



**The Community Newsletter of TotSoc - the Totnes and District Society**

PLANNING POLICIES AND  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Paul Bennett

What should “community involvement” mean? Central government policy itself would seem to be clear (Planning Policy Statement 1) in stating that planning affects everyone “and everyone must therefore have the opportunity to play a role in delivering effective and inclusive planning”.

To enable this “opportunity” to be grasped requires local planning authorities to build “a clear understanding of the make-up, interests and needs of the community in their areas”, a tall order perhaps in a town like Totnes where disparate views vie with each other for predominance.

Community involvement should not be a tick box process but should take an approach which:

- tells communities about emerging policies and proposals in good time;
- enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate
- in developing proposals and options
- consults on formal proposals;
- ensures that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible;
- provides and seeks feedback.

The Statement enlarges on what it means by “Communities” in saying that they will comprise “many different interest groups, for example, relating to a particular place, issues (such as access for the disabled, local environmental quality, or support for small businesses), values or religion. Some of these will be well established and represented. But some groups may be less well equipped to engage with the planning system” and

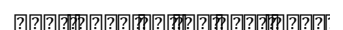
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goes on to say that those groups should not be disadvantaged.

Whilst the aspirations therefore of the Statement are entirely laudable it has nothing to say on “community” responsibility.

How representative are community groups of the community at large and furthermore are those within these groups making decisions representative of their wider membership? Whilst the TotSoc planning group would hope to reflect members’ views there is no mechanism for ensuring that this is the case. The only viable way of consulting



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open to us is by email as the cost of doing so by post is too expensive. We place items of interest on the TotSoc website to enable members to comment.

It is likely that with present government policy, community involvement in planning matters will continue. That being so, there is an obligation on us to understand the issues. Change, for the most part, in an already

beautiful town is generally not welcomed, but the town is a living entity not a museum; it has never stood still and never will. Our responsibility as the civic society is to ensure that we are fully engaged in planning for the future in a constructive and objective way. "Wish lists" are fine as a starting point but have to be tempered by realism.

Paul Bennett, Secretary and Planning Officer

## HARD TIMES

Sue Bennett

We are being told that times are hard and likely to get harder. With this in mind I think we should all do as much as we can to support our local shops. Never mind the supermarkets – they will almost certainly all survive however deeply the recession bites.

OK buying locally can be a little more expensive but surely we can all manage with a little less. The awful "use it or lose it" slogan jumps into mind or, to mangle a well-known supermarket's slogan - "you don't shop - local shops drop".

I would hate to think that any of our "Totnes Treasures" could go out of business and there's little more depressing than seeing lots

of empty shops in the town.

On that subject I was in Bath recently and noticed that local artists had imaginatively colonised empty shops there by putting on displays of their artwork in the windows and shop floors.

I'm not sure how this works in terms of payment to landlords for the privilege but I imagine estate agents would put in a good word to their clients as having an eye-catching art display can surely only enhance the chances of selling or re-letting premises.

Totnes is full of artists, sculptors and potters - has anyone thought of doing this?

## LEECHWELL GARDEN NEWS

Dave Mitchell

Since the last edition of Contact quite a lot has been a lot happening in the Leechwell Garden. The basic infrastructure work – devon banks, paths, initial planting and grass sowing, construction of the water features – has been completed by South West Highways. After several months of sun and rain the lawn is now green and the new hedging and trees are well established.

Even more important, the LGA's application for

a £50,000 grant from Community Spaces has been approved. We've already begun to commission local craftsmen to construct things like the Pergola, the Gates and the Play Structure. In fact, the latter, made using the trunk of the large Eucalypt which was felled last December, is already in place, thanks to Buckfastleigh-based Earth Wrights. The garden will be formally opened on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at 3pm, by which time we hope the garden

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will be looking even more spectacular than it does in the picture below. You can find out more details about the garden and how to get involved on the LGA website at

[www.leechwellgarden.org.uk](http://www.leechwellgarden.org.uk).

Dave Mitchell – LGA Committee



## Book Review

John Keleher

John Hitchins and Nicola de Pulford One Hundred Things to See between Totnes and the Sea. River Press 2008.

