

NBC Heritage and Culture questionnaire;

1. Please can you make suggestions for the Scrutiny Panel's consideration how Northampton's heritage and culture could be promoted on a regional, national and global level

Quite an array of ambitious goals here "regional, national and global" As Cllr Nunn mentioned in the meeting, getting the town's population to take pride in the place they live in would be a start, then working up to global.

I think it needs to be accepted that not all things labeled as heritage are going to provide a positive draw for a wider lay group of visitors or locals. The meeting on Thursday was in many ways a self selecting group of people with a passion for any and all historical subjects. I celebrate and champion the wonderfully quirky English enthusiast who gets to know and love an obscure subject with a depth that even professional academics don't often match. Unfortunately it would be unwise to base a modern civic programme on such niche interests alone.

It has been remarked by many, that Northampton is a town with as much raw history as a York or Chester. This is of course a valid observation in terms of dates and events, if there was a popular history book written on the town, it would indeed have many interesting chapters to match many towns and cities in Britain. Sadly from a casual tourist's point of view, dead dates, vanished castles and plaques saying something once happened here in a building long gone, aren't the same draw as mediaeval walls, ramparts, half timbered thatched houses, winding street patterns, majestic minsters and colossal cathedrals.



Northampton castle today,



York city walls and minster today

Flagging up some of the things that have happened in the town, adding them to concise illumination of what the modern town has to offer is surely the mix we should be aiming at for the average tourist. I think the reality of any tourism offer in the town is that the only current national draw we have is the well known shoe industry. I would be overjoyed if any of the surviving quality footwear manufacturers decided to fully embrace the visitor centre approach to their business. Going beyond just a factory shop which most manufacturers have, they should creating a museum space, a café, and importantly viewing of the ancient and modern techniques and machinery still used in the creation of Northampton's famous good year welted brogues would be a great addition to the town's attractions. Perhaps Churches are considering this in their new expansion into the old bus depot, we badly need it. Their proximity to the

railway station is a boon for access via public transport from outside the town, something we see with the Albion Brewery's similar walkable location



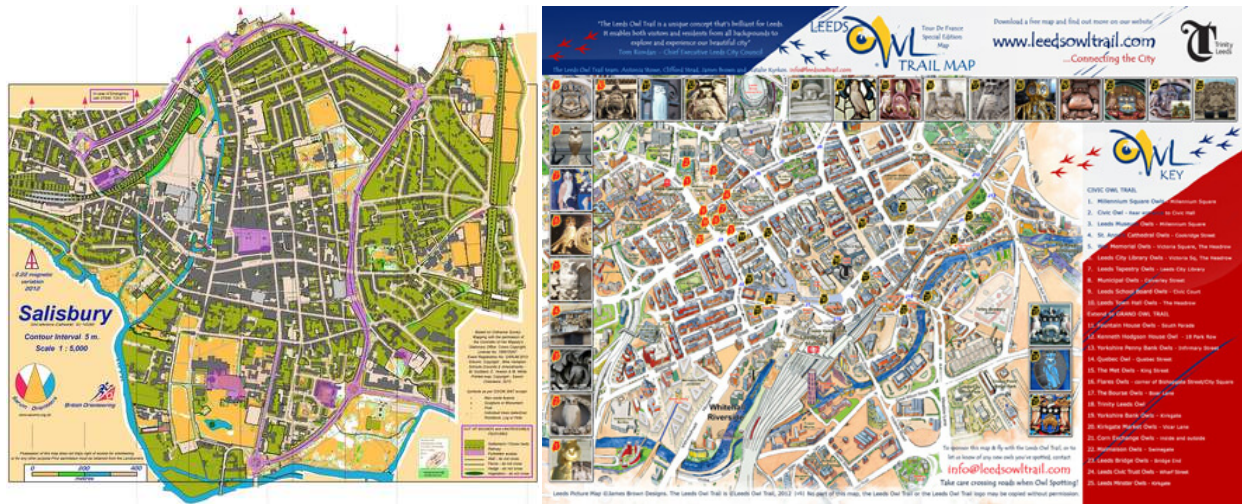
- Can you identify any gaps within this marketing and the cultural and tourism offer and how it can be developed. Please provide details

I agree with a number of parties that as Northampton doesn't have a fighting chance to win a battle with Milton Keynes and now Rushden Lakes, to be the top shopping location in the area. Culture and night life offers a better route to a vital and prosperous town centre. The University's move to Waterside may be a help in realizing this goal but in heritage terms, students aren't an obvious market for such attractions. They will crave the buzz of a busy night life, funky small shops, café culture in the day, gigs at night.



