

## The results of the BCS questionnaire, reported by Matthew Montagu-Pollock

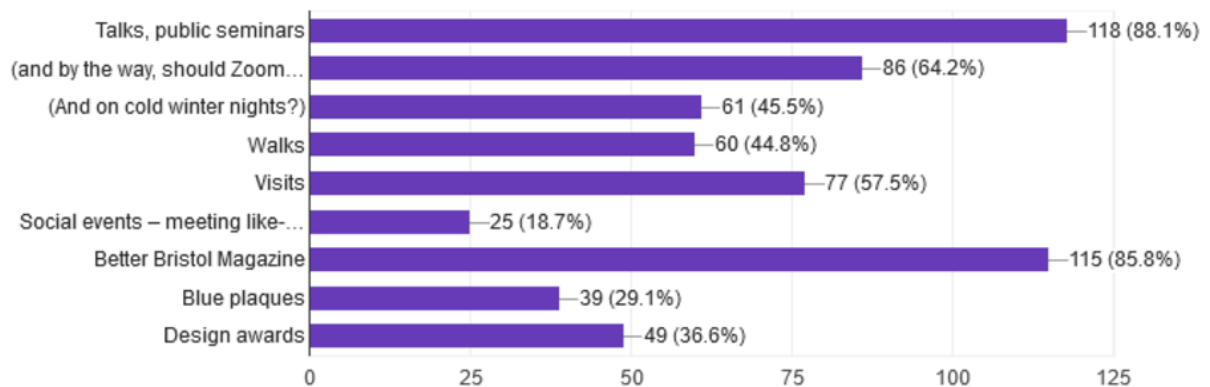
I drew up the questionnaire, and I here summarise the results. The big surprise was the level of responses – 140 responses for a membership of 577. After two mailshots that's pretty good (responses are still coming in). Commercial mailshots get read by around 7% of recipients, and responded to by 0.2%, but here the response-rate was about 24% of the membership.

First, what people enjoy most about the Society.

You'll notice how much people like our magazine, Better Bristol, edited by Mike Manson. Neck and neck were online talks, now our second most popular offering. Due to Covid we expanded them and Nic Billane, Mike Bates and Graham Egarr have done an amazing job. The smash hit was [Nottingham's trams](#), an obvious model for our city.

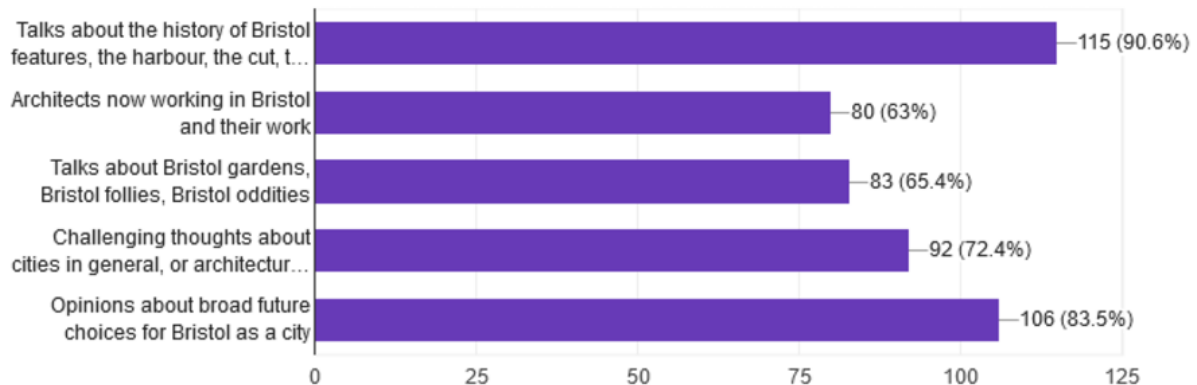
### A. What do you most enjoy about being a member of the Bristol Civic Society? (tick many if you wish)

134 responses



### C. If you enjoy the talks, what do you enjoy hearing about? (tick as many as you like)

127 responses



**The most popular** talks are about the history of Bristol.

**Second most popular** are “Questions about broad future choices for Bristol as a city”.

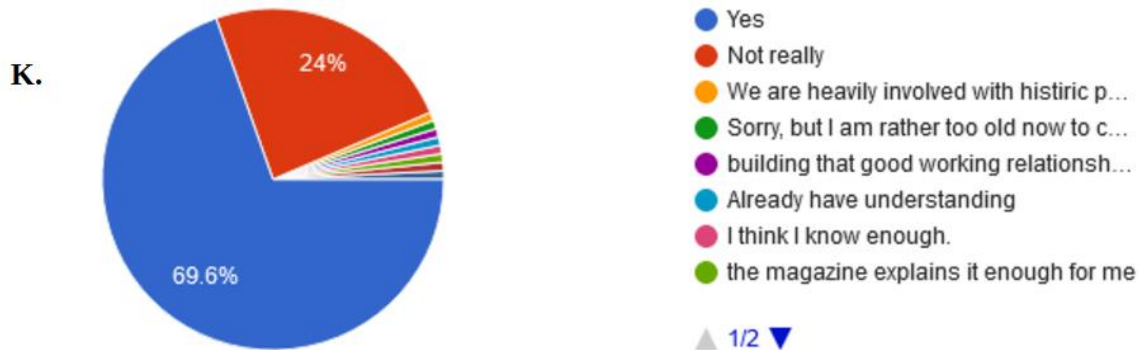
Let me briefly say why I was happy with this. The extraordinary fact is that in Bristol, there is no proper forum for discussing what future we want for our city – think of the Agora in Athens, where all male citizens would regularly gather to discuss the big choices Athens should make. But in Bristol this ‘forward looking’ function is not well done either by our local newspapers, nor by the Festival of Ideas, or indeed by anyone.

Doesn’t this leave a ‘gap in the market’? Perhaps the Civic Society, with its new found Zoom prowess, can begin to fill this gap through Zoom seminars and talks. We already seem to be attracting quite a lot of people who wouldn’t previously have thought of coming to Civic Society events.

We asked whether the membership wanted to learn more about how we interact with the city’s planners. I expected members to shout “No” – just get on with it. But the vast majority of you answered the question, and most members who answered wanted to learn more:

**J. Are you interested in learning more how we interact with the city’s planners, and how we go about making comments on major planning matters?**

125 responses



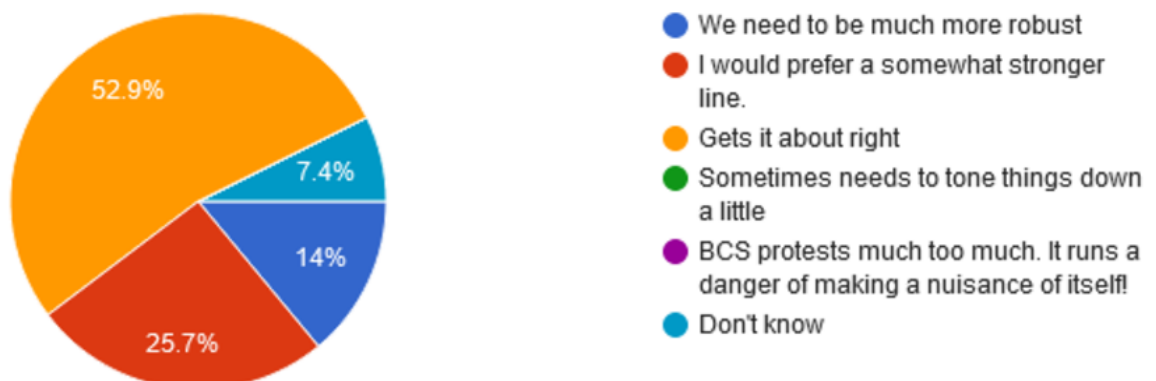
That response was a surprise. There was also support for involving the wider membership in discussions of the biggest projects, like St Mary le Port in Castle Park, alongside some scepticism. The general view was “try it and see if it works”.

