

PRESS RELEASE

£15,000 FILLIP FOR TOWN HALL CAMPAIGN

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Community-led plans to secure the long-term future of Hebden Bridge Town Hall received a welcome fillip today with news of the award of a £15,000 grant for feasibility work.

The grant, from the charity Adventure Capital Fund, will enable detailed architectural and survey work to be undertaken to plan the future development of the landmark building. The grant will also fund a full appraisal of the possibilities for making the Town Hall as sustainable and energy efficient as possible. One option to be researched will be the possibility of providing some of the energy needs for the building from a new micro-hydroelectric turbine powered by the river Hebden.

The grant is made to Hebden Bridge Community Association, the new charitable trust which has been established to develop plans for community control of the Town Hall buildings. The Association launched its Friends of the Town Hall scheme earlier this month, and has already attracted about three hundred supporters and members.

Andrew Bibby, one of the Association's project team, said: "We are delighted to have received this grant, which will take us another step forward in our campaign to secure the Town Hall's future as a centre of community life. Only about forty such grants have been awarded and we were up against some strong

applications from all over the country, so the grant is also welcome external recognition of the strength of our proposals.”

Calderdale’s ruling Cabinet recently approved a new strategic framework for community participation in asset management, and Hebden Bridge Community Association will be approaching the council shortly to formally request the transfer of the Town Hall into community control. Initial discussions with Calderdale have been taking place for about eighteen months, and the new grant will now enable the details of the Association’s plans to be fleshed out.

Andrew Bibby added: “Our vision for the building includes creating a new entrance hall, using the currently empty garage beside the Town Hall, and a rear atrium equipped with a lift. We also want to create new community facilities, so that there will be meeting space and a new hall for community use. Our grant will help us research the feasibility of these works and of a new-build small enterprise centre, which would help create jobs in the town centre and which would create additional revenue for the building.”

“This is a very long-term project which will take some years to come to fruition, but the grant enables us to move forward to work more closely with architects and engineers on the planning stage.” The Hebden Bridge Community Association trustees say that they will consult as widely as possible locally to ensure that the proposals have real community support.

The £15,000 grant is one of a small number of business development grants made by Adventure Capital Fund, an investment fund which specialises in supporting community enterprises and which itself is a charity. ACF describes its work as follows: “We back community enterprises that could make a real difference. By offering a combination of financial investments and expert support, we help these enterprises to become stable, soundly run businesses that will survive long into the future. The pioneering packages that we offer have the

potential to transform neighbourhoods across the country.” The £15,000 grant to Hebden Bridge is accompanied by the offer of free professional business advice.

Meanwhile, Hebden Bridge Community Association is continuing to encourage local people who support the project to sign up as Friends of the Town Hall. The trustees say that they are very heartened at the level of support already shown, and are now working to meet the next target of five hundred members, with the ultimate aim being one thousand Friends. All Friends will shortly be receiving a first news update from the project team. Regular updates are also posted on the website www.hebdenbridgetownhall.org.uk

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