



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

A charitable company limited by guarantee.

Company registration no. 4574188

Charity no. 1126736

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2020



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Charity information

The Hackney Society Limited is a civic and amenity society.

Board of Trustees:

Ray Blackburn
Monica Blake
Laurie Elks
Wendy Forrest
Tony Gillett
Julia Lafferty
Nick Perry
Lisa Shell

Officers:

Chair: Nick Perry

Vice Chair: Lisa Shell

Treasurer: Tony Gillett

Registered office: The Round Chapel
1d Glenarm Road
London E5 0LY

Bankers: The Co-operative Bank PLC
P.O. Box 250
Skelmersdale WN8 6WT

Independent Examiner: David Harris FCMA
36 Malvern Road
London E8 3LP



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ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020. The company's charitable objects are as follows:

- 1. To promote the highest standards in design and protect Hackney's unique heritage.**
- 2. To encourage positive development of the borough's built and natural environments, through engagement with a broad cross-section of local people and experts.**
- 3. To encourage exemplary new design, regeneration and conservation of our rich heritage.**

The Hackney Society is a membership organisation, a registered charity, and a company limited by guarantee. An elected Board of Trustees, drawn from the membership, manages the work of the Society.

What do we do?

- Organise public events including talks, guided walks, exhibitions and site visits (aimed at members, non-members and new audiences)
- Produce publications which celebrate Hackney's social, cultural and architectural history
- Produce a regular newsletter 'Spaces' to highlight the society's work and important current issues
- Campaign to protect local buildings of historical and/or architectural merit
- Co-ordinate a Planning Group to assess important developments and emerging policy on the built environment
- Promote high standards of design, construction and conservation, including through making comments on selected planning applications in the borough
- Support the six Conservation Areas Advisory Committees (CAAC) made up of local people including publication of their minutes on our website, where required
- Build links between residents, officials and councillors, including being a member of Sustainable Hackney
- Provide advice and support to local groups to help them improve their neighbourhoods



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Review of activities during year ended 31 March 2020

Introduction

Despite the fact the Society receives no public funding, it continued to deliver a modest programme of projects and events on modest income from activities and donations, whilst maintaining its public profile and its level of engagement with the planning authority on matters of development, and develop future projects.

Crucially, the Society continues to meet its charitable objectives.

Statutory 'lockdown' measures were put in place towards the end of the financial year, to mitigate the global Coronavirus pandemic. The Society operates in an agile fashion and had no major projects in progress, so the impact of those measures has not had material effect on our operations this year, though may do so in the future. The only exception to this is a nascent project to engage members and the wider public to discuss the future shape of the Society. The project was due to begin a programme of meetings in March, but has now been put on hold.

1. Membership

Membership is stable at 211 members of whom 61 are life members, and as a body provides the largest single source of income, albeit generating little to no surplus for general projects. Three years on from changing our bank there remain around thirty members who in spite of attempts to contact them, have not updated from their old Standing Orders and so are no longer members. We continue efforts to establish if those people wish to rejoin via more flexible methods.

2. Fundraising and volunteering

The necessary work to continue the activities of The Hackney Society either has been undertaken by volunteers, or, where appropriate and funding has been obtained, outsourced. Work such as organising events, editing the newsletter, book sales, managing the membership and dealing with planning matters continues to be done solely by volunteers including, and especially, the Trustees.

3. Programme of events

Events have been well-attended and popular.

We ran **eight events** during this financial year.

There were **two** walks: *4% Housing*, led by Jerry White, beginning with a visit to Navarino Mansions; *Hackney's Secret [Woodland] Places*, led by Russell Miller and Dominic Allen.

There were **two** talks: *Biodiversity, Swifts, Buildings and Open Spaces in Hackney*, by Edward Mayer of "Swift Conservation", held at Hackney CVS ; *Post-WW2 Council Housing in Hackney*, by John Boughton, in partnership with Friends of Hackney Archives and held at Hackney Archives.



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There were **three** site tours: Gravel Pit Chapel, led by Tim Walder; De Beauvoir Block led by Edward Benyon and Simon Henley, preceded by the AGM; London Power Tunnels, at National Grid Highbury Substation, led by James Watson, and **one** social evening, held at Sutton House and featuring a performance of *The Hackney Anthology*.