The next question was about our stance. In the 60s and 70s the Civic Society was a strongly campaigning organisation. The Society helped stop the Outer Circuit Road, the more misconceived slum clearances, the cementing over of the harbour, the Post Office high rise near King Street, and the Avon Gorge car park.

Well, plans are coming out of City Hall at a pace of knots. So how do our members think we should respond? What do our results tell us?

**E. Is Bristol Civic Society too passive in the face of what is happening to the city’s built environment? Are we too accommodative or too confrontational?**

136 responses



52.9% of our members think we're getting it just right. Which is reassuring.

But 40% think that in one way or another we're not pushing hard enough. No-one at all, thinks we need to tone things down. If we were performing ideally, I believe, the dial would be mid-way between "push stronger" and "tone it down!" But actually, we are not in the mid-way position. Which tells me that we maybe need to push a bit harder.

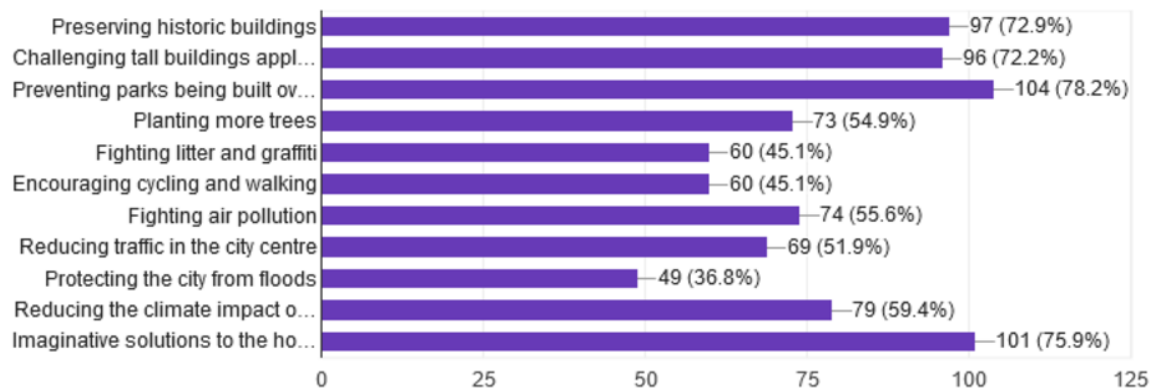
We asked specifically what issues we should campaign most strongly on:

The answers represent a pretty broad range. The ones that came out strongest were

- Preventing parks being built over
- Imaginative solutions to the housing crisis
- Preserving historic building
- Challenging tall buildings applications

**G. Thinking about the range of issues, what are the key concerns we should stress more? (tick as many as you like)**

133 responses

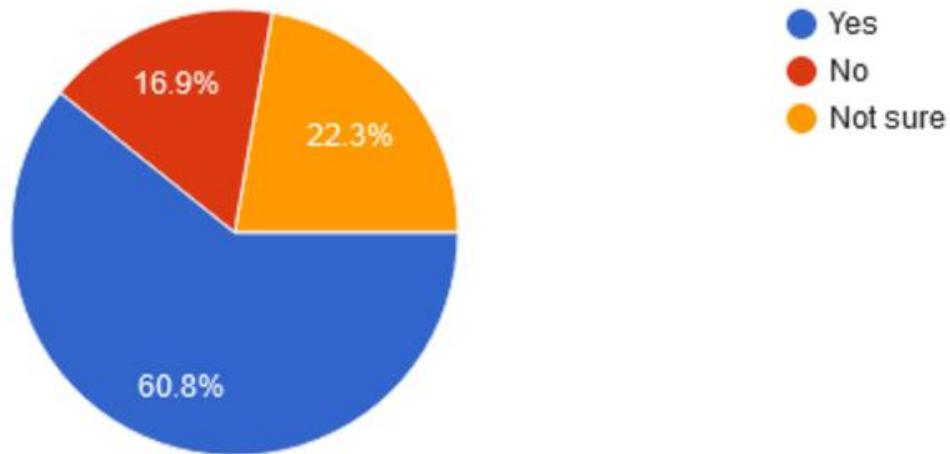


Parks was a surprise, as the question was thrown in at the last moment.

I was amused to see that support for awarding a "Carbuncle Cup of the Year" was strong. Clearly not everyone is happy with what's being done to Bristol.

**L. There seem to be a lot of ugly buildings going up in Bristol. Should we award a "Bristol Carbuncle Cup of the Year"?**

130 responses

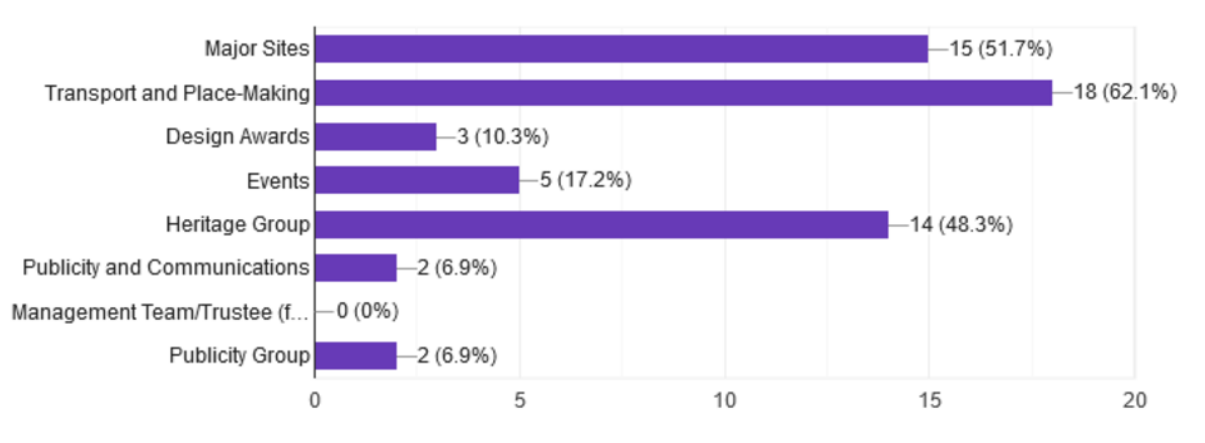


I am sure there will be a vigorous debate in the next management team meeting about how we decide on this year's carbuncle cup award!

