

The Point at St Mary in the Castle

Frequently Asked Questions

Will the building still be open for wider community use?

Yes – our proposal is for a youth managed arts and cultural facility. The funding is aimed at providing world class youth facilities with positive activities for young people, but also aims to encourage community integration and therefore young people will be welcoming the wider community into the building. We also need to make the facility financially sustainable so the programme of events and activities that you are used to will continue and be expanded upon. Young people are part of the wider community and therefore there is no distinction between youth and community. The wider community will be encouraged to not only attend events, activities, concerts and so on, but will also be actively encouraged to deliver activities within the centre, and to volunteer with us to support the core staff team and youth volunteers.

Will music events such as the Hasting Philharmonic Choir, operas, etc still be able to run?

Yes, we will actively encourage these sorts of events and concerts to continue to be held at St Mary in the Castle. As stated above, we need to continue and expand on the programme of activities that people are used to seeing in the building, and we need to generate an income that will be re-invested in the building and activities. Young people are not only interested in ‘modern’ music – they want to see a full range and breadth of music and performance – jazz, opera, musicals, classical, rock, pop, rap, film, comedy, spoken word, amateur dramatics and so on will all form part of the programme of events.

Is it a youth club?

No, not in the traditional sense of the term. Young people themselves have identified that they want a youth managed arts and cultural facility – young people will learn the skills in facilities management, venue and stage management etc. What we have discovered during the journey to here is that young people want something more sophisticated than pool tables and table tennis – they want a space that is safe and inviting, where they can enjoy informal social contact, across all generations, where they can learn new skills, where they can access support and advice, and where they can take part in interesting and inspirational activities.

Are you planning to remove original features such as the pews and the font?

No, we are working with and respecting the architectural heritage of the building. If anything we are re-instating original features, whilst making the building work for modern society.

What is the Lottery funding for?

The funding has come from central Government and is simply being administered by the BIG Lottery fund. The funding is capital only and will just pay for the refurbishment costs and installations / equipment. There is no revenue funding to pay for officer time in overseeing the capital phase of the project or for the on-going operation of the facility.

How will the building be financially sustained?

As part of the funding process Hastings Trust has been required to put together a robust business plan for the future operation of the centre – as is the case with all of the myplace projects. The building has to be commercially viable, which is a challenge for a youth centre and hence us developing, with young people, the concept of a youth managed arts and cultural facility. We will be maximising on venue hire, public performance, commercial lettings and so on. We will generate income from outsourcing the bar and café area. All the facilities within the centre will be free of charge at point of use for young people, however they will also be available for the use of the general public at a charge and in a carefully managed environment. This is fully in line with the guidance that we have received from the funders and the support team. Unless we are able to make the building sustainable we are not able to take the project forward.

Are the problems with the building solvable?

The building is old, complex and difficult but we believe that the vast majority of the issues are manageable if not solvable. There are a lot of differing views as to the root cause of water penetration and other problems, therefore we commissioned a specialist condition survey which formed part of the feasibility works. This was undertaken by a firm of architects (not those working on the myplace designs) with extensive knowledge of the building. We have also worked closely with a local firm who are engaged by HBC to carry out essential maintenance of the building. Further, following the work on the proposed remedial works, we commissioned the same firm to put together a schedule of on-going maintenance based on these proposed remedial works in order that we could integrate these maintenance requirements into the business plan.

The building is cold and expensive to heat – how will you ensure that it is kept appropriately heated?

This is a condition within the lease as adequate heating is required to protect the building from further deterioration. Clearly with expansive use of the building this will add to providing adequate temperatures – keeping the auditorium closed and locked and under-utilised does not allow for warm air circulation caused by moving energetic bodies. We are also exploring the use of sustainable energy technologies which will make heating of the building more effective and affordable. In any case, the existing inadequate heating and electrical systems will be replaced with more effective, efficient and affordable systems.

We have heard that a survey by HBC from 4 or 5 years ago shows that there are major problems with the drains – how are these being resolved?

