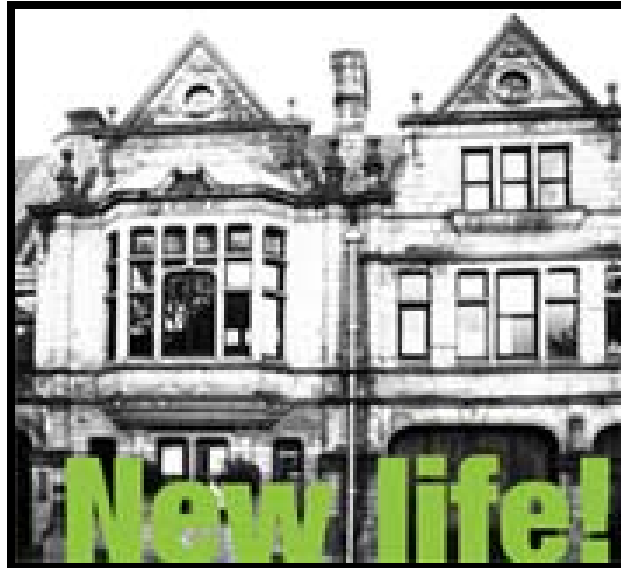


At the Centre of Hebden Bridge Life

**Report of public consultation event, Sat December 15th
2007**



Summary

Our 'drop-in' consultation event, held at the Hebden Bridge Council Offices on Saturday 15th December, attracted an estimated 150 people. The drop-in session, originally scheduled to start at 11am, was brought forward to begin at 10am and continued until 1.30pm.

Eighty-nine people signed up as formal supporters of the project and left their contact and email details.

A further local organisation (Lime Press printmaking group) gave its support. This takes the total number of local community organisations formally backing the project to 70.

Publicity

2000 A5 leaflets were printed and distributed, advertising both the event and our new website, www.hb-bridgecentre.org.uk.

About two-thirds of the leaflets were distributed in advance of the event, with leaflets taken in a wide range of local outlets and centres, ranging from the public library to the Hebden Bridge launderette. We are grateful to the shopkeepers who agreed to take stocks of the leaflet.

The remaining leaflets were given out on the morning of December 15th, to shoppers and passers-by in the centre of Hebden Bridge. We are grateful to all the volunteer leafleters, including representatives of Erringden Parish Council, for agreeing to take on this very cold task.

Displays

Displays illustrating the project plans were put on in the ground floor of the Council Offices building with three A1-sized posters, showing the proposed building works, forming the central display. All the documentation submitted to the Community Assets Programme (government funding via Big Lottery Fund) was available for browsing.

Andrew Bibby and Janet Battye (joint project coordinators) were present to answer questions, as were other members of the project management team and members of Hebden Royd Partnership.

A large A1 poster was also erected outside the building, visible from the main shopping area St George's Square across the River Hebden.



Visitors at the drop-in session held at Hebden Bridge Council Offices on December 15th.

Visitors

A wide range of visitors attended during the day. We were pleased that at least three Calderdale councillors came, as well as several Town and Parish councillors. We were particularly pleased that several children took the trouble to leave comments (see below).

The Halifax Courier sent a journalist, whose report appeared in the paper on December 18th (see appendix).

We also had an entirely unplanned demonstration of why the building needs to be made properly accessible: the father whose child is a wheelchair user, and who pulled her wheelchair backwards up the stairs to the first floor in order to be able to see the Council chamber.

Feedback

The following 67 written comments were made by visitors to the drop-in consultation session. (All comments received have been listed, without any editing. The order is random)

