

NEWSLETTER

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www.hb-bridgecentre.org.uk

'Fingers crossed' for future of Hebden Bridge's Council Offices



The future of Hebden Bridge's beautiful but neglected Council Offices will become clearer in a few weeks, according to the community group who are overseeing the ambitious plans to breathe new life into this landmark building.

Hebden Bridge Partnership, the umbrella group linking together community organisations in the town, has drawn up detailed proposals which would see the use of the building transformed. Among the changes envisaged is the conversion of empty offices at the rear of the site into a new function hall, giving the town a much needed facility. The plans also envisage a new entrance foyer and exhibition area, meeting rooms and offices, and a central information point for the delivery of

public services. A lift will make the building fully accessible for all.

These capital works are currently the subject of an £866,000 bid for government funding, via the Big Lottery Fund. "We've now heard that our application has successfully passed the first hurdle, and the grant assessors will be coming to Hebden Bridge shortly to meet us," says Andrew Bibby, joint project coordinator. "This will be our chance to explain in detail our vision for the building. We believe what we're proposing is both financially sound and designed to meet our community's real needs."

The members of the volunteer team leading the project say that their task has been made easier by the massive local support received in the past few months. Seventy local organisations have now endorsed the project, and many individuals have also given their support. About 150 people dropped in to the Council Offices to see the plans at the recent consultation day in December, and messages of support have also been coming in via the project's website.

The grant application has been made in partnership with Calderdale Council, who have committed in principle to transferring the ownership of the building into Hebden Bridge community ownership. The details of this transfer are now being discussed with Calderdale. "We have to ensure that the financial basis for the new arrangements is sustainable. We also want to make this a model of really strong local democratic control, with the whole community actively engaged and involved. The aim is to make the Council Offices building the heart and soul of local life for a very long time to come," Andrew Bibby says.

Website 'blog'

A regularly updated online diary is giving progress reports on the development of the project.

The blog, produced by members of the project team, is the latest addition to the Council Offices project website, which can be accessed at www.hb-bridgecentre.org.uk. Free access to this site (for people without home internet access) is available in HB library in Bridge Lanes.

In line with the project's commitment to full transparency of information, the website also includes full details of the documents submitted as part of the grant application.

Seventy organisations now support project

The total number of local community organisations, groups and social enterprises endorsing the Council Offices project has recently grown to seventy.

The groups represent a complete cross-section of local life, including voluntary youth organisations, local history groups, choral and amateur dramatic societies, sports groups and the local Business Association. Hebden Royd Town Council and Blackshaw, Erringden, Heptonstall and Wadsworth parish councils also support the project.

Turning the Council Offices green

Energy conservation wasn't top of the priorities when the main Council Offices building was first built in 1897, but the need now is to make the

building as environmentally sustainable as possible for the twenty-first century.

The project team have committed to weaving 'a green thread' into their proposals for the building, and Hebden Bridge's own Alternative Technology Centre is giving welcome technical advice.

Who's leading HB Partnership?

The Council Offices proposals are being coordinated by a project team and advisory group, working under the auspices of Hebden Bridge Partnership. Details of the project team (which is jointly coordinated by Cllr. Janet Battye and Andrew Bibby) are given on the website.

Hebden Bridge Partnership (which brings together local community groups and the town and parish councils) has recently elected a new Management Board. Its members (in alphabetical order) for 2008 are:

Janet Battye (Calderdale councillor), David Bell (Wadsworth PC), Andrew Bibby (HB Walkers' Action), Stewart Brown (coopted; HRTC), Lee Comer (HEADS Arts), Michelle Dargan-Cole (Girlguiding), David Fletcher (Innovation café and shop), Michelle Foster (Hebden Royd TC), Fiona Gibbon (Erringden PC), Gwen Goddard (Friends of Calder Holmes), Lesley Jones (Hebden Royd TC), Gerard Liston (Hope Baptists), Lesley Mackay (Sustainable Transport group), Nicola Milburn-Jones (Civic Trust), Diana Monahan (Local History Society), Stephen Murty (Murt's Motors), Dave Nelson (Arts Festival), Michael Newton (Camera Club; International Group), Janet Oosthuysen (Central St), Susan Quick (coopted; disability issues), Dorothy Sutcliffe (Blackshaw PC), Polly Webber (Alternative Technology Centre).

This leaflet is available in large print format: ring 01422 844026

Give your support

Please complete this form and drop it (in an envelope) through the council offices letterbox or post to HB Council Offices project, c/o Hebden Royd Town Council, Council Offices, St Georges St, Hebden Bridge HX7 7BY. Or go on line to www.hb-bridgecentre.org.uk

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