

Profile for Heritage Counts 2015

Kevin Grady – Amenity Society (Leeds Civic Trust)

1. Could you provide us some details about your amenity society? (name, when formed, how many members, volunteers, why it was formed)

Leeds Civic Trust was founded in 1965 and is celebrating its 50th birthday this year. The Trust is a voluntary organisation which promotes high standards of architecture and planning in Leeds; protects the city's built heritage, and encourages the improvement of the city's amenities. It has 500 individual and family members, over 80 corporate members and 24 affiliated amenity societies. Its headquarters is a pair of mid-Victorian cottages which is bought and renovated in The Calls area of Leeds city centre. The Trust is best known for its work as a 'watchdog on planning' and for extensive activities in the heritage and conservation sphere.

2. What is your involvement in the amenity society?

Since 1987 Kevin has been Director of Leeds Civic Trust. Kevin is extremely well known in the local authority, business and voluntary sector spheres in Leeds, representing the Trust at the highest levels in partnership working to do with improving the city.

3. Please explain any interesting examples of managing heritage at the local level which had a positive result – particularly with reference to working with local government, Historic England and owners. What barriers/challenges were faced, and how were they overcome?

The Trust has successfully sought the listing of many buildings in Leeds over the years. Buildings it has saved from demolition or unsympathetic alteration include: the Bank of England, the Third White Cloth Hall, Kirkgate Market, St Paul's House, Park Square, and the south side of Boar Lane.

It works closely with Leeds City Council and English Heritage/Historic England. In 2013 it embarked on a project to survey the external condition of all the Grade II listed buildings in Leeds Metropolitan District. Since then its volunteers have surveyed 1500 of the 3000 buildings, providing the local authority's Conservation Team with a photographic record and description of the condition of the buildings.

It is also working with the Council, Historic England and the HLF on the Lower Kirkgate Townscape Heritage Initiative—providing information about the history of the area and providing advice and vocal support for developing a solution to secure the long-term conservation of its historic buildings, most notably the First White Cloth Hall (1710-11).

In addition to this work, the Trust informs the public about the heritage of the city through its annual historic walks programme, its blue plaques scheme (154 erected so far), its annual programme of lectures on the history of the city—'Leeds in Your Lunch Hour'; and by co-ordinating, in partnership with Leeds City Council, Leeds Heritage Open Days each September with over 80 building openings or events.

If you require an alternative accessible version of this document (for instance in audio, Braille or large print) please contact our Customer Services Department:
Telephone: 0370 333 0607
Fax: 01793 414926
Textphone: 0800 015 0516
E-mail: customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk