

FLOOK HOUSE 2021

DECEMBER 8

CREATIVE INNOVATION CENTRE CIC

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A Proposal for Using Flook House

For arts, culture and community

This document outlines a proposal for discussions to take place regarding the possible use of Flook House for the benefit of the community and those who serve the community within the arts, culture and creative industries.

Its intention is to look at the viability of raising finance along with a part donation of the property value from the owners Somerset West & Taunton Council (SWT).

A COMMUNITY ASSET WITH GOOD TRANSPORT LINKS WITH A BUS STOP, IN TOWN FOR EASY ACCESS TO ALL AREAS OF TAUNTON, POTENTIAL FOR CONTRIBUTING TO THE OUTSIDE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA & IDEAL FOR STUDIOS, WORKSHOPS & COMMUNITY PROJECTS/MEETINGS

HISTORY

Flook House has been empty for many years with the odd resident business within it. Its previous function was a registry office for weddings, births and deaths. Flook House is also mentioned in historical documents, stating that John Trenchard MP resided there during the election of 1715.



In December 2020 the council discussed knocking it down but there were objections within the council and community. Flook House is currently valued at £274,743, based on a 2019 valuation. (Noting that improvement costs would be required).

In 2015 CICCIC began talks with the council (known then as Taunton Deane Borough Council) to utilise the building for educational, vocational, training, community and business development purposes (see original doc attached). Investigative talks were underway with CICCIC and TDBC but due to internal pressures at the council regarding donating the whole value of the building these talks eventually fizzled out.



Since then, the needs of the community have changed and indeed for CICCIC. The funding landscape has also changed. So, with fresh eyes, more evidence of the needs of community, more partners, a council led local Cultural Strategy, and the risk of cultural assets been lost through the new county wide unitary authority, we refresh this project and provide this document for potential partners to agree a strategy that can be used as a proposition to SWT.

Community Asset Transfer

As mentioned in CICCIC's original proposal in 2015:

“...as Flook House is owned by the council and under the Localism Act we originally wanted to look at a Community Asset Transfer. Community Asset Transfer involves the transfer of ownership and/or management of land or buildings from a statutory body (such as a local council) to a community based organisation or group (such as a charity or community interest company) at less than market value for local social, economic or environmental benefit.”

Unlike 2015, this proposal doesn't just suggest using the Community Asset Transfer option but also looks at other finances and grants. We believe by searching for other alternative funds we could increase the chances of the council part selling and part giving the building to us.

Learn more about Community Asset Transfer at:

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/understanding-community-asset-transfer>

Funding

There aren't many pots of money that would support the taking over of a property for community use but one that CICCIC has had experience with is the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, which does allow 'the purchasing, refurbishing or developing of land and buildings'.

We believe we should ask for £100,000 from this fund and having applied before the process is simple at the start:

1. Send an overview of your proposal to the local representative
2. If it is something they may fund they will pay a visit
3. They will advise and ask you to provide more info
4. With such a large amount of money required this will go to a regional panel for decision

There are other funding pots, which will require further research, but we wanted to show that things are possible and of course it would be natural to have conversations with Arts Council England.

Whatever funds we obtain it would be prudent to discuss with partners the following:

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1. Do we try and get the whole building for free under the Community Asset Transfer?
 2. Do we offer a cash amount to the council as sweetener to close the deal?
 3. Do we ask the council to loan us (kind of like a mortgage) X-amount so whatever we need to pay them we can do this monthly and at a cost that is affordable so we can retain funds for doing the place up?
 4. Do we try and start a Community Share Scheme to generate funds?

Building Usage

Through the consultations with local working groups CICCIC has identified that many arts and culture providers can do amazing things for the community but often have nowhere to do them. From workshops to space needed to meet and collaborate. From demonstrations to youth-based projects. From small events and public meetings, to projects that need spaces to deliver community services.

In addition to this, because CICCIC could not obtain Flook House in 2015-17 to house its business and community incubation, it eventually started the Creative Industries Centre (CIC) at Dennett House in 2019, which at the time was part funded by TDBC. However, since the CIC has been running it has become clear that it is not fit for purpose as we have many



artists wanting studio space which the building cannot provide. There are additional issues with the building including rising costs and being unable to operate effectively at certain times. Therefore, this proposal recommends that Flook House be used for

creative industries business incubation and artists' studios, and existing residents from Dennett House be moved there if we are successful.

Once up and running organisations like GoCreate, CICCIC and others will be able to generate income from a multitude of workshops and vocational courses, while supporting the skills and educational development of our communities.

Your Invitation

We hope this gives you a flavour of what the future could look like and we would like to invite you for drink and discussion on this matter at **CICCIC on Thurs 16th Dec at 4.30pm**, so we can proceed with haste before this opportunity disappears.

Thank You

Andrew Knutt & Richard Holt

CICCIC

