

2020 VISION

Hebden Bridge in 2020: a better place for all

Action Plan • prepared by Hebden Bridge Partnership • 2013



Revised after public consultation
and feedback, Autumn 2013

About Hebden Bridge Partnership

Hebden Bridge Partnership was established in 2001 to bring together representatives of community and voluntary organisations in Hebden Bridge (including environmental, sport, artistic and young people's organisations and the disabled community), of the business community and of Calderdale Council, Hebden Royd Town Council and the four rural parish councils.

Hebden Bridge Partnership was recognised as the 'town team' for Hebden Bridge by Calderdale Council and Yorkshire Forward during the Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Project.

This report is a follow-up to the earlier Hebden Bridge Action Plan, produced by Hebden Bridge Partnership in 2005. A draft version of this report was launched at a public event in Hebden Bridge Town Hall on May 18th 2013, having been produced by a small task group over a period stretching back more than a year. Key proposals contained in the draft emerged from a public Neighbourhood Planning workshop on Saturday March 3rd 2012, which was facilitated by Dr Lindsay Smales of the University of Leeds. This final version of the Action Plan has been published in October 2013. It draws on comments and suggestions received at the May 18th event, on written submissions received and on the results of an online and paper-based survey, to which 58 replies were received. All these responses have been made available at www.hbpartnership.org.uk.

The Action Plan is limited to Hebden Bridge itself (Mytholmroyd has its own partnership organisation in Royd Regeneration). It also does not cover the rural hinterland of the town, which are served by four parish councils.

Members of Hebden Bridge Partnership

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Introduction

THIS REPORT has been prepared with a simple purpose: to suggest ways in which Hebden Bridge can be an even better place in the future than it is today.

We want a strong and healthy community life, one which builds on our town's very deep traditions of participation, cooperation and engagement. We want a town which is welcoming and inclusive, where all parts of our community feel engaged and able to play their part.

We want to see our local economy strengthened, with local businesses supported and encouraged to grow. We want decent jobs for our people, especially our young people as they first seek employment.

We want Hebden Bridge to be a sustainable community, one where people are able to live in an environmentally friendly way.

We want a thriving social, cultural and artistic life, with the resources and infrastructure in place to encourage creativity of all kinds to develop even further.

We want to be able to be active agents, collectively, in change, setting our own future and not simply passively reacting to forces outside our control.

We believe that, together, we can achieve these aims.

Our suggestions in this report are simply this – suggestions to stimulate what we hope will be an active ongoing discussion in the town. We have tried to be strategic. We have tried to hold to a vision of what, with hard work, is possible. We have also been practical in recognising that we are currently in difficult economic times.

Our strengths

There are difficulties and threats facing our town at the moment, in part because of the economic climate. The floods of 2012, so sudden and so devastating, have affected us all.

But we believe that Hebden Bridge has a number of strengths, on which it can build a development strategy. These include:

1. The unique character of the town's buildings, history and heritage
2. The town's vibrant and attractive independent retail and service facilities
3. The reputation of the town as a place of innovation.
4. The town's dramatic landscape setting, its surrounding countryside and its outdoor recreational potential
5. The strong community spirit, sense of identity and local pride
6. The rich artistic, cultural and creative energy of Hebden Bridge's people.

Bringing new life to our town

Hebden Bridge is a former mill town, once dependent for its prosperity on the textile industry and, in particular, on fustian. But, in the decades after the Second World War, our economic base was almost entirely destroyed.

The 1950s and 1960s brought severe economic decline and depopulation to Hebden Bridge and its rural hinterland. Many people left the area, abandoning homes and farms. Houses were demolished. Shops and small businesses closed.

From the mid 1960s, a local community regeneration initiative sought to respond to the problems by reinventing the town, by building on its character, heritage, countryside and recreational resources. There were some landmark early successes, including the saving of the Picture House, the development of Bridge Mill and the conversion of the Birchcliffe Chapel into a charity-run community centre.

New settlers arrived, bringing new skills and new energy. Houses, left empty and derelict, were lived in once again. New initiatives got under way. The canal was restored and reopened. The town slowly regenerated itself as a centre for tourism, small independent businesses and creative industries. This work of reinvention and regeneration has now received national commendation – but it is worth recalling that it has been achieved almost exclusively by community self-help, not by top-down help from outside.

The last ten years have seen this process continue. Hebden Bridge Partnership's own Action Plan of 2005 helped to establish some strategic goals, and it is satisfying to be able to report that some key developments identified in that document (including the pedestrianisation of Bridge Gate/St George's Square and the rebirth of Hebden Bridge Town Hall) have now been achieved.

The economic situation now is more difficult than it was in the last decade. Our local authority, Calderdale, is under severe financial constraints and the Upper Calder Valley Renaissance funding has gone (and with it, the body which supported the project, Yorkshire Forward).

We are also living in an unsettling time, in terms of environmental change. The effects of the 2012 floods, which lasted a few short hours, will be felt for years. We are increasingly conscious that we live in a narrow valley at a time when climate change is causing more extreme weather conditions.

