

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2009 (John Pritchard)

I must thank the Society's Officers and Executive Committee members for their support during the past year. Anne Winter has continued as our Honorary Secretary, whilst serving the community in so many other ways. Martin Thomas has taken on the position of Honorary Treasurer from one of the Society's founder members, Dr Dorothy Pearson. Our Society depends upon the success of our Coffee Mornings in the Mechanics Institute. Thanks to all who have helped or donated raffle and tombola prizes.

Mike Brunt has represented us at the Whaley Bridge Regeneration Partnership, Barbara Pritchard at the Central Area Forum, and Bert Bowles at EMACS (East Midlands Association of Civic Societies) meetings. I also must thank Dr Bernard Treves Brown for his work on maintaining our website (<http://www.wbas.org.uk/>) and with various planning matters. Liz Chambers is standing down from the Executive Committee. Mrs Ivy Lomas has not been able to attend meetings, but continues to monitor international, national and local affairs from her fireside.

Since the last AGM there have been two Coffee Mornings, six ordinary meetings of the Executive Committee, which are open to all members, and six meetings of the Club Room Committee. We took part in August in a Local History Exhibition at the Uniting Church, where our Coal Mining Abandonment maps attracted much interest.

The business of the Society is conducted in the context of promoting the Objects of the Society:

- to promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit (ie the civil parish of Whaley Bridge)
- to stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of this area and its surroundings
- to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area of benefit.

CLUBROOM: Thanks to the volunteers for keeping the weeds at bay on the steps and in the garden, for keeping the room clean and tidy, and for providing refreshments at meetings. It is increasingly difficult to justify continuing with our Club Room in Old Road, because of the costs incurred and the limited usage. A Committee of five members looked at the options. It reported back in May. Its Recommendations, based on costs and usage going back to 2001, are:

(1) Subject to the outcome of the architect's inspection and report, work with Nye Rowlands (who is working on a proposed 'Whaley Bridge Heritage Trail' project) to see how the Club Room could feature in the Heritage Trail project and how an application for funding for that project could include an element of funding (including carrying out a formal structural survey and any other appropriate survey to investigate public liability, DDA compliance, and other statutory and/or relevant issues) that would secure the integration of the Club Room into that project on a long-term basis.

(2) In the event that Recommendation 1 is non-productive, seek to find appropriate professional help for the disposal of the Club Room (in a way that satisfied the Charity Commission and the local planning authority) at no expense to the Society.

MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN: For the annual Mersey Basin Week in October, the Society carried out two Clean-ups (Memorial Park and Canal Basin areas), supported by the Friends of Memorial Park and High Peak Borough Council. Volunteers enjoyed a Litter Pickers Lunch at the Goyt Inn. There were two Whaley Water Walks and two Canalside Walks.

Two members attended the Greater Manchester Waters Forum at Digital World Centre, Salford Quays in May. Four members attended the Environment 09 Conference at the BT Convention Centre, Liverpool in September, where Lord Heseltine warning against complacency said: 'This has been the biggest urban regeneration since Victorian England. But that should be the platform to leap forward, not the opportunity to congratulate ourselves on a job completed.'

The river is now cleaner than at any time since the Industrial Revolution; its restoration is one of the UK's biggest environmental success stories. The Campaign, launched 25 years ago when the Mersey was commonly regarded by many as the most polluted river estuary in Europe, shuts down next March.

CIVIC TRUST and CIVIC SOCIETY INITIATIVE: The Civic Trust of England was a charitable organisation founded in 1957. It has ceased operations and went into administration in April due to lack of funds. **The Civic Society Initiative** (www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk) was set up with the support of The National Trust, CPRE and other organisations to ensure a future for the civic society movement.

EAST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC SOCIETIES (EMACS): The Midlands Amenity Societies Association (MASA) was founded in 1987 to represent Midlands amenity societies registered with the Civic Trust. In 2001 it divided into East and West MASA in line with Civic Trust aspirations to create a regional association for each of the nine local government regions of England.

In July 2006 East MASA changed its name to the East Midlands Association of Civic Societies (EMACS), (www.eastmasa.org.uk or www.eastmidcivicsocieties.org.uk). There are fifty Civic Societies in the East Midlands Region, fifteen of which have their own web sites.

Since its inception in March 2001 the Association has continued to issue its magazine, reports, accounts and any additional information to all member societies on a quarterly basis. It particularly encourages the foundation of new societies and improved contact between members, including the establishment of web sites and modern methods of communication.