I would personally love to see the town erect Poster drum towers at strategic places within the town centre. These appear in other towns and cities and by their very existence, covered in bright eye catching posters for all sorts of events, add to the street view that the town is jumping and alive. They aide the independent promoter in getting the message out that their event is on, or the local business selling its

wares and services at special times. As students come to town these would help spread the word of what the town has to offer outside of the academic institution and its student union.



The simple idea of free visitor maps available at every hotel, the railway station, Student hall of Residence, tourist information centre is an obvious and easily attainable goal. I would vote for this map to be as much a signpost for what we have today as solely a trip around the town’s past. Showing commercial visitors or random tourists who want to fill some time in the town where to go and what to see is the key. Pure heritage trail publications have their place but we really need to think about whether we have enough above ground structures or visitor attractions to make that work.



### 3. How could the vehicle of tourism be used to provide learning about Northampton.

Clearly people do visit Northampton as tourists in some small number.

I am proud to say that since we opened up the restored Albion Brewery, we have seen Real Ale enthusiasts from around the country and even abroad turning up every now and again as Phipps is on the radar for those serious in tracking down brewing history. We have had small groups from Norway, Australia, Italy and Japan visit us and a film crew from LA in the The States came to see us, most stayed in the town over

night. We also get day and weekend trippers from within the UK who come to hunt out pubs and breweries they can reference in the Good Beer Guide, the bible of British Beer fans.

We plan to continue restoring other sections of the brewery still semi derelict. We also have some historic Phipps Brewing equipment we would like to restore and display in the bar and brewery, costly refurbishment and re assembly of a giant 1914 brass and copper mash tun from the original Bridge Street Brewery is a long cherished goal for me, but funds are always needed elsewhere as we expand as a modern manufacturing business.

