



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk



**NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2023**

Chairman's report

Alison Gifford

Another very successful Heritage Open Day was organised by members of the Civic Society Committee. Anna and Laura Gunn and Kim Leonard did most of the hard work with help from willing members and volunteer stewards. The day was very hot which was a challenge, but it was a busy and popular event again. Lynn really puts itself on the map each year. Support from the Council is essential and appreciated.

I must thank committee member Kim Leonard for continuing to negotiate with our bank to update our bank account. The latest letter tells us they are 'Here to Help' then that we might have the account closed. I don't mention the bank as I don't want us to be debanked through wrongthink! Banks don't want Societies to bank with them and it could cause some small Societies to shut down in pure frustration and exhaustion. This applies to churches, trusts and community organisations who keep a lot of things going in this town. Forms were lost, letters written to deceased committee members asking for signatures and it took six months to be able to sign cheques again. Banks don't want the trouble of servicing clubs and societies. Online banking is their ideal – with no actual person-to-person communication – but charities and societies, quite rightly, need two signatures to spend money and therefore can't operate online banking and need to use cheques. Many charities need to pay in fairly small amounts of money, a parish church paying in the Sunday collection for example, but with fewer and fewer branches available this becomes increasingly difficult. Small local businesses are also affected. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations is aware of this problem. In their newsletter they write **'Charities, voluntary organisations, and community groups need to be able to bank. However, over the past few years, we've heard from a growing number of NCVO members that it's becoming more and more difficult to find banking services that meet their needs'**. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/the-challenges-of-charity-banking>

Banks are very much in the news. Let's hope the NCVO, Charity Commission, Civic Voice and other pressure groups can persuade them that in a civilised society, when banks make large profits and still have a

proportion of taxpayer's money which bailed them out in 2008, with these benefits come responsibilities.

All members must be aware that the political make-up of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council changed in May, to be led by the Independent members with support from smaller parties to give this group the leading role and to appoint cabinet members. We were developing some rapport with Cllr Stuart Dark and thank him for his time and consideration over several meetings. But King's Lynn Civic Society is non-political and we are confident we will develop a good relationship with the new administration. Preliminary meetings have been congenial and informative and we agree on many things – which can only be good.

But it will be no surprise if one subject leads to differences of opinion again. It is the closing of the Carnegie Library and moving the book stock to the Multi-User Community Hub (MUCH) aka the old Argos building. Please see more on this on page 5.

Our Planning Committee continue to review new applications. There is a great deal of new housing now coming forward in and around the town. Who are all these new houses for? Not people on the Freebridge waiting list, I'm sure. Do we have the infrastructure in doctors, schools, water, sewage, roads and other amenities for this influx of new people to West Norfolk? These are the questions we continue to ask in our planning responses.

The fact is – tonight 1 million homes in England will be in darkness, standing empty, with no residents. The official total vacancy now stands at over 676,000...but that isn't the full picture.

This figure excludes a further 257,000 so-called 'second homes' or 'furnished empties' and another 70,000 second homes now paying business rates as permanent short-lets. This means that there are over 1 million homes in England where no one actually lives.

But councils say their hands are tied by Government, and that current powers are weak for dealing with those who simply leave homes empty hoping they will go up in value, or because they lack the funds, energy or knowledge to bring them back into use. I'm not sure this is true and through this supposed inability to deal with empty homes nationally,

many communities are being overwhelmed by new housing development whilst some residents in those same communities cannot find a house to rent or buy.

It should concern us all. For more information look up 'Action on Empty Homes' and if there is any way councils, civic societies and other local organisations can change the direction of travel from new homes to making the most of our current housing stock then let us all do it. Your Society has previously campaigned about this with our 'Living over the shop' campaign and we will continue to lobby about the number of permitted housing schemes in the town that are not coming forward.

The Old Post Office on Baxter's Plain must be tackled. Either the owner gets on with developing it or a compulsory purchase order should be issued. It might be difficult, but that doesn't mean it can't be done. Local authorities have these powers to use for the good of our community. Councillors set policy and officers carry those policies out, so I sincerely hope there is appetite in the new Council to say we must not have neglected private property or empty derelict sites blighting our town.

