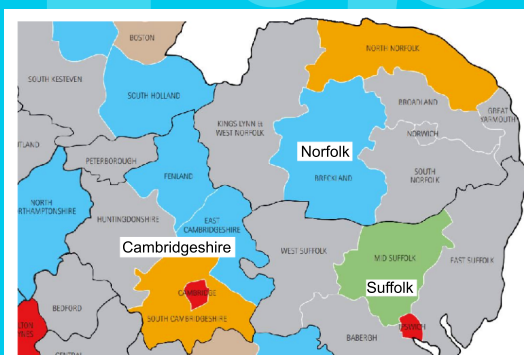


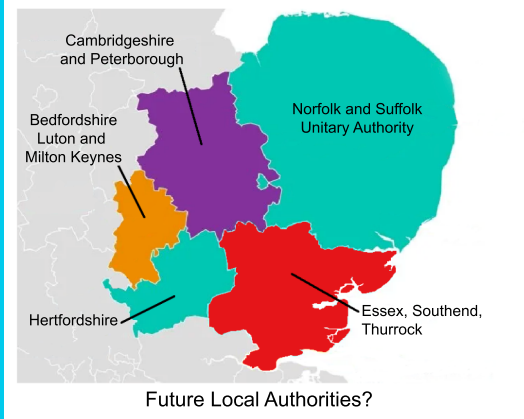


KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

www.kingslynncivicsociety.co.uk



Current Local Authorities.



Future Local Authorities?

Are you ready for devolution?

ANNUAL REPORT
2024–2025

Chairman's report

Alison Gifford

An annual report is a time for reflection. What has the Civic Society achieved over the last year? Do we make a difference to our town, have the monthly autumn/winter talks been interesting and made members think as well as entertain? Have the newsletters been informative and does this Society still strive to make the phrase 'only the best is good enough for King's Lynn' come true'? I hope so. But overshadowing all those nice ideas we are now faced with our biggest challenge for 50 years, Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, which we write about on page 9.

The last year has been difficult with several very sad deaths among members who been so supportive of the Civic Society over the years. Ken Hill, Julian Litten, Peter Putterill and Sally Turff. All their knowledge and wisdom would make a very large book and they are missed.

Helen Russell-Johnson had been vice-chairman for the last ten years but she decided to move to Sheffield to be closer to her family. Helen was quietly supportive and always prepared to help with practical tasks. She was involved with the planning sub-committee for several years. We met for visual image meetings in her lovely Hampton Court apartment. Very good wine I recall. I hope she is happy and making friends among the heritage circle in her new home.

But despite the celestial sniper, we have gained new members and I hope they enjoy our work and activities. Sandra Coleman, our long-suffering membership secretary, will have to tell us again to alter our bank payments to the new amount agreed at the 2024 AGM on page 25.

Behind the scenes a small sub-group are scrutinising planning applications. Many applications for conversion of buildings into flats are passed but still on the drawing board. We are told that we have a housing

shortage, yet if all these proposed homes and empty homes in England were added up, there would be over half a million properties. Meanwhile vast swathes of greenfield land are used for estate-style housing by the large volume housebuilders who are very influential in the business.

But before the final planning decision some plans can be ameliorated and that is where the CAAP (Conservation Areas Advisory Committee) has had a part to play but we understand this group is to be disbanded. Over the years fewer architects and other interested professionals have wanted to give their time to voluntary groups like this. Kim Leonard represents us now, and over the years we have always sent a member of the committee to this group. It's a sign of our modern society, which often emphasizes individualism and personal achievement over collective action and social responsibility, that such groups are failing.

The project we finally finished a few weeks ago when the last sign went up has been our very successful 'Every Street Name Tells a Story'. I worked with Liz James and Robert Fayers. We commissioned 20 new street signs and had 15 old ones refurbished. We had 500 children's books printed for all Year 6 children in the town schools. We commissioned a play from a local drama company 'Time Will Tell' to entertain and inform the children who came to the Town Hall to collect their books from the Mayor and we also produced a trail through the town guided by our old and new street names.

