



CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

Last message from the Chair

The time I've spent as Chair of the Cheltenham Civic Society has been immensely enjoyable and has introduced me to some firm friends and stalwart supporters of our town. Thank you to all of you who have supported the work of the Society during this time and who, I know, will continue to do so with Andrew as the new Chair.

On our web site we say that the Civic Society "*encourages a sense of belonging, responsibility and civic pride in our local communities.*" I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the Civic Society to help to make Cheltenham a great place to be, whether through our big annual activities, special projects or through our regular talks and events. I first met members of the Civic Society when I was responsible for taking a building development through planning and I was quizzed by the planning forum members about its design quality. That wasn't an easy discussion! However, I was very impressed with the group's knowledge and passion – something that has become even more obvious to me as Chair. The Society does so much more than act as a consultee on planning, but this work remains at the heart of what we do.

The single individual project that I feel most proud of is this summer's Street Pride audit when 30 volunteers catalogued clutter and obstructions on the full length of the High Street. The ensuing report and discussions with the local authorities is on-going and I have high hopes that we'll help improve our public realm as a result. The project showed just what willing volunteers can achieve and I do hope that members will continue to step up to help when requested.

I think it's very important that we work collaboratively with other groups in the town, whether that's through links with the Borough Council and the Cheltenham Trust or by collaborating with groups such as the Friends of the Wilson, the Cheltenham Local History group and with other Gloucestershire Civic Societies. Sometimes we need to lobby and act as a thorn in the side of those who are charged with leading our town. At other times we need to work closely and support their efforts. One of the things I've tried to do as Chair is to get this balance right.

I will stay on as a trustee for the foreseeable future and will concentrate on the Street Pride work we've started. I am very pleased that we have such an enthusiastic and capable new Chair for the Society and I'd like to wish him all the very best as he moves into the role.

Maxine Melling

23 October 2018