Nevertheless, it is important to maintain the momentum which has carried Hebden Bridge forward to where it is today. The current government's encouragement of localism provides us with opportunities we may be able to exploit. The Town Council has the power, for example, to develop a formal Neighbourhood Plan, a document which helps establish general planning policies for the use and development of land, subject to national and Calderdale planning frameworks. We are pleased that the Town Council has begun preparatory work for a Neighbourhood Plan, and we hope this report of ours will help in that work.

We have been influenced in this report by the ideas first expressed in the Egan Review (2004) of what constitutes sustainable communities.

Vibrant, harmonious and inclusive communities

- A sense of community identity and belonging
- Tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs
- Friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighbourhoods
- Opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities
- Low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing
- All people socially included and with similar life opportunities





Effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership

- Strategic, visionary, representative, accountable governance systems that enable inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations
- Strong, informed and effective leadership and partnerships that lead by example
- Strong, inclusive, community and voluntary sector
- A sense of civic values, responsibility and pride
- Continuous improvement through effective delivery, monitoring and feedback at all levels

Providing places for people to live in an environmentally friendly way

- Efficient use of resources now and in the future in the built environment and service provision

About this final version of the Action Plan

Things change, even in a few months. We are aware that a small number of our proposals made in our earlier draft Action Plan have already become less appropriate: for example, work has begun on improving the towpath, higher speed broadband has been made available at the local exchange, and an action group has emerged to address bus service issues. There have been physical changes, too. For example, one of the eyesores photographed (the former Hebden Cord factory in Old Gate) has since been demolished.

We have taken the opportunity to update the text of the draft Action Plan where appropriate. We have, however, decided after careful discussion to maintain the original framework for the Action Plan. There could have been other ways we could have structured the report. For example, we received two well-argued responses, in one case proposing that we refocused the document around a transition to a low-carbon future and in the other case suggesting a much closer integration between our document and Calderdale Council's planning strategy and its work in developing a Local Plan.

We are sympathetic to both these viewpoints. However, the reality is that a major change to the framework for the Action Plan would have required significant extra voluntary efforts from Partnership members and would have delayed the publication of the final Action Plan well into 2014.

We have made one major change, however, for this final Action Plan. We received several comments that there were simply too many proposals made in the draft version and that as a consequence we were failing to be strategic or to establish clear priorities. We think these comments are valid. This final Action Plan establishes nine priority areas where the Partnership, together with other partner organisations, will be focusing its efforts.



Section 1: Town centre infrastructure

Hebden Bridge's roots are as a nineteenth century Northern mill town. The Victorian architecture reflects its vigorous industrial history and civic pride and the overall consistency of its buildings and their setting, including the river, canal, railway, aqueduct and mills, form a coherent townscape of great character. The narrowness of the valleys has led to an attractive clustering of buildings, many of which cling precariously to hillsides in terraces with 'under and over' dwellings built one on top of the other. Hebden Bridge town centre has been a conservation area since 1973.

Our approach is based on the principle that we should both retain and enhance this heritage. Future development should be focused on a respect for the local styles of buildings and building materials used, though this does not mean simply aping nineteenth century architectural styles or eschewing high quality modern architecture where appropriate. We want a living community, not a mill town theme park.

Helping pedestrians and vehicles to co-exist in the town centre

We have entrenched traffic problems in our valley which are difficult to tackle in conventional ways. The A646 divides the town in two and causes significant air pollution.

We need to look for new, innovative solutions.

In the short term, we seek an immediate improvement at the main traffic lights in town, to enable pedestrians to cross the A646 on the western side of the lights (ie from beside the former AJs restaurant to the West End shops). We also recommend that pedestrians should have the facility to be able to cross diagonally.

We are aware of the successful introduction of 'shared space' in a number of British towns including the Cheshire town of Poynton, as well as more widely in countries such as the Netherlands. 'Shared space' gives equal rights to all users, including motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Evidence suggests that, perhaps counter-intuitively, this arrangement can work safely and well, provided users are aware through signage that they are approaching a shared space area.

We believe it may be possible to use the shared space concept successfully in parts of Hebden Bridge town centre. One possible area is the short stretch of road between the Keighley Road and Hebden Bridge Town Hall (Bridge Gate – St George's Bridge – St George's St). Another is Old Gate. Old Gate is currently unsatisfactory. Whilst full pedestrianisation would create a delightful riverside walk for visitors and locals, we believe that Old Gate needs to continue to allow one-way traffic in order to access the Hangingroyd Lane/Valley Rd area. We are also conscious of the on-road parking provided.

We also believe that the centre of town (the A646 itself) could potentially be a candidate for shared space, an arrangement which would transform the heart of the town.

We recommend research into the use of shared space schemes elsewhere, with a view to this solution being applied in Hebden Bridge.

Traffic flow and pedestrianisation

We believe that the pedestrianisation of Bridge Gate and St George's Square has improved enormously the attractiveness of the town centre and has boosted the economy. (Unfortunately a small number of vehicles continue to use Bridge Gate as a through route; this could be stopped (while allowing access for traders) if there were arrangements to control the removable bollards erected near the Shoulder of Mutton and to ensure that they were normally raised.)



Although the advantages and disadvantages of further pedestrianisation need to be considered carefully and any proposals subjected to full public consultation, we believe that there could be a case for pedestrianising the top and bottom sections of Crown Street. Another alternative suggested to us is that traffic leaving Crown Street at the south end (the A646) should only be able to turn left.

