

PROJECT REPORT - ACADEMY OF URBANISM VISIT AUGUST 2013

1. OVERVIEW

Buxton was shortlisted for the Academy of Urbanism Award Great Town 2014. Buxton Town Team took the lead in organising the judges' visit on 21st August 2013, working with HPBC, Vision Buxton, University of Derby Buxton, Buxton Festival and Trevor Osborne Property Group.

2. DETAIL OF WHAT TOOK PLACE

The visit involved tours of the town and its various facilities, as follows:

- minibus tour of the town and its environs, including stops at Cote Heath allotments, Staden Lane Business Park, Lhoist's Hindlow Quarry, H&S Laboratory, Grinlow Caravan Park and Poole's Cavern
- tour of the Opera House
- presentation in the Pavilion Gardens Arts Centre about the HPBC Design & Place Making Strategy
- St John's Church for a short organ recital and talk about the town's music scene
- University Dome for lunch with key business leaders in the town, then a short talk by Peter Dewhurst
- by Discover Buxton tram and electric bikes loaned by EcoRepublic to St Anne's Church and the Market Place
- walk down to Spring Gardens and the Cavendish Arcade
- tour of the Crescent and explanation of the development plans
- evening drinks reception with members of the volunteer community and small businesses
- dinner at the Old Hall Hotel

The judges were each presented with a BTT logoed bag containing general information about the town and small souvenirs, including specially branded Buxton Town Team notebooks.

The judges were all extremely complementary about the day, and both surprised and impressed that the Town Team were taking the lead rather than the Council.

Several members of Buxton Town Team attended the award ceremony on 8th November. Buxton did not win, that honour went to Cork, but the judges were very complimentary. We 'won' a poem written for the town by Ian MacMillan, the Bard of Barnsley.

Since the event, we have arranged for small signs 'finalist GREAT TOWN 2014' to be added to the town entry signs. Richard Guise (lead judge) came to our first general meeting in December 2013 as guest speaker.

3. ASSESSMENT AGAINST AIMS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA

The aims of the project were:

- **to win the Great Town 2014 award**
- **to consolidate Buxton Town Team's position in the town's consciousness**
- **to raise aware of our existence and what we are trying to achieve**

The first was obviously not achieved, but we believe the other two were.

The measurable success criteria of the project were as follows:

- **The event is covered in all the usual media outlets, with mention of Buxton Town Team's leading role**

This objective was met in full. The judges' visit was covered by the Buxton Advertiser and Pure Buxton, where Buxton Town Team's involvement featured prominently. In addition we had a visit from BBC North West and were featured on both the lunchtime and the 6:30pm broadcast, which included a short interview with Janet about Buxton Town Team.

- **Retailers and voluntary groups are enthusiastic about getting involved in the project**

This objective was largely met. Over 100 people attended the drinks reception, the majority of these were representatives of the many voluntary organisations in the town.

- **The event generates a positive feeling in the town**

This is difficult to gauge, but the visit certainly generated interest and many people spoke enthusiastically about it.

- **Buxton is named as Great Town 2014**

This objective clearly was not met, however we believe that most of the benefits accrued simply from being short-listed for the award.

4. ANY FURTHER BENEFITS

We developed the 'Taking Stock' Fact Sheet which has now been posted on the Visit Buxton website. We consolidated our contacts with the many voluntary groups and with businesses both small and large in the town, and considerably extended our data base.

Through working closely with HPBC on the project, we improved our (already good) relationship with councillors and officers, and had the opportunity to discuss other ideas with them in an informal setting. We developed good links with the Academy of Urbanism and have the potential to network with other towns who have been nominated or won the award in the past.

We have a bespoke poem about Buxton.

5. COSTS

The project was allocated a budget of £130. Just over £70 was spent on items for the judges' visit (bags, souvenir notebooks etc) the rest of the cost was covered by donations in kind. The Town Entry signs cost £310, which is being split between ourselves four other organisations, once those contributions are received the final total expenditure will be £133.

6. LEARNING POINTS FOR THE FUTURE

- We must ensure that we retain the flexibility to be able to pick up unexpected opportunities like this when they come along.
- We should actively seek out similar competitions to enter, as a way of enhancing pride in the town and raising its profile.
- We should investigate the provision of appropriate promotional merchandise to ensure it is available in the town.

JCMM/TH

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