

Annual Report of the Trustees for 2018

Introduction

The Norwich Society has had a particularly busy year. Our new Co-ordinator, Rachael Cochrane left us to have a baby and we welcomed, Rachel Kirk, previously manager of the Norwich museums, as her replacement. The proposed development of Anglia Square took up a great deal of the Society's time and we are grateful to all those with such specialist skills who have enabled us to submit well informed comments to the City Council's Planning Committee. We have also delivered a new publications programme and launched a new website.

Thanks are due to the members of the Executive, the Chairs of the various committees and their members, and to the volunteers who have supported our events programme. Without all that expertise and time commitment the Society could not function. We are also indebted to many sponsors and financial supporters whose support enables us to undertake much more work and to a higher standard than would otherwise be possible.

Vanessa Trevelyan, Chair

The Society

The Norwich Society helps preserve what is important of Norwich's built heritage and encourages good new design which the Society considers will be the heritage of the future. We encourage people to explore and enjoy Norwich, and shine a spotlight on little-known aspects of Norwich history for enjoyment and education.

The Society is an unincorporated organisation, founded in 1923, and a registered charity (registration number 311118). It is primarily a voluntary organisation but it also employs a contractor to provide administrative and support services. It rents an office in the Assembly House in Norwich.

Furthering the Society's charitable objects

The Society's charitable objects are to:

- Encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in Norwich.
- Encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.
- Stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the City and its surroundings, and
- Pursue these ends by means of meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, and other forms of instruction and publicity, by co-operation

with the Local Authorities and other bodies, and promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.

Encouraging high standards of architecture and town planning

The key concern in 2018 was the proposed development of Anglia Square, which incorporated a 25-storey tower block and surrounding blocks of over 10 storeys. The Norwich Society argued that the designs were bland and completely out of scale with Norwich's other historic and modern buildings. The Society called a public meeting in April attended by over 200 people, and carried out an information campaign on Facebook attracting over 30,000 reads. The Society submitted a detailed response to the City Council's Planning department outlining our concerns and were supported by Historic England, the Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral, and urban designer, Wayne Hemmingway. A proposal to reduce the height of the tower block by five storeys did not, we felt, provide an adequate response to the concerns raised.

Our Planning Appraisal Committee met regularly to consider developments which will have an impact on the public built environment and streetscape within

Norwich. These ranged from replacement windows to large developments comprising hundreds of homes.

Out of more than 1,000 planning applications submitted to Norwich City Council last year, we commented on about 60 which we felt would have a significant impact. We supported about 25% of these, and objected in principle to about the same number. For the remaining half, we always try to make positive suggestions about how the impact of these schemes can be mitigated, or the quality of design improved. The Committee comprises architects, planners and developers, so we have expertise and a local knowledge to provide what we believe are constructive comments to applicants, and are pleased to provide Design Reviews where requested without charge. We welcome presentations to the Committee, which included this year, for example, developments at St Mary's Works and the Norwich School.

There were a further 26 applications for HMO extensions and conversions, and applications for over 700 student flats, all of which needed to be judged on their individual merits.

We added about six schemes of exceptional design quality to our list of potential Design Award entries for 2019, and are optimistic that there is a steady stream of exemplary projects in the pipeline.

This year we are excited to announce that, instead of our own Design Awards which we have run for many years, we are collaborating with the RIBA, Norfolk Association of Architects and Civic Voice, on a joint Design and Craftsmanship Awards scheme. More details will be issued in due course but we are already fully involved in developing categories, planning an Awards dinner and inputting to the Awards website (<https://designandcraftsmanshipawards.org.uk/>). If you are aware of any projects you would like to nominate for an award, or would like to participate in judging, please let us know.

In 2018 Westlegate and All Saints Green were the latest areas to be pedestrianised, which have proved very popular with pedestrians but perhaps not so much for car drivers. A retrograde step in the view of the Norwich Society was the replacement of all the existing "foot streets" with 24-hour "pedestrian and cycle zones". This has caused concern amongst

pedestrians, especially in those streets where the pavements are cluttered with A Boards that do not comply with the City Council's A Boards Policy, which covers size of the board, number of boards per shop, and position in relation to the shop frontage.

Encouraging the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest

The Society was delighted that the scaffolding around Howard House has at last been removed and the external restoration looks excellent.

The Society continued to appoint one of the Mousehold Heath Conservators. During the year work started on a new 10-year management plan for the Heath, with public consultation due to take place during 2019.

The Society also nominated three board members to the Norwich Preservation Trust, which was set up as joint venture in 1966 between Norwich City Council and the Norwich Society. Plans are currently in place to restore 16 Elm Hill.

Stimulating public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the City and its surroundings

The Society's Civic Environment Committee undertook a survey of public clocks and sundials and found over 60. A report, *Telling the Time in Norwich*, has been produced with details of over 50 of the clocks and sundials and is now on the Society's website. Three trails have also been produced to encourage people to explore for themselves, which are also on the website. The report was launched with a public lecture during Heritage Open Days in September.

Another directory on commemorative plaques in Norwich, *Signs of Past Times*, was also produced following a lecture delivered as part of Heritage Open Days. This, together with associated self-guided trails, is available on the website. Trails have also been produced to complement Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery's latest exhibition on the Vikings, and in

response to C.J.Sansom's latest Tudor crime mystery, *Tombland*, which is set in Norwich at the time of Kett's Rebellion.

