“Get In On the Act”

Report from Public Meeting
Tuesday 12 February 2013
Hope Rooms, North Berwick

Local people exploring the need for an arts centre in North Berwick

Supported by East Lothian Community Planning Partnership through the Community Engagement Small Grants Scheme.”
Introduction – Ian Watson

North Berwick Arts Centre Steering Group includes local people representing a variety of community groups who wish to explore the need for an arts centre incorporating theatre, cinema and performance in North Berwick. The group has been meeting since April 2012 and identified the following issues with current venues:

- Staging issues adapting current venues, having to erect complex lighting/sound equipment
- Not all performances can take place within a church setting
- Growing audiences, limited capacity of existing venues
- Limitations of venues e.g. no wheelchair access, steep stairs

Initial ideas of what is needed from an Arts Centre include:

- Theatre / film/ black box studio/ rehearsal space/ scenery - costume store
- Dressing rooms / technical space/ Offices
- Café – Bar
- New technology – community internet, large screen to show performances - local made films – podcasts etc from across East Lothian
- Internet conferences / pay per view shows/ local advertising / studio facilities.
- Multipurpose or limited use?

In partnership with North Berwick Community Centre Management Committee the group attracted a small grant to carry out a community consultation to find if there was any interest in the idea from local people. This would include the following:

- Carry out a mapping exercise of community spaces.
- Carry out a community survey
- Organise a community consultation event attracting people from across the cluster to engage them in the process of identifying what was required.
- Gather evidence and prepare a report with identified actions which inform a future feasibility study and report back to the community.
- Agree actions to take forward, linking in with Local Community Planning to influence local services and strategic planning.

The Group

- Ian Watson – NB Community Council
- Eric Wales, Fringe by the Sea
- Susan Moffat – NB Movies
- Nicky Fox, North Berwick Community Centre
- Caroline Veevers – Ex NB Operatic Society
- Mike Duffy – Actor, North Berwick Drama Circle
- Peter Hammond - North Berwick Raft Race
- Lesley Kay, North Berwick Youth Project
- Sandra King - Community Development Officer
Public Meeting Programme

7.15pm  Registration and refreshments
7.30pm  Welcome, Introductions & Background
         Ian Watson
7:40pm  Results from Community Consultation
         Eric Wales
7.50pm  Examples of Performing Arts Centres and the benefits for the community.
         Mike Duffy

Tea and coffee break

8:00pm  Discussion Groups (Susan, Caroline, Sandra)
         • Key Questions - Flipchart responses

         Feedback from the groups and the way forward from here (Ian)
9:00 pm  Evaluation & Close (including what skills/experience can you offer?)

North Berwick Coastal Area

- 12 293 people live within the North Berwick Coastal Ward
- That is 13% of the population of East Lothian
- 48% of the population live in the town of North Berwick
- The population has grown by 8.5% since 2001. This is set to increase further due to new housing developments.
- 19% of the population are children and young people (aged 0 -15)
- 53% of the population are adults of working age – between 16 and 74
- 1 in 4 people are 75 and over
Survey

The group carried out a survey using a short tear-off form which was distributed in the community centre, library, local shops, at events and handed out to people on the High Street. The survey was also completed on-line through 'SurveyMonkey' as a link on the web site. The survey asked people if they thought there was a need for a dedicated performing arts centre in North Berwick, their age range and what they would be interested in e.g. film, music, theatre, performance, dance and private functions. There were 478 survey forms completed.
Survey Results

For or against?

1 = No Thanks!
5 = Yes Please!

