



## civic update

17th September 2021

You can contact us by:  
Email: [info@civicvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@civicvoice.org.uk)  
Twitter: @civic\_voice  
Website: <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/contact/>

### Key dates for your diary:

- 28th September: North West Membership Briefing: [Register here](#)
- 28th September: Midlands Network Briefing: [Register here](#)
- 29th September: South West Network Briefing: [Register here](#)
- 29th September: East of England Regional Briefing: [Register here](#)
- 30th September: Yorkshire Network Briefing: [Register here](#)
- 30th September: South East and London Network Briefing: [Register here](#)
- 4th October: Civic Voice and Formal Status for Civic Societies in the Planning System: [Register here](#)
- 15th October: Civic Voice AGM: [Register here](#)

More events via: <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/get-involved/events/>

### Exploring the role of local civic societies in the English planning system



In collaboration with the University of Reading, we are delighted to launch a new survey. The survey is aimed at exploring the role of civic societies in the English planning system. Fundamentally, it responds to a question from Civic Voice's Regional Forum for us to: 'demonstrate that civic societies remain the best route for serious community involvement in the planning system'.

At such a crucial time for the planning system, we want to demonstrate the value of civic societies to the planning system. To ensure the results are independent, we have commissioned the University of Reading to do the survey.

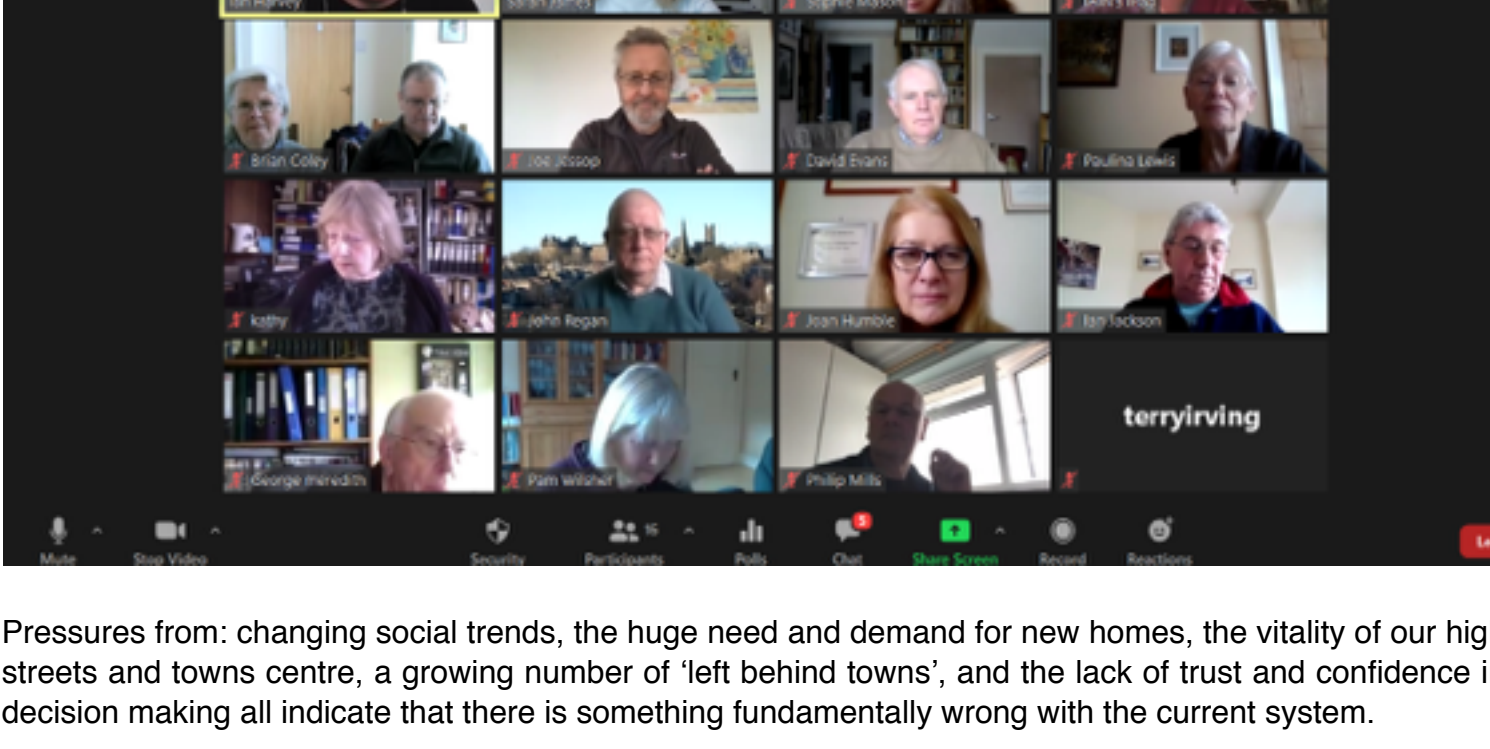
Why do we feel now is the time to do this? We want to explore this because there has been little work on the role of civic societies in planning since the National Planning Policy Framework's introduction in 2012 when we published *The History of the Civic Movement*. This survey is part of our broader work to consider whether Civic Societies should be given formal status in the planning system.