Also in this newsletter, Helen and Kim have carried on Ian Price's work with monitoring our town centre retail and in particular, the number of empty shops. See page 9.

Our blue street names project has had a big boost with grant aid from the Audrey Stratford Trust. We thank them and are working on getting the project off the ground. We will tell you more in next year's Annual Report.

We briefly outline some of the many other projects we are involved with – see page 22.

Lectures started again on 5 October at Thoresby College Great Hall 7.30. We were pleased to welcome our first speaker, the new Conservation Officer, Lynette Fawkes. For details of the rest of the lecture series, see page 7.

Finally, I have good news from visiting tourists. They think our town thrives compared to many where they live! We must all do everything and more to keep it so.

Pilgrimage Trail – the final plaque on the wall

Please find below an invitation to all members to a reception to celebrate completion of our Pilgrimage Trail project. If you would like to join us, email info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk

We were able to use a grant from Historic England through the King's Lynn HAZ scheme to commission 12 new plaques and an online and paper trail which locate and explain important lost religious sites in the town of Bishop's Lynn. Medieval Lynn was full of pilgrims especially at Easter time as they made their way to Walsingham and the Shrine of Our Lady. We also added in a couple of curiosities from our past such as the Witch's Heart site when religious propaganda took a very nasty turn.

We will open the trail at Surrey Street by unveiling a new plaque which explains why this small road was once called Jew's Lane, part of our town's fascinating history.

We have arranged a buffet reception at the Corn Exchange opposite at 1pm. We look forward to seeing you and would appreciate a reply if you are able to come.



You are warmly invited by the committee of King's Lynn Civic Society to a reception to celebrate completion of the

Pilgrimage Trail of King's Lynn

Launch of Pilgrimage Trail Green Plaques

On Thursday 19th October at 12.45pm. Please gather at Surrey Street (TSB) followed by a reception in the Corn Exchange.



RSVP

Closing the Carnegie Library – my thoughts

Alison Gifford

A MUCH (Multi-User Community Hub) building will certainly be supported if such a thing is demonstrated to be good for the community, economically viable and architecturally pleasant. The Argos building can only be improved and plans to remove part of it to better showcase the Majestic Cinema is to be applauded. But there is so much to question. In this little article I try to get to understand the decisions behind the closure of the Carnegie Library, but I can't. Is it the siren call of the new and modern with a shelf life of 30 years which necessitates the abandonment of a much-loved and very fine example of an Edwardian municipal building (1904)?

I'm also sure it has nothing to do with giving local people a better library service and everything to do with financial/political convenience and mistaken values. As a library, the Carnegie building works perfectly well – it was designed to do so. As a social services hub, it may well fail, as that was never its function. But must it be discarded as it cannot wear the clothes of a different policy agenda?

Yet the Guildhall of St George (I like this project by the way) is to have millions spent on it. A building never designed to be a theatre and cultural hub will have a makeover to make it so. But the Carnegie Library, built as a library, is no longer fit for purpose. Colour me puzzled.

Is it too small? Build on the car park. Is it in the wrong place? Surely not – it's close to the families from deprived areas in South Lynn and Hillington Square who need peace and quiet to study with online access. It's easy to walk to, isn't walking good for us, and no further from the bus station than the Minster for example. It has an attractive ramp and automatic doors. It's all on one floor.

The case for its rejection is therefore baffling and contradictory.

I urge all members and readers of this Newsletter to find the 'Vision King's Lynn' website, find Projects then MUCH then Documents. Read

the Business Case document followed by Strategic Case. Then pick yourself up off the floor.

Where has our sense of civic pride gone?

From Persuasion by Jane Austen. *Here were funds of enjoyment. Could Anne wonder that her father and sister were happy? She might not wonder, but she must sigh that her father should feel no degradation in his change, should see nothing to regret in the duties and dignity of the resident landholder, should find so much to be vain of in the littlenesses of a town; and she must sigh, and smile, and wonder too, as Elizabeth threw open the folding-doors and walked with exultation from one drawing-room to the other, boasting of their space; at the possibility of that woman, who had been mistress of Kellynch Hall, finding extent to be proud of between two walls, perhaps thirty feet asunder.*

In the whole of the Norfolk Library Service, there are six copies of this famous book and two electric copies. None in the King's Lynn branch. If the age of the public library as a keeper and lender of books, knowledge, history and culture is over, be honest about it. The conflation of library with job centre, health drop-in, baby bounce, hobby club and gym is a modern sleight of hand to hide the real agenda of abandoning the notion of a library for a collection of popular easy reads.