Another very satisfying outcome was the number of members who volunteered. 18 members were interested in Alan Morris' work on Transport and Place-Making, 15 in Simon's work of Major Sites, 14 in Simon Birch's new Heritage Group. (People were much less keen on doing the PR!).

**Would you like to join, or find out more about, one of our working groups? (tick as many as you like)**

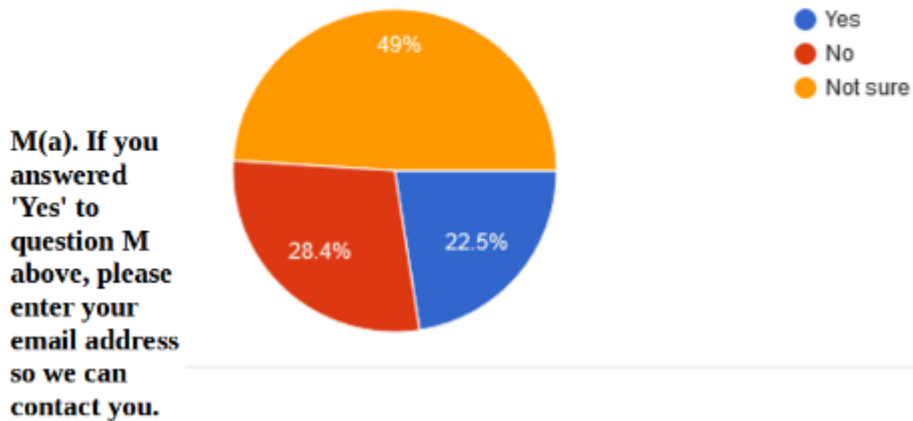
29 responses



And no less than 24 people volunteered to help us include younger people.

**M. We need to attract more young members. Would you be willing to help think how that might be done?**

102 responses



We are in the process of contacting all those who expressed an interest and left an email address.

Young people, in the context of the Civic Society tends to mean, younger than 60! I'm joking of course, but this problem became obvious to me when I recently attended an Architecture Society event. I was by far the oldest person. The vast majority of attendees were in their 20s or 30s. Our members are divided about how much that matters. And I suspect social context matters – people feel nervous of joining groups of completely different people.

A parallel issue, not raised in the questionnaire, is there may be work to be done with communities which have large BAME populations like Easton, and with districts beyond the centre. All this is going to need more than just asking younger people and people from outside the centre to come along – we'll have to figure out how to make ourselves relevant to them.

The next step is to discuss how, and by whom, and where these results should be considered, and what they mean for us.

I'd like to thank all those who contributed responses to the Questionnaire, and particularly to thank those who felt able to volunteer to help.

We also asked for individual responses to seven questions. These responses were diverse and impossible to summarise, but contained much of interest. I have therefore included them in full, as an Annex.

## Annex – individual responses to questions

- [Could you explain what is most important to you about the Society?](#)
- [Also, what would you like to see more of? And/or other events that you enjoy?](#)
- [Other issues that you would really like to hear about?](#)
- [Was the question \(about the Society talking with a louder voice\) phrased the wrong way? Do you have any other comments about the Civic Society's general stance?](#)
- [Which of the issues we mentioned are particularly important to you? Do you have other burning concerns?](#)
- [We have a group which looks at Major Sites. If we planned the discussions properly, should we widen some discussion to include more members?](#)
- [Any other thoughts for improving the Society?](#)

(scroll back to these questions below by clicking [#Back to questions](#))

### Could you explain what is most important to you about the Society?

130 responses

The meetings on zoom have been varied and interesting.

Demonstrates that the community has a deep feeling for the quality of the city and a knowledge of how to manage it, that is often lacking in the political and business establishment

Influencing developments in Bristol

Keeping tabs on the planners (or rather the developers)

Protecting the city's architecture, history and ambiance from rapacious developers. And discovering more about the city's architecture, history and ambiance.

Greater knowledge of the city.

Being part of the people of Bristol and learning about the city through talks etc.

Well organised and professional presentations

Your reasoned pressure

Being kept up to date on planning applications and physical and environmental issues.

That it exists, watches over planning intentions/applications, is acknowledged by our Council and others as a powerful and authoritative organisation and voice on behalf of like-minded citizens.

The Society should represent an positive, well informed, and independent view on all aspects of Bristol's built environment.

The continued policing of the protection of this historic city!!

Views on local building planning and visits to locations.

Enhanced knowledge of City, and care for it, warts and all.

constructive dialogue with planning applications

Being part of an organisation that cares about Bristol, how it looks and works, about the public realm and the environment of our city

Preserving link to Bristol and keeping up to date with changes

Keeping me informed about important issues about Bristol.

It is a group of people who care about the city and includes among its membership well-informed and well-connected people

It keeps me aware of developments.

Learning about Bristol's architectural fabric - and having the society speak out to defend it.

Influencing Bristol City Council planning committee members to make then right decision.

Championing a better quality public realm for the city effectively.

Supporting apolitical intelligent input on our future

Making people think about the City

To keep abreast of developments in the Bristol environment

Good means of keeping abreast of contemporary planning changes and helping me appreciate Bristol and other places . The quality of the visits and talks is excellent

Major Sites Group

Learning about how we contribute to making Bristol a good place for all to live

A place in Bristol where changes to the city are considered by an independent group.

It's efforts to keep Bristol improving.

Campaigning for quality in Bristol's built environment.

We have lived in Bristol for over 40 years but have recently moved away. We are very fond of the city and want to keep track of civic news.

Comments on planning applications

Keeping up with has happened and is happening in the city.

Getting to know more about Bristol as a city.

information on developments around Bristol and some of the historical articles

Making Bristol liveable for all.

I believe in supporting the work

The society is striving to prevent the worst excesses of the developers.

It sticks up for a healthy, liveable, and beautiful Bristol

Protecting our urban heritage

Knowing what's going on in Bristol

That someone is standing up for Bristol's sense of place

the feeling that people are paying attention to the living fabric of our city

Keeping informed about developments around the city

Ensuring the new build in Bristol is to an acceptable standard.

City information and considered views.

Its ability to put forward views on heritage and conservation, and to press for sympathetic development.

Guiding the Councils in their plannig matters so as not to spoil the City.

Accountability for those responsible for city development.

Its very existence.

Input on planning issues

I value the Society for its role in highlighting the good architectural changes being made in the city, and for challenging of the 'rogue' changes. I'm not sure it has 'clout', though. I love Bristol (though I live outside) and want it to it to thrive aesthetically as well as commercially. The Society gives me a Bristol 'fix'.



