The Bath House Project

“A Creative Centre for Creative People”

Preamble

It is almost exactly 10 years since the colliery at Kiveton Park closed down. On that day 800 miners were left without work, many families were left without a regular income and the future of the community itself was left very uncertain. Within months the whole colliery site was swept away except for two buildings that had been judiciously listed and saved for the nation. One was the Old Colliery Offices from where the mine had been managed. The other was the pithead baths, a massive 1930’s structure. Neither had any immediate use and both were left vulnerable and neglected - as was the village and its community.

Community pride and resolve however refused to let the village die. Working closely with Rotherham Borough Council, local people and organisations with a local interest put a survival plan in place that exploited the natural advantages of being in a semi-rural environment, on the edge of the South Yorkshire conurbation and close to major transport arteries. Land was released for new housing and industrial development, older housing was renovated, environmental improvements took place, community facilities were improved and, most significantly, the community was given a stake in the future through the setting up of its own community-owned Development Trust. The Trust was registered as a company limited by guarantee in 1997.

The Kiveton Park and Wales Community Development Trust (KP&WCDT) became a registered charity in 1999. Its membership is drawn from all strata of the community in the villages of Kiveton Park and Wales. Its ten trustees serve voluntarily and are elected from the membership at the Annual General Meeting. The Trust took occupancy of the Old Colliery Offices in 1997 and quickly began to make its mark. The offices themselves have developed as a busy community resource and training centre. The Trust also provides a range of spaces that are let mainly to agencies who are serving the social welfare needs of the local community.

The regeneration strategy is working. Many new people have come to live in the village whilst a majority of the mining families have remained. The rather rapid influx of newcomers has not been without its problems and the village has had to learn how to cope with change and a breakdown of the long traditional community-based lifestyle of a mining village. The Trust has played a vital part in managing this change and uniting the community around a new set of aspirations and ambitions.

The Trust has built up its strength, knowledge and expertise over the past five years and is now delivering a forward programme that includes:
• A review of arrangements with Yorkshire Forward over the Old Colliery Offices that will result in the Trust taking ownership of the building in due course.
• The further development of its training and social enterprise development programmes.
• A partnership to manage unique recreation opportunities that will serve more than local needs on the reclaimed Colliery site.
• Working in partnership with others to find a way to re-open the Chesterfield Canal and construct a marina at Kiveton Park.
• A viable, vital and sustainable use for the pithead baths that will justify its rescue and retention.

Developing the Project
There is no doubt that the “Bath House Project” is the Trust’s main regeneration project and a priority project for the villages of Kiveton Park and Wales.

Rescuing the pithead baths is a project that the Trust took the initiative on some four years ago at a time when it was under a real threat of demolition. It had been left to rot and had become a target for vandals and a home for unsociable activities. The owners, Yorkshire Forward, sought permission to demolish it in 1999 but they met with considerable opposition from the community. Many local people remembered what an important building it had been in the life of the miners. They also knew of its wider heritage value – it is one of only four such listed structures remaining in the UK. English Heritage and Rotherham Council also felt the building had great value and turned down the owner’s request.

In the wake of the furore, the Trust offered to carry out a feasibility study to consider whether the pithead baths building could be restored and, if so, what it could be used for and what it would cost. The results of the feasibility study in 2002 were encouraging. Many good ideas came forward from our surveys and consultation events with the community. We also established that the building was structurally sound but did have substantial repair and restoration costs. The feasibility study recommended that the building should be converted into a creative enterprise centre to promote cultural pursuits and creativity amongst the population of the whole of the South Rotherham area and to further the development of creative industries in this part of South Yorkshire.

Creative Industries are defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as:
“those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.” The term “cultural enterprise” is used to distinguish business and economic activity which is generated through, derived from or reliant on artists’ practice.
A cultural/creative enterprise centre brings together a cluster of artists in the creative endeavour, media and multi-media industries and provides a focus for community arts development of indigenous talent and skills in these fields.

This concept and the vision as set out in the 2002 feasibility study generated much enthusiasm locally. It won the support by Rotherham Borough Council. It was endorsed by the Area Assembly and included in the Area Plan for Rother Valley South. It also gained interest from a number of regeneration agencies and funders who could see its potential as a catalyst for economic regeneration. Yorkshire Forward agreed to fund the development work for the project and, with the help of a first class consultancy team, we now have plans, drawings, specialist reports, a business plan, presentations and detailed costings. We have recently made a full planning application and we are making a range of funding applications.

**Project Description**
The Bath House at Kiveton Park will be a creative enterprise centre that will offer opportunities to ‘experience’ a range of performing and visual arts in a “state of the art” facility on the edge of the village, in a magnificent new parkland setting. (The spoil heaps are presently being reclaimed and landscaped by Renaissance South Yorkshire.)

The Bath House will be a hub of activity and enterprise seven days a week. It will be the venue for a wide variety of live performances such as music concerts, dramas and dance performances. It will house a local and alternative cinema. It will be the base of the area’s community TV and radio station. It will have an arts exhibition area that will allow an exciting programme of exhibitions and education events by local, national and international artists to be presented in Kiveton Park. It will be home to RMBC’s Redroad Music project, the area’s premier media technology training organisation.