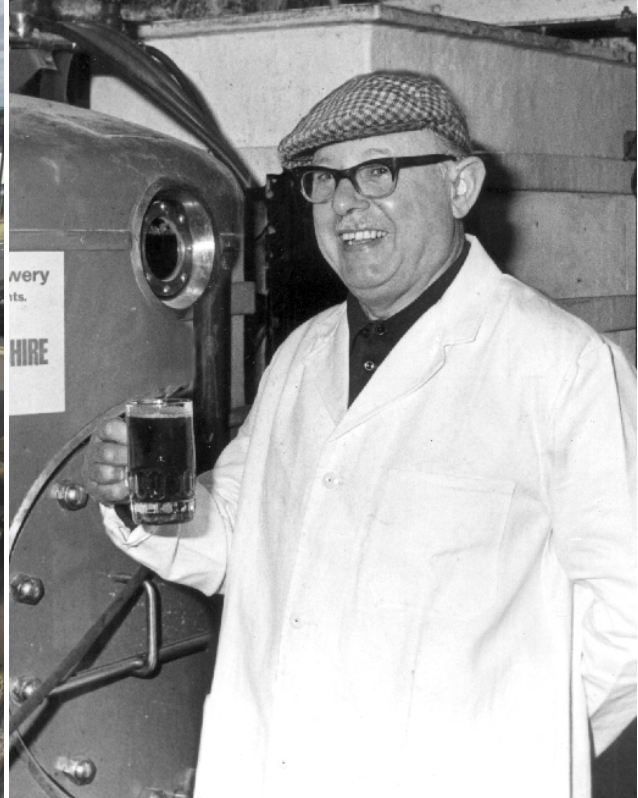


The 1884 Albion Brewery



1914 Phipps Northampton Mash Tun

One great improvement for us in developing the Albion Brewery as a real Heritage draw would be the pedestrianisation of the stub of Kingswell Street outside our building. This idea has had some support from The County Council which as the body responsible for Highways, would be in charge and technically owns the land. I have proposed creating a new town square in the space bounded by the 15<sup>th</sup> century Church Restaurant, The King Billy Pub, The Albion Brewery and the Department for Meat and Social Affairs. There are plans to re route the traffic which currently flows around the island of buildings including the Plough and the Church with just bus access up Bridge Street. This would enable this area to be included more organically into the cultural quarter, pulling it down from the Guildhall Rd to a new public space, paved, with tree planting and public art. I would propose that a statue of Bill Urquhart with pint in hand, the last head brewer at Phipps' Bridge Street brewery and the world's First Micro brewer be erected as the centre piece to this square. The statue itself would become a national draw and be photographed and posted on line by many visiting ale enthusiasts along with educating our local population about Northampton's pivotal role in the history of brewing.



Redundant stub of Kingswell St. outside the Albion Brewery      Bill Urquhart, the world's first Microbrewer

In addition prior to the paving, an archaeological dig on the site might find evidence for the ancient Saxon or Anglo Danish Burg wall around the original settlement of Hamtun. This wall was situated between Kingswell Street on the inside and Bridge Street on its outside and thus the only place in the town where it could be found and marked in the modern fabric would be in front of the Albion Brewery, IF it extended this far down the Ham hill. There may even have been a southern gate at this point as the wall probably turned westwards around this spot. We hear so much about our Norman castle that the origins of the town are somewhat forgotten. If a wall line was located, (and its always an if when dealing with re used and re dug town centre sites where archeological remains could have been destroyed by cellars and later building) I would propose marking it in the modern day square paving in a different stone, tracing in Saxon / Danish inspired twisting knot work design the line of the original settlement boundary of the town, along with a plaque noting the founding of the town and the small Saxon kingdom it was the capital of. Of course we might not find it, and it might not be there, that is archaeology!

4. Please provide details of the roles of both Northampton Borough Council and other partners have in promoting the town of Northampton.

I think that question is really being asked of the wrong people: I am sure I and other interested parties can put up our pet projects and suggestions for wonderful actions. Given the perilous state of funding in all levels of local government in the UK today, it is surely for Councilors to examine their available resources of time and money and make the best judged interventions they can afford.

However I would make one more serious proposal to you as a council, have a look at Light Night events around the country. I live part of the time back in Leeds and its Light Night event has grown over the years to become a wonderful celebration of art and the joy of city living. They also have smaller versions in other places like York. An evening as Autumn draws in where the town centre is full of street art and most distinctively moving film and illuminated buildings brings virtually the whole city out to promenade the streets closed to traffic and soak in the visual feast before their eyes. I don't know the cost although I am happy to find out. I do know that any money spent brings back twice the outlay in civic pride and togetherness. Imagine the front of All Saints and the Guildhall lit up with fantastic moving images and animations, Imagine Guildhall road being a sea of lights and stalls. Perhaps St Crispins fair is the basis for our own Northampton event but it needs to be widened out from just fun fairs and stalls to be a genuine town festival again, attracting resident from town and county interested in art, culture and spectacle, free to families, young and old



I make the offer to any councilor or official; I will host you all on a fact finding visit to Leeds next year, come and see the event on October 4th, I will take your round my second home and guide you round the city as it becomes one giant stage for all that's good about urban life. Or I will introduce to the organizers at any point before then if you wanted a conversation on how it works and is funded.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEIO702DzAM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoldTnUsrb8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEqGsBdns0Q>

<https://whatson.leeds.gov.uk/lightnight>



5. What do you want the cultural and heritage offer of Northampton to look like in 2025?

Should I live that long, I would hope to see a bustling town with a championship Football team to match its great Rugby and Cricket clubs;

A kaleidoscope of independent shops, bars and venues making the town a hub for the area's night life.