The Audrey Murial Stratford Trustees gave the bulk of the funding. The King's Lynn Town Guides gave a substantial grant and the St Margaret and St Nicholas Parish Trust helped with funding the books. The Shakespeare Guildhall Trust supported the play. Practical help was given by the Borough team at the depot who took the old signs down and put new ones up for us and were always helpful.

We were asked to contribute our thoughts to the various Town Fund schemes under the heading ‘Vision King’s Lynn’. Never has so much been promised and so little delivered.

The ‘Rail to River’ project in King's Lynn focuses on improving the public realm and creating a more attractive and vibrant route connecting the railway station to the river. This project involves public art installations and overall improvements to the pedestrian pathway, aiming to enhance the experience for residents and visitors.

So far two very underwhelming art projects no one notices and some horrid sheds in Purfleet Street.

The South Gate Masterplan identifies the potential to create an attractive and active entrance into King’s Lynn by delivering major highways and public realm improvements and opening up the historic South Gate as a major asset for the town. Over recent years the council has progressed a series of feasibility studies exploring the potential for road diversion around the South Gate. The proposed masterplan will seek to draw on and learn from this evidence base but will also take its own approach, putting the task of ‘placemaking’ at its heart.

Don’t wait for this. One of the consultant town planners paid out of your money to do this work had never been to Lynn and so obviously had no experience of London Road and the roundabout.

Devil’s Alley. This timely review will allow us to shape, with the community and other stakeholders, a revised design for Devil’s Alley that potentially is part of a more ambitious phased scheme for the riverfront, as well as exploring further funding opportunities to help make that happen.

The riverfront project, Devil’s Alley, has been postponed and pushed into the next Town Board phase.

Luckily the same lack of progress means the Custom House will be largely left alone. We hope it opens to the public in the near future.

The library. The Carnegie library building which could have been remade as a modern facility in a unique building has been abandoned. It will become a dance studio for a worthwhile charitable group called 'The Garage'. Many towns would have been proud of such a building. I've written about this before. Let's hope the revamped Argos aka the Multi-User Community Hub is the wonderful hub of hubs we are promised. *What's really important about the new space is that it will accommodate a larger library for the town, and the rare book collections will not only be displayed but will also be available for public viewing.* Perhaps a qualified librarian will be employed?

But praise where it is due. The little derelict annexe to the historic former warehouse along South Quay will be converted to provide welcoming dryside facilities for leisure craft owners who moor up at the visitor pontoons, including showers, toilets and washing machines – although no work appears to have been started as yet.

Of course, the Guildhall of St George. *St George's Guildhall is set to become a dynamic cultural destination, blending history with innovation.* I'm sure £12million + can achieve that.

Several committee members attended workshops for a new Cultural Strategy. It has been published. *The vision is a vibrant, inclusive cultural scene in King's Lynn that amplifies diverse voices and celebrates the rich cultural contributions of all local communities. We want every resident and visitor to feel represented, valued and inspired to participate in and contribute to King's Lynn's culture and heritage.* Very nice sentiments. I'm not sure how it is going to happen.

Although I've done my best to support the Hanse Festival over the years with some children's activities, I was more than pleased that the Committee agreed that the Civic Society would be officially involved in

2024 (especially as it turned out, I spent the previous night in hospital with a dislocated hip!). Because Councillor Nick Daubney's leadership could not easily be replaced, the Festival was arranged at the last minute but very well done by Kevin Holland and stalwart supporters. It was a very pleasant day for us with medieval crafts and re-enactors in the courtyard of the Hanse House. The Civic Society also had a stall to promote our work and show we are not just about behind the scenes planning and policy matters but up front, supporting the town's family activities. This year the date is 15th June and any volunteers will be welcome.

But the highlight of every year in town involvement is Heritage Open Day which we have organised since 2008. It's the best in the country and continues to add events and activities each year. Sandra Coleman stood down, she is a very busy person, and Laura Gunn joined Anna and Kim to get this great event off the ground. Last year, the sun shone and the town was buzzing. Well done everybody who helped make this day great again. Put Sunday 14th September 2025 in your diaries to volunteer two hours of your time please.

