

# Portsmouth Society News

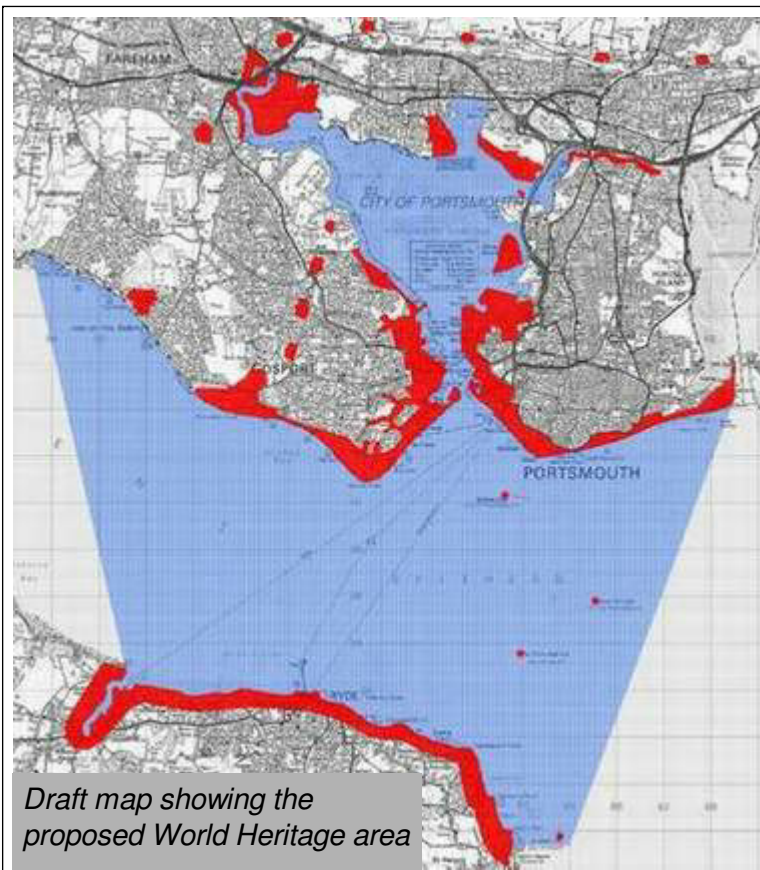
The Newsletter of The Portsmouth Society - Winter 2008

## “The past is a present to the future”

### Portsmouth Harbour, Isle of Wight & Spithead as ‘the world’s first Cultural Seascape’ ‘to be inscribed on the World Heritage List’

The public launch of the project on 28 January 2008 in the modern auditorium of Boathouse 6 was an appropriate venue in the Historic Dockyard for this enjoyable, successful and informative occasion. Over 150 delegates attended from a wide range of organisations representing local government, heritage bodies, companies, property / landowners, community groups, and local societies. It followed closely on the good news of the Heritage Lottery Fund’s massive grant for a new museum for the Mary Rose.

The chairman, Peter Goodship of the Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust which sponsored the event, stressed that it would have been just as appropriate to have held it on the Isle of



Wight, Fareham, Gosport or Winchester, such is the scale of the project. All these councils have expressed their support for the project, which is very encouraging. Working together with major stakeholders will we hope will have an integrative effect on policies.

The exciting prospect – to inscribe Portsmouth Harbour, Isle of Wight and Spithead on the list, of World Heritage sites - would be the world’s first Cultural Seascape to be included. The people who attended the launch had been invited because they all had the potential to make this ambition a reality. David and Jackie Baynes had worked tirelessly to bring together over a hundred and thirty people representing many diverse interests. Local people’s support was needed – because without universal stakeholder support, the project cannot get off the ground. Ann Coats drafted an informative leaflet, designed by Gail Baird of 131 Design; printing costs were paid by Portsmouth City Council, which also seconded an officer to work on the economic benefits and provided the draft boundary map.

David Michelmore of ICOMOS – the international advisory body which advises UNESCO on the list outlined the World Heritage site bidding process, which in the UK is controlled via the Department of Culture, Media and Sport’s Tentative List. David has successfully inscribed 11 sites onto the World Heritage List, and is preparing several others. After working with Celia Clark on an EU Walled Cities

*In this edition .. The past is a present to the future, Northern Quarter Plans Now Available, Meetings and Events, New Venue for Monthly Meetings, Visit to Farnborough Airport, Farewell Pitt Street Baths, Tipner Regeneration Masterplan, Hilsea Lido Pool for the People, Boundary walls and Conservation Areas, What's Past is Passed? - Creative Thinking Exercise, Your City, Your Future - Core Strategy Submission, The Guardsman, Fratton Road, Cut the VAT Coalition. Odeon Cinema North End.*

project in Obidos in Portugal and Xingcheng in China, he had suggested that Portsmouth Harbour and Spithead were just as worthy of World Heritage status. After a year of preparatory work, the bid was ready to ask for public support. Creative, forward looking cities regularly reinvent themselves, and the process towards achieving this project would help the harbour and island communities to establish new roles.

