



Community Participation and Inclusion strategy

DRAFT

The background

The past two years have seen a concerted community-led campaign in Hebden Bridge to see our beautiful but neglected Town Hall building brought back to the centre of community life.

Through Hebden Bridge Partnership (the 'umbrella' voluntary sector organisation locally), we have been engaging in on-going discussions with our local authority, Calderdale, which currently owns the building. Calderdale has committed to work in partnership to secure the long-term future of the Town Hall. It has expressed the desire to see the building used to its fullest extent for community and civic purposes.

We are negotiating with Calderdale for ownership and management of the building to be passed to the newly established charity Hebden Bridge Community Association Ltd, which has been set up specifically for this purpose. Asset transfer to community control is being strongly supported by the present government.

We are determined to ensure that the future of Hebden Bridge Town Hall, as a landmark building in our community, is secured for the very long term. We want to ensure that a robust framework is put in place right from the start, so that there is proper democratic control and public accountability at the heart of the management of the building.



Our objective

Hebden Bridge Community Association Ltd will maintain Hebden Bridge Town Hall in **public ownership** in perpetuity, as a centre of community and civic life.

What we mean by *public ownership*

For much of the twentieth century, public ownership was synonymous with ownership by the national or local state. Our concept of public ownership is a broader one, which looks back to the earlier nineteenth century models of mutuality and common interest, as well as forward towards new twenty-first century models. We are aware that these models are still in the process of being created, and that therefore we are taking on a pioneering role.

Our principles

In its work, Hebden Bridge Community Association Ltd will operate on the basis that it is **demonstrably democratic and accountable**.

What we mean by *democratic*

The transfer of the Hebden Bridge Town Hall into community ownership will deserve to succeed only if the new arrangements receive the maximum possible endorsement from local organisations and local people – if everyone feels that the Town Hall is ‘our’ not ‘their’ building.

Under our constitution, Hebden Bridge Community Association Ltd is controlled by its members, on the basis of one person, one vote. Membership is open to all individuals over 18 and organisations in Hebden Bridge (and beyond) without discrimination. Members elect the trustees who take the responsibility under charity law for the strategic management of the Association.

Within this framework, we will be looking to maximise the engagement of local people and organisations in the democratic life of the Association, so that our democracy is a real and vibrant one.

What we mean by *accountable*

Hebden Bridge Community Association accepts that it has a duty to be accountable to the whole community for the way in which it manages and operates the Town Hall.

Under local authority control, the local electoral system provides a mechanism for accountability. Under community control, measures will be put in place to provide a similar, if not greater, level of accountability.

What we mean by *demonstrably*

We will monitor, on an ongoing basis, how well we are doing in meeting our objectives of being democratic and accountable. We will do this by testing ourselves against a set of objective performance indicators. This document sets out below some of the indicators we expect to use.

Our charitable status

Hebden Bridge Community Association Ltd has been given registered charitable status by the Charity Commission.

This means we are under a legal duty to run the Association for the public benefit, using our income and our assets to meet the charitable objects which are set out in our constitution. (In broad terms, these objects are the provision of community facilities and the regeneration of our community).

Our structure and way of working

We are a company limited by guarantee, a legal form very widely used for not-for-profit organisations.

We identify with the concept of the community cooperative, and will aim to play our part in the broader cooperative movement. We also commit to being active members of the Development Trust Association and Community Matters.

We know that, to meet our objective, we will need to work in close partnership with other local organisations as well as with our local authority and our town and parish councils. We will seek partnerships wherever possible.

Our approach to community participation and social inclusion

Five fundamental principles will inform our actions:

Awareness

Knowledge of the work of Hebden Bridge Community Association among the largest possible number of local people

Transparency

Full transparency of information about Hebden Bridge Community Association and the operation of the Town Hall