I'm fairly new to Bristol and I have learned so much by being a member  
Learning about what's going on, what's planned for the future, and what has happened in the past  
I think the most important thing is that the Society should try to prevent (or modify) unsuitable developments in Bristol and celebrate good developments.  
That BCS exists is important to me even though I'm unable to get out to many things (terminal cancer treatments 2008-12 now kicking back & multiplied through being a hermit during pandemic lowering fitness level)  
I like to know about the area in which I live. Conservation is important to protect our heritage  
Making me think about the kind of Bristol I want! I like the way that the Society offers enthusiastic support to good changes and works hard to keep rogue developments from getting through the planning system  
BCS is the only organisation that campaigns for a better built environment in Bristol  
Talks  
Keeping up to date with what is happening to Bristol; its buildings, routes and environment.  
Keeps me in touch with plans for the development of Bristol  
Input on major building projects  
I mainly like the work it is doing, and am happy to be a supporter, I love the magazine, I am busy with many things and don't make it to many events/walks/visits/meetings  
Being aware of what is going on in Bristol and keeping a watchful eye on all developments.  
News from Better Bristol mag.  
Its role in pressing all key parties for a 'Better Bristol' (as per the magazine title).  
Voice for design matters  
BCS's appreciation for the built environment  
Its keeping an eye on developments in Bristol and commenting on them.  
Events and visits  
Influencing the development of the city  
As a new resident to Bristol it has informed me about my home and its past.  
Being kept informed  
I feel that the Society is looking after Bristol heritage  
A sense of contributing to the future Bristol  
Learning more about the multiplicity of period buildings and the history of the city's development.  
Being in the know  
Providing a voice for quality design in Bristol  
That it actively promotes improvements - and positively resists the opposite - to the city we love.  
Benefits to me as a member are appreciated, but less important  
Bristol's Victorian engineering heritage  
Being part of a group that loves Bristol and wants to look after it and improve it.  
Listening to the planning debates about future developments in Bristol  
Educating me about Bristol. I was born here  
The interest shown in safeguarding our architectural heritage and being kept so well informed  
Learning about Bristol which I have lived in only since 2013, especially the built environment.

To comment and inform others on the City and its past, present and future developments. To keep us apprised on what's happening and being developed in Bristol.

Knowing there are people out there holding developers accountable and ensuring that Bristol gets the best. Also finding out what is happening to buildings through the magazine

Very new member so not sure yet. But very much enjoy being part of sub group looking at heritage issues in more detail.

Involvement in planning applications

You explaining what's going on and your opinion about each item

To gain more knowledge about Bristol in an enjoyable way.

A democratic resident-based organisation that can bring an informed and substantial non-political voice to discussions about planning in Bristol

Protection of heritage assets

Advocating for a better future for Bristol, based on an understanding of the past.

Civic involvement & pride in the city. Engagement with people of similar minds & Interesting talks, presentations, magazine etc.

I'm interested in Bristol's history

I've ticked no options for question A because I belong to the Civic Society to support its planning casework

Fascinating insights into the history of the city and the work that people do.

Learning more about the multiplicity of period buildings and the history of the city's development.

You explaining what's going on and your opinion about each item

The need protect Bristol's character in a sensitvie way.

A credible, well-informed commentator on developments in Bristol.

Keeping informed about planning in Bristol and the challenges to control it, often against Council preferences

I feel I am more involved in what is happening in Bristol

Both its activities, but activities relevant to the built environment in Bristol

Information about Bristol past, present and future

Providing sensible and balanced contrributions to improve our community facilities

I find out a lot about what is planned for the city, and about the issues and procedures surrounding planning approvals in general. It is good to feel able to express a view on the topic as well and to know that the voice of the organisation will be listened to as a counter-balance to the Council's activities.

History of Bristol and architectural heritage

Feel it contributes a lot to the city of Bristol

Campaigning to conserve and improve

Feeling connected to the city, its past and future

Influencing the physical development of the city.

Meeting enthusiasts who are knowledgable and interesting.

To know that good people are keeping an eye on - and influencing - what happens to our wonderful city.

The most important function of the Society is to campaign for a better city  
An independent monitoring services run by people whose views I respect  
Act as my eyes as no longer mobile  
A clean air environment  
Feeling that there's a group of people who really care about the city and how it develops.  
I am very restricted and want to allow Civic Society to act for me as trust their judgement as evidenced by award for St George's and Actions of working parties. Roger Mortimer.  
Balanced professional views  
The built environment of the city is my priority.  
Supporting a society that has the interests of Bristol at heart  
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**Also, what would you like to see more of? And/or other events that you enjoy?**

Talks of all sorts  
With access to Zoomed presentations I'd be interested in presentations from national figures!  
Lectures/seminars from experts in city management and development  
Archive films and historic walks  
No more, thank you.  
It's ok as it is.  
Walks and visits at weekends so working people can attend.  
Unfortunately, due to ill health, I have been unable to participate in any events for some time. Sadly, the foreseeable future is not much better.  
I am happy with the level of events that the Society's currently organises.  
Interesting talks.  
Love the history lessons.  
Bit more campaigning, on quality of city life  
Historical context talks on urban planning  
Meetings in other areas of Bristol to increase participation and make it easier to get to them.  
Something about the challenges faced by other similar cities  
I really enjoy talks which delve into the history of Bristol  
More vocal in preventing the current attack on Bristol's heritage  
Visits  
Study trips  
Talks. I like them in person but it is useful to have them recorded and available on Zoom  
Informal social meetings in different parts of Bristol.  
Higher profile and a younger membership.  
Good balance this year, considering Covid-19s effects!  
I'm new and content with what I have to date

More of both the history and options for the future.

Do not mind

Behind the scenes visits

Site visits

Particularly enjoyed visits

Zoom events that can be watched at a time to suit me.

Current content is just about right for me.

More seminars on proposed new developments and potential visions for the city over the next 20-30 years.

I greatly appreciate the Zoom meetings because I cannot get out too much.

I'd like to see a slightly stronger line taken when the wrong things are proposed in Bristol.

The present balance seems good. It is an appreciation society for the likes of me, and a campaigning platform for those so minded.

walks/visits when it is allowed

More presentations from people who are developing things for the future

The balance seems about right of the above activities and events.

Research writing articles books

I like talks on a diverse range of subjects, but especially on topics which are not likely to be covered by other societies such as Bristol Museum. I prefer subjects relating to Bristol.

Post-Covid, it will be a pleasure to meet up in person - but putting the talks in Zoom opens them up to a much wider audience so I can see there's a good reason to keep these going

A clearer campaign policy

Clips from old videos

Zoom has been fun perhaps more of these informative talks

Its about right

Talks

Nothing in particular; I think the current balance is good.

Periodic talks by related knowledgeable specialists

Saxon and Medieval Bristol talk/tour

More visits

Visits to other cities/towns

The transportation-related events I'm most interested in.

Walks and visits

Not sure but have enjoyed the zoom talks especially on a cold dark evening!

More communication

A more diverse membership, age and background

Ship building history

Repeats of walks or visits that are often fully booked in a very short time

Talks/films - information about any structures: whether that is buildings, or organisations eg Merchant Venturers, Bristol Grammar School...

