

**From:** Civic Society Initiative <admin@civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk>  
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**To:** tcrooks@me.com  
**Reply-To:** admin@civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk

Issue 2, August 09

**civic  
society  
initiative**

## BULLETIN

### Welcome

Welcome to the second Civic Society Initiative Bulletin.

This edition is packed with news and information, including details of a [major new survey of civic societies](#) and their members to help inform the debate about the future of the movement. Every response will be entered into a prize draw giving you the chance of winning £250 for a civic society of your choice and a personally signed copy of Griff Rhys Jones' latest book, *Rivers*. It also includes some of the issues emerging from the Open Forums around the country and provides details of two new [Open Forums in Portsmouth and Exeter](#).

There is information on a major meeting in [Guildford](#) and of the national convention in [Blackpool](#). In response to some of the issues raised at the [Open Forums](#) we have included some ideas on how to [recruit volunteers](#) and [fundraise](#) for your work. There is also news of the [insurance arrangements](#) for civic societies with Bluefin. And Griff has written a [new blog](#) - check it out for news of his interview with the Prince of Wales, and the success of Camden Civic Society's campaign against the British Museum extension.

### Civic Society Survey

This Bulletin follows hard on the heels of a [new survey being circulated](#) to gather views on the civic society movement and its future. This is an important part of the civic debate being managed by the Civic Society Initiative to find a way forward following the loss of the Civic Trust. We are asking officers and members of all civic and amenity societies to respond and for the questionnaire to be passed on so it can be circulated as widely as possible. This is important for everyone to contribute to shaping the future and ensuring it meets the needs of local civic societies, their members and like minded organisations. We are also asking other organisations for their views on the movement and the way forward so we know how others see us.

You can get hold of the survey questionnaire [here](#). It will only take a few minutes to complete and over 190 people responded within the first 48 hours. Every survey that has been returned by the deadline of 30 September will be entered into a prize draw - with the chance of winning £250 for a civic society of your choice and a personally signed copy of Griff Rhys Jones' latest book, *Rivers* for you. You can also see the press release announcing the survey [here](#).

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### Civic societies in the 21st century

Civic societies exist in a fast changing world and one of the main questions being asked following the closure of the Civic Trust is how they might adapt and develop to the changes going on around them. There is no question that the issues civic societies get involved in matter more and more to people. Equally they are well placed to address the growing interest in localism and community action. An ageing population also brings potential benefits in the form of new volunteers. More challenging is the shift in development arising from the impacts of climate change and a growing population. This is affecting the physical environment and the nature of new building and infrastructure. We are also seeing a shift

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### Civic Societies in the News

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towards electronic communication and social networking and more diversity in society and in communication action. This challenges old ways of working in voluntary groups based on committees and a desire for different ways to volunteer and get involved. The nature of local government is also changing with the growth of cities, more fluid partnerships and questions being raised about the role of the regions.

These and other issues, and their implications for civic societies, are addressed in a [discussion paper](#) prepared for the Civic Society Initiative. This identifies 10 key issues for civic societies:

- Positively promoting a better future which addresses the changes going on in the physical and cultural environment and responds to emerging issues
- Connecting with different communities and in new places
- Harnessing social networking and new media to bring the movement together and engage communities
- Harnessing the ageing population and shifting values to provide new volunteers
- Harnessing the corporate, government and philanthropic interest in "community" whilst retaining independence
- Adopting a flexible approach to organisation by geography
- Changing old habits to become more attractive to new members and volunteers
- Responding to the growth of other forms of community action and local groups
- Demonstrating transparency and fairness in the face of heightened scrutiny
- Building the case for long term investment in the quality of the local environment and the ability of citizens to shape its future

Your views and reactions are welcome. Are these the right issues and what else might the future hold?

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## Open Forum Feedback

It is just over a month since the last Bulletin and during that time our priority has been meeting with as many of you as possible to discuss and debate the role of the civic society movement through a series of Open Forums. Attracting in excess of 150 civic societies so far, the Open Forums have provided new insights on the wide range of activities being undertaken by societies. The range of activities is both impressive and daunting and extends well beyond monitoring planning applications -

- [The Oxtou Society runs a "secret gardens" scheme which is extending public access;](#)
- [Bradford Civic Trust has published ambitious alternative plans for the regeneration of the city;](#)
- [Oxford Civic Society plays a leading role in keeping the city clean;](#)
- [A Civic Society Week brings local societies together in Yorkshire.](#)

The diversity of the movement is clearly a huge strength although sometimes it is easy to forget the common thread which unites us all.

The Open Forums have attracted a wide range of people to discuss the role and purpose of the movement in the 21st Century. It is clear that many share the view that the civic movement is too important for it to lose its voice and everyone has welcomed the opportunity to shape the future so it better meets the needs of societies.

