PONTEFRACT CIVIC SOCIETY

Autumn 2026

The King's Award for Voluntary Service
The MBE for volunteer groups

PONTEFRACT VOICE














Executive Activties

The Executive has been busy since the March AGM. We have been welcoming some new members and trustees to the Executive; fresh ideas and energy have revitalised the team.

Utilising the vast experience of Fr Ian we have rewritten the constitution to enable us to have greater flexibility and to allow us to grow our activities in the future; whilst ensuring we maintain our charitable objectives. These changes are currently with the Charities Commission, and we are expecting their approval before our next Executive meeting in October. Once approved we will move on to reviewing our policies to complement our activities. Approval of the new constitution is likely to form part of the AGM in March 2027.

We have reviewed our internal processes including financial budgeting and reporting to provide the Executive with greater clarity and accountability. This greater awareness has avoided unnecessary waste and losses which is a great result. It was great to see that, for the first time, the Wheelfest and Liquorice Shoots events had a nett profit without grant support. A great effort from the Community Connectors team to find local business sponsorship, whose support is always much appreciated. All profits go back to fund future events.

Politics is always moving and we have spent a great deal of time getting to know the new administration of Wakefield Council. This includes the leader, the local councillors and the council officers. We are acting as a positive critical partner to the council; this approach seems to be working with discussions and resulting actions over a broad range of areas. Something that has become very clear is that few of the officers from Wakefield Council visit or are resident in Pontefract and so do not see what we see daily. It is therefore vital that we help keep Pontefract and the issues we face on their radar.

To date we have:

- Raised awareness of the overdue completion of the Horsefair project and continue to be active in understanding the processes and plans of Vico Homes in relation to the flats. We will continue to monitor progress to ensure what was promised is what is delivered.

- Raised awareness the appalling condition of the Town Hall and the urgent need for attention. This is part of the WMDC Facilities and is currently being assessed for repairs.

- Raised issue with the functionality of the bollards defending the town centre during the day with the new Head of Highways. A constructive discussion was had to clarify the functionality, operation and what to expect. We also had the opportunity to discuss parking on Bridge Street, Corn Market and Gillygate. We further noted the poor state of the temporary repairs made to the stone paving in the town centre. All things take time, but we are assured that these points will be resolved.

- Raised awareness the appalling state the 57 wooden planters, that had been left in town following the abandonment of the Ropergate project, had been allowed to get into with no plan to maintain them. Following a constructive visit in September with the officers responsible it is was concluded that some planters will stay in town with some being moved into more in suitable locations and be maintained properly. The excess planters will be redistributed to other local organisations including the new horticulture centre at Pontefract Colliers FC and Friarwood Valley Gardens.

- Raised the issue of the poor presentation of the town on approach due to the decaying flags on lamp posts. We had the unsatisfactory answer that only those that cause a highway obstruction would be removed. We will continue to campaign on this matter.

- Looked to find a solution to the plants growing on buildings in the town looking unsightly and causing damage. As many of the buildings are privately owned it can be difficult to address this and WMDC will not do this; but we continue to look for a solution.

We are starting to campaign to resolve the issue of decaying buildings within the town and particularly within the conservation areas. It cannot be that buildings can be left to decay and become an eyesore without action or consequences. The Council do have statutory powers to resolve this, and we will encourage them to act.

We are pleased that our new web site has been live since June and the content is developing. A new feature is the Events calendar where we have uploaded all the Pontefract events we can find along with our own events. We have added a new Community Group benefit that they can add any event they wish to promote to our calendar too. Details of the events include description, location and if required links for the booking sites so keep a look out for events of interest.

We are proactively supporting the FREE Wakefield Council initiative Citizen Coin that lconnects volunteering opportunities with local business rewards. Local businesses can benefit by attracting footfall and additional spend, while volunteers receive rewards for participating. Search Citizen Coin for more details if you want to participate or visit www.pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk/citizen-coin/

We were delighted to support Pontefract in Bloom with a grant to help enable them to provide the fabulous display of flowers in the town. A huge thanks to them for their efforts. We know they are looking for support on their committee so should you have time to help they would be very grateful.

Heritage

heritage open days

September saw the annual national Heritage Open Day celebration, and we have been heavily involved in encouraging Pontefract people and organisations to get involved with around 30 events listed. Our events included detailing different aspects of Pontefract history and heritage. As an addition to this year's promotion of HOD we had a market stall where our members were able to answer questions not just about HOD but also our other activities too. The stall was part of KLH events new Friday Artisan Craft Market which will run on the second Friday of each month up to Christmas. Thanks to the Heritage Group for their efforts on this.

November marks the 100th anniversary of the Crescent Cinema building and the Heritage group have organised a blue plaque in recognition of this funded out of the residual funds from the Crescent Project. There will be an unveiling ceremony in November.

Community Connectors

The Community Connectors team have once again done a great job in organising and running WheelFest26 and 1940s Ropergate in June and Liquorice Shoots in July.
These events draw crowds into the town centre creating an enjoyable environment for a mass community event for all the family while providing opportunities for our local businesses to get involved.
They also provide a platform for local charities and community groups to fund raise with reported funds raised amounting in the region of £2900. WheelFest 27 and Liquorice Shoots 27 are already in the planning stage. If you would like to sponsor an event contact vicechair@pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk

On a positive note, the meeting with the WMDC Events team was beneficial to both parties with the Events team confirming their commitment to Liquorice Festival 2027 while having a desire to help to make Liquorice shoots have a larger role in the weekend's celebration of our town's unique heritage

The Community Connectors group are running several events as we come to the year end. This includes a Quiz night, Christmas Wreath Making, Christmas window competition for businesses and the Christmas banners around the towns Christmas tree. Not forgetting the monthly social lunches and dinners. Check out the event calendar for more details.

While the decoration squad haven't been able to install the usual displays on the Town Hall due to repair of the Balcony. They are looking at doing something new around the war memorial if prepared in time

Our Junior Civic Society is currently trying to update their contacts at local schools. This is an annual exercise with staff changes but this year it has been made more difficult with the PAT now becoming part of Ark academies and all emails changing. We are still hopeful that we have a good entry for the Christmas banners and student judges for the Christmas windows

Our Town Crier John Turner has continued to engage with Pontefract's community and has now been joined by Deputy Town Crier Sean Gaffney. Working together they can fulfil more engagements but are also able to record and post their proclamations online to spread the word wider.

John's recent bookings have included appearances at Junction 32, the opening of the new Prince of Wales Hospice Shop and attended Pontefract Golf Club Captains Day where he made appropriate Proclamations.

We are very proud of Sean and his Wife Fiona as they have recently represented England at the Commonwealth Powerlifting Championships in Canada where Sean won Five medals including two gold whilst Fiona won four medals including two gold. We look forward to hearing all about their fantastic achievments.

2027 Plans

Plans for more social events in 2027 include a Barbecue afternoon and a Treasure Hunt.

Working with a young local film producer we are supporting the creation of Pontefract's first Film Festival which is planned for October 2027. This is a great opportunity for budding film makers to get involved so watch out for more details.

We are looking to create a music night so up and coming talent from New College will be able to perform for you in 2027. This is currently in the planning stage with New College. Look out for more details.

Rail

The Rail Group continue to work with the various rail operators and networks to campaign for better rail services to and from Pontefract. The project to create a bridge suitable for all users on Monkhill station is finally taking shape and with promises of completion in 2027. The group are also engaged in attempting to have the station building at Baghill station prevented from decaying, but it seems it is a battle with the owners. There are plans to add wall flower boxes to Tanshelf station and discussions for approval from the station owners are in process.

Planning & Highways

The Planning and Highways Group meet to discuss the latest planning proposals with Pontefract and after analysis comment accordingly on the planning portal. They also monitor the town centre and conservation areas, reporting possible breaches of planning restrictions to WMDC for their consideration and action.

One new task is to think wider and consider what changes, however small, could be made to Pontefract to improve the experience of a new visitor or our current citizens. If you have any ideas, observations or suggestions then we would be happy to hear them to see what can be achieved.
Following discussions with the council officers it would seem that a good strategy is to have a project identified, considered and planned and waiting for when funding becomes available, as it can do sometimes with short notice, So the better prepared we are the greater chance we have of reaping that reward. You can either email us directly on info@pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk or use our Contact Us form with your suggestions.

Talks and Tours

Our monthly talks are flourishing under the new Talks and Tours coordinator, and many enjoyable and well received talks have been held so far this year. What has changed from September 2026 is the venue. It was considered that the Town Hall was no longer suitable as a venue going forward mainly due to the unreliability of the lift and the general conditions for safety plus the demographic of the audience. It was decided to accept the kind offer of hospitality and facilities at Pontefract Masonic Hall which is much easier for everyone to access. The first talk at the new venue on Sept 15th was a great success with improved access and easier parking encouraging a new and returning audience.

We look forward to the remaining 2026 talks, details of which can be found on the events calendar.

The 2027 program is almost completed and the dates noted on the events calendar. More detail will be added as it becomes available.

Membership

The Executive would like to extend our thanks to all our membership for supporting our efforts, for attending our events, getting involved in the organisation or running of the event or are members of our working groups. We would all welcome a greater participation so why not get involved?

Currently we have a special membership offer for those wishing to support our work. By talking out membership during the remainder of 2026 you will receive 2027 membership Jan – Dec as well.

https://www.pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk/product/annual-membership/

Thanks to our Business members for your support.