Trips around buildings and areas

Clearer (possible fewer?) campaigns with more public engagement that have an impact and positive outcomes, making BCS an un-ignorable voice.

Historical talks

Comparisons with how other cities have developed

I feel the balance is about right. 'More of' = more arranging, more volunteers, this could be easier said than done.

I've only just joined so I would like to know about places I used to know in the 1960's

Campaigning for the civic environment

I feel the society should re-frame itself and its work to attract a wider range of members - particularly the highly environmentally conscious new generation. Its work is potentially of interest to a much broader group than it presently reaches.

I would also like to see it raise its lobbying profile.

You do enough.

More walks please

I have really enjoyed the film events.

I think it does most things well already.

I have only recently joined and I wonder, do we visit educational establishments and take part in interactive days?

Zoom talks are good - but WHY does everyone have to sit in silence beforehand. I know the reason given, but in my experience elsewhere discussion works fine. Give it a try.

Transport solution talks

Proactive campaigns on issues such as future of St Phillips

Better Bristol promotes the Society well.

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### **Other issues that you would really like to hear about?**

Developments that improve Bristol and developments that should be resisted

How we tackle the essential green agenda

Allotments and green spaces - new ideas!

Historic city walks

Combat vanity projects of our illustrious council!!

Perhaps on some social issues, effecting the city, housing etc

Engineering developments in the area

Be quite interesting to have some debates about controversial topics impacting on the city

Eg the scooters . The likely impact of Covid on the cityscape

How is Bristol going to get itself off gas heating in the next 10 years?

Anything that's controversial and where we need to be aware

More environmental stuff, climate change strategies, green issues

Civic Society being more proactive in stating what should be built where and to what standard.

The city's approach to heritage and whether the city really values its past.

The above covers my interests apart from shipping on which I think involves you.

Current and historic issues with race and inequality

Sustainability is THE issue of our age. Can BCS be even more engaged in creating a green vision for Bristol. Time to stop being polite about the city heading in wrong directions.

1. Exemplary developments in other cities (esp. in UK) that could serve as a model for future developments in Bristol. 2. More about sustainable building design. 3. Do ethical and/or sustainable property developers exist? If so, can we hear from them!

Debates about local policies - see above

Long term planning and transport

I am unable to attend talks (mobility problems) and don't like Zoom. I would prefer text and illustrations for talks to be sent direct to my tablet via email so that I can read them.

Traffic and environmental issues

I am committed to helping address the ecological and climate emergency, and to improve social justice so I am always glad when Civic Soc recognises these issues, and avoids pandering to the notion of endless economic growth

Bristol becoming a 'green' city

Ways to enhance community involvement in shaping the city's future.

A talk about how to combat tagging and illegal graffiti

Dealing with the planning department

What city council planners are thinking about for the future

how to encourage good design, what constitutes good design

The White City story

Ideas from other cities

General historic built environment and conservation areas

Infrastructure: (I loved the waterway talk!), I'm not sure what else, Electricity? Telecommunications .... how does it all work?!

Bristol History

Public transport: railways, buses. etc

Awareness of future vision - buildings, energy, transport, climate and how we will all be living in 20-50 years time.

How Bristol has evolved as a city since 1900, including the development of its suburbs.

Transport issues, I know that this topic is covered from time to time.

The workings of the other institutions City Church University and how they fit into the City.

More on the role of architecture, and the responsibility and accountability of architects, in creating places

Transport related issues.

Bristol outside BS1,2 and 8.

Some Celtic and medieval history

Watching craftsmen and women at work

Progress on Ashton Court and I know that's in the pipeline

Urban design, smart cities, the future of cities

Maybe useful to hear from the different committees about how they go about their business and the impact they think they have

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**Was the question (about the Society talking with a louder voice) phrased the wrong way? Do you have any other comments about the Civic Society's general stance?**

61 responses

It's fine by me

As a committee member of CHIS I've been disappointed in BCS's stance on the despoiling of BS8 with low quality modern architecture.

In the city, as a whole, I'm concerned about this drive for tower blocks which research has shown are really unsuitable for housing the elderly and young families in terms of safety, physical and mental health.

Generally good

No, it seems to cover a wide range of aspects and topics

Question ok.

Generally gets it about right....though could be stronger sometimes

The BCS needs to stand up to the appalling planning decisions that are made and make sure the public understand why

No, I am not interested in a society that says "No" to everything.

No. BCS needs to be more robust and members need to be more closely involved and consulted

I usually agree with the position BCS takes on e.g. planning applications/pre-planning applications.

To me more local media savvy and the enlightenment of younger people in the way ahead!

No I think it is important to be self questioning as an organisation, especially one as important as this

I am pretty happy with it

Nothing wrong with the question, I just don't have enough experience to provide an adequate answer

Appropriately supportive of good design that enhances the built environment and against bad schemes that do not work for Bristol or Bristolians.

Civic Society feels weak at the moment with the clustering of tower blocks planned

I think they get it about right except for dilapidated historical buildings which have now become much too expensive to restore. Sometimes we have to let go!

No, about right.

It was OK

I think we need to show we understand the reality of development but still push people to the maximum and insist that high quality is built and poor design is rejected

I'm unsure how the Society is viewed from outside by the Council and local architects and planners. Can you survey them so the Society can see whether it needs to be tougher or otherwise?

Good to be sources of knowledge when facing difficult decisions about our city

More attention could be paid to high rise and its impact on the city

I like the increasing emphasis on active transport and sustainability (its not all about the skyline)

Gives a good awareness and comment on Bristol environmental issues

Given all the ambitions in the latest government White Paper about the enhanced role of local communities, a stronger line seems essential not just optional.

Responses can sometimes appear lay reaction without full understanding

Insufficiently proactive...it is almost too late to influence a development by the time BCS comments on it

Too new to the society to have formed a view.

Sometimes I get the impression that anything new / progressive / different = a general opposition, anything restorative and working with historical properties = general supportive. Is this reflective of the demographic of BCS?

What a great question this one is - so often I complete surveys without feeling I've had a chance to really express my views. Since I first joined 30-odd years ago I think BCC has at times been seen as a nuisance, so less effective. Seems to me the approach now is much more collaborative, which I support. Thanks for all your hard work.

As a relative newcomer I do not know enough, as yet.

Difficult one but I think the Society is seen as being elitist ie generally white, middle class educated and mostly retired. Whilst this will generally remain the case by the nature of the activities carried out which is not necessarily a problem but might put off new blood. Perhaps it could find a way to attract or represent a more diverse group so we don't become a museum piece ourselves. The society needs to remain current and relevant in today's changing world and perhaps we find a way to engage or promote with communities in Bristol and changes they are pushing for in their built environment which could in itself bring new life, ideas and energy? Sorry I've perhaps not been clear enough in what I'm trying to say but you might get the gist.

Robust is good - question is: how to be heard?

The Society needs to present evidence, not just opinion.