Robert Whelan of the Civitas think tank says '... the people who are running the library service have lost the plot. Unfortunately, the public library system seems to have moved from education to entertainment and as a result we are becoming increasingly illiterate as a nation'.

Instead of embracing this doomed model, wouldn't it be wonderful if the intellectual minnows now in charge of the library service actually liked books and wanted to promote the most important literature in western culture. Works by Shakespeare, Hemingway, Proust, Faulkner, Bronte, Fitzgerald, Dickens and many others and be committed to offering and evangelising classic texts by important writers like these in our library system. And wouldn't it be wonderful if they looked at the Carnegie library and thought 'that's exactly the right place for a library, many

towns would envy this'. King's Lynn could pave the way for a new way of thinking – levelling up and not dumbing down. Surely libraries should seek to shore up our culture against the eroding force of fleeting trends?

Winter Lecture Series

2023

Thursday 02 Nov: Herbert de Losinga – the founder of Lynn



Come and listen to Kim Leonard tell you about the life and times of a man who has been described as 'one of the most remarkable men of the 12th century.' A wealthy man of letters, a great leader, builder of churches and cathedrals and a traveller with a bit of bribery, torture and a beheading thrown in for good measure.

Thursday 07 Dec: The Victorian Dinner table – upstairs and downstairs

Kathy Hipperson gives this light-hearted talk in character costume. Followed by mince pies and mulled wine.

2024

Thursday 01 Feb: William Schaw Lindsay

Bill Lindsay tells us how an orphan boy became a shipping magnate, an MP, and owner of one of the largest shipping companies in Britain in the 1850s. A true story of sailing the oceans in the 1830s, of high politics, and meetings with famous Victorians including Brunel, Lincoln,

Nightingale, Livingstone, Disraeli, and Queen Victoria. In his earlier days, he shipped coal from north-east England to ports including King's Lynn.

Bill Lindsay's biography of his forefather was launched in July by Amberley Publishing. Taken from extensive and unpublished papers held in the National Maritime Museum, the documents took six years to transcribe. Bill retired from a career in pharmaceutical marketing and is now a member of several maritime and history societies.

Thursday 07 March: Francesca Saggini – Fanny Burney

We are very lucky that Dr. Francesca Saggini is able to visit King's Lynn and give a talk to Civic Society members. She is Professor in English Literature at the Università degli Studi della Tuscia (Viterbo), Italy, the author of *The Gothic Novel and the Stage, Romantic Appropriations* (2015, Honourable mention at the ESSE Book Awards) and *Backstage in the Novel: Frances Burney and the Theatre Arts* (2012). Francesca is currently engaged in a project called *Frances Burney and the Muses*, studying Burney's versatility in her novels and plays during her long life.

Thursday 04 April: The Jews of King's Lynn and Environs

Marsha Parker (Jewish Cemetery Friends Association) gives us 'a condensed history from 1080 to the present day, where we lived, what we did, and contributions to the town. The talk will be illustrated with maps, documents and images wherever possible.'

Thursday 23 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

Empty Shops Survey 2023

Kim D Leonard

Background: For many years our friend and previous Treasurer, Ian Price, walked around the ten major retail streets that form the core of King's Lynn's shopping district to establish the number of empty shops. Whilst doing so, we were able to collect more information about the changes in the town centre. I have inherited this project from Ian and with the help of my colleague Helen Russell-Johnson, we are pleased to present this year's results in a slightly different format.

We recorded a total of 349 shops in the ten streets we surveyed and these have been broken down into their main business. These results are analysed in more detail below.

