



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

### "Our Plan"

Kate Wilson

It is always a challenge to make strategic planning interesting and to engage people, and the progress of SHDC's local plan has been no exception - until very recently. "Our Plan", as the local plan is now named, is billed as an *"overarching strategic plan for the whole district to 2031. It will cover a wide range of topics, from issues such as community wellbeing, energy needs and landscape protection through to employment growth, housing and infrastructure"*. Comprehensive aims if a little dry, but otherwise South Hams District Council has changed its tack and popped up with all the enthusiasm of a children's entertainer - offering colourful newsletters and a video. But does it work?

The National Planning Policy Framework required local authorities to have a compliant Local Plan by 2013 – SHDC is not alone in not meeting this deadline. According to the Planning Inspectorate, only 49 out of 336 local authorities have an NPPF compliant plan in place. The barriers to producing Local Plans apparently relate to housing need and the new duty to cooperate - and probably to the savage cuts which have affected local government, planning particularly.

The aim is that Our Plan will be ready for examination in March 2015. Progress has been steady. The first Our Plan e-newsletter, dated June 13th 2014, didn't offer much in the way of evidence, but asked for responses by 20<sup>th</sup> June. Unfortunately, most people can't have realised the consultation was taking place because there were only 76 replies district wide. To the Council's credit they have put every one of these on their website and used the responses to create the second newsletter, dated 1st August 2014, headed "Topics and Challenges: You said, We say".

This is where I begin to feel that maybe things are a little too simplistic. Here's an example: *"We had some really good suggestions about what we could improve or change so thank you to all of you who have taken the time to respond to the consultation."* It continues with a list of issues people have identified as missing including: *"Biodiversity; Water resources and quality; Digital/communications infrastructure; Transport*

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*and road infrastructure; Energy infrastructure; Resource management; Working with our partners; Fuel poverty".* Oh dear. However, the Council agrees these are lacking and has *"amended our topic diagram to include them"*. The newsletter continues identifying key issues respondents have highlighted and saying thanks for bringing it to our attention, but at no point does it advance the *content* of the topics to be included in Our Plan. It's taken months to agree these topics and we are no nearer to understanding the complex planning decisions that the Council will need to make if it is to produce its plan according to the published timescale.

Nevertheless, it is the next stage of the Our Plan "consultation" which now needs our attention. The essence is contained in Issue no 3 of the Our Plan newsletters dated August 13<sup>th</sup> (the second August newsletter). This newsletter is about considering sites for development and we now have until October 3<sup>rd</sup> to respond. The affable writing at the front seems innocuous enough: *"Please remember...This exercise looks at what sites might have potential for future development in the district. However, it doesn't make any decisions*

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*about where development will or will not go. Further consideration will be given to this through the preparation of Our Plan and Neighbourhood Plans". What?*

It's easy to be flippant and criticise, but consultation documents must surely present us with specific plans or at the very least some draft proposals and the evidence underpinning the decisions that have been made. The site allocations provided are almost all suggested by landowners or developers and the accompanying comments are few and not very meaningful. There is little point in asking people what they think if the parameters are not defined. No doubt there will be responses to the site allocations this document identifies (and TotSoc's will be one), but as the context and references against which to make decisions are missing, many responses will operate in a

vacuum - or be based on self-interest. Without a sufficient level of detail, no meaningful consultation can take place. Decision making is the most complicated bit of the plan and it looks as if it is still all to do.

SHDC needs to present us with solutions to the dilemmas we face rather than dupe us in to thinking all is well. It clearly isn't, and the simplistic approach represented in the Our Plan publications so far is alarming - see especially the aforementioned Our Plan video. <http://www.southhams.gov.uk/ourplan> .

When I look back to the impressive and imaginative work prepared by the District Council on the Preferred Options DPD (albeit years ago and in a different political climate) I can't help thinking that now we are being shortchanged. Something is very off kilter.

