

**Ideas and Vision Group**  
**Notes of the meeting on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

**Present:** Adrian Brown, Bill Land, Janet Miller, John Estruch, Roddie MacLean, Mike Bryant

**Apologies:** Sarah Rawlinson, Rachael Quinn, Linda Baldry, Julian Cohen, John Hudghton,  
Alan Thompson, Tom Rhodes, Roger Floyd

**Chairman:** Mike agreed to chair the meeting.

**Introductions:** As there were new members present, the meeting started with a round of introductions.

**1.1 Notes of the meeting on 4th February.** These were approved as a true record.

**1.2 Matters Arising** Roddie reported what a lively event was created around the launch of the new tram. A samba band, Artists (from Green Man Gallery) painting on the street, giant bubble blowing and a stall were all there to support the main event. The tram was named "Wonder of the Peak" by Rev Chris Lowdon who splashed it with water from St Anne's Well.

**2 Terms of Reference** The draft terms of reference for the Ideas and Vision Group had been circulated before the meeting. It was agreed that the group could work within them, if the Directors approved them as drafted.

**3 Ideas Schedule** Mike had updated and circulated the Ideas Schedule to include the recent activity. The Town Team's stance with regard to "Delegated Projects" was explained to the new members. It was noted that about ¼ of the entries had made some progress and pointed out that several others were about to be started. This was regarded as satisfactory both from the point of view of progress made and with regard to the requirement that the schedule should be maintained as a live working document.

**4.1 History of Peak Hydro** Mike explained that Idea number 11 in the schedule included encouraging local residents to talk up local history. As an introduction to the next business he offered a brief insight into the development of the Peak Hydropathic establishment.

Hydropathy was a movement to provide health benefits by the use of water. It was not medically supervised and used any available water – often cold water or wet sheets. It became popular throughout the Victorian period, with Hydros springing up everywhere. There were several in Buxton including two on London Road.

Dr Samuel Hyde started his Hydro in Buxton House at the top of Terrace Road. Despite the fact that its ground floor has been rebuilt to accommodate two shops, the Front door and first floor bay windows are still evidence of an elegant residence. There are still remnants of baths in the basement which has tiled walls.

Dr Hyde claimed that he had tapped into the Buxton Thermal Water but one of his staff wrote "That the water was not warm until it had been taken to the furnace". Apparently he had a boiler in a separate outbuilding behind the house.

His business was such a success that in 1880, just when the dome was being put on the Devonshire Hospital, he formed a company to extend the hydro down Terrace Road to what is now the entrance to the museum and on round the block to include the former British Legion building. There were large rooms for dining and dancing and accommodation for 150 guests.

The popularity of Hydropathic treatment was fairly short lived. The buildings have subsequently been used to accommodate the Buxton Museum, the Magistrates' Courts, some shops and the British Legion Club, with a Steward's flat on the premises.

**4.2 Possibility of a museum and cultural hub** Roddie told the meeting that the former British Legion Club and the extensive premises above it were both vacant and for sale. The Club had a large ballroom which would make a fine meeting and performance space. There were three floors of rooms above the ballroom and a mezzanine floor within its height at one end. Additionally there was vacant space on the upper floors above the courts and museum.

It had been suggested that part of this accommodation could be used as additional museum space to house exhibits related to The Crescent development and Buxton's history as a spa, in partnership with the existing Museum. It was also possible that a national Gilbert and Sullivan Museum might be looking for accommodation in Buxton.

The new management of The Buxton Festival were looking to further expand their programme and would make use of additional performance space, if it became available, as would other groups within the town.

There would still be large areas in the upper part of the British Legion building which could be linked to the other vacant upper floors to provide a suite of offices. This might take all the functions currently accommodated in the Town Hall. In turn this would free space for the reinstatement of the upstairs ballroom and leave the ground floor free to accommodate the library or an indoor market.

To achieve all this, a trust would have to be established to take ownership of the British Legion and to operate the building once purchased. Trevor Osborne was keen to see such a development and was considering putting in some of his own money. Time was required to establish the trust and to assemble funding. Dai Lerner had suggested that the Town Team might apply for registration of the British Legion building as a "Community asset", under the new localism legislation, and thus prevent the sale of the property to any other purchaser for six months. The Town Team board were considering doing this forthwith.

The meeting welcomed this possibility and were quite excited about the prospect of this new hub of cultural activity, which would bring new life to Higher Buxton.

**5 Final Evaluation of the Christmas Crawl** A detailed report and a spreadsheet of responses from the participating businesses had been circulated. It was noted that the project met most of its success criteria. Only 28 completed entries were received but this was clearly because completing the course proved quite onerous. The possibilities, if the project is repeated, to reduce this burden was discussed but it was clear that reducing the number of calls needed to qualify for a prize would undermine the whole intent of the project, to introduce possible customers to retail outlets which they did not know.

A representation sent by Tom Rhodes, who runs a locally owned and managed business under the franchise of "Specsavers", was discussed. He had pointed out that a significant part of Buxton's retail offer was provided by national chains and franchised businesses. He pointed out that these were no less vulnerable, in the present recession, than wholly independent businesses. The meeting was told that the exclusion of chain and franchised businesses was part of the guidance from the national scheme of which our crawl was a part. The crawl was intended to particularly support those businesses which did not benefit from a nationally recognised name and national advertising.

