



## WHITEHAVEN TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

### *THI up and running*

Whitehaven's Townscape Heritage Initiative, or THI for short, is now up and running. This is the first THI Newsletter, to update you on progress and keep you informed about what's coming up.

As an introduction, THIs are schemes which run for a period of five years and were designed by and are supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. They raise awareness of the value and quality of the historic built environment and promote good practice in building conservation. Whitehaven's THI covers the Old Town Conservation Area around Irish Street, James Street and the Market Place.

### *Funding*

There is a fund of £1,353,900 available for works in the THI area. The main funders are the Heritage Lottery Fund (£659,300) and Britain's Energy Coast (using NDA funding £394,600). The balance is made up with capital funds from Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council.

### *Programme*

The majority of the funds will be used for grants to enable property owners to sympathetically repair and protect the fabric of historical buildings and bring vacant floorspace back into use. £100,000 has been set aside to undertake some improvements to the public areas and £30,000 has also been set aside for heritage skills training for contractors and local residents. Complementary activities such as tours, lectures and workshops highlighting the rich history of Whitehaven and the importance of maintaining and preserving the built heritage, will also be provided.

### *Public Areas*

The first phase of the improvements to the public areas has now been completed with the demolition of the closed toilet block and the paving of this area to make a square at the end of James Street. Galpin Landscape Architecture has been appointed to prepare a phase 2 scheme, looking at how reference to the town's heritage can be brought into the public areas, whilst at the same time managing traffic and access for all. Watch this space for further details.



### *Please forward your photos and memories*

We would like to put together a collection of photographs, drawings and memories of the THI area.

If you have any photos taken in this area or inside any of the properties, that we could copy, or if you have any memories of the people who lived and worked there, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact Jane using the contact details on page 4.

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## First grant offered

The THI is pleased to announce that it has offered its first building grant to the Whitehaven Foyer Company. The Whitehaven Foyer Company is a joint venture between Impact Housing and the Howgill Family Centre. The Company intend to transform the Grade II listed former YMCA building on Irish Street into an iconic Foyer development.

Foyers are based on a French model and cater for those young people who do not have the home support and springboard into independent living, learning and work that they need. Foyers provide that support. The Foyer will be a fantastic re-source for the area. It will offer a wide range of services for young people and the wider community.

It will have seventeen safe, comfortable and secure self-contained flats for single, young people. In addition to having a need for housing, young people who live at the Foyer must also be willing to engage in training, education or employment.

There will be dedicated, experienced support workers on site, who will work with the residents to assist them maintain their tenancies and deal with any other issues they are facing.

For further information visit: <http://www.whitehavenfoyer.org.uk>



## Would you like to take a look inside the YMCA?

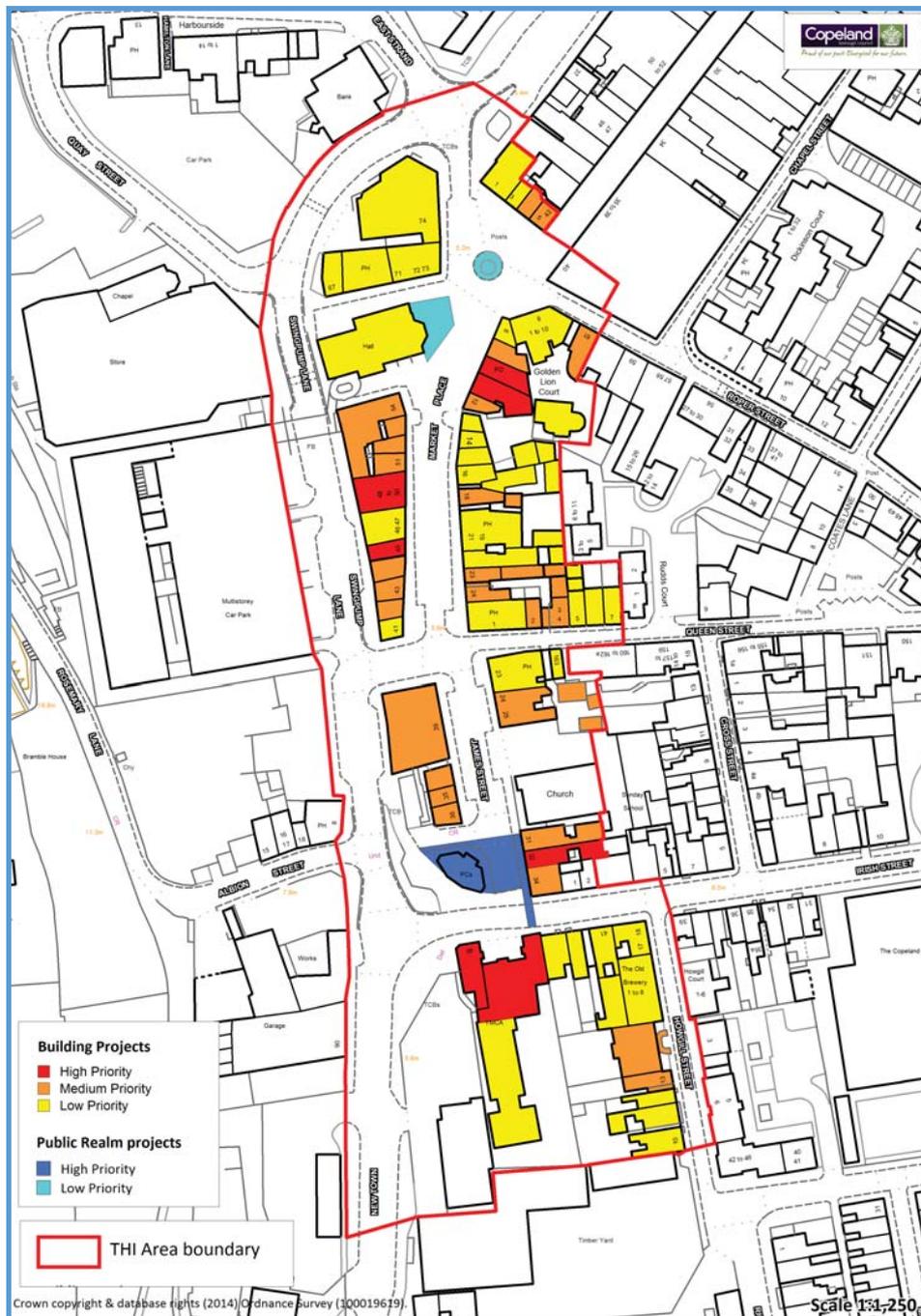
As part of the Heritage Open Days annual events weekend, we are offering guided tours around the former YMCA building, so you can see the property for one last time before work to transform it into a Foyer begins. The tours will take place at 10am and 1pm on Friday 12th September and last for approximately one hour.

