

Outline Plan

Future uses for the Barrett Browning Institute, Ledbury



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18th June 2009

Executive Summary

Background

A meeting took place in October 2008 between all four Trustees of the Barrett Browning Institute (BBI), and the Chairman, a Director, and Chief Executive of the Ledbury & Area Development Trust (LADT). At this meeting LADT offered to put together an outline plan on how the building could be used in the future, and this offer was accepted by the Trustees of the BBI.

The fundamental premise of the outline plan is twofold:

- Firstly, that the building should be used for the benefit of the local community in perpetuity – be for all age ranges and include people living in the villages around Ledbury
- Secondly, that there needs to be income generating activities in the building in order for it to become financially self-sufficient

Process

It is important that the agreed proposed use(s) for the BBI are supported by the local community. Equally, it is important not to raise false hopes and – particularly – not to have put forward ideas publicly that the BBI Trustees have not had a chance to discuss and approve.

This outline plan, therefore, is focused around five working hypotheses that meet the key criteria. While a number of discussions and presentations have taken place with a range of people and organisations in Ledbury, a full Business Plan will need to be developed on the preferred option once this has been chosen by the BBI Trustees.

Working Hypotheses

1. **Cultural Hub** - refurbish the building as a 'Cultural Hub' based around an extended portfolio of activities for the Ledbury Poetry Festival and complementary literary organisations, together with some music based activities. This option would also include facilities supporting Ledbury's current wish to make the most of its cultural heritage around the town – both buildings and open spaces
2. **Intermediate Affordable Accommodation** - work with a leading housing association on the refurbishment and creation of 'intermediate affordable accommodation' (2, 3, or 4 flats on 1 or 2 floors) combined with a reduced version of the 'Cultural Hub' option on the ground floor
3. **BBI Community Fund** – focus on the activity and or use that maximises the potential income from the building (estimated to be around £15,000 per annum). Use the profit from that to establish a 'BBI Community Fund' which local organisations can apply to

4. **Transfer BBI to Ledbury Town Council** - it is within the power of the current BBI Trustees to gift the building to Ledbury Town Council (Clause 9 of the Trust Deed of 28th November 1895)
5. **Herefordshire Council/Library remains as key tenant** – despite existing promises, it is possible, given the current economic climate, and the increasingly stringent reductions on funding by the Government to public bodies such as Herefordshire Council – that the Council may revisit its decision to provide £2.92m funding for a new Library in Ledbury.

If this occurred then the BBI Trustees could decide to continue renting two floors for use as a Library into the foreseeable future – but at a full, commercial rent and with a significant contribution towards a new entrance and/or lift

Potential Funders

Given the current economic climate it is self-evident that funding will be even more difficult to secure than in recent years. Funding will be required to:

- develop a detailed Business Plan once the BBI Trustees have agreed on their preferred way forward
- enable the refurbishment and upgrading of the building that will be required

Potential funding bodies include:

- Advantage West Midlands
- Adventure Capital Fund
- Communitybuilders Programme
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Arts Council
- Community Buildings Grants Programme
- Elmley Foundation
- LankellyChase Foundation

The decision to approach one or more of these funders will be dependent on the choice made by the Trustees of the BBI as to which opportunities outlined in this plan they wish to pursue. It will also be prudent to consider a package of funding rather than relying on any one source.

Governance

The Charity's Objects are for the BBI to be:

"For the purposes of libraries reading rooms lecture rooms museums and any other purposes and means for the advancement and spread of knowledge literature science and art among the inhabitants of the town of Ledbury and the neighbourhood thereof and the general public."

Its Governing Document is the Trust Deed dated 28th November 1895 and key clauses of this include:

- *"The Trustees...permit the said piece of land Clock Tower and Institute and premises to be used under the direction of the Committee...for the purposes of an Institute to be called 'The Barrett Browning Institute' including the purposes of Libraries reading rooms lecture rooms class rooms museums and any other purposes and means for the advancement and spread of knowledge literature science and art among the inhabitants of the Town of Ledbury and the neighbourhood thereof and the general public" (Clause 1)*
- *"The Committee shall manage the Institute and decide on the use thereof...and rooms may be let for purposes other than those coming within the definition in Clause Number 1 hereof" (Clause 6)*
- *"The Trustees...shall on the request of the Committee let or lease all or any portions of or rooms in the Institute to such persons on such terms for such periods and for such purposes consistent with these presents as the Committee may from time to time determine..." (Clause 7)*

This Clause 7 appears to give the BBI Trustees wide scope as to what the building can be used for – and this is the basis for the various working hypotheses put forward in this outline plan - but it would be prudent to have this confirmed – particularly the phrase *'...consistent with these presents...'*

A number of options are available for consideration concerning the Governance and management of the BBI over the coming years.

- Retain the 'status quo' – with the existing Registered Charity and existing Trustees
- Retain the same Registered Charity but increase the number and diversity of the Trustees
- Merge two or more current organisations to create a new Registered Charity to provide a wider-based organisation to run the proposed activities and facilities, to be eligible to apply for funding from a range of organisations, and to be more readily able to reach financial self-sufficiency

Limited Liability

One other measure that the BBI Trustees might like to consider is adding a Limited Liability structure to complement its current status as a Registered Charity. This could be in the form of establishing a Company Limited by Guarantee. This would provide more 'protection' for existing Trustees and would provide an increased level of confidence for any potential Trustees.

Next Steps

A number of key steps will be required to take the BBI project forward.

- **Deciding on the best option**
The BBI Trustees can agree to make the decision themselves on which of the working hypotheses to implement, or they can decide to consult with a range of key individuals and organisations in Ledbury about the five options and then reach a conclusion on the best way forward (target date of mid-August 2009)
- **Communication/PR**
Agreement on how and when to communicate the work carried out so far on the BBI locally, and to the Press (July/August 2009)
- **Creation of full Business Plan**
A full Business Plan will be required for the chosen option – and funding will need to be secured in order to produce this (Funding to be in place by September 2009)
- **Approval of Full Business Plan**
The BBI Trustees will need to approve the Full Business Plan (target date of May 2010)
- **Funding for Refurbishment of Building**
Submission of funding applications for refurbishment works followed by tendering for work to be carried out – probably in stages since the Library will still be occupying two floors initially (target date of June 2010 onwards)
- **Approvals**
Submission of applications for Planning Permission, Building Control Approval, Listed Building Consent (June 2010 onwards)
- **Refurbishment Work**
Refurbishment work on main fabric of building, top floor, and new entrance to start (Autumn 2010)

Refurbishment work on ground and first floor to start once Library moves out