

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S REPORT 2023

(AS ADOPTED AT THE 2023 AGM ON 4th JUNE 2024)

WBAS Club Room Sale

As we reported at last year's AGM, we had been concerned for some time about the future of the Club Room, and reluctantly decided that our only realistic option was to offer it for sale on the open market. This decision was approved by the 2022 AGM, and the Club Room was placed in an auction on 15th March 2023, with Botham's of Chesterfield. The sale attracted a great deal of interest and it raised more funds for the Society than we had been led to expect.

Funding Programme

As a registered charity the Society is seeking to distribute the funds raised from the sale of the Club Room. A programme has been devised for funding projects benefiting the residents of the civil parish of Whaley Bridge (which is the Society's area of benefit), including the wards of Fernilee, Furness Vale, Taxal and Yeadsley. Details of the programme have been circulated and expressions of interest have been invited from organisations in the civil parish.

Owing to the unavailability of volunteers, it has unfortunately again not been possible to hold any coffee mornings since the last AGM.

Subscriptions remain the same as last year and we have continued our subscription to 'Civic Voice', which keeps us up to date with the activities of other civic societies and of civic issues which are being raised and dealt with nationally.

This year, we have been able to hold only two meetings of the Executive Committee, whose members are mindful of the Objects of the Society, which are:

- **To promote high standards of planning and architecture in, or affecting the area of benefit, which is 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.**

The agenda for each meeting gives opportunities to discuss and comment on Planning Applications, Public Rights of Way and other matters relating to the four wards of Whaley Bridge.

Sadly, the membership of the Society continues to decrease, although it does maintain a strong interest in Whaley Bridge activities and local issues.

The Canal and River Trust's construction of a new spillway for Toddbrook Reservoir continues, following the emergency in 2019. This will be followed by the removal of the old auxiliary spillway, which failed in 2019, and the work is now expected to be complete by late 2025, with the re-filling of the reservoir complete over the winter of 2025/26. The Society will continue to monitor progress.

Since our last AGM, Network Rail have completed the partial reconstruction of the Grade II listed railway bridge BEJ42, which crosses Buxton Road between the Uniting Church and Whaley Bridge Primary School. As the bridge is a listed structure, as much as possible (approximately one third) of the existing structure has been retained, with the new sections being in keeping with the old.

The public inquiry into several planning issues at Taxal Edge, off Macclesfield Road, which was held in November 2022, reported in 2023. Of the two appeals which were considered in the inquiry the first (demolition of the existing building known as "Taxal Edge" and the detached garage building and the erection of 7 no. dwellings) was dismissed (i.e. disallowed) and the second (the alteration of a building known as "the classroom block") was allowed.

High Peak Borough Council has embarked on a review of its Local Plan, which was adopted in 2016, to cover planning matters in the borough outside the Peak District National Park, in the period until 2031. Circumstances have changed and it has been determined that the Local Plan needs to be updated. The new Plan will cover the period to 2041, with a target date for adoption in mid-2026. The development of the Plan will take place in several stages; the first stage, Early Engagement, in which the public was invited to comment, ended on 3rd March 2023. There will be at least two further public consultation stages: an options consultation and a preferred options consultation. The Society will maintain a watching brief and will make contributions where appropriate.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Whaley Bridge ('The Plan') was adopted by the two planning authorities for the parish, the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) and High Peak Borough Council (HPBC), on 19th and 31st January 2024, respectively. The plan has been developed by Vision4Whaley, a small group of volunteers (including some members of Whaley Bridge Amenity Society), in conjunction with Whaley Bridge Town Council. The Plan provides a strategy for the development of the neighbourhood area (the civil parish of Whaley Bridge, which includes Fernilee, Furness Vale, Taxal and Yeadsley), and a range of policies and proposals which will result in positive benefits for the local community. It covers policies on employment and housing, heritage-led regeneration and conservation, environment and climate change, and transport and movement. It also supports the housing growth strategy and associated policies of HPBC's adopted Local Plan and the growth strategy of the PDNPA's development framework, as applied to the neighbourhood area. The Plan will be used to shape planning policy until the end of 2032 (or until an updated plan is made before that date), and will be taken into account by the two planning authorities (HPBC and PDNPA) when considering planning applications. Full details of the plan may be found at <https://www.vision4whaley.org.uk>.

Links to further details on the above local matters are available on the Society's website at <https://www.wbas.org.uk>.