We have not relied on any old condition or other surveys and have commissioned our own. We have had a detailed condition survey carried out as stated above, and a maintenance schedule based on our proposed remedial works. We have also had a detailed drainage survey carried out which included CCTV work of the existing drains and the finding of this have been incorporated into our plans.

How long will the building be closed for whilst the building works are going on?

We have tried to have as short a build phase as possible – partly to save costs and partly to reduce inconvenience to current users, who we hope will continue to use the facility. We had discussed a phased build in order to minimise disruption further, however we considered this to be impractical. We anticipate that the build phase will last no longer than 18 months, but preferably 12 – 14 months, however we must be realistic about potential delays once we get on site. Assuming that the project goes forward, we hope to be on site end June 2010 with the facility open no later than beginning 2012.

We have heard that there will be a bar – how does this fit with the youth use?

We do intend to continue to provide bar facilities for public evening performances however we have no intention to maintain a licence for the facility as this does not fit with the proposed youth use and management. We will therefore be going out to tender for a local licensee to run the bar for which we will charge a flat rate and negotiate a percentage of the bar take. We feel that this will be the most appropriate way of ensuring that alcohol is available for public performances, whilst still safeguarding young people on a day to day basis.

We have heard that the café will be commercially let as prime retail space – can you please explain?

As with the bar, we would go out to tender for a local operator to run the café for a fee. We believe that this is the best of way of building community integration and fits with the Trust's aim of procuring locally and supporting local enterprise. The only proviso that we would put on this is that all staff will need to be CRB checked and that we would wish youth training opportunities to be provided.

What sorts of activities will be available within the facility?

All activities within the facility have been identified by young people leading the project. There will be a flexible programme of activities available – core activities, ad hoc provision, youth led activities, support services and community / public events performances.

Core activities will include educational provision around performing arts, music technology, graphic design, new media etc. We also hope to be able to deliver Creative Apprenticeships in partnership with Sussex Down College once these are available to volunteers – this is still the subject of negotiation.

There will be core activities relating to dance, drama, performing arts, digital media, music production and performance, an online activity.

Ad hoc activities will be determined by the youth led steering group and we will work with the wider community and groups to ensure that an inspirational programme is available.

The café and informal, undirected, chill out space will be available with access to music, gaming and so on.

Public performance of opera, dance, film, comedy, drama and so on will be provided open to all.

In additional support services relating to careers, housing, health and other issues of importance to young people will be made available through partnership working.

We also plan to deliver, in partnership with language schools, specialist activities for foreign students, and with social services specialist activities for young people in care, with disabilities etc, in addition to the activities which will be available to all, to which we will welcome those with disabilities, health difficulties, speakers of other languages and so on.

Why has this building been chosen – wouldn't a new build have been better?

Prior to submission of the original bid document last year we carried out an options appraisal of various sites which were proven to be inappropriate or unavailable. This options appraisal was submitted as part of the bid and again as part of both the Business Plan and Capital Delivery Plan. Two preferred options at the pre-bidding stage were a new build (for which we were informed that there was no development land available) and the White Rock Theatre – which became our preferred option. We were however aware that HBC was seeking a commercial operator for the theatre at that time and very soon before the bid was due to be submitted we learned that HBC had found a commercial operator, and therefore, in order not to lose the opportunity to potentially bring up to 5million into the town for the benefit of young people HBC offered us St Mary in the Castle, and we agreed to bid for it. We admit at that time we were unconvinced as to its suitability for the proposed use, but we wanted to continue with the application with the belief that, were we successful with the funding, we would carry out detailed feasibility works including consultation with young people, and if the space proved not to be viable we would go back to the funder to negotiate a change of location. Once we commenced feasibility works and had the architects on board it became apparent that not only was the building viable as a location, it was also welcomed by young people (if not all of the wider community), and that one of the reasons that our bid was successful was because of the very calibre and uniqueness of the building. We also believe, from talking with other myplace projects, that there is significant added value from this location – myplace not only aims to provide world class youth facilities, it also aims to promote a positive image of young people and integration with the wider community – the danger of a new build would be that we would be unable to encourage that wider community usage which would enable that integration, with St Mary in the Castle we have a significant advantage due to the love that the wider community have for the building, their desire to continue to use it, and the value of the building as a key performance venue; there is also value in the fact that we can help to sustain a hugely valuable and iconic heritage landmark in the town, not only financially through the commercial attractiveness of the building as a performance venue, but also through the significant financial investment which will help to protect it, and the involvement of the

younger generation in looking after it into the future, rather than isolating them from a real stake in it.

