

HYPHE CIVIC SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2025

ITEM 5.2 ANNUAL REPORT

During the period from April 2024 to March 2025, we made great strides in delivering on our plans, celebrating numerous successes and positive developments across our key objectives.

Charitable Objective 1 - Promoting High Standards of Planning and Architecture in Hythe

- Provided input on various **planning applications** (including proposed developments at the former Aldi store site, land adjacent to 24 Station Road, land adjacent to 26 Blackhouse Hill, land opposite Spanton Crescent, and the former Dukes Head boundary wall), contributing to the enhancement of Hythe's built environment. Made input to the Princes Parade consultation, and submitted significant comments on the FHDC 'Heritage Strategy'.

Charitable Objective 2 - Informing the Public of the Geography, Heritage, History, Natural History, and Architecture of Hythe

- Hosted another highly successful **Talks Programme**, featuring engaging subjects and local topics. Attendance increased from the previous year, averaging over 65 attendees per session.
- Expanded our promotion for the **Guided Town Walks**, leading to a very significant rise in participation. In summer 2024, we welcomed 172 walkers, almost doubling the 92 from 2023 and nearing pre-Covid numbers. We were delighted to welcome group visits from Folkestone Inner Wheel (9 attendees) and Charing Ladies Group (13 attendees).
- Successfully organised the popular **'Through the Lens'** photographic exhibition at the Library in May 2024.
- Completed the **Blue Plaque** project in honour of Gerald Holtom, designer of the iconic Peace Symbol. The unveiling ceremony generated widespread interest and appreciation.
- Launched the new **Hythe Countryside Walks** (six routes) on our website, making them easily accessible for mobile users. This initiative was developed in collaboration with the then Town Mayor, Cllr Anita Jones, Hythe Town Council, and the Elham Valley Walkers Group.
- Our publication **"A Walk Around Historic Hythe"** continued to sell exceptionally well. Additionally, our new release, **"A History of Hythe in 80 Places"** by Anne Petrie, was met with overwhelming demand, selling out in just five weeks and requiring a reprint.

- Enhanced our website with new and engaging features, including updates from the active **Hythe Local History Group**, which also launched an exciting **Oral Histories Project** and revamped its website.

Charitable Objective 3 - Securing the Preservation, Protection, Development, and Improvement of Features of Historic or Public Interest in Hythe

- Continued advocacy with the District Council to initiate a management policy review for the **Hythe Conservation Area**.
- Successfully lobbied for improvements to a prominent High Street building, addressing both aesthetic and safety concerns.
- Facilitated the presentation of a historically significant painting to the Local Museum, enriching Hythe's cultural heritage.

Charitable Objective 4 - Promoting Civic Pride in Hythe

- Recommended litter picking groups to receive the **Outstanding Service Award** for their commitment to maintain the appearance of the town and surrounding areas for all to enjoy.
- Delivered another year of **stunning floral displays** in Prospect Road and the High Street, thanks to the dedication of our volunteers. To ease pressure on local council staff, we secured support from a local building company to assist with watering in Prospect Road.
- The **Tuesday Gardening Volunteers** continued their fantastic work, maintaining key areas such as Wakefield Walk, the War Memorial borders, the Princess Diana Sensory Garden, Mackeson Square, and Blue Shield Insurance's adjacent flower bed.
- Landscaped and planted the **Mill Road/Seabrook Road** junction triangle, enhancing its appearance.
- Extended our efforts to Sandling Station, where some of our volunteers collaborated with the **Friends of Sandling Station** to revitalize the flower beds.
- For the third consecutive summer, our dedicated **painting volunteers** worked diligently to complete painting projects in Oaklands and along the High Street's northern lanes. Their dedication is truly commendable, and future projects may extend to new areas requiring attention.
- Commenced the cleaning and rubbing down of High Street benches.

Charitable Objective 5 - Delivering Effective Operations and Governance - Valued Communications with Members and the Wider Public

- Expressed gratitude to our volunteers with a wonderful **"Thank You" Party** in November, attended by the Town Mayor and over 60 volunteers.
- Hosted a highly enjoyable **Christmas Social Evening** for members at Hythe Bay School, with over 60 attendees.
- Kicked off our **80th Anniversary Year** with a lively and well-attended **Quiz Night** in February 2025.

- Although membership numbers were down on the previous year, we maintained a strong **membership base** throughout the year of 590 members across 370 households, representing approximately 4% of Hythe's population.
- Continued to **engage members** through our newsletters, website, and informative leaflets.

Charitable Objective 6 - Effective Promotion

- Increased visibility through expanded publicity efforts, including a successful **promotional window display** at Open Door, 101 High Street, in early May 2025.
- Maintained active engagement through our **website and Facebook page**, keeping members and the community informed.

Charitable Objective 7 - Sound Finances

- Achieved a **healthy financial outcome**, despite the drop in membership numbers from the previous year. Our planned Boot Fair for 2024, unfortunately had to be cancelled due to weather conditions.
- The **financial statement** provides a detailed breakdown of our strong financial position.

Charitable Objective 8 - Effective Policies and Governance Measures

- Made significant progress in **refining and strengthening governance policies**, ensuring they align with Charity Commission recommendations. The Committee has adopted and updated multiple governance policies, which are now available on our website.
- Governance remains a top priority, with further policy developments planned in the coming year in accordance, including a review of the Safeguarding Policy.

Hythe Civic Society is proud of its achievements over the past year and looks forward to another year of positive impact, community engagement, and civic pride!