I guess BCS is well regarded in the City Council & it's voice is considered important. Whether further engagement would be beneficial is difficult to assess. Having a direct voice via elected councilors could be beneficial (not necessarily as specific BCS candidates)

The Civic Society's response to major planning applications is all too often along the lines of "we are supportive of this application but it needs major revision". I understand the desire not to be seen as negative, but the current rush for development has trashed the city of Bristol and the Civic Society's response seems often collusive.

I would like to see more comment on the issues of the day.

We have the knowledge, experience and wisdom, but somehow less so the visibility and clout.

I think we probably come over as an 'academic' society for the educated middle class. That is a shame. Not sure how, but widening our audience to all citizens should be a goal.



I cannot answer that question. I don't think BCS' stance is always clear, nor is it clear how BCS arrives at its positions. How are members involved in this? I don't think BCS should (or could) poll members on a regular basis, but there should be mechanisms for involvement that do not require going to meetings etc. because not everyone has time for that, but still may have valuable contributions to make.

Does BCS reflect the views of too narrow a section of Bristolians'?

The Society is very important and broadly seems able to make its voice heard.

Needs to be a forum for strong view points all of which have to agree, but is a place of debate

The Civic Society seems too close to the local "establishment". It did not in my opinion work hard enough to oppose some of the more recent plans, especially high-rise buildings. It needs to be a campaigning voice. It also needs to attract a younger and more diverse membership. It is in danger of becoming irrelevant.

Whenever I read the society's comments in planning applications, I'm always really impressed and think we/you come across very well.

I am new to the society. I'll answer next year.

It's OK

In general I think it's about right. A strong stance on 'high' buildings would be appreciated.

The Civic Society is the leading campaigner for the look and feel of the future city, so we should have views on what this means. We must stand up for what is right - few others do so.

I answer as I do - about right - because I think that is true and the measured way in which I think things are thought through. It is not a conservation society, it is not the 19th century society. It has to deal with the now with the best intuitions about the future and the impacts of designs etc on the future of the City

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### **Which of the issues we mentioned are particularly important to you (you can mention several issues!) Or do you have other burning concerns?**

104 responses

Imaginative solutions to housing.

Astonished that BCS supports St Mary Le Port development at edge of Castle Park. Equally astonished that it refers to Cumberland Basin as Western Harbour. (0% certain that I won't renew membership.

Traffic, air pollution and litter

Preserving the past and preventing tower blocks. Also preserving parks and planting more trees. Air pollution - so reducing traffic. Ensuring 20 mph speed limit is enforced and pedestrians are given priority over cyclists and motorised vehicles. All issues to address the green agenda.

Cycling and walking not synonymous. Each have their own needs and separate space. Scooters likewise.

Education re litter and graffiti. historic parks and buildings should be conserved, they are a living part of an historic city.

Flood protection and green spaces

They are all important to me

1. Tall buildings equal wind alleys and, from personal experience, this creates very unsafe situations for pedestrians in windy weather.
2. In the absence of an inspection of every 'old' building in the city, many owners or developers are not acknowledging or declaring unique or historical features, e.g. the Jacobean ceiling knocked down in Small Street.
3. With so many people living in flats, we must retain every possible open space for their use. Preserving the built environment by "repurposing" industrial buildings not just knocking them down because it's easier, and not necessarily the cheapest option.

Anything which improves the quality of life for the majority of citizens

Stronger stance on outdoor amenity space (green space) particularly on new build flats and HMO's....in light of working from home more and peoples mental health.

The housing crisis; and why opposing gentrification is not the answer.

Preserving historic buildings. Preserving pubs

Reducing litter and graffiti with more enforcement and more housing solutions.

Perhaps it's not historic buildings as such, but buildings that add character. I loathe graffiti, but I think I'm on a hiding to nothing in Bristol where every example is "art". I hadn't thought about air pollution before, but if we are serious about making the city a better place to life it's probably the no. 1 issue.

All are important, but I think the Civic Society should not spread itself too thinly so should focus on buildings.

Preventing parks being built over

Challenging tall buildings applications and finding solutions for housing

Far too many of Bristol's fine old buildings have been lost because of poor planning decisions so preserving historic buildings is very important. Tall buildings are often designed with little or no imagination (they are of the Lego variety) so BCS should continue to oppose them. BCS should carry on objecting to poorly designed buildings in any case.

Preventing parks & green spaces from being built on & ensuring these aspects are incorporated into any planning challenge if applicable.

A realistic approach to the utility of cars in a regional centre. Also remembering that those in the South of the city may of necessity need to travel to the North by car..... becoming increasingly difficult.

Sustainability

Preservation of historic buildings

Bristol is ruined by traffic. But I don't know if this is something the Civic Soc should take up.

Addressing the causes of litter and graffiti

Fighting litter and Graffiti

Quality of public realm

Reducing traffic in the city would be very important - making it more 'people friendly'

Concerned about the quality of new architecture in the city

Air quality

Transport in the city. We have some of the most expensive buses in the UK and few other options for other modes of public transport (i.e. trams, trains, underground) compared to the other cities of a similar size in the UK.

It seems to me the society gets it about right

Preventing parks being built over, fighting air pollution, reducing climate effect of buildings

Keeping local character. countering pollution of all sorts

fighting air pollution and stopping the reach for the sky ambitions of the Mayor

Air pollution.

All ticked are important in my opinion

Preserving historic buildings; challenging tall buildings applications

Ensuring that the Council control costs on proposed projects.

Climate change is THE big issue. But the housing market is ripe for reform. Mere talk of building more houses is not enough: we should tackle empty housing and offices AND explore ways of promoting the sort of reforms to the market that would cap house-price rises and therefore rent rises. (But that may well stray dangerously into the impossible and the political...). Can we promote the conversion of car-parks into ...housing?

The housing crisis

Climate change is the biggie, and it cannot wait. Litter can. I wish the Society had more (political?) influence - I had a mate in the Council planning dept who laughed at us! All of the above are important for the 'ideal' city.

Challenging high rise buildings - not only for the appearance - but for people living in them. Has Marvin actually tried taking 2 small kids and a push-chair down ten flights of stairs when the lift is broken? Tried entertaining kids when there is no outside space?

Pushing developers to build the meet the housing needs with high quality buildings, the the right places with the right infrastructure

The other issues are important, but should not be the main domain of the Civic Society as there are other groups fighting environmental and traffic issues. I think the Society's main remit should be encouraging good developments in the built environment. Maybe high-rise is appropriate in a few locations??

I could have ticked all of the above! Good public transport - achievable, sustainable with as little air pollution as possible.

I do not think the Society can encompass all these issues- I think it should focus on the built environment- there are other groups dealing with pollution, trees, flooding etc.

Ugly inappropriate building developments, especially those based on a now out-dated pattern of building office blocks the costs of which are offset rental from retail outlets and blocks of two bedroom flats

Long term planning and transport problems are not yet being adequately addressed.

Housing would seem to be a major issue. I would like to see imaginative use made of unused commercial buildings, such as shops and offices, for residences.

