

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

25 November 2005

THE FUTURE OF THE HAMPSHIRE BUILDINGS PRESERVATION TRUST

Report by the Chairman, Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust

RECOMMENDATION :

It is recommended that the Association:

- (1) Notes the amendments to the Constitution of the Trust agreed at its AGM in December 2004, and the other changes being implemented;
 - (2) Indicates its continued support for the work of the Trust as it attempts to establish a more independent role, following the reduction in support from Hampshire County Council necessitated by changes in the rules relating to the involvement of local authorities in charitable trusts; and
 - (3) Agrees to nominate three representatives – through the Members' Appointment Panel - to serve on the Board.
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INTRODUCTION

1. The Trust was formed by Hampshire County Council in response to European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975. Its main objectives were to help save historic buildings by securing their repair, and also to encourage public support for the work. The Trust was endowed with monies which has been used as a revolving fund – the money from the selling on of a completed project being recycled into a new one.
2. The Trust has been very successful in its efforts. It has certainly made a significant contribution to an increasing awareness of the architectural heritage of our County, and there have been significant changes in the public perception of our historic built environment. In 1975 a significant proportion builders and developers, and quite a few private owners, still regarded old buildings as impediments to the march of progress, which should be swept away and replaced. Today historic buildings are much sought after, to a point where the Trust has had difficulty identifying, and then being able to afford, suitable cases for treatment. To an extent we have become one of the victims of the success of the conservation movement.
3. Just as the Trust was beginning to come to terms with the need for a realignment of its objectives to suit this changing situation, it became clear that the County Council intended to severely reduce its “hands on” involvement. Although not legally required to take this step, the move was generally in accordance with Government advice regarding the relationship between local authorities and charitable trusts. Over the years the Trust had operated almost as a committee of the County Council. Technical and administrative officer support could be called upon to meet any eventuality at no charge, and rooms were made available for meetings. Given the new “hands off” relationship the Trust has had to become much more self-sufficient, and consider additional sources of revenue income to

compensate for the support previously available from the County Council. To meet these new challenges the Trust has agreed a number of changes to its constitution; to its base of operations; to its membership; and to the range of projects in which it will become involved.

CURRENT SITUATION

4. The new Trust now operates from Bursledon Brickworks (where it is the freehold owner of the site), and, to help reduce costs, shares staff with the Bursledon Brickworks Trust. Other actual or impending changes can be summarised as follows:
 - Board of Management - At its forthcoming AGM in December the Trust will elect a Board of twelve rather than the present nineteen members. To reflect the changed relationship, the County Council will only nominate one member to the new Board. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association will have the right to nominate three members, and the Conservation Officers Liaison Group in the County will also nominate a member. The remaining seven members will be elected by the membership.
 - Membership - The forthcoming AGM will also mark the launch of a campaign to extend the Trust's membership to individuals and families. Membership has previously been largely limited to the local authorities and to organisations, businesses and individuals specifically involved in the field of conservation. While increased membership will bring in welcome income from subscriptions, it will also imply an obligation to keep new members informed of, and involved in, the work of the Trust and the other conservation bodies in Hampshire.
 - Consultancy - The Trust has recent broadened its activities to embrace the field of consultancy, and early this year completed a project for Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. It is currently close to completing an exercise for Rushmoor Borough Council, which has involved the re-appraisal of the majority of its designated conservation areas. Much conservation work is concerned with short term projects which are ideally suited to the employment of consultants. Because the Trust can, in part, call upon professional voluntary effort, it is able to offer a competitive price and still make a reasonable profit.
 - Education - Access to facilities at Bursledon will allow the Trust to run a variety of conservation courses, and it is hoped that these will start early in 2006.

THE FUTURE

5. It has become increasingly clear that the future of the Trust will be inextricably linked to the Bursledon Brickworks site. The site is both a major headache and also, hopefully, the best opportunity to give the Trust a secure future. It is hoped that this can be achieved by the promotion of a limited amount of commercial "enabling development", which will allow the site to provide a secure revenue income base for the future.
6. The site is currently a headache, however, because the Bursledon Brickworks Trust is struggling to repair and re-use some of its buildings; to establish the only formal museum of brickmaking in the country; to restore brickmaking to the site; and to increase the sale of traditional building materials through its trading company. Although an enormous amount has been achieved on all these fronts, the original substantial dowry which came with the purchase of the site has proved insufficient to achieve all that is necessary. Two

of the large Grade 2* listed drying sheds are in a very poor state and are now on the Threatened Listed Buildings List, and all the projects on the site struggle to find the necessary finance.

7. Since the Hampshire Trust moved its base of operations to Bursledon there have been a number of joint meetings between representatives of the two trusts. These have culminated in agreement by the two boards for a re-amalgamation of the two trusts. Not only will this rationalise administration, and hopefully effect some modest savings, but it will also give the Hampshire Trust a more direct responsibility for the Bursledon site. Any re-amalgamation will be subject to scrutiny by the Charity Commissioners, and their views will hopefully be known in the near future.
8. The relatively healthy financial resources of the Hampshire Trust should be beneficial to the various projects underway at the brickworks. However, there is also a danger that these resources could be quickly depleted, and the Trust's effectiveness in projects elsewhere in Hampshire reduced, if alternative sources of finance, capital and revenue, cannot be secured. The current priority is to put together a Conservation Plan and a Master Plan for the site in consultation with Fareham Borough Council as planning authority. This will form the basis for both a Lottery application and further discussions on the form of any future development on the site. It may well be that the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust will have to agree to fund this preliminary work, on the basis that we have to speculate to accumulate the funds necessary to continue our work. It may also have to fund the establishment of a joint website with the Bursledon Conservation Centre to help keep the membership informed, to increase publicity and to generate business for the trading company and educational courses.

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Chairman

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