

Thelma Hulbert Gallery

Feasibility Study September 2008

Executive Summary

Commissioned by East Devon District Council
Supported by Arts Council England South West

Written by Gallery Creative Business Consultancy

'Inspiration comes from the people' – this is the moment for growth!

Why the study?

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) in Honiton was opened in April 1998 as the first public exhibition space in East Devon. The gallery is situated on the first floor of Elmfield House, a Grade 2 listed Georgian House, previously owned by the artist Thelma Hulbert, who had lived there since 1984.

Over the last 10 years there has been a steady increase in visitor numbers and the beginnings of commercial activity and income generation.

Elmfield House currently houses the East Devon Registration Office on the ground floor. There is a break in the lease in June 2009 and it is this break that has prompted the commissioning of this study to look the options for the expansion and long term sustainability of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery.

The brief

To look at the opportunities available for the development of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery to create a more sustainable initiative.

To include:

- Appraising the gallery's objectives, space available, grounds and outbuildings
- Investigating how further changes could help deliver the East Devon District Council (EDDC) corporate strategy particularly in relation to young people and the economy.
- Assess potential new audiences and future marketing needs and costs
- Assess potential economic benefits for Honiton and East Devon
- Assess alternative models of governance and ownership
- Estimate capital requirements and revenue costs
- Consideration of existing staffing and future requirements

Methodology

A participative strategic planning process was used to consult with a wide range of stakeholders. Capturing their ideas and views helped to inform and shape the business case and practical development options.

The consultancy reviewed every aspect of the Gallery which included:

- Visits to the building and Honiton market town
- Interviews with EDDC officers, THG Curator, Gallery Administrative assistant and stewards
- Interviews with Town and District Council members
- Interviews with Friends of the Gallery and volunteers
- Survey of local businesses, residents and artists in Honiton & E.Devon
- Interviews with the Youth Group 'Masterpieces'
- Consultation with schools, education and services for disabled people
- Focus group events and 'Open Day' session at the Gallery
- Research and visits to other similar gallery and arts centre venues
- Desk research and meetings re governance, Creative Industries etc

Key Points

Ten years ago, East Devon District Council (EDDC) made a clear decision to take an opportunity and invest in an art gallery by buying Elmfield House. The break in lease of the East Devon Registration Office brings about an opportunity to reflect on the benefits and opportunities of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery, and to look to the future.

Throughout this research, there have been many examples of good practice; public demand for the gallery; desire from other organisations (education, galleries etc) to form collaborative partnerships; and the success stories of the young people's panel, 'Masterpieces'.

In 2007, young people were recruited to form a youth panel who could advise staff on youth participation. After meetings and a trip to Tate Britain, ideas were generated, friendships made and the youth panel is now a permanent fixture involving young people in decision making and providing social events.

All this, coupled with the unprecedented visitor numbers as a result of the Elizabeth Frink exhibition this summer (over 1000), combines to make a strong case for the expansion of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery.

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery provides a much needed cultural experience and has the potential to grow into a pivotal tourism destination for East Devon, promoting the area and growing a strong reputation for good contemporary art and related activities.

The staff and Arts Department work tirelessly to make this gallery a memorable and professional experience. However, the lack of space contributes inevitably to a poor complete gallery experience (i.e. lack of café, no decent shop, lack of good size gallery space to stand back and view work). The gallery has limited opening times: Wednesday to Saturday, 10.00am to 4.00pm with free admission.

All this continues to constrain and limit the work and activities the Thelma Hulbert Gallery can deliver. And this will always be the case without commitment and investment. What's more, if the gallery is kept on a shoestring budget and constantly relying upon the energy and goodwill of staff, then inevitably, the staff will leave and the gallery may suffer.

This is an opportunity for East Devon District Council to invest properly in this artist's home and create an exceptional space that has the potential to place-shape Honiton, raise the profile of East Devon and draw visitors from a wide geographical area thus bringing economic benefits to the area. The Gallery also has the potential to deliver on many of EDDC's Corporate Objectives and to have the wider role for EDDC to become the cultural gateway to the Jurassic coast.

