

November 2020



St Michael's Church, c. 1860 (See Page 6)

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The "Planning for the future" White Paper promises to "...streamline the opportunity for consultation at the planning application stage, because this adds delay to the process and allows a **small minority** of voices to shape outcomes".

People rarely get involved with planning unless they have a concrete proposal to consider. Members of the Civic Society are among a relatively small number who actively participate in shaping our Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan.

We think our members do want to shape outcomes, but we don't think our members want to be part of a small minority. So how can we help ensure that the voices of the wider community are heard?



Discussion with Northumberland's Director of Planning

On October 5th we were joined by Rob Murfin, the Director of Planning at Northumberland County Council, by Councillor Castle, and several Town Councillors for a wide-ranging online discussion about the future and the current operation of planning in Northumberland.

Planning for the future

In August the White Paper, "Planning for the future" was published and consultation opened. Neither Northumberland County Council nor Alnwick Town Council had responded to the consultation at the time of our discussion. We heard that there is widespread agreement among planning professionals that change is needed, but also a perception that the White Paper lacks sufficient analysis of the problems that it aims to solve, and that there are gaps in the detail of how these will be addressed. The discussion concentrated on aspects that are likely to cause most concern in Northumberland.

The White Paper proposes moving to a zonal system, with three distinct approaches for different types of area.

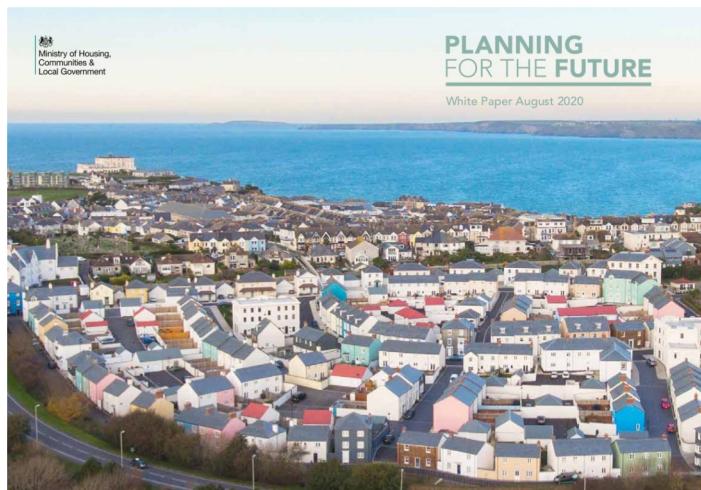
- **Growth** areas suitable for substantial development: here outline planning permission would be granted in the local plan, with little opportunity for communities to comment on specific proposals.
- **Renewal** areas suitable for development: here development would be enabled through a mixture of permitted development, permission in principle and traditional planning applications; and
- **Protected Areas**: here approvals for development would be based on a mix of individual applications, design guides and national policy.

A zonal system in itself is not seen as problematic, but in effect each type of area will have a different planning system: so this will not result in simplification for planners. Nor does it eliminate the need to balance difficult issues in complex applications: so the way these are handled is unlikely to change as much as some claim.

A new method is proposed to establish housing requirements and ensure enough land is released in the areas where affordability is worst. The aim is to "*stop land supply being a barrier to enough homes being built*". Under this new system Northumberland would face one of the largest increases in housing allocations (estimated to increase from 651 to 1,172 new homes). Developers are already pressing for an increased allocation in the Local Plan so one immediate concern is that such a large increase will disrupt its preparation. Some feel that the policy is designed to address a problem with supply of land in the South East, so does little to address different housing problems in the North East. It won't help across Northumberland, where planning permission has already been granted for 13,000 houses that have not been built, or in Berwick where it won't help to address a shortage of new housing.

Community engagement

The White Paper promises that "*Planning decisions will be simple and transparent, with local democracy at the heart of the process*". Few would argue with that in principle, but we already know that public engagement is difficult to



achieve. There are concerns that in aiming to simplify and speed up the planning system it will become more difficult for the community to engage, and therefore a risk that the balance of power will shift towards developers.

The implication of the White Paper is that communities will need to become more involved at the stage where plans are being formulated: when they are still abstract.

We know that people are more likely to engage with planning when concrete proposals are put forward in a planning application, but the White Paper promises to "*...streamline the opportunity for consultation at the planning application stage, because this adds delay to the process and allows a small minority of voices to shape outcomes*".

Unlike decisions on individual applications, the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan are democratic processes. However, we know from experience of contributing to the Neighbourhood Plan and commenting on the Local plan that it is challenging to encourage the community to engage. Rob was able to quantify engagement with abstract policy, and concrete proposals. During development of the Local Plan they received input from 250 people. This contrasts with 9,000 commenting on specific planning applications over the same period.

To use our resources effectively in the current planning system Rob encouraged us to remain involved both in commenting on individual applications, and through development of design guidance (such as the Shopfront Guide), and appraisals of the Conservation Area. He commented that other groups sometimes simply respond by paraphrasing an application, and he urged us not to hold back from expressing a clear opinion. If it would help us he offered to provide a separate session on how to make effective representations.