- 1 A good idea, a lovely building
- 2 Excellent idea! Lots of imagination, thought and communication needed.
- 3 Great – the town really needs a community space
- 4 Great building, let's make more of it
- 5 Nice bit of architecture, should be preserved and cared for
- 6 Wonderful building – let's use it to its full potential
- 7 Will be an excellent resource when complete
- 8 Please leave it – so wonderful building, and so well-built – for the community
- 9 Good idea
- 10 Great ideas! Don't forget the grand piano!
- 11 So much needed! It must happen!
- 12 We need a storage space for a Grand Piano!
- 13 Great plans and future use of building
- 14 A good opportunity – go for it – the town needs it
- 15 Keeping people together!
- 16 Great idea
- 17 Great idea. Visit Pendle Heritage Centre too!
- 18 Good ideas. Design should be energy efficient etc
- 19 Excellent project
- 20 Great plan!
- 21 What a great resource in central HB it would be!
- 22 Great
- 23 Great project – HB needs this resource
- 24 We really need our building back – properly
- 25 Calderdale cannot be trusted – we need to take over
- 26 Brilliant! It will be wonderful to recreate the living building
- 27 ? [writing indistinct]
- 28 Transfer of public assets to local community – great idea. Parks next
- 29 Interested in hiring out rooms for training events and bringing people into Hebden Bridge
- 30 It wants using
- 31 Brilliant – community use for those who live here rather than further housing!
- 32 Keep community centred around such wonderful buildings
- 33 It is most imp't to keep this community asset!
- 34 A most important resource for HB. Community space desperately needed
- 35 All essential
- 36 Good luck!!
- 37 Don't lose any parking if possible
- 38 How much are Calderdale going to put in as HB gets very little from the MBC!
- 39 Excellent. Hope it succeeds. Facilities for Youth Groups??

- 40 We need disabled access to our democracy
- 41 A good use for a wonderful old building
- 42 Very important campaign to win!
- 43 An excellent idea. What the town needs. Let me know if you need help
- 44 Such a building and community facility must not be lost or allowed to waste
- 45 Brilliant
- 46 Money well spent
- 47 Excellent!
- 48 Excellent plans. Best of luck!
- 49 Fingers crossed!
- 50 Great project
- 51 Well done and good luck
- 52 Excellent ideas
- 53 Good luck!
- 54 Great idea. Good luck! What about weddings here
- 55 Will be excellent
- 56 A wonderful idea!
- 57 New life in old buildings – excellent
- 58 Great idea – will strengthen community/bring people into town in evenings, help deter vandals
- 59 Amazing space must be saved and used
- 60 Great idea
- 61 Make sure it doesn't all fall by the wayside!
- 62 Must be maintained for civic purposes
- 63 3-D plans online
- 64 A splendid building which should be preserved and put to good use for the community
- 65 Keep up t'good work. Would like to be involved
- 66 Would be wonderful. Meeting room for more than 80 – great.
- 67 I used to run a cinema/theatre in Shropshire – v happy to help

In addition, visitors were invited to write suggestions for the use of the building and comments on the plans on post-it notes. The following comments were received (Several are comments from children)

- 1 Really like the idea for the back
- 2 I think that this place should be for fairs and shops
- 3 What about the building at the back?
- 4 We need a place for local organisations like Amnesty can meet on a regular basis
- 5 Needs redecorating, refurbishment
- 6 Excellent. Interested in performance space for concerts. we need a 'town grand piano'! So need to plan for storage space for piano – at least 6' 6"!
- 7 Good site for a children's centre hub!
- 8 Space for clowning workshops
- 9 I think the building should be a place for people to raise money and have fun!

- 10 Maybe we could use it for fairs, workshop and to come here if we have fundraising ideas to share it with everybody
- 11 For everyone not just the mayor and stuff but so every one can use it
- 12 To any would-be 'modernisers', for goodness sake preserve the original features eg wood panelling etc. And don't let it fall into private ie business hands!
- 13 How much will this project get from Calderdale as HB gets very little from the MBC
- 14 Ensure minor architectural features eg door furniture, glass, signs etc are retained and saved
- 15 I think we could use it for workshop and fairs
- 16 Music practice space – decent piano
- 17 The little theatre seats about 120 so would prefer to see a slightly bigger capacity if possible
- 18 We need facilities to hold a variety of WEA classes in Hebden Bridge. There is a dearth of these at the moment and our old brains are seizing up. May I ask for Art classes. life drawing etc
- 19 Would it be feasible to continue the walkway along the river between the bridge by the offices to the Old Bridge?
- 20 Keep open during week to pay com charge/bills etc

Appendix: Press coverage

The following article appeared in the Halifax Courier, December 18th. (This text is taken from the Halifax Courier website, <http://www.halifaxcourier.co.uk/news/Hebden-Bridge-council-office-plan.3598084.jp>)

Hebden Bridge council office plan wins praise from residents

By **Rehana Zeria**

PLANS to develop Hebden Bridge council offices have been given the thumbs-up by residents. Hebden Royd Town Partnership has plans to develop the site into a community space.