John Rodger spoke eloquently about the difference World Heritage status has made to Blaenavon Industrial site in South Wales. Local people's perception of the site's key history as a cradle of the Industrial Revolution had been totally changed by a continuous programme of events and activities. Physical repairs and new buildings had raised property values and encouraged considerable inward investment, and tourist figures to the Big Pit and other industrial sites have tripled.

Celia Clark and Gary Momber of the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology described the unique combination of geography and history which shaped this key part of the Solent. The theme of the bid was Defence of the Realm. The dockyard and its supporting establishments: Gunwharf, ordnance, victualling, ship-testing, hospitals were distinctive to the area's history, and they had been defended from enemy attack by successive layers of defensive structures. The navy and dockyard continue to defend the nation's interests – a living tradition. Gary Momber showed how the Solent River's submerged landscape holds evidence of its pre-history in the tidal zone and under water. The story of human occupation and responses to cycles of climate change over seven thousand years is being discovered. His trust works hard to promote understanding and pride in this heritage in local people.

The discussion with the diverse audience included an eloquent contribution from Alan Burgess of the Portsmouth Campaign for Climate change – reminding us all of how vulnerable the area is to rising sea levels, a factor which ICOMOS encourages applicant sites to take into account. The leader of Portsmouth City Council, Gerald Vernon-Jackson, said that nothing should jeopardise the navy's freedom of operation. This is already subject to civilian planning law on land and the myriad of marine consents on water, and Defence Estates are to commission a study of the effect of World Heritage designation on the navy's operations.

Peter Goodship concluded by saying:

"We are at the very beginning of a journey and we still have much to learn about the process. And, importantly, we do not yet know how the new DCMS guidelines which were to be published last Autumn may impact on our ideas. What we do know is that the DCMS wish to review the current waiting list, remove those who have been on it for many years and made no progress and admit new applicants who have a real chance of success. We wish to be one of those new boys."

"I would like to say one thing at the outset: an obvious question is would World Heritage Status frustrate economic progress and just become another layer of bureaucracy or indeed impede the way in which the Royal Navy, for instance, operates within the Harbour? I can say that if for a moment we believed any of those things to be true then we would not be here today."

"All the research we have undertaken suggests that the reverse is true; it positively encourages inward investment, is good for tourism and unlocks grants and yes it may demand that new design is appropriate and of good quality – but I believe we can all sign up to that."

The Steering Group are now planning Phase 2 - to widen their membership, and to work on the medium-term gains which will reward the process, whether or not we succeed with world recognition. These include:

- A cultural heritage-led regeneration theme: defence of the realm.
- A significant international focus on the area.
- Co-ordination of policies around what we perceive as one place.
- Increased collaboration between key harbour/waterfront authorities and agencies – needed to plan the future of the area.
- Integration of planning around harbour and on Ryde, Gosport and Southsea waterfronts including tall buildings policies.
- Opportunities for joint tourist marketing and promotion.

- Increased appreciation and protection of marine industry/nature conservation/port matters.
- Raised awareness of Portsmouth Harbour and Spithead heritage among regional and national agencies and bodies, e.g. DCMS, English Heritage, SEEDA, PUSH, HLF etc.
- Increased opportunities for grants, project funding and inward investment by gathering interests under one over-arching theme.
- Raising the profile of civic pride in Portsmouth, Gosport and Isle of Wight waterfronts and harbour heritage amongst residents and visitors, increasing visitor numbers and usage of attractions and local businesses.
- Cementing the primacy of waterfront and harbour within the harbour communities' identity.
- Protection and enhancement of public access to the water.

World Heritage status helps to preserve and sustain the heritage - built, underwater, archaeology, cultural, natural - by emphasising its importance worldwide, to local people, to the local economy and in trust for future generations.

These are the gains from the process, whether or not the application for World Heritage status succeeds. Celia Clark suggested that we should use the naval, military, dockyard, ordnance, victualling and medical legacy as a springboard for new creative visions for the harbour and Isle of Wight communities.