	High Street	Norfolk Street	Broad Street / St Dominic's Square	New Conduit Street / Purfleet Street	Tower Street / Blackfriars Street	St James Street / Saturday Market Place	TOTAL
Financial services	5	1	0	4	0	2	12
Hospitality	16	18	7	4	8	8	61
Newsagent/Convenience store	2	4	0	0	0	2	8
Medical	9	5	1	1	3	2	21
Hair & Beauty	4	16	0	5	13	12	50
Phone/Media	5	4	4	0	0	1	14
Charity	8	5	3	1	0	0	17
Gambling	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Vaping	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Other	2	10	2	5	5	9	33
EMPTY	8	8	6	3	4	7	36
RETAIL Independent	9	18	5	4	13	4	53
RETAIL National Chain	17	9	5	7	1	0	39
TOTAL	87	99	34	34	48	47	349

Empty Shops: This year, there were a total of 36 empty shops. The table below gives the number of empty shops for each street going back to 2018.

Date of survey	High Street	Norfolk Street	Broad Street / St Dominic's Square	New Conduit Street / Purfleet Street	Tower Street / Blackfriars Street	St James Street / Saturday Market Place	Total
August 2018	9	9	8	4	4	10	44
February 2019	12	12	9	2	1	8	44
September 2019	12	12	12	1	1	5	43
October 2020	8	5	13	3	2	6	37
April 2022	15	8	7	4	2	8	44
September 2023	8	8	6	3	4	7	36

The table below compares the number of empty shops to the total number for 2019 to 2023.

Date of Survey	Total Shops	Number of Empty Shops	% of Total
2019	353	44	12.4
2020	354	37	10.4
2022	357	44	12.3
2023	349	36	10.3

Note: A full survey was not carried out in 2021 due to COVID 19

Whilst one in ten shops being vacant is concerning, the position has remained relatively constant over the past four years that I have statistics available. In 2019, there were 12.4% of the 353 shops empty and in 2023 this had reduced to 10.3%, although there were four fewer shops in the streets we surveyed.

When we look at bit more closely at where the empty shops are located as shown in the table below, some obvious differences begin to appear. Whilst the location of the Saturday Market Place and St James' Street being somewhat removed from the town's epicentre could explain a higher rate of empty shops due to less footfall from customers, Broad Street one of the main thoroughfares, at 17.6%, is more difficult to understand.

Location	Total Number of Shops/Units	Number of Empty Shops/Units	% of Empty Shops/Units
Norfolk Street	99	8	8.1
High Street	87	8	9.2
Broad Street	34	6	17.6
St James Street / Saturday Market Place	47	7	14.9
Tower Street / Blackfriars Street	48	4	8.3
New Conduit Street/Purfleet Street	34	3	8.8
Total	349	36	10.3

This may be due to larger units which traditionally may have been let to household names and national brands. There is a lot of pressure on the Town Centre with the continual expansion of the internet, out of town shopping centres with free parking, more innovative sales platforms such as Amazon allowing potential shoppers to choose and buy from the comfort of their own armchairs.

Rising interest rates, poor decision-making by owners and fierce competition from online and cheaper competitors with the right business models have seen some High Street names close branches or disappear completely, most notably Wilko during the course of this survey.

Change from shops to residential: The reduction in the number of shops over the past four years is partly reflected in a growing trend to convert uneconomically viable commercial and retail premises into residential use. As a Civic Society, we are closely monitoring the Planning Application process and we are seeing more of these filter through. There are examples of excellent conversions, the old Trustee Saving Bank and the Courts building in St James' Street deserve much praise.

However, whilst it is generally welcomed that a previously vacant and slowly dilapidating property is brought back to life and occupation, the Civic Society has serious concerns over the small size of some of the flats and the lack of external space for relaxation and well-being that are provided in some of these conversions as developers maximise their return without due regard for the quality of life for the prospective occupant. To quote a colleague, you couldn't swing a kitten in some of these places let alone a cat!

To survive and prosper, shops need real customers and there is always more that can be done to attract people to shop in the centre of Lynn. Making the gateways to the town more attractive; reviewing parking fees, rents and taxes; tackling absentee landlords who allow their properties to remain vacant and deteriorate and proper use and targeting of funding might be good places to start.

