed. Specifically the two Abbey Conservation Management Plans, one for the Abbey as a whole, the other for the Carnaby Building, state: "Cars and car parking have a negative aesthetic impact in themselves and the use of large areas of hardstanding, particularly tarmac, is also aesthetically poor when set against a significant historic environment.

"....at Hexham car parking detracts from the setting of the historic buildings and the environment as a whole.

"This is not an insurmountable problem and with careful thought, can be resolved, most sensibly as part of wider development proposals."

This sums up very well our views on the Market Place.

PLANNING

Select Committee report on draft National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF")

A Select Committee report showed that people supported the concept of a streamlined planning system. Most witnesses to its inquiry were broadly content with the concept and approach of the NPPF in simplifying planning guidance and did not want a wholesale rewrite.

The Committee considered that it is reasonable and practical for the NPPF to have as an overarching principle a presumption in favour of 'sustainable' development and that if the final NPPF contains an agreed definition of sustainable development which is balanced and comprehensive, then the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' becomes a very constructive part of the Government's wider environmental, social and economic agendas.

The Committee provided its own suggested definition of sustainable development that respects the core Brundtland definition but reflects the balance between economic, social and environmental dimensions. The Brundtland definition states:-

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and,

the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

The report makes specific constructive suggestions including:
• An expanded definition of sustainable development
• Standardising key terms - such as weight in decision making
• Emphasising the importance of the local plan. (NCC’s is expected to be published next year.)

Clarifying the expression of policy on brownfield land, offices in town centres and windfall sites, Greg Clark, Decentralisation Minister, says he is determined that the NPPF will put power into the hands of local people, through a simpler, clearer system, which safeguards our natural and historic environment while allowing the jobs and homes to be created that our country needs.

Betting shops

As an interesting postscript to the campaign against Betfred opening in the Market Place, it is reported that both Prime Minister David Cameron and Communities and Local Government Minister Grant Shapps have hinted at Government support for moves to tighten planning controls over the proliferation of betting shops. Grant Shapps made it clear that the Coalition was interested in the idea of a separate ‘Use Class’ for bookmakers, as proposed in the report from Mary Portas on how to revitalize the High Street. It seems however that the worst fears about the appearance of, and behaviour around Betfred’s premises have not been realised.

Planning applications

The following planning applications are included either because the buildings are listed or the applications are judged to be of general interest. They are the result of a search on 13th March of NCC’s website for applications either submitted since the last Newsletter (9 August 2011) or awaiting decision.

Applications withdrawn

Former Coach House, Tanners Yard, (11/03012/FUL) Change of use of former Coach House to two bedroom dwelling.

Applications refused

5 Temperley Place, (11/01949/LBC) Listed building consent for the conversion of existing coach house including the installation of a spiral staircase to provide access to first floor.

Applications permitted

Wentworth Leisure Centre, 11/02629/CCD
Resubmission - Installation of solar photo voltaic panels on the leisure centre roof.

3 Wentworth Place, (11/01473/LBC) Listed Building Consent - Construction of window opening to the second floor of the rear elevation.

9 Cattle Market, Britannia, (11/01376/ADE)
Advertisement consent for one non illuminated letters sign and one illuminated double sided projecting sign.

24 Market Street, Mo Hair Studio, (11/01065/LBC) Listed building consent - Installation of external flue to rear elevation and five radiators to internal walls.


Hexham Service Station, Station Road, (11/02920/FUL) Replacement of existing fuels installation including, tanks, pumps, fills, vents and lines. Replacement of existing canopy and re-erection of existing sign.

5 - 7 Priestpopple, Poundland, (11/02648/ADE)
Advert consent for one internally illuminated fascia sign and one internally illuminated hanging sign.

2 Cattle Market, former Nationwide, (11/02641/COU) Change of use from financial services (A2) to cafe (A1) at ground and first floor, and workshop to second floor.

The Mill, Burn Lane, (11/03268/LBC) Listed Building Consent for construction of a 150mm thick concrete skin fixed to the wall between Tyne Green Road and Cockshaw Burn in connection with flood alleviation works.
9, 9A And 9B Priestpopple, T.E.Liddell etc, (11/03387/DISCON) Discharge of conditions relating to planning permission 20101046 (Conversion of upper floors to provide two new residential flats, refurbishment of existing retail unit with new shop front, change of use from store associated with adjacent retail use to cafe, demolition of two storey rear extension and replace with the construction of a single storey rear extension).

