

# Trowbridge Town Hall Trust

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## Progress Report to Cabinet Asset Committee

### January 2013

#### Progress since previous report:

Since the previous report in March 2012 we have:

- Established a limited company – Trowbridge Town Hall Trust Limited – as a vehicle to progress the asset transfer and develop the project. A board of 8 directors was appointed in May 2012.
- Applied for charitable status and VAT registration
- Engaged with numerous potential stakeholders and partners including (amongst others)
  - Collaborative Schools
  - Pound Arts Trust and Rural Touring
  - Encore – the catering arm of Salisbury Playhouse
  - Selwood Housing
  - English National Ballet
  - Wiltshire Rural Music School
  - Arts Council England
- Undertaken peer visits to:
  - Merthyr Tydfil Town Hall – currently being transformed into a centre for the arts and creative industries
  - Salisbury Arts Centre
  - Battersea Arts Centre
  - Hebden Bridge Town Hall
- Given presentations of the scheme to:
  - Local area board
  - Friends of the Trowbridge Information Centre
  - Youth action group
  - BA14 Culture
  - Community Arts Training
- Commissioned a Concept Proposal for the building from Nash Partnership, architects and urban regeneration consultants. This was published in June.
- Provided input to the Transforming Trowbridge report by Arup and consultations for the proposed Campus
- Held six public open days, which attracted over 1,500 visitors and allowed the opportunity for significant community engagement. Feedback on our concept proposals has been very close to 100% positive.
- Secured and used six consultancy days through the Asset Transfer Unit, including 1 day with Glasshouse who specialize in community engagement in design; and two consultancy days through Locality.
- Established a ‘friends’ group numbering over 100 members
- Established a web site ([trowbridgetownhall.org](http://trowbridgetownhall.org))
- Held a ‘community clear up day’ to clear the Supper Room and carry out interior cleaning
- Hosted a weekly youth theatre programme in partnership with Salisbury Playhouse

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- Hosted a professional theatrical production – Country Boy’s Tale – and the premiere of the film ‘Agog’ by local film maker Meg Mosley as part of the Inaugural Trowbridge Arts Festival (both to capacity audiences)
- We continue to work hand-in-hand with Locality and have now made contact with the Architectural Heritage Fund

## Strategy

Our intentions at this stage are to take a phased approach to development of the project, starting with the early use phase described above and undertaking staged capital works as we go. This is considered to be a lower risk approach than a ‘big bang’ large capital project as it will allow us the opportunity to test markets, build confidence in funders by demonstrating a track record of success and adapt our business model as necessary as we go. It will also mean we can make smaller funding applications, which tend to stand a greater chance of success.

The concept report prepared by Nash Partnership is based on the flexible use of space in the building in order that we can operate a venue/ facility that can host different events at different times in a single space. We intend to operate throughout the day and evening in order to maximize usage of the building and optimize the capacity for revenue generation to support the provision of arts and community activities.

## Next steps

Our immediate priorities are:

1. To secure funding through Locality to develop our Concept Proposal into a feasibility study. Up to £100,000 funding is available and we are currently preparing our application which includes securing consultant quotations and preparing an outline business plan. The feasibility process will include a more intensive round of stakeholder engagement and result in a full business plan and capital funding plan. We will then be in a position to make bids for capital funding.
2. To build on the ad-hoc events we have organized in the building and begin to develop regular usage by community groups, arts providers and the public and develop streams of revenue. This ‘early use phase’ will enable us to develop the business in an organic way, making use of the building and generating income without significant capital works in the short term and provide empirical evidence for our business planning process. We are planning to engage a ‘facility manager’ (to be funded partly through the Locality feasibility funding, and partly through revenue generation) to bring activity and business into the building. We have begun negotiations with officers to set up a ‘Tenancy at Will’ to enable us to take more control over the building. Within this ‘early phase’ we can envisage the following being delivered through the building:
  - Continued regular youth theatre and other regular participation

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- The offer of some level of catering
- The presentation of performances
- Hosting of meetings and events as is practicable
- Exhibitions
- Office space rental
- Hosting regional and local arts organisations such as Trowbridge arts and creative ecology Wiltshire

## **Capital Funding**

We have already approached Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund, who are considered likely to be key funders for the project. Both have given valuable feedback on our approach to making our applications. Arts Council England have indicated their support for a project development grant that will allow our main capital funding application to be as strong as possible.

We have met with Julian head of Wiltshire Council to explore the opportunities for European funding and the potential of rural growth network funding from DEFRA.

We will also investigate the potential of Community Shares Issues, Co-operative initiatives, Community Development Funds and low cost loans from organisations such as the Charity Bank.

We are currently intending to work with a consultant employed on the Merthyr Tydfil Town Hall project who successfully secured £8m of capital funding.

It is noteworthy that our ambitious plans for the development of the town hall development played a key part in securing £90,000 of project funding from Arts Council England – awarded in December 2012 – which, along with match funding from Wiltshire Council, Trowbridge Town Council and TCAF will provide over £120,000 of investment in the delivery of professional arts across the Trowbridge community area over the next two years.