Redroad, with whom the Trust is already working in partnership, is to have a substantial presence in the Bath House. Redroad currently offers a range of easy access training and skills development for young people, and seeks to help especially the more excluded and disaffected. It intends to establish a multi-media centre for professional application and training. It will support the skilled and experienced as well as train and teach the novice. Redroad will make regular use of the theatre/performance space itself, as well as running a programme of film and live performance events. It will offer rehearsal rooms and recording facilities. It will encourage and support live performance at the Bath House.

The Bath House will incorporate a range of custom-designed workspaces to be let to individuals or enterprises carrying out or supporting creative or artistic work. We aim to attract those with a common artistic purpose and ethos who will help inspire and encourage visitors and users of the Bath House to greater creativity. The Centre will also have a number of activity rooms that can accommodate a wide
range of community events and functions including regular arts projects in association with local schools and colleges.

The Bath House will have its own café that will be available for use by visitors to the parkland as well as the building. It will provide a range of rooms that will make it an ideal venue for conferences, meetings, presentations, training and education and many other community events. These rooms will be available for hire by tenants, community groups and the general public.

The space in the old water tower will become an integral part of the building. On the ground floor it will accommodate the reception and management office. On the first floor, making best use of the impressive glazed west elevation, there will be a bar and lounge. The upper part of the tower will house the community TV/radio studios. The tower may also provide a viewing facility from its roof and there have been suggestions that this could, in time, be the location of a community observatory.

In creating a state of the art centre we have not forgotten the heritage of the building. We intend to mark this in a most imaginative way using the latest virtual reality techniques to bring the building’s and the site’s past back to life in both the theatre and the large hall on a daily basis. There will also be a Gallery on the first floor that will provide a permanent display of lockers and showers in sequence together with other relevant plant and fixtures from the building. The lockers will be used to disclose a variety of interpretive and archival material about the building and the pit. Different lockers will hold artefacts, audio, photographic and interactive multi-media displays.

This we intend will add to the visitor attraction of the site and connect the project with the Creswell Craggs and the Yes developments as well as Magna to offer a diversity of high quality visitor experiences.

We expect 50,000 visitors a year to the Centre. To serve them we shall create 7 new full-time jobs. We shall accommodate 15 new businesses operating within the creative and digital high-growth sector (CDI). We shall provide 3,500 sq ft of well equipped training space and South Rotherham shall have a new, modern, theatre, its first exhibition gallery, its first cinema for a very long time, a community media suite and high quality community spaces that can be used for a host of activities.

**Capital Cost**
The overall project is estimated to cost almost £4m to repair, restore and convert into the creative enterprise centre we envisage. We have a big fund raising challenge ahead that needs the help of everyone with an interest in bringing cultural and creative enterprise to Rotherham.
Ownership and Management

Part of the current stage is negotiations with Yorkshire Forward over the transfer of the freehold of the building and surrounding land. The Trust is also negotiating over the Old Colliery Offices. It wishes to take ownership of both buildings – this will be needed to satisfy the funders.

The Trust intends to manage and run the Bath House, though it will probably create a wholly-owned subsidiary trading company for the purpose. It will appoint a Centre Manager to run and develop the activities at the Bath House and supervise five other staff. Overall management responsibility will be in the hands of the Trust's Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will report regularly to the Trust's Board although the Bath House will have its own management committee, including user representatives, to which the Trust will delegate some of the policy and decision making responsibilities.

Revenue Strategy

Indications are that the Bath House can be run without subsidy within five years if it is given a proper start. The financial strategy is based on a set assumptions and targets that are ambitious for the development and success of the centre but not over-ambitious in their aspirations. The Bath House must be marketed properly and well before it opens. The employment of experienced and skilled development staff is an essential pre-requisite. Together these will require revenue grant support in the early years. Should this be forthcoming, then the letting and management of the workspaces so that they average no more than a 10% vacancy rate and the growth and development of a wide variety of community-based training and arts activities, will ensure the Bath House is a sustainable venture. The proposed charges for workspaces, lettings and services have been set at the market rate. A sensitivity analysis shows that concessions can be made to local community groups and to start-up businesses if needed.

The Bath House project is a massive project in many ways. It has to be to justify a substantial investment in the Pithead Baths. But it deserves to be, so as to acknowledge and pay tribute to the endeavour and enterprise that sustained the pit at Kiveton Park for so many years and was responsible for building the baths. That legacy will carry on into the 21st century at the Bath House in the pursuit of creative excellence and the encouragement of cultural activity that will bring great opportunities for the young and great enjoyment and satisfaction to the rest of the community.
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- Rotherham MBC
- Cultural Industries Quarter Agency (Sheffield)
- Coalfields Regeneration Trust
- Five Parishes History Project
- Kiveton and Wales Community Learning and Opportunities Centre
- Kiveton Park Youth and Community Centre
- Redroad Music Project
- Rotherham Investment and Development Office
- Rotherham Social Enterprise Unit
- Voluntary Action Rotherham
- Wales Parish Council
- Yorkshire Forward/Renaissance South Yorkshire

We have had the support of a first class consultancy team:

- Architect: Latham Architects of Derby
- QS: Monaghan’s of Sheffield
- Structural Engineer: Wm Saunders Partnership of Newark
- Mech. & Elec. Engineers: Operon of Sheffield
- Transport Consultant: MVA of Manchester
- Arts: James Copp, arts consultant of Doncaster