Just two initial observations: first, we are indeed fortunate that the authors, in identifying the hundred things to see between Totnes and the sea, set off down the Dart rather than taking to the A435 and ending up at Paignton. Second, the aim of this little book is laudable in that it's an attempt to get people to leave the car behind and explore the Dart either on a boat or by Shank's Pony – which happens to be my own preferred mode of transport.

The book contains over a hundred and twenty of Nicola de Pulford's delightful photographs, more than half of whose locations can be seen if you take a ferry trip. Visits to the rest of the sites will require detours – preferably on foot – to the villages

which lie between Totnes and the mouth of the Dart. These photographs are well set out and presented along with the text, and Kim Waldron is to be congratulated on the design and layout of this fifty-six page book. But having said that, #71 seems somewhat out of place. (You'll have to buy a copy of the book to see what I mean.)

The text, which was written by John Hitchins, is clear, concise and contains lots of snippets of information (largely historical) onto which hungry, enquiring minds can latch. But it's not without the occasional sore thumb and inaccuracy. For example, the literary festival which is held at Dartington Hall is called 'Ways with Words' not 'The Way with Words' (page 6.) Incidentally, I'm wondering if a purely visual exhibition/festival or whatever might be called 'Away with Words'. And while we're with Dartington, and still on page 6, let's

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knock on the head the Elmhirst-promoted myth that the sunken amphitheatre might have been used for jousting; it's far too boggy. In Victorian times the previous owners put it to a better use, for a map from the 1840s shows it to be a lily pond. And by the way the summer theatrical productions take place in the Private Garden, not the sunken, misnamed tiltyard.

Just a couple more slips and that'll be enough, but now Kim Waldron might have to sit in the naughty corner. On page 21 I saw (for the first time) Henry VIII, is written as Henry 8<sup>th</sup>. Tut! Tut! And another booboo occurs when we

are informed that John Davis of Sandridge was, at the age of 62, killed by Japanese pirates. Alongside the text is an image of a plaque to John Davis (1550-1605) put up by Dartmouth Town Council and the Dartmouth and Kingswear Society. Now, sums were never my strong point but .....

But all this is relatively minor and trivial. The book is beautifully illustrated, well written, and attractively presented. It will achieve its aim, and will increase the enjoyment of the places along the river of those people who get a copy. I now challenge the River Press to see if they can produce a book of similar interest

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Judy Westacott

Two of the things guaranteed to bring about a heated debate are building, and traffic, both of which feature in the town's Local Development Plan Document due to be presented to the Inspector later this year. As a society whose aims are to protect and enhance the town's historic core and its environmental setting both topics concern us.

Our medieval streets were built to accommodate pedestrians and horses and carts and many deliveries came by sea. Since the arrival of the car, traffic and parking have been a problem, and the many and varied attempts to solve the problem have done little, or nothing, to improve the conflict between business and pleasure, pedestrians and the motor car. It is the charm of the old town that attracts visitors and encourages people to retire here, both bringing much needed income into the town.

The introduction of parking meters in and around Fore Street and High Street was controversial, but has proved in the main successful in increasing the turnover of on-street parking.

The "Residents Only" parking scheme introduced this year is to be reviewed shortly. It has been welcomed by many residents, and

caused problems for those working, but not living in Totnes who have found it difficult to find a "free" parking space.

On certain days all South Hams car parks are full, but finding the space to build more in a location near to the centre is not possible. Should the Council put another deck on some existing car parks? What are your views?

It is my opinion that, for the majority of the day, cars do not use the main street as a rat run. This only happens between 8 and 9 a.m. and 5 to 6 p.m. So is there really a need to change the traffic direction or prevent access in certain areas? Many groups and Highways have suggested ways of slowing the traffic down, or preventing rat-running; all of which would have had a knock-on effect in other areas. Where do we go from here? Whatever happens next, we must avoid harming the financial viability of our businesses and small specialist shops.

As a society, we will monitor future proposals in order to uphold our aims. Do you feel strongly about traffic, parking or rat-running? If so, we would love to hear from you.