An initial capital investment of approximately £ **136,782**, with £ **68, 391** from EDDC and £ **68, 391** from Arts Council England South West is required to extend the space, along with continuing revenue funds to establish the gallery over the next five years.

If Thelma Hulbert gallery moves towards becoming a charity or CIC, this will enable increased access to a wide range of funds and grants. If East Devon District Council truly aspires to being an inspiring council, then here is an opportunity not to be missed!

Introduction

Cultural Tourism

At a regional level, 'Towards 2015: Shaping Tomorrow's Tourism' (South West Tourism and SWRDA) outlined three strategic priorities and a vision for the tourism industry which is 'less seasonal, of higher quality, and delivers an improved all round experience.'

Culture needs to be at the heart of economic planning and development for 'cultural destinations'. The Creative Industries have a significant role to play in relation to a tourism economy like the South West. A recent study showed that for 50% of all visitors to Penwith in Cornwall, perceptions of the area as a place to view arts and crafts had been a factor in influencing their decision to visit (Cornwall Arts Marketing).

Social impact

Policy makers, arts practitioners and researchers have demonstrated that participation in the arts can result in a broad range of positive social effects. These range from increased educational attainment and self confidence, enhanced communication and organisation skills, social cohesion and reduced offending behaviour.

A current DCMS key aim prioritises culture as a key contributor to quality of life in the UK. The 'Every Child Matters and Youth Matters' National Policy is all about working to improve access to culture, sport and play for children and young people, so they can develop their talents and enjoy the benefits of participation. Consultation with young people confirmed that they need 'somewhere to go, something to do, and someone to talk to'.

EDDC cultural strategy

The cultural strategy for East Devon 2004-8 identifies the vision for culture for the district over the next five years:

a qualitative and quantitative increase in the cultural opportunities available within the district for more people to take part in and enjoy in order to enhance an individual's quality of life

It identifies four strategic themes:

- Encouraging increased access and participation
- Improving the quality and relevance of cultural activities
- Supporting the region's cultural industries and maximising economic benefits
- Celebrating regional and local identity and cultural diversity

An action plan builds on these local priorities and strategic themes with key actions. Specific actions relevant to this study include: community development, young people, economic development, environment, education, property and resources. The EDDC's Arts Development Team is committed to extending the work of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery as the main focus for delivering on these priorities.

Why a contemporary Art Gallery in Honiton?

Honiton

A traditional market town, well known for its historical lace making, Honiton has a population of 10,600. Over the last ten years, Honiton has developed a growing reputation as centre for antiques in the South West. Bonhams auctioneers have offices here attracting wealthy clients to the area. Honiton is seen as the gateway to the Jurassic Coast and the wider South West; and utilised as a stopping off point between London and St Ives, Bristol and the coast. The Thelma Hulbert Gallery has the potential to be a big draw for these tourists and to place-shape Honiton.

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery is the only local authority owned contemporary art gallery in East Devon. Over the last ten years it has steadily built a reputation and is highly regarded by artists, Friends and visitors. The energy and commitment of the Curator and Arts Officer have driven the gallery into a new place, creating many good news stories for the region, in particular, its exemplary work with young people.

However, there are a number of blocks to the gallery fulfilling its potential, mainly lack of space; poor marketing and signage; no café ; and a very small 'shop' – all leading to a limited gallery experience.

Investment and EDDC Strategic priorities

East Devon's District Council's vision is:

'outstanding and sustainable quality of life for everyone in East Devon'.

To achieve this vision the Council is working towards seven priorities. Four of these can be delivered by THG:

Thriving Economy

Investing in the gallery would mean investing in Honiton and East Devon as a cultural destination. Giving it a sense of place and identity it would attract visitors to the gallery, the town and the area spending in the gallery, and with local businesses bringing economic benefits.

Children and young people

Investing in the gallery would result in creative, engaging and relevant services for children, families and young people. The gallery is already recognised for its innovative work through the 'Masterpieces' project and has been able to attract separate funding from engage (national association for gallery education) of £ 8,000 in 2008. A bigger gallery space and a dedicated learning room would greatly benefit local young people and their families.

Excellent service for our customers

The results from our consultations and surveys show that there is a clear demand for an art gallery in Honiton; for a space for workshops and inspiring talks, and as a creative space for people to meet.

An inspirational council.

Investing in the expansion and vision of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery demonstrates tangibly EDDC as an inspirational council. Committed to providing a first class contemporary gallery, leading the way and creating a thriving creative environment for a whole range of audiences to engage.

“A total commitment to moving the gallery forward would show vision, strength and a belief in investing in this area culturally, it would put us on the map”

Consultation

Consultation process

The consultation process for this study included a questionnaire study, face-to-face meetings and an open day at the gallery. Parallel questionnaires were developed for local communities including visitors and supporters of the Gallery, and EDDC Councillors, distributed with support from the Gallery staff and Arts Development team at EDDC. We received 65 forms from local communities and businesses, plus five completed forms from Councillors.

The Open Day helped to identify key issues that would need to be addressed as part of any future development. It also generated a wide range of positive ideas and insights, which contributed to defining a potential vision for the gallery, with clear aims and values.

Vision

That by 2012, the Thelma Hulbert Gallery will be a nationally recognised contemporary art gallery. Its innovative programme of exhibitions and ground breaking work with young people, communities and volunteers alike will bring it media attention, awards and visitors from afar.

Its pivotal role as the leading cultural space in East Devon will have developed a reputation for Honiton and the surrounding area as ‘the’ place to visit for contemporary art and antiques’.

And as a result of all the talks, workshops, classes and collaborations driven forward by the gallery there is a new buzz on the high street with regular art markets, specialist events, projects with and for specific communities and an active engagement with local business, to include exhibitions with Bonhams.

Aims

The gallery’s aims are to:

1. Be an asset to the region, making a contribution to the social, cultural, educational, and recreational experiences of the local and wider communities
2. To originate and show an innovative and high quality programme of contemporary art and craft of local, national and international significance
3. To support and promote contemporary artists living and working in the South West

4. To develop and deliver a strong art-based learning programme for diverse groups and individuals
5. To curate and facilitate integrated exhibition and learning programmes

Point of difference

What makes Elmfield House and the Thelma Hulbert Gallery so special is the space itself. The fact that it was a home of an artist brings a personal, welcoming and accessible space in terms of its atmosphere.

It is not an impersonal white cube that alienates and threatens. This uniqueness has the potential to create a clear point of differentiation as a gallery. And, expanding on previous shows coupled with a new and clearly defined curatorial programme, there is an opportunity to focus on one-off shows that enhance this position. such as a contemporary twist on the tradition of lacemaking or connections with its rural space.

Values

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery must have clearly defined brand values that run through the heart of its curatorial policy, activities, promotional materials and volunteer training.

Personal	a welcome home for visitors, new artists, new artwork and cultural partnerships
Contemporary	showcasing creative innovation in the visual arts
Engaging	involving all audiences (local, regional and national) in a dynamic, targeted and relevant way
Inspiring	the experience should inspire and link back to one of its key priorities as being a cultural leader for EDDC
Quality	promoting excellence in contemporary arts

Curatorial programme

Within the new vision for the Gallery comes a revised curatorial policy:

The Curator's aim is to create active partnerships with artists resulting in an innovative and high quality programme of contemporary art and craft exhibitions - rather than the gallery simply acting as a receiving house for artists submissions. It is important for the Curator to have dialogue not only with artists but with other curators and arts professionals from galleries and visual arts organisations in Devon and beyond, thus establishing long term working relationships and raising visibility of the Gallery.

