**Looking Ahead**

Following last year’s optimistic AGM and our discussion with Prof. Michael Parkinson on Liverpool’s journey back from ‘the Brink’ of the 1980s, as Lord Derby commented at the start of this year’s meeting, none of us could then have foreseen the global crisis which was just around the corner. It’s been an eventful year for us all, and while consequently bereft of Civic Society events, as noted in the Annual Report many of our other activities have been continued, with our working groups continuing to meet together virtually, and with partner organisations including the city council.

In the past 9 months, society as a whole has found ways to work without the face-to-face contact that we so often take for granted and now miss so much. In the time that we’ve been locked down, the funding climate has changed, buildings at risk have deteriorated further, and plans that were in place have flexed and changed. We at MCS made a journey from first awkward Zoom meetings to our first virtual awards presentation, and now must look to a hybrid virtual and live events programme for at least much of the coming year.

What has also changed though, is the tenor of global civic conversation. Looking ahead, topics that only a few months ago were simply topical and interesting have shifted to become the centre of public debate:

* How we live and where we live – in particular, for many how work and workplace are shifting.
* What will the future of our high streets and town centres look like?
* How will we travel, and, how far should we travel, or have to travel for vital amenity?
* Urban health and wellbeing are essential topics for the exit from the Covid-19 crisis. And,
* Having been a beneficiary of EU money, having been a bastion of remain in the North, How will the City Region fare outside the EU?

It’s worth noting that the Liverpool City Region is looking to consult on and codify these civic themes as part of its 15 year Spatial development strategy focusing on the five strands of

* climate change and the environment;
* health and wellbeing;
* inclusive economic growth;
* placemaking and communities,
* social value

Now is the time for engagement, and my 2021 challenge, therefore, to the Society and its Members is:

to bring these topics, and, how to understand and tackle their everyday local implications, into our activities and events, both ‘on’ and ‘off-line’.

We’ve shifted the mechanism of MCS membership too, and through this hope to welcome more members and a greater range of people and groups to add their voices to the debate and their practical support as volunteers. MCS is a membership organisation; it’s your Society.

You can help and be involved:

* by spreading the word about new membership opportunities,
* by joining one of our working groups,
* by partnering us in exploring the ‘new topics’, and,
* by keeping us informed of what’s happening in your part of the city region, and, the issues that are important to you.

Here’s to 2021 and a year of exploration and recovery! We will be in touch