Judy Westacott - Chair of TotSoc

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# The TotSoc 2010 AGM

Sue Bennett

The Totnes and District Society Annual General Meeting will be held at the UNITED FREE CHURCH HALL on THURSDAY 25th NOVEMBER 2010. The AGM will start at 7 pm and will be followed by a talk at 7.30pm

**Tickets:** £1.50 for Members  
£3.00 Non-Members

The following officers are required:

CHAIRMAN	VICE-CHAIRMAN
SECRETARY	MINUTE SECRETARY
TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	PLANNING OFFICER

Judy Westacott and Pruw Boswell Harper have indicated that they will stand again as Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Lionel Harper will stand again as Treasurer/Membership Secretary, Paul Bennett is willing to stand again as Secretary/Planning Officer, and Sue Bennett is willing to stand again as Minute Secretary.

There is also a vacancy for a Social Secretary. If you wish to nominate yourself or someone else, please contact Paul Bennett (tel. 01803 865848 or email [paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com](mailto:paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com))

**Please note:** Nominations will **not be accepted** from the floor.

The AGM will be followed at 7.30pm by a talk from Caroline Bennett on

## **"FISHING: A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE".**

Caroline is well-qualified to talk on this topic - in 1990 she set up the first conveyor-belt sushi restaurant in the UK - the critically acclaimed MOSHI-MOSHI based in London. She is actively involved in marine conservation through work managed by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), on a fisheries project called "Invest in Fish". Moshi-Moshi has been recognised for its work on marine conservation and received the Green Apple Award in 2006 and the RSPCA's Innovation Award in 2007.

Caroline has also co-established the Pisces-Responsible Fish Restaurant initiative which helps chefs source better quality, more sustainable and more local fish and rewards good fishing practices with better prices for the fishermen. Through her work with her own restaurant and the Pisces-RFR project, Caroline is both encouraging others to improve sustainability and also making this improvement more logistically possible by directly connecting restaurants with responsible fishermen. She was recently lauded as a 2009 International Seafood Champion by SeaWeb's Seafood Choices Alliance.

This promises to be an interesting and informative talk. There will be time for questions afterwards.

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## ANOTHER DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES

Sue Bennett

I am sure, like me, many of you are intrigued by the new Dartington Primary School and would enjoy a chance to look around. With this in mind I contacted the Head of School, Jill Mahon, who was very helpful and would be delighted to show a group from TOTSOC around the premises. The date and time for this visit is: *MONDAY 11th OCTOBER AT 4pm.*

If you are driving there you can either park at the school or the Cider Press Centre opposite, or take a bus - X80, 88 or 165 go to the Dartington roundabout. If the weather is dry some of us will be walking there and back as traffic between 3.45 -5 p.m. onwards is heavy - meet at 3 p.m. at the Lodge at the entrance to the Dartington Estate.

Jill was reluctant to set a charge for the visit but we discussed this at our last committee meeting and decided to levy a charge of £2.00 per head as a contribution to school funds. Please could you hand your donation either to me or any of the other committee members at the door when you arrive.

It would be helpful if you could let us know if you will be joining us:

either by ringing 01803 - 865848 and leaving a message if we are not there  
or emailing [paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com](mailto:paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com)

## BALTIC WHARF

### An unusual (if not unique) planning process

Paul Bennett

The fresh planning application now submitted by TQ9 is the culmination not only of work by its Architects and Traffic Consultants but also of many hours of meetings between the G4BW group and TQ9 alongside its professional advisers.

G4BW was set up under the auspices of the Strategy Group with sponsorship by the Town Council; it was to be led by TotSoc and to enable it to act quickly and flexibly the core group was limited to four members (Tony Whitty, Charles Fox, Louis Victory, Paul Bennett). These four, although representative of community groups, could in the circumstances obtaining here act only as individuals but at the same time have regard to the wider community views expressed when the previous scheme was rejected by the

SHDC Planning Committee.

Perhaps the unique aspect of what happened here was the willingness of TQ9 to engage with a community group in a genuinely constructive way. Looking back to the Group's opening position in March this year and contrasting that with the then new proposals of TQ9 it is remarkable what has been achieved during the course of the extensive negotiations. The total time involved in meetings with TQ9 was some twenty four hours, with that time being spent in seeking to reduce the areas of difference between what TQ9 believed to be appropriate and G4BW felt as a group, they could broadly commend as an acceptable development of the site.