Heritage protection

In terms of the role that Civic Societies play in scheduling, listing and protecting heritage at risk, Rob has already identified a need to deal more effectively with non-designated heritage assets. Assets that are not listed, or fall outside a conservation area can still make a significant contribution to the character of an area, but at present developers are in a strong position to counter any argument for their protection. So he hopes to do more work next

Director of planning, continued...

year on Supplementary Planning Documents to achieve more clarity in this area. He also hopes that he will shortly be able to apply for additional resource to help develop local lists across Northumberland. We are not the only body with an interest in contributing and Rob promised to get back in touch as soon as he is in a position to do so.

Consultations are under way on adapting the structure of Rob's department so that they are better able to respond to new priorities. This involves an increase in resources on heritage conservation and design. One area we may be able to help with is a review of the boundaries of Alnwick Conservation Area: an exercise that has recently been completed in Morpeth. Once the new structure is in place Rob will share details, and nominate contact points .

Discussion

Planners will be strongly supportive of any proposals to introduce **housing above shops**, and will be happy to discuss specific schemes. In historic buildings, like those in Alnwick, such conversions are not always straightforward, but bringing more residents in the town centre will encourage additional footfall on the high street, and discourage anti-social behaviour. So the overall planning environment is supportive, there are some permitted development rights, and the county has already used some Housing Delivery funding to make marginal schemes more viable.

On **sustainability**, the White Paper promises tools to help towards energy efficiency, but Rob warned that in his experience the housing industry will use viability tests to resist imposition of higher standards, and government tends not to favour imposition of stronger building standards in planning. Nevertheless there is provision in the Northumberland Local Plan for developers to demonstrate sustainability credentials. He personally prefers to keep this flexible because there are different issues on different developments. Sometimes the emphasis is on renewables, and sometimes energy efficiency.

The **Local Plan** is now close to being adopted, and as long as things go ahead as expected there will be little impact on the current **Neighbourhood Plan** for Alnwick and Denwick. However, there are some areas, such as housing numbers, where there is pressure to make changes that will cause tensions with the neighbourhood plan. So it will be necessary to review the Neighbourhood Plan at that point, to see whether any adjustments are needed to bring local policies back into alignment. County planners will be preparing a list of the implications.

It is more difficult to anticipate how the proposed reforms to the planning system will affect the Neighbourhood Plan. There is some strong opposition to the White Paper and a widespread expectation that it faces a "rocky trip" and will change as it progresses through parliament.

In that context the important preparation for stakeholder groups in Alnwick is to consider what we would like an updated Neighbourhood Plan to deliver. We should look beyond what planning policies should consider, to prepare a "shopping list" of priorities that might be addressed through other mechanisms.

Systems have now been put in place to support planning decision-making by members through remote meetings. This means that **Local Area Councils** are now back up and running. The limitations of remote meetings mean that these can deal only with a relatively small number of applications. Rob would have liked to allow members of the public to make spoken representations at these meetings, but the associated technical risk means that any such representations have to be read out by an officer.

Apparently the feeling among officers, members, and colleagues in the other authorities is that the approach in Northumberland is now running well, and is seen as an example of good practice. In that context we welcomed the return of Local Area Councils.

Rob and Councillor Castle agreed that it is misleading to consider a planning decision as being democratic in nature. However Rob also made the point that not all planning decisions are a clear-cut choice between refusal and approval. Effective local involvement in decision making can give officers additional leverage when they negotiate the detail.

The current emphasis on **Planning for Beauty** will have a variety of effects. Government interpret this as conformance with design guideline, so these are likely to play a bigger role in future. Rob recognises the pressure this places on his own resources, but it will also have an impact on appeals and on the inspectorate.

There are some concerns that this approach to quality assessments will become prescriptive. Mass developers are adept at using the right language, but prefer standardised designs. Smaller developers tend to be more sensitive to local vernacular.

In conclusion

"Every successive government since 1947 has said that it is going to speed up the planning process and improve the ability of people to get involved in making decisions".

Our discussion covered a broad landscape in considerable detail, and when it closed we were left with a great deal of food for thought.

We still have questions about how the White Paper will affect Alnwick, but Rob has given us some useful pointers. We are better placed to navigate the uncertainty, help to protect Alnwick's heritage, and strengthen our position among the "*small minority*" with a voice in planning. It looks as though this is going to be an interesting journey.

Our thanks to everyone involved.



Prudhoe Street and Lisburn Street Traffic

Residents on Prudhoe Street and Lisburn Street are worried about speed, noise, blind spots, parking and the use of the roads as a rat run by increasingly powerful cars and HGVs. Some Civic Society members are directly affected, as residents or near neighbours. Others face similar issues elsewhere in town. Some have long argued for a more coherent approach to traffic management in Alnwick. Others have different priorities, but an interest in how the community exerts influence over decisions that affect us all. Wherever we stand, this is a campaign that we will be watching closely.