We note that the ginnel linking Bridge Gate (near Theos/Earth Connection) and Crown Street was recently closed by locked gate. We would welcome negotiations to reopen this, so that this route was available for daytime visitors.

There is a clear consensus which emerged from consultation on the draft Action Plan that Albert Street should remain two-way. However, alternative proposals which would reduce through traffic-flow in Hope Street, in the process creating more parking, have been put forward to us, and we would recommend that these are researched further.

Market Street is the least attractive of Hebden Bridge's main shopping streets, due to speeding traffic and narrow pavements. Our suggestion of hangings which would welcome visitors as they approached the town (and would, we believe, also have a psychological effect in encouraging traffic to be more likely to obey the 20 mph limit) has received a mixed response. Shared space may prove a longer-term answer.

Parking is needed in Market Street at least in the evenings, for customers using the take-aways.

Accessibility issues

Hebden Bridge town centre, both its shops and offices, is (with one or two notable exceptions) poor in terms of accessibility. Access issues potentially affect, among others, wheelchair users and others with mobility difficulties, parents with buggies, blind people, deaf people, and those with sensory impairment.

Based on recent research, there is a particular need for the town to improve its attractiveness to people with mobility difficulties.

We recommend that a task force be set up, led by local people, to encourage shop-keepers and office managers to maximise their efforts in making their premises accessible to all.



Central Street

The 2005 Action Plan sought to address the poor quality of Central Street as a major priority issue, and major efforts were made to work with local landowners to improve the road surface and appearance of Central St and Pitt St. Unfortunately, these efforts were unsuccessful. The condition of Central St remains a significant blight, and there is a clear desire remaining within the community to resolve this when possible.



Canal

We feel that the canal wharf in New Rd is an underused resource. The irregular setts make this space difficult for wheelchair users and those with buggies to use.

We recommend further discussion about how the wharf can be better used, including consideration of improvements to the paved surface and of the possibility of a public work of art.

We would like to see canalside access from Memorial Gardens opened up to the canal wharf. We have also put forward the idea of a new footbridge directly between the wharf and the park.

We note that there can be conflicts between different users of the towpath (walkers, cyclists, anglers, boaters). It may be appropriate for a towpath users' code of conduct to be drawn up.

PRIORITY 1

Traffic and the town centre

The Partnership has established a task group to develop further the ideas in this section of the Action Plan. Its remit includes (a) progressing short-term improvements for pedestrians at the main traffic lights (b) researching further possible changes for Hope Street and Crown Street and (c) researching the possibility of a formal shared space scheme in Hebden Bridge.

PRIORITY 2

Making Hebden Bridge accessible for all

The Partnership intends to establish a task group to work to make Hebden Bridge an exemplary town in terms of accessibility. Its remit will include (a) researching and campaigning to change aspects of the built environment which prevent or discourage accessibility (b) developing an online resource dedicated to access information for Hebden Bridge



Section 2: The local economy

HEBDEN BRIDGE has received national acclaim for the number and variety of the independent businesses in our town. We are unusual in that the vast majority of our retail properties are let (the UK average for empty shops in High Street areas is currently around 15%-20%). Empty premises do not normally stay empty for long.

For a town whose core population is only about 4,500 this is quite exceptional. Much of this is due to local investment by local people.

However, we cannot be complacent. Major out-of-town developments and the internet are challenging the viability of our independent businesses. The problem of potential flooding and the difficulty in obtaining flood insurance remain very real. Profit margins are small for some current businesses.

Supporting local independent businesses

Our goal is to retain the range, diversity and local ownership of our shops and service providers, and to maintain and extend the service they offer both for local residents and visitors. We are not in favour of edge-of-town supermarket developments (including Brown's site, Mytholm).

We welcome the 'shop local' initiatives of recent years, including Hebden Bridge's participation in the national Totally Locally initiative. We would seek to encourage the growth of local food outlets and of local supply chains in materials and services. We would welcome joint marketing initiatives for the town's businesses, focused on the localism and individuality of our shops.

Hebden Bridge has a rich tradition of co-operatively run businesses, and we welcome the recent establishment of new cooperative businesses.

We want our businesses to be engaged in the community and socially-minded. We encourage the employment of apprentices and the provision of work experience wherever possible. Hebden Bridge should be a town committed to ensuring that all workers are paid a living wage (the current living wage for our area is £7.45 ph).

The market

We believe a strong and popular market benefits the whole local economy. We are strongly in favour of the proposal to relocate the market to Lees Yard. This was a priority project of Hebden Bridge Partnership which has yet to be realised. We are in favour of dismountable market stalls, not fixed stalls.

We are aware that Lees Yard is slightly smaller than the Market Square. We believe there is scope for including stalls in St George's Square during market days, or even closing the top section of Crown Street. We recommend that successful relocation of the market should be one of the first priorities for the town. The opportunity of the relocation should be taken to engage in a major regional marketing drive.

We believe there is considerable scope for extending the number of markets held in Hebden Bridge, and we invite more creative thinking about what could be possible. We would particularly welcome weekend markets offering locally produced food. It has been



suggested that Hebden Bridge would be ideally placed to stage a regular second-hand book market, perhaps to be held on a Saturday once a month. We also believe there is scope for a regular open-air market of artworks by local artists (as in Portobello Road in London). We are disappointed that the existing 'farmers' market' does not meet the criteria adopted for genuine Farmers' Markets by the National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association (FARMA). We recommend that we aim for accreditation by FARMA for a genuine Farmers' Market selling locally produced food and drink, and other locally produced goods.

PRIORITY 3

Development of Hebden Bridge Market

The Partnership has established a task group to work towards the development of outdoor markets in Hebden Bridge. Its remit includes (a) working with Calderdale Council and existing market traders towards the successful relocation of the street market, (b) exploring ways of marketing more strongly the open market markets, and (c) exploring ways of developing new open air markets.

The broader local economy

Business activities currently range from new start-up businesses through small/medium-sized business to larger manufacturing businesses. Although much manufacturing and light engineering takes place on the business parks in Mytholmroyd and Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge itself is home to the international sound recording equipment company Calrec, as well as to other well established firms such as Wireform.

The town also has many home-based workers (some of whom have recently joined the Town Hall's Business Associates scheme).

We want to see the current broad range of business activities continue. We welcome the work undertaken by Hebden Bridge Community Association at the Town Hall as a central access point for business, offering advice and training opportunities. We would welcome a strong Hebden Bridge Business Association or Chamber of Commerce acting as a focal point and advocacy centre for local businesses.

The town also benefits from the facilities for small businesses at other central locations, including the units provided at Bridge Mill, the Birchcliffe Centre, and (by Setbray) in Hangingroyd Lane and Valley Rd. The studio spaces available in several parts of the town, often in former mills, help to provide working space for artists and craftspeople and add to the creativity of our community. There may be a concern that cheap mill space may increasingly be more difficult to find.

We recommend monitoring the provision of small work units and studio space to ensure that adequate provision is available.

The visitor economy

Part of the regeneration of Hebden Bridge over the past forty years has been based on its success in attracting visitors. Although local people can sometimes have mixed feelings about tourists (particularly perhaps on crowded bank holidays), we have to recognise that income from the visitor economy plays a major role in the overall local economy. It is important in creating employment for local people.





Those benefiting include not only retailers but also cafes and restaurants and hospitality providers such as B&Bs. Events such as the Arts Festival, the Piano Festival and the Heritage Car Weekend also benefit from visitors from outside the area. The Town Hall is developing an income stream from business conferences, training events and weddings, events which in many cases bring visitors to the town.

Although we have potentially both quality and quantity of tourism assets in Hebden Bridge, businesses serving the visitor economy argue that the town lacks an integrated strategy which could maximise the benefits. Marketing efforts have been weak. Past efforts by Calderdale Council in relation to visitor promotion have been spasmodic. The excellent work undertaken in 2005 by the Tourism Action Group of Upper Calder Valley Renaissance (which included representatives of Hebden Bridge Partnership) resulted in the development of a strong strategic document which unfortunately was not followed up.

We are pleased that there has been for a number of years a Tourist Information Centre in Hebden Bridge and we believe it will be important to ensure that such a service continues. We do not feel that the current Tourist Information Centre is well sited or makes use of its frontage on to New Rd, however.

We would seek to encourage the development of training courses locally in customer service in hospitality businesses and visitor attractions, particularly focused on school leavers.

Hebden Bridge's only direct 'attraction' for visitors is the small canal exhibition in the Tourist Information Centre. We believe that Hebden Bridge could improve its attractiveness to visitors, and to residents as well, by developing other innovative ideas for visitors.

PRIORITY 4

The visitor economy

The Partnership has established a task group to develop a visitor economy strategy. Its remit includes (a) updating of the 2005 Tourism Action Plan, and (b) working with local people (including retailers, artists, hospitality providers and arts groups), Calderdale Council, the Town Council and other appropriate agencies to improve the strength of the visitor economy.

Browns Site, Mytholm

In any discussion of the future development of the local economy, Browns site in Mytholm is obviously key. This gateway site to Hebden Bridge has been empty for more than twenty years but is now subject to planning proposals which are proving controversial.

We do not believe it is realistic to expect that this land will remain undeveloped and we therefore consider that active intervention with the developers is the best way to ensure an appropriate future for this site.

We welcome the fact that a community-led group (Incredible Edible Mytholm) has produced a number of suggestions for the site.

We believe that, if community options were considered unviable and a choice had to be made, light industrial use (and in particular start-up design and manufacture units) and/or housing would be preferable to retail development on this site. However, we are aware that planning



permission is already being sought for a retail store and hotel, and regrettably there may be limited opportunities for further community engagement on the future of this important site.

Valley Rd/Hangingroyd Lane

The most significant undeveloped site in the town centre itself is the former Fire Station site. This area of the town was identified in the 2005 Action Plan as potentially suitable for a 'transformational project'. Unfortunately planning permission has been granted and renewed for a development which we feel would not enhance the surrounding area. Development has not yet progressed because of the economic situation.

We do not believe that the market square car park, despite the attempts at landscaping, works particularly well as a public space at present. We note that with the proposed relocation of the market, it might be possible to design an integrated and holistic project which would use all the land between Hangingroyd Lane and Valley Rd in a much more imaginative way.

