

Friends of High Town Meeting Minutes - 13th August 2013

1. Attendees

David Landau, Annie Bygrave, Russell Cartwright, Marie-Louise Lowcock, Chris Grabham, Fiona Morton, Simon Barrow, Joan Samuel, Michael Missen, Philip Jones, Carolyn Barratt, Mark Barrett, Philip Horner, Kim Greig, Lisa Wright, Roxanna Whittaker, David Alexander.

2. Apologies

Andy Malcolm, Fiona Martin, Naomi Wynter-Vincent, Linda Farrell, Martyn Godden.

3. Minutes

Correction to July minutes by DL: Gavin Shuker is in a group that is 'looking at changing the law' regards prostitution (i.e. GS is not doing it alone). AB has noted and changed minutes accordingly.

4. Wardown Park Museum – presentation by Laura Lewis

Laura Lewis, Community Engagement Officer for Luton Culture, gave a presentation on 'The People's Museum Project'

- Wardown Park Museum, part of Luton Culture – a Charitable Trust
- Deep financial cuts – needs funding/change
- New bid to Heritage Lottery Fund (previous bid failed)
- New bid to Heritage LF Transition Fund
- Gained Art Council England (ACE) Strategic Support for 2 years
- Budget set until Mar 2015
- No further funding for Museum after that
- Needs to be self –funding
- Project set up to make a new self-funding model
- Get community support – sign up 'Museum Makers' over next 2 years
- Help to determine:
 - What events to run
 - What exhibitions to show
 - What we collect

- How we operate
- How we run our business
- How we raise money
- How we market ourselves
- How we reach our audiences
- Where we develop
- Who we partner
- Test out various options over 2 years to see what works
- Create sustainable future model – roll this out to other areas too

Want to work with various partners e.g. British Museum, LBC, Stockwood, Luton Culture staff, as well as the public.

Get advice and ideas on all aspects of Museum; increasing turnover of Café and Museum Shop, improving footfall, what forms of marketing would work best (e.g. social media?) etc. Museum Makers: volunteers from any walk of life, any experience, giving any kind of input from 1 hr to a few months.

Year One: Concentrate on signing up volunteers, creating a buzz

Year Two: Concentrate on exhibitions and learning

Q&A Session

JS: Did you get any feedback on the refused HLF bid?

LL: Bid was to reinstate the original Victorian building of the Museum. Feedback was that the bid was too detailed. There are different stages to bidding for funding. We went in at Stage 2 (too much detail) rather than Stage 1. But we now realise that the idea presented in the bid wasn't feasible.

JS: Did they tell you which bits of the bid they did like? It would be good strategically to build on that.

LL: I'm personally not privy to that information as it's at a higher level. But yes I believe they did.

KG: Luton Fair Trade Steering Group – have you approached Luton Airport for funding?

LL: Our funding mostly comes through the airport. Want to approach other companies too, e.g. Whitbread - maybe to expand the Café.

LL (*general question to group*): What do you like about the museum?

MB: Lots of things. Nostalgia. Walking around it. Great collection. Theatre with no stage – live performances outside, interactive. Unusual.

LL: Want to dispel myths about Museums. Want to get people to touch things, to make a noise, become involved.

JS: Can you quote us an example of a self-funding museum that you can use as a model?

LL: Hackney Museum is doing something slightly differently – getting money from Café, secondary spending in shop, certain paid exhibitions. Best examples are Arts organisations – they have to survive.

KG: Have you rental facilities in the Museum?

LL: Yes we do have a space that can be offered to communities.

(*Brief discussion about what venue at the Museum could be used for*)

DL: What kind of target (in money) have you got?

LL: It's not all about money. It's about raising people's awareness, Tweeting, liking Facebook Page etc.

DL/MM: It is about raising money though isn't it?

LL: We have 2 years funding. That is to develop sustainable money.

DL: What do you want us to do to help the museum stay alive?

LL: We would talk about that as a group or as individuals. Event stewarding, cleaning cases, lots of things can be done. At this stage we are signing up and then we would talk to you about what you can do.