North Eastern Co Operative Superstore, Maidens Walk, (11/01058/FUL) Application for a new planning permission to replace an extant planning permission in order to extend the time limit for implementation 20080716 - Construction of 2 non-food retail units including mezzanine floor level.

Applications pending consideration

Land East Of Sunningdale Nursing And Residential Home, Dean Street, (11/02101/FUL) Variation of condition 2 attached to planning permission 20080983 - Construction of 8 dwellings and 4 flats together with underground car parking and associated landscaping (amended layout and position of terrace).

6 Battle Hill (rear of, Fentimans), 12/00326/FUL Proposed construction of single story lean-to extension to the front right hand side of the property within the existing courtyard.

5 Battle Hill/29 St.Mary's Chare (12/00255/FUL) Listed buildings including NatWest Bank Change of use of part of ground floor (i.e. excluding banking area) and entire first and second floors from offices to 1 three-bedroomed and 4 two-bedroomed dwellings.

Priestpopple, Fore Street and 7 other locations throughout Hexham (12/00630/MAST and others) Prior notification for siting of one equipment cabinet. (These cabinets are associated with the provision of high speed broadband and are 750w x 407d x 1308h)

Old Smithy, 18 Eastgate (listed building, 12/00571/LBC) Installation of mezzanine above second floor.

Market Street, Gilesgate, and Market Place (12/00565/ADE) Advertisement consent for display of 13 flags and flag poles on various properties.

West Orchard House, Allendale Road (12/00355/FUL) Demolition of 35 metres of stone retaining wall, former garage and classroom blocks and construction of new footway, boundary wall and widened vehicular access. Change of use and conversion of former Red Cross building to accounts office, associated storage and construction of new office block. (Also separate applications for tree removal and conservation area consent for demolition.)

4 Orchard Place (listed building, 12/00526/LBC) Proposed conversion of the existing office buildings back into 3 residential flats.

Hexham East First School (12/00487/CCD) Installation of photovoltaic panels on school roof.

RETAIL

Hexham Railway Station

HCS has long held the view that Hexham's retail sector is robust. While some businesses close, others soon open and Hexham continues to be attractive to the big national chains. Evidence of the latter is the proposal by Barnard Castle based developer Rokeby to redevelop the former goods yard at Hexham station.

Under the proposal Homebase would be the anchor tenant of a new multi-million pound mini-retail park. It is understood a national pet store chain is set to move into the unlisted 1873 Prosser Goods shed at Hexham Station.
complex and it is hoped other major retailers will be attracted to the site. Among national big names which have expressed an interest in coming to Hexham in the past are Next and Halford's.

Of particular interest to HCS is the future of the listed buildings and the unlisted Prosser goods shed. Rokeby have said they will refurbish the two former engine sheds at the station, one of which they intend to make a decent headquarters for the local dramatic group, Theatre Sans Frontiere.

We are very pleased by this intent and assume it refers to the goods sheds, one of which is listed. HCS sought in 2004 to have the other, the 1873 Prosser shed, listed when it was under threat from the proposed Safeway development of the yard. While the Department of Culture Media and Sports noted that the shed was "well preserved, of local interest and significant in the history of North Eastern Railway Company" it was not special enough in a national context to warrant listing.

We welcome Rokeby's undertaking to build a new car park to the north side of the station, which will provide proper access to the north platform for wheelchair users, and share the view of Sandy Rutherford, Chairman of Hexham Business Forum, that this mini-retail park would complement the existing businesses in Hexham, not have an adverse effect on the existing businesses in the town centre, and encourage people to come to Hexham.

A planning application is believed to be imminent and, if things proceed as expected, work should be completed by the spring of 2013.

Another indication of the attractiveness of Hexham as a retail centre is the existing planning permission for two new stores alongside the existing Marks and Spencer shop in Maidens Walk, but we guess there will no movement on this until the bus station issues are resolved.

**Graffiti and the attractiveness of Hexham's retail environment**

A letter by our Vice Chairman, Roger Higgins, in a January edition of the Courant contrasted the recommendations by Mary Portas for reviving the high street with the Council's apparent inactivity on graffiti etc. One of Portas' key recommendations was that towns must maintain and raise their environmental quality if they want to attract and retain vitality. Despite coverage on October 7th 2011 of the Town Council's valid criticism of the apparent lack of enforcement and clean-up of graffiti around the town, almost 4 months on from this article it seemed clear that responsibility had not been taken for the most basic of housekeeping.

Mr. Higgins highlighted that in the Sele Park, considered by many to be one of Hexham's jewels, the County Council compound was heavily graffitied. Lighting near the Sele school had been broken for more than a year. Benches on the Sele were splattered in paint and the WCs close to the Sele School, and gates on the footpath to Glovers Place were graffitied.

"Broken lighting has been fixed and a partly collapsed wall at the New Court pedestrian cut-through has been repaired. This has removed a useful source of ammunition for would-be vandals.”

We are pleased to report that following this letter, Hexham County and Town Councillor Terry Robson galvanised significant activity from County Council staff. Graffiti has been removed from the park compound and benches.
Broken lighting has been fixed and a partly collapsed wall at the New Court pedestrian cut-through has been repaired. This has removed a useful source of ammunition for would-be vandals.

People have traditionally been attracted to visit and shop in Hexham as it is a unique historic town. However, to continue to be attractive in these competitive times, Hexham requires appropriate care and action. We invite Council officers and members alike, to use their next lunch break to walk the town, cast a critical eye over its appearance, and see what is within their powers to remedy.

Hexham’s retail sector is dynamic with businesses closing and others opening. This suggests that while Hexham is perceived as an attractive location for retail businesses, some of those businesses are fragile. We urge you to support all town centre businesses, especially the independents.

RH

Wet and Wild

While looking at the Sele, a glaring example of shameful neglect is the condition of the Grade II listed drinking fountain by the Sele school. Its listing describes it as ‘Drinking fountain. Circa 1912. Small cast iron domed structure with exuberant scrollwork and cusped arches. Corner brackets over corinthian columns of pendentives have miniature dragons upon them. Central pilier contonne with wide shallow bowl with tap urns in centre’.

We and others contacted NCC. We now understand that County and Town Councillor Mrs. Ingrid Brook told the Town Council that repainting will be done shortly. It would be welcome if this proposal included the re-activation of its water supply so that it becomes a functional item once more.

TT

The Sele Drinking Fountain

A fascinating history, with thanks to Colin Dallison, our membership secretary and Hexham’s unofficial archivist:

“In 1899 this £30-plus iron edifice was provided by the Abbey Church of England Temperance Society and formally opened on Tuesday 12 September. It had been intended that it be inscribed Pure Air and Pure Water - Good Gifts from God but the actual, and puzzling inscription on the north and south sides reads KEEP THE PAVEMENT DRY.

C.E.T.S. thinking behind provision of the drinking fountain is illustrated by a report in the Hexham Parish Magazine of a temperance service in 1900 “The numbers of children of four years old and upwards who spend a considerable portion of their time running to and from public houses, or worse still in them, is very great......about a thousand people listened most attentively” Some turnout for a small town!

As early as March 1900 the Courant reported that it was falling into disrepair and Hexham Urban District Council agreed to take over its maintenance. It would seem that they did a reasonably job since the next reference we have to maintenance is the 1993 renovation. Contemporary reports in the Courant refer to vandals removing some of the griffin gargoyles and the heron centre piece and criticised the plan only to repaint it in its original green colour. It was subsequently agreed that the fountain would undergo full-scale renovation at a cost of £3,000, one hundred times the original cost!
The fountain is of a standard design registered by Walter Macfarlane & Co., Saracen Foundry, Glasgow in 1860. Examples of this design and of the larger six column version are found worldwide, e.g. India, Australia, and even Middleton-in-Teesdale!

6 Beaumont Street (adjacent to the Conservative Club and formerly Tyghtspot)

4 Beaumont Street (formerly Taylor's fish shop)
A notice in the window suggests the imminent opening of a delicatessen.

9 The Courtyard (formerly Stanegate Flyers kites and model aeroplanes)

11 The Courtyard (formerly Bates & Westlake handmade leathergoods, now relocated to 10 Market Place, above Stevens optician)

13 Battle Hill, formerly The factory Store (A notice in the window suggests the imminent opening of a new business)

It is understood that the National Trust will close its Hexham shop when the lease expires in June.