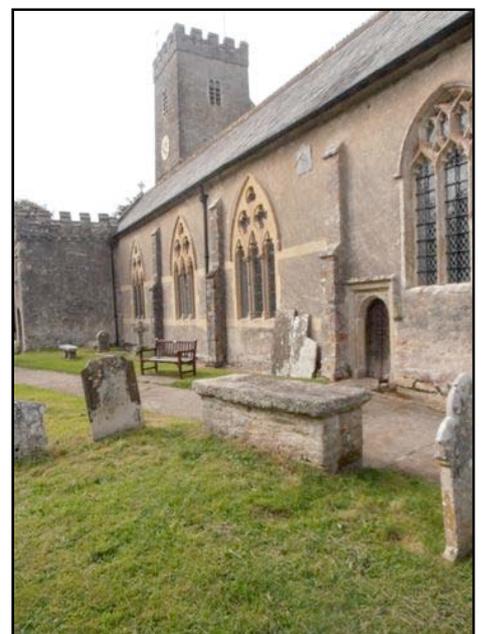
## St Paul de Leon, Staverton

Lawrence Green

Set above the river on the edge of the village of Staverton this church and its tree-shaded churchyard have a remote, slightly haunted feeling\* hanging over it. With its back turned to the village the church looks towards the river from where St Paul de Leon possibly came to found it between 526 and 529 AD. A Romanised Celtic monk, Paulinus Aurelianus was born in South Wales in 495 AD. He founded nine churches and a monastery in Pembrokeshire before being invited to Cornwall by King Mark from where he travelled to Brittany to live on the Ile de Batz near Roscoff. The Breton Count Wilbur invited him to the mainland where he founded ten more churches before being made a

bishop in the Leon region of Brittany by the King of France. Sometime between 550 and 555 AD Paul died on his island after reportedly killing a huge dragon. He was then buried in the Cathedral at St Pol de Leon where his bones and pilgrim's bell in the shape of a fish are preserved. His sister St Sidwell of Exeter was the first Christian martyr in England.

Staverton Church is unusual in having kept its dedication to a Celtic saint, a fact it shares with St David's, Ashprington. Set in its unusually level churchyard surrounded by brooding trees which include a thousand year old yew and a wellingtonia, it



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has a tapering thirteenth century tower somewhat similar to St David's with stairs set in an attached turret on the north side and no buttresses. The rest of the outside of the church is rendered, giving it a stark faded white appearance.

The interior of the church is remarkably large for such a small village. Both north and south aisles have the original barrel vaulting while the nave, choir and sanctuary have a pitch pine copy dating from 1871. There is a feeling of uncluttered space dominated by the complete rood screen with loft restored by Harry Hems of Exeter between 1889 and 1891. The figures of Jesus on the cross (the Holy Rood) was carved by Violet Pinwill who also did the work on the high altar. When the restored screen was rededicated in 1891 the Revd. Sabine Baring-Gould came from Lew Trenchard to preach in the church where many of his ancestors were buried. The Baring-Goulds had formerly taken family monumental brasses and ledger stones away to Lew Trenchard from Staverton church.

The rood screen, although magnificent, is quite overpowering in its height and breadth. Much of the lower screen is original, dating from the late fifteenth century, and has traces of the original paint in places. Hem's work matches beautifully with what lies beneath.

The arcades in the nave and choir are magnificent with their granite masonry pillars and random red sandstone and creamy beer stone arches. The painted angels above the screen and the painted bosses above the choir show that this has always been an important church. The fine parclose screens at right angles to the rood screen appear to be original. The two windows of the Lady Chapel are perpendicular and contrast with the heavier 1851 plate tracery windows in the south aisle which have been described as 'rather unusual wilful designs'.

Standing in front of the font and looking towards the screen it is obvious that both arcades lean rather gracefully toward the north and south walls. The plain pine pews in the south aisle also seem to be gently subsiding into the south wall. It is a pity that some of the Victorian encaustic tiles have been replaced in patches with cement. What would Revd. Baring-Gould have said about that?

