



civic update

1st October 2021

You can contact us by:

Email: info@civicvoice.org.uk

Twitter: [@civic_voice](https://twitter.com/civic_voice)

Website: <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/contact/>

Key dates for your diary:

4th October: Civic Voice and Formal Status for Civic Societies in the Planning System: [Register here](#)

4th October: Joan Humble to speak to Lytham St Annes Civic Society

12th October: Civic Voice to speak at the Association of Town Centre Managers on High Streets

14th October: Civic Voice to speak at Quality of Life Foundation conference on effective community engagement

14th October: Civic Voice to speak at ICOMOS UK Conference on Climate Change

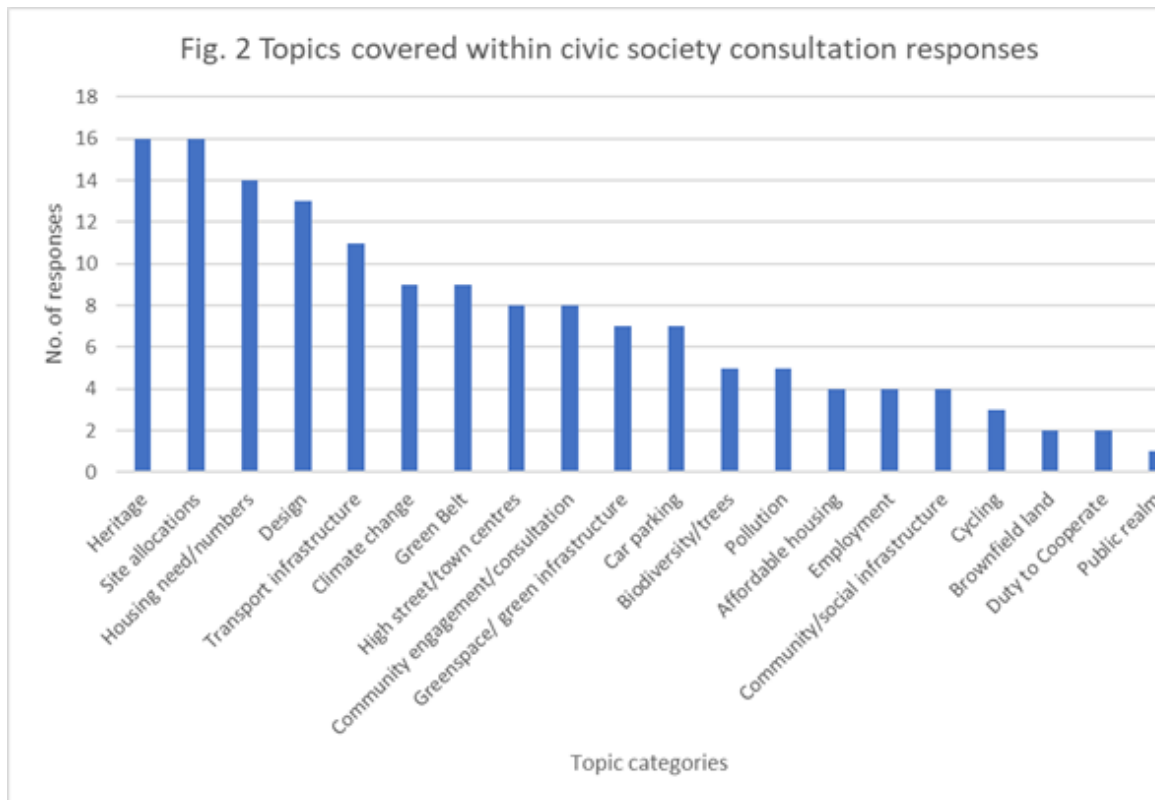
15th October: Civic Voice AGM: [Register here](#)

21st October: Civic Voice to speak to IHBC North West on effective community engagement

10th November: Ian Harvey to speak to Chester Civic Trust on the Planning Bill

More events [via: http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/get-involved/events/](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/get-involved/events/)

New research reveals the current level of civic society participation in the development of Local Plans



We have always known that civic societies engage in a broad range of issues, and we now have the data to back this up. Our new research shows that civic societies champion policies to create better places from housing and heritage to climate change and community engagement.

This research has been undertaken to inform a broader conversation about civic society participation in planning, with a specific focus on understanding the current level of civic society participation in the development of Local Plans.