Endorsement

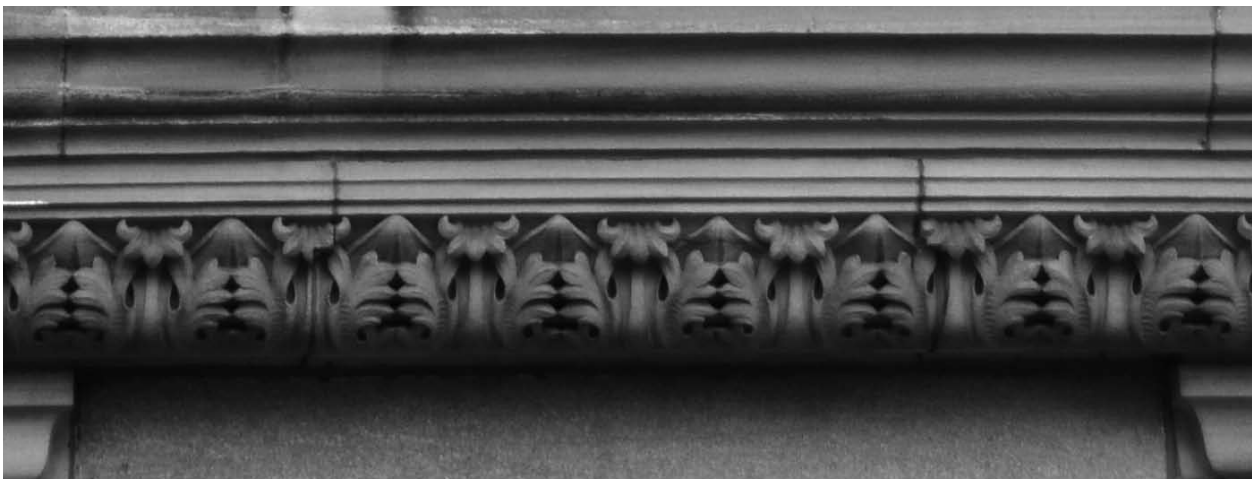
The widest possible number of local organisations and local individuals in membership of the Association

Engagement

Active engagement in the life of the Town Hall by as many organisations and people as possible.

Inclusivity

Recognition of the diverse communities in Hebden Bridge, including communities which may be excluded from traditional community life. A strong commitment to abide by our equal opportunities principles.



Our approach to awareness and transparency of information

We want to ensure that there is a very high level of awareness about the Association and the Town Hall in the Hebden Bridge area. We have identified a number of tools to help achieve this. These include:

- Regular submission of material to Hebden Bridge Times.
- Regular submission of material to Hebden Bridge community website (www.hebdenbridge.co.uk, HebWeb).
- Regular communications to the Business Association.
- Regular briefings to Hebden Bridge Partnership
- Regular meetings with representatives of the Town and four Parish Councils
- Regular production of a newsletter
- Public open days and drop-in sessions at the Town Hall.
- Information about the Association to be supplied to Hebden Bridge Library.
- Regular updating of the dedicated website (www.hebdenbridgetownhall.org.uk)

We want to ensure full transparency of information about the Association and the operation of the Town Hall.

- We will use our own website to achieve this.
- We will also deposit copies of key documentation with Hebden Bridge Library and Hebden Bridge Visitor Centre.

We will establish a Users' Group, for those working in and using the facilities in the Town Hall.

We will also hold liaison meetings at least four times a year with Calderdale MBC.

Our approach to community endorsement and engagement

We anticipate shortly launching a major campaign to attract local people and organisations into membership of the Association.

We will be promoting this under the banner of Friends of The Town Hall. We will be seeking maximum media exposure at the launch.

Although for legal reasons, membership of the Association is open only to those 18 and over, we will be actively encouraging those under 18 also to become Friends.

Friends will receive a membership certificate and commemorative mug.

We will be seeking partnership arrangements with local retailers, so that members of the public will be able to become Friends and receive their certificates and mugs through shops and pubs in the town.

We will also in due course make provision for Friends to join via the internet.

Our approach to Inclusivity

Hebden Bridge Community Association is committed to work for equal opportunities and for full community social inclusion.

The Association acknowledges that although Hebden Bridge is in many respects a good example of a small town with a strong community life, there are groups within our community who could potentially feel excluded from the life of the Town Hall and therefore where particular work may be appropriate (This list is not intended to be exhaustive).

