

Report from Councillor John Hobart, Member Champion for Heritage and Environment

I have compiled my report in no particular order as all areas discussed are individual and of equal importance however I have decided to start with information about Heritage matters.

HERITAGE AND EDUCATION

I recently visited Carisbrooke Castle Museum for the enrolment of a new trustee to their charitable trust, which receives 75% of it's funding from English Heritage (with an annual shortfall of around £14,000). Also operating within the museum is the The Heritage Education Service which, in the year to September 2008, taught over 5200 students at Carisbrooke Castle and museum.

The provision, including delivery and collection, of more than 900 loans, (historical artifacts) from Carisbrooke Castle Museum has enhanced the teaching of history in schools and nurseries, as well as for families and other adult learners. Outreach sessions led by HES staff have helped bring history to life for 5212 students in over 90% of Island schools.

Over the last year the HES has sourced and managed over £18,000 worth of grants in order to improve museum provision for all Islanders and visitors. This work has been done in partnership with the Council's museums, Family Learning Service, Early Learning Service, the Special Needs Team, Dimbola Lodge and Brading Roman Villa. The museum trustees are currently approaching town and parish councils hoping to obtain their financial support as well.

ISLE OF WIGHT HISTORIC ACTION PLAN

The Isle of Wight County Archaeology and Historic Environment Service has now completed and launched the Island's first Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP).

The HEAP is a five year plan which identifies the pressures on the historic environment and will assist the management of change by providing a practical programme of actions to assist landowners, farmers, community groups and individuals in the sustainable management of our heritage. It can be consulted on the Isle of Wight Council's website at http://www.iwight.com/living_here/planning/Archaeology/historic.asp and has been adopted as background evidence to the Local development Framework (Island Plan). It is hoped that the HEAP will inspire positive action by individual Islanders and help the Isle of Wight Council to manage future change.

The Isle of Wight County Archaeology and Historic Environment Service are celebrating after achieving the national standards for their new Historic Environment Record (HER) database even before the pending Heritage Protection Legislation has been through Parliament. The small team of 2 archaeologists who make up the Service have achieved the national standards at no extra cost for the Council so that when the legislation is finally passed through Parliament, the Isle of Wight Council can fulfill its statutory duty.

AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

As I move to the part of my report that will cover environmental issues I am very aware that Councillor John Hobart

the AONB is a natural link as it is an organization with a foot in both heritage and environmental camps. Designated in 1963, it covers half of the land area of the Island, thus the AONB organization has wide and varied responsibilities protecting and advising on many development matters, indeed, 197 Planning Applications received so far this financial year have been within the designated area. In line with the agreed protocol with the Planning Department, the AONB Planning Officer has provided detailed comments on 113 (57%) of these applications to assist Local Authority Officers in their determination of the impact upon the AONB and final recommendation on the development proposals. The AONB raised no comment or objection on the remaining 84(42%) applications.

As a newly appointed committee member to the AONB it was both my task and my pleasure to attend the AONB annual conference where we came together with members and personnel from key organisations such as Natural England, Defra and English Heritage to discuss common issues and share best practice in the management of protected landscapes. I found the conference both inspiring and educational

Once again funding has been available through the Sustainable Development Fund for innovative projects that help in the delivery of the AONB Management Plan and look to explore new ways of sustainable living within or of benefit to the AONB. So far, grants for this year have been offered to support a number of varied schemes including the development of a short course at the College for the construction industry on the installation of solar energy systems.

The key focus for the AONB team over the last six months has been the statutory review of the current AONB Management Plan. This revised Management Plan identifies important issues affecting the future management of the designation, and along with proposed policies, highlights key actions for the next few years within the delivery plan. All being well, we are on target to present the adopted AONB Management Plan to the Secretary of State by the requisite 31st March 2009.

ACCESS FORUM

There are 500 miles of rights of way, of which approximately two thirds are footpaths, one third bridleways and a few byways open to all traffic. Disused railways are being developed as cycleways. These are monitored by the Access Forum, (on whose committee I serve)

This network hosts the largest walking festival in the country in the spring and this has now expanded to a small autumn event as well. A cycling festival is held in September and other events such as a triathlon are becoming established. The network also provides opportunities for safe walking and cycling routes to school which are being actively developed.

