



Ledbury & District Civic Society

Registered Office:
Burgage Hall
Church Lane
Ledbury
Herefordshire
HR8 1DW

*Butcher Row House Museum
and Burgage Hall.*

Ledbury Places Group Provides Context To 'Lift' Debate

Alex Clive, Chairman of Ledbury & District Civic Society, has today given the latest update on the progress of the Ledbury Places project.

He has also provided some clarity and context in relation to recent media reports about the possible installation of a lift in the town's Market House – a proposal which would improve access to the first floor so it can be put to better, more full use by the local community as a whole.

Explaining the latest position in relation to Ledbury Places, Mr Clive said:

“Ledbury Places has been progressing well and having completed the information gathering part of our feasibility study, we then put together a business plan outlining various options for the future use of the six buildings we are looking at.

“No decisions have been taken yet and what we are able to do will depend greatly on the amount of grant funding available. However, the essential aims of the project have not changed.

“The aim remains to preserve the long term future of six of Ledbury's most historic buildings (the Barrett Browning Institute, Burgage Hall, the Butchers Row House Museum, the Heritage Centre, the Market House and the Town Council Offices) by managing them as a group to the benefit of the Ledbury community.

“The buildings themselves are expensive to maintain and, in some cases, difficult to use well in their current state, but through the development of the business plan they could be brought into better, more co-ordinated and sustainable use. Clearly, this could be of huge benefit to the community.”

Moving on to address recent media reports about the possibility of installing a lift at the Market House, Mr Clive said:

“Once again I can reassure people that no decisions have been taken about installing a lift in the Market House, nor will they be before the full consultation process is complete. However, the fact remains that if the community feels it would like to increase the use of the large room on the first floor then access needs to be improved – not only for the disabled, but also the elderly and for people with young children who might want to attend events upstairs.

“For clarity, the simple reason we are considering the installation of a lift is because we are looking at ways we can increase the use of the Market House – especially that of the room on the first floor. Use is limited at the present time as access is poor but one of our proposals is for the Market House to become the town's new tourist hub and Heritage Centre. We feel the central location could be ideal for this use and as it is the town's most iconic building, we feel it's the perfect place for visitors and tourists to learn about the history of Ledbury and begin their visit.



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“Every member of the Ledbury Places group understands why the installation of lift is a contentious issue – the majority of us are from the local community too – but I would ask that people look at any plans that are put forward with an open mind before forming their opinions.

“To provide further information to aid the debate, only last night the Town Council voted in favour of our idea to install a ‘model’ lift in the Market House for a few days in the very near future so we can all see what impact the installation of one for real might have.

“This will hopefully show that any claims a lift would take up a quarter of the ground floor space are simply not true and that there may be ways of improving access for all without compromising the ground floor space. Any notion that we would consider a lift if it damaged the fabric of the building is simply absurd and English Heritage have been involved in the discussions about this proposal from an early stage.

“If the conclusion is eventually reached that installing a lift is not the way forward then so be it, but at that point, as a community, we must accept that the town’s most iconic building will not play as much of a part in the lives of Ledbury people as it could do were the first floor more usable.”

Finally, on behalf of the Ledbury Places group, Mr Clive then expressed concern that the continued focus on only the lift proposal means that many people are not taking the time to look at the project as a whole. This means they may not understand the huge opportunity this project offers the local community to take more control of the six buildings included in Ledbury Places and ensure they are put to the best possible long-term use.

“With so much focus on the lift proposal, we are very concerned that local people are being drawn away from looking at the bigger picture. That bigger picture is that this project provides a unique opportunity for our town, one which could see the potential for significant grant funding to be taken full advantage of.

“We would ask local residents to not simply listen to those people who are driving all attention towards the lift proposal, but also to look at the innovative proposals relating to all six buildings. The lift proposal must and will be debated before any decisions are made, but this element should not mean that people do not have an awareness of the fantastic opportunities the project as a whole offers the town.

“Attending the Annual Town Meeting last week proved extremely useful and positive for us as we were able to fully address concerns that a few people have expressed in recent times. We have been responding to concerns throughout this process so far but it was of real benefit to take a little more time to answer people’s questions face-to-face at the meeting.

“With that in mind, in the very near future we will be releasing information about the next round of public consultation events we will be organising and therefore I’d ask people to keep their eyes on our website, our social media platforms, the local press and also for posters around the town which will feature all the details to help you get fully informed.



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“In addition, I’d also remind people to come forward and ask questions if they have them so that we can give a response based on fact rather than speculation, rumour and hearsay. Feedback from the local community is more important to Ledbury Places than it has ever been so please do make contact if you have any concerns or issues you’d like us to provide clarity on.”

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