Reaching the rural areas

The small rural communities on the hilltops can be overlooked, with the focus too narrowly on Hebden Bridge town itself. Those living 'on the tops' (particularly those without cars) are disadvantaged in terms of access to public services, since to get to Halifax requires normally at least two separate bus trips each way.

The Association considers it a strength that all four rural parish councils have given their support and are represented on the Town/Parish councils project working group. The Association will seek to address the needs of the rural population as the project is developed

Older people

Those in our community who are of retirement age are predominantly people who have made their lives in the upper Calder valley, and who have experienced major changes in the town, not least with the collapse of the textile trade in the 1960s-1980s on which the town's economic prosperity was based. Recent changes, including the influx of younger people from outside the area, may seem challenging.

Older people in our community are those for whom the Town Hall building is particularly significant, since it is here where – for example - they have registered births and deaths in times past, paid their rates (and later their Community Charge, and Council Tax), and interacted with the Urban District Council (and later Calderdale MBC). It is important that their memories of the Town Hall in its heyday are fully taken into account as plans are put in place to breathe new life into the building once again.

The opportunities for the public hall/function room to cater for the needs of the retired community through weekday daytime events need to be acknowledged and maximised.

Young people

The Town Hall project is a long-term initiative, aimed at securing the future of these buildings for the twenty-first century. It is therefore appropriate that the voices of young people and children are adequately heard as the project is planned.

The Association will seek to make contact with young people at Calder High, including Calder High Sixth Form, with the aim of encouraging direct participation in the Association from older young people. The Association will also seek to work with the local Scouts, Girlguiding and Woodcraft Folk groups.

Work will be undertaken to encourage input from children at Riverside, Central Street, Hebden Royd, Stubbings, Heptonstall, Old Town and Colden schools. A range of imaginative and creative ideas will be pursued, to make the idea of creating a new community space in Hebden Bridge as appealing as possible to this age group

The lesbian and gay community

Hebden Bridge has sometimes been called the lesbian capital of the North, and Wikipedia reports that the town has the highest proportion of lesbians per head of population in the country. There are many lesbian households with young children in the town.

The town also has a (somewhat smaller) gay community, as well as a well-organised small transgender community.

The Association will ensure that facilities are provided to meet the needs of the LGBT communities in Hebden Bridge

Disability matters

One of the key aims of the Association's proposed capital works for the Town Hall is to ensure that the buildings are fully accessible by all.

Access by wheelchair users is currently extremely limited. The proposed capital works include a new entrance foyer (on the level) and lift to all parts of the complex. A hearing induction loop is included in the proposals for the new public hall/function room.

The Association pledges to ensure that people with disabilities are able to engage centrally throughout the planning process for the building (and not simply consulted on technical issues from time to time). The project will take specialist advice from those most able to give it.

The Association will work closely with the disability representative on Hebden Bridge Partnership and will develop an informal sub-committee covering disability issues

Ethnic diversity

The Hebden Bridge community is predominantly white, but is gradually changing to become more ethnically diverse.

The town, although in a small valley, has broad horizons, and several international NGOs and campaigning bodies have their bases here. The project will aim to celebrate this aspect of our community's life.

The project team will aim to encourage the promotion of cultural diversity in the activities within the building.

Our key indicators of our performance

We are currently developing a set of indicators which we will be able to use to monitor our performance in meeting our objectives and principles.

We anticipate that we will use the following indicators to measure our success in meeting our principles of democracy and accountability:

1. The number of members of Hebden Bridge Community Association
Target by end 2009: 1000 members
2. The number of local organisations in membership
Target by end 2009: 30 organisations
3. The number of members attending our first AGM
Target: 60 people
4. The number of members voting in the first trustee elections
Target: 100 votes cast
5. The number of young people (age 18-30) in membership
Target by end 2009: 60 people

We welcome further suggestions for objective, clearly measurable, targets.

Separate indicators will be developed to monitor the usage of the Town Hall, once management control has been passed to the Association.





Hebden Bridge Community Association Ltd

Company limited by guarantee, no 6685276

Registered charity, no 1127597

Your comments on this draft document are welcome. Please send them to Andrew Bibby, andrew@andrewbibby.com (2 Hebble End, Hebden Bridge, HX7 6HJ).