

Friday, 01 December 2017

Dear supporters and followers

It has been incredibly busy since our last update, so apologies that this one is coming out later than we would have liked.

As we head towards the end of another year, this briefish update focuses on some of the *oldest* facilities in our community (the Mansion) coming into community management; some of the *youngest* members of our community showing some amazing appetite for supporting each other and developing their own talents (the Golden Iris Festival); and some of the investment that is coming into Totnes to support a new way of building new homes, facilities and managing listed assets together for and as a community (the Brunel Building in Atmos Totnes).

## Atmos Totnes

Following the granting of funds from Heritage Lottery Fund earlier this year, the remaining pre-development work is commencing on the Brunel Building. This will take the plans and design of this building to the point of renovation.

As part of the work on the Brunel Building we will be announcing consultation dates for input into the detailed designs of the scheme in the new year. At this point we also hope to provide more information on development of the Community Labour Initiative that will provide training opportunities in construction across Atmos Totnes and within other community projects. This is a direct response to the need for local employment for young people, those out-of-work and others who wish to develop their skills and experience.

Alongside the work on the Brunel Building TCDS has continued to take forward the legal documentation for full site acquisition and prepare for the remaining pre-development for Atmos Totnes as a whole. We are working with consultants on meeting conditions within the Community Right to Build Order, with a view to commencing clearance of the site next year ready for construction. In the meantime BAM Nuttall, working with the Environment Agency, continue to use the site whilst they complete work on the flood enhancement works in Totnes.

*Look out of consultation sessions in early 2018 which will be available through the TCDS newsletter, the Atmos Totnes website and social media accounts.*

## The Mansion

Totnes Community Development Society (TCDS) became Trustee of a separate Charity, the King Edward VI College Site Foundation (which holds the Mansion in the centre of Totnes) in January. The Charity is now managed as a community building by TCDS, and is home to many established community organisations as well as a range of education programmes and the library.

Like many buildings of its age, many of the facilities at the Mansion have not been updated or well maintained in the last few years. Over the past year we have begun a programme of mapping and planning essential maintenance of the space and we are putting in place a programme of renovation.

Updating the Mansion is likely to take several years to complete but is critical to the long term sustainability of the Mansion, in order that it can offer space as a community hub to support and build the capacity of local people for years to come. Where possible the renovation of the Mansion will connect with the Community Labour Initiative taking place through the Brunel Building to make the most of onsite training and development opportunities for local people.

The objectives of the Mansion as a Charity are focused around the education and wellbeing of people in Totnes. Since taking on the management of the Mansion a number of new groups and service providers have come to us who wish to provide a range of support, including around health and well-being and mental health needs, to those living and working in Totnes.

*Follow the Mansion on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for information about activities and services in the building @MansionTotnes*

Whilst clearly there is much potential for the Mansion, in itself it is unlikely to be able to offer the range of space this community needs to ensure sustainability of this building or the services within it. Therefore, Totnes Community Development Society will continue to work within its remit of developing assets for community management and ownership across Totnes to connect the work at the Mansion with other opportunities locally to support the needs of this community.

In the immediate, groups have been approaching the Mansion looking for flexible meeting and workshop space. Therefore, we are pleased to have been working with local contractors to open the Pulse building at the rear of the site for groups to use from December. In order to provide the flexibility that many local groups and service providers want, we will offer half day, day and by hour rates. Gradually the facilities will be expanded, within the wider maintenance of the Mansion as a whole.

*To book space at the Mansion, including the Pulse [click here](#).*

## Education opportunities, local talent and the Golden Iris Festival

As part of continuing the education opportunities locally, Totnes Community Development Society has continued to work directly with those in education and expanded this work where there are no other providers. Two highlights of this year include working with the University of Plymouth and students from KEVICC.

A number of final year students from the school of Architecture, Design and Environment at the University of Plymouth undertook a final year assessment focusing on the Brunel Building, Atmos Totnes project. They presented to a range of industry professionals on technical feasibility and business viability in the context of the community redevelopment of the listed building. Work in partnership with University of Plymouth will continue in 2018 and will feed into the Community Labour Initiative locally.

Between June and October we were lucky and privileged to have worked with a talented young production team formed out of a dedicated group of work experience students from KEVICC. Looking at the combined themes of mental health issues and providing opportunity for talent as a community they produced and staged the Golden Iris Festival.

The production team of 15 and 16 year olds brought together 78 young people to stage a fashion show in the market square and a music festival, with young people working alongside international, national and local artists and experienced professionals.

The results of the work by the Golden Iris team are evidence by films (click on links below), produced by one of the young team:

*The Golden Iris Fashion Show: Market Square, Totnes*

*The Golden Iris Music Festival: Elmhirst Site, Totnes*

Our thanks and love go to Mia, Calypso, Yaz, Lily and Spike for showing us that 'if we all light up we can scare away the dark'. A huge thanks to all 78 young people, all the volunteers, artists, sponsors, Celebrate Fund from Big Lottery and professional support teams as well as the community businesses and organisations that worked with the team to provide much needed food and drink, community transport, parking, as well as the statutory organisations involved in the licencing and hosting the events. And of course we really appreciate the support of the hundreds of people in the audience that came out to enjoy these flagship events.

Totnes Community Development Society will continue to work with the young production team and local organisations involved in the Golden Iris Festival and will seek to support their work to develop practical activities, spaces and services for young people in this community both independently and integrated with those needed across the generations within our community. This will actively feed into projects across the Town including through Atmos Totnes and the Mansion.

*Follow Golden Iris on Facebook.*

Thank you again to all those who have worked with Totnes Community Development Society over the past year, as we work together to maximise the opportunity that exists in this community to develop, connect, and sustain the services, housing and facilities people across this town will continue to need into the future.

We wish you all well for the season, and look forward to working with you in 2018.

The Directors, Totnes Community Development Society