*Celia Clark*

## **Northern Quarter Plans Now Available**

Developers Centros Miller have submitted detail plans for the Northern Quarter development in Portsmouth City Centre and they are now available for public inspection and comment. Until now all plans, with the exception of the road network, have been outline only so now we will be able to see the full detail of the buildings proposed. Details of the application are :

Description: Reserved Matters Submission for the redevelopment of the site for the following:

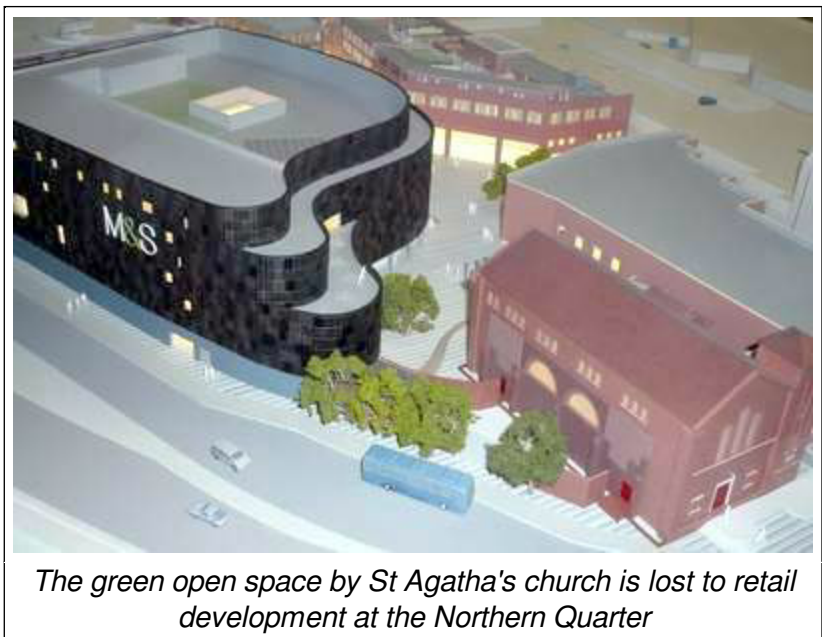
Construction of: retail units (CLASS A1-A5) (68,964.5 SQ M); Leisure units (CLASS D2) (2,089 SQ M);

200 residential units, including affordable homes; multi-level car park (2,300 SPACES), including link bridges;

Basement service area; centre management suite, public toilets and shopmobility unit;

Public realm, including new streets and spaces. landscaping of public realm areas and of residential amenity areas.

The planning reference number is 08/00099/REM and the closing date for comments is 15 February 2008 The Portsmouth Society will be scrutinising the application and will submit comments in the coming weeks. The plans may be viewed at the Civic Offices (where there is a large model on display) or on-line at [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk). There is also more information and pictures at the Northern Quarter Web site at [www.northernquarter.info](http://www.northernquarter.info). Be warned, the application consists of no fewer than 307 documents!



## Meetings and Events

Meetings are on the first Wednesday of each month (not Jan//Aug/Sep). There is no admission charge - all are welcome. For the latest programme see <a href="http://www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk">www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk</a> .	
Wednesday 6th February 2008, 7.30pm at the John Pounds Centre	<b>Portsmouth Society Design Awards</b> - Illustrated talk and discussion on the recent design awards.
Thursday 21 february 11.00am to 1.00pm	<b>Unveiling of the plaques by the Lord Mayor</b> for the 2007 Design Awards starting at the Blue Reef Aquarium on Clarence Esplanade.
Monday 3rd March, Civic Offices, 7.00pm	<b>Tipner Regeneration Masterplan</b> - Portsmouth Environment Forum meeting open to the public. Q&A with developers. See article below.
Wednesday 5th March 7.30pm at the University's St George's Building (coffee from 7.00pm)	<b>Bill Gage, Assistant Archivist for West Sussex County Council</b> will give an illustrated talk on the way things used to be - with an emphasis on rail travel. <b>** NOTE NEW VENUE AND TIME**</b>
Wednesday 2nd April 7.30pm at the University's St George's Building	<b>Annual General Meeting</b> - plus Open Forum Coffee will be served from 7pm.
Tuesday 22nd April & Tuesday 27th May 10.00am at Farnborough	<b>Visit to Farnborough Airport</b> - Two chances to see the operational activities and tour new buildings. Spaces strictly limited - first come first served. Members only. Please see the booking form.
Wednesday 7th May 7.30pm at the University's St George's Building (coffee from 7.00pm)	<b>The work of the Solent Protection Society</b> - Dr Chris Willard, SPS Council Member, will give an illustrated talk and answer any questions The Society, formed in 1956, exists to safeguard the amenities of the Solent area and do everything possible to preserve their beauty for our own and future generations.
Wednesday 4th June 7.30pm at the University's St George's Building	<b>Portsmouth's Museums Service</b> - Dr Jane Mee, Head of Museums and Records will speak about the current activities and future development of the service. Coffee will be served from 7pm.
Wednesday 2nd July 7.30pm at the University's St George's Building	Monthly meeting - speaker to be confirmed. Coffee will be served from 7pm.

