

Plan of activity for building re-opening

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 20 January, although some public services will not immediately be available and the heritage hub (Museum and library) will not open until March.

Aim

HDC wants to invite the local community as well as staff and partners to celebrate the re-opening of the building, marking 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 new building's 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 the library, acknowledging the support of the Bowdens Charity in this.

Principles

The following are some guiding principles that all activity around the re-opening should adhere to:

- The re-opening is not to be used as a political statement
- The re-opening activity must not be overly expensive, as this is a time of public sector cuts
- There should be a clear figurehead for all activity

Key themes

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.
 - o The redevelopment will allow the council to reduce the number of buildings it uses, as well as providing improved access to public services and civic amenities.
 - o The council will save £45,000 a year by moving to occupy just one fifth of the building, rather than one half as was previously the case.
 - o An income of £123,000 a year will be generated by leasing those areas of the building that are freed up for office and retail use.

Plan of activity

HDC is planning to organise a series of activities running over the 'opening week', commencing Monday 24 March 2014 and culminating in a big community event on Saturday 29 March (dates tbc).

The activity will include:

- encouraging local residents, businesses and community groups to use the building during the week, in order to demonstrate the range of facilities and services available;
- working with partners to offer 'taster sessions' for new users;
- tailoring events to suit specific audiences and community groups;
- inviting local media to be present for key activities, especially those with a visual element.

Activities related to LCC services will be handled by the LCC communications team, rather than HDC.

Pre-week activity

Although the opening week will not take place until March, the building will be in use from January. Therefore HDC and LCC should celebrate the 'first moments' the building is used for different functions between January and March, such as:

- the first member of HDC / LCC staff to go to work in the new offices
- the first member of the public to use the One-Stop Shop
- the first customers to use the new shops
- the first baby to be registered once the building opens
- the first Council meeting to take place in the building
- the first book to be borrowed from the library
- the first person to visit the Museum

HDC should brief local print and broadcast media on relevant events, and issue news releases with photos or videos wherever possible and appropriate.

Week-long programme of activities

HDC will work with local groups and organisations (such as the Historical Society, Civic Society, Drama Society, local churches, NCT groups, Alzheimer's Society etc.) to organise different activities throughout the opening week that appeal to different audiences and community groups. This will include encouraging groups that are already planning to hold activities or events during the week to use The Symington Building.

The programme of activities could look something like this:

Monday 24 March ('official opening evening')

- Invite councillors, local MPs, Government ministers and other VIPs to officially re-open the building, with an unveiling of the Bowden charity's plaque at the heritage hub.
- As part of the unveiling, open a photo exhibition showing the highlights of the building's redevelopment and the launch of the completed publication that accompanies this work.
- Invite local media to attend the official opening.
- Film the event for the HDC website.

Tuesday 25 March

- Invite a local historian and representative of the Symington family to present a brief history of the building, talking about its transformation from a corset factory to its current role as cultural and heritage hub for the area.
- Invite a local poet to run a workshop for the South Leicestershire Poetry Society in the building.

Wednesday 26 March

- Invite local schools to attend a reading and Q&A by a local author on a topic relevant to the curriculum.
- Invite a member of the local press to a family history taster session at the library for a feature.

Thursday 27 March

- Invite the Mums and Tots Group that usually meets in the Great Easton Village Hall on Thursday mornings to meet in The Symington Building.
- Invite a local children's author to do a reading for the Group.

- Invite the Dementia Café that normally meets at St Dionysius Community Hall to hold its meeting in the building.

Friday 28 March

- Invite the local press to interview the registrars to understand what their job entails, perhaps also speaking to couples who have registered to get married since the building re-opened.
- Invite Elaine Pantling of the Laurielorry Theatre Company to create and perform a new piece about the legacy of the Symington family in Market Harborough and the surrounding area. This would build on her previous 'Countour and Cream' show, which told the stories of workers at the two Symington businesses in Harborough.

Saturday 29 March (community event)

- Invite councillors, local MPs and other partners to attend a community event to celebrate the opening of the heritage hub.
- Hold a community fancy dress parade to celebrate the return of the Hallaton Treasure.
- At the end of the parade, invite a prominent historian or archaeologist (perhaps Professor David Mattingly) to do a brief presentation to the local community on the significance of the Hallaton Treasure.
- Invite local and regional press to attend the day, highlighting key activities that would be suitable for filming, as well as issuing a news release with photos and video following the event.

HDC should also work with retailers based in the building to develop incentives to offer customers during the opening week, with particular focus on offers available at the community event.

Ongoing activity

In addition to the activity planned during the opening week, HDC should consider ongoing activity to promote the benefits of the redeveloped HQ:

- Create a film for the HDC website that tells the story of the redevelopment, including highlights of the construction work, the first moments celebrations, the official opening ceremony, opening week activities and community events.
- Either as part of the film or separately, create voxpops from local residents, business owners, councillors and staff discussing how they will use the new building and the benefits its brings to the local community.
- Promote the heritage hub to the museum and library trade press.
- Enter awards to demonstrate the success of HDC's transformation programme and the redevelopment work in particular, such as:
 - o LGC Business Transformation award
 - o MJ Community Investor award
 - o Local Authority Building Control Best Community Building award
 - o SCALA Civic Building of the Year award
 - o Bookseller Library of the Year award
 - o Museum and Heritage Awards for Excellence
 - o Kids in Museums Family Friendly Museum award
 - o Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year
 - o RIBA Regional and National Awards
 - o Visit England Regional and National Awards for Excellence
 - o East Midlands Heritage Awards

Practical Considerations

There are a number of considerations HDC needs to take into account when confirming and planning activity around the re-opening:

