

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2011

I must thank the Society's Officers and Executive Committee members for their support during the past year particularly Cllr Anne Winter (Honorary Secretary), Martin Thomas (Honorary Treasurer), and Dr Bernard Treves Brown (webmaster and lead on planning matters). Our Society depends upon the success of our Coffee Mornings in the Mechanics Institute. Thanks to all who have helped on the day, or have donated cakes, and raffle and tombola prizes. Thanks, too, to Marlene Bate, Joy Brown, Barbara Pritchard and Anne Winter for a 'quinquennial' spring cleaning of the Club Room and to Barbara for also providing refreshments at our meetings. I regret to report the passing of Nancy Gourley, Arthur Jackson ('Jacko') who passed away in his 100th year, former High Peak Borough Councillor (HPBC) Henry Playford and Deryk Thomas, father of our Honorary Treasurer – I represented the Society at their funerals.

Since the last AGM there have been seven meetings of the Executive Committee and four Coffee Mornings (two of which were dedicated to fund raising for the Toddbrook Valves project (see below). All members of the Society may attend and speak at Executive Committee meetings, and we have been pleased to welcome several this year.

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: There is nothing to report about the use of the Club Room as an audio-visual centre for the proposed Whaley Bridge Urban Heritage Trail, apart from the Living History Group producing an excellent booklet about the Trail.

BRITISH WATERWAYS: Over the past two years British Waterways, a major asset owner in Whaley Bridge and district, has been moving steadily towards transferring its canals and rivers to the ownership of a new waterways charity, the Canal & River Trust, by April 2012. Regularly updated news about this 'transition' may be found at the Waterscape website (see below).

LITTER PICKS: This year, the Town Council took out public liability insurance cover for community litter picks, in which some of our members participated.

CIVIC VOICE: Our Society has continued with its membership of the new civic society movement **Civic Voice** (which it joined last year as a founder member). Its current campaigns include: Save Our High Streets, Love Local and Street Pride. Neighbouring members include: Bollington Civic Society, Dronfield Civic Society, Eyam Village Society, Cheadle Civic Heritage Trust, Marple Civic Society, and The Wilmslow Trust.

REGENERATION: Following 18 months of uncertainty about the future of the Whaley Bridge Regeneration Partnership, the Town Council has established two successor partnerships.

One of these is to be concerned with the provision of a new bridge (to provide an alternative HGV access to and from Bingswood Industrial Estate avoiding Canal Street, the Canal Basin and Bingswood Avenue) and the regeneration of the Canal Basin and the Grade 2* Transfer Shed therein. Another, called Whaley4Wards, will be concerned with other issues; for further information, visit the community website.

Following the local elections in May, HPBC has reversed its decision to stop supporting the Whaley Bridge Regeneration Partnership beyond March 2011. In October it agreed to make £4,000 available this year. The successful Going Local method of supporting communities has been scrapped, but a Members Initiative Fund has been introduced.

I am sure that I speak for all our members when I applaud the work of other local community groups, especially: Friends of Furness Vale Station, Friends of Whaley Bridge Station, COGS (Furness Vale Community Organising Green Space) and Friends of Memorial Park. An 'easy access area' platform has been provided on the Manchester platform at Whaley Station, and the renovation of the Booking Office and Hall, and Waiting Room, on the Buxton platform has been completed.

We have met COGS representatives this year, and learned that there is a 21st century form of 'planning blight' preventing them from achieving their aspirations for their community.

SHALLCROSS INCLINE GREENWAY: I represented the Society (and the Town Council) at Derbyshire County Council's Regulatory (Planning) Committee meeting on 1st August 2011 at which planning permission was given. The project is currently under construction. The route will be able to be used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders, and will be wheelchair accessible at both ends and throughout its length. Its completion will go some way to address the problem of the danger from the lack of pavements (and speeding) on Elnor Lane. It adds to the existing Linear Park, and takes forward the aspiration of the former Whaley Bridge Urban District Council to have public access along the line (as far as practicable) of the former Cromford and High Peak Railway within the Parish.

PLANNING: It is expected that the imminent passage of the Localism Bill into law (although at the time of writing it is still believed to be capable of amendment) will finally achieve the coalition government's intention of abolishing Regional Spatial Strategies and regional housing targets. Next year will see the introduction of the final National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Society's response to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) public consultation may be found on our website.

It is in this context that the local planning authority, HPBC, has continued working during 2011 towards the submission of its Local Development Framework (LDF) documentation for an 'examination in public' in 2012, prior to formal adoption by the Secretary of State in 2013. 'Community Conversations' have been held in Whaley Bridge and Furness Vale. For the area of High Peak Borough outside the Peak Park, the existing evidence-based housing targets in the East Midlands Regional Plan will be replaced by evidence-based housing targets in the High Peak LDF.

The procurement of affordable housing to meet local needs will be an important issue.

LAND AT JODRELL ROAD: A Section 106 agreement between the local planning authority and the developer (associated with the planning permission for the development in the Hockerley New Road area) provided for the transfer of land to be maintained in perpetuity by HPBC. This transfer, together with a sum of £10,000, has taken place during 2011. It is hoped that this land (to the north of the Jodrell Road Children's Recreation Ground) will in time become a protected Local Nature Reserve. HPBC is to write to Whaley Bridge Town Council about the transfer of ownership and maintenance funding to them.

BRIDGE 42: Network Rail has been refused Listed Building Consent for work that would strengthen the railway bridge (crossing Buxton Road, near Wharf Road). Network Rail's intention is that the restriction of a 10mph speed limit across the bridge for goods trains be removed. Planning permission is not needed – but Listed Building Consent, for this Grade 2 Listed Building, is. At the time of writing, the outcome of Network Rail's appeal against the local planning authority's refusal is awaited.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAYS (PROWs): The Society continues to make representations to Derbyshire County Council (DCC) about matters as they are brought to our attention. The claimed footpath between Whaley Lane and Orchard Avenue was formally added to the Definitive Map (Ref. No. WB113) last year, and has been joined this year by the new PROW footpath between Whaley Lane and Reservoir Road. A claim has been made for a footpath in Furness Vale between Station Road and the canal towpath. The Town Council's claim for a link between PROW WB61 and Chapel Road at Cadster is progressing. See also (below): DCC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.wbas.org.uk (The Society's website)

www.whaleybridge.com (Whaley's 'Community' website)

www.merseybasin.org.uk (The Campaign's 'legacy' website)

www.civicvoice.org.uk

www.britishwaterways.co.uk

www.waterscape.com (News about the transition of British Waterways to a new charity)

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/countryside/access/rights_of_way/default.asp (Information about Public Rights of Way within Derbyshire)

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/2011.08.01%20RP2%20Goyt%20Valley%20Greenway_tcm44-176204.pdf (DCC Officer Report on Shallcross Incline Greenway)

[www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/2011.09.12%20\(3\)%20Mins%20of%201%20Aug%2011_tcm44-188353.pdf](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/2011.09.12%20(3)%20Mins%20of%201%20Aug%2011_tcm44-188353.pdf) (DCC Decision and Conditions to approve Shallcross Incline Greenway)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2011/2012:

Friday, 25th November: 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, 10th December: A normal service train (from Piccadilly to Buxton) will be designated as a 'Santa Special'

Saturday, 7th April: WBAS Coffee Morning, Mechanics Institute

Saturday, 23rd June: Civic Voice's 'Civic Day'
Saturday, 25th August: WBAS Coffee Morning, Mechanics Institute
Annual 'spring clean' of Club Room: To be notified

John A T Pritchard (Chairman)

1st November 2011