While many societies are pleased to tell us about successes, it is clear that many of you also recognise that you have serious challenges, including:

- An ageing membership and ageing committee
- Not being representative of the local community
- Lack of volunteers
- Limited funds
- Lack of activities likely to attract new members who aren't keen on "committees".

There is some comfort in knowing that these issues are not unique to the civic society movement but common to voluntary and community groups up and down the country. In response to these concerns there are articles on volunteer recruitment and two important funding sources included in this Bulletin.

As well as a determination to address these challenges, there is also a real sense of purpose and vision coming through the debate and some common themes are emerging.

## Civic Society Initiative in the news

Listen to Griff Rhys Jones talk about the importance of the Civic Society Initiative

[Listen now](#)

[Civic Society Initiative in the Daily Telegraph](#)

[Civic Society Initiative in the Guardian](#)

[Civic Society Initiative in the Times](#)

## Images

[View a selection of images from the Open Forums](#)

## Forthcoming events

[Protecting Local Heritage, 9th September, Oxford](#)

[Heritage Open Days 10th - 13th September](#)

[English Heritage: PPS 15 Consultation Events, September](#)

[Development of our Region, Cambridge, 17th September](#)

[South East Conference, Guildford 26th September](#)

[Blackpool Convention, 15th and 16th October](#)

You are looking for a movement:

- with a clear and shared purpose and sense of direction
- with the profile and influence that it deserves
- in which civic societies meet and share more with each other
- that can shape official policy and thinking through lobbying and campaigning from the national through to the local level
- that is independent
- which gets support and advice on policy and planning issues and how to strengthen and develop local societies
- which has a positive reputation and engages the local community
- [which campaigns on key issues](#) in which societies have a stronger say in the future.

These are just some of the themes which are emerging and we still have many more [Open Forums](#) and the [national survey](#) to be completed. Don't forget you can always email us [here](#) with any ideas you have for the future of the movement.

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## Open Forums

We are pleased to announce 2 more Open Forums in Portsmouth (1 September) and Exeter (15 September). These add to the series being held across the country to gather views, ideas and proposals for the future of the civic society movement.

Your views count, so register soon on our website - [www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk](http://www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk) - for an Open Forum near you or use the links below:

- [Portsmouth, 1st September, 6.30pm - 8.30pm, hosted by Portsmouth Civic Society at the Royal Maritime Club](#)
- [Bath, 4th September 1pm - 4pm hosted by Bath Preservation Trust at the Building of Bath Collection](#)
- [Birmingham, Groundwork UK Offices, 8th September 1pm- 4pm - hosted by Groundwork UK](#)
- [Exeter, 15th September, 10am - 1pm at St. Matthew's Church Hall, Lower Summerlands - hosted by the Outer South West Association of Civic Societies](#)

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## Follow us on twitter!

One of the key things emerging from the Open Forums is a wish for societies to get to know each other better. There are lots of ways of doing this, as such we have just launched some new social networking tools. Over 90 people, including MPs, councillors and civic society members are now keeping up to date with the Civic Society Initiative and getting live updates on the work we are doing.

Why not follow us at [www.twitter.com/csinitiative](https://www.twitter.com/csinitiative)

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## Local campaign - national impact!

We are drawing up plans for a public campaign in which all societies can get involved over the next year or more. This will pick up on some of the exciting local campaigns being run by civic societies to highlight "eyesores", get involved in street audits, fight against clutter and champion high quality public places. If you have ideas and want to get involved then email us at [campaigns@civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk)

In addition, if your society is involved in any special campaign at the moment, let us know - we would be pleased to share this with others in the movement so everyone can share in your success.

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## Blackpool Convention

The National Convention will run from 1pm on 15 October to 4pm on 16 October in Blackpool. It will provide a unique opportunity to meet and share experiences with civic societies from across the country and to contribute to the discussion on the future of the civic

society movement. There will be a full day of seminars and workshops on Friday 16th and Blackpool Civic Trust has arranged a busy programme to be enjoyed on the afternoon and evening of Thursday 15th, including:

- Joining a series of guided walks around Blackpool
- Enjoying a civic drinks reception in the company of The Mayor and Mayoress of Blackpool, Councillor Norman & Mrs Barbara Hardy
- Having the opportunity to be entertained over an evening meal while networking with colleagues.

We would ask that you register for the Convention as soon as possible by [completing the registration form here](#). The fee is just £9.95 for both days. We want to ensure as many societies as possible can attend and will be operating on a first come first served basis.