The Society delivered another lively events programme including 12 walking tours and visits. There were three public lectures and a programme of informal talks as part of the Historians initiative. The talks were well supported, and the Society is grateful to Michael Blackwell and Ann Farrant for agreeing to take on the organisation of the Historians programme.

A highlight of the year was a visit to How Hill, the home of Norwich architect Edward T Boardman. This coincided neatly with the publication of the Society's booklet on *Edward Boardman and Victorian Norwich* by David Bussey and Eleanor Martin. This has proved extremely popular and headed Jarrold's local best-seller list for several weeks. The Society also delivered three lectures as part of Heritage Open Days: David Bussey on *Edward Boardman*, and John Trevelyan on *Signs of Past Times and Telling the Time in Norwich*.

In June the Society held what has now become an annual event looking at a key issue concerning Norwich. This year the subject was the use of green spaces and the river and featured the internationally-famous Amsterdam Light Festival, which is inspiring Norwich to develop its own winter light festival; role of open spaces in the health and welfare of local people; and how best to exploit the potential for spaces and places to improve the quality of life.

A new publication was introduced in 2018. *Aspects of Norwich* is a twice yearly journal containing around eight articles relating to Norwich. As well as encouraging greater interest in different aspects of Norwich, the journal enables us to provide better value to members, especially those who live further afield, who may not be able to take advantage of our events programme. The response has been overwhelmingly positive thanks to Paul Burall, his Publications Group and the many authors who have provided articles. *Aspects of Norwich* is available for sale to the public and has featured in Jarrold's local best sellers list.

A photographic competition was held for people under 30 looking at the best and worst of Norwich. Although the number of applications was small the

quality was very high and the winners are featured in the Autumn 2018 edition of *Aspects of Norwich*.

A large piece of work had been the redesign of the Society's website. This now provides clearer links to information about the Society and Norwich, and also enables us to manage membership applications online. After some initial hiccups, this has proved very effective and means that members can manage their own membership information, receive requests for renewal in a timely way, and reduce the amount of administrative time involved. The Society has also been developing its social media presence with regular posts on Facebook. This is proving an effective way to communicate with a wider public and raise awareness of the Society, especially with a younger audience.

Networking

It is important for the Norwich Society to work with other organisations with complementary interests in order to further our joint aims and raise awareness of the Norwich Society's activities. The Chair represented the Society at the monthly Dean's Breakfast at Norwich Cathedral. These are attended by a wide range of public service directors and business leaders. The Chair also attended the quarterly meetings of the newly formed Norwich Heritage Alliance. This seeks to fill the gap left by the demise of Norwich HEART by bringing together representatives of all the main heritage organisations in Norwich to encourage complementarity and joint working. The Society is also supporting the Norwich Historic Churches Trust in a project to build on the success of Flintspiration to raise awareness of Norwich medieval church heritage and encourage improved standards of conservation.

The Society is a member of Civic Voice, which represents all civic societies. Mary Ash is a member of the Civic Voice board and, in that capacity, has been co-opted onto the Norwich Society's Executive in order to facilitate communication. Society representatives attended two meetings of civic societies in the East of England; the first hosted by us in Norwich and the second in Great Yarmouth.

Governance

The Society is governed by a constitution which provides for the management of the Society to be in the hands of an Executive Committee, who are also the Trustees. The Executive Committee consists of four Officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary), and up to nine other members. The constitution was last revised in April 2017 to create the role of Secretary, and during 2018 the Society investigated becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, a new form of legal entity designed for non-profit organisations in the United Kingdom. The main benefits are that the new entity has legal personality, the ability to conduct business in its own name, and limited liability so that its members and trustees will not have to contribute in the event of financial loss.

In 2017 the Society developed a Forward Plan for the next five years (available on our website <https://www.thenorwichsociety.org.uk/about/what-we-do>). An action plan is produced each year to guide our work.

Executive Committee members during the year were:

Mary Ash
Jon Boon
Deborah Bourassa
Paul Burall (Vice-Chair)
Barry Howell
Kate Nash
Neil Sturgeon (Treasurer)
David Taylor
Vanessa Trevelyan (Chair)
Paul Watson

Membership

At the end of December 2018 the Society had 799 individual members and 30 corporate members. Members received during the year an Annual Review for 2017, two copies of *Aspects of Norwich*, and the publication on Edward Boardman. Those who provided the Society with an e-mail address also received monthly electronic newsletters.

Finance

The Society's income in 2018 was a total of £27,248 with the main sources being membership, events and sales of publications. Expenditure was a total of £35,826 with the main sources being staff costs and office rent. One-off costs relating to the development of the new website and a fall in donation and legacy income meant that we had a deficit of £8,578 and needed to draw on our reserves. The 2018 income, expenses and loss figures were similar to those in 2016.

The Society is grateful to the following for their support by way of grants, sponsorship or support in kind:

Epic Studios
The Forum
Jarrold
Norfolk Museums Service
Paul Bassham Charitable Trust
The City Bookshop
Cozens Hardy Solicitors
Norwich Evening News

