



HOYLAKE VILLAGE LIFE

2013 ANNUAL REVIEW



Hoylake Village Life (HVL) was formed by a small group of residents in late 2009 out of concern about the number of empty shops in Hoylake. However, in order to tackle the problem effectively, it was clear that it was more sensible to address the causes of this decline rather than the symptoms. In 2009, Hoylake had the fifth highest vacancy rate and was the lowest performing town centre in Wirral. However, it was believed that Hoylake had untapped potential to reverse this trend, that a strong sense of identity could be developed to recapture pride in our town and to make the most of Hoylake's many excellent assets to secure a more prosperous and more sustainable local economy. In order to put HVL's status beyond doubt, we became a non-profit making Community Interest Company on 6 May 2010 – Registered No 7246081.

This report records progress to 31 May 2013.

Introduction

In celebrating our third anniversary, we take the opportunity to look back at our successes, examine areas where we could have done better and ensure, looking forward, that we continue to harness and appreciate the enthusiasm and commitment of our volunteers.

Whilst the situation has improved significantly since 2009, the current situation remains fragile and it must be a priority to ensure this recovery continues and is sustainable.

It is a testament to our helpers and the time they give that Hoylake Village Life continues to play an increasingly valued role in supporting community activities. We have an ambitious agenda of generating ideas, helping them grow and identifying avenues for improvement and enhancement of our town which has so much economic potential.

We aim to inspire and be inspired to make Hoylake a better place in which to live, work and play.

Concerns and Future Activities

Overall, we have had a mixed year with a number of successes and a few disappointments. New blood in the form of energetic and committed directors, greater accountability, a sharper focus on deliverable goals and active support to other local groups should ensure continued relevance and achievement for our town.

Whilst preferring to raise funds from commercial activities such as street banners and advertising rather than seeking grant funding, this is time consuming and places a heavy burden on a small group of volunteers. In addition withdrawal of support from Wirral

Borough Council in installing and maintaining the high street banners has reduced funding from sponsorship. Also income from repeat advertisements on the HVL website declined probably due to the recession. As a result sales income was down by almost £3000 compared to the previous year.

Seeking further regular income therefore needs to be seen as a priority. As suggested by our supporters, we hope this may come in the form of an annual event, or other regular activity.

Volunteers are our life blood and the appointment of a Volunteer Co-ordinator (also a volunteer) will hopefully redress the ad hoc approach to management of volunteers in the past. It should also lead to greater participation and best use of skills at all levels. The time pressures on the small core of principals needs to be better balanced and this can only be achieved by sharing the load through effective volunteer recruitment, management, training and retention.

HVL has continued to refine its original purpose of how best to tackle a declining local economy. Whilst the situation has improved significantly since 2009, the current situation remains fragile and it must be a priority to ensure this recovery continues and is sustainable.

Attracting more niche businesses, creating a buzz through place promotion at many levels, and improving the physical appearance of Hoylake will be key factors in this. Liaison with landlords and continued support for businesses through the business network and Town Team will continue.



Message of support from actor and Hoylake Community Cinema patron Daniel Craig

Hoylake Community Cinema and other events

Through its Community Cinema programme, a monthly film has been shown in The Parade, (HCC) supported by a licensed bar, homemade food and a film quiz which proved an irresistible combination for movie fans. The films chosen have been out of the ordinary, offering different appeal to main stream films being shown at regular cinemas. Our second film night, for example, was a "who could forget" screening of the film version of the World War 1 book 'Regeneration', supported by enthusiasts from the Wilfred Owen Story, who provided an actor in WW1 uniform, reading out the evocative Owen poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est', as well as a world premiere reading of a Siegfried Sassoon letter by local resident and celebrity John Gorman, from the band 'Scaffold'.

Local boy Daniel Craig of James Bond fame and Wirral born actress and MP Glenda Jackson are two of our famous patrons and supporters. Special guests included cult film director Alex Cox, David Bradley who played Billy Casper in 'Kes' and local script writer Mark Gee who each joined us to talk about their experiences, perspectives and answer questions.