While they recognise that progress and change are inevitable, the campaigners believe that traffic matters have got out of hand in the last few years. They highlight concerns over more, faster and heavier traffic and increased noise. Some feel that it is only a matter of time before we see a serious accident.

This extra traffic will have been generated partly by more housing in the town and by increased visitor numbers, but campaigners believe some must be the direct result of a change in signage for vehicles. In particular, they feel that changed signage lies behind an unacceptable increase in the number of HGVs in recent months on Prudhoe Street and Lisburn Street. People can feel the walls of their houses vibrating when HGVs go past. Parents worry about the safety of their children in the front rooms. Many of these houses have no gardens to protect them from heavy traffic. Residents have witnessed accidents and near misses. Many pedestrians find crossing the road impossible at certain points along these two long roads.

These problems have amplified concerns over existing hazards along this stretch of road. These include:

- 15 separate junctions or points of access
- Many blind spots or junctions where careless parking, or parking of large vehicles like camper vans and goods vehicles inhibit clear vision
- Narrow streets with parking on both sides of the road
- A large primary school accessed by a narrow road, generating a huge amount of pedestrian and extra traffic.

These problems come before a new care home with nearly 100 residents is open, and before major construction work starts on the Duke's School site.



"One of our residents reported that she is scared for her toddler son in his pushchair as HGVs thunder by the narrow strip of pavement on Lisburn Street. Several people have told me that they can feel the vibrations affecting their houses as HGVs pass by. Many of the older houses do not have foundations and are seriously under threat while many houses have no garden to shield them from the worst effects of the traffic. A local parent told me she felt unsafe sitting in her living room".

Jane Mann

"There are so many blind spots and junctions that just don't work. Residents know that they take serious risks pulling out into Prudhoe or Lisburn Streets from side streets". Jim Coulter.

What do campaigners want?

The group feel that too little attention has been paid to potential traffic problems when considering new developments, and that decisions have been taken without sufficient thought to the impact on residents and their enjoyment of their homes. They want to be more involved in planning, and they want councillors and officers to know what it is like to live on these streets.

They are worried about children's safety as they go to and from Swansfield Park School and are looking for ways to make these streets safer. In summary the group want a fair, workable and well ordered system of traffic management. Their specific proposals include a 20mph speed limit, a residents' parking scheme and restrictions on parking near junctions.

Next steps

The group has presented their concerns to Alnwick Town Council, and the council's Sustainable Travel Working Group. They found both very supportive. They have also spoken with Councillor Castle, who has helped advise on where different areas of responsibility lie, and how to access decision takers.

The Town Council can only propose changes to traffic management, but has agreed to put forward wider 20 mph limits in Alnwick as one of their transport priorities. The Alnwick Forum has been set up to encourage liaison and joint working between the the Town Council and County Council. It will have an important role to play in taking this forward, and in determining an overall traffic management strategy for the town. In addition the group is contacting the local police to ensure they are aware of their concerns and to seek their support.

In our view

Safety improvements and the reduced speeds that this campaign are seeking will find widespread support in the town and among Civic Society members. The introduction of a 20mph speed limit across the town is long overdue and will be welcomed. On the other hand there is already pressure on parking in this part of town, so any additional restrictions may prove controversial. We anticipate some opposition but on balance the need is recognised, and limited restrictions should be supported.

Any attempt to reduce the volume of traffic on Prudhoe Street and Lisburn Street will need to be carefully considered because there are so few alternatives. Crude measures that simply moved the problem elsewhere would not be worth supporting. However, we should support a proper review of traffic management, based on an understanding of the causes of increased volumes and encouraging a general reduction in all traffic: particularly heavy vehicles.

Anyone interested in in promoting safer roads on Prudhoe and Lisburn Streets should contact Jane Mann by email: janehmann@btinternet.com.

Planning matters

In August Northumberland County Council made a Tree Preservation Order on 204 lime trees in the grounds of the former Duke's Middle School. This prohibits anyone from cutting down, uprooting, wilfully damaging, topping, or lopping any of the trees without consent from the council.

"Not before time" we hear you cry.

We also understand that an assessment has been carried out at Allerburn House with a view to making several TPOs on the remaining trees on the site.

Anyone who wilfully destroys a tree in the Conservation Area, or one (like these) protected by a TPO is guilty of an offence, and can be fined up to £20,000 in a Magistrates Court. Damage could result in a fine of up to £2,500.

We felt that applications were justified for work on trees at the Tennis Courts in Prudhoe Street and Corner House in Green Batt, so made no comment.

You can find out more about tree maintenance, tree preservation and how to report problems with trees and shrubs on the NCC web site:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6jcrq86>

We decided that no representation was required on the application for permission to erect a self-contained cabin with decking in the garden of Loan End on Argyle Terrace. Then we discovered that the application has been withdrawn.