In any such proposal, and particularly if part of the market square was to be lost as an open space, we would want (a) to maintain at least some outdoor public area (b) to maintain at least the existing number of car parking spaces, and if possible create more parking and (c) include some public use of the new buildings.

PRIORITY 5

Valley Road

The Partnership intends to establish a task group to monitor developments on this site. Its remit will include (a) discussing with Calderdale Council and the existing owners of the former Fire Station site possible viable solutions and (b) if community use and parking can be maintained, exploring possible funding avenues.

Section 3: Housing



RECENT STATISTICS suggest that 41% of Hebden Bridge houses are owner-occupied with mortgages outstanding, 31% are owned outright by their occupants, 22 % are renting privately and 5% are in social housing.

Hebden Bridge’s unique two-tier housing cascading down the hillsides is very much a part of the rich heritage and aesthetic appeal to the town. However, the relatively high cost and uniformity of housing in the town are both seen as problems. Building land is scarce and the opportunities for new housing are primarily small-scale in-fill projects.

A town with a good social mix and a mixed economy needs varied housing provision. Surveys and expressions of opinion locally suggest the need for there to be more affordable housing to rent and buy. There is also a culture of valuing shared or semi shared accommodation.

The government has established clear targets for new housing for each local authority area. Currently, Calderdale Council’s draft strategy anticipates a need for over 250 new homes to be created in Hebden Bridge, a percentage of which must be either self-build or housing association built.

We strongly recommend that new housing should be focused on existing brown-field sites (areas of former housing or of former industrial use) rather than green-field sites. There are various sites in Hebden Bridge, including Heptonstall Rd, Bridge Lanes and Commercial St, which previously had housing which was demolished during the 1960s-1970s. We would support creative new infill in areas such as these. We see the opportunity for an imaginative ‘rebuilding Hebden Bridge’ initiative, led directly by the community.

We would welcome a significant proportion of the projected increase in homes being provided by housing associations, cooperatives and self-build groups. Sites for and providers of these development need to be determined urgently. We also recommend the exploration of greater use of spaces above shops and offices for conversion into rented accommodation.

Buttress Brink, the former residential building immediately opposite the Hole in the Wall, was Hebden Bridge’s quirkiest building, renowned locally for its different levels internally and for the extraordinary way in which parts of the building were accessed via steps and walkways at the side and back. Its demolition is still regretted by many in the town. We want to float the suggestion that consultations be held with the view to building a new, and equally quirky, Buttress Brink on the site of the old building. Any building on what is now green space would have to be of the highest architectural standard and fit for such a prominent site. We are mindful of the shortage of affordable housing in the town and therefore propose that any new Buttress Brink be used for social housing.

PRIORITY 6

Housing

The Partnership has established a housing task group. Its remit includes (a) to seek proactively to identify brown-field sites for housing (b) to encourage an increase in affordable housing and social housing in Hebden Bridge and (c) to explore possible community-led housing initiatives.

Section 4: Transport and communications

HEBDEN BRIDGE is not an island apart. Whilst our focus in this report is primarily on our own town, we need to acknowledge that our future is closely linked with our neighbouring towns in the upper Calder Valley, with the other areas of Calderdale, and more widely with the Yorkshire and Lancashire/Manchester regions and beyond. Many of our local businesses, both large and small, have national and international customers and suppliers. Connectivity is important to us, both in terms of transport and communication.



We need to ensure that there is an efficient (and green/carbon neutral) transport system linking Hebden Bridge with surrounding areas.

An integrated transport system is essential to contributing to the reduction in carbon emissions.

The railway

The railway station is a key transport hub. We have benefited recently from improved train services and annual footfall has doubled in the past ten years, now exceeding three quarters of a million. The station is Grade II listed and retains most of the original features from the 1880s rebuild.

There is more which can be done to maximise the benefits to our town of the railway. We welcome the firm proposals as part of the Northern Hub to extend Calder Valley line trains from Manchester Victoria to Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport. We would also support the reintroduction of direct trains to Liverpool and the introduction of a direct service to Huddersfield. Timetable changes, including a later late evening service from Leeds and Manchester and early morning Sunday services, are further changes we would support.

Line speeds (and therefore journey times) and line capacity can be improved by resignalling. We are in favour of electrification of the Calder Valley line.

Platform 2 (westbound) is not accessible to wheelchair users and others with serious mobility difficulties. We support the campaign being led by the Friends of Hebden Bridge Station to install lifts at the station. The preferred option is for a modern lift to utilise the shaft of the former goods lift. Other simple steps (such as repainting the safety lines on the steps for visually impaired pedestrians) could also make the station more accessible to all.

Car parking for station users on weekdays is creating a problem on the main road between the town and Fallingroyd. We want to encourage maximum use of the station, and believe there is considerable scope for increasing parking provision there by redesigning the existing car park. We believe parking at the station should remain free, so as to encourage train use. We recommend that Calderdale Council be asked to progress the extension of the railway car park urgently with Network Rail, Northern Rail and Metro.



Walking and cycling

Hebden Bridge created the Walkers are Welcome brand, a community-led initiative which has now spread to over a hundred towns in the UK. Hebden Bridge provides good facilities for walkers, including the three waymarked trails from the town centre.

It is disappointing, however, that opportunity has not been taken recently to extend the riverside walk which currently ends near James Shepherd garage to the end of Victoria Rd and to the Spring Grove bridge. We recommend that active steps be taken to improve the walking route from the town to Hardcastle Crags, both in the town centre and beyond Salem Fields.

The lack of adequate coach parking for visitors to Hebden Bridge has been identified as discouraging some walking parties who would otherwise visit. We recommend that long-stay parking for coaches be identified.

We are pleased to note that considerable activity is taking place within Calderdale to capitalise on the passage of the Tour de France through the upper Calder Valley in 2014. We note that improvements to the cycling infrastructure are planned and that funding is being sought for cycle networks and paths as well as additional cycle storage and parking. We recommend immediate action to create better cycle facilities. Better parking for motorbikes and scooters is also needed.

We note that the Town Hall has declared its intention to develop as a 'Sustainable Transport building', and is seeking to encourage users to use public transport, walking or cycling when visiting the building. We commend this initiative and would encourage other local organisations and businesses to develop similar schemes.



Buses

The local Hebden Bridge buses are vital to the town's life, and have a particular role in linking the rural parishes to the town centre, in helping older people or those with children, and generally in promoting social inclusion. The service from these buses has recently been poor however, and the long-term future of the buses is potentially at risk. It may be necessary to take active campaigning steps to safeguard these vital services.

We believe that there remains an opportunity to review the timetabling of these buses, and in particular to improve connectivity with trains.

We urge Metro to install real time bus indicators at all central bus stops in the town.

We also see major benefits in the rural Hebden Bridge – Ripponden – Huddersfield buses 900 and 901, the Oxenhope – Hebden Bridge service 500, and the rural bus 906 which serves Hardcastle Crags and Widdop in summer weekends. We note the recent work done by Hebden Bridge Walkers' Action to help protect route 906. We would like to see more steps taken to market these services, particularly to visitors.

We urge Metro to restore the bus service to Eaves estate and to ensure a regular service from Fairfield to the town and back again.

We want to see through ticketing on local buses, so that (for example) travellers can buy a single ticket from Heptonstall to Todmorden or Dodd Naze to Halifax.



We are keen to support a campaigning and community-led bus users' group, to liaise with Metro over potential improvements to the Hebden Bridge local services.

PRIORITY 7

Public transport

Good affordable public transport is a necessary requirement for a socially inclusive community and we will encourage and support community-led initiatives to defend and improve our existing public transport. In particular, we welcome the work of Friends of Hebden Bridge Station, the newly-formed Hebden Bridger Action Group and the Upper Calder Valley Renaissance (UCVR) Sustainable Transport Group.

We strongly support the proposal to provide further car parking at the station.

Telecommunications

It is vital that businesses, as well as residents, have access to the fastest possible telecommunications networks. Community initiatives in the past, as well as the well-established Hebden Bridge based enterprise Green ISP, have helped to bring broadband to the town, and further efforts will be needed to ensure that Hebden Bridge continues to be able to access high speed ICT connectivity.

We welcome Calderdale Council's current initiative, which is seeking to bring high speed broadband into rural areas (through the government-backed BDUK scheme). We also welcome Calderdale Council's involvement in a commercial scheme to increase the connectivity of businesses, including the possibility of fibre optic cabling of the town.

We would welcome the centre of Hebden Bridge being a wifi hot spot.

We note that a major fibre optic trunk route passes through Hebden Bridge (under the canal towpath), much of it currently unused (so-called 'dark fibre'). We also note that there is high speed fibre optic cabling beside the railway line. Although it is not immediately obvious how these resources can be accessed, we encourage future research into possibilities.

Park and Ride

There has been discussion in the past of the possibility of developing one or more edge of town car parks, primarily for visitor use.

Developing a successful scheme which was well-used and paid its way is challenging, given the Hebden Bridge topography. However, we believe that it might be possible to create a visitor park and ride car park linked directly to a tourist land train (ie an electric powered vehicle designed to resemble a train). We believe a land train could prove an attraction in its own right for the town.

Section 5: Community, social and artistic life



WE ARE fortunate to live in a town with a strong community life. Beyond the town, the steep hillsides and ancient woodlands leading to the wild open moors offer opportunities to enjoy the Pennine countryside on our doorstep.

There is more that can be done to build on these assets.

Calder Holmes Park

Calder Holmes Park is a significant recreational resource in its own right, and was identified in the 2005 Action Plan as a priority area for improvement. Some changes for the better have been achieved since then. The children's play area has been completely redesigned and re-equipped (a project led by the Town Council), and young people daily demonstrate the pleasure which the new skateboard park gives them. The path at the north side of the park has been landscaped and lit. A new path gives access at the south-east corner to the station approach road.

We are also delighted that, since 2012, a café has been operating daily in the park pavilion, run by two local business people. The café has already demonstrated its value, not least in supporting the Friends of Calder Holmes Park and informally in discouraging vandalism.

However, the central part of the park, and in particular the tennis courts and former bowling green, are now in a very poor state. It is depressing to see how these facilities have been allowed to degenerate over the past ten years.

