

Heritage Champions in action



Historic England

NAME OF CHAMPION	Cllr. Maxine Chew
LOCAL AUTHORITY	Fylde Borough Council

Introduction

Cllr Chew was a Heritage Champion from 2004 to 2006, after which date all Champion roles were removed from the Council. But Cllr Chew was determined that there was a need for a champion to promote heritage within the Council, so she enrolled to do a B.A. degree in History and Heritage Management via an outreach programme from Lancaster University and she has continued to work as the unofficial champion for Fylde, seeking to promote heritage and support Council staff at every opportunity.

Cllr Chew's passion and enthusiasm for history and heritage led her to volunteer on the working group who were formulating the Built Heritage Strategy for Fylde 2015-2032 as part of the Local Plan. Also, Council heritage officers were introducing a Local List of heritage buildings or other artefacts that were deemed important to the residents of the Borough, the details of which are summarised below.

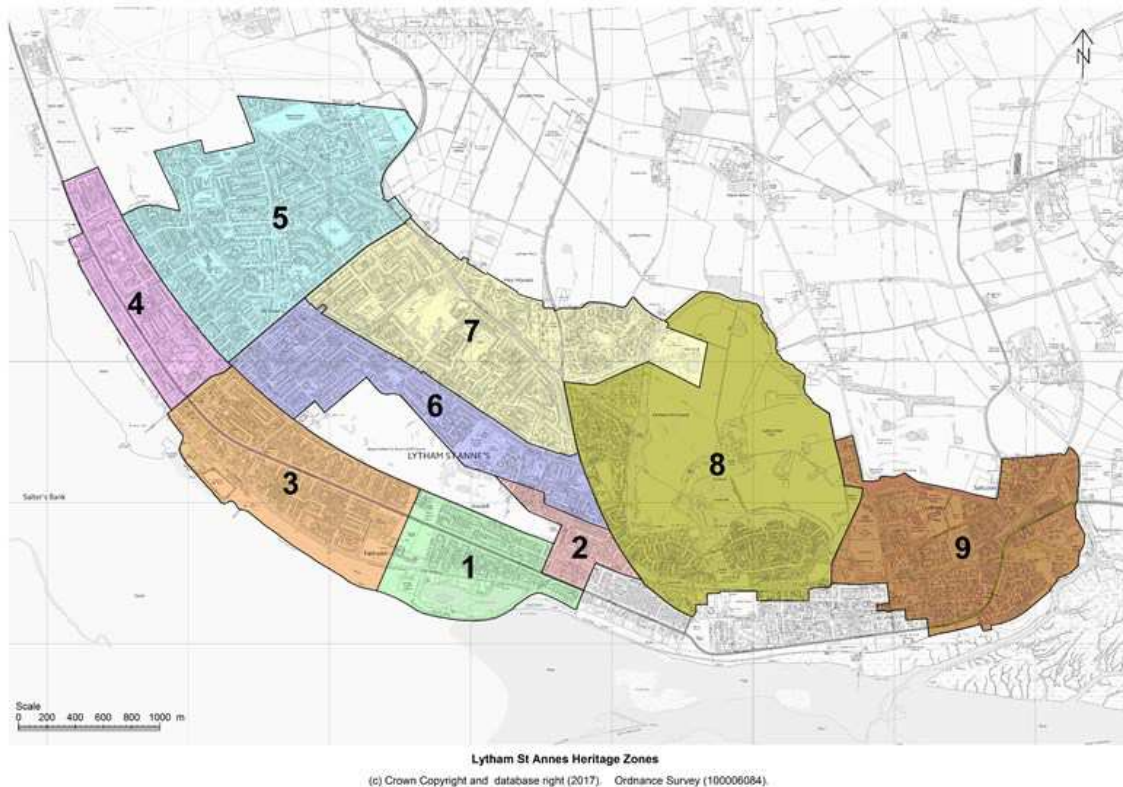


Impact of the activity

Work on the Heritage Strategy started before Cllr Chew became involved, with the detailed preparatory work being done by officers. Cllr Chew began by supporting those officers whenever heritage was mentioned at any relevant meeting. This was informed by prior, quick briefings, and entailed Cllr Chew offering public support and lobbying to ensure that the officers could continue with their work as needed.