This survey has gone through several iterations as we have co-designed it to get it to the point that works for Civic Voice, Civic Societies and the University of Reading.

The questionnaire is circulated to all civic societies under the umbrella of Civic Voice to develop an extensive understanding of how civic societies are involved in planning processes throughout England.

You can take the survey via: <https://reading.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/civic-societies-and-the-planning-process-exploring-the-ro-2>

### A Community Conversation about the Civic Society Movement



Pressures from: changing social trends, the huge need and demand for new homes, the vitality of our high streets and towns centre, a growing number of 'left behind towns', and the lack of trust and confidence in decision making all indicate that there is something fundamentally wrong with the current system.

The Civic Society movement is well-placed to facilitate and enable this network of local people who want to get involved. Is it ready to seize the opportunity, though?

Whilst some civic societies are having great success, many are not and have struggled to keep pace and modernise. The civic movement and communities could achieve more influence and impact with a well-resourced Civic Voice that can offer direct support to the network nationwide.

Where does the Civic Movement fit into this? We want to undertake a national 'community conversation' that brings together civic societies to develop a national framework for all groups to consider a way forward. A targeted conversation with our network will help us better understand where the nationwide movement wants to go.

The community conversation will consider:

1. What is the mission of the civic society movement in the 21st century?
2. What is needed to achieve this mission through an effective network of local groups and a strong national and local presence?
3. How is this organised and funded in years to come?

We will start this conversation in our next round of member events, so we encourage civic societies across England to register for an event in your local area.

You might even want to watch a recent event with Kevin Trickett where he shared his own private thoughts on the movement's future. [Watch it here.](#)

### An excellent example of co-production, working with local people to produce design proposals



(l-r) Andrew Morrison, Duncan Marks and Sarah James

As part of her ongoing work with the APPG for Civic Societies, Sarah James recently made a visit to York. Sarah is looking into different ways civic societies and other community groups are reaching out beyond their existing membership to represent the wider community's views in planning-related decisions.

On her visit to York, Sarah heard about York Civic Trust's campaign for much needed long-term improvements to the surroundings of Exhibition Square.

Sarah heard from York Civic Trust chief executive Andrew Morrison and Duncan Marks who showed her around the area, which they said was one of the most historic in York.

Exhibition Square includes sections of 2,000-year-old Roman wall; the walls of the St Mary's Abbey precinct; medieval King's Manor and the foundations of St Leonard's Hospital; Bootham bar itself; and the 'grand terrace' of St Leonard's Place - not to mention the Civic Voice Design Award winner, Theatre Royal and the Victorian Art Gallery.

Mr Morrison said the proposals were drawn up by the Civic Trust following a series of zoom workshops with local people and businesses and an event in Exhibition Square where locals were invited to come along and draw or sketch their own ideas.

Since Sarah's visit, the work of York Civic Trust has appeared in the local newspaper, with local Cllr Denise Craghill saying: "This has been an excellent example of co-production, working with local people to produce design proposals. These proposals give an inspiring view of what could be possible to improve this junction and the surrounding area for all users whilst also improving air quality and the setting of the historic Bootham Bar."

Read more here: <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/19577488.calls-radical-revamp-bootham-gillygate-junction-york/>

### Climate crisis: What can we actually do about it?



We were joined by Civic Voice members earlier this month as we considered how the civic movement could respond to the climate emergency. We heard from [Addingham Civic Society](#), [The Petersfield Society](#), and [Littleborough Civic Trust](#) in an excellent session. They all shared their experiences as civic societies wishing to make a positive environmental impact.

You can watch the session back here: <https://vimeo.com/607291863>

Have you been involved in a project that focuses on the environment and climate change? Get in touch, and we can include you in a future session.

With the publication of the UN's report on climate change last month, we must consider the role that planning and local communities can play in delivering on the world's significant challenges. As we lead up to our AGM in October, we want to build a meaningful conversation with our network on this topic. How do you think Civic Societies can engage in this debate?

### National Lottery funding to support communities across the UK



Did you know that the National Lottery is offering from £1,000 to £10,000 of National Lottery funding to support communities across the UK to take action on climate change?

We know many civic societies are currently talking about the role they can play in the climate change debate. You may well be able to get funding to help with that, as The National Lottery are particularly interested to hear from people beginning to think about taking action on climate change in their communities. That will be a lot of Civic Societies.

The National Lottery can pay for activities or items, costing between £1,000 and £10,000 in total, that will support your community to take climate action. These could be activities that bring people together to talk about what matters to them and what they want to do, events to raise awareness or reach other community members, or equipment to support something such as a community growing project.

You can learn more [here](#) if this might be something you are interested in.

### Civic Voice study into the impact of the new permitted development right to change to residential on high streets

**Why are we here today?**  
**New PDR from 1st August 2021**

- Follows on from Gov consultation, which closed in Jan 2021
- Widespread concern (Civic Voice objected) but...
- New legislation introduced:  
• A new permitted development right (PDR) which allows the change of use from any use, or mix of uses, within Class E (Commercial, Business and Service Uses) to Class C3 (Residential use) without the need for a planning application. Prior approval required (light touch application).
- Applies in Conservation Areas

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development etc.) (England) (Amendment) Order 2021 [From 1st August 2021]

Working with the APPG for Civic Societies, we continue to focus on the impact of the new permitted development right (Class E) which allows the change of use of properties from 'high street' uses to residential (Class C3). The new right applies in most locations, including Conservation Areas, (with some minor exceptions e.g. listed buildings), and is effective from 1st August 2021.

You can watch a recent event explaining the policy [here](#). We used the session to explain the background to the policy and how civic societies can get involved in monitoring the prior approval applications coming forward in your area.

If your civic society is interested in taking part in this study, there is still time to get involved. Get in touch at [info@civicvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@civicvoice.org.uk)

The purpose of the study is to assess the actual impact of the right in practice. A study, using civic volunteers to capture data and evidence, will enable us to see if our fears have been borne out or, conversely, if the PDR has had a neutral or positive impact on the high street.

We will formally launch the study in the Autumn at an event with the APPG for Civic Societies. We will also be using the study to inform our response to the HCLG Select Committee which recently called on the Government to pause the introduction of the new right.

### Ilkley Civic Society championing High quality design

Ilkley Civic Society has been successful in securing National Lottery funding to support a study into the impact of the new permitted development right (PDR) on high streets. The study will focus on the impact of the new permitted development right (Class E) which allows the change of use of properties from 'high street' uses to residential (Class C3). The new right applies in most locations, including Conservation Areas, (with some minor exceptions e.g. listed buildings), and is effective from 1st August 2021.

Civic groups have consistently told us that local authority resourcing is one of their key concerns with the Government's proposals for planning reform. With two-fifths of local planning authorities having no access to urban design advice, almost two thirds no landscape advice, three quarters no architectural advice and currently, only 14% of local authorities produce design codes in house; a real challenge exists in delivering high-quality design across the country.

For that reason, civic societies are in the strongest possible position to participate in the growing debate about high-quality design.

We are here to help you. Whether providing examples of high-quality design through the Civic Voice Design Awards, organising briefing sessions, or writing articles, we always want to help you be aware of the latest thoughts and perspectives.

If you are interested in this area of work, you might be interested in a recent Membership Monday event where we heard from [Ilkley Civic Society](#), who talked to us about champion good quality design in their areas.

Watch the session here: <https://vimeo.com/588213691>