The possibility of extending the exhibition space allows a strong relationship between showing local work and work of nation and international repute, for example:

- A contemporary art/craft exhibition which highlights environmental issues – potentially linked to the local countryside, AONBs and Jurassic Coast, encouraging partnerships between EDDC departments, local agencies and organisations.
- A themed Open exhibition - judged not only by the Curator but with guest arts professionals. The Open allows everyone to submit work for display.

- A family centred exhibition – for example Animated Exeter.
- A contemporary exhibition by an artist of national or international reputation - who has never or rarely exhibited in the area before

A Special Projects space would be developed on the first floor and equipped as a versatile space with the possibility to show:

- Projects undertaken by 'Masterpieces' the gallery youth group
- Work by community groups in East Devon collaborating with the gallery
- Specially commissioned projects by young people undertaking arts education in the local area
- New work by emerging artists from the region.

Learning programme

Learning and engagement already play a strong part in the THG programme. In 2007, young people were recruited to form a youth panel who could advise staff on youth participation. After meetings and a trip to Tate Britain, ideas were generated, friendships made and the youth panel is now a permanent fixture involving young people in decision making and providing social events. This project's success has been recognised in terms of funding given by Engage, alongside an invitation to talk Tate St Ives about the project.

A lifelong learning programme will not only include workshops and educational activities for schools but activity sheets, gallery talks, courses and events to reach out to all of the community.

The strong variety of exhibitions enable different audiences to access a range of contemporary work. Its vision for the future builds upon this inclusive approach and brings learning to its heart. The Gallery wishes to become a model of best practice for learning and engagement and a leader among arts organisations.

Staffing

Gallery Curator

The Gallery is managed by Angela Blackwell, the Curator, who is employed part-time by EDDC. It is obvious that her current hours are too small for her to fully engage with a new curatorial policy or extend the learning programme at present. Within her 26 hours a week, she programmes exhibitions, creates interpretation of the artworks, manages the Gallery budget; manages one part-time staff member (jointly with Ishbel Ramsey, Arts Development), two new freelance artists working on the education programme and up to 15 voluntary stewards. She also manages the 'Masterpieces' youth group (meeting every other Wednesday with up to 15 young people attending).

The Curator also has to act as the technician in hanging exhibitions and also develop marketing and promotional materials. She assists with fundraising in terms of funding bids, developing local sponsorship and supporting the growth of the Friends Scheme.

The reality is that she is unable to have any time to research new shows, and is reliant on applications to the Gallery, forcing her position to be mainly reactive, not proactive.

But her work has not gone un-noticed. She won the 'Star performer' Award for EDDC in July 2007 for recognition of outstanding achievement and contribution towards the Council's key goals. Support for her work was evidenced in consultation:

"Congratulations to all involved as this was a great exhibition (Elizabeth Frink). This might be a very important turning point for the Gallery as not only do we seem to have a renewed interest from Members in Arts and Culture, but this exhibition seems to have drawn in plenty of people who do not usually visit - you have regularly proven that there is scope for sales income."

"You have built up a great reputation, and the result is obvious with an expanding number of visitors. I have been coming to your gallery for a number of years and would be delighted to see it expand."

To maintain and increase the quality of the Gallery's programmes, facilities and services, Angela will require support for professional development and training, more hours; and time to research other contemporary galleries and artists' work.

A significant result of a recent Audit has resulted in a 'red alert', identifying the need for extra staffing as increased income streams are generated by the Curator, forcing her to deal with finance on a day to day level and taking her away from her key role.

New post of Gallery Business Manager

Any sustained growth for the gallery must take into account the wide range of demands and resources needed, in particular, to increase funds for the gallery, through applications to a wide range of options and developing the shop and café functions.

It is proposed that a new post of Business Manager (Grade 5) is created for the Gallery starting in Jan 09, which supports the marketing and commercial side of the organisation, leaving the Curator to concentrate on the curatorial and learning programme.