Ugly Lynn

Alison Gifford

I was looking at some photographs of King's Lynn in the 1960s and the state of many historic buildings was truly tragic. That we have so much left of our ancient fabric is down to some thoughtful restoration undertaken by the local council at the time (which was the Borough of King's Lynn) and the King's Lynn Preservation Trust. Many buildings were on the point of collapse. Much was lost however, which now we would probably restore rather than demolish. Pedestrianisation also damaged our street scene. The backs of buildings previously unseen were now revealed because the only way to deliver goods is to the back of shops. Baker Lane and the area behind Primark are prime examples of this.

Our unsightly car parks have filled in any space available. It would be ideal to restore the street scene around all these car parks or find a way to remove them altogether using an innovative multi-storey. But in a rural county, people have to drive and park when they come into town to shop, socialise or work.

There is one car park which is a particular embarrassment. This is the Church Street car park used by National Car Parks. Here is a dilemma which applies to several buildings in town as well. To what extent should we, the people of Lynn, tolerate very ugly eyesores in the middle of our town so a company or person can make money?

I recall plans being drawn up to build houses around an enclosed car park some years ago on this site, but it came to nothing. I looked at the planning portal and found some interesting facts. It appears continued

parking on that car park is subject to renewable temporary permission from the Council.

In April 2007, temporary planning permission was given to NCP to use the space until 2012 when *'permission shall expire and use of the land discontinued in order that the local planning authority may retain control over the development where permanent condition may give rise to conditions detrimental to the amenities of the locality contrary to Policy 9/29 of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan.*

This permission is granted on a temporary basis only. No renewal of this permission will be likely and you need to address a permanent solution before the period of the permission expires.'

So in 2012, what happened? Nothing. Then in 2019, a new application including landscaping was submitted. This time there doesn't appear to be an end time to the temporary permission even though *'I think that the timescale of the temporary surface car park use has to be defined unless there is a statutory timescale for this particular use that is automatically applied'* was a comment by a planning officer along with *'Please can we have a quick word about this when you have a moment. It looks cheapskate to me and I'm not sure how much benefit 2 clumps of planters and a patched up fence will provide but if you are Ok with it I won't argue'* and *'The ongoing use as a temporary car park may be acceptable in the short term but this site is also forms part of the HAZ area and is being looked at separately as part of this scheme'*. Ah, the famous now defunct HAZ (Heritage Action Zone) scheme devised by Historic England, where the only action is millions of pounds going no one knows where (someone does of course).

This 2019 application is the one which allowed the pathetic planters with the condition *'Any trees or plants within five years that die, are removed or become*



seriously damaged and diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season’ as you see.

Who owns this land? Perhaps we have members who can unravel this puzzle.

We can sigh and say ‘that’s how it is’ or we can find out how we can effect change. It’s not good enough.

If it can’t be used for high quality town housing, surely it can adapt for another use as an open green space or similar. Or where is the mysterious benefactor who wanted to donate an art gallery to Lynn – come back, we need you – why not here?

Planning round-up – Autumn 2023

In the 2022 autumn newsletter, we provided a summary of larger housing schemes coming forward in and around the town. This year many of those schemes are now underway – with work proceeding at the Persimmon and Larkfleet sites in South Wootton and the Borough partnership with Lovell Homes continuing at Parkway. When complete, these schemes will amount to nearly 800 new dwellings in the town.

Meanwhile the last reserved matters issues are being ticked off for the Knights Hill development. We note an extension of time request has been granted for planning officers to sift through all of the information now provided. But we might expect construction of this 600-dwelling scheme to commence early in 2024.

It is now ten years since the outline application was first submitted for 1,100 dwellings and a primary school at Constitution Hill (North Runcton), but we understand that this application is now eventually going to go before the planning committee this month.

King’s Lynn is certainly not the only place to have this rapid and large amount of growth – you can see housing estates springing up around towns all over the UK. But in a historical context it is exceptional. Last year’s article questioned whether underlying population trends really

supported this push for settlement expansion (and in this issue Alison has written in her Chairman’s report about the apparent disjunct of building large numbers of new houses whilst possibly a million houses stand empty). The limited numbers of social housing being delivered and the various inequities in the rental market also raise questions about what is really needed to address apparent housing need.

