

BUXTON TOWN TEAM

NOTES ON THE MEETING WITH HPBC ON WEDNESDAY 7TH MAY 2014

Present: Dai Lerner, Janet Miller, John Estruch, Roddie MacLean, Tina Heathcote

1. LINKS BETWEEN BUXTON TOWN TEAM AND HPBC

All agreed that the relationship between us is good. Dai stressed that HPBC are keen to support us as there is only so much the council can do, and they cover a big area; people on the ground can often do things they cannot do, and do them better.

Roddie advised that the £6,000 of the Town Team Partner money drawn down so far had now all been spent, and that we would be calling on the remaining £4,000 very shortly.

The Town Team has several points of contact with HPBC, Sarah Porru is a general contact for some issues, Terry Crawford for others, but there are a number of council officers who have been enormously helpful on the various projects. Dai advised that officers knew it was a priority to work effectively with the Town Team.

It was noted that it was over a year since the previous meeting with Dai, and agreed that we should aim to meet approximately every six months.

2. UPDATE ON BUXTON TOWN TEAM PROJECTS

2.1 Buxton Spring Fair

The second Spring Fair had taken place on the previous Monday and was about 50% bigger than last time. It went well, all the feedback received so far has been very positive.

2.2 Big Buxton Spring Clean

The Spring Clean had taken place over a few days in April, with over 100 school and college students cleaning railings and towards 100 others litter picking and cleaning signs, benches and other street furniture. If the event is repeated it is expected to grow. There are still areas needing attention however; the barriers to the Spring Gardens parking area are in very poor condition and an eyesore; high level signs beyond our reach need cleaning; the post boxes need painting, we are assured by Royal Mail that this is in hand.

2.3 Bunting and Street Art

The Town Team have organised producing and installing coloured flower tubes made from plastic bottles, and also for traditional bunting to be hung by Derbyshire Fire Service. We would hang more if it can be acquired. Plans are also in hand to have the panels along George Street painted as murals, by school and college students; Fairfield Builders and Trevor Osborne Property Group will be donating materials, and we hope that the work will be completed by the end of June. The front of the Crescent is also being tidied up, and updated information panels installed.

2.4 Artisan Market Trials

Two trials have been arranged for June and July, and the Market Company are in discussion with shops and traders and addressing any concerns. The Town Team are working with the University on an evaluation to inform the decision on future markets. If initial feedback is positive we would hope to have further markets in August and possibly September, these could be held on the Market Place without the need for special licensing arrangements.

2.5 Talking Signposts

This was run as a two week trial last year, and the signposts talked to over 1,400 people about a wide range of topics. The plan for this year is to extend the time period and also hopefully operate in more than one area of town. There are also plans to run guided tours of the Crescent, possibly linking with tours of the Devonshire Dome and the Opera House, in collaboration with Buxton Festival.

2.6 Illustrated Map

The map is now on sale. It was suggested that it would look very good in Dai's office, and that it would make a suitable gift from HPBC to official visitors.

2.7 Buxton in Bloom

The Town Team are resurrecting this, with help from members of the previous organising committee. Some funding has been received from the Councillors' Initiative Funds, and we hope to get further funding from the Waitrose Community Fund.

3. UPDATE ON HPBC PLANS

HPBC have brought in a Housing Company and are looking at building more affordable houses; they are particularly keen to build homes for people with special needs, both age related and other. The collaboration with Staffordshire Moorlands is continuing.

There have been changes to the senior management team, new heads of Departments are:

Head of Operations	Keith Parker
Head of Reg. Services	Rob Weaver
Head of Assets	Paul Hare
Head of Transformation	Mary Walker

All of these have been brought in from elsewhere in the country.

HPBC are embarking on a Service Review and an Efficiency Programme; they will focus on delivering front line services, reducing management costs, looking after their assets and being more effective in the town centres.

They are also launching a Growth Fund and looking at ways to stimulate economic growth. There is more incentive to do this as local authorities can now retain additional business rates within their own budget. Development of the Crescent is critical, tenders are being prepared to go out in July, with a view to work on the ground recommencing in late autumn. The delay is due to redesign work to reduce costs and ensure these fit in with heritage requirements.

Roddie asked about the Townscape Heritage Initiative, but as this is Heritage Lottery funded, we could not expect to be awarded anything until after the Crescent project has been delivered.

Dai was not aware of any progress on the wayfinding scheme that Paul Armstrong was working on before he left; he will find out about it.

Ideas are being developed to improve the efficiency of the TIC and taking account of the changes in how people access tourist information. While there are plans for some things to become self-service, there are no plans to not have a TIC. Vision Buxton have raised concerns that opportunities for group marketing is constrained by capacity for phone answering, Dai will check on the response rates.

Tina asked about plans to implement systems to allow parking permits to be topped up by phone, Dai will check progress on this. He will also check who is responsible for maintenance of the on street parking meters.

4. MONITORING PROGRESS

It is clear that there are fewer empty shops in the town than there were a year or so ago.

Dai advised that the most recent figure (March 2014) for commercial vacancies was 5.8%, compared with 7.2% on June 2013, and a national average in December 2013 of 13.9%.

Dai will ask Sarah Porru to send us these figures on a regular basis.

5. SCOPE FOR FUTURE WORKING TOGETHER

Roddie advised that the Town Team are not averse to the idea of taking on the running of the regular market, albeit probably through an independent company of some sort. It was agreed that a separate meeting would be convened with the relevant officers to discuss ideas of how this might work.

Roddie reiterated the Town Team's request for a register of landlords, Dai thought there had been some progress with this and will check with Sarah Porru.

6. NEXT METINGS

Meeting to discuss ideas for the Market - soon, to be arranged.

General review meeting - in October or November, to be arranged.

JCMM

8May14