



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk



**NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2022**

Chairman's report

Alison Gifford

Just after I finished this report, the news came that HM The Queen had died. Therefore, I have rewritten the opening comments. For many people, this sad event was met with sorrow but not surprise. Here in Norfolk, we felt a very special connection to The Queen through her family home at Sandringham. It is the home she has come back to almost every Christmas for generations, St Mary Magdalene, the church where she worshipped and Wood Farm, the small farmhouse where Prince Philip chose to spend his retirement. The town of King's Lynn was familiar to the Royal family and many members of the Civic Society will have met the Queen, Prince Philip, the Prince of Wales and other members of the royal family over the last few decades.

At 10.30 on Friday 9 September, a decision was made by the senior people in the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk to close all their buildings, parks and open spaces which would have opened for Heritage Open Day on 11 September. This decision has made it impossible to run the event. I had hoped that with thoughtful management we could run this community event, with encouragement to sign the book of condolence, visit the Minster's special area of remembrance and take part in the Proclamation by the Mayor at 1.30 on that day. Such a large event is impossible to cancel (like a football match) when over 50 different buildings and organisations were ready to take part, so there will be disappointed people and consequential muddle for which I apologise. Anna, Kim and Sandra have worked so hard, but hope to hold the event on 02 October. Check the Civic Society website for the latest information.

King's Lynn Council have interpreted the fairly loose protocol in a particular way, but the buildings of Norfolk County Council remain open and the four days of Heritage Open Day continue in Norwich and other parts of Norfolk with this advice 'Following the guidance from National Heritage Open Days, the festival will continue, but individual events may be cancelled'. I think we have lost an opportunity here in King's Lynn to come together and celebrate our wonderful heritage in a sincere tribute to the continuity of our monarchy and to meet together as a community to commemorate what is good and traditional in difficult times.

As always, planning applications have been scrutinised, the usual suspects and chancers sending in applications with so little detail as to be worthless and others ignoring planning rules altogether and when caught out, even months later, then put in retrospective planning applications. These developers almost certainly know the rules, but think it's a risk worth taking as the planning committee probably are more reluctant to have an illegal scheme pulled down than refuse it in the first place.

But good news – two very worthwhile town developments which the Civic Society entered into the competition have been shortlisted for the Mayor's Design Awards and may win at a ceremony on 20 September at the Town Hall. They are 18–20 Railway Road and 9–11 St James Street (pictured on front cover). Both have contributed to improve the street scene and are well designed. Well done to all involved.

Here we go again! This time it's the Riverside Regeneration Plan for the umpteenth time. Everybody involved means well and has good intentions, but it's so difficult to understand the language of the press releases which are written in a kind of newspeak 'A space that integrates with the town centre, forming a multi-use destination which will attract both visitors and residents' for example, what does it actually mean? It's as if it is intended to disguise what might actually happening or intended to happen. But despite that, the benefits springing from the further restoration of Lynn's maritime heritage are clear and include increased tourism, promotion of community cohesion, investment and economic regeneration.

But it is the riverside and the plans should reflect that, with more historic ships visiting and perhaps a proper lock on the Purfleet so it is returned to its use as a harbour, which I think is what attracts local people and visitors rather than light shows and digital games. It seems to me the Riverside Regeneration plans are written by a group of people who don't understand that the town doesn't need a programme of 'day and night time activities'. It needs to be cared for properly, local businesses supported and what it actually has in the way of historic building and spaces promoted, and what it has is more than most towns can hope for. It's as if they have a cake which they think needs icing without realising that actually the cake is the best bit.

St George's Guildhall has been neglected for over 20 years. I can remember a meeting where Councillors were asked if they had visited the Guildhall/Arts Centre and most of them had never been and didn't know where it was! So it's good to see this Damascus moment at last. Let's hope the plans are realistic. It's beguiling to spend money that seems not to be yours, but in fact it is ours. All the money comes from our taxes.

For our members we have an interesting and varied lecture programme which is laid out on page 4. We are especially pleased that 'WhataHoot' gin company are coming to our Christmas lecture with tasters! This local business is in King Street and an example of how towns really regenerate – from the bottom up, from the street. No amount of £12m hubs can achieve that.

