

## MEDIA RELEASE

### FRIENDS OF TOWN HALL PLAN OPEN DOORS

It will be open doors at Hebden Bridge's Town Hall on Thursday October 8<sup>th</sup>, when the charitable trust which is leading the community bid to take over management of the Town Hall will be sharing its plans and ideas for the future of this landmark building.

From 5pm until 7pm there will be a chance to look around the whole building and meet the volunteer trustees of Hebden Bridge Community Association, the charity established to undertake an 'asset transfer' of the Town Hall into community control. "Everyone is welcome to drop in anytime between 5pm - 7pm, find out more and tell us how they'd like to see the building developed. There'll be free tea and cakes, a trail around the building with some surprises thrown in and a chance to meet the new architects," says Sara Robinson, one of the trustees. "We have musicians and entertainers coming along, as well as local historians so there should be a good atmosphere."

The open doors session will be followed at 7.30pm by the first AGM of Hebden Bridge Community Association, when individuals and organisations who have signed up as Friends of the Town Hall will be given a detailed account of current developments. Over 450 adults, children and local organisations have now joined as Friends.

The project to ensure a long-term sustainable future for the Town Hall, currently partly empty following the closure of several offices, dates back several years, and has the support of Hebden Bridge Partnership, Hebden Royd Town Council and the four rural parish councils as well as many other local organisations. It received a strong boost following 2007 recommendations from the government to

local authorities to consider asset transfer of key public buildings into accountable community control, and the Town Hall was identified last year by Calderdale as a pilot for transfer. Hebden Bridge Community Association has been established specifically for this purpose, with a constitution which encourages democratic participation by all living and working locally.

“Too many key buildings have been lost in Hebden Bridge in recent years, and we are determined that this won’t happen for the Town Hall. We’re developing detailed plans which we believe will not only secure the long-term financial future of the building under democratic community control but will also improve dramatically the facilities available in the building for local groups to us,” Sara Robinson says.

As well as the open doors session, groups of children and young people from Calder High and Riverside will be visiting the Town Hall earlier in the day, to discuss their own ideas for how the building can be used. “We’re planning for the Town Hall for the next fifty years, so it’s vital that we listen to what our young people want,” Sara Robinson adds.

Hebden Bridge Community Association has got off to a strong start in terms of its declared desire for community participation, with thirteen people having put their names forward for the ten places as trustees of the charity. Ballot papers are being sent out to Friends of the Town Hall this week and the result of the election will be declared at the end of the Association’s AGM on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

The detailed submission from the Association to Calderdale, which sets out the proposed arrangements for the asset transfer, is currently being considered by Calderdale council, and a response is expected shortly. The submission includes a pledge to maintain the existing use of the building being made by the town and parish councils, and by the Light Opera society and Youth Theatre.

Calderdale is also assessing a separate rival bid by the Light Opera society to take over extra space in the buildings for their own use.

Full details of the Town Hall project, including the asset transfer proposals, are available at [www.hebdenbridgetownhall.org.uk](http://www.hebdenbridgetownhall.org.uk), where it is also possible to join as a Friend of the project.

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More information: Sara Robinson, 01422 842792