Almost 90% of respondents are in favour of having a facility in North Berwick

What would you like to see?
All age groups
Summary of Results

The survey demonstrated a demand for film, theatre, music, dance, performance and private functions. Other uses mentioned by respondents included art exhibitions, poetry, workshops, lectures, demonstrations, rock bands and craft workers.
Examples of Theatres

Mike Duffy from North Berwick Drama Circle gave a short presentation based on his personal experience as an actor and director. This outlined the benefits of an arts centre for the whole community. He also presented examples of arts venues including Eastgate in Peebles, The Maltings in Berwick-upon-Tweed, The Beacon, Greenock and the Swan Theatre, Stratford.
Summary Notes from Discussion Group Questions
(see appendix 1 for full responses)

The meeting attracted around 70 people including the group members. There were six discussion groups with 8-10 people in each. Groups discussed 4 key questions which generated a whole range of ideas and suggestions which have been summarized as follows:

How would a centre be governed?

There were a number of suggestions on ways to take the group forward and how a future arts centre would be governed. It was suggested that the steering group firstly become constituted, and attract funding for a feasibility study. Suggestions included community ownership, shareholding or a mix of public and private ownership with charitable status. There was a need to prove the centre would benefit all sectors of the community. It was stressed that there was need for a good viable business plan including raising capital and ways to achieve sustainability. Expertise could also be offered from visits to other arts venues.

What opportunities or facilities would you like to see from a Performing Arts Centre?

People stressed that North Berwick is a growing community, and it would be important to have a good, well equipped centre for multi-purpose use available both day and evening and that this should include rooms for the following activities: theatre (with comfortable seating), cinema, cafe/restaurant/bar, art studio, function room, meeting rooms and exhibition space. It was suggested that facilities be available for use by community groups as well as touring performances and shows. The economic impact of the arts centre was viewed as crucial including the creation of local jobs for young people.

When looking at possible locations for a centre what key factors should be considered?

Although a variety of locations were suggested, a central location in town was the most desirable, parking and the availability of public transport was viewed as important. The benefit of having a central location would suit visitors to the town as well as residents. An extension to North Berwick Community Centre or an out of town new build were options to consider. It was hoped that the building would be sympathetically built to the local environment.

How can the community be involved? What skills and experience are needed?

People enthusiastically embraced the idea of community involvement and made many suggestions. It was felt important to have representation from all ages in planning the Arts Centre and to have a website to keep everyone up to date. Volunteers from the community especially those who have expertise and knowledge could be recruited for specific tasks. e.g. quantity surveying, planning, architectural, fund raising and business management. It was also important to get ideas from young people and involve representatives from the surrounding villages. One suggestion was to have a virtual arts hub to increase arts activity, share resources in the area and strengthen links between people involved in the arts.
Fundraising Ideas

There were many fundraising ideas suggested. In the short term applications could be made to grant making bodies for a feasibility study. Long term there would be funding bids made to national bodies e.g. Creative Scotland, Big Lottery etc. Long term, income could be generated from performances, exhibitions, leasing of multi functional space and takings from a bar/restaurant and café.

Evaluation

Attendance 70
Evaluation forms completed 28

How did you hear about tonight?

- Email x 6
- Community Centre x 3
- Courier x 4
- Website
- Poster x 5
- Mum
- Signs around North Berwick
- Publicity
- Drama Circle x 2
- Word of Mouth x 4
- North Berwick Movies x 1
- Friend x 2
- Shiona Liddle x 2
- Youth Network Meeting x 1
- Rowing Club email

Satisfaction Ratings

Unsatisfactory 1 = Weak 3 = Adequate 4 = Good 5 = Very Good 6 = Excellent

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Please list any ideas suggestions you have for the group

- Hopefully this evening helped a bit, good luck with evaluation?
- Strategy for feasibility study? Fundraising for this first?
- Economic impact
- Radical new models
- Don’t forget to include young people in decision making!
Follow Up

19 people offered their skills and experience

Experience and skills people could share with the group

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Future Actions

- To circulate a Consultation Report and invite further comment from the community.
- Continue to consult with local people.
- To seek advice and expertise from relevant individuals/agencies.
- To investigate other arts centre venues and report back on findings.
- To analyse the results from the consultation and formulate recommendations to take forward.
- Carry out an options appraisal
- To map existing facilities/venues.
- The Steering Group Members to become a constituted group.
- Attract funds for a feasibility study.
APPENDIX – Full Notes from Consultation