I wrote in the Annual Report about the many objections to moving the books from the Carnegie Library to a new building on the old Argos site and those still stand. But there is now a feeling that it's being driven by Norfolk County Council and

the Borough Councillors are perhaps seeing the light and madness of such expenditure without ever costing the actual benefit to the majority of the residents of Lynn. The reach of NCC into Lynn life concerns me because if you read the EDP (Norwich based) you would think West Norfolk after Swaffham didn't exist. It's like being a twin-hatted councillor (Borough and NCC): where do your loyalties really lie? The library and the museum services are both directed from Norwich. Those historic books, the King John Cup? Who really controls what happens to them do you think?

Now for some nice things.

King's Lynn Society of Arts and Sciences Society have asked our very own Rick Morrish to give a talk 'Harding's Pits – Doorstep Green' on Tuesday 28 March 2023 in the Ballroom of the Duke's Head. It's a collaboration between our two Societies and therefore our members can buy visitors' tickets at £3 each (normally £5).

Furthermore, if any of our members should choose to join KLSAS at the end of the meeting, the £3 paid will be taken off the first year's subscription (their annual subscription, which covers nine talks, is now £24).

Two events for your calendar:

You are invited by the Mayor to the Town Hall at 6.30 on Wednesday 5 October for the launch of the Civic Society Pilgrimage Trail.

The Committee would also like to invite you to a Christmas Buffet on Thursday 8 December at 1pm to be held at 21 Queen Street.

If you would like to attend either or both events, please email alisongifford@btinternet.com or telephone 01553 763983 or telephone or text 07870139315 or drop a note through 21 Queen Street box or ask a Committee member.

For your interest. I came across an examination paper for entrance to the five Women's Colleges, University of Cambridge, November 1967. Out of 13 questions (three to be answered in three hours) in the General Paper, I have chosen one (because it is short). Q 12 'Is it possible to describe anything without implying acceptance of a theory about what has been described?'. The rest would make your head hurt too!

Winter Lecture Series

2022

Thursday 06 Oct: Lettering Arts Trust – the tradition of letter carving stretches back centuries and these patient artist-craftsmen are still among us serving the need to leave a trace of ourselves or others in stone.

Thursday 03 Nov: to be confirmed. Check our website for details.

Thursday 01 Dec: Nicky Crown – WhataHoot distillery

2023

Thursday 02 Feb: The Future of Norfolk Coastal Communities

Climate scientists now predict more rapid melting of polar ice and faster sea-level rise. Regardless of governmental climate action, scientists expect a sea level rise of at least 50 cm in the next century – with a change of 1 m or more being feasible.

What does this mean for low-lying coastal areas like West Norfolk? What should we be doing to prepare in King's Lynn?

Come to hear Professor Robert Nicholls, Director of the world-leading Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at UEA, speak to us about managing and adapting to coastal change in coming decades.

Thursday 02 Mar: Oxburgh Hall renovations – Anne Guymer talks us through the recent programme of renovations at this iconic National Trust property.

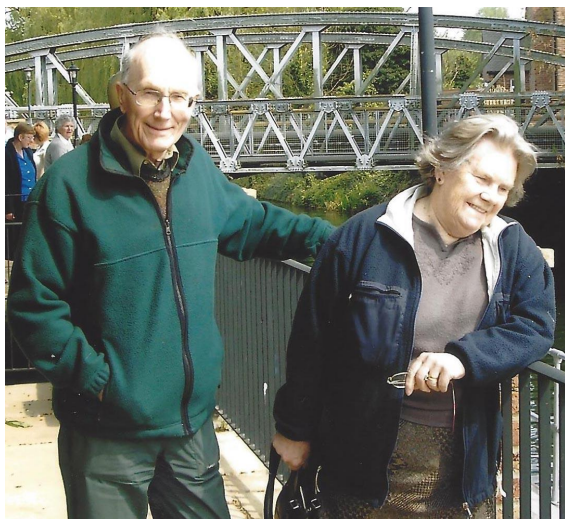
Thursday 06 Apr: to be confirmed. Check our website for details.

Thursday 25 May: AGM followed by an update on what Civic Society have done this year

All lectures at Thoresby College, South Quay at 7.30. Members free. Visitors £2

Colin Johnstone

Alison Gifford



Colin died on 19 July aged 93. He was bright and active until a very short time before his death and good neighbour and friend to the residents of Three Crowns House, where he lived for the last two years of his life after his wife Janet died and he sold the house in Queen Street. For many years, Colin was a member of the Civic Society Executive Committee. If he said something, it was worth saying. Colin always had a

grasp of the details of the constitution, which was useful at AGMs. Colin's considered manner on committees like the Civic Society and the Preservation Trust made him trusted member and I knew his advice could be relied on. He was always on top of the remit and worked out complicated legal and financial problems that baffled me. I knew Colin for 30 years. He was unflappable and he was never other than kind, polite and interested in all that happened.