The Trustees would like to thank the various venues and the walk and talk leaders for supporting our events programme through volunteering to participate in these events. Their energy and commitment is greatly appreciated and to be recognised.

4. Publications

1. The Society continues to sell its backlist titles through local bookshops, and occasionally at local events and fairs. Since 2018, the Society has sold its titles in modest quantities through the Amazon Marketplace. It is our policy to price Amazon sales so they are no cheaper than RRP and that our income, net of postage and package costs, is greater or similar to those of direct website sales and trade sales.

2. Work that began in 2014 on a new version of *Hackney Houses*, a guide to improvement, conservation and maintenance of late Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian houses remains on hold.

3. The Society's most recent title, *Hackney: portrait of a community 1967 – 2017* continues to sell steadily and there remains around 395 copies in stock from our first reprint, reported last year.

5. Spaces newsletter

The Society produced **four** issues of *Spaces*: 64, 65, 66 and 67. The newsletter is quarterly and is written by voluntary contributors. They cover planning and historic building issues in the borough, topical issues, forthcoming events, buildings at risk and updates on Hackney Society projects and events. Buildings and issues covered by *Spaces* over the year included: Hackney Town Hall, Hackney Design Awards 2018, Holborn Studios, Talks at the Tower, Pitcairn House, 146A Rushmore Road, 195 Mare Street, Hackney Disinfecting Station, Green Spaces Walks, De Beauvoir Block, New Gravel Pit Burial Ground, London's Anatomy, Bohemia Place, Kings Crescent Estate, St Columba Church and St John at Hackney.

The newsletter continues to be funded piecemeal and by in-kind contribution of the editor and Trustee, Monica Blake, along with Ray Blackburn for help with copyediting. The Trustees would like to thank Paul Bolding, Tim Cocker, Core Arts, Siobhán Doran, Tom Feary, Sean Gubbins, Charles Hosea, Nicholas Kane, Peter Landers, Iain Langlands, Debbie Michener, Hedy Parry-Davies, John Pawson Ltd, Jim Stephenson, Rossana Tich and Ian Walder for their **articles** and **photographs**. We would also like to thank Glory Hall. Without her generosity, we would not be able to afford the commercial rates for **design**.



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6. Websites

The Society continues to maintain our main website <http://hackneysociety.org> and received a generous donation after the last AGM towards redeveloping the site. This is a high priority, medium term project for the Trustees, which will require additional funds to be identified before we can commit to it.

Two other *micro-sites* are still available but not actively updated.

hackneybuildings.org (aka lovelocallandmarks.org)
hackneysociety.org/health

The Trustees thank *Community Sites* for their continued provision of services at very modest costs for community and amenity groups such as ours.

7. Social Media

Social media continues to be important and we are indebted to member Rossana Tich who continues to manage the vast majority of our Twitter presence. As at 31 March 2020 we had around 11,100 Twitter (@HackneySociety) followers, up by 400 on the same time last year.

Our Facebook (@theHackneySociety) page is less actively managed and generally automatically reflects our Twitter activity.

8. The Hackney Society Planning Group (HSPG)

The Planning Group meets on a monthly basis to review proposals for significant developments within the Borough. Group members submit comments to the Council in response to planning applications, as well as provide advice to developers, their design teams and other interested parties ahead of their submissions for planning approval. Although the Hackney Society is not a statutory consultee, consultation is a matter of the Council's adopted policy and the Planning Group continues to be approached directly by developers, who make regular presentations to the group ahead of their submissions for planning approval, including the following over the last financial year:

- De Beauvoir Estate – Hackney Council / Henley Halebrown
- 305A Kingsland Road – CMA Planning / pH+
- Northwold Estate – Gunness / TM Architects / Rolfe Judd Planning
- Christopher Street – London Stock Exchange / Make Architects
- Thoresby House – Arcadia University / dMFK / Kanda Consulting
- Haggerston Baths – Castleforge Partners / Squire & Partners / Kanda Consulting
- 16 Orsman Road – Southern Grove / Waugh Thistleton / Maddox Planning
- 144-164 Homerton High St – Nudo Properties / CZWG Architects / DP9 / Icen Projects



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The group has engaged periodically with the Council's ongoing programme of spatial planning and policy consultations, though limited resources in terms of volunteer time make this a difficult task to perform diligently. Of particular note is the Council's long-running 'LP33' programme to renew the entire Local Plan.