The sanctuary in all its Victorian glory seems remote from the rest of the church but is spacious and unremarkable apart from the altar. Back below the screen are some interesting details to intrigue the visitor. A chained copy of Foxe's Book of Martyrs lies on a shelf near the door. The font cover nearby has a replica of the mediaeval sanctuary knocker that once adorned the north door, now blocked up. The pulpit

has some Georgian carvings and the lectern incorporates carved panels from a gallery that once stood at the west end of the church. The War Memorial on the wall of the north aisle contains the names of twenty-one Staverton men who died in the Great War, a large number for such a comparatively sparsely populated village.

The porch is wide and deep and beautifully proportioned, retaining its room above. In the churchyard can be found the granite altar thrown out of the church during the Reformation as well as a large granite font, now full of flowers, just across the path from the wooden door in the wall of the former vicarage. Between the altar and the font is the stone cross on its plinth which was reassembled from pieces of stone used in various parts of the parish as gateposts and walling. The clock face in the tower faces the river rather than the village because, legend has it, the parishioners could not agree on which of the four faces of the tower it should have been placed. Walking round the perimeter of the churchyard one can frequently see rounded river stones in the wall.

Churches like St Paul de Leon in Staverton and St David in Ashprington remind us that Devon was once as Celtic speaking as Cornwall. During the so-called 'Dark Ages' travel between the Celtic countries of Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany was fairly common among the men and women who spread Christianity from the west. Devon later became almost wholly dominated by the Saxons and almost all place names such as Staverton and Ashprington are entirely Saxon. One notable local exception is the nearby village of Ipplepen which remains Celtic in name.

It is very peaceful to stand beneath the trees in Staverton churchyard with the church keeping its secrets behind you, sensing the presence of the river a couple of hundred yards away and hearing the distant whistle of one of Mr Churchward's locomotives heading towards Totnes.

\*I had a very strange experience in this church many years ago while a student. I was there on a very hot summer day with my fiancée. We walked into the church and I experienced a wall of icy hostility, a dramatic drop in temperature which raised the hairs on the back of my neck. I felt that something malevolent was watching me from the top of the screen, nothing I could see. I had to go out into the warm sunlight leaving my fiancée to her icy fate. She still occasionally reminds me of my sin of omission to this day....

# Repairing the Leechwell

Dave Mitchell

Anyone who walks past the Leechwell is aware that it's not in good shape. Much of the water bubbles up through the cobbles rather than coming out of the spouts because the clay floor of the inner chamber leaks. There's a lot of silt, rubbish and graffiti and the walls are covered with vegetation. Those who have looked at photos on the well at the Image Bank will know that there used to be a notice board on the wall – in fact over the years there have been several different notices.

The Leechwell Garden Association, in partnership with Totnes Town Council and with additional funding from the Totnes Trust and from TotSoc, has been working on a project to repair the well, which involves re-puddling the inner chamber, cleaning the

outer walls, removing the debris and putting up a new information board. The pictures show the design of the new sign (whose text is similar to that on the old signs) and how we plan to mount it on the right-hand wall where it does not dominate the eye and placed high enough to deter casual graffiti.

Because the well is listed, we have applied to English Heritage for



“Scheduled Monument Consent”, employing Oliver Bosence to draw up a Schedule of Works. Once we have permission we will hire a contractor to do the work – a task we hope will be completed later this year.

The water from the well flows through the Leechwell Garden of course, and we are treating the work on the well as a ‘dry run’ for the task of repairing the immersion pool in the garden – a task which has been put on hold while the Japanese knotweed around it is eradicated.

## The Leechwell

A water source of this name has been recorded here since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

Wardens were appointed to ensure its care and the names of wardens between 1405 and 1475 are known. This office still exists today.

The three troughs are known locally as Snake, Long Crippler and Toad and it was believed that the water had healing qualities for snake-bite, joints, eyes and skin diseases.