You are invited to our annual Civic Society Lunch on Thursday 3rd July at 1pm in Queen Street garden via Clifton House door. Tickets £15. See page 6.

May I thank all the committee for their hard work. If any members feel they could be useful on the committee, please contact Anna.

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will be held on

Thursday 22 May at 7.30 p.m.

Thoresby College, South Quay

The business of the meeting will be followed by an update on what Civic Society has done this year.

You are invited to the

Civic Society annual fundraising lunch

Thursday 3rd July at 1pm

£15 per person

Queen Street garden – enter through Clifton House door

Bring wine or beer (glasses and soft drinks provided)

Raffle

Email alisongifford@btinternet.com

Text 0787 0139315 or call 01553 763983 to book a place

Cash or cheques through 21 Queen Street letterbox made out to King's Lynn Civic Society

Autumn Lecture Series

Thursday 02 October Alison Gifford: 'Where Troy Once Was'

Chairman Alison Gifford opens our lecture series with a controversial idea presented in an illustrated talk about the origins of Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. An age-old puzzle may be solved!

Thursday 06 November Dr Dustin Frazier-Wood: 'The Spalding Gentlemen's Society Revamped'

This wonderful antiquarian survival founded in 1712 has a new lease of life. Dr Frazier-Wood takes us behind the scenes.

Thursday 04 December Kathy Hipperson: 'Christmas at Audley End'

Our favourite December speaker gets into costume to demonstrate how the kitchens at Audley End prepared for Christmas in Victorian times.

Mulled wine and mince pies.

All lectures at Thoresby College, South Quay at 7.30. Members free.
Visitors £2.50



Heritage Open Day 2025

Sunday 14th September 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

The national Heritage Open Days theme this year is '**Architecture**' It's a perfect opportunity to celebrate the amazing architecture of King's Lynn and we are hoping to have a wide range of buildings open, from churches and museums to pubs and private homes. There will be walks and talks, and a market of local producers in Saturday Market Place, as well as a selection of entertainers in different locations. And of course the ever-popular buses will be travelling their usual routes. Do come and join us!



More volunteers needed!

Several of the buildings require stewards. We need more people to offer two hours of their time to ensure that we can continue to organise a successful Heritage Open Day. If you haven't already offered to volunteer and would like to participate, please contact Laura Gunn. laurajg237@btinternet.com



Devolution and local government reorganisation

The plan to replace County and District Councils with one-tier ‘Unitary Authorities’ is expected to mean that the Borough and County Councils will be abolished by May 2027. The Borough Council was established after local government reorganisation in the 1970s, but Norfolk County Council has been an entity since 1889.

In addition, a new mayoral system for the whole of Norfolk and Suffolk is due to be introduced in May 2026. We think the last person who had jurisdiction over both Counties was sheriff Thomas Felton in 1574!

These changes will therefore be truly historic and we fear that at present too few people are considering the detailed implications.

A government consultation period closed on 15th April. King’s Lynn Civic Society wrote a five-page letter to our Council leaders to set out our current views. We summarise our letter below.

A Mayoral System: Only the Greater London mayor has been in place for longer than ten years and the metropolitan mayors are to date the most closely scrutinised. We think that the pros and cons of a regional rural mayor are yet to be fully tested. Success or failure will very much depend on the quality of the appointed individual. A party-political election may well distract and detract from identifying an ideal candidate capable of succeeding in such a demanding role.

Size of the Unitary Authority: The government have apparently indicated that they favour large ‘super unitaries’ for Norfolk and Suffolk, but District Council leaders seem united in resisting this. We said we supported the idea of a smaller unitary in principle (such as the mooted merger of West Norfolk, Breckland and North Norfolk).

However, we felt that even this smaller unitary authority amounted to a very large area. The government goal is of course to cut local government costs by reducing the number of offices, staff and other resources. This can only mean that some residents will end up a long way from Council offices and officers will end up a long way from some of their ‘dominion’. Even with online communications, the new set-up is likely to result in a lot of travelling.

