

Bradford on Avon RC Boathouse Development Project

This brief is to provide a summary of what has happened and what is happening at present, in respect of the review of options available to the Club if it wished to have a replacement boathouse with full modern facilities.

It is now sometime since the idea was first put forward that consideration should be given to improving, upgrading or even renewing the boathouse facilities of the club. These ideas were reviewed by small group, initially under Matthew Harden's chairmanship. This is now being progressed by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman in regular consultation with the Club Committee.

These considerations were given great impetus following Ed McKeever's Olympic success which coincided with the house building proposal on local land owned by the family of the late club President, Alex Moulton. Whilst the link may not appear immediately obvious the building program could generate funds for "community use" through what is called, Section 106 funds. This is money that any development needs to find now to 'add back' into the community in one form or another as a result of the gains from such a development.

The prospect of being able to obtain substantial funds and the high profile of the club through its success generated an approach by the club on two fronts; to find out whether a new boathouse would be feasible or practical on the site and to seek support from the official bodies for the scheme and by so doing to get our name on the list of potential beneficiaries of the Section 106 money, referred to above, whatever it might be. However, there are other sources of funding for sports and community projects and our progress on that front is set out below.

The committee were also aware and concerned about a competitor application to build a new rowing club premises at Staverton concentrating on a 'Youth' membership – something which could have drawn our prospective future membership away and at worst seen our club die. As part of our initial appraisal we also visited a potential alternative site above the Greenland 'town' weir . This site was found to have too many access problems and we reverted to our current site.

A proposal paper was submitted to Bradford on Avon town council, and they indicated that they will be supportive of the project on the boathouse site. They passed this recommendation to the Wiltshire Council planning department.

In parallel with this possibility of getting a new boathouse, plus all the appropriate support elements, such as the small gym and club room (kitchen but no bar facilities) on the site without causing major problems had to be evaluated. Architects, Tuke Manton, were engaged. They have designed boathouses in a number of sensitive areas and therefore have the necessary experience to produce a viable solution at our site. As we are opposite a Grade 1 listed building, the Tithe Barn, which itself is adjacent to the country Park, the potential for challenge was anticipated to be high. Outline design solutions were produced some time ago and were displayed at the 2013 annual general meeting. The plans were also shown to the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust who noted the project and did not raise any objections in principle at the meeting but obviously reserved their position for the full planning process.

Since then has been some work on the plans themselves, mainly to incorporate important layout alterations to the changing room, the size of the gym, small office and related spaces. The design remains at the development stage. Discussions have also taken place with the architects on the need to keep the clubs active during any stage of the project. Consideration has been given how to achieve this but not in any great detail at present as we are some way off that as a concern but it has been registered and will affect how any building is developed.

However, there has been considerable work undertaken also on other aspects. A number of statutory surveys are required before any building can progress through the planning application process.

A comprehensive site survey of the land in detail has been undertaken. This will be needed for any development on the site, however big or small. This cost £2000, but is relevant for any future work or building on the site. It was undertaken by a local specialist firm.

Other surveys are required as part of the Planning Application process. They include Flood Risk, Ecological, Transport Assessment, Landscape and Visual Impact, Historic Environment and Tree. One has been undertaken this year; the Ecological, which is an environmental and wildlife survey, shorthand for this type of survey is a "bat survey". This has to be done at a specific time in the year so the committee decided that this should be undertaken this year so as not to delay matters by further 12 months if we did have the opportunity to move ahead on other fronts. This survey has been done and no issues have been identified as a result of it. This is good as it does not inhibit the building development on the site. The survey cost £1500. Other reports will be needed in order to progress any proposals through the Planning process but it has been decided to defer these until we are quite clear that we can proceed with the funding side of the project which is

examined below. Whatever we do on the site, even if it is only to 'improve the existing facilities' we will need these reports so that we can proceed. This is to meet the current planning regulations.

The committee has been very careful to ensure that any expenditure on this project is kept to an absolute minimum. Clearly there have been costs associated with the development of the plans by the architects but they have entered into the project on an 'at risk' basis with the upfront costs kept low. Of course if the project does proceed to completion then their fees will be part of the costs we incur. Similarly costs are incurred in the planning process itself and we have been careful to undertake all work so far with Wiltshire Planning on a consultative, no cost basis. As a 'non profit community body' we may well be able to either recover some or all of the planning costs but that has yet to be resolved. To date we have incurred less than £ 6000 on payments to the architects, surveys and funding advice.

The other matter we have had examined is the potential for funding support for project. The classic "chicken and egg" situation affects the search for funding. In order to get a realistic response to requests for grants or loans there is the necessity to have an outline proposal for potential funders or grant makers to look at. We have such an outline plan which is referred to above and also some supporting papers we had written to various bodies over the time in order to enhance our proposal and to explain the objectives of the club for the future. This included the identification of potential "shared users" of the facility, as most grant providing bodies wish to see a community benefit element in any such proposal. We have identified a number of potential shared users which should add positively to any suggestion that we will be able to make in the future. The outline design as developed does not envisage a social club or bar dependant facility. There would be no need for a 'steward' or indeed, staff of any sort. We would require no more paid maintenance than we presently do.

To find grant funds and loans is a relatively specialised area of expertise which the Committee decided was not available within our club membership. We employed Plan4Sport. The company is well experienced in such matters. It recently provided the report to the committee. It was mixed in so far as we learned that there is not one particular group immediately eager to provide the funding support a project of this type. However, it did identify where some funds were likely to be found. On the positive side, it did identify that the British Canoe Union was very supportive of the project in principle and would add its weight in any application we may wish to make. The report indicated a less supportive response for British Rowing. However we have been in correspondence with the relevant officers at British rowing who have advised that they are willing to assist in various ways, which is good for our prospects of having the governing bodies of both rowing and canoeing

working on our behalf. We will be developing the aspects that we need to with both the BCU and BR over the next few months so that we are properly prepared for the next stages. We expect that both the BCU and BR, with their experience of other projects, will be able to provide the necessary guidance on the order in which matters need to be dealt with in conduction with the advice from the architects, Tuke Manton.

The availability of funds will be the determining factor in any way forward. The plan as shown at the 2013 AGM was not 'cost dependant'. It was an interpretation of what was set out in the Statement of Requirements which was developed in consultation with the the Captain and Commodore. The architects put an order of cost of the project at £800Kas presently conceived. Any such design can be scaled back and that may well determine how far we proceed with the project.

The Club Committee has been very conscious of the need to manage the progress of this project on a realistic and tested basis. All expenditure has been assessed and approved stage by stage. There is no thought of 'pressing on to get it done' without careful management. It is recognised that some of the 'support impetus' locally is London Olympics generated and we do need to recognise that post Rio there may be different pressures on sports in the country but at present rowing and canoeing are 'golden sports' and we can benefit directly from that at BoARC.

Rodney Beer
Chairman

Stan Missen
Deputy Chairman

Friday, 31 October 2014