

Hebden Bridge Community Association NEWSLETTER OCT 2010



2010 annual meeting fixed for Thurs Nov 25th

The AGM of Hebden Bridge Community Association (Friends of the Town Hall) will take place on Thursday November 25th, at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. We hope very much you'll be able to come.

This is the time when the trustees who were elected last Autumn report back to the whole membership on what we have been doing. This is the time to ask us questions and to discuss the way ahead. Our AGM will be particularly important this year, both because we now have responsibility for running the Town Hall and because our ambitious capital-build plans look as if they will be able to progress.

There will be refreshments provided!

You will receive the agenda notice with a trustee voting paper about ten days before the 25th. However please treat this as formal notice. (We are also legally required to remind you that you have the right under S324 of the Companies Act 2006 to appoint a proxy to attend).

Becoming a trustee

We have five vacancies for trustees this year, and are now actively looking for people who would like to give this extra commitment to the work of developing a vibrant, sustainable Town Hall in Hebden. You will find a separate note about this (either at the end of this email or – if you're getting this by post – as an enclosure).

We are also reviewing our governance arrangements, and hope to be able to delegate much of the practical details of managing the Town Hall to one of five committees (finance, stakeholders & communications, building management, capital build, governance). These committees will be chaired by trustees but will have spaces for one or two non-trustees. If you feel daunted by the idea of being a trustee, please consider whether you could volunteer to be on a committee.

Our plans for the future accepted by Calderdale

It was a nerve-racking occasion, but we are delighted to say that Calderdale's planning committee gave us planning permission for the Town Hall extension on Tuesday Oct 27th – and by a unanimous vote. A big thank you to everyone who wrote to support the plans and to those who showed up at the planning committee itself to offer support.

Piecing together the finance

This news gives us the go-ahead to begin the building work in late Spring, provided we can secure the finance package we need. The news here is also encouraging: Communitybuilders have agreed in principle to give us funding of £2m, which in turn will enable us to have the matched funding we need for the European grant we are applying for.

However, nothing these days is entirely straightforward. Communitybuilders have a number of conditions to their support, one of which – if it cannot be amended – would make it difficult to go ahead. This is the requirement that a very part of the building work must be complete by next September. We are in urgent discussions with them about this.

Communitybuilders are awarding us a £750,000 grant, but the remaining £1.25m is a loan (effectively a long-term mortgage). This is rather more borrowing than, in an ideal world, we would wish for and will require us probably to pare down the building design to some extent. Given the UK's current financial difficulties, though, we feel that we have been fortunate to receive as much grant-funding as we have. The European matched funding will be grant-funding.

Nevertheless, we have decided that it will be prudent over the next few years to actively look for further funding sources, so we can reduce our overall mortgage debt. Some hard work is ahead here. We will hope for your help and encouragement.

Weddings take off

We have already had three weddings in the Town Hall, and have several more weddings and civil partnerships booked in for the next few months. The licence to be able to do this cost us over £1000, but we've been pleased at the positive response in the town to the idea that there is now somewhere local to tie the knot.

Ours for 125 years!

Our original agreement with Calderdale gave us 40 year leasehold ownership of the Town Hall. We're pleased to report that Calderdale have now agreed to extend this to 125 years. (This enables us to meet another condition imposed by Communitybuilders). So HB Community Association will have the responsibility for the Town Hall for a very, very, very long time to come.

Early discussions about the Picture House

Everyone knows that the forthcoming period if going to be a very challenging one for local authorities. Like many in the town, we are very keen to ensure that the Picture House remains our own much-loved cinema, and although the Picture House is not currently at threat we want to ensure no nasty surprises here! We have come together with the Town Council, Hebden Bridge Partnership and representatives of other local groups (including the Arts Festival), to discuss at a high level with Calderdale possible future options. If an asset transfer of the cinema into local ownership seems the appropriate way forward, we have committed to offer our expertise.

Creative businesses invited to find out more on December 2nd

As well as the new community facilities, our capital build proposal includes space for what we are calling Hebden Bridge Creative Quarter – small office space and hotdesking areas for very small local businesses particularly targeted at the digital and creative sector.

We are holding our very first briefing meeting about our plans on Thursday 2nd December at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. If you run a creative/digital business, are thinking of starting one, or are just interested in the plans, please come along.

Christmas event

We'd like to organise a Christmas event in the Town Hall (when among other things we could show off the plans again), but are not quite sure at the moment whether we have the capacity. If we feel we can do this, it will take place on Saturday December 11th. We'll tell you more at the AGM.

Dry rot corner

We're responsible for ensuring that the Town Hall's fabric is well maintained... and that has meant calling in the dry rot experts recently to sort out a nasty little infestation at the west end (Tod end) of the building. We suspect Calderdale knew that there was a latent problem here – at least now it's been taken care of.