High rise

Flood issues protecting historic buildings

Preserving historic buildings

Keeping parks and open spaces

Solutions to housing crisis

Challenging unsuitable building applications and preserving historic buildings

All of the above are important because they work together to help create sustainable places

Fighting litter and graffiti - the cause of antisocial behaviour and more serious crime

Sustainable buildings and imaginative solutions to the housing crisis

Traffic (and improving the public transport system generally)

Transportation and housing

Challenging planning applications, not just tall buildings.

Good solid design

Bristol as a whole entity

Climate change and its consequences

Too much effort is spent on the historic aspect more needs to be done to help the future. Change is constant and there has always been an apparent reluctance to embrace this in Bristol for whatever reason. We're so progressive in many other aspects of how we live and present ourselves to the world here in Bristol but very regressive when it comes to the build environment.

I think we need more emphasis on walking, which often feels to lose out to cycling. Needs special thought about enabling and encouraging older people to keep getting some exercise - and accessing services - without feeling intimidated by cyclists.

Western Harbour 'solution' - objection. Explore alternatives (tunnel?)

Reducing inequalities (opportunities, leisure, housing, green spaces etc.)

Challenging tall building applications and over development in garden plots. There appears to be a postcode lottery in the city as to when City planners are sympathetic to the local environment and to what developments are permitted-regardless of local residents opinion !

Obviously climate issues are extremely important, BUT they should underpin and not dominate society function....

The way the Planning Authorities ignore good advice and common sense

Preserving historic buildings and parks/open spaces.

No more tall buildings- more imaginative building solutions, less rabbit hutch housing developments that say they will do social housing and then don't

Reduction of traffic

Housing, climate change, green spaces

No, that is the key list of concerns.

1. Climate crisis 2. Sustainable living, including housing

Well they all are in their way. (I don't perceive flooding as a major issue) Living in a city should engage all residents in civic involvement if not pride. The Cameron 'Big Society' idea was good, shame it faded away or never got the impetus behind it to engage citizens more. I see a Civic Society as engaging in a similar way but how to enthuse people is a complex & different matter.

Challenging tall building applications. Parks are important . Prevent them being built over

Most important for the society is preserving historic buildings, and anything which seeks to reduce the impact of climate change (which probably covers almost all the above!). Campaigning: I don't think BCS campaigns nearly enough, or if it does, it does so too invisibly. Most important of all is reducing traffic in the city centre.

## Climate and Transport

### Preserving historic buildings.

It saddens me to see the disastrous planning decisions being made and the missed opportunities to meet the Kyrle objectives. Bristol has been allowed to drift into being, for a large part, an ugly city. I wish the society could do more to press for a liveable, attractive, people-centred city.

I also feel we should skill up to support a much bolder, clearer visions for the transport system we want. Bristol has become so used to appallingly low standards that it is unable to visualise something that befits the 21st century. Perhaps we can learn from other cities, particularly some of the good examples in continental Europe.

challenge tall buildings.

There are too many value judgements in this list. Why challenge tall building applications? Who decided this might be a priority for BCS, I have never been asked about it. I am all for preserving historic buildings, but only those which have a viable future. Are there plans to build over our parks? If so, why has this not been reported to BCS members? I disagree with 'encouraging walking and cycling' but I fully support work towards an integrated transport system for everyone in the city, that is accessible to everyone with a wide range of needs - not everyone \*can\* walk or cycle, so this simple statement excludes a large number of Bristolians (I would say, a % of BCS members, given what I understand to be the age profile of the membership). Similarly, reducing traffic from the city centre as a bald statement has the impact of excluding a lot of people from the city. Is this what BCS intends? We need to encourage building sustainability but start with retrofitting as well as design standards. This is not in this list. This is not a list I can support, and if these issues become BCS priorities, I will have to make a decision about whether I retain my membership.

### Real affordable housing

Last one -imaginative solutions for housing

I really do not want to see tall buildings in the middle of the city. I want to see better design in new buildings - the majority of approvals seem to cover budding eyesores. The impression is that architects don't actually know what the general population wants, or they are disdainful of it, searching instead for glory within their own ranks. (No "witty" buildings please)

The Society should be more 'hands on' taking positive action and positively promoting ideas, not just critiquing the proposals and ideas of others

challenging tall buildings, reducing traffic in the city

keeping the city accessible and as a place for all

The future of central Bristol post-Covid. A real danger that some parts will become modern slums. Also, and related, what can be done for the huge numbers of homeless on the streets with addiction and mental health problems.

### Preserving green spaces

More trees less concrete. Sustainability in all things. Housing to live in not air B and B.

They are all important.

The council's obsession with tall buildings is particularly destructive, and needs to be vigorously opposed

Traffic reduction

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**We have a group which looks at Major Sites (which you're welcome to join!). Should more discussions be open to the general membership? For instance the proposed buildings around St Mary le Port on Castle Park. If we planned such discussions properly, we could feed members' views into our comments on major developments (we cannot 100% promise to deliver this, but we can try!)**

89 responses

Yes

Yes please

Good idea

not sure

Zoom is a great opportunity to open such discussion to the wider membership. They should be.ership

I thought that the discussion on High Street / St/ Mary le Port was important: unfortunately I didn't look at the time properly!

Yes, I agree. The plans for the St Mary le Port area are a real concern. Why do the buildings need to be replaced? If they are then no higher than the 5.5 stories of the former Dutch House.

Neutral

Possibly and especially on major developments which may affect the historic core and districts of the city

Good idea.

There is an element of trust in the groups officers but all major issues could well be passed under the noses of the members for approval or else you can get some really annoying decisions from a small clique!! As seen in other organisations who appear to have lost there way ??

Yes I think that would be helpful and interesting.

Might be tricky if there are as many views as there are members.

Great idea, happy to contribute were and when I can

Maybe

Support this.

Well the difficulty with this is that you'll get a 101 shades of opinion, some of them very unrealistic. The St MleP discussion was interesting because somebody came up with an imaginative proposal, so perhaps you should be inviting a wider cross section to contribute - always assuming they're prepared to make the time commitment. I always read what the Society has said about planning proposals, but I am not sure I'd make a very helpful contribution if asked to comment on every one, so thank you to those who do do it and do it well.

I would welcome discussion

Yes. 100% agreed.

Sounds like a good idea but how will you resolve conflicting comments?

Good idea if possible !

Agree but it is up to people to contribute not for the major projects group to chase!

Please try and promulgate intended goals!

From time to time

Worth a try.

Could be worthwhile, yes.

Yes for the most high profile developments.

Whilst I'd usually find plans interesting, as a passive member with limited time, I don't think it would be particularly productive

Yes

Zoom would make this easier to arrange and to attend.

I would welcome a short presentation on the various major developments within Bristol and then allow me to comment over time.

Yes please.

Yes, sensitive sites such as St Mary-le-Port are too important to be left to a small group

I may be on post war historical matters.

Seems a good idea

I don't know, but am filled with admiration for the work done by a small group.