If plans are successful the former housing department offices could be transformed into a public hall and function room.

The project also includes plans for a meeting room, offices for community groups and a new staircase and lift to make the building accessible to everyone.

Barbara Green, 80, from Heptonstall, said: "There are not enough places in the town where elderly people can meet, so I think if these plans are approved it will bring some community spirit back.

"There is no longer anything here for the elderly, we are seizing up.

"I take my hat off to them and wish them all the success."

The town partnership is hoping to look after the long term future of the building as a resource for the town.

Andrew Bibby, town partnership member, said: "Over the last few years Hebden Bridge has lost various public buildings.

"People living here now feel very strongly about the possibility of losing yet another one.

"We want to do what the Government has suggested by putting this valuable building back into the community."

The group is in talks with Calderdale Council to return ownership of the building back to the town.

A grant application has also been made for funding of work on the building.

"The Government has, at short notice, made £30 million available via the Big Lottery for projects like ours, and we have managed to work quickly to ensure our own application is considered," said Mr Bibby.

Gordon Rimer, of Fairfield, Hebden Bridge, who saw the plans at an open day said they were fantastic.

He said: "The transferral of public assets to the community is a great idea. It is about time we had more people involved in the community."

Information about the application will be known in the new year.

If plans for the building are successful, work will be under way by 2009 and facilities should be fully available by 2010.

Last Updated: 18 December 2007 12:02 PM

The following article appeared in the Hebden Bridge Times, December 13th (This text is taken from the Hebden Bridge Times website)

Keynote building on show to public

By Staff Copy

THE doors will be open at one of Hebden Bridge's finest buildings this Saturday, as members of a project team, hoping to breathe new life into the town's Council Offices, are on hand to discuss the proposals. The ambitious plans, which would see the building next to St George's Bridge extensively developed for community use, would among other things create a new public hall and function room in the former housing department offices. The project also includes plans for meeting rooms, offices for community organisations and a new staircase and lift to make the whole building fully accessible to all.

The Council Offices are a grade II listed building which passed into Calderdale's ownership from the old Hebden Royd Urban District Council in 1974. In recent years, several offices have been closed and the building is currently under-utilised.

The current community-led project, under the auspices of Hebden Royd Partnership, aims to safeguard the long-term future of the building as a key resource for the town.

"The government is at the moment strongly encouraging local authorities to transfer community buildings into direct community management and ownership, so this an important opportunity for us in Hebden Bridge to ensure that the Council Offices site is secure for the future and becomes once again the hub of life locally," said Mr Andrew Bibby, one of the voluntary project team members.

In recent weeks he and his colleagues have learned that Calderdale will agree in principle to the building passing into the hands of a Hebden Bridge community trust, though as Mr Bibby points out the detailed negotiations with Calderdale about such a transfer are still to be held. The project team have also seized the chance to put in a grant application for capital funding for work on the building.

"The government has, at short notice, made £30million available via the Big Lottery for projects like ours, and we have managed to work quickly to ensure our own application is considered," added Mr Bibby. The group will hear in the New Year whether a bid, for about £860,000 for major capital work, has been short-listed.

The Council Offices have long been seen as a key resource in the town's regeneration, and is one of the priorities identified by Hebden Royd Partnership, the umbrella organisation linking community groups in the town.

The project team also includes councillors from Hebden Royd Town Council and the parish councils, who have been developing a strategy for the future of the building over the past eighteen months.

Members of the team will be on hand in the Council Offices this Saturday morning between 11am and 1.30pm to discuss the proposals, and all are welcome to drop in during this period. "We will also be happy to show anyone who hasn't seen it before the Council Chamber on the first floor, which is particularly architecturally impressive," said Mr Bibby .

The future development of the Council Offices hinges in part on the progress on the lottery grant, as well as on the discussions with Calderdale. "Don't expect immediate changes," Mr Bibby warns.

Last Updated: 12 December 2007 10:05 AM