District council leaders will need to offer central government a very persuasive argument and clear plan of how the smaller authorities would work in order to get them agreed. We noted that we are unclear that any substantive work has yet been undertaken to plan a merger of West Norfolk, Breckland and North Norfolk and there is a limited track record of previous working cooperation. Compare this to eastern Norfolk (where districts have worked together for many years to produce the *Greater Norwich Local Plan* and have merged their back-office staff), and Suffolk (where district merger has been taking place over the last decade).

There will be a vast amount of work to achieve by 2027 – and in reality, the ramifications of merger are likely to take many years beyond that date to work through. We are concerned that this will hamper day-to-day services in the short term and planning and development strategies in our region in the mid- to long-term. And one suspects that not a lot of money will be saved either...

A King's Lynn Town Council: Although this is not a requirement of central government, the formation of a King's Lynn Town Council has been mooted by Borough leaders as a necessary outcome of district mergers. We support this proposal in principle.

However, there are many questions that arise and we have asked how much thought is presently being allocated to this matter.

- What will the boundaries be? (Will 'KLTC' include the Woottons? Knights Hill? West Lynn? West Winch Growth Area?)
- How will a Town Council be funded (and to what tune)?
- How much autonomy will it have? (Remember Yarmouth, Bury and Boston are, or were, their own planning authority. We assume the Town Council will not become a planning authority, but given the size and significance of the settlement, would the Town Council be afforded any additional planning powers above those of a Parish Council?)

Typically, a Town or Parish Council might undertake the following service delivery areas:

- Managing Local Amenities: They often take responsibility for local parks, open spaces, allotments, play areas, street lighting, bus shelters, and car parks.
- Community Buildings: They may manage community centres, libraries, museums and other local facilities.
- Cemeteries: They can be responsible for the upkeep and management of local cemeteries.
- Litter and Waste: They may be involved in managing litter and waste collection in the area.
- Public Toilets: They can also be responsible for the provision and maintenance of public toilets.
- Community Events: They may organize or support local celebrations, festivals, and other community events.

So, by our estimation, all of the ‘Alive’ assets would fall under the auspice of a Town Council, along with our principal buildings (Town Hall, Guildhall and the Museums?).

All of our green spaces including cemeteries within the town would be Town Council. (This should probably include Mintlyn?)

The bus station, car parks, and street lights would be Town Council – begging the question of whether all of the inner streets and spaces such as the market places and riverfront should fall under the auspices of the Town Council as well. (We would say ‘Yes’.)

Waste management for a growing town of 50,000 is not a small matter – but we assume that domestic and commercial waste collection would be operated by contractors as at present.

An elephant in the room must be flood defence? Any objective assessment of threats to King’s Lynn in the next 50 years must include sea-level rise. Whereas we appreciate this is a multi-agency matter, how

would a proactive Town Council be empowered to address the issue? (We don't think letting someone else worry about it would be a legitimate position for a new authority.)

Therefore, one would need a substantial budget and a substantial set of staff to run that number of amenities / facilities / services. But for the new Town Council not to have autonomy over those parts of its jurisdiction would render it a fairly toothless and pointless type of authority.

We would very much welcome hearing the views of our members on these matters and we hope that you will all attend the AGM on Thursday 22nd May where we plan to include this topic for discussion.

Fundraising for KLCS

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.

Our other online fundraising effort is via Easy Fundraising. If you ever shop online, whether for groceries, products or financial services like insurance, you can help to raise money for King's Lynn Civic Society. Click on the link on the homepage of our website for more information.



**Enter our
Super Draw**
**WIN £1,000 CASH OR
PLANT 1,000 TREES!**

- Tickets cost just £1 a week
- Chances to win up to £25,000
- Play weekly, or just play the Super Draw!
- Plant 1,000 trees in local or global projects!



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www.westnorfolkwins.co.uk
Search for: King's Lynn Civic





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See website for Terms & conditions

Planning round-up 2024–2025

Planning sub-committee

We have prepared responses to over 40 planning applications over the year, ranging from support to objection. However, the majority of our letters focus on highlighting **constraints** (e.g. noting that a building is on our ‘Local List’ and therefore has some architectural, cultural or historic

significance that should be respected) or **opportunities** (e.g. suggesting ways in which planning officers might urge for better design outcomes).