Our aim is to raise Pontefract as a whole and we really appreciate the support given to us by our business members in 2026. It is our intention to increase and improve the contact and support we can offer our business members through meetings and information, acting as a conduit for WMDC Town and City, Wakefield First and Citizen Coin to keep members abreast of potential opportunities and town developments.

We would like to welcome our recent business members.
Gold Members
The Grange - Carleton Grange Trust
Boom IT
Silver Members
House of Ales
Fairwood Fields Care Home
Bronze Members
WF8 Retail
Sams Happy Faces.

Community groups

Local community groups and charities are a vital part of the Pontefract landscape. We intend to increase the level of contact and support we can offer. We can often use our network of contacts to resolve a problem or supply a solution along with awareness of grant and funding opportunities. Our Community Showcase event in March is a great example of both the marketing of community groups and networking between them. A new member benefit is that we invite groupsto promote their events on our web site to encourage greater engagment.

2026 remaining events

Quiz night with pie and peas supper . Monday 12th October 7pm. Pontefract Masonic Hall £12.50

Monthly talk - The Mobile Police Museum. Tuesday 20th October 7pm Pontefract Masonic Hall. Free for members. Non member £3 on the door or £3.96 via eventbrite including booking fee.

Monthly talk - The setting up of the War Graves Commission. Tuesday 17th November 7pm Pontefract Masonic Hall. Free for members. Non member £3 on the door or £3.96 via Eventbrite including booking fee.

A Christmas Carol - Chris Cade
A one man performance of A Christmas Carol by actor Chris Cade
Monday 30th November 7pm Pontefract Masonic Hall. £5 on the door or via Eventbrite with an additiional booking fee.

Join us to make your Christmas wreaths at our workshop. Tuesday 24th November 7pm Pontefract Masonic Hall.
Materials included. Festive welcome drink, Festive nibbles, Take your wreath home
Open to PCS Members, Masonic Members and the General public
Member price £25.00 per person
Non Member price £30.00 per person

Join us for a Christmas wreath making workshop and afternoon tea. Wednesday 25th November The Old Grocers, Beastfair.
All materials included.
Session one starts 12pm
Session two starts 3pm
Afternoon tea including sweet and savoury treats to be served at 2pm so both groups can enjoy it together
Take your Christmas wreath home.
Open to PCS Members and the General Public
Member price £35 pp
Non Member price £40 pp

Liquorice Singers at Christmas
Sunday 20th December 7pm The Grange, Carleton. £10 on the door or via Eventbrite with an additiional booking fee.

To book your place on the Quiz night or Wreath making please email societysocials@pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk

Gold Member

Barkers Fencing

Gold Member

The Prince of Wales Hospice

Gold Member

Partners No 5

Gold Member

Pontefract Squash & Leisure Club

Gold Member

Tracked Spider Solutions

Gold Member

twistedesign.

Gold Member

Pontefract Academies Trust

Gold Member

Berriman Carpets

Gold Member

Farmer Copleys

Gold Member

Wild Camping Vans

Gold Member

BOOM I.T.

Gold Member

The Grange Carleton Grange Trust

Silver Member

Silver Member

Michelle's Flowers Limited

Silver Member

newcollege Pontefract

Silver Member

ridley&hall solicitors

Silver Member

House of Ales

Silver Member

Fairwood Fields Care Home

Residential and Dementia Care

Bronze Member

Cromwells Restaurant

Since 1988

Bronze Member

Cavallo Ristorante & Bar

Bronze Member

Pomfret Gin

Bronze Member

St Marys Community Centre

Bronze Member

Non Sibi Sed Omnibus

Founded 1779

Bronze Member

Mark R Cawthorn Accountancy Services

Bronze Member

Sam's Happy Faces

Bronze Member

WF8 Retail Outlet

We would like to thank all our business members for their support.

Pontefract Civic Society is here to help your business through local networking and enabling business support.

Email us at info@pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk to find out more. We would be delighted to get to know your business better.

VISIT OUR ONLINE SHOP

We offer a range of books and souveniers of Pontefract though our online shop or at our stall during events.

There are pens, badges, mugs, bags, gift jars of Pontefract cakes, T shirts and even a model of the Buttercross!

Most of the books we offer are not available from other sources and they cover various parts of Pontefract's ancient and industrial history including the Railways.

DONATIONS

Have you thought of making a donation to Pontefract Civic Society ?

The civic society is both independent and non-political. As the town's 'watchdog' for the built environment, highways, rail, planning, architecture, heritage, events, business, and public amenities; we can speak on behalf of those who live, work, are educated here, or visit Pontefract, without fear or favour. We would be absolutely delighted if you would make a donation.

Both the Chair and Vice Chair are available if you wish to discuss this in more detail.

CONTACT US:

We would be delighted to discuss any aspect of Pontefract with you to see how we could help or if you would like to know more about personal membership, Community membership or Business membership.

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MEMBERSHIP & PARTNERSHIPS