### New Venue for Monthly Meetings from March

From 6 March we will be holding our monthly meetings at the University of Portsmouth's St George's Building which is at the junction of High Street and St George's Road in Old Portsmouth. The main entrance is at the rear of the building which is accessed from the large car park in St Thomas' Street. We will be using room 1.11 on the ground floor and coffee will be available from 7pm. There is a wheelchair lift from the car park although there are a few steps to be climbed for walking attendees. Ramp access is also available from the entrance in High Street. We are moving because the room at our current venue is too small and they have no suitable alternative there. We'd like to thank the staff at the John Pounds Centre for hosting us over the past two years.

### Visit to Farnborough Airport

Farnborough Airport is booming. Famous as the site of Britain's first powered flight in 1908, it is home to nearly 50 corporate aircraft and is pushing to have its 28,000 annual limit on flights raised. Owned and operated by TAG, a Swiss-owned aviation company, the airport now has some striking contemporary terminal and hangar buildings. Two dates are available for Society members (only) to have free morning guided tours of the operational and passenger areas and a chance to check out the architecture. Only 15 places are available for each visit, so get your booking form in without delay!

## Farewell Pitt Street Baths

After a long history of ups and downs, Pitt Street baths were suddenly and quickly demolished in January 2008. This L-shaped Art Nouveau building was built in 1910-11 as the Royal Naval School of Physical Training at a time when the armed services were worried about the lack of fitness of new recruits. It has a twin in Chatham, in HMS Pembroke, now used by the University of Greenwich. In the early 1990s the building was the focus of one of the Portsmouth Society's biggest struggles and its greatest triumph.



*The replica facade of the Bell School is revealed during the demolition of Pitt Street Baths*

This is how I recorded it in our newsletter of December 1994.

Pitt Street Reopened. The opening of the Pitt Street Gymnastic Centre by Princess Alexandra on 8 November 1994 marked the triumphant conclusion of a five year struggle. Uniquely the Society can claim in this case that, had it not been for us, this building would have been demolished.

In September 1989 a member, Dr Peter Wright, alerted us that there was an item on the Council Agenda that Pitt Street Baths (1910), recently purchased by the council from the Ministry of Defence, should be demolished to provide a temporary car park. The Ministry of Defence had by that time built the new replacement sports centre in Burnaby Road. Our first action was to get certain city councillors, likely to be sympathetic, to block the motion to obtain at least a stay of execution. This was successful - first for a month and then for six months.

We then tried to get the building listed; but the council forestalled us and obtained a certificate of immunity from listing. I went to the Public Record Office at Kew to try to confirm what we believed to be the case that the architect was G.E.Smith who had designed the former technical institute and library (now the University Park Building) and the pre-fire South Parade pier. I found the relevant page of the navy records had been removed - sliced out!

At the time we were under pressure to find a new use. Our friendly councillors rightly said that it was no good to preserve it just as an empty building. The best advice was that the swimming pool was beyond economic repair; but the gymnasium, the larger arm of the L, a huge unobstructed space, cried out for reuse.

A number of possibilities were considered: the YMCA were interested in buying the building for a variety of uses (we were not enthusiastic about this; but they provided a useful excuse for delay as they at least could raise the money; a couple of young architects prepared a scheme with our blessing to build a hotel alongside (commanding splendid views over the dockyard and harbour) with Pitt Street providing its recreational facilities; even a covered market to house the Charlotte Street traders was put forward.

But gymnastics always seemed a possibility and the county officers, in particular Malcolm Miles of the recreation department, were supportive. He brought along Keith Richardson an expert gymnast who was immediately enthusiastic about the potential of the building. We wrote to SAVE Britain's Heritage who commissioned an architectural firm to suggest possibilities for reuse; the Sports Council - who were not then very helpful; IBRM - The Institute of Baths and Recreational Management - a registered charity devoted to "recreational services to the community" who said they would get in touch with the Central Council for Physical Recreation; and the Amateur Swimming

Association who were said to be experts on getting disused swimming pools into action; and the County Architect who looked at it as a possible site for the School of Architecture.

But the next move forward came from John Atkinson, executive manager of the British Amateur Gymnastics Association from Shropshire who came at our invitation to have a look, He was enthusiastic. He and Malcolm Miles had been at college together. Mr Atkinson said that Pitt Street was just what was urgently needed to provide a regional centre of excellence. He told us that promising gymnasts from Southampton and Worthing were having to go to Lilleshall in Shropshire for their training because there was nowhere suitable on the South Coast. Mr Atkinson did what he could amongst national sports organisations and he managed to get the promise of a grant from the Sports Council.

The big snag was the price the city had most ill-advisedly paid for the Building: £729,000, which was the valuation as a city centre redevelopment site - at the height of the property boom. Valued as a recreational building the price would have been £250,000. The impossibility of covering this extra half million was the millstone all along. And then at a time of stalemate Malcolm Miles had a lucky meeting in a Winchester pub with someone who told him about the Sports and Arts Funds - set up to use the profits from football pools instead of taxing them. Miles immediately applied and they gave him a grant of £400,000. This was the turning point.