We recommend that Calderdale Council, the Town Council and the Friends of Calder Holmes Park develop a strategic plan for the long-term sustainable development of the park.

We recommend reinstating the mini-golf putting green in the enclosed lawn near the pavilion. The tennis courts urgently need attention. We recommend that one tennis court is restored to a high standard. We recommend that the second tennis court is turned into a space for football and for bike polo. We recommend that a bandstand/performance area be created, perhaps in the area of the former bowling green.

Memorial Garden

We continue to support the proposal in the Partnership's 2005 Action Plan for the railings at the far (canal) end of Memorial Garden to be removed, allowing direct canalside access. We do not believe there would be any significant safety concerns.



PRIORITY 8

Calder Holmes Park and Memorial Gardens

The Partnership considers improvements to Calder Holmes Park and Memorial Gardens to be a priority for the town, and it will offer its support to Friends of Calder Holmes Park in their work towards this aim.



Other children's play areas

The strong community involvement in the recent transformation of the Victoria Road children's play area is a model of what can be done to improve these facilities, which are particularly important in a town like Hebden Bridge where few houses have gardens.

We would like to see similar community-led makeovers of children's playgrounds, an early priority being the play area opposite the Eaves estate, Mytholm.

Leisure facilities

We think that it might be possible to create a new learner pool for children, to replace the much-loved learner pool at Pitt Street which was closed when the Adult Education building was sold. We could envisage the creation of a regional centre of excellence focusing on helping children learn to swim and develop their swimming skills. One possible location would be to include it as part of the proposed Hangingroyd Lane/Valley Rd project discussed above.

Hebden Bridge lacks an indoor sports centre, a major omission given that the Pennine weather can discourage outdoor recreation and sport. However we note recent plans to create a new swimming pool in Mytholmroyd.

Hebden Bridge Town Hall

The 2010 transfer of Hebden Bridge Town Hall into community ownership has secured the future of a key heritage building in the town centre and the subsequent new development on land at the side and rear (a proposal made in the Partnership's 2005 Action Plan) has given the town new public space, including the courtyard, the Waterfront Hall and the upstairs public rooms. The Town Hall project has been one of the major success stories for community-led regeneration since the 2005 Action Plan.

It will be important, in the years to come, that Hebden Bridge Community Association is supported in its work of ensuring the success of the new Town Hall. We encourage Calderdale Council, the Town and Parish Councils and local community organisations to work closely with the Community Association in its work. We also support the Community Association in its plans to improve the physical condition of the original Town Hall.





Hebden Bridge Picture House

We can be proud that far-sighted action by councillors of the then Hebden Royd Urban District Council secured the future of the cinema in the late 1960s, when it was at risk of closing and being sold for commercial use. We are also pleased that Hebden Royd Town Council has now undertaken to protect the future of the cinema, under its asset transfer agreement with Calderdale Council of 2012.

We believe that there is scope for improving the environs of the Picture House, including improving the rear canalside aspect.



Section 6: Low-carbon Hebden Bridge



WE WOULD like our community to be one where people were able to live in an environmentally sustainable way. We understand that efficient use of natural resources now and in the future is essential to our continued economic and social well-being.

Recent flooding has drawn attention to the risks that we face in our town. Expert advice is that, as climate change continues and global temperatures increase, we can expect more volatile and extreme weather conditions. Therefore we support Calderdale Council's climate change strategy, with its adopted target of achieving a 40% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 compared with 2005. The actions we take in Hebden Bridge need to be consistent with this strategy.

Water and flooding

The moors above our town, the majority of which have been designated as Special Protection Areas, are not only important for their biodiversity and for the habitats they provide wildlife. They are also gathering points for our water, and blanket bogs (saturated peatland) are vitally important carbon sinks. We welcome the recent attention given to the risks of heather burning on some local grouse moors north of Hebden Bridge.

We commend the work being done by the SOURCE partnership – an alliance of local groups such as treesponsibility, BlackBark, Calder Future, the Upper Calderdale Wildlife network and Calder and Colne Rivers Trust together with support from larger organisations such as Calderdale MBC Countryside Unit, the Environment Agency, Pennine Prospects and the White Rose Forest. We support the partnership's aims of:

- Minimizing flash flooding through appropriately sited tree-planting and moorland restoration
- Treating damaged land and controlling erosion
- Improving the quality of the River Calder
- Undertaking educational activities and encourage volunteering so that people of all ages and from all walks of life become aware of the value of our rivers and uplands.

Energy

With average annual household gas consumption of 20,113 kilowatt hours and electricity consumption of 6443 kwh, the Alternative Technology Centre (ATC) estimate that the total household energy consumption in Hebden Bridge is 6570 MW hours per year. It can be noted that this is the equivalent of the output of eight 2.5 MW wind turbines.

Energy efficiency is the first priority when tackling energy issues and we support greater efforts to insulate and improve energy efficiency in existing buildings. Any future new buildings in Hebden Bridge should be built to be highly energy efficient and should meet either BREEAM outstanding or very good criteria (as Hebden Bridge Town Hall extension has done).

Hebden Bridge's mills were once powered by water power, and there is the potential to bring hydro generation back to our valley. The ATC, through the Power in the Landscape project, is carrying out a Technology Strategy Board

scheme to install eight hydro schemes in the upper valley and to trial small 'out of the box' schemes.

