

Ledbury & Area Development Trust Limited

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For Release on Friday 28th August 2009
Innovative Forward Planning for the Barrett Browning Institute

The creation of a vibrant Cultural Hub in the heart of Ledbury is one of the innovative suggestions put forward for the future uses of the Barrett Browning Institute (BBI) by the Ledbury & Area Development Trust (LADT).

This 'Hub' could become the centre for residents and visitors to enjoy a wide range of literary and music-based facilities and activities. It would also provide information about the many aspects of cultural heritage that the town has to offer – including buildings, people, and open spaces.

This Cultural Hub would build on Ledbury's already significant literary connections and could, potentially, provide an innovative and vibrant facility not just for the town, but also for the West Midlands Region – and beyond.

LADT received funding for the Outline Plan from the Adventure Capital Fund – a London-based new style of funder for community enterprises which offers pioneering packages of support that have the potential to transform neighbourhoods across the country.

'Adventure Capital Fund were very pleased to have been able to help Ledbury & Area Development Trust to develop ideas for the use of the Barrett Browning Institute by offering them one of our Business Development Grants. The fund aims to invest in and support community organisations to develop enterprises which will help them become sustainable and strengthen local communities'.

LADT also received funding from the Ledbury & District Civic Society whose aims are to promote high standards of planning and architecture, and to secure the preservation, protection, and improvement of historic buildings and places in Ledbury and the surrounding area.

The funding for the Outline Plan was crucial because ideas for the future of the building must be considered as soon as possible to prevent a major building in

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

the centre of the town being shut, and thus appearing derelict, once the Library moves out.

Commenting on the outline proposals, Roger A. Payne, LADT's Chief Executive, said, *"we have spent over six-months looking at a number of options for the building and talking to a range of people and organisations. The ideas we have come up with had to match our key criteria – namely that the building would continue to be used for the benefit of the people of Ledbury in perpetuity, and that there needed to be income-generating activities to ensure the future viability and sustainability of the building."*

A second option put forward by LADT to the BBI Trustees is to retain some of the Cultural Hub activities and facilities, but in addition to provide some intermediate affordable accommodation in the building.

A third option would be to focus on the activity or use that maximises the potential income that can be generated from the building - and then to use the profit from that to establish a 'BBI Community Fund' which local organisations could apply to twice a year.

The BBI Trust Deed of 1895 provides a fourth option because it gives the BBI Trustees the power to transfer the building to Ledbury Town Council.

It will be for the BBI Trustees to make a decision on the best way forward to ensure a smooth transition to new uses for the building. Once they have done this, applications for funding and a detailed Business Plan will need to be prepared.

The building currently houses the Library which will move to a new building due to be constructed on a site next to St Katharine's/the Master's House over the next 18 months to two years.

[Release ends]

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Note to Editors

The Ledbury & Area Development Trust (LADT) supports continuing regeneration in and around the Herefordshire Market Town of Ledbury. It is an independent, entrepreneurial organisation and any profits it makes are used for the benefit of the local community.

LADT was recently voted as the winner of the West Midlands Region Market Towns Award for 2009.

LADT played a key role in the refurbishment of the Old Cottage Hospital and now manages the 8 Studios in the building ranging in size from 61 sq ft (5.7 sq m) to 382 sq ft (35.8 sq m) primarily targeted at local, young entrepreneurial businesses - focused mainly (though not exclusively) on the creative industries.

In addition, it completed a £25,000 consultancy project on the Master's House in Ledbury outlining 9 key recommendations for its future use – based on extensive local consultation. This resulted in April 2008 in Herefordshire Council agreeing to provide £2.92m to implement the key recommendations – including creating a new library.

LADT was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 5th January 2005 and became a full member of the Development Trusts Association in February 2005.

The Adventure Capital Fund is an ambitious new style of funder for community enterprise. The pioneering packages that we offer have the potential to transform neighbourhoods across the country.

We back community enterprises that could make a real difference. By offering a combination of financial investments and expert support, we help these enterprises to become stable, soundly run businesses that will survive long into the future.

But we expect a return on our investment – we hold our investees to account to provide us with results, both social and financial. This rigorous approach is already reaping dividends across the country and we have big plans to see our influence grow in the years ahead.

Phone: 020 7 842 7760 e-mail: info@adventurecapitalfund.org.uk

Ledbury & District Civic Society – the objects of the Society are to stimulate public interest, to promote high standards of planning and architecture, and to secure the preservation, protection, and improvement of features of historic, natural, and public interest in Ledbury and the surrounding district.

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End of Note to Editors