Gallery Administrative Assistant

It may also be appropriate to increase the hours per week for the Gallery Administrative Assistant, in order to cover the extra administration caused by longer opening hours and extra activity.

Volunteers

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery has built a dedicated group of 15 volunteers since it opened in 1998. The Gallery could not operate without its voluntary stewards, who are well managed and trained by the Curator. Some volunteers have supported the Gallery since it opened.

Acknowledgement of the true value of volunteers and the demands placed on the Gallery Curator in managing them needs to be recognised and considered in future planning. Volunteers need a role description and specification. The organisation needs to consult with its volunteers and develop an agreed Volunteer Strategy and Policy document.

Friends of the Gallery

The Friends Scheme is an untapped resource and has the potential to contribute significantly to income for the gallery. The scheme needs a complete overhaul, developing a clear package of benefits and a restructure of the price. The membership fee is very modest compared to other organisations. The Friends are also an untapped resource for extra donations and volunteers; however until greater capacity is built within the staff team these opportunities will be missed.

Marketing

There are a number of key issues to deal with regarding effective marketing of the Thelma Hubert Gallery. Primarily they are around signage, joint mailings with EDDC (thus a confusion of the gallery identity) and the ineffectiveness of the webpage dedicated to the gallery on the EDDC website.

Limited resources and budget are, in the main, the reason why a lot of these issues have not been addressed. To support the development of the Gallery's identity and profile, widen audiences and attract new visitors consideration needs to be given to developing strategic marketing and communications including new branding, signage, website and publications with the necessary budgets to deliver this effectively.

Fundamentally the gallery name, its brand identity, the vision, curatorial policy, activities and marketing should all be clearly aligned. Further work is needed on development of the gallery name, pros and cons of changing it or modernising and developing a strong brand identity.

Signage

The lack of permanent signage for the Gallery is a serious problem. It results in many people - including local residents - not being aware the gallery exists; visitors having problems successfully navigating their way through Honiton to find the Gallery; and once they arrive being put off or confused by the closed front door and Registration Office on the ground floor.

Website

Currently the Gallery's web-presence is hosted as a web-page on the East Devon District Council website. In 2007 these web pages received a total of 1163 hits, and from January to July 2008 it received an increased level of users with 2041 hits.

However, if the Gallery is to expand its exhibitions, learning and engagement programmes and market its facilities and services it will need to develop attractive web communications with interactive features to meet wider audiences needs.

Currently, there is no Gallery archive on the web and this is another feature that could be developed as a valuable cultural resource.

Visitors

Visitor data for 2006-2008 reveals a growth in the number of visitors to the gallery (even with less exhibitions):

Dates	Exhibitions	Visitors Numbers
Feb 2006 to Jan 2007	8	3170 (363 young people)
Feb 2007 to Jan 2008	7	3626 (670 young people)
Feb 2008 to Jul 2008 (6 mths to date)	4	2371 (6 mths) (352 young people)

The visitors' book provides evidence that people are travelling to the Gallery from across Devon, the South West and from London. There are marked increases in the quantity of visits during high quality national exhibitions such as the recent Frink show.

New Audiences

Schools

The Curator has been developing strong links and partnership working with schools in East Devon. Artists Claire Gunningham and Anna Aroussi are developing an education programme at the Gallery to engage with schools and children. This is funded via a recent grant from Envision, a programme supported by Engage (the national association for gallery education).

Families

Currently, Angela provides a very popular 'doing trolley' for children when they visit the Gallery with their parent or carer. Extending this could be a new area of audience development for the gallery. One way to do this is to work initially with primary school children and then organise activity days at weekends for the whole family.

Older people

Tate Liverpool also offers a well attended 'Over 50's' programme throughout the year. Visits are led by an artist who guides groups of older people round the exhibition, provides a commentary and interpretation of the artworks and facilitates group discussion. The Friends are an obvious starting point for developing this targeted activity.