All too often we feel our suggestions are ignored or overlooked, which is very frustrating. In general, we feel that, although BCKLWN have supported the development of the King's Lynn Local List, officers appear not to utilise it to safeguard these 'non-designated heritage assets' or to guide planning applicants toward more sympathetic design.

We have been discussing a review of the Local List because it is now more than 10 years old and many of the identified assets have subsequently been affected by alterations and development. But with local government reorganisation bearing down upon us, it is not entirely clear who our planning authority will be in coming years, let alone who the conservation officers will be or what their attitude will be to non-designated heritage assets. And, sad to reflect, if the list is not going to influence ongoing management of identified assets, is a review a worthwhile use of our time?

We are also frustrated by a more general lack of pro-active design guidance from the Borough planning team. We feel that it indicates a lack of joined-up thinking when it comes to creating better urban and rural environments – surely the essence of *Town and Country Planning*.

A recent example we commented on was the redevelopment of the former Cruso and Wilkin offices opposite the railway station. This unusual building stands at a prominent position at a major gateway into King's Lynn and West Norfolk. It adjoins Waterloo Street, which has been the subject of reasonably successful streetscape enhancement works in recent years. The Town Investment Plan has focussed on the 'Rail to River' route as an important public realm corridor to enhance. And yet there appears to have been no effort to push for improved presentation of this site, e.g. with tree planting, considered placement of utility areas or improved presentation of the building.

More frustratingly, the original plan to create three spacious town houses with a studio apartment above has been whittled away until the most recent application is for 15 flats (of which six are bedsits), most of which are very small and likely to be character-free.

In recent years your Civic Society committee members have collectively sat in on hours of ‘workshops’ to discuss opportunities to enhance the presentation of Lynn – and yet when simple opportunities arise through new development, they are often completely ignored.

Strategic Planning: The Borough Council adopted their ‘Local Plan Review’ in March. This will therefore act as the Local Plan until 2040. It is, to all intents and purposes, a re-hash of the previous Plan adopted in 2016, and it is an unfortunate truth that Local Plans are nowadays largely ‘evidence’ to support a housing delivery numbers game.

However, we must be grateful that there is now a definitive Climate Change Policy, and improved policy on Green Infrastructure and Historic Environment (although as noted above, attitudes to protecting non-designated heritage assets must improve).

Now that local government reorganisation is under way, it is assumed that work on developing the next Local Plan will be delayed until the shape of the successor planning authority is defined. Unfortunately, we suspect this delay may last several years until the new strategic planning team is thoroughly ‘bedded in’.

Housing: We remain opposed to the small size and lack of outdoor space offered by the majority of repurposed buildings in the town centre. Whereas landlords can make vast profits from renting out these little flats, we feel strongly it is building in future social problems for the town.

Significant conversion projects in the town centre are not materialising – the old Post Office being a notable case in point, although they seem to have kept the application alive with minimal site establishment works.

At a wider level, development at Knights Hill (600 houses) is under way and the first completions are expected to be in 2026. At South Wootton dwellings are now on the market at ‘Lavender Fields’ and ‘Wootton Grange’.

However, although the first phase of the West Winch Growth Area was approved by the planning committee last August, at the time of writing the developer, Hopkins Homes, had not signed off on the Section 106 agreement. Various reasons have been publicised. The planning

committee have given them three extensions of time to complete the agreement. One suspects that an uncertain economic climate is a contributing issue. BCKLWN need the scheme to proceed to ensure their ‘five-year supply’ of housing allocations. Then again, it will be the new planning authority’s problem after May 2027 ...

Conservation Areas Advisory Panel

CS Representative Kim Leonard

Sadly, this is the last time that I or anyone else is likely to write for the Civic Society Annual Report detailing what has been referred to the Conservation Area Advisory Panel (CAAP). Due to changes in planning policy, the CAAP is to be replaced by another body known as the Design Review Panel, more of which shortly.