Proposals have been submitted to convert Sion Chapel to a boutique hotel with 12 bedrooms. We would normally welcome a planning application which brings a new use to an historic building without significantly altering its exterior appearance and we have no issue with the proposed internal alterations per se.

However, in this case we must object because of the additional pressures which would be placed on the already limited and inadequate amount of parking in this essentially residential area adjacent to the town centre.

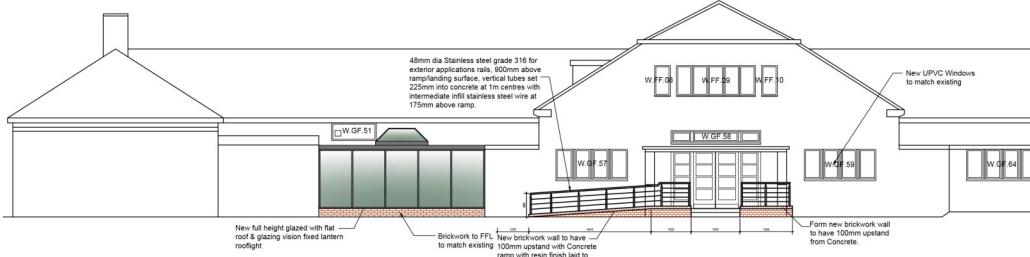
The applicant should not expect to be able to take up well-used residential spaces or indeed parking permits for spaces in public parking such as Roxburgh Place, which recent surveys have shown are full or nearly full by 9am. They should seek to make alternative arrangements for guests' parking which do not depend on further diminution of the available public or on-street parking in the area. Alnwick Town Council was supportive in principle, but wanted the Planning Officer to be satisfied with provision for parking.

In June 2019 Northumberland County Council decided to create a Community Hub, and facility for the Northumberland Adult Learning Service, by refurbishing the annexe at the former Lindisfarne School. The facility would also support existing organisations operating from the site such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Alnwick food bank.

An application has now been submitted that involves replacing roof tiles with slate, replacing timber windows with UPVC double glazed units, installation of solar panels, and loft insulation; creation and refurbishment of classroom and spaces for community use. An extension will increase the size of the cafe area.

Lindisfarne opened as Alnwick County Secondary School in 1939 and was extended in 1958 before becoming a middle school on the change to comprehensive in 1979.

While the annexe will be refurbished the other old school buildings will be demolished to save running costs. In the short-term the space created by



demolition can be used for parking, but in the long-term we can expect it developed for housing. We will review those proposals when (and if) they appear. Meanwhile we welcome this investment in community facilities, and have not commented.



Members will recall that we objected to plans to infill road bridges over the former Cornhill line at Rugley and Mossyford. Along with other local bodies such as the Ramblers, we fear that this will compromise any future use of the line to create a new Greenway over Alnwick Moor. There is still some hope that the Highways England Historical Railways Estate can be persuaded that their plans fly in the face of local feeling, the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and government policies on obesity, Public Health and Covid recovery. However, it is beginning to look as though planning for a Greenway will need to find a way round these two unnecessary obstacles.

There has been a significant application to develop a stone quarry at Shiel Dykes, Newton-on-the-Moor. This will involve extraction of 5 million tons of rock over the next 30 years, and importation of replacement material. It will be most visible from the Newton on the Moor to Longframlington road but for Alnwick we believe the most significant issue is that lorries exiting the site and heading south on the A1 will not be allowed to turn right, but will need to travel north to the Willowburn Junction in order to take the southbound carriageway. This will result in about 9 lorries per hour making this manoeuvre. We already had concerns about the risks of tailbacks at this busy junction during peak times, so were pleased to see that Highways England requested further assessments of traffic management before approval is given. Alnwick Town Council have identified the same issue, and others such as dust, noise, rights of way, and protection of waterways.

Recording St Michael's Graveyard for Posterity

Family Historians will be pleased to learn that a two year project to record all the burials in the church yard has now been completed by Trish Jones and Colin Watson.

