

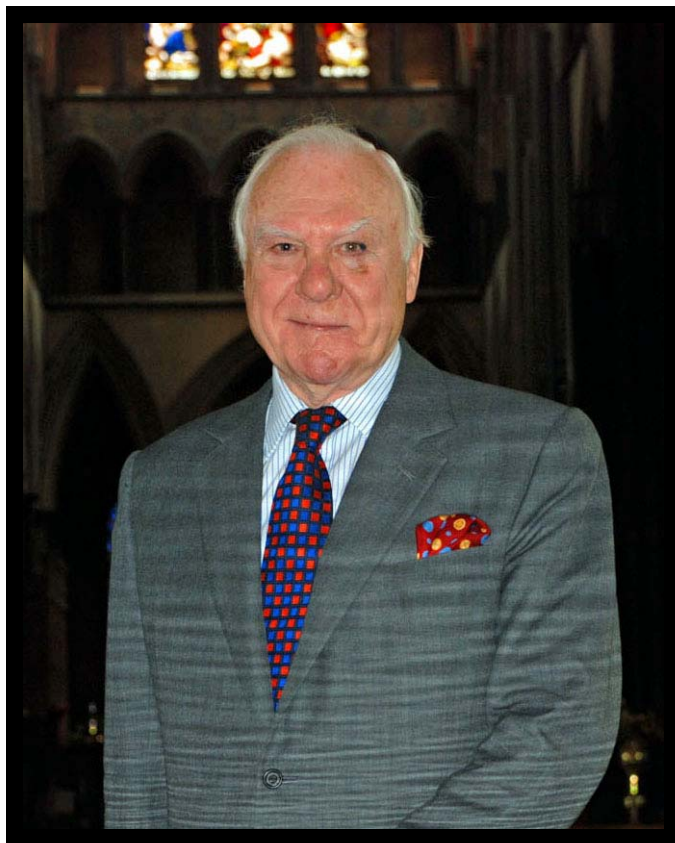
SALISBURY VISION

Proud of our past...forging our future

For immediate release

Thursday, 28th May, 2009

Salisbury Vision appoints Sir Christopher Benson



VISION: Sir Christopher Benson, pictured inside Salisbury Cathedral, is the new chairman of regeneration body Salisbury Vision



VISION: Sir Christopher Benson, pictured at Salisbury Cathedral, is the new chairman of regeneration body Salisbury Vision

One of the most prominent businessmen in the UK is the new figurehead of regeneration vehicle Salisbury Vision.

Sir Christopher Benson, who lives in Salisbury with his wife and one-time city mayor Lady Jo Benson, has been appointed as the non-executive chairman of the new Salisbury Vision management body.

The new body, known simply as Salisbury Vision, replaces the previous council-led steering group with a more business-orientated set up.

The Salisbury Vision is responsible for delivering 24 projects aimed at making the city prosper in order to improve the well-being of residents, businesses and its 1.5m annual visitors.

One of the centrepiece projects is all ready under way – plans to improve the look and feel of the Market Place and Guildhall square.

Sir Christopher, who was High Sheriff of Wiltshire six years ago, was knighted in 1988 for public service and has an illustrious business career spanning five decades.

Previous chairmanships held include some of the UK's leading pharmaceutical, chemical, insurance, retail and construction companies, such as Boots, MEPC plc, Albright & Wilson, Royal & Sun Alliance, Costain plc and London Docklands Development Corporation.

Sir Christopher, who takes the chair for the first time on July 2, said: “It is an honour to lead Salisbury Vision, which is dedicated to revitalising key parts of our wonderful city whilst ensuring its historic uniqueness is protected.

“Like businesses, cities cannot stand still otherwise they get left behind by alternatives and the community can be the losers.

“Should Salisbury Vision’s carefully considered projects become a reality, the city will have gone to great lengths to ensure prosperity and growth for generations to come, mirroring the vision and enterprise of its founders.

“One of my priorities as chairman will be to explain to the business community why it must play a key part in helping Salisbury become a destination for companies and visitors alike and one of England’s best places to live.

“It is in their long-term commercial interest that Salisbury Vision delivers results because they all benefit; the whole-hearted support of commerce and community is vital.

“It would be a shame if anyone holds back when so much hard work is being done.”

Sir Christopher has accepted the chairmanship in a voluntary capacity and will not be paid for his time.

The Bensons are well-known benefactors in Salisbury; they recently helped fund the cathedral's new water-flowing font – the first permanent font at the 750-year-old place of worship in more than 150 years.

Sir Christopher replaces former district councillor Peter Edge, who previously acted as the chairman and interim chairman of Salisbury Vision's steering group.

He said: "Sir Christopher's appointment as Salisbury Vision's figurehead is widely welcomed and his experience, skills and contacts will be invaluable as we seek to make the city a destination of choice for businesses and visitors alike. I wish him well in the new role."

Salisbury Vision is Sir Christopher's second regeneration-related appointment in public life.

He is chairman of Stratford Renaissance Partnership, established to provide a vibrant, community-focused legacy site for East London following the 2012 London Olympics.

Among his many local interests in Salisbury, Sir Christopher is a Lay Canon at the cathedral. He and Lady Benson, an OBE and life-long resident of the city, are also magistrates.

Salisbury Vision's Executive Board has up to 10 members, of which a maximum of 40 per cent should be from the local authority, plus the private sector chairman.

The initial board comprises representatives from Wiltshire Council, to be the new Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise, Salisbury City Council (interim member Reg Williams), Salisbury Civic Society (Alastair Clark), Salisbury City Centre Management Limited (Ian Newman), Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry (Neil Philpott),

South Wiltshire Economic Partnership (Jack Wills) and Salisbury City Community Area Partnership (Tim Skelton).

Ends

Notes to journalists

The Salisbury Vision project is a joint private and public sector initiative to revitalise key areas within the city of Salisbury whilst ensuring that its historic uniqueness is protected.

The partnership's aims are to create high-quality facilities, new jobs and an improved and sustainable environment for the people of Salisbury and beyond.

The Salisbury Vision Board is responsible for delivering the Salisbury Vision regeneration programme. It is private sector-led and its members are:

- Salisbury Civic Society**
- South Wiltshire Economic Partnership**
- Salisbury City Centre Management**
- Salisbury & District Chamber of Commerce and Industry**
- Salisbury City Community Area Partnership**
- Wiltshire Council**
- Salisbury City Council**

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