But, whatever your views on these issues, there are a number of facts that stand out and are very relevant to Lynn:

- Whilst ‘greenfield’ development sites leap forward, scores of ‘brownfield’ sites stand derelict in and around the town. Many of them have now stood empty for decades – often with extant planning consents for new houses and flats. The Post Office, Chequers House, the ‘Silo Site’, land off Edward Benefer Way and land at West Lynn are prominent examples. Successive governments have expressed their supposed desire to favour brownfield regeneration – but have not provided cohesive long-term policy to support it. It is an appalling failure of leadership.
- We are also witnessing a consistent failure to plan new infrastructure to support this settlement growth – so as to enhance the lives of current residents whilst ensuring high quality environments for the new residents. Transport infrastructure is the obvious example – where inclusion of the bare minimum of car-centred access provision seems to pass as acceptable. With Westminster now turning transport policy into a political football, perhaps local authorities can’t be entirely blamed for failing to deliver good quality public transport, cycle and walking infrastructure. They seldom seem to be given the money or incentives to do it. But multi-modal transport schemes have to be part of the ‘carbon-neutral’ future. It will be much harder (and therefore more expensive) to retro-fit such schemes later on, rather than integrating them fully into initial designs.
- And it is a fact that many of the schemes we are seeing come forward are ‘sub-optimal’ in their design quality. Apart from

minimal energy efficiency standards (comparative data suggests the UK has some of the least efficient housing stock in Europe), the schemes we are seeing are generally not designed for low carbon systems to be fitted and are unlikely to be resilient for climate change (e.g. 40 degree summers). Moreover, they are frequently bland, uninspiring homes with bland, uninspiring settings. There are countless studies to show that such environments are bad for community building, bad for mental wellbeing and that they eventually lead to higher levels of crime and antisocial behaviour.

These are the types of concerns that KLCS try to raise in our planning comments and we also lobby officers and councillors where we can. Since April, we have commented on another 15 applications within the town and we have more letters to write.

We will also respond to the latest developments in the Local Plan examination and continue to monitor some of the 'Town Deal' proposals. (See 'Other Projects' below.)

Some of our other 'projects'

Town Deal: Since the Council elections in May we understand there have been a number of changes to the Town Deal board. The current members are Graham Purkins, Vicky Etheridge (King's Lynn BID), James Wild MP, Cllr Alistair Beales, Carly West-Burnham (QEH), Mike Dowdall (New Anglia LEP), Nova Fairbank (Chamber of Commerce), Jason Fuller (This is Fuller), Lorraine Gore (Chief Exec, BCKLWN), Cllr Deborah Heneghan, Brendon LeGrove (Greenyard), Rik Martin (CEO, Community Action Norfolk), Harrison McNaught (Mars Food), Cllr Jim Moriarty, David Pomfret (Principal, College of West Anglia), Dr Jane Steen (Bishop of Lynn), Andrew Stevenson (Hawkins Ryan), Adam Taylor (CEO of the cultural charitable trust that runs The Garage in Norwich and The Workshop in KL). KLCS did write to the Chairman to ask whether we might meet to discuss what the role of the Town Deal

Board would be now that the business cases prepared for government had been approved. In short, the reply, which was signed by both Graham Purkins and Lorraine Gore, indicated that the Town Deal board would continue to 'provide oversight in the delivery phase of the Town Deal'. It also indicated that the Town Deal Board might have an extended role in reviewing 'other initiatives' in the town. We will be monitoring their ongoing role with great interest.

Public Realm Panel: Perhaps because of the change in the administration, the Town Deal Public Realm Panel, where KLCS has a representative, has met infrequently since April. New Borough Councillors were briefed about elements of the 'Rail to River' enhancement project in July. A planning application has been submitted for 'pop-up shops' (metal-clad cabins for retail rental) in the Upper Purfleet adjacent to Boots. A metal arch over the road has also been applied for. KLCS had no particular view on these ideas – we don't think they will diminish the setting – but equally they are unlikely to transform it. But time will tell!

Baxter's Plain: Public consultation was also held in the summer about ideas for the enhancement of Baxter's Plain. KLCS have been supportive of the concept and the emerging design ideas – but we feel that without regeneration of the Post Office and resolution of ideas for the Argos building, no meaningful progress can be made in this space at present.