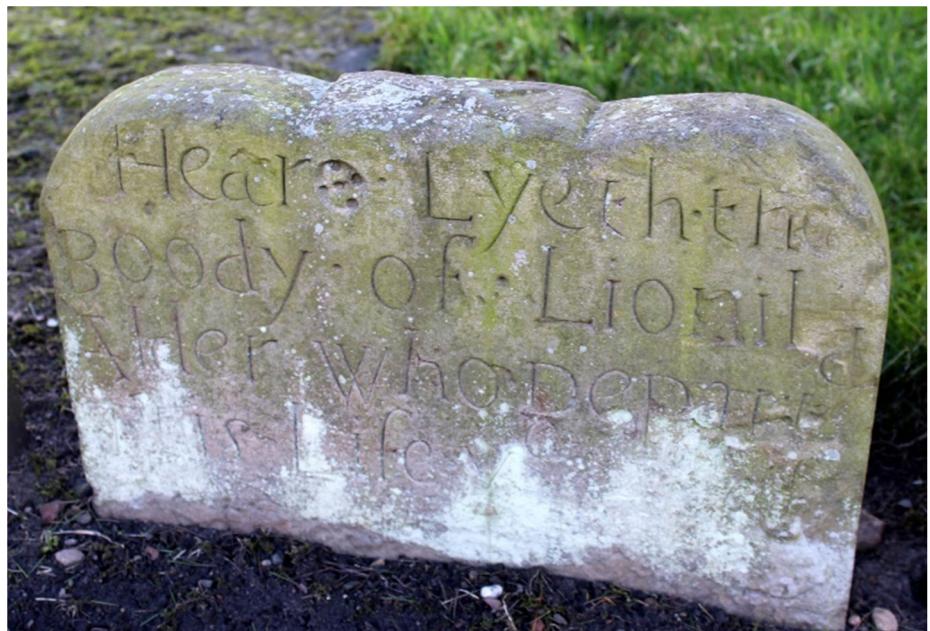
From earliest times this was the only burial ground for the people of Alnwick with the exception of a small Quaker plot and ones at St James's and St Thomas Chapel.

A surprising number of 20,000 named individuals buried in the one and a half acre church yard have been brought together on a searchable database. All the original church records available from 1646 form this data store with any added information available about the deceased. It has been proved challenging deciphering early handwritten records and grave stone inscriptions in order to bring all the records together.

The church no longer holds any of its original records as they are deposited at Woodhorn Museum Archive. Completing this project means that family historians will not need to make the journey out to Woodhorn and spend many hours searching through the parish burial book. Besides being of interest to family historians, the records are of historical importance to the people of the town.

A map exists to help find a burial plot for many burials and it is also possible in some cases to find an individual grave and head stone. Some of the stones name those who died in the Cholera epidemic of 1849 and recently a new stone has been erected in the churchyard in memory of those who have no known grave.

The second part of the project was to record all the existing tomb stones as it is evident that they are deteriorating and will in time be lost. A number of stones have fallen or were originally flat have become overgrown or completely hid-



Lionil Alder who died in the 1700's

den over the years. These have now been cleared of grass to reveal any inscriptions that positively identify them.

The church yard closed in 1856 when it was becoming full although there were a small number of burials after this time.

In 1885 there were 717 stones in existence now a recent count has found this number has been reduced to 522. The project has photographed and transcribed where possible and any further research on their occupation, age and place of abode added.

Many of the older tomb stones and larger table top tombs have either disappeared or now stand against a wall or lay flat. Closer to the church south wall as many as thirty stones have been used as pavement slabs, some have been moved inside the church and used as window sills. It is noticeable given the high number of burials that the ground has risen around the church.

A visitor could be forgiven for rushing through the church yard, its grave stones are modest and hide the lives of the those buried here.

One historian commented that
"The monuments in Alnwick church-yard are not famous for the length or undue panegyrics over the dead".

However, Alnwick was certainly not short of characters in the past and folk who made an interesting contribution to the town. Buried here are the trades people, soldiers, artists, scientists, doctors, academics, musicians, painters and many more. Some families who had been here for centuries whilst others came and went.



St Michael's Graveyard, continued

There are many examples of stones from past centuries which have more elaborate inscriptions telling the story of the person, their family and achievements.

Interest in family history has meant that the church and graveyard are often visited by local residents and visitors seeking information about their ancestors who may have been buried here. As a result of this, researcher Trish Jones with permission from the church, embarked on the project to record an up to date data base. The scale of this soon became apparent and Colin Watson has been instrumental in undertaking the arduous task of meticulously producing the data base, photographing and transcribing the stones. It was this interest in Alnwick's past as lived by its inhabitants which has brought about the project. The next stage will be to explore the life and times of those buried here and write their stories.

If you would like more information about an ancestor who is buried in St Michael's Church yard please contact us via the church or their web site and we will be pleased to help.

We would also like to hear from anyone who remembers the collapse of the church wall in the 1980's which exposed early burials and then was rebuilt, or the vault for Sir David William Smith which is no longer accessible.

One of the oldest stones in the churchyard that is still visible is that of Edward Alnwick who died in 1597. His epitaph is no longer visible but was recorded in 1822 by William Davison "Here lyeth under Buried the body of Edward Alnwick who departed 12th February 1597". The date on the stone can just be made out.



Another early stone termed a "memento mori" is from the 17th century and is to remind passers by of the deceased and their own mortality.

WILKIN William	B2052 2E6
	<p>Sacred to the memory of William Wilkin who by innate Vigour of his own GENIUS, improved by Application, acquired a most extensive Knowledge in MATHEMATICS. His Heart was endowed with every social and manly VIRTUE and adorned with those Qualities which constitute an amiable character. But alas! ere his Genius had reached its Meridian and just as his talents became known and necessary to Mankind the SMALLPOX as if envious of his growing lustre extinguished his lamp of science on the 15th January 1777 and 24th year of his age. In token of their esteem, a few friends have erected this to mark the place of his dust.</p>

This tombstone is a memorial which was erected by a few friends and admirers of Mr William Wilkin.