Scheduled as an Ancient Monument by English Heritage in 2002.

## The Baltic Wharf Arts Programme

Suzanne Heath – Project Manager

**Can the Baltic Wharf arts programme put Totnes back at the forefront of best practice in the arts and public realm design?**

For the past year or so I've been working for TQ9, the developers of Baltic Wharf down by the boatyard in Totnes, to develop an arts strategy for the site. The strategy is almost complete and we are now writing funding applications and developing projects with partners to a point where we can share them with local people. As you may know TotSoc have agreed to act as the accountable body for these funding applications and in my view this collaboration and unusual 'mix' of public and private investment offers many exciting opportunities.

My background is both as a Public Art Officer working for local authorities, and more recently working on

behalf of arts consultancies for private developer clients on public art commissions in settings such as schools, hospitals and housing developments.

This work is usually funded entirely by the developer through a section 106 planning condition set down by the local authority, the same requirement that ensures provision of affordable housing, roads, public space, play and education when large new developments come forward. However public art conditions are not mandatory and are often the first to go (if the developer renegotiates their conditions) or the last to be included by the local authority. In areas such as London where developments are larger, and the demand to develop is high, local authorities have more success in requiring public art to be delivered by developers.

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Baltic Wharf is unusual because the developers TQ9 have decided to pursue an arts programme despite there being no requirement by the local authority for them to do so. This is great news for Totnes, and hopefully will help to set a precedent of good practice for public art commissioning in the area. It also builds on the preliminary work of the Totnes Public Art and Design Forum developed by TotSoc member and former Councillor Anne Ward that resulted in the drafting of a public art policy in South Hams.

The arts programme I have proposed for Baltic Wharf consists of a series of high quality temporary and permanent creative projects that involve commissioning leading local, national and international artists to create new site specific works for Baltic Wharf that respond to and reflect the unique history and character of the site and its context. We intend to work closely with architects Stride Treglown to ensure the art commissions are properly integrated into the wider design and landscaping of the development. Artist selection and project delivery will be overseen by a strategic commissioning group including local people and project partners.

The creative programme aims to reveal unexplored

cultural, social and physical connections within the development and surroundings by drawing upon the people, history, culture and natural environment of the area.

Although all projects remain subject to funding and further project development and feasibility, proposals include commissioning artists to design lighting features and an artwork integrated into the planned 'rill' water feature for the new public plaza at Baltic Wharf, as well as artist-designed bespoke play equipment based upon Natural Play principles. We have also planned an artist residency by a Finnish artist exploring the historic connections between Baltic Wharf and the Scandinavian countries from which historically wood was imported. Another project takes the principle of 'meanwhile space' and intends to invite local artists to use vacant space within the site to meet, show and make work, prior to it being redeveloped.

I very much hope that the answer to my initial question is yes. We hope these proposals sound as exciting to you as they do to us, and we can't wait to get started. Keep an eye out for the publishing of the arts strategy in due course.

To find out more visit:

[www.suzanneheath.co.uk](http://www.suzanneheath.co.uk)



The Baltic Wharf site is seen on the left.

Aerial Photo by Dave Mitchell

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## Loyd Grossman on Heritage

John Keleher

Each month 'Prospect' invites a different well-known person to give vent to the inner feelings and produce an article under the title 'If I Ruled the World'. In July the actor Rebecca Front told us she would demand better manners, less sexism, no name-calling and so on. She'd insist we be nicer to each other, and as a result we'd all be happier. In August Loyd (yes, there is only one 'l' unlike the Bank) Grossman, the Chairman of the Heritage Alliance, was the writer.

After arguing that heritage is central to well-being he went on to talk about what is being done about it, or rather what could be done about it. What follows is a long extract from the article.