The CAAP has been in existence since the 1960s and is currently made up of volunteer members with a wide range of experience and knowledge in the fields of architecture, history, building techniques, heritage, conservation and civic and planning administration. The CAAP considers planning applications from all 44 Conservation Areas across West Norfolk, which include the five in King’s Lynn covering The Friars; The Walks; Norfolk Street area; St Nicholas area and the St Margaret’s area.

The CAAP is chaired by the King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council’s Principal Conservation Officer assisted by the Conservation Team and the Planning Department.

Any planning application that might have an impact within or on these Conservation Areas is brought before the CAAP to assess the effect on the individual building or the wider area and to ensure that our heritage and history is protected.

The demise of the CAAP does not mean, however, that the Civic Society will be any less vigilant in ensuring our heritage, fine buildings and the unique areas of Lynn are protected. The Civic Society remains a

Statutory Consultee and members of our Planning Committee monitor all planning applications and we submit many letters during the year to the Council with our concerns, recommendations and support of applications. These letters are held on the Council's Planning Portal and members can keep track of the progress of all planning applications on the website (<https://online.west-norfolk.gov.uk/online-applications>) using the 'Simple Search' facility.

I would encourage any member of the Civic Society who lives in a Conservation Area, or anywhere in Lynn for that matter, to keep an eye on the Planning Applications and put their objections or support in writing.

As I mentioned above, the CAAP is to be replaced by a Design Review Panel and the Council will be seeking individuals with the required level of expertise and experience to join. These Panels already exist and the one in Cambridge, for example, has an extensive and respected membership.

Design Review is and I quote from a learned publication: *an independent and impartial evaluation process in which a panel of experts on the built environment assess the design of a proposal. The projects that Design Review deals with are usually of public significance, and the process is designed to improve the quality of buildings and places for the benefit of the public.*

The review is conducted by expert practitioners with current experience in design and development, a record of good design in their own projects and the skills to appraise schemes objectively. The Review Panel offers feedback and observations that will lead to the improvement of schemes, but does not redesign them and gives decision makers the confidence and information to support innovative, high-quality designs that meet the needs of their communities and customers, and to resist poorly designed schemes.

A more detailed description about this major change is available in copious articles and publications on the internet should members wish to look.

There have only been four CAAP meetings since our last Annual Report, one of which (held on 30 October 2024) was to discuss the future of the CAAP. The applications discussed are detailed below:

24/00817/F: The proposal for dryside facilities at Annexe Building, South Quay, King's Lynn (adjacent to Sommerfeld and Thomas warehouse). The application relates to the small building next to Sommerfeld and Thomas. There were two meetings to discuss this application. The second meeting on 10 July 2024 included a presentation by the architects.

Conclusion at meeting on 12 June 2024: Overall, the Panel supported the principle of the scheme; however, we did not support the application in front of us as we felt the design would impact on the Conservation Area and the surrounding listed buildings. The Panel suggested positioning the staircase the other way to enable natural lighting through the windows to improve the overall lighting and wished to see the shutters retained on the windows.

Conclusion at meeting on 10 July 2024: Overall, the Panel unanimously agreed and felt the presentation did not address the Panel's concerns. The Panel was content with the interior but still had concerns in relation to the façade of the building. We still felt that the change to the fenestration would be harmful to the character of the building and the Conservation Area.

The Panel shared the view that if the existing window arrangement was retained and the canopy and the full-height flood door were removed, the Panel would be in a position to support the scheme. The Panel also added that we would not have an objection should a couple of roof lights be proposed at a small scale in the roof.

Current position: Application approved with some changes suggested by CAAP but with conditions relating to flood protection and evacuation.

(i) 24/01189/LB: Application for listed building consent for internal and external restoration and refurbishment works to existing

buildings, including internal and external demolition, reconfiguration and rebuilding, minor extension(s), part change of use, associated plant and enclosures and hard and soft landscape works at Guildhall of St George, 1 St Georges Courtyard and 29 King Street, King's Lynn

(ii) 24/01188/F: Internal and external restoration and refurbishment works to existing buildings, including internal and external demolition, reconfiguration and rebuilding, minor extension(s), part change of use, associated plant and enclosures and hard and soft landscape works at Guildhall of St George, 1 St Georges Courtyard and 29 King Street, King's Lynn. These applications relate to one of the most important projects in a generation: the St George's Guildhall Complex. The discussions with the CAAP included a site visit to see for ourselves the extensive improvements that are proposed and the potential impact on the existing buildings, some Listed and some not but still important and historic.