Contact : pfj100@btinternet.com

Conservation of railings and gates

The practical purpose of railings is to mark the boundary of a property and to provide a degree of security. However, from the middle of the 18th century ironwork was also used to add decoration. The rhythm of a regular pattern of railings can be used to unify the appearance of a street - even where there are variations between the design of individual buildings.

In the 18th century gates and railings were hand made from wrought iron. Wrought iron can be bent, twisted and cut to make complex patterns. However, early wrought iron railings did not take full advantage of this capability. They consisted of plain bars, and a simple top rail, with little ornamentation. In the second half of the 19th century cast iron became the most popular material for railings. This coincided with a change of taste that favoured increasingly complex decoration. Cast iron railings typically use a regular repeating pattern of standard, ornamental components. Then towards the end of the 19th century there was a reaction against mass production, and wrought iron again became a fashionable material for railings. Finally, from the end of the 19th century mild steel became the preferred material for railings, and is still in common use today.

In the 18th century railings were normally painted dark grey or grey-blue. The colour was cheap to make, and resembled metal. In the 19th century bronze or green railings became popular. It is widely believed that black paint was only in common use for railings after 1861, as a mark of respect following the death of Prince Albert. This is not the case: at the time black paint was slow to dry, and rarely used. However, progressively darker shades of green were used in cities as pollution became worse. Gilding was only used on grand houses and public buildings, and is now discouraged by some planning authorities on domestic properties.



Historic ironwork is prone to three main risks: Corrosion, Structural Damage and Inappropriate repairs.

- Corrosion is the formation of iron oxide by the reaction between iron, oxygen and water. Footings, crevices, and inaccessible areas are particularly vulnerable. Paint is the most practical method of preventing corrosion.
- Vandalism or vehicles are the most common cause of structural damage to railings. Moving parts, such as gates, can be distorted or broken. Wrought iron will deform but, within limits, will not break. Cast Iron, though, will break with very little prior distortion.
- Poor repairs or incorrect maintenance are common reasons for deterioration of railings. Examples include use of different types of metal; or the wrong method of connection between the new and the old.

Many wrought and cast iron railings were removed for salvage during the Second World War. Railings removed in this way have rarely been replaced or may have been replaced with inappropriate alternatives.

Cheltenham Borough Council has developed detailed guidance on the history of railings, and methods to maintain historic ironwork. Railings and other ornamental ironwork are important elements of Cheltenham's historic townscape so the planning authority requires that all new and replacement railings are designed appropriately. The advice they offer would not necessarily apply elsewhere, but it is used as a reference by Historic England, and may be of interest to property owners and others involved with traditional railings. It can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y4l4swb4>.

To explore iron railings in Alnwick see the examples in the quiz on page 11, and more on Bailiffgate and in Percy Terrace.



News in Brief

At the time of writing work was still under way to prepare the town centre for Christmas. We can't expect everything that we normally look forward to. Covid restrictions will prevent the celebrations to mark switching on the Christmas lights, but we can expect a tree in the marketplace, some of the traditional lighting, and some innovations themed around a Victorian Christmas. The usual markets are expected to continue through December, with preparations under way for more stalls on the weekend of 5th and 6th Dec.

We hope members will watch out for announcements and support the efforts that retailers, the Town Council and others are making to bring life to the town centre at this time of year.

Alnwick Town Council have been carrying out a survey to test whether we suffer from a general problem with broadband provision, or whether some are suffering localised problems. If necessary they will look to secure grant funding to enable faster broadband for the town. We look forward to reporting the results.

In recent newsletters we have commented, and Councillor Castle responded on the role of Local Area Committees in relation to the response of Northumberland County Council to Covid. When Councillor Sanderson was confirmed as the new leader of Northumberland County Council he said that one of his priorities was to ease back into a full committee programme. There have clearly been challenges in achieving this while Covid restrictions are in place, but we are pleased that we can welcome the return of Local Area Councils.

Full meetings of Northumberland County Council can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRjaNG8hxEey9jHfGPaSuVg>



Meetings of Alnwick Town Council can be found here:

<https://alnwick-tc.gov.uk/?s=live+stream+ing>

The town's cleansing schedule has been increased, and we believe this has resulted in a welcome improvement. We encourage members to report any problems that they come across. You can report problems with litter, dog mess, graffiti etc. here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y5eowxbz>

We hear mixed stories about how quickly such reports are addressed. It would be useful if you could pass on your own experience.

As evenings grow longer members may feel they need alternatives to normal social activities. Have you considered learning more about heritage, or about the planning system?

Historic England offer online learning on a variety of topics related to the heritage sector. The depth varies: some cover technical detail, and some are designed for development of conservation professionals. However, thoughtful members will find much of local interest in topics such as :

- Pedestrian spaces for social distancing in historic town centres
- Opening upper floors in historic town centres
- Climate change and the historic environment

View recordings of recent sessions or register for future sessions at

<https://tinyurl.com/yboc2e54> .