1. Governance

- Constituted group
- Charitable Status
- Fundraising for feasibility study
- Fundraising for capital and sustainability
- Community Ownership Share Holding (would you set charities fund?)
- Ownership – local / Loanstock (individual investment)
- Shareholdings
- Not for profit or mix of public and private
- Business model/Commercial/Sustainability versus state subsidy
- Do you want a money-spinner or a local facility?
- Need to prove the centre will advantage all sectors of the community e.g. ageing population
- Demonstrate economic growth for the area
- Good viable business plan needed
- Social Enterprise
- Manager at the Maltings/Eastgate expertise offered

1. What opportunities or facilities would you like to see from a Performing Arts Centre?

FACILITIES

- Specialist centre/good – well equipped
- Multi-purpose and flexible use day and evening
- Staff and volunteers?
- More activities to meet the needs of a growing community
- Meeting space
- Theatre
- Dance classes
- Cinema
- Music
- Art Studio
- Lectures
- Cafe/Restaurant/Bar
- Education space
- Exhibition space
- Crèche
- Good piano
- Comfortable seating
- Good acoustics
- Function Rooms/hospitality space
- Arts Studio rooms, Technical & staging manufacturing space
- Concert hall
- Recording studio and music rehearsal/practice space
- Commercial child’s nursery
- Soft Play area
- Small business units/retail
Business space/conferences

OPPORTUNITIES

- Learn about sound/lighting etc.
- Photography Workshops
- Try to crossover with other community groups
- Art courses
- More general arts rather than performance arts?
- Ask young people re future
- TED (online ideas) type Talks
- Live music, singing
- Adult learning
- Aerobics/Keep fit classes
- Apprenticeships “Macsense Dalkeith”
- Employment for local people of all ages
- Day time activities for children (school holidays)

2. When looking at possible locations for a centre what key factors should be considered?

- Sustainable options
- Key factors re location dependent on what kind of arts centre and finance
- Consider infrastructure in town already and what is needed long term
- Sympathetically built for environment
- The look of building is important – the community centre is too small
- View of the sea
- Purpose built to get what we want – parking size
- Ability to expand if needed
- Encourages locals and tourists to enter and spend money
- Flexibility
- Easy to reach so that ‘drop-in’ possible for both locals and visitors who do not have to search it out
- Visible presence in town
- Community based, accessible to all the community
- I feel a town centre arts theatre would be the most appealing but parking a major problem
- A place that is welcoming to locals and visitors
- An attraction – exciting/café/hub – different
- Balance between something that suits locals but also brings visitor revenue
- Tate, St Ives, Pitlochry (commericial), Folkestone
- If there is to be a New Junior/Infant school/Nursery – frees up space at Community Centre site
- Base in the centre of town so walkable? (car park immaterial?) or what about people coming here from other places?
- Nice, easy accessible parking
- Access for delivery/crew
- Access and parking main problems for a central site – needs to be accessible to locals and visitors
- Close to residential – noise disturbance/traffic
- Public Transport
- Loss of green space
• Need transport for locations outside North Berwick
• Abandoned spaces (existing co-op)
• Build at the same time as new build housing
• Leverage on developers existing e.g. Tesco
• Trust land for centre (no cost)
• Money from sale of trust land for 400 houses – what is happening to the money and who decides?
• Planning/infrastructure to suit a growing community e.g. Eddington and Health Centre site, school, nursery, community centre
• Conversion of existing building versus brand new building?
• Community Centre is central – poor disability access – re-engineer bequeath land?
• Co-operation with school
• Out-of town location suits tourists, car-drivers – In town Pavilion style will please locals, wandering visitors.
• If the site is cheaper – free subsidized transport or public transport/accessible
• In North Berwick good, difficult to go into Edinburgh – bring people here!
• Difficult for families especial young families – trains inadequate