LL: People support us but don't come to the Museum enough. When we were under threat of closure they rose up and objected.

DL: What have you got at the moment that would tempt us in?

LL: Exhibition on the Victorian child. A fantastic house. You can come in and look at the ceilings and lovely features. People just don't do that.

JS: What Grade listed building is it?

CG/DL: Grade 2

DL thanked Laura for her presentation. Group applause.

5. Prostitution & Drugs

DL reiterated what had been spoken about in our previous meetings for the benefit of new members. Also mentioned the public meeting with the police – notes of which have been taken and may be released after review.

CG: Have they started sorting out the problems rather than attacking the council and councillors for not doing enough?

DL: Yes, they are addressing many of the practical problems. It seems likely there is only 1 months resource for the police in the area but all

the other actions will continue. Dispersal Zone in place to move people out of area for 24 hrs.

JS: I walked past the shop [where the petition was started] – and all the posters had been taken down. Could be that this order has been effective.

DL: Could be because Shazad was targeted with graffiti, but maybe because he and Wendy at the public meeting were satisfied [*that action had been taken to address their concerns*]. Don't know when the next meeting is....in 1 month's time?

AB: Every 3 months.

PH: Tuesday 1st October.

AB: Last one was 6:30pm

DL: I walked the beat with a PCSO for 30 mins. Told him we wanted to have a PCSO come to our meetings and he made a note of it. But nobody has come down.

6. High Town Festival Feedback

DL: Thanks to AB, KG and LW for all the help provided on the day. We signed up some new members. Want some honest feedback about the Festival.

AB: Too small. Not enough going on.

MB: Not enough publicity. Not ambitious enough.

KG: Lots of people popped over to have a look [*at the stall*] as they were passing. So if there had been more going on for people they would have

stayed longer. Need feedback on numbers from local shops and food outlets. How well did they do?

ML: Scandie café did not do very well.

DL: The Arts and Crafts Fair in the Scandie did not have... [the publicity that it had last time.]

ML: Needed much more buskers and music on the street.

CG: Could we have something in the Square that directs/leads people up to High Town?

MB: There is that big car park – could tell people about the festival there and point them up to it.

CG: Projector onto that big car park side wall?

DL: Only 4 weeks lead up time – limited this year to what we could get. There is a large steering group meeting in September.

MB: Not diverse enough entertainment – eg circus acts, jugglers, magic tricks, and *where was the street market?*

DL: We run into issues with the street market.

CB: The Luton indoor market is already branching out with stalls outside – offer them stalls in High Town for the Festival.

DL: Would it still be High Town if we brought in people from other areas?

MB: There's not enough local talent for a top notch music festival. You have to bring them in from elsewhere to make it work.

CB: A lot of African people come here to shop in the African shops [*food, hair, cosmetics*]. Have to give them something to grab their attention. Or they just shop and leave straight away.

KG: A carnival atmosphere was needed.

ML: So much of it was inside shops and buildings – you couldn't see it.

MB: Part of the thinking was protection from the weather if it turned bad, which is a good idea. Got to have a contingency plan – to ensure it will be a success whatever the weather. But keep it outside under marquees and covered walkways.

DL: Use the Festival as a start to make it a pathway through High Town. Expand it into People's Park, the working men's club and other venues. Need people to work on it [for next year] and give their time. Meeting in September, if you want to come let me know.

(ML indicated she wants to come)

PH: Agree with points made. However despite comments I thought it was a great day and had a great atmosphere.

DL: I agree. I think the Polish café did really well. I saw a lot of people going in for iced coffee and food who wouldn't normally use it. I hope that other businesses also made some money.

PH: People who came into the church often said they couldn't stay long, so I think they were just passing by. Would have been nice if they had planned to come!

DL: Excellent feedback. LBC did very well.

JS: Advertising is still up [*on hoarding*] opposite the station.