Via a desktop review of all Local Plans submitted to the Planning Inspectorate between 1st March 2019 and 1st September 2021 has been undertaken, we can reveal the following key findings:

- 31 of the 45 Local Plans had at least one civic society within their area. This equates to 69% of Local Planning Authorities with a civic society within their area (broadly consistent with previous research on the location of civic societies).
- 22 Local Plans received a consultation response from at least one civic society. This equates to 71% of Local Plans, where civic societies exist, obtain a consultation response from civic society.
- In total, 35 civic societies provided consultation responses on Local Plans within the study. Knowing that some of the 45 local authority areas surveyed had more than one civic society, extrapolating the data across all civic societies in the study, 59% of societies provided a consultation response on their Local Plan. This equates to approximately 3 in every five civic societies commenting on their Local Plan.
- Civic societies consultation responses covered a vast breadth of issues, falling into 20 broad topics.
- The most common issues/topics covered within civic society responses were 'Heritage' matters and 'Site Allocations', both referred to in 52% of responses.

The research is helping Civic Voice at a national level position to understand how and when civic societies engage in local plans. It is part of our broader work, preparing for the Civic Voice AGM when we formally discuss the motion: **Formal Status for Civic Societies in the Planning Process.**

You can read the background [paper here](#).

Please join us on Monday as we consider this research further: [Register here](#).

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



In collaboration with the University of Reading, we continue our research into the role of civic societies in the 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>

You can also [download a PDR version here that you can discuss with](#) your colleagues before formally submitting it.

Notice is hereby given that we will be holding the AGM of Civic Voice for 2020-2021

Notice is hereby given that we will be holding the AGM of Civic Voice for 2020-2021 on Zoom on Friday 15th October 2021 at 2pm.

The purpose will be to transact the following business:


1. To agree the minutes for AGM 2020 ([available here](#)).
 2. Appointment of Messrs McMillan and Co LLP Chartered Accountants as independent examiners
 3. Ratification of Trustees appointed to serve from 2021-2025
 4. Any other business relevant to the AGM
- Motion 1 Climate Change Emergency
 - Motion 2 Formal Status for Civic Societies in Planning System

Further information on the motions can be accessed [here](#).

We hope that you can join us for the AGM, but if not, please do send apologies. Apologies can be sent to info@civicvoice.org.uk and will be recorded at the meeting.

The AGM is free for Civic Voice members to attend, but registration is required here so that we can issue you the Zoom details to access the meeting.



Climate crisis: AGM motion will discuss how we can add value



Gill Battarbee

Addingham Civic Society
Presentation to Civic Voice
6th September 2021

Addingham Environment Group
Climate Change



11:02:29

We know that Civic Societies are some of the most passionate advocates for local action in protecting built and natural heritage but what makes them unique is that unlike many other sector, the civic movement embraces everything from dense urban, to deeply rural communities and everything in between. With such a vast area of interest, we have an important role to play in the climate change discussion. Members have been asking us what we are doing, so we are responding to your demands.

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. We will be bringing the following motion to the conference to ensure the Civic movement plays its part in the greatest challenge facing the world.

Motion one: Climate Change Emergency
We recognise that a climate crisis is upon us. As a national organisation, we recognise the influence that we have with civic societies and community groups across England.

We commit for Civic Voice as an organisation to take account of climate change within our own organisation, practices and activities, including staff travel, events and meetings.

We commit to delivering our charitable objectives, which include promoting sustainable development by the conservation, protection and improvement of the environment, and the promotion of the prudent use of resources

We commit to informing communities about the challenges the planet is facing, and to highlight examples of how community can take practical action, with the aim to inspire civic societies to develop local activities that respond to this agenda.

We commit to supporting individual civic societies to consider how they can promote sustainable development in their own activities.

We commit to supporting and developing the capacity and skills of individuals and communities to understand and act to conserve, protect, and improve the environment of their locality

[Read more here.](#)

Our Director to talk to dozens of civic societies in the next few weeks



Alnwick, Bristol, Chester, Ealing, Pontefract and Plymouth Civic Societies are just some of the civic societies that our Director, Ian Harvey will be meeting on Zoom in the next few weeks.

'Community Placemakers'. 'Voluntary led', 'Projects and Planning'. 'Collaborative' are just some of the phrases that have started coming up in our community conversation. Do you think they describe what we do as Civic Societies?

Why is Ian meeting Civic Societies in the next few weeks? This is part of our review into the Future of the Civic Movement as we undertake a national 'community conversation' with civic societies to help us better understand where the movement wants to go.

The community conversation will consider:

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

We encourage civic societies to get in touch and arrange a session with us.

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.](#)

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?

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/](https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/19577488.calls-radical-revamp-bootham-gillygate-
junction-york/)

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

Recording...

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

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.