Places are limited so you do need to book by ringing or emailing Jane, using the contact details overleaf.

Please also note that the building is currently in a very poor state of repair, so you will be required to wear a hard hat and protective footwear (which will be provided) and need to be able to walk on uneven surfaces and climb stairs. The tour is not suitable for children and there are no parking or toilet facilities on site.



## Thi Area



### Applying for a grant

Whilst we would love to be able to offer grants to all those wanting to carry out work to their properties, funds will not allow us to. Therefore a prioritisation process had to be undertaken.

As part of this process experts used a scoring system which looked at the condition, appearance, level of vacancy, use, ownership, group value and keenness of owners to undertake works. The highest scoring properties are shown red on the plan.

Applications have, in the first instance, been invited from the owners of these properties. However, should any of those owners decide not to take up a grant, or there are funds left over when they have, the THI Officer will then approach the highest scoring medium priority property owners, to see if they would be interested in undertaking works.

Grants are available for building repairs, restoring architectural features and bringing historic floorspace back into use.



*“The five year Townscape Heritage Initiative programme will help ensure that the Old Town area of Whitehaven is as strong and appealing as possible. This, coupled with the increased footfall from the Albion Square development, and the much needed and long awaited facilities for young people on offer at The Foyer, will see the Old Town area of Whitehaven as a thriving location. Our strategy for Whitehaven is really taking shape.”*

Cllr Hugh Branney, Copeland Borough Council’s portfolio holder for Community Regeneration



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## Does conservation matter?

The short answer is yes, if you believe that our built heritage reflects the history of our country. The loss of our built heritage is irreversible, and whilst there have been arguments in the past that buildings that have outlived their usefulness should be demolished, current thinking points towards their re-use in the interests of sustainability.

Most traditional buildings can be adapted towards other uses or can have their empty spaces put back into use. These are the principles attached to the THI – bringing empty property and floor space back into use, refreshing the external appearance of the buildings and bringing new life back into the area, which in turn will help to reverse the declining economic viability of the Market Place.

Sometimes, by chance, the work may reveal some interesting historical conundrums. Take the exposed gable on the former YMCA. Stripping the render for safety purposes has revealed the original roofline, a number of bricked up windows and what appears to be a central doorway.

Once the rest of the building fabric is exposed further research will help to explain how the building has been adapted to meet the town's changing fortunes. If the building were to be demolished instead because it no longer served a purpose, then this link to the town's maritime history would be lost and it is highly unlikely that we would have a replacement building of equal merit in its place.

**Richard Majewicz, Conservation Officer, Copeland Borough Council**



## THI Officer



Jane Taylor has been appointed as the THI Officer.

She is based at The Copeland Centre and has a background in surveying and regeneration, having previously worked for the Northwest Regional Development Agency.

If you would like any information on the THI, would like to sign up for any events, or to receive future newsletters electronically, please contact her using the details below.

## Contact

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### Stakeholder Partnership

The THI is overseen by a group of stakeholders. Below is a list of the stakeholders and who they represent:

Kerry Maxwell Whitehaven Community Trust (Chair), Shelley Williamson Town Team/Town Centre Businesses (Vice Chair), Cllr Mike McVeigh Copeland Borough Council Heritage Champion, Cllr Geoff Garrity Whitehaven Locality Group, Christine Minnorry Whitehaven Heritage Action Group, Celia McKenzie Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners, Anne Bradshaw Copeland Disability Forum, Karl Melville Cumbria County Council Highways.

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