2a Location Suggestions

• Fire Station site – rebuild/convert?
• Kirkports Church
• Harbour site - where the yachts are? Could be part of the sea defenses and Seabird Centre? Walkway along coast incorporating centre. Opposition from yachters? Cost£, vested interests. Great location, great light, stars inclusive
• What about venues we already have?
• What about the school hall or revamp that?
• Base a community theatre/cinema in the school
• Old council site at Lime Grove? Too costly?
• Station Hill – garage site?
• North Berwick Trust Site – is that possible?
• Lodge as a site (hurdles?)
• Community Centre extension - amalgamate community centre and arts centre into one big project.
• Ben Sayers factory?
• Quarry at back of the Law
• Castleton Farms
• Fenton Barns
• Ferrygate

3. How can the community be involved? What skills and experience are needed?

• Create a virtual arts hub meantime to keep up momentum, working together to share resources/ increase arts activities in the area (e.g. network of artists, staging / storage of equipment etc.)
• Designers
• Financial skills
- Fundraising
- Organizational, connections with schools
- Needs Assessment
- Local groups – what they need from a venue?
- Map existing facilities/usage
- Local notables
- Politicians
- House builders for both skills and money
- Developers – should put something in or build into planning
- Planners
- Artists
- Architects/Local Architect
- Quantity Surveyors
- Ethical fundraising
- Local produce
- Local caterers
- Fairtrade
- Project Management
- Youth Organisations
- Publicity & Marketing
- Sustainable Development
- Link with Queen Margaret & Other Universities
- Private Individuals donate money
- Exhibitions – Scottish Tourist Board
- Links with other Repetory companies and travelling exhibitions
- Catering
- School use? Developers
- Problems with parking
- Develop links with East Lothian and wider East Coast
- Possible use of Ben Sayers?
- No need to duplicate what exists already
- Ideas for use of flexible space
- Ideas from Lammermuir and other local festivals
- Business Community Involvement
- Strategy for measuring impact
- Creative Scotland – feasibility study (SNP? - focus on ‘place’ ‘home’)
- School involvement – performance, music, design
- Attract young people from outset – give added value to school
- Link to music/drama/art – Schools Academy
- SPACE – should be involved and get advice from them
- Brunton overlap – need to consider how to be complementary rather than in competition
- Need to be pro-active in involving small communities – Aberlady, Gullane etc.
- Representation from all ages in planning
- Membership scheme
- Volunteers
- Web site to keep everyone up-to-date
- Names – ‘The Haven’ shape of venue - nautilus shell
- Famous Patron? – Ronnie Corbett?
4. Fundraising Ideas?

- Membership – priority/playhouse seating
- North Berwick Trust
- Lottery – Big, Heritage
- Creative Scotland (Andrew Dickson Director)
- Andrew Lloyd Foundation (community)
- Viridor – waste recycling company at Dunbar
- East Lothian Council
- Scottish Government
- Housing Developers – Cala, Millar
- New housing Developers
- Benefactors
- Bequests to fund
- Donations
- Debentures e.g. Murrayfield sell seats/sponsor seats
- Patron
- Income generation – café/bar
- Money raised through bar/restaurant/cafe
- Local lottery
- Sell bricks
- Grant dependent? Look at revenue from building
- Sponsorship – Tesco – Corporate Social Responsibility
- Royal Bank of Scotland
- Legacy
- Golf Clubs
- Casino
- Education funds if there is an educational component
- Demarco
- Celebrities
- SAGE or equivalent
- Solar panel on roof of new building – generate own electricity and sell surplus to grid.
- Kickstart – Observer article
- Picture of loved-one projected for a price
- Funded through leasing of multi functional space
- Sponsor seats
- Expertise in marketing and promotion
- Exhibitions revenue
- Corporate Sponsorship