



BUXTON CRESCENT HOTEL & THERMAL SPA CO LTD

BUXTON'S BID TO BECOME A PORTAS PILOT TOWN

After nine years of unwaivering local support, our project for the heritage led regeneration Buxton Crescent scheme is now the subject of an agreement exchanged between our Company, High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council.

Whilst it is exciting news that this project will now get underway and recreate the spa which has its origins as a Roman thermal water spa together with the 79 room, five star spa hotel to be created from the 18th century Crescent to be followed by the upgrading of the Old Hall Hotel which is the oldest hotel in the country, this is only the beginning.

Buxton must build on its strengths and, judging from the enormous support for our project, the community is proud of Buxton and anxious to see its once enjoyed reputation and standing recovered.

The three distinctive characteristics which provide the platform for the Town Team bid form an enviable base on which the Town can be taken forward.

The University of Derby incorporating the former High Peak Further Education College is already making plans to develop its courses in hospitality and catering and in spa management. The University's collaboration with our project has led to an agreement being reached with Danubius, our hotel operator, to link the hotelier with the University to provide two-way training, reciprocal training and work experience, both here and with the potential exposure to other European hotels and restaurants. Our University may well take the natural lead in its hospitality and spa related faculties. The way will also open the growth in hotel accommodation which will be initiated once the Crescent is open, the emergency of hospitality and spa businesses in this remarkable Town accompanying the expansion of the already considerable role being played by the University.

The link between the University, local business and its grasp of the potential for specialisation will be a catalyst for growth in entrepreneurial skills.

Ours is a heritage led leisure project which will attract guests, both nationally and internationally. Buxton's distinctive character which includes many local independent traders will prove to be an attractive magnet for the tourism spend and it is essential that the Town Team works to protect and to expand its retail offer.

However, there are signs in Buxton of fragility in the retail offer with vacant shops and others occupied by charities with the loss of a number of highly respected and long established traders. This trend must be reversed and can be reversed by making our "Main Street" more attractive and competitive by comparison with other centres. I am delighted that it is now recognised that retail vibrancy is closely linked



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to the local economy and the Town Team will do all it can to deliver the synergies that will enable the local retail offer to draw upon the Town's strengths which are:

- Heritage and tourism where the Town's historic Georgian and Victorian buildings set in the context of its green and much loved and admired gardens and slopes continue to draw local folk and visitors
- The opportunity to enjoy beautiful High Peak countryside and take part in physical and sporting pursuits for which the topography provides an ideal backcloth and which activities will generate public demand for specialist shops retailing, outdoor clothing and equipment.
- The recognition of the Town as "Buxton Spa", the highest altitude town and the only thermal water spa town in England. This will prove to be the foundation of a whole new business sector with interests in health, welfare and beauty businesses stimulated by the reputation of the Town for its distinctive natural mineral water as well as the facilities to be created by our project.
- Finally, the growing reputation for the Town's culture. We are blessed with the Buxton Opera House, one of the finest Matcham theatres in Britain which accommodates a nationally respected Opera Festival which has now been running for over 20 years. The Festival has grown in its reputation and importance. Not only does it put on a unique festival spreading over 21 days in the summer months, it also provides considerable community and education linkage of enormous benefit to the community at large. In the difficult financial climate which exists, the Festival will be drawing upon the resources created by over 3,000 Friends and such is its reputation that, over the past year, the Festival has attracted a new Artistic Director, Stephen Barlow, and a high quality Chief Executive, Randall Shannon, who is currently Opera Advisor to the Arts Council in Northern Ireland. These high profile and prestigious individuals are evidence of the rising esteem in which the Festival is held. What is shown is that a vibrant Festival created by local people has already been the impetus for the formation and creation of a Literary Festival, the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival, a healthy Fringe and an energy to create new cultural organisations in the Town. The Town Team, with the benefit of Portas Project funding, will be able to develop these themes in order to create a force to take Buxton forward to ensure that our Main Street becomes the envy of others with an economy which will support it in full and with a growing cultural sector which engages the whole community and which will enable the Town to continue its progression. The team believe that, if cultural and art flourish, business will follow.



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I have written at length because I would wish you to know that the Buxton Portas Project bid has our full support and, if successful, we would wish to play a fulsome role in building the Town's economy, its cultural and artistic agenda, its development as an entrepreneurial University Town, its wider economic wellbeing and the strengthening of its community.

Trevor Osborne

Date: 27 March 2012