Public Art: Artists Annabel McCourt and Adrian Riley have been appointed to deliver two pieces of public art outside the Railway Station and adjacent the St James Swimming Pool. The successful proposal will utilise metal sculptural installations to reflect themes to engage local residents – but at this stage the planned publicity programme appears to have stalled, so we cannot reveal more!

Vicky Etheridge (the town Business Improvement District (BID) manager) has now also appointed the same artists to provide mural designs within the town. KLCS have been broadly supportive of these public art initiatives and think they could provide a useful element in town centre regeneration plans.

High Street Task Force: Some years ago, we learnt from Civic Voice, our parent organisation, that the government had commissioned a group of place-making experts who would work to redefine the high street. They would provide guidance, tools and skills to help communities, partnerships and local government transform their high streets.

This Task Force would ***provide support to local leaders in town centres and high streets in England.*** We learnt that they were engaged to come to King's Lynn. We thought this sounded like a very good thing and asked BCKLWN if we could be involved. Eventually we were informed at short notice that they would be holding a half-day workshop in July.

We imagined this would be the start of an ongoing process. In fact, it turned out to be a one-off event followed by a short report where the advice was to 'rebrand' the town centre, consider introducing a 'teenage market' and encourage local businesses and groups to add events to the annual calendar. Rather underwhelming advice.

We reported a couple of years ago that the government had funded over 130 different 'High Street' strategies – and if this is the calibre of them, they are probably not worth the closing-down-sale posters they are written on (RIP Wilko by the way).

Other Public Realm: We are presently awaiting updates on the development of the strategies for the Riverfront (including Custom House) and South Gates. Good things come to those that wait?

We have recently been invited to a forthcoming discussion about a town centre Parking Strategy. Obviously, this is a much driven (?) path – which has arguably been ongoing since the Paving Commissioners reviewed the town in the 19th century! The small print in the invitation states that we will be able to discuss 'the two locations' – which doesn't indicate a forthcoming session of blue-sky thinking...

Friends of the Walks: The Friends of the Walks Group was established during the Heritage Lottery restoration of the park in 2007. It was a useful forum that allowed local residents (including members of the Civic Society) to be involved in Walks management planning matters – but the

group has dissipated due to the pandemic and following the retirement of key Borough officer contacts.

KLCS think it would be a very good thing to rekindle this group and have had a meeting with Borough Councillors who also support the idea. Key tasks such a group might undertake include:

- Consultation about plans and activities involving the Walks.
- Assisting with events planning and operational tasks and possibly grant hunting
- Coordinating tasks such as opening Red Mount Chapel and possibly South Gates
- Working with and supporting all the user groups who already utilise the Walks
- Promoting the Walks – a nationally significant and unique heritage site.

We are planning a meeting to discuss formation of the group. If you are interested in rekindling the Friends of the Walks – please email info@kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk.

Volunteers Fair: Conscious of the demise of the Friends of the Walks group (and other groups and initiatives in the town that depend on volunteers), we used the excuse of the national Civic Day in June to hold a 'Volunteers Fair' at the Town Hall. Supported by BCKLWN, we felt that it was a reasonably successful event – if for no other reason than it encouraged BCKLWN Councillors to consider this issue of volunteer recruitment. We will keep banging the drum.

Street Trees For Lynn: Our project to encourage more tree planting in the town centre is not dead! We now have two new Tree Officers at the Borough and are due to have a meeting to discuss this and other tree-related matters later this month.

King's Lynn Heritage Open Day – 10 September 2023

This year's Heritage Open Day fell on one of the hottest September days recorded and it was extremely challenging for some. We were very pleased to have some new buildings open (97 London Road, Crown & Mitre, Pink House), and some which hadn't opened for a while (Lattice House, Lath Mansion). We are very grateful to the Borough Council for opening some of the finest buildings in King's Lynn (the Custom House, St George's Guildhall, South Gates, Red Mount Chapel, the Town Hall) and for the support of their staff both beforehand and on the day. We could not have such a successful day without the support of other organisations, too – King's Lynn Town Guides, the King's Lynn Preservation Trust, Friends of St Nicholas' Chapel – as well as museum staff, church staff and many volunteers who helped out on the day.