Civic Voice has also organised a series of workshops on the Government's new Planning White Paper. They aim to go beyond the headlines and to discuss the Civic Movement response.

Anyone can view previous Civic Voice events discussing the planning system.

Civic Voice #inconversation events can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/yat3c3ey>

In September Alnwick's Bailiffgate Museum was highly commended at the Museum and Heritage Awards for their 2019 exhibition "100 years of fashion". We were impressed when the results were

announced, but even more impressed when we heard who Bailiffgate Museum were competing against: the Horniman Museum and Gardens in London, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, The Fitzwilliam Museum at the University of Cambridge and The Grant Museum of Zoology, at University College London.

Our congratulations to all involved.



**100 YEARS OF
FASHION**
SATURDAY 6 APRIL
TO SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER

The latest update to the Historic England Register of Heritage at Risk shows no change to Bondgate Tower or Heiferlaw Settlement. At General Lambert's House Historic England has funded a survey and urgent repairs, which are under way. It is hoped that conversion to serviced apartments and a café will provide a sustainable future. As a result the priority level has been reduced from B (Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented) to F (Repair scheme in progress ... new use agreed but not yet implemented)



Team Tree

We have four members of the Civic society who have now expressed an interest in caring for the trees in our town.

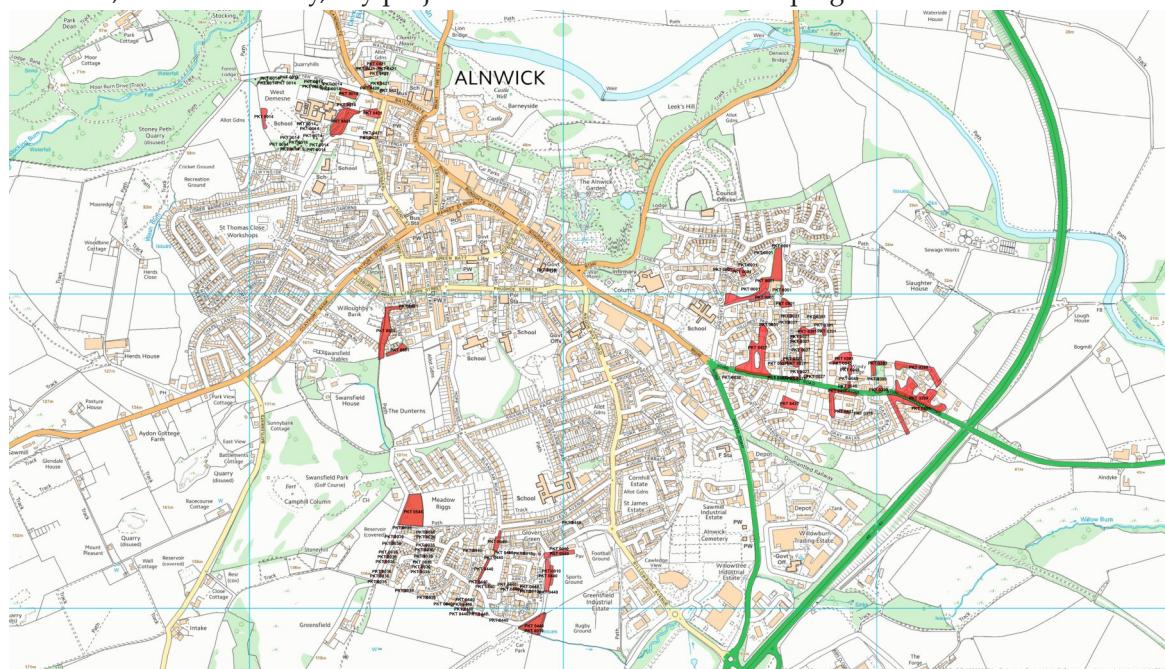
Two strands to the Civic Society's involvement in trees in Alnwick have been identified. One is as guardians of the trees which we already have and the second is to come up with ideas which would enhance the appearance of our town, basically with more trees.

Regarding the first, below is a NCC map of Alnwick TPOs although we are not sure how accurate or up to date this is. It certainly won't show the recently TPOed lime trees of the former Duke's Middle School. Trees in the conservation area are protected. The town will be divided up with each member of the Society's 'Teamtree' taking a section, with member Pat Brand offering support from the side lines.



Regarding the second, it would appear that the route to seeing any ideas or projects which we would like to see progress would be through the Environment Group of the Alnwick Partnership. The Partnership is comprised of ATC, NCC and a number of other bodies. The Civ. Soc. is one of four voluntary bodies which are affiliated to the Partnership. The Environment Group takes its references from the Alnwick and District Neighbourhood Plan which has half a dozen aims connected to trees. The Partnership has already made funds available and recently ATC has made available a further £2000. They have instigated a Ribbon of Trees initiative seeing a number of trees planted in planters in the town with varied results. Some of the trees are doing well, others are not thriving and a couple have been vandalised. The plan is to move the ones not thriving and replace the vandalised ones. The Town Council is keen to plant as many trees as possible and would support community groups like the Civic Society who wish to plant trees. Grants are available to purchase trees.