He started his professional life in engineering and moved to work for the British Library in charge of digitising the catalogue. At that time, he lived with Janet and his daughters, Ann, Nicola and Catherine in Blackheath in London, where they were founder members of the Blackheath Society and retired to Queen Street in 1987. He and Janet were intrepid travellers even into their 80s.

Colin was a stoic of the old school. Never complained and accepted what happened as life took its toll with good grace. But he was always good company and a pleasure be with. He will be missed by all our small community. A long life well lived.

Custom House

Kim Leonard



It is great to hear that the iconic Custom House is open again following the move of the Tourist Information Centre to the Stories of Lynn in 2019. The Greyfriars Art Space have taken over the lease of the Custom House until at least Christmas and there will be exhibitions of their work on show at various times. For further details of when they are open, please look at their Facebook page – **Greyfriars Art Spaces – GAS**.

Members of the Civic Society's Heritage Open Day Committee had a very constructive meeting with the Art Space and we are delighted to say that subject to it going ahead (see our website for the latest news), the Custom House will be open on the re-arranged Heritage Open Day, Sunday 2 October 2022.

You may recall that the Civic Society volunteers opened the Custom House for two days a week between July and September 2021, when we attracted almost 1,600 visitors, proving that this unique building should be opened on a more permanent basis.

Please support this innovative use of the Custom House by Greyfriars and if you can, pay them a visit to see their colourful artwork by local artists.

Jewish Cemetery Friends Association KL

Kim Leonard

The Civic Society were invited to attend a meeting with supporters of the Jewish Cemetery in the Millfleet in July to form a Friends Group to help provide financial and active support to maintain this important part of the town's history. Last year, the large old gate to the Cemetery was renovated. We have joined the Committee and we will be pleased to offer advice on setting up the Group, accounting records and procedures, etc.

If you are interested in becoming a Friend of the Jewish Cemetery, please contact Marsha Parker at info@discoveringjudaism.org for further information.



West Norfolk Wins Lottery

On the next page, you will see an advert for West Norfolk Wins lottery. We have registered as a 'good cause' and hope that you will join the lottery – for a chance to win £25,000! – but also as a way to help support King's Lynn Civic Society. It's easy to join and can cost as little as £1 per week.

If you have any queries, contact our secretary Anna on info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk or 01553 849957.



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY
Member of Civic Voice
Registered Charity 298916
www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk
Email: info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk



WIN
A WHEELIE AWESOME PRIZE!



WIN A
£1000
BIKE
VOUCHER

- Please help give our fundraising a boost
- Tickets cost just £1 a week
- Chance to win up to £25,000
- Win a £1,000 Bike Voucher!

PLAY NOW:

Go to

www.westnorfolkwins.co.uk

Search for: King's Lynn Civic

Players must be 16 years of age or older. Offer ends 29th Oct 2022. T&Cs apply (see website for details).

Planning sub-committee

The Government want house building. 300,000 new homes a year was in the Tory manifesto. In fact, over the last 20 years, annual house completions have seldom exceeded 200,000 a year, and never more than 250,000 a year.

The reasoning for this required rate of building seems questionable. People are living longer – but life expectancy seems to be plateauing. Birth rates are flat-lining. Immigration is politically unpopular, but seemingly necessary and inevitable. But, depending on what estimates you look at, net immigration seldom exceeds 200,000 people a year. Yes, there are record numbers of young adults staying at home with parents – but with the economic outlook as it is, will housing availability cancel out this trend? And is it a bad thing anyway?

Nevertheless, it is difficult to go anywhere in the country nowadays without finding large new estates on the edge of settlement – often of a rather unappealing style and quality (despite the government's 'build beautiful' mantra).

King's Lynn and West Norfolk are no different. The Borough need to fulfil their 'housing supply' numbers. We are on the cusp of King's Lynn becoming a much larger town – almost certainly the largest expansion for 50 years. The South Wootton schemes by Larkfleet and Persimmon (nearly 600 dwellings) have been approved at Reserved Matters design stage. We have recently submitted comments on the reserved matters application for 600 dwellings at Knights Hill (Barratt David Wilson Homes).