- *Inviting Ministers and other persons of note:* it is standard practice for event invitations to be issued six weeks in advance, but we suggest inviting VIPs to the official opening at least eight and preferably ten weeks in advance. This means that timing and plans for all relevant activities will need to be confirmed by the end of December 2013 at the very latest.
- *Local celebrities and external organisations:* working with local celebrities and professionals such as Elaine Pantling will add to the sense of occasion, but may require additional budget.
- *Refreshments:* HDC will need to consider what refreshments should be made available during the community event. We suggest that the council explores possible donation or sponsorship of refreshments by local businesses if at all possible.
- *Awards:* different awards will have different timelines and costs, and may require different information for entry. We suggest that HDC creates a separate project plan for award nominations, and compiles a list of all requirements as soon as possible so that it can begin to gather evidence during the project.

Next steps

Once the date for the 'opening week' is confirmed, 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	Likely budget requirement
Brief the press on the 'first moments' celebrations	Brief local media, both print and broadcast, on upcoming first moments when building is used for different functions for the first time, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the first member of HDC staff to go to work in the new offices • the first customers to use the new shops • the first baby to be registered once the building opens • the first Council meeting to take place in the building • the first book to be borrowed from the library • the first person to visit the Museum 	Ongoing from January 2014	HDC Comms HDC Comms LCC Comms HDC Comms LCC Comms LCC Comms	n/a
Develop and promote retail incentives for first customers	Work with retailers based in the building to develop a series of incentives for first customers and offers for the opening week and community event Promote incentives through local media and direct marketing	January 2014 January 2014	Chris Clarke (CC) / Mark Perris (MP) HDC Comms	n/a n/a
Organise 'official opening' celebration	Identify and invite local MPs, councillors, Government ministers and other VIPs to attend unveiling of Bowden charity plaque Curate photo exhibition of building's redevelopment to be opened at event and launch of publication Liaise with local businesses to arrange refreshments for the event	January 2014 March 2014 March 2014	HDC Comms, supported by Linstock Zara Matthews (ZM) CC / MP	£300 in consultancy time n/a To be donated or sponsored by businesses

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	Invite media to attend event and draft release	March 2014	HDC Comms	n/a
	Organise filming of event for HDC website	March 2014	HDC Comms	Approx. £2,000 if external company commissioned
Organise programme of activities for local groups	Research local community groups (e.g. Mums and Tots group and Dementia Café) to invite to be part of the opening week activities, considering timings and access requirements	October 2013	Linstock	£400 in consultancy time
	Invite relevant groups to attend specific sessions throughout the week	January 2014	HDC Comms	n/a
Organise programme of readings by local writers	Research local authors and poets etc. to invite to be part of the opening week activities, considering needs and interests for different groups (e.g. older people, school children etc.)	October 2013	LCC Comms	n/a
	Invite relevant writers to attend specific sessions throughout the week	January 2014	LCC Comms	n/a
Organise programme of activity for schools	Invite local schools to attend readings by relevant authors on a topic relevant to the curriculum	November 2013	LCC Comms	n/a
Organise family history taster session for press	Liaise with library staff to arrange a family history taster session	December 2013	ZM	n/a
	Invite a member of the local press to attend the session for a feature	March 2014	LCC Comms	n/a
Organise registrar interview for press	Liaise with the registrar to confirm availability for media interview on the realities of their role	March 2014	LCC Comms	n/a
	Identify and approach couples who are soon to be married that	March 2014	LCC Comms	n/a

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	<p>might be willing to be interviewed by the press</p> <p>Liaise with the local press to arrange interviews with registrar and couples</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>LCC Comms</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Organise presentation on history of the building</p>	<p>Identify and approach local historian and representative of the Symington family to discuss the history of the building together at opening events</p>	<p>October 2013</p>	<p>Linstock</p>	<p>£400 in consultancy time</p>
	<p>Agree timing of presentation and key messages</p>	<p>December 2013</p>	<p>Linstock</p>	<p>£400 in consultancy time</p>
	<p>Identify and invite residents, relevant community groups and VIPs to attend presentation</p>	<p>February 2014</p>	<p>HDC Comms, supported by Linstock</p>	<p>£200 in consultancy time</p>
<p>Organise drama performance</p>	<p>Liaise with Elaine Pantling to discuss creation and performance of new piece about the legacy of the Symington family</p>	<p>October 2013</p>	<p>ZM</p>	<p>TBC</p>
	<p>Identify and invite residents, relevant community groups and VIPs to attend presentation</p>	<p>February 2014</p>	<p>ZM</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Organise community event</p>	<p>Liaise with Harborough Museum to confirm return of Hallaton Treasure</p>	<p>September 2013</p>	<p>ZM</p>	<p>n/a</p>
	<p>Research and liaise with prominent historian or archaeologist to do presentation on significance of Hallaton Treasure</p>	<p>October 2013</p>	<p>Linstock</p>	<p>£400 in consultancy time</p>
	<p>Liaise with local businesses to arrange refreshments for the event</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>CC / MP</p>	<p>To be donated or sponsored by businesses</p>
	<p>Design marketing materials promoting the event and inviting people to take part in fancy dress</p>	<p>January 2014</p>	<p>HDC Comms, supported by Linstock</p>	<p>£400 in consultancy time</p>

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	Invite media to attend event and draft release with quotes from key spokespeople	March 2014	HDC Comms	n/a
	Organise filming of event for HDC website	March 2014	HDC Comms	Approx. £2,000 if external company commissioned
Total budget				£6,500 approx + cost of Elaine Pantling drama

