



READING CIVIC SOCIETY

AGM - 6 April 2022

Chairman's Report – to 31 December 2021

A. Events during the year:

Presentations

During 2019 8 presentations to different groups were given, mainly about the impact of all the planning applications on brownfield sites in the centre of Reading.

During 2021 these were limited to:

- Friends of Reading Museum, 3 Feb 2020 (by ZOOM) – Rapidly changing face of Reading. Approx 60 people.
- Abbey School Guild, Oct 2021 (physical meeting) “**Whats going on in Reading?**” – an update on planning and new facilities. Approx. 20 people.
- Caversham WI, November 2021 (physical meeting) “**What’s going on in Reading?**” approx. 25 people.

Heritage Open Days, 13-22September 2021.

- Joe Doak – **Looking up to History.** 38 people. A large % not were not known to us
- Lloyd Turner – **Landlords and Conservation; a conflict of interests?** 37 people, a high % known to us. Attended by the Mayor and Mayoress.



- 2* walks led by Terry Dixon & Richard Bennett - Castle Hill & Coley Walkabout – approx 30. Funds raised towards Terry’s Charities of the year.



Annual Luncheon at Pepe Sale, 14 November 2021 (30 people) (March 2020 - 40, March 2019 – 58). Many thanks to Clare Platts and Penny Kemp for organising the event, to Terry for his quiz. No raffle was held this year. (Image below C Widdows)



Future Cities engagement

This was with the team advising about Art for the Station Hill Development. RB, Richard Stainthorp & Linda Saul took part in an on-line discussion in Oct 2021

Follow up engagement in Feb 2022 with RS / LS.

Water Fest and Celebration of the 900th Anniversary of Reading Abbey, June 2021

We took a stand for the first time & will do so again in 2022.

Memorials and Sculptures

In October, after Lynette Edwell highlighted that the plastic cover to the slate plaque to Maureen Lockley on Queens Road Car Park was damaged and obscured, Cllr Page arranged for it to be replaced within 2 weeks, see below.



In the Autumn we were asked to update RBC's information on Memorials and Heritage Assets, last updated 15 years ago. Part of the review was to identify assets which needed urgent repair for which CIL funding was available. Input drawn from CAAC & CADRA members and also from Civic Society members. Initial report submitted mid- December. Meeting 12 April with RBC to discuss final version and candidates for repair.

Reading Gaol future – no news at the date of the report.

B. Social Media

Reading Civic Society Website www.ReadingCivicSociety.org.uk

This has been simplified thanks to David Neale of RVA. More work to do. Highlighted that the hosting cost is excessive and we are paying for related domains which are unnecessary. Will be addressed during this year.

RCS Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ReadingCivicSocietyd> & Twitter [@ReadingCivicSociety](https://twitter.com/ReadingCivicSociety) Pages do not have many “viewers”. Very few RCS members seem to view.

An Instagram page has been set up and is being used more.

C. Projects - Look Draw Build @Reading Station

We started to work as a partner with Archi-Adventure, based in Barcelona, on this project for which they had been granted £4,000 by GWR. It will deliver an architectural / engineering project into 10 Primary Schools (approx. 450 Children in years 5+6) in Reading during April - June 2022. Haslams subsequently offered to be a Gold Sponsor which added £1,500, received 2022.

Stantec (former Peter Brett Associates) on Caversham Rd and Weston & Co Architects will lead delivery of the project in schools.

Project launch 28 April.at Haslams Estate Agents. Invitations will be issued.

D. Newsletter.

Our last formal printed newsletter was published in Summer 2018. We did not have the physical resources to continue to prepare and publish in the old way. During 2021 we emailed 17 updates to members as a way of keeping them informed

E. Civic Voice Membership

Renewed in 2021, based on membership numbers the cost was £260 (2020- £280).

During 2020-2021 the Chair took part in On Line quarterly Regional Committee of Civic Voice and other CV events / APPGs. This gives us a broader understanding of issues faced by Civic Societies and access to the national position on planning matters, conservation areas etc.

We share the Civic Voice communications and engagement benefits with the Conservation Area Advisory Committee and some other groups.

F. Planning

We continued to review Reading Borough Council's On Line list of planning applications. We have found it difficult to comment on many due to lack of time and resource.

Early engagement with developers assists our understanding of the constraints of a site and developer's plans and can give us the opportunity to influence designs and, if our comments are positive, can save time and money from the developer's point of view.

Consultations

March 2021 - Queen Victoria Place Consultation.

[Queen's Yard \(queenvictoriastreet.co.uk\)](http://queenvictoriastreet.co.uk)



We ran an On-Line consultation which we publicised heavily on social media. This was an opportunity to meet the scheme architect. The Scheme gained good feedback. Approved quickly. Work has commenced. 65 participants of which RCS members 15.

Caversham Park Consultation, 21 October– [Caversham Park \(caversham-park.co.uk\)](http://caversham-park.co.uk)

We shared with members information about this consultation in and know a number certainly attended.

G. Other related activities – CAAC for information

The **Conservation Area Advisory Committee** was established to provide advice to the Council on issues in Conservation Areas, including updating the CA Appraisals. The members of the committee include several members of Reading Civic Society, CADRA, BSANA, Bell Tower Community Association, NARA, Redlands NAG.

Work by members on the two Centre Conservation Area Appraisals stalled following the initiation of a Historic Area Assessment, which is part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone Project. Work on Christchurch & Eldon Square CAA's continues. Progress is constrained by volunteers' time.

High Street Heritage Action Zone.

The Chair is a member of the Board of the HS HAZ project, The role is to monitor progress being undertaken by a small project team, and support where possible. COVID has made it very difficult to persuade retailers in Castle Street / St Mary Butts and Oxford Road to invest in improving their shopfronts in an appropriate way. Progress is being made with 6.

Locally Listed Buildings

There are now 19 buildings on the list, though 2 were demolished in 2016.

[Locally listed buildings - Reading Borough Council](#)

The CAAC has around 15 other buildings / assets which it considers suitable for addition to the local list, including the Gasworks Social Club. It is gradually working to nominate them.

RBC now has a scheme which enables members of the public to make nominations. It is discreetly “hidden” in clear sight on the RBC Listed buildings page. More visible on RCS’s website [Local List of Heritage Buildings](#)

H. **Membership Report** *Note previous year in brackets*

Subscriptions for 2021 total £1,350 (£1,305 2020, £1,620 2019, £1,483 2018).

As at March 2022 there are 175 members (6 honorary life members).

Since the 2020 AGM we have had 12 new members.

14 members do not have online access and receive notification of the AGM and the relevant documents by post. They receive hard copies of email updates which are now used in place of printed newsletters.

Richard Bennett

Chair

25 March 2022