

COMMUNITY PLAY PROPOSAL TO BELPER TOWN COUNCIL BY (3 pages)**APPLICATION TO ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND FOR FUNDING OF THE BELPER COMMUNITY PLAY**

I propose that Belper Town Council are the named lead applicant for Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants Funding for the Belper Community Play. I would be named as the main partner in the application to deliver the project. The application would be for funding in the region of £60,000 (90% of total budget – the remaining 10% would be mostly in-kind support). Belper Town Council as the lead applicant would increase the chances of securing funding because it is in line with the current Arts Council's "Let's Create" strategy, which encourages artists to involve town councils as partners in their projects. The project also meets all the current Arts Council priorities listed in their new guidelines for Project Grants.

I will do all the work in writing the application if the Council will agree to be the main applicant. There will be no cost financially or otherwise to the Council. All I will need is some information about the Town Council required in the application form.

The project will be a positive demonstration of the Town Council's commitment to enriching the quality of life of its residents. It will also establish a relationship between the Town Council and the Arts Council which could lead to funding for future arts projects in the town. I understand the project meets the Town Council's policy to increase the "offer" to the community of arts/entertainment provision. Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site have also confirmed the project will contribute to their Management Plan, particularly Objective 2.8 "to enrich the offer for visitors and residents through events which creatively tell the stories of the DVMWHS, its Outstanding Universal Value and unique selling points"; and Objective 2.9 "to promote arts activity through the DVMWHS to engage people with the unique culture and heritage of the DVMWHS"

The show will attract interest from people from a wider catchment area to visit the town and will increase the footfall for local retailers.

WHY NOW?

After long periods of lockdown due to Covid, there is a great need to bring communities together in positive ways. The show celebrates experiences and stories of Belper from the past to the present day. I have lived in Belper for the last six years and feel strongly that the town would benefit from a major arts project directly involving the community. The Arts Council funded me to Research & Develop a community play for Belper from 1/12/20 – 31/10/21. I have concluded that there is a great deal of support and enthusiasm for the project.

I have identified the Market Place and Coppice Car Park area as the best site for the show and the Town Council have granted me permission to use the site for the last weekend of Sept 2022 to perform the show.

I have set up a Steering Group representing a broad cross-section of the community to support and advise me on the development of the project – please see the list below of members of the Steering Group.

During the R&D I was able to employ a local part-time Community Coordinator (xxx) to help me make contact with organisations, groups, venues and key individuals in the area. I was also able to employ 9 professional artists from the area for a season of workshops in theatre-making skills for the community.

There were 327 participants of all ages engaged with the R&D in workshops, individual interviews, group interviews and other contributions from the community. The play is inspired by those interviews and contributions, alongside my own research into the area: factual and fictional stories, historical and contemporary. Around 100 participants have expressed their interest in taking part in the show and there will be many more of all ages if the show goes ahead.

HOW IT WOULD WORK IN PRACTICE

The funding would be paid into Belper Town Council's bank account. The Council would then commission me (for the equivalent amount of funding) to produce the show, including contracting the Creative Team, managing the project and delivering to budget. The funding from Arts Council would be paid in three instalments: 50% on award, 40% mid-point of the project and 10% at the end of the project following a final report.

The project will employ a creative team of 12 professional experienced artists to support the community in creating a high-quality show and pass on skills. Almost all of these artists live in the Belper and surrounding area. I will also employ again the Community Coordinator, Caroline Hawley, to continue working with me.

The play will be open to everyone who wants to be included. We will help people find their role in the production – either performing, singing, music, making, costume, technical production, administration or general help. There are likely to be over a hundred participants. The show will be inclusive and will continue to target under-represented groups in the community to get involved, many of whom are represented by members of the Steering Group.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF DELIVERING SIMILAR PROJECTS

I have worked full-time as a Playwright for the last 40 years. I have written to commission over 50 original stage plays for a wide variety of theatre, some of which have won major awards. Some of these plays I have also produced as well as written, including shows for the Commonwealth Games in Manchester 2002 and Manchester City of Drama 1994. Most recently, in 2017, I produced a site-specific community play (like the one planned for Belper) for Barrow Hill Railway Roundhouse Museum near Chesterfield. The Roundhouse was the named applicant for Arts Council funding (which was successful). The Roundhouse worked with me as their main partner producing the project (as well as writing the show), which included managing the project, employing the Creative Team and delivering to budget. The total budget was £80,000. Arts Council funding was £50,000 plus £10,000 invested by the Roundhouse plus £9,000 from sell-out box office sales. In-kind support included a guest appearance in the show of the world's most famous steam train "The Flying Scotsman". The show received rave reviews.

Go to my website for further information:

STEERING GROUP MEMBERS

Can be provided to Cllrs upon request