The building was renovated and altered by Terry Wren, the city's historic buildings architect. The entrance was changed to Clarence Street from the busy main road. The swimming pool was adapted to a learners' gymnasium, the pool itself filled with large blocks of plastic foam to give soft landings, and new heating and lighting was installed. Local clubs started to use it. And then by 1994 we had a unique centre that the city could be proud of.

Keith Richardson who had played so big a part in the development stayed on to direct and manage it. It is only fair to say that when the present plan to relocate to the Mountbatten Centre first surfaced, he told us, almost with tears in his eyes, that eternally grateful as he was to the Portsmouth Society, he had to admit that he would prefer to have a new purpose-built gymnasium as was now promised.

Phase 2 which would have used the smaller rooms to provide living accommodation for visiting teams never materialised.

The plan to demolish and relocate was slipped rather under the noses of the Development Control Committee. It was never presented as an item on its own account. It was presented as a consequence of the transportation part of the plan for redeveloping the Tricorn site, the Northern Quarter, in 2005. The transport plan which had a number of other very undesirable consequences was taken at the same meeting which was mainly concerned with new shopping. Room had to be found for the widened Hope Street and the possibility of widening it to its west - taking one carriageway to the west of the dockyard wall - was not an option offered to the committee. The transport plan was approved there and then with a minimum of debate and with opposition only from the Portsmouth Society. *RJ*

## **Tipner Regeneration Masterplan**

The Tipner masterplan proposes a mixed use scheme which includes affordable housing, office space, a hotel, surgery and community centre, a Park & Ride facility, public open space and access to the waterfront. The Tipner Regeneration Company (TRC) is now taking the masterplan proposals to public consultation with the intention of submitting an application for outline planning permission for the scheme in the Autumn 2008.

Society members are invited to attend a presentation which the TRC are making to the Environment Forum on the 3 March. The Forum meetings are open to the public and start at 7pm in the Civic Offices. The TRC will be available immediately after the presentation in an adjoining conference room to answer any questions we may have while the Environmental Forum continues with the rest of its agenda. The Society has a meeting on the 5 March when we can agree the comments we wish to make on the emerging scheme.

## HILSEA LIDO POOL FOR THE PEOPLE



*Hilsea Lido supporters pictured outside the Blue Lagoon in March 2007*

The Portsmouth Society brokered the formation of a new community group which was formed last October in response to the Council's decision no longer to fund the continued opening of Hilsea Lido swimming pool from the end of the 2008 season - a season that as such, only lasts for the duration of the school's summer holiday anyway!

This group, calling itself *Hilsea Lido Pool For The People* (HLPFTP) aims to save the pool from closure and likely demolition once a new but smaller, indoor pool is opened by the Council at the Mountbatten Centre, probably in 2009.

HLPFTP aims to achieve this principally by quickly establishing itself as a suitable registered charity, company limited by guarantee or a social enterprise company to which the local authority could confidently transfer the operation or the ownership of the swimming pool. If it was also thought to be mutually acceptable, the assets so transferred could also include the remainder of the entire Lido complex on the land north of the Hilsea moat.

The group has been especially encouraged by the Government's support for the groundbreaking QUIRK review "Making Assets Work" that was commissioned and then accepted by Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly MP. This endorses the transfer of management or ownership of assets from local authorities to suitable community groups. It firmly believes that all too many Council owned items just like this pool could have a better future in the hands of the people who want to use it. Portsmouth City Council, as one of the very first local authorities to be involved, says it will be reporting its own understanding of the Quirk Review and its ramifications by 31 March 2008.

Notwithstanding the Government's avowed support for Barry Quirk's Review, HLPFTP is confident the necessary Capital and Revenue funding can be found elsewhere, if necessary, given commitment and effort from the pool's many supporters throughout the community.

Portsmouth City Council Leader Cllr. Gerald Vernon-Jackson has backed the virtue of such local community groups as HLPFTP by writing to their Historic Research Officer Jane Smith, author of the book "The Book of Hilsea, gateway to Portsmouth".

With the Lido pool due to close so very soon, HLPFTP has to move fast before the bulldozers possibly move in during next autumn and so this group needs as much support of any kind as it can get. If you wish to see the Lido retained and then much improved, join and support HLPFTP now!

Its meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month at 7.30pm at the Howard & Matapan Residents Association Community Hall in Howard Road, Hilsea, nearly opposite The Oakwood pub. You will be made most welcome!

*Robin Kay*

## Boundary walls and Conservation Areas

Here is an example of the quirkiness of the planning system ...

If a building is a business and it lies within a conservation area then planning permission is required for any works on the building, outbuilding or boundary wall.

If the building's use is changed to a private dwelling (through a planning application) then the restrictions are relaxed and the likes of boundary walls may be demolished without permission.