One of the challenges was apathy from Councillors who were not interested in history, unmoved by the threat of losing an historic building or landscape and indifferent to the preparation of a heritage strategy. Cllr Chew spoke as much and as often as she could to try and inject enthusiasm into protecting heritage assets with policies strong enough to help.

Cllr Chew's Cllr Chew comments that *"I have thoroughly enjoyed being part of the team who formulated the Heritage Strategy. We are fortunate to have an experienced officer in charge who guided the team to a professional conclusion. Our Heritage Strategy is a document used by other councils as a benchmark."*



Zones were used in developing the local heritage strategy to identify and describe different character areas

With regard to work on the Local List, funding was another tricky obstacle to overcome. All recognised that the Borough had many beautiful and locally important buildings, but a lack of finance was holding back the progress of a Local List – until Lytham St Annes Civic Society offered to fund the officer time to work on the Local List.

Cllr Chew was invited to be part of an expert panel of professionals who would judge whether the nominated building or artefact was of sufficient importance or rarity to be part of the list. The panel was made up of historians, planning officers, heritage officers, an architect, a local resident with experience of local history and a local councillor (Cllr Chew). To date, work has focused on the urban seaside towns, but it is hoped that future work will cover the rural areas.

The Local List was treated with some suspicion by some Councillors, who did not know how it could help to protect assets valued by the local community. Exemplifying the importance of the Local List, recently an application came to committee to demolish a building considered to be historically important to the area. Cllr Chew was able to defend a decision to apply an Article 4 direction to stop the demolition for further talks to take place to save the building had been agreed by the Local Listing Expert Panel that it was suitable for local listing.



An Article 4 Direction has been put on the Lytham Avenues Conservation Area to require a planning application for any works to ensure that any alterations to the houses in this Conservation Area will be appropriate in style and in the use of materials

Looking to the future

Cllr Chew continues to speak about local heritage at every opportunity and, informing this, Cllr Chew attends Historic England training days and Champions meetings.

Joining Cllr Chew at one such meeting in 2017 was Cllr Alice Bennett, Liverpool City Council's Mayoral Lead for Heritage and Design and a new Heritage Champion.

Cllr Bennett commented on her aspirations for the role of Heritage Champion as follows: *"I have been in this role since May 2016 with no prior experience, just a huge amount of enthusiasm for heritage. I oversee a list of 66 buildings at risk and do my best to co-ordinate activity, news and communications with the many stakeholders, interested parties and community members as I possibly can.*

"Alongside that, I am excited to announce that I am setting up a programme aimed at engaging young people in heritage, design and development. The Young Heritage Champions project seeks to educate and engage secondary school pupils from across Liverpool on heritage buildings and sites. It seeks to inspire them to view heritage as their heritage and to have a voice on how the city could be shaped. They will form a Design Review Panel to explore the conflict and complementarity between heritage and development. I can't wait to experience their visions for the city."



Cllr Bennett standing by a listed ha-ha wall in Calderstones Park, Liverpool

From Cllr Chew's perspective, looking forward she hopes to work soon on conservation area appraisals and management plans. Over the next year she hopes that the Local List will have been completed. Once this is done knowledgeable and enthusiastic local volunteers need to be recruited to start a Heritage Forum where a close eye can be kept on ensuring historic buildings are valued and conserved.

Cllr Chew concludes “We need to recruit a person who can research the local area and then write articles to be published in the areas newspapers. Heritage needs promoting and showing how improvements can be brought to the local economy. I would like to work with the authority’s tourism and economic improvement officers to bring this about. Heritage tourism is an underused resource. It could help economic growth by bringing new visitors to the borough. Heritage gives a sense of place; it promotes love and loyalty to where you live or work. It encourages pride in your local area.”

Key learning points

- The importance of local knowledge: Cllr Chew suggests learning all you can about the history of your borough; reading local history books; obtaining details of the Borough’s Listed Buildings and studying them.
 - The importance of planning. If planning training is offered by the “Member Development Group” at the Council Cllr Chew makes sure that she attends. In her words: “Knowledge of the planning system is the key to successful outcomes when heritage is under threat”. Study the NPPF and how it can help protect heritage buildings.
 - Engage with Parish and Town Councils - explaining about the Local Plan and the Heritage Strategy within it. Ask them to list all buildings or artefacts that are important to the area. Explain about Article 4 directions.
 - Speak out! Cllr Chew speaks at planning meetings when a local heritage building is being threatened by demolition or inappropriate development.
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Contact for further information

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