



THE NORWICH SOCIETY

*Press Release for Norwich Evening News and Eastern Daily Press
Archant – 18 April – **embargoed until 21 April 2011***

Elm Hill enthusiast is new Chairman of the Norwich Society

At the Norwich Society Annual General Meeting on April 20th presided over by the Lord Mayor, Mr Peter Bentley was elected to succeed Professor Derek Burke as Chairman of the Norwich Society

The Norwich Society is a civic society founded in 1923 and one of the most active in the country. It is known in Norwich as a watch dog on conservation and planning issues. And has a membership of 800+ private and 46 corporate and Non-Profit members.

Derek Burke has served 12 months as Chairman during which his experience as Vice Chancellor of UEA has been a tremendous asset for the Society both in administrative and in public terms. He has consolidated the work of his predecessor Alec Hartley in placing the Society in practical partnerships and initiating projects.

Vicky Manthorpe, the Secretary to the Trustees, said “Professor Burke has been a marvellous advocate and ambassador for the Society and has brought an assured approach to the administration which has been extremely helpful.”

The Society’s New Chairman, Peter Bentley, is a relative newcomer to Norwich, having moved from his previous home in South Norfolk in 2006, but Peter has energetically thrown himself into civic life in the city. With his educationalist wife Kay he “found a shop with a flat over it” – a house in Elm Hill with origins back to the 15thC – and, is busy restoring it.

Peter is Chairman of the Friends of Elm Hill and has been persistent and outspoken in defence of the character and repair of the street which is so closely associated with the formation of the Norwich Society.

Retired from a varied career, first in the commercial marine world and later 24 years with the Shell Group, his work developed from that of a widely travelling consultant to “creating my own job” as a pioneer in online staff development and leadership. This led to him setting up Shell’s own Open University, working alongside the parent O.U. Business School in Milton Keynes. Peter left Shell in 2004,

but continues to teach business and leadership subjects to Shell multinational staff on-line. In 2002 the Open University gave him an award for his contribution to corporate learning, something he is particularly proud of.

Since arriving in Norwich Peter has joined the Prince's Trust as a business mentor for young disadvantaged people starting their own businesses. He is also a director and trustee of the Norwich Preservation Trust.

Peter feels honoured to be able to lead the Society over the next two years and expresses his commitment to carrying on the excellent work of Derek Burke and his immediate predecessors. He summarizes his principal aim as that of working collaboratively with the city council, especially over the future maintenance of the many listed buildings they currently own. In addition he is aware of the many transport problems of the inner city and will continue to press for the development of safer pedestrian and cycling routes. As a founder member of the Norwich Cathedral Quarter group he is acutely aware of the need for the revitalization of this historic and heritage-rich area which has been badly affected by commercial decline and the intrusive spread of the city's raucous nightclub scene.

To achieve successful change in all these areas will require much work and energy so that the need to recruit more volunteers of varied skills and talents will be another of Peter's concerns in his period of office.

In addition to his house restoration he has another very practical interest, that of clock repairing, and he and Kay are both keen walkers. Their two children are grown up, their son an architect in Madrid whilst their daughter is a national fencing champion, in full-time training for the Women's team foil event in next year's Olympic Games.

*Contact: Vicky Manthorpe
01603 765606
admin@thenorwichsociety.org.uk*