This is exactly what has happened in Helena Road, Southsea in Conservation Area 29 where the owner applied for change of use from a nursing home to a private house then demolished the fine boundary wall in order to provide vehicle access and car hard-standing. The intervention by our City Council's Conservation Officer has fortunately seen the partial reinstatement of the wall whilst allowing some vehicular access.

Only if an Article 4(2) direction is in place for the conservation area can boundary walls to private dwellings be included in the restrictions.

The moral of the story is that if you are concerned about the loss of boundary walls in conservation areas then check to see if an Article 4(2) direction is in effect. If not, request the Planning Department to put one in place!

*John Holland*

## What's Past is Passed? - Creative Thinking Exercise

Charles Landry and I have been working as Creative Thinkers, interviewing people across the city (including some of you), subsuming ourselves in Portsmouth as a place (by walking the streets day and night for hours...) and writing articles for the Portsmouth News. All of our work has been intended to stimulate a discussion about Portsmouth and where it sees itself going in the future.

A little bit about us and what we are trying to do. Comedia is Britain's leading 'place-shapers'. We use culture in its broadest sense to encourage regeneration. We look not just at cultural containers and content and how they can work more effectively, but the whole cultural landscape of a place; how it looks, feels, where the energy of a place is and where it's lacking. We see how the 'culture' of the people impacts on their ability to be successful and if there are skills and lessons learned in the past that can help or hinder future development.

For the last 30 years, the company has worked in major world cities around the world, helping them to get a sense of what assets they have, what challenges (we call them 'fault-lines'), and to see how the intellectual, cultural, economic and other forms of capital each place has can be combined in specific ways to gain economic advantage and recognition. We have advised the EU, national, regional and local Governments, worked for crown states, and been commissioned to work for large agencies.

Charles Landry has written many papers, booklets and articles. His two books 'the Cultural City' and 'The Art of City-Making' are international best-sellers. He has recently been 'Thinker-in-Residence in Perth and is currently in Dubai working on Phase 2 of its development.

I joined Comedia in March last year having been Head of Culture & Learning in Poole (responsible for libraries, museums, archives, and adult learning. I led on the refurbishment of Poole Central Library two new library builds, the Waterfront Museum refurbishment, supported the refurbishment of Lighthouse Poole and the Stabilisation of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra , As Corporate Director in Test Valley, I developed a Vision for Andover, a new cultural complex 'the Lights: Andover' and a four-screen cinema within an ASDA superstore.

Since joining Comedia, I've worked in Brixton, Morecambe, Sussex, Copenhagen and Bilbao.

We will be presenting our thoughts to an audience at the Kings Theatre on Monday 4th February, so I won't repeat what we say here.

I recall joining a project in another part of the UK quite late on. Spending a day listening to people talking about the future, I sensed they had no connection to the cultural life of the area they were

hoping to develop. It sounded an inane and obvious question to ask...but I did. Do you know the history of the area? Has anyone done some research about what made this place great, who lived and worked here, historical events etc?

The sea of blank faces proved they hadn't. I was asked to do this. Not only did the snippets of information I could provide add value to their work, it showed them how they could reframe work programmes, skills development and community engagement knowing a little more of the DNA of the place.

When someone else said there were an awful lot of eastern Europeans migrating to the area, I was able to remind them that population was double the size it was now just after the Second World War due to the displacement of people for a different set of reasons. Again, the team could make connections to see how communities adapted and flourished to see if these could be helpful today.

Preaching to the converted in you I know, but it never ceases to amaze me how truly ignorant people are, not necessarily about their knowledge of significant historic events, but about the history of the place they live (and often) work in.

For me, I was lucky. My Grandfather used to say when I was very young 'we are walking on the bones of our ancestors.' I had a history-mad father taking us to museums and stately homes on holiday (when all we wanted to do was laze on the beach) and a mother who is a fanatical genealogist and is writing a novel loosely based on her family.

I feel we owe it to the efforts of those who went before us, to understand their intentions and life-conditions, for they have created ours today. If we understand how this works, we might be a bit more mindful about what we do now which will impact on the future.

This is why history is so fundamental to a future vision.

At our presentation of our thoughts and findings during this residency in Portsmouth, we will touch many times on your City History...the way it is so proudly displayed in selective areas, blown up or defaced in others, or simply ignored and left to the passionate few to protect and conserve for future generations.

I'm not a 'preservation luvvie'; far from it. I've had a few battles in my time with my archaeologists and curators about preserving medieval roof-tile shards for their own sake. To me, the past has to be contextual. Too many fusty interpretations or wrapping in tissue paper and cotton wool has turned so many people off their history. The past and the things that once made a place great can be its biggest hindrance to future development. (I've already argued in one of our news articles that the naval culture and its regulatory system might not be the best combination for a city where wealth is created in places that are agile, flexible and open to change?

