



NEWSLETTER

Helping to secure the future of Herne Bay's own museum

MUSEUM TO BE MANAGED BY TRUST

Canterbury City Council are pressing ahead with plans to put the coastal museums out to Trust for community bodies to manage.

In Herne Bay, both The Friends and Herne Bay Historical Records Society have had meetings with council officers to hear details of the plans. The new body would need to have charity status, probably a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), a body registered with charity commission and differing from a traditional Trust in that the trustees are not personally financially liable.

So what would be the advantage? For the council the gain is savings, staff and administration costs would be greatly reduced. This is not an unusual strategy; many small local museums are now run in such a way and many are very successful. Some are not.

As for the town, the advantage is that it could become more successful. Much of the criticism of the museum over some years centres on how nothing ever changes, exhibitions have become fewer, displays never change, there are less events, it's difficult for school visits and it has become divorced from the community. All of this could change.

Why would a community trust be any more successful than the council in running the Museum? A well-managed and well-supported trust could invigorate the museum greatly. With an increased level of direct community involvement the profile of the museum could be raised considerably and the town assured of a first-rate attraction. We are a seaside town and consequently rely on providing as greater variety of attractions as possible for the visitors.

As to financing the museum, council subsidy would not stop, it would be reduced, the details have yet to be negotiated. Other sources of funding would be available to a charity body which are not available to councils. The Arts Council has already provided CCC with a grant to effect the transfer, including a sum to refresh and remodel the museum as it now stands.

It is envisaged that members from both HBHRS and

the Friends would be part of the CIO, but new blood would be essential. Five years ago, when the museum was threatened with closure, the community spoke emphatically and loudly, with one voice, that it did not want to lose it, under any circumstances.

It now falls to those thousands who signed the petition and wrote countless emails and letters, to consider what they can do to help maintain what it was they so desperately did not want to lose.

cont..

CAN HERNE BAY RUIN ITS OWN MUSEUM!

Can we do it?

Yes! We can - if YOU help.

- We have the building.
- We have the exhibits.
- We have the history.

We need to show that we can use them to educate and entertain.

Canterbury City Council is giving Herne Bay a chance to run Herne Bay Museum.

The Historical Records Society and Friends of the Museum want to form a trust to do just that, but they need YOU, and many others.

We need volunteers in the Museum when open.
We need people to organise the volunteers.
We need people with communication, training, health and safety, and display skills.

If you can help, or just think you might be able to help, please give us your contact details.

SEE OVER...

We can do it if YOU help

On Wednesday 26th March we will start to find the answer to the question “what are people prepared to do?”.

The annual Herne Bay Showcase will be, as usual, at the King’s Hall from 2pm until 7pm. Both the Friends and HBHRS will be in evidence. The leaflet you see reproduced on page 1 is designed to help answer that question, and we will be distributing it and talking to people all around the hall.

Could you, for instance, think of doing one shift a month (morning or afternoon) on the front desk? The leaflet details the kind of skills that will be needed.

We would not be alone, there would be help and support from the council, specifically from the Museum service in Canterbury. Whitstable is going through the same process. We have already, tentatively, talked with them about sharing some services and resources. The Arts Council will continue to be interested in progress and Kent’s own Museum Development Officer is always available with advice and support.

Additionally it is envisaged that the Trust would want to employ a Museum curator/manager for two or three days a week. Earlier in this article I mentioned that many trust museums were successful



and that some were not. Budgeting, right from the start, for a part-time curator, is often an important element in the successful ones.

The projected hand over is April 2015, sooner than many of us would like. The bid from the charitable body, still to be formed, has to be in by the Autumn of this year.

So what would happen if we didn’t, as a community, take up this opportunity? Well, the museum might limp on in it’s current state with reduced and reducing opening times. But with increasingly savage cuts to council budgets the museum’s survival could not conceivably be guaranteed.

And it’s unlikely, isn’t it: that the community that had turned down an offer to run it, could, again, successfully manage to save the museum?

Herne Bay has already proved with Beach Creative at Beach House and with the Duchamp festival last year, that committed, broadly supported, community action can work wonders. The key is in the breadth of support; a large pool of volunteers would be needed for a community museum. Each doing a little, what they can, what they are suited for. So that we could all take the town museum into a new and more sustainable future.

David Cross
Secretary FoHBM&G

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Sarah Corn tells us about managing a museum run by community trust, and her current role in supporting the development of other examples across Kent.



The prospect of Herne Bay Museum being managed by the local community, for the local community, is very exciting. Before my current role (as Museum Development Officer for Kent & Medway – see more at www.southeastmuseums.org/about) I used to be Curator of a small, local, community based and led social history museum in East Grinstead in Sussex.

Run entirely by volunteers, from the trustees who met quarterly to discuss the strategic direction of the museum, through to management, collection teams, researchers, IT support, activity organisers and front of house, all of whom come into the museum on a regular basis. The museum boasts between 60-70 volunteers – only myself and the

cleaner were employed – and in 2011, the museum was publicly recognised by winning The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for groups of volunteers who work in their local community for the benefit of others.

