

DIRECTORS ANNUAL REPORT May 2024.

BOARD BUSINESS

It's been another eventful year for with some great things to celebrate and some ongoing frustrations!

At last year's AGM, we elected one new board member: Zoe Blake and we co-opted 3: Viv Jorissen, Helen Vickers and Phil Hawdon. This year, sadly, we accepted the resignations of Frank Darnley and Isolde Davey: Frank has been heavily involved with our many arts and cultural activities over a number of years and Isolde has been with us from early days, spear-heading with massive enthusiasm just about every Fire Station activity that's happened – their contribution has been immense, and they are going to be greatly missed.

The current constitution allows for 10 voting members, the 9 members currently in place are:

Ann Dower (standing down)
Cas Sewell-Storey (1st term ends 2025)
Clare Nestor (2nd term ends 2024)
Dot Foster (3rd term ends 2026)
Malcolm Gardner (3rd term ends 2024)
Phil Hawdon (co-optee one year term ends 2024)
Viv Jorissen (co-optee one year term ends 2024)
Helen Vickers (standing down)
Zoe Blake (1st term ends 2026).

Of the above, Ann Dower and Helen Vickers are unfortunately standing down, Malcolm Gardner must stand down for at least one year, Clare Nestor, Viv Jorissen and Phil Hawdon are seeking to stand for a next 3-year term and the unfilled seats should also be filled. This means that at the AGM, provided there are sufficient candidates, we will seek to appoint/re-appoint a total of 7 board members.

Whilst the role of board members is to be responsible for our planning and management, because we do not yet have any paid staff, we also have responsibilities to organise and carry out a lot of functions. Currently we have the following sub-committees, each lead by a board member:

1. **Building:** Deciding where to progress building and what funds are required. Programming building works, running volunteers, and preparing space for events and uses of space.
2. **Events:** Activating and facilitating events and community activities and overseeing letting of space.
3. **Media:** Responsible for updating Face Book and other social media and public interfaces thought appropriate for information and advertising, programming
4. **Funding:** Other committees will apply to this committee for funding. They will decide the best way forward for each activity and try to find particular funding for those activities as well as general funding.
5. **Structure:** Responsible for CBS and Business Plan updating, requirement surveys Will be Also responsible for necessary permissions, licencing, dealing with Companies house and e-mail.
6. **Treasurer and Finance:** Responsible for everyday banking VAT and insurances.

Board members are expected to have a hands-on approach to these functional areas and therefore individual skills and interests are paramount.

The 2024 AGM will have an 11am start for the business meeting in the History Room, followed by an open day throughout the buildings. This, we hope will bring the project to life as it is one of the many things that will happen in the buildings.

The Board has been meeting monthly throughout the year and normally has additional meetings and workshops as necessary. All Directors have inputs into all of our dealings and are asked to ratify as appropriate the findings or recommendations from our sub-groups or task leaders. This year we tried to streamline the board structure but with only limited success.

Our Articles do not require us to hold an Annual General Meeting but they do require us to provide an annual report to members and they also require us to appoint directors on an annual rotation basis.

Fire & Water is all about community, sharing, caring, providing spaces, providing for individuals, groups and how we can strive together to achieve this. In spite of the Covid restrictions we have continued with voluntary work in the buildings, organised activities and are running a major building project. As we emerge from Covid and as the building project comes to an end, we fully expect activities to return, at an even greater scale than pre-Covid because we will have more space available for such activities.

Communications to Members:

Most members have opted to allow us to contact them by email and this is by far our preferred method. We use MailChimp to do this which gives us confirmation of how many members received the email. It also tells us of recipients who have, for some reason or another, been unable to receive such correspondence and we try to remedy this as best we can.

We also send out messages via Facebook and other regular social media, we have a regular page in GoLocal, put notices on the Fire Station door and on occasion we circulate fliers.

Data Protection:

Members' personal data is stored digitally but only under a secure regime, currently under the control of member **Phil Hawdon** and our administrator and we'll announce the designated board member taking over in the current year in due course. All previous personal records were properly disposed of once the new system came into operation.

BUILDING WORK:

The scope of building work has increased significantly over the past year as a result of a variety of grants having been won by F&W:

Historic England's High Street Action Zone funding enabled us to enter into a building contract affecting the street frontage buildings and some inner spaces, to replace the roofs, floors and windows, install under-floor heating (an air-source heat pump powered by photovoltaic panel) and electrical work and a long list of associated improvements. This work is significantly complete, there just remains some snags related to the re-roofing.

Carbon Zero fund has enabled us to start on thermal insulation to the external walls and roofs- this will continue throughout the year.

Changing Places fund has enabled us to complete the Charging Places facility which is due to open in the next few weeks.

Other small grants: the Ward Forum grant is paying for completing internal doors throughout the usable parts of the building, Calderdale Council financial grant (a one-off grant to cover part of the increased buildings insurance premium) and the Windfarm grant which has paid for clearing the riverside garden and constructing the flagstone terrace in readiness of the planting scheme to start.