It was noted that there were several complaints of families sending children into shops to collect stamps and the meeting suggested a requirement for an adult to enter the premises to remedy this problem, if the crawl was repeated in the future.

The suggestion that a purchase should be required, to qualify for a stamp, was regarded as impracticable because of the specialist nature of some of the businesses taking part.

If Neil has any record of why some retailers declined to take part, the meeting requested this useful information so that it could be put on file with the detailed report provided by the Project Team.

This project was clearly valuable to some of the retailers who took part and to the Town Team, in that it raised its profile in the town. The Town Team was grateful to Jean and Neil for all their hard work on this project.

The Ideas and Vision Group agreed that this project was now completed.

## **6 Progress Reports on Projects**

**6.1 Spring Fair** Janet reported that she was optimistic about the Spring Fair now. There was an increasing amount of interest from organisations and businesses who wanted to participate.

She was, at last, discovering the route through the labyrinth of local authority procedures. High Peak Council had now agreed to free licensing of stalls in the street and to the use of the car parks on the Market Place, despite the fact that they would be losing revenue on the day. This support was conditional upon a charge being made by the Town Team for stalls and was for this year only with no precedent being set for future events. A scale of charges for stalls had been set by the Project Team and details and Application Forms were about to be published. *These are now available on the website: <http://buxtontownteam.org/about-us/town-team-projects/buxton-spring-fair>.*

The County Council, which as highway authority has to be consulted over road closures, had clarified that this was also down to the High Peak Council. The plan is close The Crescent, The Slopes Car Park, The Market Place Car Park and Scarsdale Place with hopefully short sections of Bath Road and Chapel Street as well. However, Eagle Parade/Hall Bank would be kept open as a through route for Taxis and the bus turning loop and Fountain Street would be kept open at the southern end of the Market Place. The police had raised no objections to the proposals for the day and in fact were quite supportive of the proposals.

She had received considerable help from the university. Students had been visiting businesses distributing and gathering information. As well as getting support for the fair, information was being collected at the same time if businesses wanted to be listed on the Visit Buxton website.

It was hoped that the Pump Room, which was currently being refurbished as part of The Crescent development, might be open by May. It would be wonderful if the roof was available as a stage for musical performances on the day.

Event insurance was being arranged to protect the Town Team for the day.

**6.2 Buxton Illustrated Map** In the absence of Joe, Janet reported that some progress was being made but as there were only four people at the meeting about its content a further meeting would be required.

**6.3 Green Man Gallery** Janet reported that three copies of the lease had now been signed by directors of the Town Team and passed to the landlord for signature. The lease was for one year, ending on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013. By that time the artists using the premises were expected to have formed themselves into a legal entity so that they could take over the lease themselves. The business was going well (with a waiting list of artists wanting to participate) and it was anticipated that by November they would be able to pay the rent for the premises. Julie, the landlord, had indicated that, if all went to plan, the lease could continue for the foreseeable future.

The Town Team's half year review was to be undertaken at the May meeting of the Ideas and Vision Group. Alan Thompson would be asked to report on the business to that date.

**7 Special Meeting about Transport and Parking** Despite a small attendance, useful progress had been made. Janet's notes had been circulated and were noted. Some people had undertaken to do further research before we moved to contacting the councils.

A discussion took place about whether a further Special Meeting was required but it was agreed that this should be the main business of the May meeting of the Ideas and Vision Group.

## **8 Other Business and New Ideas**

**8.1 Local Plan Consultation** The meeting was reminded that High Peak Borough Council had just embarked on a further round of consultation in its development of an up to date Local Plan. The variety of options on which consultation took place last autumn had been refined to a set of "Preferred options" which were set out in a draft Plan document.

Mike stated that he had already studied it in some detail. He had found that it set out a logical and realistic framework for the future development of High Peak. It had taken on board some of the suggestions from the last consultation and did not propose to build over every green field around Buxton, as had been suggested by those who misunderstood or chose to misrepresent the first consultation.

It was agreed that it would be hard to find a consensus within the Town Team so individual members would be encouraged to send in individual responses. To facilitate this Mike was asked to circulate details of where the document could be accessed.

**8.2 Vision Buxton** Adrian stated that the AGM of Vision Buxton was drawing close. One of the issues facing the organisation was identifying its role now that the Town Team had been established. It was important that good relationships were maintained so that actions were collaborative rather than competitive.

**8.3 Pop-Up Sport** Tom Rhodes in his e-mail had mentioned an item on television about Pop-Up Sports. Empty retail units were being used to accommodate taster sessions for people to try out sports like squash. It was agreed that this could be part of the remit of the Pop-Up Shops Project Team and did not therefore constitute a new idea to be added to the schedule.

**8.4 Paupers Pit** The loss of the Paupers Pit, later this year as part of The Crescent development, was lamented. The venue is currently used by Buxton Film for their weekly screenings. It is also used intensively by the fringe and throughout the year by a variety of community groups for events and rehearsals. The Studio in the Pavilion Arts Centre is expensive and much bigger while lacking the intimacy and rather seedy character of the Paupers Pit. It was thought that there must be another suitable space in the town to which the seating, lighting and other equipment could be transferred.

**9 Future meetings** The Ideas and Vision Group was to meet again on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April and Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

It was now anticipated that the "One Year On" Meeting to review progress and develop the Town Team's strategy and working relationships would be held in June.

MFB 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013