

BuxtonTownTeam

All together, better

BEAUTIFYING BUXTON WORKSHOP MONDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2012

Workshop Led by: Tina Heathcote

Other Participants: Alan Thompson, Charles Jolly, Janet Miller, Janine Morris, Jean Todd, Joe Dugdale, John Estruch, Kathryn Barton, Philip Barton, Richard Lower, Sarah Rawlinson.

1. PRESENTATIONS

1.1 Starting Point

Filthy signs, weeds and green algae, peeling paintwork, dirty windows, ugly electrical boxes, blank concrete walls – there are lots of things in the town that we do not notice consciously, but that we are subliminally aware of, and which affect people's overall impression. Some of these things can be resolved by basic housekeeping, but others will need more imaginative solutions.

1.2 Clean-up Example

Tina reported on a clean-up project in Market Raisin:

- Initial town walkabout
- Audit and list of actions required
- Contact council re who was responsible for what
- Letters sent to tenants and landlords as appropriate
- Probation service involvement via community payback
- Volunteers including teams of young people

This initiative made a big difference, as regards basic housekeeping.

It was agreed this should be seen as everyone's responsibility, not just 'something the council should do', and that we could do something similar in Buxton - an annual Buxton Spring Clean.

1.3 Gathering Ideas

A series of photos of interesting ideas from around the world were shown; these included mazes, water games, musical bars and paving stones, science based games and amusements, a sundial, a disc marking distances to world cities, sculptures, distorting mirrors, murals, pavement art, guerrilla knitting and more.

2. GROUP WORK

A set of photos of Buxton were studied, which covered the length of Main Street and the area between Spring Gardens and Station Road. Examples of 'grot spots' and ideas for improving the townscape were suggested and discussed, as listed below.

Generally:

- Shop owners - encourage improvements (cleaning, painting) especially to upper stories
- Need more hanging baskets, troughs, planters etc
- Use quarry tyres as giant planters, celebrate industrial links
- Have a 'Green Space' competition, planters sponsored by local firms, or groups of retailers
- Murals, trompe d'oeil etc - let loose a few creative types! Bring in the artists!
- 'A' Boards - far too many of them all over town - we need an attractive alternative
- An art project depicting a timeline of the town, a history trail
- Graffiti festival, festival of pavement artists, guerrilla knitting festival
- Remove traffic lights and let traffic and pedestrians interact - with care
- More awnings (like Potters') to protect from rain
- Have bunting across the streets in summer, Christmas trees and lights in winter

Specific Locations:

- High Path - repair the wall
- Fairfield Rd - encourage property owners to paint houses and hide wheelie bins
- Back of Spring Gardens precinct - cover walls with greenery - green walls
- Wye St - back walls of precinct are hideous - mural?
- Iceland car park - lots of ugly blank walls - artwork?
- Spring Gardens - clean up the stones, blocks and litter bins, all green and grotty
- Lower Hardwick St - Argos blank wall, mural needed
- Station Approach - Conways wall and precinct walls blank and ugly, need artwork
- Station Approach - Conways car park, gate, signs all need refreshing
- Spring Garden/Terrace Rd - ugly road signs, can they be more discrete?

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Cavendish Arcade - clean green grot off the canopy roof
Slopes - 'Interesting things' every 15m or so, ideally interactive
Slopes - repair the boarded up urn, add modern sculptures
Slopes - Sundial and interpretation boards by the Weather Station
Slopes - don't chop down the trees
Parade at top of Terrace Rd (New Inn etc) - road surface in terrible condition
Scarsdale Place - pave over, tidy up shop fronts, turn into nice space
Town Hall - windows need repainting
Town Hall - entrances to public toilets are very ugly
Bryants Arcade - build a replica Roman baths with interpretive boards
Market Place - thoughtless positioning of ugly electrical boxes (NB need to allow for the Fair)
Market Place - convert from car park back to market place - paving or cobbles
Market Place - refurbish the well (NB Well Dressing Festival have a project in development)
Market Place - clean the green slime off the top of the bus shelters
Market Place - re-instate trees in front of the Methodist Church
High St - ugly blank walls either side of South St - murals?
Top of Bath Rd - trompe d'oeuil artwork on blank wall
Five Ways junction - roundabout instead of traffic lights

3. FUNDING ISSUES

It was noted that grants are available from HPBC towards the cost of improving shop fronts, Sarah Porru is the person who administers these.

It was suggested that we could employ a professional team to advise, but generally felt that there were advantages to having ideas of our own, before bringing people in from outside.

Putting together a proposal for BIDs funding was also suggested; various reservations were expressed, including that businesses have to pay an additional levy on their rates (even if they themselves are not in favour of the proposals).

Further comments on funding covered the need (usually) for match funding against grants, and the effect that large amounts of 'government' money can have on community cohesion. It was suggested that if funds were needed for particular projects then Crowd Funding would be worth investigating.

It was noted that there would be a need for ongoing effort, and possibly funding, as an initial clean-up would inevitably deteriorate in time.

4. WHAT NEXT?

Discussion point - do we concentrate on one area and do that really well? It could then be used as an example to encourage retailers and property owners elsewhere. Or do we improve things wherever we can do so easily, across the whole area? It was agreed that it could be a bit of both, and that we should get an idea of just how big the problem is before attempting to answer this.

Some of the photos used were a few years old, we do need an up to date survey of the town. It was agreed that as a starting point we will divide the town up into areas, identify the 'grot spots' and suggest ideas for improvement. Janine will organise a suitable map; Janet, Janine, Joe, John, Jean, Richard, Tina, Phil and Kathryn all agreed to take responsibility for an area and check it out.

Once these surveys are collated, we will present them to HPBC, and also ask them (Dai Lerner and Richard Tuffrey) to present an overview of their plans for the town.

It was agreed that we should invite DCC, Vision Buxton, Buxton Civic Association, the Buxton Group and probably other organisations for their input as well.

JCMM

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