

Heritage Lamp Standards

Background

1. Members attention is drawn to the letter, attached, from Mr John Robertson, who is speaking on behalf of CAAG.
2. Members attention is also drawn to the following minute of full council, dated 6th February 2017; C276/16 HERITAGE LAMP STANDS

After a number of councillors had spoken it was proposed by Cllr Seymour, and seconded by Cllr Hill, that no further work be undertaken on this matter. After a further debate, it was **RESOLVED**, by seven votes to four, not to adopt the proposals contained in the previous reports. On the topic of Standing Order 7 the Interim Town Clerk confirmed that it would require a special resolution of council for this matter to be re-opened within six months, although the decision as to whether similar schemes might be added to the agenda would be a matter for the Proper Officer.

3. In March 2017 your then Interim Town Clerk (ITC) had a lengthy correspondence with an officer of NCC who provided secretarial support to CAAG. In the course of that correspondence your ITC said "My only concern right now concerns the expectations of those in Berwick who might believe that NCC is under a duty to preserve the Berwick lanterns, or who might assume that some such duty has arisen. Can we point [NCC's Lighting Officer] to an easily accessible list of how many lanterns there are, and where they are?"
4. In turn the NCC officer who supported CAAG said "Building Conservation has no statutory duty or role as part of the Lighting Strategy (unless the lamp is attached to a listed building) and has no financial budget to make up any cost differences to retain any traditional lamps, but can assist with the delivery of the message and consultation through established community forums like the CAAG.

The Town Council has reached its own conclusions as far as Berwick is concerned and so none of us would wish to re-open this debate.

Where Berwick CAAG is concerned, it still harbours an aspiration to retain its 'Berwick lanterns' and if I (as Conservation Officer *with and on behalf of the CAAG Forum*) can assist with this [NCC Lighting Officer], please do not hesitate to contact me.

Issues

1. Given the decision of council on 6th February 2017 this committee cannot make a recommendation on the substantive matter to council. Standing Order 7 is quite clear.
2. The question arises of whether the committee can request the Town Clerk to raise the matter with the relevant members of Northumberland County Council to ask them to encourage NCC officers to engage proactively with the Town Council; it appears there has been a substantial breakdown in communications between CAAG and NCC, and a lack of continuity within CAAG. This would be appropriate.

3. Alternatively, the committee can consider whether it wishes to recommend to council that it consider a resolution to waive standing order 7 and consider this matter again.

Recommendation

1. That committee consider whether it wishes to
 - a. Adopt the approach in para 2 under Issues (above) and ask the clerk to make contact with NCC councillors.
 - b. Adopt the approach in para 3, above, and recommend to council that it consider a motion allowing it to consider this matter again, or
 - c. To note the letter from Mr Robertson and to take no further action.

The Mayor

Berwick Workspace

Boarding School Yard

90 Marygate

Berwick-upon-Tweed

Dear Mr Mayor,

As the HELM (Historic Environment Local Management) Champion for Berwick CAAG (Conservation Area Advisory Group), I recently attended a Conservation Area Management course provided by Historic England, which covered amongst other things the Historic Areas at Risk Register and what would be considered within it. I assumed that it would concentrate solely on the built environment such as derelict or deteriorating listed buildings, but in fact it takes into account a number of factors which impact directly or indirectly on the Conservation Area such as the state of the public realm (pavements, roads, signage, lighting) and setting (development taking place outside a conservation area but which might have a negative visual impact on it). At present, Berwick and Tweedmouth are currently on Historic England's Conservation Areas at Risk Register, although Berwick has every chance to be removed following recently completed schemes such as Governor's Garden and the Cowe Buildings and the positive works now being undertaken at 76 Ravensdowne and St. Aidan's House in Palace Green.

At the March meeting of Berwick CAAG, the current Lighting Strategy being rolled out by County was discussed in the context of its possible impact on the Berwick Lantern (a modern and distinctive design to be seen in West Street etc. Attachment A) and the traditional lamp columns (Quay Walls etc. Attachment B) plus further traditional wall fittings currently sited in the conservation areas. As lighting does not fall under statutory planning or conservation legislation unless it is attached to a listed building, there is a distinct possibility that our existing light fittings will be removed or upgraded without prior consultation with the Town Council.

The removal of traditional, locally distinctive features, such as lamps and lighting columns would adversely contribute to the current 'at risk status' of Berwick in particular and would make it less likely for it to achieve removal from Historic England's Register. It is an issue which has been raised in conservation areas elsewhere in the County, with Alnwick and Hexham being particularly concerned that they were unaware of what they were being asked to support in their previous communications with County officers.

It is the lack of consultation which is our primary concern and we may be panicking unnecessarily. It is possible that the contractors commissioned by County will be able to convert them all to new LED fittings but what might they look like? If they need to be replaced, what might the alternative be? Some of these fittings are bespoke and unique to Berwick, so without a prior financial commitment from the Town Council we may wake up tomorrow or next week to a completed programme of renewal which has the potential to adversely impact on the conservation areas leading to both a local, regional and national outcry. More importantly, it will cost the town far more to commission further replacements than if it acts now to reduce the potential cost.

Berwick CAAG urges the Town Council to make a commitment to re-engage with County on this issue before it is too late. In order to help the Town Council identify Berwick's unique lanterns and traditional light fittings, Berwick CAAG members are willing to undertake a detailed audit in the three conservation areas of Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal which they would present to the Town Council within the month, to aid them in any further discussions with County Council.

Yours faithfully

John Robertson

HELM Champion

Berwick CAAG