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## Calendar - get national impact for your event

One of the most striking benefits of the open forums to date has been the opportunity to get to know neighbouring civic societies better and find out what others are doing. To help this we have set up the Civic Calendar so everyone knows more about what is going on. Share details of your events by sending details through to us [here](#) and we will display them in this central database for all to see.

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## South East Autumn Conference

A major conference is being hosted by the Guildford Society and organised by Civic Trust South East on 26 September to bring civic societies together, learn more about English Heritage's work on heritage at risk, debate the future of regional planning and shape the future of the civic society movement in workshop and networking sessions at The Millmead Centre, Guildford Baptist Church, Bury Fields, Guildford GU2 4AZ

Speakers include:

- Russell Walters, English Heritage
- Anne Milton, Member of Parliament for Guildford
- Laura Sandys, daughter of the founder of the Civic Trust [and newly appointed president of the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies](#)
- Tony Burton, Civic Society Initiative

Please contact Tony Molesworth [tmoleswo@googlemail.com](mailto:tmoleswo@googlemail.com) or register [here](#). The fee is £10, including lunch.

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## Heritage Question Time: Put Your Question to Heritage Leaders

What do you think are the most important issues facing England's heritage? Is it funding? Is it the reform of heritage protection? Is it the development pressures facing our historic towns and cities? Is it how we present our castles and country houses or how we look after local conservation areas?

English Heritage invites you to join the audience for a panel discussion involving Baroness Andrews, newly appointed Chair of English Heritage, Sir Simon Jenkins, Chairman of the National Trust, Anthea Case, Chair of Heritage Link, Tom Dyckhoff, journalist and broadcaster and Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The debate will be chaired by Martha Kearney, Presenter of BBC Radio 4's World at One. Heritage Question Time will be at 6.30pm, 21 October, at the Royal Institute of British Architecture, 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD.

To apply for free tickets or to submit a question, contact: [heritagecounts2009@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:heritagecounts2009@english-heritage.org.uk) by 9 October. People whose questions are chosen will be invited to attend and ask them in person on the night. But you do not have to submit a question; you can just attend and hear the discussion.

Tickets will be given out on a first come, first served basis. For further information, contact: Katy Payne, Events Manager, English Heritage: Email [here](#) or 020 7973 3860

## Finding Volunteers

One of the most common challenges that has emerged for civic societies through the Open Forum is a lack of new blood coming through. With ageing committees and a shortage of volunteers a number of societies are worrying about their future. This problem is widespread

and other voluntary groups have the same challenges. Fortunately, there is a lot of support available and lots of things that you can do.

Good volunteers don't grow on trees - they need to be cultivated! There are three main things to think about when trying to find fresh blood:

- What impression is your society giving to potential volunteers - many people want to do something but are put off by committees and technical discussions about planning issues
- Are you clear what you want from your volunteers and what you can offer - many groups go so far as to write out a simple role description setting things out and estimating the time commitment

You need to seek out new volunteers and not wait for them to come to you. There are lots of places that you can advertise free of charge or find a matching service.

- REACH has over 2,000 registered volunteers with experience in management, IT, marketing, accountancy, project management, HR, finance and many other areas. It offers a free matching service and has a strong track record of success - check out its website [here](#)

- [CharityJob](#) - a website where you can advertise free of charge

- Volunteer Centres - contact your local volunteer centre - you can find where this is from [Volunteering England](#) under "I want to volunteer"

[TimeBank](#) and [do-it!](#) are two other important sources of volunteers and advice

You might also approach some of the large companies in your area, many of whom will run employee volunteering schemes or be looking to help staff who are about to retire.

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## Griff Rhys Jones Blog!

In his second blog Griff Rhys Jones describes his support for Camden Civic Society in campaigning against the proposals for the British Museum and reflects on a meeting with the Prince of Wales.

Why not respond to what Griff has to say [here](#)

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## Help us reach our funding target!

We need to raise £50,000 in the next few months to give us all a fighting chance of putting the civic society movement where it belongs - at the heart of community action for the places where we all live. Already, through generous support from individuals, architects, local authorities and most importantly civic societies, we have been able to raise over £23,000. We are grateful to those who have donated. This has enabled us to debate and discuss a way forward and to start build a new movement to support and champion community action for local places. On average between £50 and £100 from each organisation will see this vision happen. However, we hope you would support as an individual and where an organisation or individual can donate more, we would hope will.

We are also very grateful to the Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust for generously agreeing funding for the Initiative.

To support the Initiative [donate here](#)

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## Looking for funds?

If your society is looking for funds then help may be at hand. There are a number of funding sources which have been designed to meet the needs of organisations like civic societies and two in particular are likely to be worth exploring.