If it becomes law next year, the draft Marine Bill contains a section which includes the government's coastal access initiative, to be implemented by Natural England, it will have a significant impact on the 60 mile coastal path around the Isle of Wight.

Much of the rights of way network is historic and can be traced on the first Ordnance Survey of 1791. The recently completed Historic Environment Action Plan highlights the need to conserve this valuable landscape heritage.

Councillor John Hobart

The next few years could be very exiting for access on the Island as 3 major things have come together all at once; PFI Funding, the government's Access Initiative and Safer Routes to Schools.....great news for those wishing not to use a car!!

ISLAND 2000

I am the Council's representative on the board of the Island 2000 Trust. The Island 2000 team was set up by the council in 1997 as a means of securing over £2Million in funding from the Millennium Commission. It has worked ever since as a close collaborator with the authority, raising substantial funds (especially through landfill tax credits) for Island projects such as popular new cycle and walking trails, helping in the essential business of enhancing our public realm and contributing to the development of policy and strategy. In my role as environment champion I see this organization as an essential part of the delivery of our eco-island aspirations and a key player in the ISP, its KDPs and indeed the Island Plan. In the last year alone the work that the Trust has done to help IWC in the preparation for the Pan Urban Extension, in the public and community work at East Cowes, in the salvage of Unica (a building that is the last of its kind and in very real jeopardy until we asked the Trust to help), and in the many 'go-between' partnership roles we have asked of it across the Island (Arreton Cross being just one small but instructive example) has demonstrated to me that our long standing and special relationship with this organization is of great benefit and something to be valued for the future.

FOOTPRINT TRUST

I recently spent a morning at Brighstone Primary School in the company of 2 members of the Footprint Trust. This small organization reaches out to children through workshops presented to pupils aged 8 years plus and aims to heighten their awareness and understanding of important environmental issues. Schools are encouraged to join the International Eco-Schools initiative and work towards gaining accolades for their environmental endeavours . So far 4 schools have gained the Green Flag, the highest award and others are working towards bronze and silver awards. The Trust is made up of a small group of active enthusiastic people and who are dedicated to educating others on how they can do their bit towards saving the planet. A small organization making a large impact!!!

CLEAN RENEWABLE ENERGY

A major factor in our Eco-Island is renewable energy and on the strength of this I attended, on 11th & 12th November, the 2nd Annual Tidal Energy Summit in London. The summit was attended by the leading players in the emerging tidal energy industry from both government and the private sector, with good representation from across Europe and Australia. At the summit we learned that there are over 140 tidal and wave energy devices in the early stages of development and there is a need, within the industry, for support at this stage to bring devices to the point where they can be fully evaluated.

Amongst those exhibiting at the Conference were Gurit who have already built a scale model device from composite materials. Some of the larger players in the industry have also built scale model and prototype devices and are now looking for marine sites to test the these over a 12-24 month period. It is clear that many device and site developers are aware of the good

Councillor John Hobart

tidal resource in the Island's waters (2.5m per second 5miles south of St Catherines) and view it as a potential site for both testing and commercial deployment, although the latter is unlikely for some years yet.

In northern Scotland, Highland & Islands Enterprise is actively promoting the Pentland Firth Tidal Energy Project which seeks to maximise the benefits from opportunities in both wave and tidal developments. Their interest is in both the generation of renewable energy and the benefits to the local economy from the manufacture, assembly, deployment and maintenance of marine energy devices. I believe there is the potential for the Island to benefit in a similar way if it were to promote itself as a centre for this new industry.

Another environmentally important project is the attempt to reduce landfill as far as possible on the Island. There are many reasons for this need, not least the lack of land available to be given over to this purpose. As a consequence Island Waste services are actively making a fuel from cardboard and plastic, which are non-recyclable, and supplying this to their neighbours, Energos, for use in their gasification plant. Energos are currently commissioning trials to produce some 2.4 Mws , enough energy to power around 3,000 homes and it is hoped that this will come on line officially in the very near future.

Last but by no means least I feel I must mention Vestas who are world leaders in manufacturing and developing equipment for producing clean energy. Not only are they at the head of their field but they demonstrate what can be done when a business is run with focus. They are a major employer on the Island and have worked long and hard to develop and sell the environmental message.