

## Ideas and Vision Group Notes of the meeting on Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013

**Present:** Joe Dugdale, Janet Miller, John Estruch, Rachel Hoodith, Roddie MacLean, Rachael Quinn, Tom Rhodes, Neil Scowcroft, Janine Morris, Mike Mirams and Mike Bryant

**Observing:** Charles Jolly (Scrutiny Group)

**Visitors:** Nichola Sargeant, Diane White and John White

**Apologies:** Adrian Brown, Linda Baldry, Sarah Rawlinson, Jean Ball, Julian Cohen, John Hudghton, Alan Thompson, Colin Chipp and Carlon Stewart.

**Chairman:** Roddie MacLean was asked and agreed to chair the meeting.

**Introductions:** The meeting started with a round of introductions.

**1 Notes of the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> April.** These were approved as a true record. There were no matters arising.

**2.1 Report of the Spring Fair** Janet had circulated her report in advance of the meeting and this was accepted by the regular members of the meeting, who had seen it. She said that almost all the success criteria, set in advance of the event, had been achieved. It had not got onto television though it had been featured on a variety of radio stations, websites and in printed media. Only 9 new Town Team members had been signed up on the day (the target had been 50) but others were coming forward as a result of the event.

As a result of the support of Waitrose Community Fund, the whole event had been staged with a small cash surplus. A cheque presentation was still to be arranged.

The attendance and atmosphere at the event, which was spread along the whole of "Main Street", was fantastic. Everyone seemed happy and there were no known incidents of crime or anti-social behaviour. This was due, in part, to the wonderful weather. Everyone was glad the event was not a week later.

Positive feedback and congratulations had been streaming in by e-mail, Facebook and Twitter. It was an acclaimed success in boosting Buxton's reputation and self image, making the Town Team better known and helping the local economy.

If the fair was to be repeated, in response to popular demand, there were things that could be done better. These had been recorded in an appendix to the written report. *The report and all the appendices are available on request from Mike – [ideas@buxtontownteam.org](mailto:ideas@buxtontownteam.org).*

**2.2 Pavilion Gardens advertising** Roddie reported that he had been concerned that the Pavilion Gardens had taken whole page advertisements in the Buxton Advertiser, for their events on the day, without any reference to the Spring Fair. He had put this to the Leader of the Council, Caitlin Bisknell, and the Executive Director for Regeneration, Dai Larner, by e-mail. He had had replies from both of them to say that they would take the issue up with the officers concerned so that in future there would be a more joined up approach to such events.

### **3 Retail Development**

**3.1 Loyalty Scheme Research** The University students had presented their findings both at the Dome, for the Town Team, and at Thornbridge Hall, for Derbyshire Towns Forum. Their full report is not yet available in a form which can be circulated but Mike had circulated their visual presentation just before the meeting. They identified two schemes for further consideration in Buxton. The first was Totally Locally an established scheme for encouraging people to shop locally (not strictly a Loyalty Scheme) and the other was Pointr an unproven loyalty scheme using smart-phones. These could be used alongside each other.

There was a wide ranging discussion during which the following points were made. The Visit Peak District's wider scheme was regarded as too wide as it included shops beyond Derby. Franchised traders should be included. Any scheme depended on the commitment of the retailers. The present Traders' Group tended to be concerned mainly with complaints rather than anything positive. Neil had attempted to launch Totally Locally last year but this had run into difficulties because of divergent views about which scheme should be implemented. Eventually his efforts were diverted to the Christmas Shopping Crawl.

The conclusion was that any scheme needed to be adopted by the local traders and to this end Rachael (Q) undertook to speak to Sam Copley to see if the Buxton Traders would be prepared to meet members of the Town Team to discuss this and other issues around retail. Pat was keen that the traders should fully exploit the opportunities presented by the festivals, through special advertising and promotions. He thought they should get together to advertise in the festival publications and the town guide, sharing the cost. All these issues could be pursued at the meeting.