This year's theme (set by Heritage Open Days national organisation) was 'Creativity Unwrapped' and we were delighted to have a talk on local artists Henry Baines and Walter Dexter by Dr Paul Richards, as well as exhibitions by Greyfriars Art Spaces, King's Lynn & District Camera Club, and artists Arturo Limbo and Anita Carnell.



We offered a wide variety of entertainment – ranging from music (two crews of shantymen, The Breakaways ukulele band, the Kentwell Players, Rachel Bea), to dancing (Mr Gosk's Dance Academy, King's Morris), re-enactors (King's Lynn Under Siege – civil war, East Norfolk Militia – Napoleonic war, the Knights of Skirbeck – medieval, Brought to Life – 17th century), and a range of others including Fens Falconry, a miniature train, Lavender lacemakers, and Lavender Hill Mob Theatre Company. As



ever, the vintage bus service proved very popular. Also popular were the Baden Powell and the West Lynn ferry service, as well as the Bell Tower Tours at the Minster. The Town Guides offered free walks around the historic town centre. The support of organisations like the Town Guides is invaluable to the success of the day.

We had our usual market of Norfolk producers in the Saturday Market Place.

Many visitors were local, from King's Lynn, Wisbech, Leziate, Watlington, Snettisham, Downham Market, Fakenham and many other places.

Others came from further afield – London, Essex, Corby, Cheshire, Ely, Chichester, Reading, York and even the Canary Islands, Berlin, Canada and Australia.

We asked how people found out about our Heritage Open Day. Answers ranged from 'leaflet', 'Facebook', 'friends in Lynn', 'local paper', to 'been before', and 'by chance on arrival.'

Some visitor comments:

'We count ourselves very lucky to have picked this date to visit'

'Thanks to the volunteers'

'Keep the event going!'

'Informative tour of this historic space' (28–32 King St)

'Fascinating building and renovations and v helpful staff and volunteers' (Evershed House)

'Very interesting. Criminal that it's moving!' (Library)

'A real treasure' (Library)

'Thanks for an interesting and informative peek behind the scenes!' (Majestic Cinema)

'Absolutely incredible – always wanted to see inside' (South Gates)

‘Fascinating to see such a lovely building’ (Lath Mansion)

It is the overwhelmingly positive responses from visitors travelling from near and far that makes organising the day so rewarding.

Here is a list of the buildings that were open and a breakdown of the numbers we have received (not everyone had the time to record numbers, or chose not to):

Property name	Number of visitors
19 Tuesday Market Place	
28–32 King Street	480
97 London Road	
All Saints’ Church	121
Bank House	630
Borough Archives	415
Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation	61
Clifton House	482
Corn Exchange	702
Crown & Mitre	
Custom House	1114
Evershed House (open 10–1)	131
Ferry Lane Social Club	235
Friends Meeting House	113
Greenland Fishery	346
GroundWork Art Gallery	68
Guildhall of St George	1903
Hampton Court secret garden	422
Hanse House	
Hardwick Road Cemetery	20
Jewish Cemetery	186
King Edward VII Academy	102
Lath Mansion	390
Lattice House	

Property name	Number of visitors
Library	
Live and Let Live	
London Road Methodist Chapel	85
Lynn Museum	552
Majestic Cinema	357
Marriott’s Warehouse	50
Minster	
Pilots’ Office & Tower	437
Pink House	406
Red Mount Chapel	632
South Gates	591
St Faith’s Church	
St John’s Church	90
St John’s House (King’s Lynn Night Shelter)	125
St Nicholas Chapel	609
St Peter’s Church, West Lynn	
Stories of Lynn	1225
Thoresby College	
Town Hall & Guildhall	1486
True’s Yard Fisherfolk Museum	566
TS Vancouver	
Wenns Chop and Ale House	
WhataHoot	599
World War II Air Raid Shelter	

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.

Enter our
Super Draw
WIN A THEATRE TRIP
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- Tickets cost just £1 a week
- Win a Luxury Theatre Trip, or take the cash!
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- Chance to win up to £25,000

BUY TICKETS



Supporters must be 18 years of age or older. See website for terms & conditions. Enter by 28/10/2023.

GambleAware 



King's Lynn Civic Society

Registered charity 298916

President: Heather Bolt

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