

HINCKLEY CIVIC SOCIETY

www.hinckleycivicsociety.org.uk

"striving for a better Hinckley"

NEWSLETTER

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
MONDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2008
GREAT MEETING BAINES LANE
Commencing at 7.30pm

TRUSTEES ELECTION

All the present Officers and Trustees have indicated a willingness to stand as Trustees for 2008-9. However, under the terms of the Society's Constitution we can have up to eight Trustees.

Trustees normally meet on the Monday following the main Society meeting and usually last about two hours. In addition, there are an increasing number of other *ad hoc* meetings and discussions with outside bodies where representatives from the Trustees attend according to their personal commitments and workload.

Communication often needs to be made at short notice and e-mail is the normal means of communication among Trustees and Officers.

Nomination papers for the election of officers and trustees for 2008-9 are included
with this newsletter

A YEAR OF SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS

The reformed Society is fast approaching its second anniversary and it seems a pertinent time to reflect on progress thus far.

The last three months have probably been the most rewarding since the revived Society was formed in 2006 as there have been major breakthroughs on a number of issues, especially in our greatly enhanced dialogue with Council officers at senior level. Notably the Society's Blue Plaque campaign is now ready to be rolled out in 2008-9 thanks to some generous financial help made available to the Society by senior officials of the Council, who have demonstrated a growing interest and hopefully confidence in the Society as an organised channel for debate and sometimes challenging feedback to events and plans for the future development of Hinckley.

However, a year ago, this newsletter remarked, "any voluntary organisation is dependant on a vibrant membership". Sadly, our membership has remained static and this is an issue that will have to be addressed when at the long-term role of the Society. Two issues stand out. Firstly, we regularly see letters in our local press bemoaning aspects of life in the town. It seems time to challenge these 'amateur scribblers' to stand up and be counted – come and air your views to the Society and test them out on an audience that is committed in its mission to make Hinckley a vibrant 21st century community. Secondly, comes a challenge to all of us as members of the Society. If each of present membership introduced just one new member by the end of 2008, our membership would double! Introduce two new members, even better..... Can you bring along a new member to our September AGM or first meeting at the end of October?

Society hosts EMACS regional meeting in October

A reminder that on **Saturday 18th October**, the Society will be hosting the regional meeting of Civic Societies from across the East Midlands. The venue will be the Great Meeting, Baines Lane. All members are most welcome to attend; full details of the day will be available at our AGM.

Founded in 1987, the Midlands Amenity Societies Association (MASA) represented Midlands amenity societies registered with the Civic Trust. In 2001 it divided into East and West versions in line with Civic Trust aspirations to create a regional association for each of the nine local government regions of England. In July 2006 East MASA changed its name to the EAST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC SOCIETIES. (EMACS). There are currently about fifty local Civic Societies in the East Midlands Region, fifteen of which have their own web sites.

Howard, our Chairman, has become a regular attendee at the quarterly regional meetings and is now helping with some of the regional secretarial work.

Good Progress on Literary Event

Since the last newsletter, considerable progress has been made on this project. Key speakers are in place and there has also been a very positive meeting with Arts & Tourism Officer at Hinckley & Bosworth Council, Lindsay Orton. Current

thinking is that the event will be a major part of the 2009 Hinckley and Bosworth Arts Week; the provisional date for the event is **Saturday 10th October 2009**; more details at our AGM.

This is a huge opportunity to bring Hinckley & Bosworth's literary heritage to a wider audience, both inside and outside the Borough. We must always remember heritage encompasses a great deal more than just the built environment.

Atkins Building

One of the several developments in the last few weeks concerns the Society being asked for its views and ideas on the future use of the Atkins Building. The basic plan focuses on its future development as 'a Creative Industries' centre. The Society is supportive of this concept and has made some tentative suggestions regarding the type of activity that might enhance the cultural and educational environment of the town.

Planning & Draft Heritage Protection Bill

The draft Heritage Protection Bill was published in April (full details are available on both the DCMS and English Heritage websites) and is likely to be put before Parliament in the 2008-9 session. It adopts a new stance making reference to 'heritage assets'. The new legislation could be effective sometime in 2010.

A summary of its key aims include

- unifying the listing of buildings, scheduling of monuments, registration of parks, gardens and battlefields into a single designation regime, including World Heritage Sites
- integrating Listed Building and Scheduled Monument consents into a single, streamlined heritage consent system, determined at local level
- enhancing local historic environment services by introducing a statutory requirement for local authorities to have access to Historic Environment Records
- working towards an effective UK-wide marine heritage protection system;
- introducing interim protection to sites and structures while they are being considered for designation;
- expanding designation to include the sites of early human activity without structures;
- enhancing the protection of archaeological sites under cultivation

These changes seem likely to shift some of the responsibility to local authority level. Conversely, there are likely to be changes to planning regulations with specific reference to major infrastructure projects (such as airports / major roads etc) that will vest more power for such planning outcomes to a proposed new national planning quango.

Another aspect of the proposed change is how these 'heritage assets' are to be given a valuation. The UK Accounting Standards Board has already proposed rules that will require more disclosure about the assets held by museums for example (*See Financial Times 14/15 June 08 p4*). It seems already that there may be some new and complex issues arising from the proposed new legislation.

The real issue.....

The importance of getting our future heritage protection framework right is further highlighted by the following statistic. Of the present 370,000 grade I, II* or II listed buildings in England alone, 17,000 of these are at risk of being lost forever. This is despite laws that, in theory, mean these buildings cannot be demolished or have their style or character changed without permission. (*Source Civic Trust*)

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