

Extract from

HDC HQ Redevelopment Communications Strategy and Plan Appendix 2: Plan of activity for building re-opening

Last updated: 10 December 2013

Introduction

The HDC HQ in Adam and Eve Street will re-open in early 2014, with the new name of The Symington Building. The majority of the building will be open and in use from 27 January, although some public services will not immediately be available and the Museum and library will not open until April.

Aim

HDC wants to invite the local community as well as staff and partners to celebrate the re-opening of the building. It marks the culmination of major redevelopment work that has been undertaken as part of the council's wider transformation programme. The aim is to promote the extensive community benefits of the building's new facilities, including the registry, shops and heritage hub. HDC is also keen to highlight the work that has been done to protect the long-term future of the Harborough Museum and library, acknowledging the support of the Bowdens Charity in this.

Key themes and principles

The re-opening activity must not be overly expensive, as this is a time of public sector cuts. All activity should relate to one of two key themes:

- The redevelopment of the HQ enhances a heritage asset. It provides a cultural and heritage hub for the area, as well as bringing economic benefits through new retail space.
- The re-development of the HQ is part of the council's wider transformation programme. We are working hard to improve services for residents and provide value for money for the community.

Plan of activity

The re-opening of The Symington Building will be a staged process. Facilities will be opened to the public piece by piece. For example, while the building will be open to the public for HDC services from 27 January, the Museum and Library will not be fully operational until April. Consequently, there will be a staged programme of communication activity from January through to April. This activity will include:

1. Communicating key milestones
2. A programme of activity to encourage the community to use the building
3. An official opening event

1. Communicating key milestones

- As per the overall communications timeline (Appendix 1 of HDC HQ Redevelopment Comms Strategy and Plan), HDC will publicise the 'first moments' the building is used for different

functions from January onwards. For example, the first retail unit to be let and the first meeting in the Council Chamber.

- HDC will work with retailers based in the building to develop incentives to offer to customers during the first months after the building re-opens. There will be a particular focus on offers available at the time of the official opening event.
- HDC will create a video to tell the story of the redevelopment. This will include highlights of the 'first moments' celebrations and voxpops from local residents, business owners, councillors and staff discussing the benefits the redeveloped building will bring to the local community.
- LCC and HDC will promote the heritage hub to the museum and library trade press.
- HDC will consider entering awards to demonstrate the success of its transformation programme and the redevelopment work in particular.

2. A programme of activity to encourage the community to use the building

HDC and LCC will organise a series of activities to encourage local residents, businesses and community groups to use The Symington Building, in order to demonstrate the range of facilities and services available. There will be 'taster sessions' for new users and tailored events to suit specific audiences.

The groups likely to be invited to participate in this programme of activities include:

- Historical Society and Civic Society: HDC / LCC may ask a local historian to present a brief history of the building with a representative of the Symington family, talking about its transformation from a corset factory to its current role as cultural and heritage hub for the area.
- Alzheimer's Society and Dementia Café: HDC may invite the group that normally meets at St Dionysius Community Hall to hold a meeting in The Symington Building.
- Mums and Tots groups: HDC may invite the group that normally meets in the Great Easton Village Hall on Thursday mornings to meet in The Symington Building.
- Scouts and Guides: LCC may invite local troops to explore the Museum or participate in a family history session in the library.
- Drama Society: HDC / LCC may invite the Society to put on a performance in The Symington Building, reflecting on the theme of transformation.
- South Leicestershire Poetry Society: LCC may invite a local poet to run a workshop.
- Local schools: LCC may invite local authors to do readings for children.

3. Official opening event

HDC will host an opening event that combines an official ceremony with a community celebration. The date for this event is still to be confirmed, but it will be held after the 7 April so that the Museum and library will be available in the building.

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There will be a relatively formal official ceremony, at which the guest of honour will be local MP Sir Edward Garnier, who will declare the building open and unveil a plaque for a gathering of councillors, staff, and important stakeholders.

There will then be a series of community events including a celebration of the opening of the heritage hub, with local residents and businesses invited to look round the Museum and library. There may be a fancy dress parade to celebrate the return of the Hallaton Treasure, perhaps followed by a prominent archaeologist (such as Professor David Mattingly) speaking on the significance of the Treasure from a historical perspective. HDC and LCC will also display a photo exhibition in the heritage hub showing the highlights of the building's redevelopment.

Local and regional press will be invited to attend the official opening, but HDC will also issue a news release with photos following the event. HDC will also film the event and include this footage as part of the wider video on the building refurbishment and HDC transformation.

HDC will explore possible donation or sponsorship of refreshments by local businesses.

Next steps

HDC and LCC will need to work with a number of partners and external organisations to organise and manage the various activities planned. The following table outlines some of the major actions that may be needed:

Activity	Details	Deadline	Responsibility
Organise official opening event	Identify and invite VIPs to attend	January 2014	HDC Comms, supported by Linstock
	Design marketing materials promoting the event and inviting local people to take part in fancy dress parade	January – February 2014	HDC Comms, supported by Linstock
	Organise filming of event	January - February 2014	HDC Comms
	Liaise with local businesses to arrange sponsorship of refreshments for event	January - February 2014	Mark Perris (MP)
	Liaise with Harborough Museum to confirm timing of return of Hallaton Treasure	January 2014	Zara Matthews (ZM)
	Research and liaise with prominent historian or archaeologist to present on significance of Hallaton Treasure	January – February 2014	Linstock
	Confirm spokespeople and draft speaking notes for all presentations	March – April 2014	HDC Comms, supported by Linstock
	Curate photo exhibition of building’s redevelopment to be opened at event and launch of publication	March - April 2014	ZM
	Invite media to attend event and draft release with quotes from key spokespeople	March - April 2014	HDC Comms

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Develop and promote retail incentives	Work with retailers to develop a series of incentives for the weeks after re-opening and at the grand opening event	December 2013 - January 2014	MP
	Promote incentives through local media and direct marketing	January 2014 onwards	HDC Comms
Organise programme of activities in The Symington Building for local groups (HDC)	Research local community groups to invite to be part of the re-opening activities, considering timings and access requirements	December 2013 – January 2014	Linstock
	Invite relevant groups to attend specific sessions	January – March 2014	HDC Comms, supported by Linstock
Organise presentation on history of the building (HDC and LCC)	Identify and approach local historian and representative of the Symington family to discuss the history of the building together	December 2013	Linstock
	Agree timing of presentation and key messages	January 2014	HDC Comms, LCC Comms and Linstock
	Identify and invite residents, relevant community groups and VIPs to attend presentation	January - February 2014	HDC Comms and LCC Comms, supported by Linstock
Organise programme of activities in the Museum and library for local groups (LCC)	Invite local authors and poets to be part of the re-opening activities, with events for schools and children’s groups	December 2013	ZM / LCC Comms
	Arrange a family history taster session for the local press	March – April 2014	ZM / LCC Comms
	Arrange for the registrar to be interviewed by media on the realities of their role, and consider couples who have registered a birth or wedding who could also take part in media activity	March – April 2014	ZM / LCC Comms