Have we, the Civic Society, any projects in mind? Member



Richard Allsop lives in Lagny Street and would like to see some greenery in that area. The original Safeway's had planted trees at the edge of their carpark but these were removed. An ambitious hope to have trees planted in this area? It's a busy but attractive area which would certainly benefit from it.

A more immediate opportunity for action involves the wood to the west of the former Thomas Percy R.C. Middle School. Formerly a source of nature study for the school the wood is in the ownership of Northumberland C.C. and a TPO was confirmed in 2013 since which time the public have used it for a number of purposes.

The small wood could potentially be a great asset to the growing community surrounding it, in fact to the people of Alnwick. Peter and Hilary Green who live next to the wood, have been concerned about it for a number of years. They completed a litter pick last month, the results of which indicate that their concern is justified (see photographs above).

Geoff Watson, chair of the Environment Group of the Alnwick partnership and councillor Gordon Castle have contacted County and report that the wood has been inspected recently by N.C.C. and that the County Council would welcome community involvement in looking after the wood. 'Teamtree' of the Civic Society will make a start.

Helping look after this wood would also satisfy one of the Environment Group's aims of 'creating and managing sites for nature conservation.' The group has five aims (ENVCAPS), this being No.2.

ENVCAP 5 states the wish to 'complete tree identification and mapping survey'. Again, a possibility for involvement by the Civic Society.

We are keen to hear your views. Please let us know what you think.

Quiz: Railings and gates

The practical purpose of railings is to mark the boundary of a property and to provide a degree of security. However, ironwork is also used to add decoration. The rhythm of a regular pattern of railings can unify the appearance of a street - even where there are variations between the design of individual buildings (see page 8 for more).



A

All but one of these examples can be found in the Alnwick Conservation Area. Do you recognise the locations? Which is the exception? We are prepared to award generous points for every correct answer. However, the only prize on offer is the satisfaction that will come from being able to correctly identify more than your friends and family.



B



C



D



E



F



G



H

Diary dates

We are hopeful that there will be some activity bringing life to the town centre over Christmas, but continuing uncertainty means that the best thing for us all to do is watch for announcements nearer the time.

All of our own events are postponed until further notice, but we aim to make announcements early next year. Meanwhile we are careful not to make excessive use of email to stay in touch with members. So we are relying, even more than usual, on members following our activities on Twitter: [@AlnwickCivicSoc](#), Facebook: [AlnwickCivicSociety](#), Instagram: [alnwickcivicsociety](#) and our web site: [www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](#).

For the latest status on Coronavirus we can suggest nothing better than the Information Hub on the Northumberland County Council web site.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus.aspx>

Reminder: If you think we may not have your current email address it would be a big help if you could let us know.



About Alnwick Civic Society

Alnwick Civic Society was formed in 1974, following the defeat of proposals to re-develop the town centre with a modern shopping area, and amid growing concerns about the future of our town. Since then, we have sought to influence developments, especially in the town centre and conservation area, to ensure that proposals protect and enhance our heritage.

The Society pursues its objectives through a variety of activities. We provide a voice for members through dialogue with planning and conservation professionals and like-minded organisations. We offer advice, scrutinise and comment on development proposals; recognise excellence; and organise public meetings. Members were heavily involved in development of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and we work with local partners to influence policy at a county level. We seek to influence national policy by co-operating with other bodies in the civic movement, and the Society was a founding member of Civic Voice.

All who share our aims can support the work of the society: by joining as an individual, family, student, or business member; by participating in activities, sharing ideas, raising areas of concern and pointing out examples of good practice. Or simply by demonstrating pride in our town, and spreading the word about the value of our work.



Founding Member



Winter approaches

We have found 17 grit bins in Alnwick. They are normally placed on steep hills, and at sharp bends in areas where routine gritting does not usually happen. Where resources allow, NCC replenish these bins during winter with grit for public use. You can use the grit to clear snow and ice from pavements around your home - and those of neighbours who may need your help. Grit provided by the council should not be used for treating private property.

You can request a refill: <https://tinyurl.com/yyzlohtq>

Quiz Answers

- A) Castle railings, on The Peth
- B) Cast iron gates and railings to Sheraton House, from Clayport Square
- C) Railings around Tenantry Column
- D) Railings at 2, Bailiffgate (former Duchess's School) a.k.a. Derwentwater House
- E) Cemetery Gates, South Road (lies outside the conservation area).
- F) Railings at Barter Books (former Railway Station)
- G) Gates at St Paul's Church, Percy Street
- H) Gate at St Michael's Church, Bailiffgate