

Re-imagining St Bride's : Creating our future together.

Progress Report.

Following our initial meeting with Heritage Lottery Fund on 24.04.17 we now have a better idea of how we will need to shape our application to have any chance of success. It's a daunting agenda.

This first meeting was styled as "Project Enquiry Advice" and was not part of the formal assessment of our (eventual) application. But what emerged most clearly was that "It's All About The Heritage"! HLF exists to preserve heritage assets but also, crucially,, to ensure that the heritage is promoted, accessible and understood. We need to start to view our project through the Heritage prism : possibly the most significant "corrective" to our approach so far.

It's worth looking specifically at their comments (in *italics*) and what they might mean.

Heritage Importance. At the moment our scheme (because it's for over £2m) would be considered at a national level and would be in direct competition with other national, maybe very high profile, projects. *We ..need to clearly demonstrate the significance and importance of (our) heritage....there is certainly merit in considering a smaller scheme to keep the decision at the Regional level, which is for grants between £100,000 and £2m.*

We were, of course, aware of this but it prompts us to think again about the scale of our Project and the likely costs.

Proposed budget. our project enquiry proposal only included costs for capital works. *For this level of request, you need to give significant consideration to activities and opportunities that you can create through this project to engage people with the heritage you look after....you will need to bring in heritage expertise.*

This is the sort of shift in perspective/focus that we need to work on, as it hasn't really featured in our thinking.

Potential Users. *Clearly there is work to be done on identifying other potential users. The physical location of the Church is a real opportunity to create a unique heritage offer but you will need to be clear which potential audiences you want to reach, what they might see in a heritage offer and how that might inform your plans.*

This is the sort of "speak" that we need to get used to and take on board! What is emerging is seeing St Bride's in the context of Canning, so that the "heritage" becomes not just the building but the whole district and it's own story, of which St Bride's is a part. Could we set up St Bride's as a "heritage centre" for Canning, telling the story and explaining both?

Consultation. *We will expect to see a good level of consultation about the proposal with both current and potential (non)users.* This is not defined numerically but we need to think more widely about this.

Business Plan. *You will need to provide a robust business plan, outlining the options you have gone through to determine capital plans, market analysis and possible rental incomes. We will need you to demonstrate how you expect the Church to be self-sufficient sustaining post-HLF investment.* We don't currently have this kind of expertise - but it's obvious why this is important. When the Project is complete, St Bride's will be a much larger-scale operation - and we will need to be much more "business like" in all areas.

End Use. *You must give consideration to....how uses and audiences will continue to access it following HLF investment. This really follows from the business plan discussion.*

Match Funding. *For any request over £1m you need to match fund 10% of both the Development and Delivery phases. We mustn't foster the myth that HLF will pay for everything! This may involve us in employing a fundraiser.*

Partners. *Good heritage projects work well with a wide number of partners to bring the heritage to life. We need both imagination and contacts. We also need to be clear what's in it for potential partners.*

HLF Outcomes.

In our application we will need to deliver at least six outcomes from their "menu". Outcomes are the difference we want to make with our funding....Engaging people with heritage is central to our overall strategy....Applicants must demonstrate how plans for capital works are grounded in the aims for audience development....opening up the heritage asset to a wide audience.

We think we could work up proposals for the following outcomes (we've got to offer at least 6)

H 1. "With our investment, heritage will be in better condition"

H 2. "With our investment, heritage will be better interpreted and explained"

H 3. "With our investment, heritage will be identified/recorded"

P 1. "With our investment, people will have developed skills"

P 2. "With our investment, people will have learnt about heritage"

P 3. "With our investment, people will have volunteered time"

C 1. "With our investment more people and a greater range of people will have engaged with heritage"

C 2. "With our investment your local area will be a better place to live, work or visit"

C 3. "With our investment your organisation will be more resilient"

(N.B. There are other outcomes which we may choose from, but these set the most relevant to us)

Where are we in relation to the published Concept Plan?

Broadly speaking it's still looking good as an overall concept. We can demonstrate to HLF that we considered other options/configurations. The major feature to come under pressure is the **use of the gallery**. Two things are causing us to re-think on this. First and foremost is cost. This would be an extremely expensive way of increasing our accommodation (complex engineering). HLF might well think that the gains are poor value for money. Second is the mini-resurgence of St Bride's as an event venue (e.g. Sister Act) which may well mean that we could use at least some of the gallery seating.

What we are now doing is putting in some of the detail that was not included in the concept.

“Emerging Principles”

As we have continued to react and respond, particularly to the HLF requirements, some guiding principles are emerging:

- A differentiation between “public space” and “working space”. If we are to make St Bride’s accessible to more people at the same time as accommodating our regular users, there will need to be public (chiefly the hub area) and working (most of the rest) areas. This may seem rather obvious but still represents a slightly new way of looking at things.
- The need to be realistic and proportionate about costs. There is virtually no limit to what we could spend on the building - and of course we want to do things well. But we will be scrutinised on value for money by HLF and so we need to ask the VFM question about every feature. Can it be justified? Does what we gain represent VFM?
- Following on from the above, it’s sometimes rather too easy to build “castles in the air”. We’ll have this and that and the other. A good principle to apply is first of all to ensure that we make the very best use of what we’ve already got (or at least could have with modification) rather than endlessly adding to the shopping list. Amongst other things we need to design in flexibility of use for as many of our spaces as possible.
- Seeing St Bride’s in its Canning context. “The Georgian Quarter Story”. This will strengthen the impact of our St Bride’s heritage.

What skills do we need?

We are particularly looking for people who can:

- Do some serious fundraising, including grant applications (paid?)
- Construct a business plan
- Bring ideas, expertise and experience around heritage (paid?)
- Help with marketing, particularly around new users and heritage.
- Introduce us to potential partners.

What next?

- Attending to the agenda set by HLF (above)
- Working up the detail for our chosen outcomes.
- Refining the design, adding detail
- Expanding the skills base we need
- Preparing the first round application for 7th December submission. If successful, a proportion of the project cost is made available for a development phase during which time we work up detailed proposals for the second round application.³
- Creating a Dropbox-type portal so that people can access relevant material as it accumulates.
- Keep praying, dreaming, imagining.