**Shops and businesses.**

**New businesses**

17 Hallstile Bank, Minerva Centre (Apologies: this should have been in the previous edition.)

31 Market Place, bin21, a wine shop (formerly Edge clothing store)

4 Battle Hill, Lemon and Lime, a ladies’ accessories shop (long vacant, formerly Parker Stagg estate agents)

25 St. Mary’s Chare, The Beauty Spot, a beautician

11 Priestpopple Poundland (formerly Heron)

25 Priestpopple, Gibson solicitors (formerly Tyghtspot)

2 Cattle Market, The Bee in the Butterfly Cafe Café and workshop.

**Vacant premises**

4A Market Street, (formerly House of Hogarth, ladies’ accessories)

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Glass act: Bin 21

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**TOWN PLAN**

This is an independent initiative by Hexham Town Council and is not related to any specific central or local government plan or guidance. HTC appreciates that many plans and wish-lists have been produced over the years by local government and other local groups who may not be enthusiastic about "yet another plan". It appreciates also that it needs the expertise of such groups and their participation in the Steering and Working Groups.

“A common view expressed was that, while we have many active organisations which make our town a rich and vibrant place to live, their..."
efforts could have more long lasting impact if sometimes there was better liaison and broader public involvement”

HTC set aside £5000 to find out during 2012 residents’ ideas for a 5-year town plan to provide a robust framework for community actions and a starting place for using the opportunities offered by the Localism Bill. Initial market place consultation in November suggested residents’ strong wish for more coordinated action and planning between different groups and agencies, both within the town and at county council and regional level. A common view expressed was that, while we have many active organisations which make our town a rich and vibrant place to live, their efforts could have more long lasting impact if sometimes there was better liaison and broader public involvement.

There was also support for doing things, rather than just talking about issues, as a way of getting to know people better, build capacity for future projects and become a more effective community.

Over thirty residents came forward to become part of a steering group to oversee town-wide consultation and engagement activities during this year to forward the aims of the planning process. Six special interest working groups covering a broad range of town themes will now help to find out the issues people are concerned about, plan specific pieces of public consultation with town groups and individual residents and organise small events and activities to model collaborative and creative ways of working together.

The groups will include built environment and public space, transport, and arts and heritage, and there will be scope for encouraging intergenerational working across the community and thinking about issues of sustainability. We would greatly value Civic Society members’ input—both collectively and as individuals.

If you would like to be more actively involved in a group please contact Judy Lloyd on 606293. Do look, too, at the Town Plan portal of the Hexham Town Council’s website, gradually being developed, where where what’s planned will be publicised.

HCS advised strongly that this exercise should not define its product but instead make itself fully aware of the plan’s context of local government plans and processes to ensure that HTC’s plan could be used, e.g. as a reference in determining planning applications. The background of NCC’s or Tynedale Council’s Core Strategy is important.

We understand that Northumberland’s new Core Strategy is not likely to be published until around second half of 2013, that the 2007 Tynedale Core Strategy will continue to provide a framework against which new planning applications will be judged and that the existing green belt protection afforded to Hexham will continue to give cover in the interim.

HCS is participating in this exercise.

**HEXHAM RIVER HYDRO**

Following its success in winning £100,000 for the hydro scheme, Hexham Community Partnership sent out information packs and requests for tender for the detailed work (including all relevant environmental work), planning and licensing for a 100kW low head hydro-electric scheme at Hexham Bridge.

This scheme would have an energy output equivalent to the electrical demand of 150 homes over its 40 years design life. Tenders are now being evaluated, tenderers interviewed etc. with the intent of awarding the contract by the end of March.

Potential site downstream of Tyne Bridge Image Copyright Tony Pringle Flickr
The Scope of Work includes:

• Technical review of three potential scheme layouts to ascertain the best option to carry forward to detailed design.

• Technical review of potential turbines to select the best option to carry forward to detailed design.

• Detailed design of selected option

• Planning and licensing

• Contract preparation

• Construction, design and management coordination

The above scope includes addressing all environmental concerns, concerns of anglers, suitable fish pass etc.

