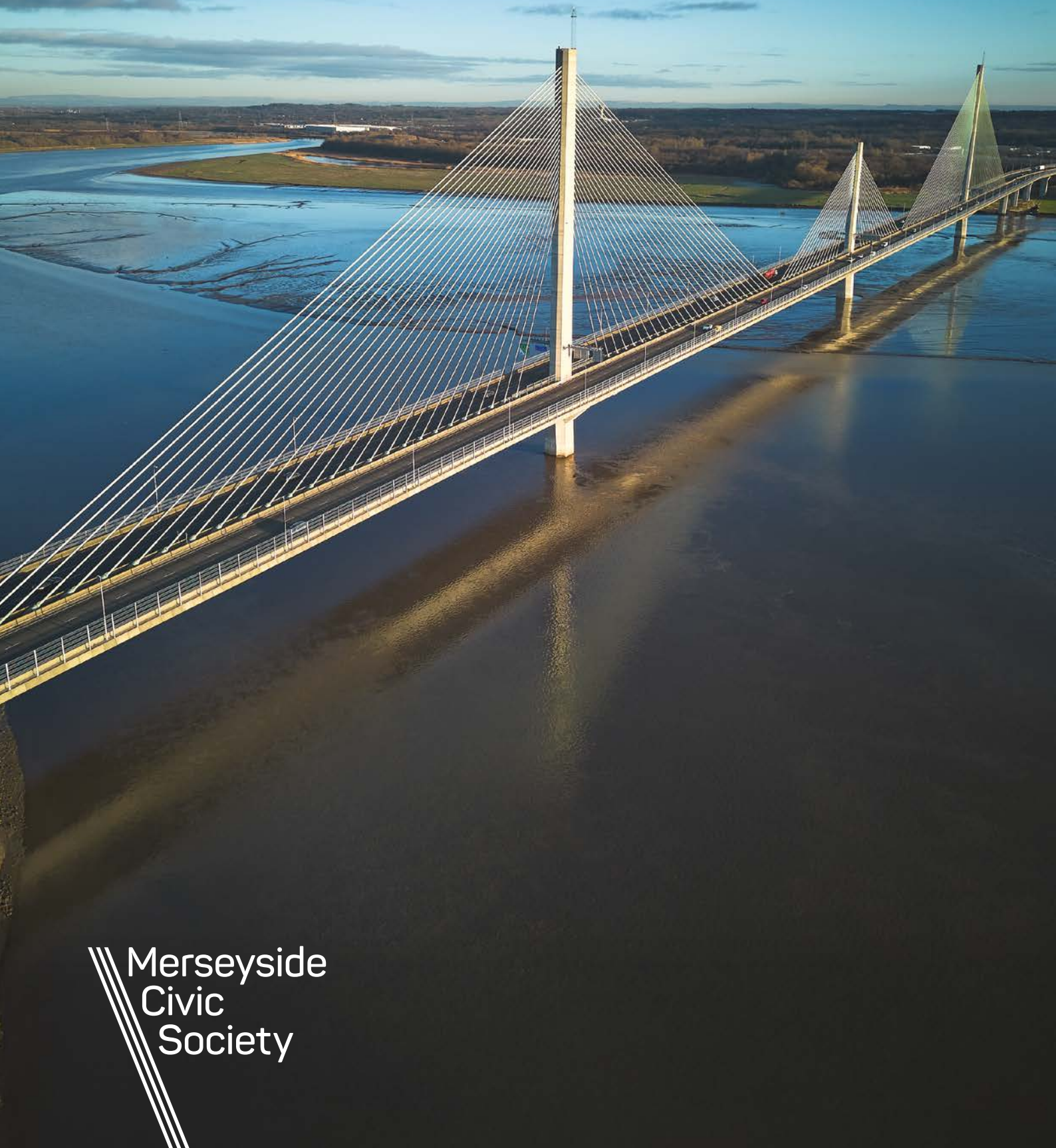


Annual Report 2025



Who we are

Since 1938, Merseyside Civic Society has championed the protection of our region's finest buildings and public spaces, from the Albert Dock to treasured parks and green spaces, whilst advocating for excellence in the design of new developments.

Liverpool remains the beating heart of our work, but our focus spans the entire city region. We take an active interest in its environmental progress, regeneration efforts, and the evolving character of its communities.

We honour the past, but we are firmly future facing. We believe Liverpool and its surrounding areas hold extraordinary promise, and we're committed to helping shape a vibrant, inclusive future for residents and visitors alike.

Our members reflect the rich diversity of our community, and we welcome individuals from every background and profession, local people united by a shared desire to make our city region a better, more attractive place to live.

We speak independently on matters of public concern, especially those affecting heritage, planning, and the safeguarding of green spaces. We also celebrate civic pride through awards that recognise individuals and organisations whose contributions strengthen the cultural and civic fabric of the region.



GET IN TOUCH AND GET INVOLVED

www.merseysidecivicsociety.org | chair@merseysidecivicsociety.org

Events

In January/February, Andrew Jackson led two sell- out 'Saved by Hospitality: Banks to Banquets' walks finishing aboard the Royal Daffodil.