So we may have initially felt ourselves, like others, that it was not the most appropriate venue, but now we believe that we could not have a better opportunity, in line with the young people's own vision for the facility, to create a brighter future for young people, for our community and for Hastings, as long as we can overcome the problems with the building and make it financially viable.

We have heard that the funding is still a competitive process and that it isn't secured – can you explain?

We are no longer in a competitive process – we are in a stage of detailed negotiation with the funders which is aimed at ensuring that we have got everything right in order to convert the in-principle grant into real cash. If we are not able to prove that the project can be viable, or something goes wrong with the lease negotiations or other legalities, or with securing the necessary consents which make our plans viable, the funding that has been allocated to us goes back into the pot for one of the reserve projects. All 62 projects that have been awarded an in-principle grant will secure that funding as long as the detail required is provided. It is not a competitive process at this stage. However, even if we are offered the full grant, Hastings Trust then has to go through its own assessment process judging the risks against the benefits of the project.

How can I make enquiries about future bookings whilst the building is closed?

Hastings Trust will be seeking and taking bookings as well as negotiating detailed partnership arrangements with proposed deliverers during the build phase. Until we have a post-holder appointed to take booking all enquiries will be dealt with by the existing staff working on Myplace : Mel Bonney-Kane - Executive Director; Carol Biggs – Assistant Director; and Jodie Taylor – Youth and Community Engagement Officer. We can be contacted via our main switchboard on 01424 446373 or e-mailed via post@hastingstrust.co.uk

During the build process we will be establishing a website where we hope to be able to provide for on-line bookings and a full tariff of charges will be made available at the earliest opportunity.

How can I get involved?

We welcome involvement in any aspect of the project from people of all ages – whether you want to volunteer now with the Trust or to get young people involved in the project, whether you can add value to the more detailed design and fit out work that will take place following the final 'yes' from the funders, or whether you have a desire to deliver activities within the new facility, or even before we open, please let us know. Full training and development is provided to all volunteers. Contact the team as detailed above to get involved.

What are the lease arrangements?

HBC is offering Hastings Trust a 25 year lease of the building on a peppercorn rent. It is a full repairing lease, therefore the on-going maintenance requirements are very important to us. The lease is still under negotiation and the Trust's solicitors, Gaby Hardwicke, have been instructed to act on our behalf and in the best interests of Hastings Trust in this matter, and other legalities surrounding the project.

What does this mean for other youth groups and facilities in the town?

We have been, and aim to continue to work with, other youth groups in the town to ensure that The Point at St Mary in the Castle is complementary and not competitive. We will actively encourage other youth groups to take advantage of the facilities available at St Mary in the Castle and bring their groups to the centre. We will also ensure that all of our youth development and leadership programmes are open for other youth groups to take advantage of, and we will encourage our young volunteers to volunteer with other youth organisations as well.

How will the building be staffed?

In order for the building and its activities there needs to be a strong and professional staff team. We are proposing a minimum staffing of 14 which will be split into two teams, one responsible for the effective management of the building and the facilities within it, and one responsible for youth work and volunteering. All staff will be adults, however we will encourage local recruitment where skills and expertise are available. The youth team will be managed under the supervision of ESCC's youth development services and there will be full time posts as well as sessional staff. There will also be opportunities for a great many professionally supported and trained volunteers to complement the team, including youth volunteers.

Proposed staffing at this time includes:

Myplace Manager / Artistic Director – who will be responsible for overseeing the facility and the activities within it.

Facilities Manager and Assistant Manager – who will take overall responsibility for ensuring that the building is operated effectively, properly marketed, properly maintained and so on.

Bookings Administrator – who will be responsible for general administration, bookings, reception and so on.

Technician – to look after all the technical equipment

Caretaker – to perform day to day maintenance

Youth Development Manager – to oversee the youth activities programme and to manage the youth work team.

Youth workers – hands on deliverers of youth activities, mentoring and support of participants.

Volunteer Co-ordinator – to recruit, manage, arrange for the training, supervision and placing of adult and youth volunteers

Sessional staff – as and when required to boost the staffing of the facility and to run specific events and activities within the centre.

The overall myplace manager will form part of the Hastings Trust core management team and will report directly to Hastings Trust's Executive Director. Hastings Trust Board of Directors will have the ultimate responsibility for overseeing staff and the project.

How have you identified what activities will be provided in the centre?

Young people themselves decided what they wanted to see – not everything identified would have worked within the building and therefore the architects based their work on what young people said and how that could be provided within a space like St Mary in the Castle. We also looked at what was already available in the town and activities like the Town Hall Takeover and the YouThink consultation added significant value to the identified priorities. We also held a design day at St Mary in the Castle where young people had a further opportunity to consider activities. Youth involvement will be key and we intend to provide a flexible programme which is responsive to the identified needs of young people – participants in the centre and its activities will be asked for feedback and suggestions of new activities which we will endeavour to put into place.

How many young people have been involved up to now?

A core group of about 10 – 15 people have been working on the detailed proposals – this includes attending workshops, working with architects and other professionals, attending meetings, setting up the exhibition which was on at F-ISH in November and generally working as volunteers with Hastings Trust. Each young person has also been responsible for cascading the information back to their peers and friends at school, college, university, in other youth groups and so on.

How did you choose the young people who are involved?

It was a self selection process – our Youth and Community Engagement Officer visited schools and youth groups and invited people to get involved. There was no selection process, we simply wanted as many people to be involved in the detailed work as wanted to be.

People, including youth organisations, don't know what's going on and keep coming into SMIC to ask – please explain how you are keeping people informed

The bid was developed in collaboration with youth organisations through the Hastings Youth Federation, and also with the Borough and County Councils. We have a Youth and Community Engagement Officer within the Trust who has been out to every youth group and school accompanied by youth client team representatives – we have a very detailed report submitted to the funders explaining how people have been engaged and the activities undertaken. There have been regular bulletins and updates as well as formal consultation sessions and meetings. The e-mailing list includes over 500 individuals in the town. Hastings Trust website and the Directors blog provides update and contact information. There is a

facebook group with over 100 members. No matter how hard we try to keep people informed there will always be some who slip out of the communication loop – misinformation does not help and therefore we are addressing these concerns on our website. We have also very publicly welcomed and questions to be brought directly to the attention of our Executive Director who can be contacted on 01424 446373, mel@hastingstrust.co.uk or 07837 612788.

There are delays in the planning permission and listed building consent which will impact on the availability of funding – please explain.

We are in constant communication with the Lottery and they are well aware of where we are. We are not the only project in the Myplace programme with these difficulties and the funders are pragmatic about it. We cannot anticipate the final decision, however we are working closely with the funders and the government funded Myplace support team to ensure that our project has the best chance of success.

There is an alterations notice in place relating to fire risk management and yet we believe that the Fire Officers have not been consulted

Fire Officers have been fully consulted by our Architects to ensure that appropriate evacuation, safety and other measures are acceptable to the Fire Authority.

Residents of Pelham Crescent have not been consulted

Letters were hand delivered to all flats within Pelham Crescent in April summarising the plans, providing contact details for further information, and inviting residents to stakeholder meetings. HBC has neighbour notification requirements relating to planning permission applications so residents will be personally informed that an application has been submitted to which they are entitled to view and comment on.

The proposals for use of the portico are impractical – the doors are fire doors and have to be kept unlocked therefore there is an opportunity for youngsters inside the building to let unsupervised others into the building who may be carrying alcohol or drugs.

Fire doors will be alarmed and therefore the full time staff team will be well aware if they are opened, as is good practice with fire doors in any case. The whole building will be monitored using CCTV to protect users and the building.

Is the funding not simply being used to protect the building, rather than to provide youth facilities?

The funding is being used to undertake remedial works, but also to make the building work for the use for which is being proposed, including equipping and furnishing it. This is one of many myplace projects which are remodelling an existing building, some of which are also listed. This is a great way of achieving strategic added value by not only providing young

people with a building and facilities which they have asked for, but also safeguarding a heritage asset for the long term use of present and future generations.

There are legal issues over the road, access and so on and we are told that they are not being addressed – please explain.

There is a wealth of work going on behind the scenes which is not, nor needs to be, in the public domain. Hastings Trust's solicitors, Gaby Hardwicke, specialist commercial lawyers, are working with the Trust to negotiate the lease and other legal requirements of the funders, which includes full investigation of title, ownership, covenants and restrictions on the property and neighbouring property which may impact upon our application and proposals.

We are told that the Business Plan is not viable.

As the Business Plan is commercial and in confidence it has only been released to those who have a need to see it – both Councils, the funders, the Project Team, and the Myplace Support Team. The Myplace Support Team is made up of expertise from Hall Aitken, Gleeds, Bearhunt etc etc and full support and input has been given to the Business Planning process. Detailed information such as the Maintenance Schedule which has been put together on the basis of the proposed works and the on-going maintenance requirements have informed the detailed financial information in the Business Plan. Research has been undertaken to ensure that the pricing strategy is both reasonable and competitive. Very conservative capacity : take-up projections have been made. Whilst we have made the best attempts with the Business Plan, it cannot guarantee success, and no such venture can be risk free. Hastings Trust will not take any risk lightly however as it is under a legal obligation to protect its charitable funds. Risk analysis is an on-going process, particularly in such volatile economic times.

How is Hastings Trust equipped / qualified to manage a building / project of this scale?

Hastings Trust is a registered charity and not for profit company with a 20 year history. We have delivered a variety of projects over our history, including capital build projects such as the Bridge and our current Eco-Retrofit. We have a substantial asset base and therefore understand about asset management.

Comments from the comments book in F-ISH made during the exhibition – please note that these are ALL of the comments received, we have not just selected those which are positive:

Total visitors to the show (6th – 19th November 7 days per week) = 250 (@ 17/11)

“Promising – good luck”

“The ideas seem to be developing very well with the input of the young people and the plans look pleasing”

“Great exhibition, unusual use of collage”

“Bronwen was here, she thought ‘great work’”

“Very impressed and very good to meet Elissa, Dan and Derek. Very best wishes”

“This project needs to happen!”

“Looking forward to this exciting project, its what the community and the bright young future of Hastings need”

“At last, a brilliant use of SMIC (St Marys In the Castle) = putting young people right in the town centre – where they belong! Where can I get hold of a copy of the “joinedupdesignformyplace”? Also check out and keep in touch with the youth empowerment project called youth bank! Hastings young people are now under-represented and we need to work together to change this”

“St Mary in the castle should be made available for everyone and not just reserved for youth. It is a good venue for the philharmonic choir and other cultural groups”

“Brilliant idea and I fully support the project. How lovely to see a very difficult building brought back to full use and masterminded by young people”

“Excellent, informative exhibition. Hope it engenders huge support for this very exciting project”

“Seems a great project, and excellently shown around by Oli, a member of the youth client team and youth council. Hastings desperately needs more and better facilities for young people and arts/cultural provides good and relevant activities. Concerns – water leaking and cost of putting this right, £1m has been suggested to resolve this issue”

“This is the most positive thing to happen in Hastings for years”

“Very exciting and can’t wait”

“Thanks and good luck”

“Love to get involved on voluntary basis or otherwise – qualified chartered surveyor /project manager – but willing to do anything”

“good luck”