The Borough Council have been consulting this month on their proposed 'supplementary planning document', which will supposedly guide the development of 4,000 houses at West Winch. As two outline planning applications have already been submitted (provisionally for 1,600 dwellings), the Borough proposals have necessarily been constructed around the submitted plans. It is not an ideal way to develop a 'vision' for what is (when combined with West Winch and North Runcton) going to effectively be a new town that may take well over 20 years to deliver.

We remain of the view that formulation of the 'sustainability appraisal' for these significant extensions to the town has been a 'tick box' exercise; that sustainable transport planning for the town is largely absent; that provisions for public transport, cycling and walking access are generally very poor; that public open space provision, amenity planting and 'green infrastructure' in general is rudimentary (and seldom seems to be delivered to the standard first promoted at outline design stage).

And it remains the case that dwellings are still being delivered with gas boilers and minimal insulation ratings, when we know full well that this is not a 'low

carbon’ and sustainable approach. Various reports have concluded that UK housing stock is some of the least energy efficient in Europe.

We have applied to speak at a Local Plan Review examination in November – but we are not especially hopeful that this will result in a more considered approach to the delivery of development in West Norfolk.

A checklist of some of the larger housing schemes in and around Lynn at present

Planning ref	Name of development (new build)	No of units	Status
13/01615/OM	West Winch (Hopkins Homes)	1,110	Awaiting outline consent
18/02289/OM	West Winch (Metacre)	500	Awaiting outline consent
20/00470/RMM	West Lynn – next to School (Minster)	38	Under construction
20/00666/RMM	Grimston Rd (Clayland)	54	Reserved Matters approved
20/00757/FM	NORA Phase 4 (Lovell for BCKLWN)	105	Under construction
20/01954/RMM	South Wootton (Larkfleet)	450	Reserved Matters approved
20/01957/FM	Waterside (Lovell for BCKLWN)	78	Reserved Matters approved
21/00855/FM	Lynnsport 1 (Lovell for BCKLWN)	96	Awaiting full consent
21/01873/FM	Parkway (Lovell for BCKLWN)	226	Approved
21/01944/RMM	South Wootton (Persimmon)	125	Reserved Matters approved
22/01310/RMM	Knights Hill (Barratt /David Wilson)	600	Reserved Matters submitted
	Total	3,382	

Planning ref	Name of development (conversion)	No of units	Status
19/00562/FM	Bishop's Lynn House, TMP (Ikon)	23	Approved
19/01015/F	Lovell House, St Nicholas St (Ikon)	27	Under construction
20/02127/FM	Chequer House, King St (LT Holdings)	40	Approved
21/00820/PACU1	Vancouver House, County Court Rd (Unex Group)	24	Approved
21/01568/FM	Old Post Office (Feride Guccuk)	30	Approved
	Total	144	



The final stage of residential development at NORA is now under construction and perhaps looks to be the most attractive of all phases. However, we still feel more could have been made of the Nar river frontage.

Other projects

As you may recall, the Civic Society were asked to sit on a panel in relation to the ‘public realm’ funding stream of the £25m Town Investment Plan. This has become a rather frustrating process where we tend to offer our knowledge, suggestions and opinions on proposals – only to see apparently worthwhile ideas shelved whilst more questionable ideas go forward.

The initial objective was to enhance the route between the railway station and the waterfront at Purfleet – which seemed admirable. Enhancing key routes through the town was an idea KLCS supported from the ‘Public Realm Action Plan’ prepared by Graham Massie Architects at the start of 2021.

The public realm panel came up with a range of positive suggestions that could begin to implement this concept, but at present at least, a lot of these ideas appear to have been knocked on the head.

We also thought it was an admirable goal of the Town Board to propose to ‘repurpose’ disused buildings. KLCS have suggested it would seem logical to use the public funds as ‘seed corn’ to encourage private developers to take forward building refurbishments in a timely manner (e.g. the former post office at Baxter’s Plain).

In fact, the Town Board now seem to have largely dropped the ‘repurposing’ remit altogether. They also seem to have pared down the ‘Active and Clean Connectivity’ aspect of the Town Deal (i.e. cycling and walking infrastructure), an investment area where one would have thought it would be possible to get quite a lot of ‘bang’ for your ‘buck’.