Working with local business

As part of the consultation, businesses in Honiton were engaged in discussion about the future development of the Gallery's facilities and services. There is potential to develop links and mutually beneficial partnerships with local businesses in the Honiton and the surrounding area for Gallery hire for events, plus joint marketing and sponsorship.

Our research with businesses on Honiton High Street alone highlighted a desire to regularly visit and be involved with the gallery. Opening hours are a current obstacle for some businesses. A regular drinks evening, talk or private view specifically for local businesses would build relationships and support any developing opportunity for business membership of the gallery, sponsorship and other partnership opportunities.

It is anticipated that the programme of exhibitions coupled with a strong marketing campaign would see visitor numbers growing from approximately 4,000 to 11,000 over the next three years.

Talks, workshops for the public and engagement with schools could easily attract a further 1200. Currently the lack of space prevents this being possible.

Gallery buildings and grounds - Assessment of Development Options

We assessed and evaluated the full range of options available for the future of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery. These are:

Option 1 – the Registration Office remains on the ground floor.

Option 2 - the Gallery takes over the ground floor from the current lease holder and expands into the whole building with a building conversion (four-phased approach)

Option 3 - Elmfield House is sold and plans for the Community Centre and the expansion of a visual arts space at Thelma Hulbert Gallery are combined.

Option 1 – The Gallery Stays the Same

The current situation is that the East Devon Registration Office for Births, Marriages and Deaths are based downstairs in Elmfield House, and the gallery upstairs. There are a number of difficulties that arise from two organisations requiring different things:

Conflict of noise control. The gallery is unable to fully extend its education work with schools and young people. This means no access to funding (ie from Arts Council) as not enough people benefit.

Hanging work becomes difficult to plan when weddings are organised downstairs:
“We also had to stop work (hammering and drilling) when the registrars were conducting weddings downstairs.” (artist)

It is off putting for the public to negotiate access to the gallery as it stands, and as such, hampers any effective audience development programme:

“The Registry office downstairs is off-putting, hearing ceremonies whilst looking at art, its not an inviting entrance.”

So, although not ideal, if the gallery was to remain in the same place, we would strongly recommend that a number of issues around marketing be carried out, to ensure visitor numbers continue to rise. These are: review the name, create a strong brand identity, develop professional marketing collateral and independent web-site, extend opening hours and create permanent signage.

This would be an estimated cost of £ 20,000, with an extra £ 8000 a year for staffing. However, it is our belief that this would not be a solid strategy for the sustainable future of the Gallery. If Option One is the preferred option, you also run the risk of losing the demoralised staff.

Option 2 - the gallery takes over the ground floor from the current lease holder

This would give access to three new rooms, the basement and external grounds, plus two small outbuildings. Options are varied and can be approached in four phases of growth, enabling funds to be raised and growth managed effectively.

Phase One

Exhibition space will be available on the ground floor.

The showing space available for artwork will be in the large room on the ground floor – approx 28 sq metres. This will be the main exhibition space and allow a programme of seven exhibitions a year. There will also be a room upstairs for Special Projects, enabling the curatorial programme to either use this room as an extension of the main ground floor space or to see it as a space for new work, by emerging artists or invited curators.

A new space primarily for a learning programme can be established on the first floor. Although this is not a large space, it can be deemed a 'messy' space and designed to cater for all age groups. In all the case studies we have made, a flexible use of space within any kind of learning room is paramount. Storage is important and many galleries provide foldable lockable doors to store equipment and sinks.

To establish a small shop on the ground floor.

The primary function of the shop would be as a showcase and selling space for crafts such as jewellery, textiles and ceramics made in the South West region and nationally.

Availability of tea and coffee facilities can also be established in the ground floor back room to run alongside a shop space. Tables and chairs can be set up outside in the grassed courtyard. The aim here is to test out the need for a larger café.

A section of the large basement will need to be made good to enable storage along with a new staircase and fire door. Other uses of the new space(s) available in Phase One:

As a meeting room. For artists groups and other arts organisations such as ArtsMatrix, alias or Engage South West. A room – either the main gallery space downstairs or one of the smaller rooms upstairs - could be hired at a reduced cost for such groups and they also benefit from access to tea and coffee facilities.