".....Yes, the heritage is fragile – old buildings, like old people, become more expensive to keep in good shape with each passing year – but once it is gone, it is gone forever. Too often, and for too long governments of varying hue have treated heritage as if it is a problem to be propped up by subsidy. Our heritage needs to be supported, protected and regulated not because it is a problem, but because it is of such value. Where is the government that treats heritage, not as a burden,

but as one of our greatest national assets? An asset that brings pleasure and inspiration to millions, that defines and bonds communities, that galvanises volunteers and philanthropists. An asset that is robust and requires investment and a forward-looking and benign legislative framework.

Can any government grasp the value of heritage and do something positive? If we must talk about money let's reiterate the fact that heritage is the most significant driver of our booming, prosperous, awash with foreign exchange, tourism industry – the fifth largest industry in the UK. So, dear Chancellor, if you are reading this – and if I ruled the world you would be – please think about getting rid of the ridiculous VAT regime which slaps a full rate of tax on the repair and maintenance of old buildings, but levies zero per cent on new build and demolition. Go figure..... "

What more is there to say?

## Chairman's Chat

Judy Westacott

Under new planning legislation there is now a clear presumption in favour of development and this, inevitably, puts pressure on our Development Management Committee. An application can only be rejected if there are sound reasons for doing so. It is therefore imperative that the Council has clear, documented policies in place if they are to have their decisions of refusal upheld at appeal. Too often these days Councillors are loath to use their local knowledge and discretion when determining applications, to the detriment of the people they represent.

Recently there have been several large developments approved, and there are more in the pipeline. These eat into the green areas around the town and villages and there is a danger that, at some future date, they will merge. I have been investigating the protection of open and Greenfield land, particularly that on the edge of

towns. Such land is not protected as 'green belt' land. Very little land falls within this designation and I have discovered that only 13% of land in England is designated 'green belt' land. In order to qualify, land must:-

*Check the unrestricted sprawl of large, built-up areas*

*Prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another*

*Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*

*Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*

*Assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land*

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These criteria would seem to apply to more than just 13% of the open and green field land of England!

One of the advantages of designation is that it prevents 'ribbon development' – the forming of a narrow band of development along main roads between towns. The new National Planning Policies even allow for changes to be made to the 'green belt' via Local Plans and one of the exceptional circumstances that allows this to happen is for the provision of housing! This poses a threat to the green areas that provide the environmental setting for Totnes as they are not 'green belt' areas.

The TotSoc Planning Team will continue to monitor,

and comment on, all applications that could have an adverse effect on our town and the surrounding villages. They will also do all that they can to protect what is precious to us all.

*With acknowledgements to the Planning Advisory Service and to the Local Government Association*

## 1914: the early recruitment campaign in Totnes

[John Keleher](#)

About this time of the year a century ago there two great waves sweeping through the country: patriotism and optimism. People wanted to get at the Hun, and those who didn't urged others to do so; that's the patriotic wave. The optimistic wave made people believe that it would all be sorted quickly and the boys would all be back, victorious, by Christmas. Lord Kitchener, the new Secretary of State for War, knew differently however. This was going to be a long and bloody war and thousands of men were going to be needed to boost the army numbers.

Nationwide the response to Kitchener's famous poster was startling. By the end of September over a million men had volunteered to join up, but within a year it was realised that conscription would have to be introduced since there were not enough volunteers to keep up the supply of men which the conflict demanded. What was the response like in this area? For an idea of an answer we have to turn to the Totnes Times.

We learn that by the end of August forty-three men, twelve of them married, had joined the Territorials. Each of them was paid a signing on fee of a fiver, and so that marriage should not conflict with patriotism a wife received a daily allowance of 1/1d, plus 2d for each child.

Throughout September the recruitment campaign continued. By the end of the month, Ashprington and Cornworthy with a total population of 807 had managed to recruit fifty men, and thirty-three of Dartington's 544 residents had enlisted. With the exception of the goalkeeper, who happened to be over the age-limit, the entire Tuckenhay football team joined up. (After winning a key match perhaps?) The West End Stores proudly apologised to their customers via an advert in the paper for any decline in service caused by

three of their staff responding to Kitchener's call. Other firms encouraged staff to enlist, no doubt thereby increasing their own local standing, some offering financial incentives. The Totnes Gas Company, for example, paid each of its employees who joined up 10/- per week.