HVL will continue to provide 'must see' films and ensure our cinema evenings add up to a great local night out. The cinema not only

brings the community together but is self-sustaining and provides added revenue for community activities. On a less positive note, HVL plans for Saturday matinee films allowing parents to 'shop local' while leaving their children in a safe and entertaining environment did not materialise in the period because of difficulties in arranging qualified child care. If this can be solved then this initiative will, we believe be welcome and popular.

The advent of other local, non HVL annual events such as the acclaimed Festival of Firsts and the Open Studios Tour have been tremendous at boosting footfall and, importantly, promoting the name of Hoylake regionally.

In concert with the Wednesday Special Needs Club (WSNC) and the Hoylake Community Centre (HCC), HVL helped to stage a third annual Halloween party for the children of Hoylake at the end of October 2012. This proved to be hugely popular with over 400 happy children doing their best to be scary.

Website www.hoylakevillage.org.uk

The Hoylake Village website continues to have a high level of 'unique' visits – in the region of 45,000 per month. The website includes a



The hugely successful Halloween parties

directory listing for most businesses and organisations in Hoylake, many of which do not have their own websites. Facebook 'Likes' and Twitter 'followers' continue to grow and the combined value of these social networking platforms has enabled us to convey news, publicise local events and generate significant goodwill. Effective and well managed social networking presents HVL as a positive, proactive group who are willing to support and promote the work and ideas of others. Indeed, our social networking strategy was cited by the Eden Project as a model of good practice.

Engaging with the Community

Triggered by HVL, the Hoylake Business Network evolved during the year from the Accommodation Providers Network started in 2010 and met regularly. Group members delivered the 2012 Festive Lights, including a live Christmas tree, bringing in over £1,000 of donations from the public to help offset some of the costs. It is hoped that in 2013 more

donations will be realised through a more targeted approach to high street businesses.

The group continues to explore ideas for other events and business networking, and it is hoped that the group will be self sufficient by the end of

2013. In March 2012 the group endorsed the HVL 'Vision' of Hoylake as a centre for quality independent, niche businesses; a 'Home Town', not a 'Clone Town'. It is hoped the business group will develop positively in order to generate further business, to attract more footfall as well as take advantage of the Council's unfunded 'Town Centre Action Plans' initiative.

Other Initiatives

During the year, the Government issued new rules for community response for neighbourhood planning under the Localism Act 2012. As a result, HVL relinquished its role as a Neighbourhood Plan 'Frontrunner' to a newly created Forum known as 'Hoylake Vision'. Further information is available on www.hoylakevision.org.uk.

Hoylake's bid, submitted by HVL, to become a Town Team under the Government's 'Portas' initiative received a great deal of local support but, unfortunately, was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, with the support of MP Esther McVey, HVL won a 'runners up' £10,000 'Town team' grant and formed a steering group to further develop this initiative.

In keeping with our community interest objectives, we were able to establish a grant fund and make small grants to other autonomous local groups:

- Hoylake & Meols in Bloom
- Incredible Edible Hoylake
- Wednesday Special Needs Club

Accountability

Having previously adopted the 'Small model' articles of a Community Interest Company, we recognised the need to become more directly accountable to the people we purport to represent. Accordingly, in March 2013, the articles of association were amended to follow the 'Large' CIC model. Our aim, by so doing, was to ensure that HVL became a more democratic organisation with a wider membership. to whom the principals were responsible.

Membership of supporters and volunteers is growing, an Annual General Meeting is planned for the Autumn of 2013 at which the membership will be able to debate the HVL agenda, approve the annual report and accounts, elect the directors and stand for election themselves. This change is seen as a major step in improving our transparency and standing in the community and will provide a mandate for future direction.

Approved by the Directors
September 2013

List of Directors (March 2013)

Matt Biagetti
Linda Gardiner
Mark Howard
Rose Kirkby
Chris Moore
Julian Priest
Richard Stowe
Kate Verdin Walsh

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