

BUXTON TOWN TEAM

NOTES ON THE MEETING WITH HPBC ON TUESDAY 8th APRIL 2013

Present: Janet Miller, Joe Dugdale, Roddie MacLean, Tine Heathcote, Dai Lerner, Paul Armstrong

1. INTRODUCTION

Dai introduced the discussions saying that it would be good for Buxton Town Team and HPBC to complement each other, there is a lot happening in the town and we need to co-ordinate our efforts for best effect. HPBC recognise they cannot do everything and are keen to support us where it fits in with their objectives. They do not mind being challenged, if this is done constructively.

2. PURPOSE AND ROLE OF BUXTON TOWN TEAM

Much of what the Town Team wants to do will be outside of the Council's remit, but there will be overlaps. So far the Town Team has been effective in pulling together the various groups in the town, but it is short of resources. On the other hand, it can pull in assistance 'in kind' in a way that the Council is not able to do.

While the 'Talk about Buxton' Group meets regularly, and includes Buxton Town Team, it consists primarily of organisations with vested commercial rather than philanthropic interests - the aim of the Town Team is to maximise the benefits to the community of their investments.

We are very aware of the tensions between the needs of visitors and residents, and keen to 'join the town up' both geographically and culturally. We are working on specific projects that will have an impact, and are developing a 'vision' for the town, but this is not yet formulated. There is within the team a strong wish to get on with making things happen, and differing views as to the value of strategizing.

The process for formal approval of projects within the Town Team was outlined.

3. HPBC VISION FOR BUXTON

HPBC does have a 'vision' for the town, as expressed in for instance the Local Plan, the Design and Placement Strategy and various reports on Parking and Public Transport. It was suggested that it would be useful if these were pulled together into a single document, but this is complicated by the fact that some policies eg transport and access have to be developed jointly with DCC.

In its broadest terms, HPBC's vision is for Buxton to become the UK's leading spa town. While this will pull in a lot of investment, the vision is not universally supported by the resident population, and there is, rightly or wrongly, a perception that the development of the Pavilion Gardens is happening at the expense of the rest of the town.

Buxton Town Team are very positive about what has been achieved with the Gardens, but believe there is a need for better links between the different parts of the town, both geographically and organisationally. It was suggested that it would not be appropriate for the Town Team to develop an independent vision for the town, if it contradicted the plans developed by HPBC through democratic consultation.

4. GENERAL DISCUSSION POINTS AND POTENTIAL PROJECTS

It was recognised that it is easier to make progress where the Council owns the assets, persuading private landowners to take action is much harder. HPBC have made grants available for conversion of properties where appropriate, and there are signs that landlords are beginning to negotiate lower rents. Buxton Town Team would find a list of private landlords extremely useful, Dai agreed to look into supplying this.

Buxton Town Team see Buxton as far more than just a spa town and are keen to develop the cultural aspects, the heritage and the outdoor pursuits opportunities as well. Unfortunately the perception from the outside is of Buxton as a 'tired old quarry town'; improving confidence and developing a positive outlook will be key to turning things around.

It was recognised that the 'pitch' would vary depending on whether the message is aimed at residents, visitors or potential investors.

A marketing survey has been suggested, this was last done in 2009, and would be usefully repeated, potentially conducted over a full year. HPBC have the means to scan and assess responses automatically, if we wanted to take advantage of this it would need to be programmed in well in advance of the need.

The Town Team are looking at ways to enhance the market, it was suggested we needed to discuss our ideas with David Morell. The market in Leek is apparently run very successfully by Totally Locally. The concept of 'Pocket Markets' may be worth investigating.

The application to register the British Legion building as a community asset is in preparation and will be submitted very shortly.

DEVELOPING A WORKING RELATIONSHIP

HPBC want to work with Buxton Town Team, but we need to work out the practicalities of this and how we liaise and establish common ground, especially with regard to forward planning.

Dai expressed concern about negative comments circulated by members of the Town Team, it was stressed that these views are not endorsed by the Buxton Town Team board of directors. While we cannot stop people making their personal views known, we can ensure that they do not appear to be the views of Buxton Town Team.

What the Town Team needs from HPBC will vary depending on the project.

It was agreed we should have regular meetings, perhaps quarterly, to share progress and ideas. Councillors and officers alike are of course very welcome to attend any Buxton Town Team meetings.

JCMM

15May13