As a resource room for exhibitions. Information in such a room can include gallery guides, extended information on boards, newspaper cuttings, articles, video of artist(s) in conversation, feedback from visitors in the form of questionnaires, post-it Board etc.

The main gallery can be hired out for functions/receptions by local businesses or other groups, thus providing a form of income. The office can move into a larger room on the ground floor, and a staff room/meeting room established in the old office space.

Phase Two responds to the needs established by Phase One and converts the outbuildings as required, along with partial courtyard cover. There are a number of options available in converting the outbuildings, either:

- Into a bigger café
- Creating a larger learning space
- Building two spaces for small creative industry workers. These could be rented out on short lets, offering emerging artists and makers an opportunity to have a dedicated space for making, followed up an exhibition at the gallery.

All create opportunities for larger sums of income, but at this stage it is difficult to predict the best use of these outbuildings in two years time. It is vital to establish the core changes and then evaluate where demand is strong and commercial opportunities create the best possible income streams.

Phase Three looks at redesigning the garden, and commissioning new works of sculpture. Fundraising will be needed for this and the Henry Moore Foundation identified as a source.

Phase Four looks to the use of the basement for extra storage and potential digital suite. We are aware that SWRDA are interested in funding digital media and incubator spaces for creative industries.

NB: To make any of these changes in a Grade 2 listed building and also within Honiton Conservation Area will require consent.

Option 3- Elmfield House is sold and plans for the Community Centre and the expansion of a visual arts space at Thelma Hulbert Gallery are combined.

Advice given by Rob Spears (Senior Estates Surveyor, EDDC) is that:

“Elmfield House, in its current commercial use as offices/gallery, would achieve a sale price of approx £330,000. However, if the property were to revert to a private residence (if planning permission were to be granted) then the value would be appreciably higher. However, the consideration of the possible sale of this asset would be a matter for the Council's Asset Management Forum to consider, not only in the light of the services that the Council wishes to provide to the community, but also as a revenue earner and portfolio asset.”

A new purpose-built community centre has been planned for a number of years now, to be built in front of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery on the space taken up by long stay car parking. It is beyond the focus of this study to analyse fully the potential for combining the community centre and the work currently done by Thelma Hulbert gallery. We have been looking solely at the needs of an existing visual art gallery in the region. However, it is possible to identify some advantages and disadvantages at this point:

Advantages

- A new building could be purpose build to reflect aspirations, such as a well equipped education room; an eco build.
- Shared staffing ie reception can also be a shop or gallery space.

Disadvantages

- Our analysis of public thought via consultations and questionnaires supports fully the need for an extended visual arts space in Honiton. Some of the key attributes of the existing Thelma Hulbert gallery space – ie the size and friendly feel of the spaces enhance the experience of the visitor which obviously would be lost with a new build.
- Another issue would be mixed use, with the emphasis on a new build being with mixed and varied use of the arts, as opposed to a concentration on the visual arts.
- The new cost of redesigning plans for this arts/community centre
- The delayed timescale as it is not known when the community centre will be built
- The community centre would not have the ability to become a cultural destination as it has a primary local focus.
- Young people would not be interested in coming to a new space. They regard THG as it stands as distinctive.

It would appear that, in the immediate future, the gallery could expand to make its existing facilities in Elmfield House work better.

Gallery ownership and Governance

For the Gallery to move forward, the current structure, governance, ownership and asset management should be reviewed. There are options for the Gallery to, over a phased period, separate itself from being owned by EDDC, thus creating opportunities for generating other income streams and greater curatorial independence.

Through this process, it may be appropriate to transfer the assets of the building. And issues around asset transfer will need to be looked at.