**3.2 Improving the Retail Offer – project proposal from Jean Ball** A proposal form had been submitted setting out a two stage project to improve the customer experience. The first stage was by Mystery Shopping which would be undertaken jointly by the town teams of Buxton, Bakewell and Matlock with the trained assessors from each shopping in a strange town. This would all be managed by Derbyshire Retail Help at a fraction of the commercial cost. When each business had been assessed and the reports submitted, stage two would be embarked upon.

Stage two is a training stage which would be directed especially at the failings identified by the Mystery Shopping. Jean had notified, just before the meeting, that Derbyshire County Council and the Derbyshire Economic Partnership were quite positive about funding this training.

Again this sparked lively discussion. This exercise, like the loyalty scheme needed to be bought into by the traders participating and could not be imposed upon them. The whole process appeared long winded. There was a feeling that the training could be offered to those who wanted it and that this might be done using resources from the Town Team. Pat volunteered his services and Tina was also identified as a possible contributor. The World Host Scheme was also suggested. It offered training at three levels and if enough staff were trained for enough businesses Buxton could even be a World Host Town.

Rachael (Q) pointed out that people did not shop out of town because of the poor service but because they could not buy what they needed or wanted in Buxton. This led to further wide ranging discussion. It was suggested that training in finding unfulfilled demand might be helpful.

**4 Parking and Traffic Management** Pat said that there were short term and long term issues. The short term problem was that Buxton ran out of parking space at peak times. These were summer Saturdays and the periods of the principal festivals. This was urgent and High Peak Borough Council should be challenged to take some action because the accommodation in The Crescent had already gone.

The long term issue was to find additional parking to meet the demand from the Crescent development and the planned growth of the town. Pat felt that the new Local Plan should allocate space for parking or for "Park and Ride" if no space was available in the town centre. He suggested that we should follow this up after everyone had taken part in the consultation about the Local Plan arranged for May 20<sup>th</sup>. He would have further discussion with Linda once she was back from her holiday.

**5 Buxton Picture House Proposal** The details of this "Contemporary art/design installation", which had been forwarded by Trevor Osborne, had been circulated in advance of the meeting. It was not clear how the Town Team could assist with this, especially while the project was so ill defined. It was agreed that the idea should receive general encouragement but that the Town Team could not do more than that.

## 6 Communications

**6.1 Website Hosting** The process of changing to a new host was complete. Janet undertook to work with Andy Parker to prepare a report so that this project could be closed. In the mean time the new website was being gradually developed.

**6.2 Use of the Website** It had always been the intention that members should receive notes of meetings and similar information through the website. More work was needed to provide members of alerts when such things were posted. Members needed to be encouraged to use the forum on the website for internal discussion instead of using e-mail. More work is needed to encourage these developments but currently the Communications Group is struggling.

**6.3 Template for Information Panels** The Directors, at their April meeting, had proposed to display details of the Town Team's achievements and organisational structure on A1 size posters at the "One year on" meeting. It would be easier and quicker to produce these if a standard template, with appropriate Town Team branding, was made available. Text could then be added to give details of projects or anything else. After some discussion, it was agreed to ask Eric if he would prepare a generic template.

## 7 Wayfinding

**7.1 High Peak Borough Council Workshop** Roddie reported briefly on the workshop arranged by the council. A variety of local people had been invited to take part. They were required to draw their own mental map of the town, identify possible destinations, list the town centre's various gateways and suggest key points where directions were needed. This information was going to be analysed as the basis for a wayfinding scheme. The scheme would only be taken forward in phases as funding became available. Roddie undertook to circulate the report produced following the workshop (*please see attachment*).

**7.2 Festival Guides** Mike proposed a new project to provide a person, in a Town Team tabard, at Turner's Memorial to help visitors (or local residents) to find their way to their chosen destinations. The initial trial period was to be for the duration of this year's Buxton Festival. These "Festival Guides" would be local people, with some knowledge of the town and its history, and will be equipped with a supply of the new Town Guide and details of the day's programme for both the Festival and the Fringe. It might not be possible to find volunteers for every hour of every day but any help for visitors was better than none. The meeting was supportive of this proposal despite the fact that a written proposal was not yet available.

*The Directors have now signed off this project, on the basis of the proposal attached, with a maximum budget of £250 to cover tabards which could subsequently be reused for other events.*

## 8 Brief Updates on Other Projects

**8.1 Pop-up Incubator Project** John reported that the team were making progress with their application to establish the Jack in a Box Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and to assemble the first cluster. The list of stallholders from the Spring Fair would be useful in identifying potential beneficiaries of the CIO. High Peak Borough Council might provide some funding. One problem might be finding suitable premises, as many of Buxton's vacant shops had been let recently.

**8.2 Buxton Market** Rachael (Q) explained that the Retail Sub-committee of the Borough Council was expecting a much wider range of options to be contained in the officers' report to their next meeting. The public consultation would not be undertaken until the sub-committee was satisfied with the proposals to be put to the public. The meeting supported Roddie in his suggestion that the appearance of the market could be instantly improved by a tidy realignment, this could be done immediately with no significant cost. *David Morrell, the council officer responsible for markets, has since agreed to meet Roddie on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May.*

**8.3 Illustrated Map** Joe reported slow progress. The colour was being painstakingly applied. The draft would be available for further review when the colouring is completed.

**8.4 British Legion Building** Roddie reported briefly on the suggestions put forward by Trevor Osborne, which had been discussed in detail at the March meeting. The Town Team had submitted an application for the building to be registered as an Asset of Community Value, which would delay the sale to any commercial purchaser. However High Peak Borough Council had returned the application with the advice that we should consult High Peak CVS and resubmit it in the approved format. This standardised procedure is intended to avoid legal challenges to completed registrations.

Trevor had made an offer to purchase the building but this had not been accepted. Subsequently, it had become known that Derby University is in need of premises for a Student Union. This was a possible use for the existing bar and ballroom in the British Legion building. The university's participation in the deal might provide funding for an increased offer, thus facilitating the purchase of the premises.

Furthermore, the borough council were exploring the possibility of transferring the Library into the Town Hall. This could key into the overall scheme very well.

**8.5 Christmas Lights** The meeting had been disappointing. There were a number of Councillors and council officers present along with several members of the Buxton Sparkles committee. Adrian Brown, of Vision Buxton, was the only other person present. Without any representation from Buxton Traders there was little possibility of much progress.

The conclusion was that the retailers would have to contribute to and arrange any lights in the shopping centres as Buxton Sparkles was too small to take on a wider remit. Adrian Brown said that Vision Buxton was about to launch a recruitment drive among the retailers and undertook to promote the idea of Christmas lights at the same time.

**8.6 Local Plan** A further brief reference was made to Pat's concern, see above under parking. This digressed into a discussion about public transport generally, which was regarded as currently being in decline. The renewal of the rail franchise might be an opportunity to press for more frequent services to Stockport and Manchester.

The consultation event, at Pavilion Gardens, had been rescheduled for Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> May. Members were encouraged to attend and contribute.

**9 Other Business/New Ideas Buxton Spa Prize (representational art)** Neil introduced this project which is aimed at putting Buxton on the map as a centre for art. The competition would get artists working in the open air around the town and lead on to a prize-giving and exhibition of the work. Mike said he had received a Project Proposal which he planned to put on the Agenda in June, when some further details would be available. He understood that the competition would eventually be run by a separate CIC but that it might need to be a Town Team project initially.

**Town Guide** Pat bemoaned the late availability of the new Town Guide (a Vision Buxton project).

**Vacant space** It was stated that there was currently vacant warehouse or retail space on the old Otter's factory site opposite the Discount Centre. This would of course be temporary, pending the redevelopment of the site for housing.

**10 Future meetings** There would be a General Members' Meeting, to mark the first year of the Town Team, on Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> June, at 7.00 pm, in the Pavilion Gardens.

The Ideas and Vision Group will meet at 7.30 pm, at The Buckingham Hotel on the following dates: Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> June, Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July and Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> August. The August meeting will be a less formal one.