Good idea - run as a pilot and increase if successful. How would you measure success?

There are architects and planners in the Society whose views I respect. I am interested, but feel safe leaving judgements to them.

Good idea to make this more widely known as opening up begins

Yes - as long as the range of views isn't distorted by a few obsessives!

Very interested but poor mobility difficult

Yes maybe.

This would be useful if possible

St Mary le port has to be seen in the wider city centre planning and transport context. City context centre context of replanning in the city centre; of Broadmead and of Castle Park

Yes it would be good to hear about the major projects

More input to Major Sites discussions would be welcome, on critically important sites/projects.

Yes but care needed

Yes...this is a proactive action

Yes, that sounds like a very good idea.

A report on their activities would be interesting.

That would be good but probably if too many views it would water down the comments of informed views and people do have bees in bonnets!

Those with the responsibility to feedback should be qualified to do so there is enough opportunity for public comment on such applications from 'joe public'

Good idea, but only if it doesn't create an excessive workload for the lovely people who are doing all the heavy lifting

Agree

Please try

Discussions on Zoom may work for Major Sites for general members ?

Not really

I do not know.

Not necessarily- people can have their views through other public consultations. As long as there is a diverse and large enough members group I would trust them to make right judgement. Start involving the general public and it gets either too diverse or too one sided, often delaying things Too soon in my membership to answer.

I would leva etc work focussed into a group, but perhaps create a short window for comment and see if it is popular. But any work should be routinely promoted on social media to give members and non-members a chance to be aware of the BCS position.

It would be sensible to sample members opinions, even if not everyone can be involved in discussions.

I presume there is already an avenue for members comments to be conveyed through appropriate channels. A more open meeting may be relevant but perhaps difficult to currently organise. I don't consider a Zoom meeting suitable.

Yes. They should be open to all members: if people don't want to be alerted to discussions, they can always be given an opt out of receiving info & timetables of discussions etc

I agree wider participation could be useful occasionally

Greater engagement can't be a bad thing.

a challenging task if achievable.

Yes, of course BCS should find ways to seek the views of the membership on key strategic issues. The question is, what are the realistic mechanisms for this. How to make this engagement meaningful?

A very good idea, could it be tied in with public consultation?

This would be a good idea.

Everyone has the opportunity to comment anyway; organising feedback from a larger number of members would be extremely time consuming.

Think there needs to be more opportunities for members to give an opinion

Committees can prolong decision making. But communication by trusted and respected people, not elected

Give it a try and see how it works.

In a few big and central cases like Castle Park yes, but mostly the membership wants MSG to do what it does now and report its work to the membership.

See above re committees explaining their work. Maybe some places are of such wide interest that open meetings would be good. It also might be worth looking at opening some meetings to specific community groups - joint working? - where interest is likely to be much more local.

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### **Any other thoughts for improving the Society?**

54 responses

No

It's good as it is

Add the question of community participation (in BCC decisions) to the issues and/or working groups



We are new members to bcs, so may be better placed to comment next time

Mike Manson does a remarkable job on Better Bristol, vital to the Society's reputation, but his review of Wulfstan to Colston comes across as unnecessary back-scratching, when his review of Sue Stops's book seems just kindly and perhaps justly over-generous. I am finding Wulfstan to Colston to be a seriously bad book, packed with mistakes, oddly naive and politically biased.

Many years ago I took over the task of Events Organiser for a short time before my business commitments took over. What I learned was that, at that time, there were several members who completely ignored me and 'took over' my role at events I had organised. It will be hard for anyone who volunteers for organising any of the above list because I guess there will always be someone who turns up to nit-pick the event. I too tried to find a way of attracting younger people into the Society but, like all organisations nowadays, this is going to be very difficult because the people we want are fully committed to their families. (Just look at the Scout/Girl Guide movements.) By its very nature, the Civic Society will always have a great number of knowledgeable and opinionated members and the way in which some of them voice this is very off-putting to the young.

Without more active members the Society's effectiveness will rapidly decline. This issue is critical and should be the the principal agendum item at the next AGM.

Sharpen our teeth

Maybe invite comments on some of the really poor major applications from your publication

Membership age is very important - there is a view that the Society is fuddy duddy, middle-class, elderly and nimby

None of the above options is very attractive to me and they look like a lot of work for somebody. I think you do well on keeping in touch with us, especially during the pandemic. I do like the idea of a carbuncle of the year. Perhaps we could all nominate and vote.

You do a brilliant job already !

Communication on thoughts for more communication with members. please?

I think it is a really vibrant organisation .. well in normalish times

you're already doing a great job!

Does pretty well!

As with all my previous responses, it's hard to know without more exposure to the Society's work

It needs to be seen and understood as a force for good in the city. "Better Bristol" shouldn't just be the name of the magazine, it should be the underlying ethos for everything that the Society does.

Larger membership means more influence

Have been very impressed with the active way that the Society engages with its members, particularly through the pandemic. Love the magazine!

Only those mention before.

The current focus is about right.

Better Bristol is a fantastic magazine, but could we improve our outreach, by using social media more effectively?

No

Can you tap into the many sources of extra help that exist? Do you use pro-bono help enough? Do you use interns and young volunteers? I have a(n ill-informed) sense that the Society could shift up a gear and become even more dynamic.

I am an outsider these days. I think the management team are doing a good job and striking the right balance. Maybe there needs to be a 'political wing' reflecting a variety of viewpoints? are we all grey haired professional middle class and retired?

Could the Society invite local planners, Councillors, and architects to relevant meetings, especially when we're hearing from someone outside Bristol, so they can be kept up-to-date with good practice too?

I think the newsletter is excellent and sufficient for my needs. I am not really interested in the society for social events.

Wider publicity, combative if necessary

There are lots of activist youngsters in the City, so reach out to them in what they are doing rather than expecting them to come to us

Added above

By being proactive and commenting on proposals before they reach pre-planning, it might be possible to influence the outcome of a development before it's too late

All the above would take quite a bit of organising when getting volunteers to do volunteer is difficult

Actually I am generally very happy

Not really; the present officers and senior members deserve thanks for all their hard work

Get students on board, get young professionals on board, there are plenty of organisations around which purposeful links could be established with.

Georgian architectural history of Clifton

Not sure

Don't yet know very much about how it works so too early to comment

Focus rather than diversify! Make best use of member's own interests and skills.

Probably need to become more exposed in the media but I cannot equate that with how!

you do a cracking job, far better than when I was chairman. From bitter experience, more public support can only come when areas have threats and thus the prospect of help from the society due to its experience, and respect from "official" quarters.

The Magazine is good and underused. How about a schools supplement?

I think the zoom sessions have added a new dimension and these should continue as they are clearly very popular

Sorry if this sounds boring but I think you are getting it about right.

I think you do a marvellous job. Tweaking but not altering substantially would be my advice.

Younger members; maintain public profile eg via BB

More walks to understand areas more, history etc. Not sure that major events and dinners would "do" anything for the Society and unlikely to attract anyone young. Outings maybe including some by bike perhaps.

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