We are therefore concerned about the current Town Board emphasis on the ‘Multi-User Community Hub’ (MUCH) – which Lynn News readers will have noted is now costed at £12.4m (even prior to a detailed design stage). Cost escalation on such projects seems almost inevitable and has troubled similar schemes up and down the country – even before the current inflationary trends began. And as we have noted before in our newsletters, this scheme just doesn’t seem like a priority for the town and there is still no confirmation as to what will happen to an emptied Carnegie Library building.

We have also been sceptical about some of the ideas we have seen for the riverfront. In a workshop KLCS attended last spring, it was generally agreed by participants that attracting more activity to South Quay was a good thing – especially if it was coupled with regeneration of key sites (notably Sommerfeld and Thomas and the former ‘Silo Site’). (It was accepted that the scale of cost of

development at Boal Quay and Millfleet meant it was beyond the current scope of the Town Fund.)

Getting the abandoned Custom House back into use was also seen as a priority (see the last newsletter), as was reducing vehicular traffic and making public realm enhancements that could support more activities throughout the year (including boats on the river).

We were therefore somewhat taken aback by initial proposals presented earlier in the summer which included a floating swimming pool in the Purfleet, a seasonal 'beach', a sauna, a floating 'Airbnb', a lookout tower and other confections. Our first thoughts were, yes, in the right weather some of these 'additions' might attract activity – but are they the sort of investments which will provide sustainable all-year benefits now and in years to come? And do they solve any of the existing problems – not least the emptiness at the south end of the quay?

We understand some of these ideas may have now been 'reviewed'. Before the death of the Queen was announced, an exhibition of the latest riverfront proposals was to be displayed in the Custom House. By the time you read this, a new consultation event may have been announced. If not, please look out for it and try to attend.

Meanwhile the challenge to local authorities to deliver these 'levelling up' projects in the current economic climate has been widely reported in the national press. £25m increasingly seems like a very modest investment pot.

Guildhall: We support the proposals we have seen for this scheme to date. We now understand a 'Guildhall Complex and Creative Hub Task Group' has been set up with Cllr Liz Nockolds as chair and Cllr Chris Morley as vice chair. They plan to set up a charitable organisation to run the complex when the capital works are complete (indicatively 2026). A number of trustees are being appointed. Robust discussions are taking place about the cost of the project – but it seems to us that investing to make such an important Lynn asset into an enhanced, versatile and hopefully sustainable cultural centre should be given the highest priority.

South Gates: We understand a new and separate 'levelling up' bid has been submitted to government for funding to take the South Gates redevelopment project forward. (Simon Clark has been announced as the new minister at the 'Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities', the sixth housing minister in four years! Will he have time to write us a cheque?!) We understand that consultants BDP continue to work up a masterplan for the area and that further consultation will be arranged later this autumn.

HAZ: We still await a final report regarding the Heritage Action Zone – which ended, eventually, in July. We are quite sure that most people in Lynn will be quite unaware that this five-year project *to breathe new life into neglected historic buildings and sites and encourage regeneration in areas that are rich in uncelebrated heritage ...* ever took place.

Street Trees for Lynn: If the heat of this summer told us anything, it was that urban tree cover is very important. Seldom has a shady side of the street looked so inviting. It is well established that trees and garden areas significantly mitigate urban temperatures. We will continue to lobby for more tree planting across the town.

Hunstanton Railway Campaign: Investment in reopening railways seems to have slipped off the government agenda recently, as has Grant Shapps, who as transport minister had been a strong advocate of the ‘Reverse Beeching’ programme.

Let us hope the new minister, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, will recognise the value of rail investment in a sustainable national transport strategy. For inspiration, she might want to review the immediate success of the Okehampton to Exeter line.

Reopened as a passenger line only last November, by this August it has already been used for more than 120,000 journeys – more than double that predicted. The local economy is also reported to have immediately benefitted.

Meanwhile, it was another summer of traffic chaos on the road to Hunstanton. We will continue to support the Hunstanton railway reopening plan.



King's Lynn Civic Society are very pleased that Hanse Day is now a regular in the Lynn calendar of events. Let's hope it will continue to grow.

King's Lynn Civic Society

Registered charity 298916

President: Heather Bolt

**Vice President:
John Loveless**

Chairman: Alison Gifford

Vice Chairman: Helen Russell-Johnson

Secretary: Anna Gunn

Treasurer: Ian Price

Membership Secretary: Sandra Coleman

Principal address:

**56 Common Lane, North Runcton PE33 0RF
info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk**