

## **PROJECT REPORT - GREEN MAN GALLERY**

### **1. OVERVIEW**

Buxton Town Team enabled the setting up of the Green Man Gallery as a pop-up shop, entered into a lease on its behalf, and supported the members through their first year of operation. The Gallery is now operating independently of any Town Team involvement, but we continue to collaborate with them where appropriate.

### **2. DETAIL OF WHAT TOOK PLACE**

Buxton Town Team was approached by a group of 22 artists who wanted to set up a pop-up gallery at 55 High Street. The landlord of the building was willing to let them have the use of the premises for a year rent-free, on a 'meanwhile lease', but not being a legal entity, they were not in a position to sign the lease. With certain provisos, Buxton Town Team agreed to take on the lease on their behalf. This was finally agreed and signed in February 2013, although the period of the tenancy was from 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012 to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013.

The possibility of a start-up loan was considered at the start, but financial projections indicated that this was not necessary. In the event, these projections did prove to be overly optimistic.

One of the conditions of the agreement was that Buxton Town Team would 'mentor' the artists, offering business and financial advice, and that we would be given full access to their accounts to ensure that they were not running up debts for which the Town Team might be liable. For various reasons this arrangement did not run as smoothly as we might have wished, but there was never any concern that Buxton Town Team finances were being put at risk.

The second condition was that the artists would form themselves into a legal entity so that when the lease came to an end they would be in a position to contact with the landlord direct. This was achieved, via an existing company Bridgehead Arts Ltd, which started trading as Green Man Gallery in autumn 2013.

The lease with Buxton Town Team came to an end on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013. At that time an agreement between Bridgehead Arts and the landlord had still not been concluded, and Buxton Town Team agreed to be party to a 6 week bridging lease to enable the Gallery to remain in existence while discussions continued. Members and directors of Buxton Town Team supported Bridgehead Arts through these negotiations by request.

A new lease directly between Bridgehead Arts and the landlord, with no Buxton Town Team involvement, came into effect on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

The Gallery now has a well-developed plan to expand its activities and to develop as a community arts hub.

### **3. ASSESSMENT AGAINST AIMS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA**

The aims of the project were:

- **Establish a pop-up shop to make use of empty retail space**
- **Provide a home for, and nurture, the town's artistic culture**
- **Act as a pilot project for further similar projects in the town**

These aims were all met in full.

In the event no more pop-up shops have been set up in the town to date. This is at least in part due to economic recovery meaning there are far fewer vacant premises, and is no reflection on the Green Man Gallery as a model that other groups of retailers might follow.

The measurable success criteria of the project were as follows:

- **6 Month Review - the gallery is thriving and economically sound**

This objective was met in part. It transpired that a number of the original members had no interest in a long term project, these people left and it took some time to recruit replacements. While the membership was in flux, it was difficult to develop a business plan and agree a direction. While the Gallery appeared to be thriving, and was covering its overheads, income (from both sales and membership) was lower than had been forecast, and its future financial viability was far from certain.

- **12 Month Review - the artists are self-sufficient and able to pay all overheads plus commercial rent**

This objective was largely met. The Gallery is self-sufficient and covering all its overheads. It is not yet able to pay rent at the full commercial level, but it has an agreement with the landlord to pay rent at an affordable rate, subject to regular review.

#### **4. ANY FURTHER BENEFITS**

The Green Man Gallery has developed into something that is rather more interesting and varied than we expected. As well as providing a home for the member artists and a place to display and sell their work, it is running a wide variety of workshops, and hosts regular music events.

The collaboration with the Green Man Gallery has had benefits to Buxton Town Team. We have used the premises to host the prize presentations for both Christmas Crawls, and we expect to continue to work with the Gallery on other projects in the future.

#### **5. COSTS**

The only cost to the Town Team was the time invested by members and directors in supporting the Gallery. No financial expenditure was involved.

#### **6. LEARNING POINTS FOR THE FUTURE**

Ensure that all members of the project share the same vision and objectives, and that the detail is agreed and recorded at an early stage.

Ensure that the terms of the lease are agreed, appropriate waivers are in place and all the legal documents are signed, before the tenants take possession.

Ensure close liaison between the project leader and the directors, and more detailed reporting, so that emerging problems can be picked up and remedied quickly.

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