In Kent, well over half of the 70 museums (there may even be more that I haven’t discovered yet) are run by volunteers; in fact, across the South East, we estimate that volunteers support museums of all shapes and sizes with 412,134 hours annually, equating to a value of £2,551,109! Typical volunteer models include the Charitable Trust, where a group of individuals legally become the trustees and are governed by a Deed of Trust – in this instance, there

is usually a management committee that carries out the day to day tasks and fulfils the strategic wishes of the trust. Another popular model is that of the Association, where trustees (and committee members) are voted in at each Annual General Meeting by the members – the committee (which then includes the trustees) govern and manage the museum with and on behalf of the trustees (who tend to be ‘holding’ trustees).

In many cases, museums like this have grown from a local historical society (as did East Grinstead Museum) and the museum side has become so popular that it has broken off and formed its own Trust – however, there are still examples in Kent where the governing body are still the Historical Society and the museum committee is just one arm of the Society’s business – this is the case in Faversham, one of the country’s biggest and longest running historical societies.

I know you must be thinking, why am I dwelling on the governance, when really you want to know how to get involved in doing exhibitions and fun activities?! Well, from experience, both as a Curator and in my current role, I fully believe that getting the structure, policies, procedures and the right people in place in the first instance is half the battle – leadership is key, and so is knowing your purpose; why do you do what you do? Who are you doing it for? What difference do you want to make in the local community? Herne Bay Museum has a fantastic opportunity to answer these questions and get it right from the start. A museum cannot be all things to all people, so don’t try to do everything – know your audience, and know your potential audience, who do you want to come to the museum who doesn’t currently visit? Why is that? Is your museum relevant to their

life, and if not, how can you make it relevant? If you can answer these questions from the beginning, and disseminate that vision throughout the organisation and through to the community, you will build up a clear identity for the museum. It will help you focus your daily activities, your exhibition and outreach programmes, it will even help you recruit the right volunteers for specific roles and tasks – there is nothing worse than volunteering in a place where you come away at the end of the day and don’t really understand what you were doing and why – when I managed volunteers, I was always very clear about how their work was contributing to the bigger picture and that everything had a purpose.

And remember, you are not alone – as well as Canterbury City Council, myself and the programme I work for is set up to support groups and museums like yours; I can offer training, on site advise, specialist consultancy, mentoring, and something I think is incredibly important, is networking and visiting other museums and meeting other museum staff and volunteers. There is a fantastic network of people in Kent, and across the South East, that I can tap into for you – so just ask!

Contact me

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e: sarah.corn@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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or

Connect with me

twitter: @KM_MDO

facebook: kent.medway.mdo

linkedin: uk.linkedin.com/pub/sarah-corn/23/457/797

From Thursday 27 March

Herne Bay Museum & Gallery will be open 11am to 4.30pm.

HERNE BAY’S ANNUAL BUSINESS SHOWCASE
Kings Hall Wednesday March 26th, 2pm - 7pm

Come and Register your support for the Museum Trust
Come and ask us about the Trust

DIARY

Exhibitions

East Kent Printmakers

Thurs. 27 March to Sunday 1 June 2014
Herne Bay Museum & Gallery

Prints by artists living or working in East Kent, including works for sale. Fun family drop-in activity to accompany the exhibition. A community partnership exhibition, with linked show at Whitstable Museum & Gallery.

Changing Times Herne Bay's Clocktower

Thursday 12 June to Sunday 27 July
2014

Herne Bay Museum & Gallery

The story of Herne Bay's clocktower (probably the oldest freestanding clocktower in the world) and the wider story of public monuments to timeliness. Fun family drop-in activity to accompany the exhibition. A community partnership exhibition.

Herne Bay Historical Records Society

Business Showcase

Wednesday March 26th 2pm - 7pm
Kings Hall

HBHRS will be manning a stall at this event as usual

HBHRS History Day,

Saturday 23rd August
times to be confirmed.

Beach Creative, Beach House

This is on the first day of the festival.

And...

Don't Forget:

The Giant Picnic

Sunday 31st August 11am - 3pm.
War Memorial Park,

FoHBM

Friends of Herne Bay Museum
members

Private View East Kent Printmakers

Tues. 8 April 2014 from 5.30pm to 7pm
Herne Bay Museum & Gallery,

The Sheriff of Canterbury, Councillor Ann Taylor warmly invites you and a guest to view the new exhibition

Business Showcase

Wednesday March 26th 2pm - 7pm
Kings Hall

This year there will be no stall but the Friends will be in evidence distributing leaflets and talking to people about the Museum's move to Trust status. Find us around HBHRS stall or Beach Creative's stall.

Friends of Herne Bay Museum

Contact us: museumfriends@HerneBayMatters.com

Newsletter:

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