However, at a recruitment meeting at the Seven Stars only twenty men took up the mayor's offer to get the necessary recruitment forms to fill the 100 vacancies in the West Devons. Later in the evening a Major Kendall stated that the response from Totnes was disappointing compared to that in Newton Abbot, or even maritime Brixham. Despite this slight dampener the evening ended on a patriotic note with a stirring rendering of 'Rule Britannia'.

Music and poetry have always been used to stimulate, among other things, feelings of patriotism. In this regard Totnes was in the vanguard. Local poets, like EHH and ADF penned patriotic verses urging others on to fight and Miss Winifred Ironside wrote a stirring recruitment song entitled 'Kitchener's Call'. This piece won the support of the London Recruitment Headquarters who urged all the music-halls in the capital to include it in their programme.

By the first week of November, according to the Totnes Times, 249 Totnesians had enlisted. Most of these were in the army and most of them were in the Devonshire regiment – although John Walters somehow managed to find his way into the Canadian Highlanders! However the response from the West Country was by no means overwhelming. In early November in a letter to the Totnes Times 'Devonian' pointed out that only 4700 men from Devon had actually volunteered and s/he

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went on to note that there had been a far greater response from Glamorgan than from all the six western counties. (However, the Narracott family supplied Kitchener with the best part of two platoons in the form of the sixteen sons and grandsons plus two nephews of James Narracott of Stoke Gabriel!)

But the reasons for signing up, or not, can be many and complex; it's not simply a matter of patriotism. So let's not rush to judgement.

In the early days of the war Totnes had been identified as a Rehabilitation Centre. The Totnes Times reported on the arrival of a group of wounded in early September, saying that these men had been 'perilously near meeting the most glorious of all deaths – that of dying for one's country.' Wilfred Owen, we'll recall, was to take a rather different view with regard to this particular reason for dying.

## 2014 AGM

### Paul Bennett

Our TOTSOC Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 9 October 2014 at 7pm in the UNITED FREE CHURCH Fore Street Totnes.

It will be followed at 7.30pm by a talk from Professor Chris Balch entitled "What have planners done for us....And what can we do for planning? – A reflection on 100 years of professional planning in the UK and a forward looking view of neighbourhood planning in the context of Totnes.

Chris Balch is Professor of Planning at Plymouth University where he leads UK's newest planning school. He is currently Chair of the SW branch of the Royal Town Planning Institute. He studied geography at Sidney Sussex College Cambridge and urban design

and regional planning at Edinburgh University. Qualified as a Chartered Town Planner and Surveyor, he has spent the majority of his professional career as consultant in addition to holding a number of senior management roles, for example, as Chair of Basildon Renaissance Partnership, and a member of the Council of Essex University.

Now living in Totnes he is a member of the Steering Group for the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan where he is drawing on his experience as Examiner of the Dawlish Neighbourhood Plan front runner.

Please come along and bring some friends too for what promises to be an interesting and provocative talk.

### **Tickets at the door: £1.50 for members, £3 for non-members.**

If anyone needs a lift to the AGM, please contact Sue or Paul Bennett (01803 865848) who will try and arrange one.

## The TotSoc Committee

The current TotSoc Committee Members are:

Judy Westacott	chair	cllr.westacott@southhams.gov.uk
Paul Bennett	secretary	paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com
Sue Bennett	minute secretary	paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com
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Dave Mitchell	webmaster and Contact editor	dave@zenoshrdlu.com
Anne Ward	public art & design subcommittee	mail@anneward49.plus.com

Forms for joining TotSoc and for Gift Aiding your membership subscription can be found online at [www.totsoc.org.uk](http://www.totsoc.org.uk)