7. Platters Lea (LoHo) Clean Up Feedback

DL: I went down to help and find out how it was organised. Simple makeover 8:30 am – 5:30 pm. Rubbish clearance, car park, clearing pavements of weeds, painting walls, hoardings and fences. Tools were supplied . Council involvement – rubbish trucks and workers to staff them.

KG: Haven't seen it. Photos?

DL: Vimeo video 4 mins speeded up version is good.

MB: Painting fences and hoardings green – looked good.

F Morton: Did they tidy up a bit around the Hat Press?

DL: They pressure washed and repainted the concrete.

DL: Feedback required on what we need to do in High Town. Then will contact the council and ask them to help.

MB: The Railway Tavern is the best area with regards visitors opinions – it's partly been given a makeover anyway [for the Festival] – so build on that.

RW: It is private property – limited to what the owners will allow us to do. Sounds like clean-up day was a great fun day.

DL: With the green T-shirts and the excellent food provided, it felt like a team effort, a very positive thing.

DL: Maybe we can request to repaint hoarding a different colour at the Railway Tavern.

8. Railway Tavern Feedback

DL: Still needs a discharge of planning permission to restart development there:

- Ventilation system and noise baffles – specialist company quotes - waiting for this
- External materials to building and to seating areas – red brick will be rendered in same style as previously done
- Disabled access – in process of being discharged – need specialist council team to come back on this

DL: So things are moving forward

CG: Windows still not blocked up to the top – if this is what owners are like now, it does not instil confidence in future development.

DL filled in new members on Railway Tavern development, the fire and the current position.

DL: I will keep at the police for info on possible arson.

9. Media & Marketing

DL: N W-V has bought the domain names for the Group. Finally ready to port the old website to the new one. N W-V will do it

JS: Will send newest poster template to N W-V. Are they going to be used for marketing?

DL: Yes

MB: Will there be a membership sign-up form on the website?

DL: Maybe pay by Paypal.

CB: Collect people's email addresses.

MB: Make a marketing list from this.

DL: How many members do we have?

AB: About 85 -90

10. Grandparent's day.

DL: No feedback at present

11. PO Petition

DL: Am working on it

12. Green Flag Award

DL: We have Green Flag status awarded [*for Pope's Meadow/People's Park*]. This enables more funding to be applied for in future [*to improve the parks*]. Judge came down and inspected – walked around with him and told him about all the work that has been done. He ignored travellers camping there from day before.

MB: There is some graffiti on the trees at the top of the park – in white paint.

DL: Do we know how to get rid of this?

AB: Spray it with same colour as the bark – the trees won't mind.

13. AOB

a. High Hats on High Town Road

ML: Has been very successful – and have had great feedback from the community. Lots of people are coming in to see and have made great comments. Three other shops are now repainting their shop fronts since we did ours. Mediterranean Café is even doing theirs the same colour.

You don't have to buy anything – come in and try on the hats. There are hats for everyone at all budgets. Next week we have a delivery of mens hats. Come in and have a chat.

DL: What is happening there at the moment?

ML: We will be doing the MacMillan Cancer Charity coffee morning. It will be the last Thursday in September. Majorie's are doing the coffee. Please bring cakes. Shop will be open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays 10am-5pm. Will have workshops too – schedule to be arranged.

DL: What can we do to help?

F Morton: Applying for funding?

ML: Yes funding advice is needed. Also ideas on workshops and volunteers for working in the shop. The official opening day of High Hats is 5th Sept at 6:30pm.

b. Micro Festival

ML: There is a High Town Shindig music festival on Sunday 8th September. Please come and tell everyone. We have advertising posters. *Action point - AB to get copy of poster from ML and email to members.*

DL: Trying to keep the momentum going from the Festival.

c. Nettles in Pope's Meadow

SB: Where the tree whips were planted in Pope's Meadow there are a lot of nettles growing up that are out competing the trees. They need to be cleared. I'm looking for volunteers to help me do this.

(2 volunteers offered, date & time set at 20th August 6:30 pm)

14. Date of Next Meeting: 10th September 2013

Meeting ended