The detailed minutes of the discussions are far too extensive for this report and members can see the documents on the Council's Planning Portal, all 241 of them.

Conclusion: Overall, the Panel were supportive of the Guildhall application. However, there were some areas which the Panel wished to change and get further clarification on. These were:

- Wished to see the Red Barn door on the South elevation removed
- Better understanding around the landscaping in all of the courtyards
- Retention of the sanitary ware
- Balustrades on the staircase
- Revisit the archaeology to see what could be done with that and check to see what could or could not be conditioned

Current position: Application approved with 15 extensive conditions.

In closing, it is a great shame that the CAAP has passed its sell-by date as this was a really committed group of individuals who gave their time freely to protect the history and heritage of West Norfolk.

All things change eventually and there is the danger that all the detailed local knowledge and commitment from those currently sitting around the table will be lost and one has to hope that the newly recruited Design Review Panel know where King's Lynn is and have actually visited the town to appreciate what we have and how easy it would be to lose it.

This year's Civic Society lectures

Our first lecture of the winter was a shared presentation by our BCKLWN Tourist Officer, Phil Eke, and Dr Paul Richards to tell us about development of a new 29-mile waymarked 'pilgrim trail' from King's Lynn to Walsingham. This is of course a very old and well-established route that pilgrims still follow every Easter. Dr Richards noted that Walsingham was originally more significant as a pilgrimage destination than even Canterbury. Much work has been undertaken with parishes along the way and the route has been initially planned largely by Canon Mark Dimond from the Minster. More funding is being sought and it is hoped that landowners along the way may be persuaded to create 'permissive paths' so that walkers can avoid some road sections. It was agreed by all that as well as being historically relevant, West Norfolk could benefit a great deal from a developing a network of long-distance walking routes.

Our November lecture was from our own Kim Leonard who presented the life and times of Henry Bell – King's Lynn born and bred, and distinguished architect, artist, cartographer, writer and local politician as well as continuing the family merchant business. We are lucky to have some of his finest remaining buildings in Lynn and West Norfolk – Pevsner describing the Custom House as the best use of the classical

orders in one building that he had seen. Although it is known that he studied at Cambridge and undertook a ‘Grand Tour’, there is little known about his early working life. It is known that he met Robert Hooke and was influenced by Christopher Wren – and it is tantalising to think he may have worked with them in London after the Great Fire.

As you will have read elsewhere, our ‘big project’ in 2024 was commissioning the historic street signs. Part of the project included publishing an accompanying children’s book, *Every Street Name Tells a Story* and appointing *Time Will Tell* theatre to present the story of Lynn’s street names in several performances through the summer. As most of us had not managed to get to the daytime shows, we invited Kathy and Simon to perform the show again for our Christmas ‘lecture’ – which, along with mulled wine and mince pies, made for a very enjoyable evening. We would very much like to promote more educational performances like this as it appears to have been a big hit with everyone who has seen it.

In February we invited Kelly-Ann Willson from the Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP) to come and describe the range of work they are undertaking to manage and protect our iconic Wash and North Norfolk coastline. I think what we learned is that it is complicated! They work with 23 partner organisations and many other user groups and are trying to juggle nature conservation with commercial shipping and fishing interests, tourism requirements, farming and land management issues and many other matters – all with the looming presence of climate change in the background. Throw in regular curve-balls including government policy changes, funding constraints and one-off crises such as the recent shipping collision in the North Sea – and there will never be a dull moment! But more seriously, one wonders whether it is even possible to successfully balance so many competing interests. KLCS will endeavour to keep in touch with WNNMP and keep abreast of initiatives and issues that affect King’s Lynn and our coast.