But in Portsmouth, I see the past everywhere. It is a unique cultural asset and could be imaginatively combined with the woefully under-exploited superlative coastline that you have (by exploit I don't mean turn into a giant tatty amusement arcade...you have the ability to create something truly classy and focussed on marine heritage). My task amongst so many others in your City which is a gem (if only you'd all realise it and shout proudly about it and be more brave and confident about it,) is to be your 'critical' friend; to remind you about the things you have forgotten because they have become too familiar, to support and develop the things that are truly world class (Mary Rose, Harbour, Naval Year, historic areas ) as well as many other elements in the woven landscape that is uniquely yours.

Thanks to the colleagues who gave me their time to be interviewed and gave constructive feedback on our writings.

It feels like I should end this piece with a great quote from the past, but I prefer to be like Janus, looking to the past and forward into the future simultaneously. Roosevelt once said 'without vision, the people perish.' In the end, that is what it is all about.

*Claire Chidley*

## Your City, Your Future - Core Strategy Submission

A subcommittee of the Society was set up to consider the consultation document on the City Council's Core Strategy. Here is a summary of their proposals and comments.

**Accessibility.** Commuting should be minimised but the City must be accessible and safe to move around in by different modes (walking, cycling, bus, train, taxi and ferry). We ask for the monorail proposal not to be abandoned and support any reincarnation of the LRT. Seamless travel can be achieved by integrated ticketing (e.g. the Oyster Card) and the City should be working with and encourage neighbouring PUSH authorities set up a Transport Authority/Executive. Rail is an under used. A park & ride station at Farlington, and other stations at Paulsgrove, Copnor & Westleigh (in Havant) are needed. New waterborne links across the Harbour would tap into an almost ignored resource.

**Housing.** A proper assessment of infrastructure needs where ever housing is approved. High quality design should be required for ALL developments, which should also incorporate use of renewable energy. A range of housing is needed to suit a wide social mix and minimum space standards for all new housing, public or private should be introduced. Guidance and help to refurbish existing housing stock is needed. Some housing will be built on 'flood risk' areas, but the city council should require those to be designed to be 'flood friendly'.

**Regeneration.** Regeneration efforts should be dispersed across the City, targeting needs where ever they are. The Hard, Harbour Station and Brunel House is an area in particular need of regeneration. A culture-and-heritage-led regeneration should be adopted as an appropriate strategy for relevant areas. Large redevelopment schemes such as the Northern Quarter must contain a cultural element. The city should welcome opportunities for mixed use development, especially residential, cultural and commercial development, as we are so short of land.

**Employment.** The Naval Base should be retained as an employment site. Policies should encourage expansion of commercial dock activities and marine industry as military uses diminish. The existing spread of employment sites should be kept but allow some mixed use developments so long as employment space is retained. Flexibility is required to respond to changing employment needs. The major employment opportunities by 2030 are likely to be in jobs which haven't yet been invented. High-tech industries should be encouraged. An adequate supply of start up and move on business premises are needed to encourage entrepreneur set ups.

**Retail and Town Centres.** The existing City Centre boundaries should remain and Gunwharf declared a separate Town Centre. The Hard interchange, Brunel House and Portsmouth Harbour station need redevelopment. Robust retail policies are needed to support Southsea, North End, Cosham and local centres. The present policy, sympathetic towards permitting single stand-alone retail developments, should be cancelled as it is causing an outbreak of stand-alone convenience stores which are undermining sub-centres (e.g.Lidl and Tesco Express).

**Leisure, Culture, Tourism & Seafont.** An emphasis on family provision, with facilities for young & old is needed. A culture-led strategy should develop a modern studio theatre & ice rink. There should be a development levy to fund public art. We also need an outdoor swimming pool, opportunities for adult education and flexible multi-use spaces.

An independent Public Art Panel is needed to review proposals before they are implemented. Local residents should be encouraged to explore and enjoy the rich variety of natural, built and cultural environments - this should be a target for the Education authority. Other tourist and educational themes should be developed, e.g. a celebration of Owen's Southsea. Heritage, architecture and literary trails should be identified. There should be a robust Policy to maintain the City council owned heritage estate including Southsea Castle, the Round Tower, Square Tower, Cumberland House and the forts on Portsdown Hill.

The Core Strategy should include the current Sea Front Strategy where we need a much higher standard of new development. We proposes the conversion of the Slindon Street Post Office into a

city centre hotel/conference centre. The need for a maintenance plan for all city assets including those on the seafront should be a stated objective within the capital and revenue budget. All parks in the city should be retained and made more attractive for all age groups

**Built environment including development control policies and maintenance of historic buildings.** The city needs a Heritage Strategy. Since much of our tourism is focussed on the historic environment, efforts should be made to ensure that historic buildings are properly and regularly maintained. There should be more conservation areas. An urban designer should be reappointed and design education bought in for the planning staff. Architects' Panel recommendations should rarely be overturned. The City Vision centre - a giant model of the city which would be used to discuss proposed new developments with local people – should be a stated objective of the plan.