REGENERATION: British Waterways (BW) have completed the repair and resurfacing to 'Greenway' standard of their entire Peak Forest Canal towpath within High Peak, and have delivered two Interpretation Boards. Have you seen these – and the new Red Wheel plaques? A pilot waterbus service between Whaley Bridge and Bugsworth Basins, and repair work to the Grade II listed Horse Tunnel (and to the ramps linking it with the towpath) are being planned - and a new Visitor Centre at Bugsworth Basin.

Consultants appointed by BW completed a Feasibility Study to produce viable options, deliverable in the short term and sustainable in the long term, for usage of the Grade 2* Listed Transshipment Warehouse and associated land at the Canal Basin to achieve social, economic and environmental benefits. It is understood that BW are engaged in confidential talks with potential funding bodies. Details are just now emerging of the new BW structure introduced on 2nd November 2009.

Consultants appointed by High Peak Borough Council have completed a comprehensive Masterplan Study producing a detailed implementation plan to guide the future development of the Bingswood Industrial Estate and surrounding land. It is understood that HPBC is engaged in confidential talks with the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership (DDEP).

<http://www.highpeak.gov.uk/news/press/2009mar1629.asp>

HPBC's Tree Strategy was adopted in July.

PLANNING: Structure Plans and Local Plans are being replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The **Core Strategy** is the key strategic document within an LDF, providing the basis for the production of other planning documents. Its role is to set out the strategic vision and direction for an area over the whole period up to 2026. An important part of the Core Strategy (the key strategic document within the Local Development Framework) will be to plan the future growth of towns and villages across an area.

The East Midlands Regional Plan requires that 10,000 new homes be built in the Peak Sub Region between 2006 and 2026; (nb Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Councils are working together as the Peak Sub Region to address the challenge of the housing crisis in the area).

After all existing planning permissions are taken into account, land for about 3,500 homes in High Peak over this 20 year period still needs to be identified. Some new land may also need to be found to support the local economy. The redevelopment of existing industrial sites will also present opportunities to provide new jobs.

During 2009, the local planning authority conducted 'Core Strategy Issues and Options' consultation during March to May to seek views on which towns and villages should accommodate this growth. Subsequently, a five-week consultation on 'potential growth' options commenced on 27 August 2009 and ran until 1 October 2009. The Society made the following comments:

The members of Whaley Bridge Amenity Society wish to make the following comments about the Development Option CC, South West of Whaley Bridge and Option CF - redevelopment of industrial sites:

The consequence of developing the land South West of Whaley Bridge would be to unbalance the Community of Whaley Bridge.

- **The current volume of traffic on Macclesfield Road makes it hazardous.**
- **The local Primary Schools are already near to full capacity.**
- **The additional demands, on the local infrastructure, created by further housing development, would necessitate a radical overhaul of that infrastructure.**

Employment land (option CF) should be used to generate additional employment opportunities, not for housing development.

Consequently, the draft 'Core Strategy' will become available for public consultation in March 2010.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAYS (PROWs): The Society continues to make representations to Derbyshire County Council (DCC) about problems as they are brought to our attention. The claimed PROW between Whaley Lane and Orchard Avenue has made steady progress through the process during 2009. Following the survey by volunteers of the 106 PROWs in Whaley Bridge Parish, a programme of improvements has been agreed with Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire covering Paths 22, 26, 39, 61, 62 and 66.

CENTRAL AREA FORUM:

The Society has been represented at the two meetings:

'Access to care outside the hospital' and Library services in Derbyshire' (26th February at Chinley WI)

'Coping throughout the Recession' and 'Local Event Planning' (15th October at New Mills School).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2009/2010:

Thursday, 3rd December: 6.45pm: Doors open and Refreshments at Mechanics Institute. 7pm: Talks, followed by 7.30pm: Start of Whaley Bridge Amenity Society ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 16th January: EMACS AGM, somewhere in Northamptonshire

Saturday, 27th March: WBAS Coffee Morning, Mechanics Institute

Saturday, 17th April: EMACS meeting, Spalding

Saturday, 26th June: WBAS Coffee Morning, Mechanics Institute

Saturday, 17th July: EMACS General Meeting, Wigston, Leicestershire

Spring clean of Club Room and Central Area Forums: To be notified