

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2010

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). During the year, Andrew Slater was co-opted to serve on the Executive Committee. Our Society depends upon the success of our Coffee Mornings in the Mechanics Institute. Thanks to all who have helped or donated cakes, and raffle and tombola prizes. Thanks, too, to Barbara Pritchard for cleaning the Club Room and providing refreshments at our meetings. I regret to report the passing of Mrs Ivy Lomas and Mrs Joan Swindells – two long serving, loyal members of our Society.

Since the last AGM there have been two Coffee Mornings, and six ordinary meetings of the Executive Committee, which are open to all members. 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 have been two meetings with Nye Rowlands (who is working on a proposed 'Whaley Bridge Urban Heritage Trail' project) to see how the Club Room could feature in the 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. An architect attended at the meeting at Footsteps on 6th October 2010.

MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN: The Campaign, launched 25 years ago when the Mersey was commonly regarded by many as the most polluted river estuary in Europe, shut down in March. It leaves a 'legacy' website.

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.

LITTER PICKS: For the first time for a long time without the support of the Mersey Basin Campaign, the Society carried out two Clean-ups in August - at Coachman's Lane (Furness Vale) and the Canal Basin and surrounding areas. Volunteers enjoyed a Litter Pickers' Lunch once again at the Goyt Inn. Support was provided by High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) and coincided with the 'Keeping the High Peak Clean' campaign staged by the Borough Council and Keep Britain Tidy (KBT).

CIVIC VOICE: Following the demise of The Civic Trust last year, our Society has joined the new civic society movement **Civic Voice** as a founder member. Its current campaigns include: Love Local, and Street Pride. Neighbouring members include: Bollington Civic Society, Dronfield Civic Society, Marple Civic Society, and The Wilmslow Trust.

REGENERATION: British Waterways (BW) have carried out work at the Grade 2 Listed Horse Tunnel: the provision of a wooden handrail on the southern ramp and the resurfacing of the path through the tunnel. This complements other completed work: the repair and resurfacing to 'Greenway' standard of their entire Peak Forest Canal towpath within High Peak, and two Interpretation Boards. BW is to be de-quango-ised, and become a charitable body by April 2012.

The future of the Whaley Bridge Regeneration Partnership remains uncertain (currently) following High Peak Borough Council's decision to withdraw support. HPBC appear to want to move to 'a pattern of annual reviews of more strategic objectives within a wider visioning exercise' rather than 'focussing on small scale local projects'. Whether the delivery of the proposed, long-awaited 'second bridge' project is a small scale local project, or an important strategic project that would unlock the tourism potential of the Canal Basin, may generate discussion. More importantly, the arrangement whereby the Whaley Bridge Regeneration Partnership acted for a decade as a conduit between the local community and HPBC (as 'lead partner') in the delivery of the bridge has failed to deliver the bridge.

LEPs are local successors to, but are different from, Regional Development Agencies. The Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Derbyshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is one of 24 to be approved so far. Whilst it is too early to conclude that it will not be able to bid into the Regional Growth Fund for any financial support for the second bridge, there are no grounds for raising expectations that this will be so. It also remains to be seen whether, and if so to what extent, the Government's proposals for Local Authorities to 'localise' business rates (ie to keep and spend locally the business rates that they collect, and which are currently pooled by central government and redistributed across all local authorities) will introduce genuine incentives for local economic growth.

I am sure that I speak for all our members when I applaud the work of local community groups in attracting (and seeking to attract) external funding for the restoration and improvement of the two local railway stations and the two local parks: Friends of Furness Vale Station, Friends of Whaley Bridge Station, COGS (Furness Vale Community Organising Green Space) and Friends of Memorial Park.

SHALLCROSS INCLINE GREENWAY: For over 30 years the Town Council has had an ambition to extend the Linear Park towards the southern boundary of the parish, following as far as possible the line of the Cromford and High Peak Railway. Older residents will remember (in the 1960s) the abandoned 'Shallcross Sidings'. Now, several former industrial sites in the New Road area have been replaced by social housing (Cromford Court and Cromford Flats) and private housing

development. The provision of three tranches of £1M of SEMMMS (South East Manchester Multi Modal Study) funding to be spent exclusively within High Peak has enabled the County Council to support British Waterways' 'Greenway' projects (see above), the Shallcross Incline Greenway project (a start is expected in January 2011) and other schemes in Whaley Bridge. The completion of the Shallcross Incline section will not only add another link to the excellent Public Rights of Way provision in the area, but will also go some way to address the problem of the lack of pavements (and speeding) on Elnor Lane.

PLANNING: On 27th May 2010, the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, confirmed the coalition government's **intention** of abolishing Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). This was followed on 6th July by a letter, **revoking** regional strategies 'with immediate effect' and giving guidance on the new Coalition Government's thinking. On 10th November this revocation was ruled unlawful by the High Court, overruling the argument of the government that regional spatial strategies were made by regional assemblies, an undemocratic tier of regional government, and that this undermined directly elected local authorities. Immediately, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Communities and Local Government. Bob Neill announced that the proposed enactment by Parliament of the Localism Bill (due to be published on 18th November) will 'sweep away the controversial regional strategies'.

It is in **this** context that the local planning authority, HPBC, will in 2011 progress towards the submission of its Local Development Framework documentation for an 'examination in public' prior to formal adoption by the Secretary of State. The procurement of affordable housing to meet local needs will be an important issue.

During 2009, our Society made the following comments (which at this time appear to have been taken on board by HPBC):

'... 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.'

LAND AT JODRELL ROAD: The Section 106 agreement between the local planning authority and the developer (associated with the planning permission for the development at Hockerley New Road) provided for the transfer of land to be maintained in perpetuity by High Peak Borough Council. The transfer is awaiting the completion of works to the satisfaction of the Council. It is hoped that this land (to the

north of the Children's Recreation Ground) will in time become a protected Local Nature Reserve.

BRIDGE 42: Network Rail wish to obtain Listed Building Consent for work that would strengthen the bridge (crossing Buxton Road, near Wharf Road) in order to allow the 10mph speed limit for goods trains to be removed. Planning permission is not needed – only Listed Building Consent. At the time of writing the local planning authority is seeking further information from Network Rail.

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 has been formally added to the Definitive Map (Ref. No. WB113), and has been in regular usage since July; there are fingerpost signs at either end. In October, DCC made an Order (which is currently awaiting confirmation) to add a claimed footpath between Whaley Lane and Reservoir Road to the Definitive Map. A claim is being 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).

CENTRAL AREA FORUM:

No Area Forum meetings have been convened by High Peak Borough Council this year.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.wbas.org.uk

www.merseybasin.org.uk/

www.civicvoice.org.uk/

www.britishwaterways.co.uk/twentytwenty

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/news_events/news/2010/October/news_items/celebrations_at_local_enterprise_announcement.asp

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/countryside/Access/rights_of_way/improvements/default.asp

FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2010/2011:

Friday, 10th 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, 26th March: WBAS Coffee Morning, Mechanics Institute

Saturday, 16th July: WBAS Coffee Morning, Mechanics Institute

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

John A T Pritchard (Chairman)

15th November 2010