Sources of Funding and Affordable Finance

Some specific current and potential future sources of capital and related revenue funding, in addition to the contribution of local authorities and charitable foundations, include:

- Big Lottery Community Buildings Fund £50m
- Futurebuilders Fund £125m - which in part funds third sector asset-based development, as part of its programme of support for voluntary and community sector capacity to deliver public services
- Adventure Capital Fund's £13m - programme of investment in community enterprises
- Community Asset Transfer Fund £30m - announced in the 2006 Pre Budget Report, and being established by the Office of the Third Sector to fund the refurbishment of local authority assets to facilitate their transfer to community management and ownership (managed by Big Lottery Fund FB)

If the gallery was successful in gaining charitable status it would then be able to apply to trusts and foundations such as Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and many others.

Recommendations

We recommend that:

Cultural Hub

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery be expanded and developed into a contemporary gallery or 'cultural hub' for local communities and visitors to Devon and the SW region. If the whole of Elmfield House was made available this would allow the building to be redeveloped into flexible gallery and learning spaces, potentially with a shop and cafe, internet facilities and a sculpture garden.

EDDC look to working in partnership with Public Sector and Third Sector partners (eg. SWRDA and ACE SW, Co-Active and CDFIs) – to apply social enterprise models and lever in public investment, community funding and affordable finance, and actively seek out other new partnerships with key sector organisations.

EDDC takes legal advice on the preferred option re organisational structure. A phased approach towards organisational independence for the Gallery is recommended over a 12 to 18 month period.

If EDDC decided to move the Gallery towards organisational independence - a 25 year lease on a 'peppercorn rent' would endow the new organisation with a valuable asset and affordable premises. Alternatively, the Council could consider 'asset transfer' as a way to endow the new arts organisation with a valuable asset that would help lever in public funding and affordable finance for future development of facilities and programmes.

Staffing

A new post of Gallery Business Manager is created as a job share (3 days a week) alongside the Curator post, starting in Jan 09, which supports the marketing and commercial side of the organisation, leaving the Curator to concentrate on the curatorial and learning programme.

The Curator position extends to 4 days a week to ensure effective curation of the whole of Elmfield House, and management of volunteers.

The Gallery Administrative Assistant is given more hours (one extra day) in order to cover the extra administration caused by longer hours and extra activity (ie Friends scheme).

Learning

A gallery-based high quality Exhibition and Learning Programme for diverse audiences is developed, offering interpretation, cultural learning and creative skills for all.

Marketing

A commitment to a proper marketing budget is made, that delivers on key aims of increased visitor numbers (and therefore new income)

A new brand for the Thelma Hulbert is considered (ie change of name)

Permanent signage is developed and that changeable exhibition banners to be attached to the two main entrance routes to the Gallery. Public wayfinder signage is needed from Honiton High Street and in the adjacent shopping centre car park. Tourism or heritage road signage could be added on the main routes into Honiton from the M5 and A30.

Opening hours are increased in order to attract wider audiences into the Gallery.

A separate website is commissioned, to be maintained and updated by gallery staff.

Fundraising

Additional research should be commissioned into a new Business Plan for the Gallery and a fundraiser sought to cover the period from now until new post of Gallery Business manager is filled.

Proposed Budget Summary

Capital Budget

An initial investment of £ 68,391 is required from EDDC to develop the gallery space, a learning space, a shop and small café facilities, alongside conversion of external outbuildings.

Actual total capital cost is £ 136,782 but discussions with Arts Council England South West show interest in raising a proportion of capital funds for this project, **IF at least 50% of confirmed partnership funding** can be found.

Phase 3 and 4 of the capital requirement would be subject to raising sufficient funds from other sources.

Please see additional financial sheets.

Revenue Budget

Currently Thelma Hulbert Gallery budget from EDDC is £46,000. There is a further £7,000 income to Asset Management at EDDC from the registrars rent.

Projected revenue needed from EDDC from 2009/10 is £ 45, 235 moving to £ 28,835 in five years.

Attached: THG budget sheets including 3 years, 5 years and a proposed capital budget.