Archaeology must be acknowledged and funded as a planning function. We believe that the city's physical history is being destroyed in the process of redevelopment. An archaeologist should be appointed. Developers for larger schemes (over 10 residential units) must undertake neighbourhood consultation. The city should develop a Tall Buildings Policy as recommended by English Heritage. There should be a presumption that developments where there will be shared maintenance are set up as Commonholds .

**Blue Skies Thinking - Vision for the mid-21st century.** The recommended 'think tank' looking at the city's direction should be set up immediately, drawing in creative people from all sectors who have a vision and commitment to the city's future. PCC should explore with local people the cultural and heritage regeneration possibilities of culture- and heritage-led regeneration in the World Heritage Site.

We would like to see the Isle of Wight car ferry terminal moved from Old Portsmouth to the Ferry Port, thereby saving more than 1,000,000 vehicles having to pass round the city Centre each year. The city council should revisit the idea of reclaiming the Winner Bank and consider using the Langstone Harbour tidal race to generate electricity. The city council should facilitate the transfer of Hilsea Lido to the specially formed community group, and support the potential for locating a Centre for Local Climate change there.

A full version of the Portsmouth Society's response to the Core Strategy consultation is available the society's Web site [www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk).

## The Guardsman, Fratton Road

Leaving a listed historic building roofless in the middle of a very wet winter makes absolutely no sense, besides laying the owner open to reprimand and prosecution by the local authority. Yet that's what the owner of the Guardsman did for nearly two months before Christmas. Does the council not have a procedure for inspecting historic buildings under repair? The roof was taken off, apparently with English Heritage agreement, but leaving the Tudor chimneystack and the vulnerable interior open to the elements for so long should surely have attracted determined direction to make the owner provide temporary cover? After many protests, the site is now protected, and the contractors are happy to show members of the Society the site.... *Celia Clark*



*The former Guardsman Public House, in Fratton Road with its temporary roof covering.*

## Civic Trust Policy Update - Cut the VAT Coalition

Our parent body, The Civic Trust, has joined forces with the Federation of Master Builders and other organisations to campaign for VAT on building repairs and renovation to be cut from 17.5% to 5%. At the moment there is a huge imbalance as new build is VAT exempt whereas the repair and renovation of existing buildings is charged at 17.5%. Here are some of the reasons :

- Reduce the number of empty homes
- Reduce the number of those living in substandard housing
- Protect the countryside
- Stop the destruction of decent existing buildings
- Help preserve our national heritage
- Increase the number of zero-carbon homes
- Help tackle fuel poverty
- Reduce the number of rogue builders

The Civic Trust is working with its partners to ensure that this message reached the national press and Treasury Ministers. We aim to have a promise in this year's budget to look at the issue of reducing VAT on repairs and renovation of existing buildings.

If you would like to support this campaign a petition can be signed online at [www.cutthevat.co.uk](http://www.cutthevat.co.uk) or you can fill in a postcard available in the next issue of House Beautiful Magazine. We would also be interested to hear how the issue of VAT on repairs and renovations has affected you or your society. Please contact Hannah Mummery on 020 7539 7908 or [hmummery@civictrust.org.uk](mailto:hmummery@civictrust.org.uk) . You can read more about the campaign at the Civic Trust's Web site at [www.civictrust.org.uk](http://www.civictrust.org.uk) (click on Policy and Campaigns).

## Odeon Cinema North End



*The Odeon Cinema, North End, 1936 - 2008*

We were very disappointed to see closure of the Odeon Cinema in North End which showed its last film on 10 January. Despite its being in the centre of Portsmouth, filmgoers will now have to travel to Gunwharf or Port Solent. With the site sold we can expect to see a planning application in the coming months and we urge the new owners to keep the distinctive tower on London Road and incorporate it into their plans. The large site, which includes a car park, could allow a road to be constructed linking Stubbington Avenue with Laburnum Grove and providing service access to the parade of shops.

*John Holland*

### **The Portsmouth Society, Registered Charity no. 266116**

*Chair: Celia Clark, 8 Florence Road, Southsea, Hants, PO5 2NE, Tel 023 9273 2912*

*Secretary: Roger James, 10 Captains Row, Old Portsmouth, PO1 2TT, Tel 023 9273 4555*

*Treasurer: Jean Thompson, 6 Livingstone Road, Southsea, Hants, PO5 1RT. Tel 023 9282 1667*

*Email: [mailbox@portsmouthsociety.org.uk](mailto:mailbox@portsmouthsociety.org.uk) Internet: [www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthsociety.org.uk)*

*We welcome new members. Please come to any of our meetings or contact Jean Thompson for more details.*