



Park Bridge Residents' Action Group & Fund

Meeting notes – The future of the Park Bridge Heritage Centre

Date: Wednesday, August 13, 2025

Time: 16:30

Location: Park Bridge Heritage Centre

Attendees: Sam Rosbottom (PBRAGAF), Grace Rosbottom (PBRAGAF), Ben Middleton (Assistant Director Strategic Property), Alistair Russell (Head of Estates), Councillor Hugh Roderick (Finance and Resources), Councillor Vimal Choksi MBE (Ashton Waterloo), Councillor Sangita Patel (Ashton Waterloo), Councillor Dave Howarth (Ashton Waterloo), Rosina Oliver-Lawlor (Office of the Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner MP), Helen Buckley (Stables Flat resident)

Key Discussion Points

- Reason for residents' concerns raised now and not earlier: recently formed residents' group set up for efficient and effective channel of communication, and proposal of sale only recently discovered via local media (Tameside Correspondent)
- Park Bridge Residents' Action Group and Fund (residents' group) plan to register as an official community group to be eligible for funding
- Council and residents share desire to preserve Heritage Centre
- Council funding cut to half, with same running costs associated

- Council budget for Heritage Centre: £37k; 2024 cost to maintain: £50k (breakdown to be provided)
- If a funding pot was available from external sources, it will help preserve the site
- Recognition that it's a positive step to now have a committed residents' group who are able to secure external funding that local authority can't access, point made that funding is also available for local authority that residents' group can't access and should also be explored
- Importance of having a clear offer and business plan that can be presented to decision makers
- Clarification that the private sale route was the only option previously considered, but not the current intention. Council aim of any private sale was to gauge interest in a buyer who would preserve the site

Financial & Strategic Considerations

- Need to balance the books – running costs remain a major concern
- Explore how to unlock funding (including external grants and heritage sources – HLF a huge potential)
- Group willing to work together with council stakeholders and formalise structure to aid funding applications
- Many unsuccessful attempts to lease the site previously, café in isolation without any attraction to drive footfall – location and viability to be reviewed, a key area of council support

Funding & Council Engagement

- Establish timeline and deadlines for business plan and explore potential bid rights / funding options
- Potential to engage HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) early for advice/consultation as well as other external funding sources, group to prepare an education and preservation presentation for external funding
- Business plan must be created and aligned to securing funding
- Keep ward councillors informed and engaged

Main Concerns Raised

- Creating a workable, realistic business plan
- Council resourcing issues
- Possibility of a community-run model (e.g. via a lease agreement), groups preference is a council-led community asset to ensure this is a collaboration

- Clear plan required for funding ongoing running costs
- Requirement for council representation throughout the process

Immediate Actions

- Agreement for residents' group to share all materials digitally
- Executives to communicate timeline for community-led (supported by council) options
- Clarify any public protection implications and share details
- Condition of property details and running cost breakdown to be shared
- Residents' group to reach out to Heritage Lottery Fund and others to explore funding plan
- Councillor Roderick to engage green spaces team
- Council still to invite offers for the Heritage Centre with a view of gauging interest for conservation opportunities, but to keep key stakeholders such as ward Councillors and residents' group informed and updated
- Council statement clarifying position on proposal of private sale requested, current council position and aims for the future of site unclear
- Working group to be formed to include key stakeholders (estates, councillors, green spaces, highways, residents' group) to maintain and progress project, recommended monthly meetings
- Itemised list of objects and archive material already removed from building to be shared with all stakeholders
- Objects and archive material already removed from Heritage Centre to be located, shared and moved to appropriate site (suggested Portland Basin Museum) for the time being