

### Agenda item 3

#### **For discussion and decision: Improving music industry skills in Frome**

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#### **Summary**

The music industry has a big presence in and around Frome. But the opportunities for local people to acquire the skills they need to succeed in the industry require further development. The Performing Arts Panel have confirmed this.

The Bert Jansch Foundation that funds underprivileged people to train as musicians and music technicians paid for a feasibility study for a new Media Centre at the Cheese & Grain to help create these opportunities. Planning consent has been granted for the change of use of the upper floors of the tower at the rear of the building together with the development of an extension to house a lift shaft and stairs.

The C&G is at an advanced stage in terms of raising external funding to deliver this project. FTC has been asked to provide up to £130k that will help lever in a further £370k.

It is recommended that Cllrs support this request and that a Public Works Loan Board loan is raised to enable a grant to be made. Steve Macarthur, General Manager of the C&G will provide background information on this project at the meeting and those attending will be invited to debate the issue.

#### **The need**

A great number of music professionals live and work in the Frome area, partly accounting for Frome's five live music venues. The conversion of the C&G market hall some years ago into a live music venue as well as event/conference/indoor market facility has been a very local and home-grown attempt to bring some of the benefits of this to local people. So far hospitality, security and seasonal work at festivals (typically bar work and litter collection) are the main areas where local people can find music industry employment.

The ability to record and rehearse is an important aspiration for local artists. Whilst the C&G currently provide two apprenticeships, on the whole, the opportunities to train locally and achieve formal accreditation in areas such as sound and light engineering are extremely limited. Therefore, the opportunity that this project creates for training local young people is the significant aspect for FTC. This project will provide training in technical and logistic support as well as marketing, all of which have the potential to create well paid work in the industry.

Training young people has been a particular topic of conversation at the recent Performing Arts Panel meetings and it is likely that a recommendation to improve access to training opportunities in the industry will be put forward to Cllrs when the Panel reports later this

autumn. But even before this, the Bert Jansch Foundation, that funds underprivileged people to train as musicians and music technicians, had been approached by the C&G to see how they could help.

### **Where have we got to?**

The Bert Jansch Foundation came forward to fund a feasibility study that was concerned with how a 'Media Centre' providing a range of training facilities as well as a recording and rehearsal studio could be developed utilising the unused upper floors of the tower at the rear of the C&G.

A planning application proposing the conversion of those upper floors together with the construction of an extension to the tower to provide a lift and stairs was approved. Both Mendip District Council as the freehold owner of the building, and FTC as the leaseholder earlier confirmed that they were prepared for the sub lease to the C&G to be extended to enable this project to be delivered.

On the back of these approvals, the C&G has submitted a bid for £300k of Big Lottery funding under their 'Power to Change' programme. The second stage of the process has been successfully completed. The Big Lottery can only provide a maximum of 75% of the capital cost of a project such as this and given that the overall cost is in the region of £500k, they now require some assurances that match funding can be obtained.

Assuming that funding can be secured, the C&G will work in partnership with Bath Spa University and Bath College to deliver the training.

### **The proposal**

Other public sector sources of funding e.g. EU LEADER funding have been explored but this project would not be eligible. So the current proposal is that FTC provides a grant of £130k of funding from April 2017 conditional on the C&G securing match funding. At the moment it appears most likely that this will come from the Big Lottery (£300k) and the remainder (£70k) to be sourced through crowd funding.

This grant is proposed to be financed through a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan for £130k. The Council receives £6.8k per annum from electricity sold back to the grid generated by the PV cells on the roof of the C&G. A PWLB loan of £130k taken over a 20-year period, the life of the PV cells, would require fixed annual repayments of £7.8k based on the current interest rates. The difference between income from the PV cells and the loan repayments is £1000 and is not significant enough to demand an increase in the precept. However, it should be noted that the net impact on FTC's budget of this proposal will be a reduction of £6.8k per annum and Cllrs are requested to note this. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have been contacted regarding the proposal and have agreed that FTC can take out a loan and then provide a grant to the C&G.

## **Viability of the project**

With reference to viability, the following points are worthy of consideration:

- Under this proposal, there are no repayment costs for the C&G to carry
- Much of the organisational and marketing infrastructure is already in place at the Cheese & Grain
- Apprenticeship delivery would attract Government funding
- The running costs of the studio and other rooms are almost entirely “marginal” meaning they only accrue when a client is hiring the recording/rehearsal facility which would be subject to commercial charges
- The income from commercial hire will cross-subsidize community and training use.

### **Recommendations**

1. Provide a grant of £130k towards a new Media Centre project at the Cheese & Grain. This grant to be conditional on securing match funding of £370k.
2. Apply for a loan from the Public Works Loan Board for £130k over 20 years.
3. If the DCLG application is successful, draw up a legal agreement between the Council and the Cheese & Grain to transfer the £130k in the form of a grant.