The group raises questions and concerns but also attempts to provide support to those bringing positive visions and quality of design to the borough.

The group recognises a shared interest with the borough's six CAACs (Conservation Areas Advisory Committees), who comment on applications within conservation areas, and continue to share information, and invite CAACs to relevant presentations, meetings and discussions. Whilst procedural and technological constraints prevent comments from the Planning Group being routinely uploaded to the Hackney Society website, four of the CAACs have provided their comments for upload each month.

The Council have not resumed their coordinated meeting for all six of the CAACs in over three years, but have continued hosting occasional Planning User Forums. Nick Perry continues to develop some planning application monitoring and access software for the Group and CAACs, which makes their work more efficient and effective and can mitigate some of the shortcomings of the Council's services.

The Society's Chair, Nick Perry, continues to attend most of the Council's Planning Sub-committee meetings as an observer, occasionally making a public address, and usually reporting his personal take on developments live via Twitter.

Lisa Shell retains the chair of the Planning Group, with administrative support from Nick Perry, and a consistent contribution from the following volunteers throughout the financial year: Luke Dewey (Metropolitan Workshop), Craig Douglas (Douglas Architects), Dickon Hayward (Material Works). Trevor Horne (Trevor Horne Architects), Jenny Lovell (Associate Director, Allies and Morrison), Robin Mallalieu (Brady Mallalieu Architects), Sarah Mann (Director, Studio Wolsey), Nick Perry (Chair of The Hackney Society), Bernard Tulkens (Tectonics Architects) and new regular attendees Ed Gant (Senior Landscape Architect, OOBE) and Ross Perkin (Director, Emil Eve Architects). Ken Rorrison (Housing, Hackney Council) left the group in November whilst he takes sabbatical leave. We are pleased to welcome Luke Dewey back and remain in contact with some of our other former attendees in the hope they will return in due course.

The planning group email discussion list comprises many more members, including the chairs of the CAACs, who receive monthly minutes and are updated of meetings, presentations and planning issues of interest.



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9. Partnerships

The Hackney Society works with other organisations in Hackney. In particular, it is represented on the committee of Friends of Hackney Archives. The Society entered the fifth year of a reciprocal membership exchange with Sustainable Hackney. The Society retains a paid membership of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies.

10. Plans for 2020/21

With no immediate prospect of grant funding, and a continued lack of specialist trustee skills in this area, our plans for the next year continue to be modest and focused on what volunteers can offer. We continue to seek to expand on those skills and apply for funding where appropriate and the return on the investment of time is sufficient. At the time of writing, restrictions around Coronavirus remain in place and have caused the Trustees to halt meeting and event activity and restrict Spaces to email distribution. Planning Group activity continues at its pre-pandemic pace albeit via online meetings.

We continue to have eyes on a revamp of our websites but these are likely to require at least £3000 of capital funds toward which we have already received a generous one-off donation of £500.

Two new publications projects are under consideration but are at an early, pre-budget stage at the time of writing. Coronavirus restrictions are likely to slow down the development of these projects in the medium term.

The standard membership fee of £15 has remained constant for a number of years and is modest considering the benefits that may derive from it. Membership fees no longer provide the Society with any material surplus once the production expenses for *Spaces* are deducted. We ceased to routinely offer free places on walks and talks to members following the 2018 AGM, which does provide a useful income. Coronavirus restrictions are likely to affect that in the coming year but as we had not become dependent upon it, the effect is unlikely to be major. The medium-term effect on our events programme will be kept under review.

As mentioned in the introduction, a nascent project to engage members and the wider public in discussions on the future shape of the Society have been put on hold following the Coronavirus outbreak. This continues to be a live topic and we are especially grateful to Louise Goodison for providing some much-needed external insight into this project.

We continue to be grateful for all membership contributions and loyalty in these circumstances. Membership fees and donations of all sizes allow us to continue to do what we do on a tight budget.