In March, Anthony Howe, Emeritus Professor of Modern History at UEA, presented a very interesting account of his extensive research into

the early Socialist and Labour movement in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. From the 1890s through to the 1920s there was a very active movement in Lynn, led by a core group of very dedicated railway and dock workers, schoolteachers and local business owners. They were particularly interested in workers' rights, education and poor relief and invited a wide range of speakers to Lynn to promote a range of new ideas and views. Their activism never led to any parliamentary electoral success (possibly because of the strong allegiance agricultural workers retained with the Liberal party), but they were more influential at the local level and produced several King's Lynn Mayors.

In April we were lucky to have another UEA academic to speak to us, Sarah Spooner, Associate Professor of Landscape History. In spite of us managing to lose Sarah's slides due to a technical gremlin (?!), she gave a fascinating account of the rise of the Georgian Pleasure Garden. As the 18th-century middle classes grew, they sought entertainments to fill their leisure time – especially opportunities to meet the opposite sex. Many towns had an assembly room, a theatre, and formal pleasure gardens for outdoor promenading. King's Lynn was no exception, boasting all three, and parts of our 'Walks' are a well-regarded and very early example of the type. Sarah noted some of the events that have been recorded as taking place in The Walks including bull baiting and, later, public 'breakfasts' for up to 7,000! We hope that we can get Sarah to return and give her talk again with illustrations!

The whole lecture series was well attended and, we hope, well received. If members come across a recommended speaker that they think may be suitable for Civic Society, please forward your suggestions. And – a special request – if you would like to help organise our lecture evenings, please come forward!

Other activities

Your committee tries to keep abreast of a range of other initiatives that are being undertaken in the town and to continue some of our ongoing commitments. These include:

- Regular meetings with the Borough Council, both Councillors and Officers, to lobby on a range of issues and to try to remain abreast of issues and initiatives.
- Attending a range of workshops and responding to consultation processes. This year has included attending a new Heritage Volunteers Forum; attending workshops to discuss a Heritage and Culture Strategy; joining the West Norfolk Tourism Forum; attending a Transport Strategy presentation and providing input to a number of design development processes including South Gate.
- We paid for bulbs and helped Harding's Pits volunteers plant them in South Lynn last autumn.
- We remain supportive of tree planting in the town and are pleased to announce that the *Beuys Acorns* project has resulted in a new circle of oak trees being planted at Harding's Pits, south of the River Nar. This is a collaboration between BCKLWN, GroundWork Gallery and the artists Ackroyd and Harvey and has become possible thanks to the Borough Council deallocating land for housing to create more public open space. More publicity is planned for this project.
- High Street Design: Some of you will remember that when our new Conservation Officer, Lynette Fawkes, spoke to us in October 2023,



Bulb planting at Harding's Pits



Planting the Bueys oak trees

the matter of helping to prepare BCKLWN High Street design guidance was discussed. Although many planning authorities have illustrated guidance on shopfront design as well as more extensive design guidance, BCKLWN have never had either.

We followed this up by researching documents from other authorities and suggesting that rather than reinventing the wheel, some of the best examples could be ‘borrowed’. We have also provided photographs of Lynn shops that we felt illustrated good and bad practice.

Last year we were told that BCKLWN Design Guide would be developed – but we suspect this idea might now be shelved due to the local government reorganisation.

(It is worth noting that both North Norfolk and Breckland have adopted design guides, the North Norfolk one first being adopted in 1974!)



Two of our suggested examples of good and bad shopfront design.

- We have continued our liaison with our parent organisation, Civic Voice, and Richard Morrish has now joined their national planning panel to monitor national planning policy. If nothing else, this will hopefully lead to us being better informed on new policy and planning matters.

If any of these areas of activity particularly interest you, please consider supporting our small but resolute committee in furthering our work.

Subscriptions

If you have already paid, thank you very much. Your contribution helps us to continue our valuable work.

If you haven't paid yet, please do so now.

Please note the new fees – if you pay by standing order, please amend it!

Individual membership £15

Joint membership (two people at one address) £25

Please consider setting up a standing order or send a cheque to:

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