February saw some 50 members and guests attend a *Liverpool Development Update* at Liverpool Town Hall by Liverpool City Council's Corporate Director of City Development

In March, we participated in the *Wirral History and Heritage Fair* at Hulme Hall in Port Sunlight.

Ed Williams, one of our speakers at last year's AGM, led two city centre public art walks in March and June which were highly popular.

In May a group of 11 MCS members visited the *Stockton-Darlington Railway* in its bicentenary year to learn lessons we can apply in the bicentenary year of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway in 2030.

Our *summer walks programme* ran from April to September and attracted 132 bookings

April 22 -
Port Sunlight: The Man and the Village

June 04 -
Amazing Grace and St Patrick – Old Hall St.

July 15 & September 10
Exploring Waterloo

July 23
Mountwood: A unique Edwardian Enclave

August 7
Street to Street: The new MerseyBeat

August 27
Neston Town Walk

Many members and guests joined our *summer social* at the Pen Factory on 31 July – a chance to meet members of the Council and talk to them about what matters to you.

In July, we also staged *Liverpool & Manchester Railway – History on the Line* at Metal in Edge Hill Station with a fascinating presentation by Eric Shenton of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway Trust and Paul Greenwood from Manchester Histories re 'Community Rail Partnerships'.

November sees two further MCS Events –

November 12
'Saved by Football' – a visit to the Hill Dickinson Stadium with a focus on the site's heritage assets

November 18
AGM & Why Liverpool's High Street is thriving and how to maintain it.



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Campaigning

Save the Piazza Fountain

Our temporary information boards are now in place telling the story of the Piazza 'bucket' fountain in Drury Lane and encouraging donations towards its full restoration. We are also in the process of setting up the Piazza Fountain (Liverpool) Heritage Trust as a charity. Due to the delay in removing scaffolding and portacabins from the Plaza following cladding work, we have been unable to host our launch event and a temporary switch on. However, we hope to organise this soon.

<https://www.merseysidecivicsociety.org/campaigns/restoring-the-piazza-fountain/>



Rocket: All Aboard

MCS is playing an active part in the plans to celebrate the bicentenary of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway in 2029 and 2030. We regularly attend the network meetings and strands groups organised by Manchester Histories. In September two members of the MCS Council contributed to events held at the University's VGM.

More details on the MCS website

<https://www.merseysidecivicsociety.org/campaigns/rocket-2030/>

See also the new Rocket: All Aboard website

<https://www.rocketallaboard.co.uk/>

Membership

Get Involved

We welcomed thirty-five new members in the last year, taking our total membership to 455. New members can now join, donate and sign up for Gift Aid from a single form on the website.

Council members have presented to a range of groups, some already affiliated to MCS, others joining following their talk, thus extending our reach across the City Region.. This year, we worked with MCS community group the Friends of Waterloo Seafront Gardens who took up the challenge to create a Charity Flower Bed at the Southport Flower Show attended by 55,000 people.

We have welcomed the following community groups to join us this year:

- Anchor Women's Club
- Haymans Green Women's Club
- Liverpool Biennial
- Liverpool Regional Group of the Victorian Society
- Upton Village Community Group

We continue our 'donate what you can' membership scheme with suggested annual donations of £20 waged and £10 unwaged. This encourages regular donation to support our events and activities while ensuring that people are not excluded because of their inability to donate. Please remember that your donations are essential if we are to continue to fulfil our objectives.

<https://www.merseysidecivicsociety.org/donate/>

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Awards



Rita Cheesman Award for Heritage Interpretation

At the tail end of 2024, MCS presented The Rita Cheesman Award (named after a pioneering Blue Badge Guide) for Heritage Interpretation to *Tree Story: A History of the Liverpool City Region Through its Trees* a project which takes an innovative step into the digital world, engages with individuals, families, schools and communities and reaches out to the whole Liverpool City Region. The *TreeStory.me* website, with its helpful guidance and ease of use is a new and welcome way of broadening the creation and interpretation of heritage in different ways. Three separate presentations took place to the three partners Dot Art, Open Eye Gallery, and The Mersey Forest.



Best New Mural - 'Katarina Johnson-Thompson' by Paul Curtis

Paul Curtis' work here is a splendid example of mural art as civic celebration in its dramatic depiction of Katarina Johnson-Thompson. The image captures both the determination of the locally born athlete and local pride in her continuing success, which went on to include the 2024 Paris Olympics.



Felicity Wren Award for Public Art

The Felicity Wren Award for Public Art is named in memory of Felicity Wren (1948-2019) (artist, teacher, gallery owner, and MCS Council member). The awards were judged, and then presented at the MCS AGM in November 2024 by Bryan Biggs, Director of Cultural Legacies at the Bluecoat.

Best New Sculpture – 'The Runner' by Faith Bebbington

Faith Bebbington's installation of figures high up along one of the roofs of the Hilton hotel is both a visual delight and completely unexpected. From the ground it is barely visible, but climbing the winding pathways of Chavasse Park it gradually reveals itself – a subtle triumph of form animating site.