DIGITAL TV - SWITCHOVER HELP SCHEME

The traditional TV signal in Tyne Tees TV region is being switched off starting from 12 September 2012. The BBC's Switchover Help Scheme has sent HCS a leaflet outlining the help available from the Scheme. If you wish to know more you can contact the scheme on 0800 40 85 900 or www.helpscheme.co.uk.

AGM: Date

We intend to have the AGM in May or June and to announce it both on the Courant and in a later edition of the Newsletter. We are in contact with John Grundy seeking to arrange for him to give a talk in Hexham focussing on its built environment. Indications are that, if it happens, it could be sometime around the middle of 2012. Its timing could have an effect on the timing of the AGM.

OFFICERS

Chairman and Secretary required: please give thought to who you wish to be your officers and committee members: volunteers please. Tim Tatman who has been secretary for the last 8 years and Chairman for the last 3, indicated to the committee last year that he was not willing to stand but did so in the absence of any other nominations. Although he is willing to be a committee member, he is serious about not wishing to stand for office at the 2012 AGM.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

The secretary received a number of "undeliverable" messages when sending emails to the membership. Please confirm your current address by sending an email to hcs@hexhamcivicsociety.co.uk. You need do no more than put your name in the "subject" box.

JOIN US!

As stated in previous newsletters, the Society can only be as vigorous as the energy put into it by our committee and membership. We would welcome any members who wish to come to our monthly steering meetings to do so.

These are usually on the 2nd Tuesday in the month - contact the Secretary for details.
APPLICATION FORM—NEW MEMBERS

Please help us in pursuit of the objectives outlined above. The larger our membership, the stronger will be our voice and our ability to influence the development of Hexham. If you are not already a member please complete this form and return it with the annual subscription to: Colin Dallison, 1 St Acca’s Court, Hexham, NE46 3SH

Either: I enclose cash/ a cheque for £7 for an individual
Or: I enclose cash/ a cheque for £12 for joint membership
Or: I enclose cash/ a cheque for £18 for corporate/association membership
Or: I wish to pay by Banker’s Standing Order.

(Cheques must be payable to Hexham Civic Society)

Gift Aid

If you are a tax payer you can further assist the Society by paying your subscription by way of Gift Aid. If you have not already signed a form, one will be sent on request.

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms..............................................................................................................................

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms..............................................................................................................................

Address........................................................................................................................................

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Postcode.................................................................................................................................

Tel no.................................................................................................................................

Email........................................................................................................................................


STANDING ORDER MANDATE (Please send to Colin Dallison)

To: The Manager......................................................Bank plc,
......................................................Branch

Address:

........................................................................................................................................

Pay to Lloyds TSB Bank plc., Priestpopple, Hexham [Sort code 30-94-19] for the credit of Hexham Civic Society, Account No. 00075579 the sum of £.................................[in words]...............................pounds six months from the date of this Standing Order, and thereafter annually until you receive notice from me/us in writing.

Please debit my/our account accordingly.

This instruction cancels any previous Standing Order in favour of Hexham Civic Society.

Account to be debited: Account Name ..............................................................................................

Sort Code ............................................... Account no. ...............................................................

Address ........................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................

Signed ........................................................................... Date..............................

HCS Email address:
hcs@hexhamcivicsociety.co.uk
Website:
http://hexhamcivicsociety.wordpress.com
Signage

A huge revamp to traffic signing policy has been unveiled by the DfT in its new ‘Signing the Way’ report.

The changes will be implemented in phases. Amendments to the current version of Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD), published in 2002, came into force in November, prescribing many of the currently non-prescribed signs that are frequently authorised by ministers.

A full revision of TSRGD, to implement the more substantive regulatory changes, will be taken forward as a priority but is not expected to be completed until 2014. The Secretary of State will use his powers of authorisation to make changes in the interim. Let’s hope the new manual encourages the removal of signing clutter.

Some of the new changes will look like this:

Skills

The North of England Civic Trust (NECT) runs an annual programme of free or inexpensive training courses across the North East and Cumbria. The 2012 training and events programme for Cumbria is now available and the North East programme is expected soon.

The North East Heritage Skills fair will take place this June 22nd, 23rd and 24th at Tynemouth Station. Type the link below to take you to the page on the NECT website where you can find a pdf version of the programme.

http://www.nect.org.uk/heritage-skills-initiative/hsi-training-and-events-programme

TL