**Bracken Hall Working Group – Report of the Review of Bracken Hall Countryside Centre 26th October 2023**

**Working Group: Cllr John Turner, Peter Ashton, Helen Thornton, Clerk**

**What have we learnt from the review?**

**Positive**

* A lot of sentiment for the Centre as it was under Bradford, ie the complete ground floor .
* A dedicated small number of Volunteers
* Lots of ideas to achieve a perceived potential

**Negative**

* Lack of Volunteers
* Lack of interest from Town Councillors leading to lack of scrutiny
* Poor Management Structures
* No strategic planning, no data on outcomes
* Scapegoating of groups and individuals
* Poor Communication/Publicity/Marketing
* Lack of funding
* Unannounced closures
* Negative publicity

So where does this lead us in terms of options. It should be self-evident that the Centre cannot operate without Volunteers and that single factor is the main reason we have the crisis situation we are in.

Any option that is agreed for the Centre must have the recruitment, training, reward and retention of Volunteers as its top priority.

Any option chosen should;

1. Be an asset to, and be accountable to Baildon precept payers
2. Have a clear focus on the Environment
3. Have a realistic Strategic Plan
4. Have a sound financial base
5. Have a clear and effective management structure
6. Have measurable outcomes

**Options**

1. Closure of the current operation and break the lease
2. Refresh and revive and eliminate factors causing decline
3. Re-Brand as ‘Baildon’ Countryside Centre.
4. Amalgamate with Glen Tramway, close centre and move to their premises.
5. Leave Bracken Hall at next break clause 20/12/25 and re-site operation as per re-brand in the new Library.
6. Set up an unincorporated association and transfer responsibility for the operation and premises

**Comments on options**

1. Means redundancy of Manager role, and loss of asset, possible financial clawback of Grant.
2. Does not address lack of Volunteers in the short term, time consuming
3. Possible in short term, loses history and possibly Manager role, needs all Stakeholders to ‘buy-in’.
4. Tramway is a trust, not acceptable to current trustees.
5. Potential be best option as a fall-back position but uncertainty of Library provision.
6. Needs landlord approval (not given) and considerable input and ’buy-in’ from volunteers

**Recommendation** from Working Group;

1. To close the Centre on Saturdays from 26/11/23 in line with the Glen Tramway, until Easter 24 and ensure it opens reliably on Sundays until Easter 2024 and then the whole weekend thereafter.
2. To rebrand and prepare to move the Exhibition operation to the new Library, if suitable, as and when TC and library move is complete.
3. To use the interim time to plan, recruit and train volunteers, test activities (exhibitions /walks/talks/practical demonstrations) identify costs and create a management structure, which is fit for purpose and give certainty to the future.
4. To establish the direction of travel, planning and consultation would begin immediately. A ‘Change Group’ will be appointed to implement these recommendations.
5. To request the staffing committee (in due course) to examine the staffing requirements of Options B, C and E.
6. To convene a review of progress in October ’24 (to review performance over the summer) and a further review in April’25 to make a decision about the Dec break clause.

**Resolution for Environmental Committee;**

This Committee resolves to:

- approve the recommendations of the Working Group

- delegate to the Clerk in consultation with the Chair of Environment Committee (and the Change Group) the implementation of combined Options B,C and E and to provide regular updates.

- recommend to Full Council the creation of a one-off allocated reserve of £2000 and delegate to the Clerk (in consultation with the Chair of Environment Committee) in support of the actions in Option B.