We also commend the recent installation of a hydro turbine on the river Hebden by the owner of Bridge Mill.

The total number of hydro installations in the Hebden Bridge area could reach 14 in 2014. It has been suggested that Hebden Bridge could lay claim to being the Hydro Capital of the UK.

Wind is our best local resource. Commercial wind farms have been highly controversial when they have been proposed locally, and we are aware of the concerns raised by these major industrial-scale developments. We do not believe that all wind turbines are as detrimental to the landscape, however, and we note that in any case the planning system examines in detail landscape sensitivity when new schemes are proposed.

We welcome the erection of a wind turbine at Blackshaw Head by Pennine Community Power, a local cooperative which raised the capital for the turbine through a successful community share issue. Calderdale Community Energy is currently developing an initiative for community-owned groups of turbines.

We welcome community-led moves to erect wind turbines on appropriate upland sites which are not sensitive in landscape or habitat terms. We welcome community-led moves to install micro hydro turbines. We encourage more development of community share issues as a way of capitalising such schemes.

In relation to the potential for biomass, we note that although the valley has many woods the woodland is largely unmanaged and difficult to access. The usual means of harvesting (short rotation coppicing) is not appropriate. We note however that the Alternative Technology Centre is currently working with Calderdale Council on a trial scheme to install pellet heating systems in around twenty houses in the Todmorden area and that it is hoped to install similar heating in the Birchcliffe Centre and Linden Mill.

We are aware that the potential for ground source heat pumps and water source heat pumps have been explored locally (for example, during the planning of the Town Hall development). At present, the potential locally for these forms of energy seems limited.

Using unused green space

We commend the Incredible Edible Todmorden initiative which is creating a growing awareness of the importance of local food production. We have been pleased to see recent initiatives in Hebden Bridge, such as the Orchard Group, Calder Food Hub, and the Heb Veg food box scheme for locally grown produce as well as the planting of fruit bushes by the Friends of Hebden Bridge Station.

We recommend that more work is undertaken to make use of unused local green spaces, particularly land owned by Calderdale Council.

We also support strongly the work the Town Council has undertaken in recent years to increase the scope of allotment gardens locally.



PRIORITY 9

Low-carbon Hebden Bridge

The Partnership will actively support initiatives in Hebden Bridge which help meet Calderdale Council's wider objective of a 40% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 (2005 base). We also welcome the proposal to develop a community benefit society, Calderdale Community Energy, to fund renewable energy projects and to improve energy efficiency of households.

Our priorities

PRIORITY 1

Traffic and the town centre

The Partnership has established a task group to develop further the ideas in this section of the Action Plan. Its remit includes (a) progressing short-term improvements for pedestrians at the main traffic lights (b) researching further possible changes for Hope Street and Crown Street and (c) researching the possibility of a formal shared space scheme in Hebden Bridge.

PRIORITY 2

Making Hebden Bridge accessible for all

The Partnership intends to establish a task group to work to make Hebden Bridge an exemplary town in terms of accessibility. Its remit will include (a) researching and campaigning to change aspects of the built environment which prevent or discourage accessibility (b) developing an online resource dedicated to access information for Hebden Bridge

PRIORITY 3

Development of Hebden Bridge Market

The Partnership has established a task group to work towards the development of outdoor markets in Hebden Bridge. Its remit includes (a) working with Calderdale Council and existing market traders towards the successful relocation of the street market, (b) exploring ways of marketing more strongly the open market markets, and (c) exploring ways of developing new open air markets.

PRIORITY 4

The visitor economy

The Partnership has established a task group to develop a visitor economy strategy. Its remit includes (a) updating of the 2005 Tourism Action Plan, and (b) working with local people (including retailers, artists, hospitality providers and arts groups), Calderdale Council, the Town Council and other appropriate agencies to improve the strength of the visitor economy.

PRIORITY 5

Valley Road

The Partnership intends to establish a task group to monitor developments on this site. Its remit will include (a) discussing with Calderdale Council and the existing owners of the former Fire Station site possible viable solutions and (b) if community use and parking can be maintained, exploring possible funding avenues.

PRIORITY 6

Housing

The Partnership has established a housing task group. Its remit includes (a) to seek proactively to identify brown-field sites for housing (b) to encourage an increase in affordable housing and social housing in Hebden Bridge and (c) to explore possible community-led housing initiatives.

PRIORITY 7

Public transport

Good affordable public transport is a necessary requirement for a socially inclusive community and we will encourage and support community-led initiatives to defend and improve our existing public transport. In particular, we welcome the work of Friends of Hebden bridge Station, the newly-formed Hebden Bridger Action Group and the Upper Calder Valley Renaissance (UCVR) Sustainable Transport Group.

We strongly support the proposal to provide further car parking at the station.

PRIORITY 8

Calder Holmes Park and Memorial Gardens

The Partnership considers improvements to Calder Holmes Park and Memorial Gardens to be a priority for the town, and it will offer its support to Friends of Calder Holmes Park in their work towards this aim.

PRIORITY 9

Low-carbon Hebden Bridge

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Lines #

After the flooding
of a lost summer - the
kindness of strangers.

by John Siddique