### Awards for All

This is a Lottery grants scheme funding small, local community-based projects and a number of civic societies have been successful in getting support. Grants are available between £300 and £10,000, the application process is relatively simple and civic societies are very likely to meet all the qualifying criteria. There are four main outcomes being sought through these grants:

- People have better chances in life - with better access to training and development to improve their life skills.
- Stronger communities - with more active citizens working together to tackle their

- problems.
- Improved rural and urban environments - which communities are better able to access and enjoy.
- Healthier and more active people and communities.

Civic societies already undertake a lot of work relevant to these areas. Grants need to be spent within a year. Successful applicants include £5,800 to the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District Civic Society to help create a heritage walking trail in Grimsby.

More details can be found [here](#)

### Grassroots grants

This is a recently launched £130m Government funded programme which is managed by the Community Development Foundation. Grants of up to £5,000 are only available to organisations with less than £30,000 annual income which have been established for more than a year (which means almost all civic societies). Unlike Awards for All applications need to be submitted to local funders and not a central body. The priorities vary a little between local funders but typically grants are awarded for activities which strengthen communities (encouraging people to play an active part), respond to local needs or problems and even build up the capacity of organisations like civic societies (such as training for committee members and volunteers). Grants can run to 2011.

It is easy to find your local funder and more information [here](#)

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## A national voice - want to join in?

We are frequently approached for our views on a range of consultation papers and initiatives by government and other organisations. The Civic Society Initiative has only a very limited capacity to get involved in these but it is important that the voice of the civic societies continues to be heard while we build stronger foundations for the future. We can have most influence where we speak from experience and we are looking for local civic society activists and campaigners to join an informal panel which will help in formulating and developing our responses. An early priority is likely to be the review of planning guidance on the historic environment - a priority for civic societies everywhere. The new planning guidance was recently reviewed in *Civic Matters* ([available here](#)) and a number of you have already started volunteering your time and expertise.

If you would like to be involved in the panel then please drop us a line with a brief summary of your interest or expertise [here](#).

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## Civic Matters

We have recently circulated the first issue of *Civic Matters* ([available here](#)). This is a new communication which provides a single post for all the announcements, research and news about what is going on in the civic society world. If you have not been emailed a copy then please contact us [here](#) so we can add you to the circulation list.

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## Planning guidance on heritage

The new draft planning policy statement on heritage was recently reviewed in *Civic Matters*. English Heritage is running a series of day long consultation events. These events are free but numbers are limited. They run on

- September 7th (Bristol)
- September 21st (Leeds)
- September 23rd (Leicester)

Contact [Rachel Prosser](#) to register a place and for further information.

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## Reviewers wanted: £150 for your organisation or FREE guide

The Community Development Foundation is looking for a number of civic societies to review its new guide *Green-up! 6 ways to work with your Council on the environment*

It was created for community groups who want to work with their Council on environmental

issues, sustainability and climate change. It's a short guide including a practical description of tools such as national indicators, civil contingencies plans, sustainable community strategy, etc community groups can use to cooperate with their local councils.

#### **There are 2 ways you can take part:**

A short e-mail questionnaire sent out with the guide OR a workshop in London on Monday 28th September, 11 am to 3pm (8 participants max). It will be an interactive workshop asking for your comments on the guide and any experience you have on working with your Council on environmental issues.

CDF will pay you up to £100 travel expenses with receipts, and £150 will be donated to going to your civic society.

If interested, contact [Agnes Gautier](#), CDF, direct line: 020 7812 5433 before 3rd September.

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## **Civic Trust Awards**

The application round for the 2010 Civic Trust Awards scheme is now open and entries can be submitted on line via the website [here](#). The closing date is Wednesday 16th September 2009.

Should you wish to nominate a project for entry, please email relevant details to the Awards team [here](#). Applications can be submitted by civic societies or other community groups and a discounted entry fee is available.

Community Advisors are also required for volunteer assessment teams. If you would like to lend your support as a volunteer please contact Malcolm Hankey [here](#) or call (01925) 273170.

Further information can be found on on the Civic Trust Awards [website](#).

The Civic Trust Awards is run independently of the Civic Society Initiative as a separate organisation.

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## **Heritage Open Days**

Heritage Open Days is set to be more successful than ever - with over 4,000 different events across the country and nearly 100 civic societies involved across the four days from 10 to 13 September. This year's HODs is being run by English Heritage and it will be the largest voluntary cultural event in the country, attracting over a million people. If your society is participating then why not take the opportunity to promote your own role and the civic society movement to the public. If you aren't involved this year then enjoy what is sure to be an exciting and action packed weekend and get some inspiration for how you can make 2010 even better and involve your own local group. Find out more about what is going on [here](#).

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## **Feedback please?**

This Bulletin is intended to keep you up to date with all matters "civic". We are keen to make it useful for you and would love to have your feedback.

Please submit your feedback [here](#)

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