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In late April it seemed likely that an impasse had been reached but G4BW then put forward four points of fundamental differences where it invited TQ9 to change its stance in the hope that negotiations could proceed with some prospect of success.

The points were:

1. Housing Numbers. These should be reduced yet further to be closer to the 150 put forward in the Enquiry by Design process. A figure of about 180 was suggested.
2. A broader "green" corridor adjacent to Sharpam Drive to protect the rural aspect both into and out of the town. This would involve TQ9 in re-designing the co-housing area.
3. A reduction in employment parking by about 15% as part of the Green Traffic Plan.
4. Affordable Housing. Base level and cap to be substantially lifted (i.e. the proportion of affordable homes to the total number to be built).

TQ9 responded positively. Housing numbers have been reduced to 180 and so far as parking within the development is concerned the number of spaces is reduced to 400 with the residential ratio limited to one space per dwelling. The co-housing area has been redesigned to meet the request for a broader green link so as to maintain the feeling of the countryside coming into the town. With regard to Affordable Housing TQ9 agreed to raise the base level to 25% and the ceiling to 50%.

G4BW took the view that the scheme was then in a form which, subject to some reservations, it could commend for endorsement and prepared

a report and recommendation accordingly, which was sent to the Housing & Built Environment Forum (part of the Strategy Group) for comment. The Report was also given to SHDC which, as part of its own procedures for dealing with major planning applications, arranged for the proposals to be aired at a Forum chaired by a member of the Council. This enabled the SHDC case officer to present the background to the proposal and was followed by TQ9 and its professional advisers setting out the details. Two brief presentations were allowed for supporters and opponents. Although a useful exercise it is clear that a forum of this kind can never achieve the same level of input and influence that had emanated from the lengthy discussions and negotiations undertaken between TQ9 and G4BW. For this, credit must be given to TQ9 for its willingness to spend so much time listening and improving its proposals to meet community objections. As an example of this G4BW went back at a late stage to TQ9 to indicate continuing community concerns regarding the base level of affordable homes. TQ9 responded by lifting the base level to 30%, a considerable further concession bearing in mind the present economic circumstances.

Whether this process might be a template for future large scale developments remains to be seen. Special circumstances obtained here in that TQ9 is owned by three local families, who have consistently stressed their commitment to the community. However the process has demonstrated its worth and should be considered for use in the future.

Paul Bennett - Secretary of Totsoc and Chair of G4BW

## [A Plea from the Secretary](#)

My request in previous issues of Contact and my plea at the AGM has now resulted in 20 email addresses being notified to me but would the rest of you please follow suit and surprise me! Postage is very expensive and to write to all members costs nearly £50, whereas emails are free. It is also a convenient and quick way for us to keep in touch with members. It is important for us to build up members' email addresses - please email me **now** at

*[paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com](mailto:paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com)*

# The TotSoc Committee

The current TotSoc Committee Members are:

Judy Westacott	chair	cllr.westacott@southhams.gov.uk
Paul Bennett	secretary and planning officer	paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com
Sue Bennett	minute secretary	paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com
Lionel Harper	treasurer	harp@prandl.plus.com
Pruw Boswell	vice chair	harp@prandl.plus.com
Jim Carfrae		jim@carfrae.com
John Keleher		john.keleher@virgin.net
Dave Mitchell		dave@zenoshrdlu.com
Louis Victory		louis.victory@btinternet.com

## Joining TotSoc

Please complete the form below and send it to:

Lionel Harper  
3 Meadow Close  
Harberton,  
Totnes, Devon TQ9 7TW

For Standing Orders, TotSoc's Bank Details are:

Account Name: **TotSoc**  
Sort Code: **20 60 88** Acct No. **50878642**  
Barclays Bank, 14 High Street, Totnes

Name			
Address			
Postcode		Telephone	
Email			

Please tick below as appropriate

I have enclosed a cheque (made payable to Totsoc) for £8.00 (family membership)	
£5.00 (single membership)	
I have arranged for my bank to pay annually by STANDING ORDER	
I confirm that I pay income tax and am willing for TotSoc to reclaim GIFT AID on my donations annually	