Voluntary DIY:

We have a small but regular enthusiastic team of volunteers who have worked most Saturday and Thursday mornings throughout the year and between us we have re-laid drains, installed plumbing, built temporary screens to protect visitors from the unfinished areas, constructed a mezzanine floor, constructed toilet partitions, plumbed-in toilets and basins, shifted tons of debris and cleared many spaces.

We've built the emergency escape platform outside the Fire Station and the Bike Port platform at the top of the car park.

We are actively striving to get Shed 2 ready for a tenant to move in, to complete an area of the first floor for Calderdale Theatre School and the first floor of the Fire Station for a prospective tenant.

In the past 12 months our DIY volunteers have put in approximately 1500 hours over 60 separate sessions.

Calderdale College building school students are using the old council chamber as a classroom workshop which sees this and adjacent rooms having their walls plastered.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:

With the final element of our Architectural Heritage Fund grant we are currently consulting with Jeff Scales of Locality about our future business plan, our application to become a Community Benefit Society and an application for capital finding from the Community Ownership Fund. If this is successful we will be completing the Fire Station on its 3 floor levels plus improvements elsewhere in the buildings.

Community Outreach:

Our involvement in Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone project has an additional benefit to F&W: as the Community Partner, F&W has spearheaded a Pilot Project – a film created by a small local team with help from the HAZ Project Manager Sarah Neville and from some young production assistants. This film 'Why Sowerby Bridge? Why Not?' was launched last year and can be viewed on YouTube. We continued with the 3-year **HSHAZ Cultural Programme** which completed in March and we are currently running a Fire Station Theatre Pilot Project with the benefit of and **Arts Council Grant**.

The HSHAZ Cultural Programme was spearheaded by Isolde Davey and Frank Darnley, aided by Andy Abbott as creative producer and has continued with Lucy Fee working with Andy Abbott. The ACE programme is being run with the same team of Andy and Lucy, under the overall direction of the F&W Board.

Over the past year we have seen a rapid expansion in the **community use of the buildings** in terms of theatrical and musical performance, arts workshops and interventions, street events and groups hiring the buildings. These include a Mikron Theatre performance (and they're coming back in September!), a Northern Broadsides workshop, Playgroup writers' group culminating in a grand performance, an Improv Theatre group, a young persons' music group, and a host of bands and disc events and workshops. We are regularly being approached by outside bodies wishing to use the building for seminars and training sessions.

Our beach party in the summer of 2023 was very well attended. At our Glow 2024 event we had over 500 people attending, including visiting the buildings and interacting with the work of 6 commissioned artist who created site specific interventions, all relating to the town and its community.

Our end of HAZ celebration event will be on June 29th in the buildings – this event will form a part of a town-wide festival.

Tenant Development:

Calderdale Theatre School are continuing to use part of the Undercroft for storage but have now moved their costume department upstairs in the front building, pending the completion of their permanent areas.

Imagineer has stepped down as a potential tenant of Shed 2 but we are currently negotiating with a successor organisation.

We have Sowerby Bridge Rushbearing and the Puzzle Hall Community Pub stores in a part of the Undercroft where we also have Phoenix Bowmen continuing to use their archery range. Wea are also in talks with a prospective tenant for the first floor studio above the Fire Station.

Merchandising:

Calendars were again produced with thanks mainly to the efforts of Tom Cosens. After deducting costs we raised about £1,430. We still have some in stock should anyone want one. We hope to start work on the 2025 calendar earlier this year with a new theme.

Media update:

We are currently attempting to improve our website and Facebook page and to interlink them with the Fire Station Theatre Facebook page. We're also investigating how to make membership payments easier via the website.

The Riverside Garden update:

The Wind Farm grant covered the cost of clearing the garden and that of constructing a stone-flagged terrace which means that the next step is the start on the raised beds in readiness for the planting scheme, spearheaded by Dot Foster and Viv Jorissen.

Ultimately the garden will be an outdoor seating area and a meeting place attached to the cafe or community kitchen and linked to the courtyard.

MEMBERSHIP:

Our membership has grown again and is now at 215 though unfortunately a number of members are behind in paying their subs – we need to find an efficient way of resolving this problem. Naturally we'd like a lot more members to add to our representation in the town, particularly when applying for grants and other funds but also vital to our ability to be a real community contributor. As the buildings become usable and we increase their use we hope that F&W membership will see a dramatic increase.

We need members to do more than support - we need committed members willing to take on individual issues, whether it be helping formulate policies, writing grant applications, doing the accounts, organising voluntary sessions, running events or anything else.

Our annual subscription rates, set in 2018, at £3 (unwaged), £5 (waged) and £20 (group or organisation), each category to be renewed on an annual basis, remain unchanged.

We are about to introduce a membership card which will be distributed to paid-up members at the various events, in the near future.