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Merseyside Civic Society Council

The Council meets quarterly, with much of its activity now actioned through its four working groups together with the new Awards and Plaques Group and our membership of the Piazza Fountain Working Group which includes Engage and the Friends of the Piazza Fountain.

These groups focus on distinct aspects of the Society's business. They meet to respond to matters of public interest, to plan our events and campaigns and to oversee the Society's governance and membership services. If you want to contribute and have ideas on issues which need attention, suggestions for events or activities, or can help with administration, we want to hear from you: secretary@merseysidecivicsociety.org

Planning, Campaigns & Policy

MCS reviews and responds to planning issues and activities within Liverpool and the wider city region. We encourage public engagement with on-going debate and aim to draw together diverse voices from our member communities and make a positive contribution to discussions that influence the quality of life for us all. The Planning, Campaigns & Policy Group has met four times this year. It brings together professional experience and community engagement.



During 2025 the group has engaged with a number of topical issues:

- Commented on the Liverpool Waterfront Masterplan and SPD
- Attended preliminary open day re Pumpfields and Limekilns SPD
- Discussed issues with the test events for the Hill Dickinson stadium.
- Commented on the Liverpool Historic Environment and Review of Conservation Areas SPD
- Commented on the Wirral Local Plan
- Attended a meeting with the leader of Liverpool City Council, the Corporate Director of City Development and the Head of Planning where we raised various items of concern
- Offered support to Garston Futures re their opposition to an expanded Waste Treatment plant
- Put in place plans to hold a North Liverpool conference in 2026 with a focus on housing and heritage
- Currently responding to the consultation draft for the Liverpool Local Plan

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Communications & Events

The group met four times during the year. We have communicated with our members through e-newsletters in June and November. This group also looks after the MCS website, the event programme, social media, and the production of publications such as this Annual Report.

We issued one media release following the devastating fire at the Grade 1 Listed Woolton Hall. This provided an opportunity to highlight the importance of a second *Stop The Rot Campaign* and a joined up approach with local authorities re Buildings at Risk.

MCS once again participated in the Wirral History and Heritage Fair held in Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight in March. This participation provides the opportunity to promote the Society and its activities and to meet and exchange views with representatives of local conservation, amenity, and heritage groups from across Wirral. We also presented talks on Heritage Plaques to the Local History Group of the U3A Liverpool and to Garston Local History Society.



Heritage Watch

We are delighted that Merseyside Building Preservation Trust has become a Strategic Partner of MCS cementing our joint approach to preserving the best of our heritage. Drawing its membership from both Merseyside Civic Society Council and Merseyside Building Preservation Trust, the Heritage Watch Group has met twice this year in March and October.

We have focused on getting support for our ambitions from Liverpool City Council (LCC), Historic England and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. This led to meetings between the group, the Leader of Liverpool City Council and his senior officers who are charged with looking after many of our heritage buildings. In addition, a workshop with LCC and members of Heritage Watch to discuss the Stop The Rot Campaign and specific buildings at risk was organised in November.

We are encouraged that Liverpool City Region Combined Authority have worked with Historic England to commission a feasibility study re the potential establishment of a Buildings at Risk resource covering the whole of the City Region.

Resources, Governance & Membership

The group met four times during the year, with additional ad hoc meetings taking place more frequently. It focuses its activities on membership recruitment and services; governance issues, financial supervision; and liaison with national and local groups. It also plans the Annual General Meeting. This year we have focused on encouraging more donations, succession planning and starting up the new Awards and Plaques Task and Finish Group.

We also convened a special online meeting to discuss the future of Civic Voice.

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Members of the Council 2024/25

COUNCIL MEMBERS	ROLE
Professor John Belchem*	Chair & Lead, Resources, Governance and Membership
Andrew Jackson*	Vice-Chair & Chair, Merseyside Civic Design Awards
Pam Wilsher*	Hon Secretary
John Goodman *	Hon Treasurer
David Massey	Assistant Hon Treasurer and Advisor to the Council
Ann Lees	Membership Secretary
Daniel Bimpson*	Elected Council Member
Peter Brown	Vice President
Chia-Lin Chen	Elected Council Member
Dave Chetwyn	Elected Council Member
Sebastian Dembski	Elected Council Member & Lead, Planning, Campaigns and Policy
Gavin Davenport*	Elected Council Member
Lord Derby	President
Peter Elson*	Elected Council Member & Lead, Communications & Events
Sarah-Jane Farr*	Elected Council Member
Steven Garnett	Elected Council Member & Community Groups Coordinator
Eric Lybeck	Elected Council Member
Glynn Marsden	Co-opted Council Member
Lesley Martin Wright	Vice President
Victoria Millward	Co-opted Council Member
Roger Phillips	Vice President
Steve Power	Elected Council Member
Tony Scanlon*	Elected Council Member
Mark Smith	Elected Council Member
Adrian Swift	Elected Council Member
Anthony Spencer	Elected Council Member
Eddie Taylor	Elected Council Member
Ian Wray	Elected Council Member

*Also Trustee of the MCS Charity
Charity Registration Number 221700