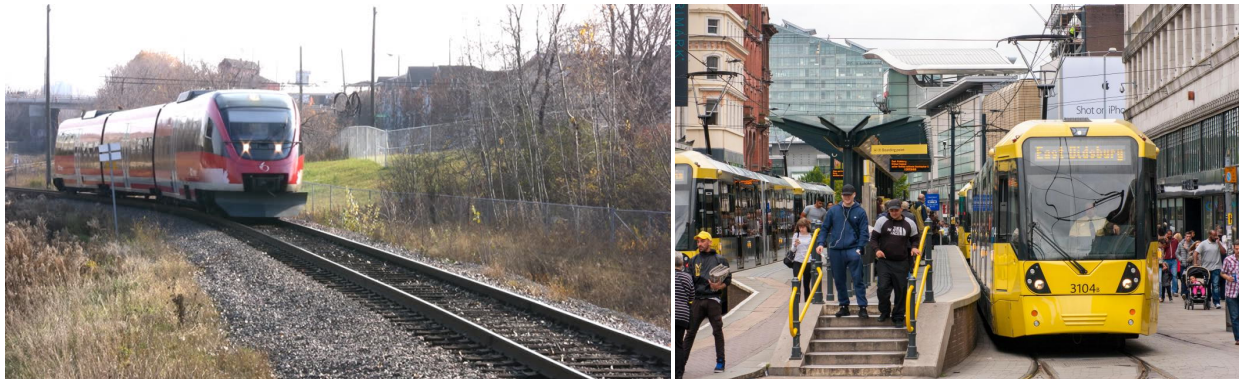
An end to homelessness and begging in the borough, no harsh enforcement but caring provision.

Some sympathetic re development of run down and in many cases empty parts of the ancient town centre, for instance supporting the proposed redevelopment of the former Barclaycard site on Marefair, enlarging it to encompass a re-purposed arts centre in St Peters church, creating new mixed residential and commercial quarters constructed in a sympathetic architectural style with green eco friendly, timber framed, real brick, real iron stone, topped off with Northampton's first new thatched roofs for centuries. These could be built around an imposing monument to the lost castle, possibly a stone, 3d recreation of the town crest complete with rampant lions. Something with life and commerce that respects the location in the heart of the ancient town, marks the adjacent castle site but isn't another pointless park or dead monument that precious few will cherish or care about. The centre of town needs more life, more people, more jobs, more attractions, more shops, more affluence.

A pedestrian square outside the Albion Brewery called Kingswell Square where a bronze statue of Bill Urquhart, the world's first Microbrewer has pride of place within sight of his old Brewery at Phipps Bridge Street, Carlsberg's new brewery and the County Hall, site of the town's first Norman brewery.

A regionally famous Light Night Festival on the historic St Crispins day evening, attracting visitors from around the area into Northampton, giving residents a pride in their historic town home.

A light rail, tram line that connects the Town's rail station with the main shopping streets and then stretches out along the Nene Valley through stops at Billing, Earl's Barton, Wellingborough where it splits into two branches, one up to Kettering the other down to Rushden and Higham on the track bed of the disused 4<sup>th</sup> good line on the Midland main line. Linking up the economic and cultural attractions of the county town with its main shire hinterland, easing the A45 commuter snarl ups, easing the congestion in the new town bus station, Linking the West Coast Northampton branch with the Midland Mainline and destinations to the East Midlands and the North, providing some nationally appealing and green transport infrastructure which the town and county would be proud to host.



6. Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to tourism and culture in Northampton.

My particular area of knowledge revolves around the neglected Northampton history of brewing. With Phipps, Carlsberg and the historic breweries that have gone before, Northampton has a right to put its brewing industry on the same page as its Footwear. We provided the nursery for the original, world changing invention of the micro brewery. Pioneer Bill Urquhart worked at Phipps and experimented with his original recipes and techniques in the dying days of the Bridge Street Brewery, under the noses of Watneys and Carlsberg. He went on to establish his first micro brewery at Litchborough and spread the ideas out from there that now form a vibrant part of the British and World brewing culture.





If Carlsberg could begin offering public brewery tours in their own 1970s monster brewery, matching what happens in Copenhagen or at other lager breweries, they and Northampton would benefit from a raising in profile; I have never understood why they don't explore this route, are they ashamed of their plant or its location or are there too many Health and safety concerns to make it feasible?

Alaric Neville, Phipps NBC. October 2017