Our commitment to Calderdale MBC as our Landlord:

Under the terms of the Joint Working Agreement which was attached to our lease, we have to fulfil certain obligations to an agreed timetable and to present an annual report to the landlord (Calderdale MBC). This is due to be submitted in the next few weeks.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Our financial year is the year June to May so presenting a report up to April 2023 feels well out of date and it is appropriate that we show an up to date snapshot in this Report. We are proposing to adjust the dates of our financial year for the future in order to make the formal accounts more relevant to the date of the annual General Meeting. The most recent formal accounts are on the F&W website.

Our financial situation remains low key but has been steady, with money coming in from private donations, membership subscriptions and merchandising. Individual donations vary from single sums and monthly arrangements.

In addition we have received substantial funding from:
Historic England (for both the HSHAZ building work and the Cultural Programme);
Community Foundation for Calderdale (towards installing assessable toilets);
Calderdale Council's Community Engagement Fund (to cover the costs of employing the Community Arts Coordinator);
The Architectural Heritage Fund (to cover consultancy fees for the Business Model and Planning work);
The Zero Carbon Fund (thermal insulation));
Changing Places (for the installation of this facility – the only one in Sowerby Bridge);
The Arts Council (for the continuance of the cultural programme based on the Fire Station, until September 2024);
The Windfarm Fund and Sowerby Bridge Ward Forum (towards work in the garden);
LocalGiving (towards the installation of the Bike Port).

Our regular income has this year covered the running costs but there is seldom any spare cash and grant applications take an awful long time to come to anything. Our general running costs, mainly for insurances and for mains services amount to about £14,000/year. Our income from rents, donations, memberships is vital and helped us put some money towards building projects and future events but is clearly insufficient without a significant boost.

Financial statement 1st May 2023 to 30th April 2024

	In	Out
Income:		
Membership subscriptions	£291.00	
Donations:	£5,449.97	
Merchandise (profit):	£1,431.84	
Rents & hiring:	£1,694.50	
Admin support grant (CMBC):	<u>£3,136.14</u>	
	£12,003.45	
Expenditure:		
General Admin (website, internet, mains services, advertising, Accountants fees, subscriptions & fees, bank charges):		£4,418.44
Insurances (buildings, trustees, employer and employee liability, events)		£8,519.41
DIY building work costs:		<u>£1,207.59</u>
		£14,145.44

Financial snapshot on 20th May 2024:

Balance of allocated funds remaining:

CFFC grant (fitting-out toilets) (fully spent)	£0.00
Garden Fund (Ward Forum) (fully spent)	£0.00
Windfarm Fund (fully spent)	£0.00
Bike Port Fund (fully spent)	£0.00
CMBC insurance premium grant	£0.00
HAZ Cultural Programme	£2,609.13
CMBC Community Engagement	£2,057.82
Carbon Zero Fund	£33,865.44
HAZ Building Fund	£4,146.92
HAZ end of project celebration Fund	£3,050.00
Arts Council grant (Fire Station Theatre pilot project)	<u>£22,972.00</u>
Total of allocated funds:	£68,701.31

Bank balances at 20.05.24:

Main Account:	£52,601.16	
Second account:	£23,106.75	
Cash box:	£56.09	
		<u>£75,764.00</u>

Unallocated Funds (this sum is agreed by the Board, used as a Reserve but partly available to be spent on DIY building work in preparing the buildings for use):

£7,062.69

Rents and hiring charges continue to come in each month but obviously this is a worrying time because there has been almost no income from events - so please don't stop donating.

We would encourage all waged members who wish to donate to Fire & Water to use the LocalGiving route so that we benefit from Gift Aid – increasing your donation by 25%.

Our certified accounts for the last financial year have again been prepared by Wheawill & Sudworth Ltd and are to be found on our website.

In line with the terms of our lease, we have had to increase our level of buildings insurance from what was previously for site clearance only to an amount reflecting their now enhanced state. The new insurance assessment is that the buildings are valued at £2.84m with the undeveloped areas valued at £85.5k. The insurance premium has accordingly increased from approx £6k to £12.6k – the CMBC one-off grant of £3,136.14 has helped this transition considerably.

Thank You All:

We owe a great debt to the many companies, groups and individuals who support us and have donated often significant amounts of time and effort to our project, freely, and we are extremely grateful to them all.

In no particular order we acknowledge the following groups, companies, businesses and organisations for the enormous help they have given us throughout the year: JGH Builders, Denholt Engineering, Halifax Renewable Energy Company, R B Electrical Contractors, Sudden Bros Builders, personnel at both Historic England and CMBC, our events management and administration team, the calendar sponsors and designers, our extraordinary cake and jam makers, our stalwart DIY team and the scores of private individuals who shall remain nameless, but you know who you are!

This has been a busy year in support for the community of Sowerby Bridge. We owe so much to our members, our volunteers, our supporters – all of you.

Please continue with us.