

Hebden Bridge Community Association



NEWS RELEASE

£75,000 BOOST TO TOWN HALL TRANSFER PLANS

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Hebden Bridge Community Association, the charitable trust which is taking over Hebden Bridge Town Hall from Calderdale in a pioneering asset transfer arrangement, is celebrating the news of a £75,000 grant award.

The award is being made by Community Builders, a new social enterprise fund financing innovative community-led ventures which use key buildings as 'community anchors' to deliver services and regenerate their local economies.

Andrew Bibby, one of the Association's trustees, said: "This is enormously welcome news. It's recognition of the depth of support in Hebden Bridge for the future development of our Town Hall under community control. The tangible commitment of Community Builders to our project is a clear endorsement of the strength of the financial and business case we have developed for the Town Hall's future success."

This is the largest grant yet received by the Association, and it is to be used specifically for developing the final business plan and planning documents, to enable an application for £2m capital funding from the fund to be made later this Spring. The trustees of Hebden Bridge Community Association are also

progressing an application for matching European funds. The aim is to give back to the town the major public hall and function room facilities lost when both the Cooperative Hall and the Civic Hall closed their doors, many years ago. The development will also include an enterprise centre designed for small businesses particularly engaged in the creative and digital sectors, as well as secondary rooms and meeting space.

The decision by Calderdale council to pass control of Hebden Bridge Town Hall to a community-led charitable trust was taken last December. It has already been hailed nationally as a pioneer in developing new ways of ensuring that important public buildings can be protected under democratic control. According to the national Development Trust Association, Hebden Bridge is the first Town Hall in the country to be passed into community ownership in this way.

Hebden Bridge Community Association, together with their award-winning Yorkshire architects Bauman Lyons, undertook a consultation day in the town last Saturday, when approximately 190 people crowded into the Town Hall to look at the plans. "This was a very successful day. We were overwhelmed by the response to the consultation and are enormously grateful for all the comments and suggestions which were made. We're still at a relatively early stage in terms of the consultation process, and our architects are now sifting through the ideas which Saturday generated."

At the same time, the Association was able to chalk up another landmark, with over five hundred people now signed up in support of the project. "We are inviting local people to support what we're doing by becoming Friends of Hebden Bridge Town Hall. We started Saturday morning with 498 Friends, and enrolled another seventeen during the morning," Andrew Bibby says.

He stresses that Saturday's consultation will be followed by others, as the plans take shape. "We promise that our planning application, when it finally goes in,

won't hold any nasty surprises. We'll be looking for broad community support for what we're proposing before we move forward." He adds that more detailed consultation will be carried out on key issues for the town, including car parking provision.