

Ian Quaife
District Manager
Community Regeneration Team
Bristol City Council
6, York Court,
Wilder Street
Bristol BS2 8QH

09/08/05

Dear Ian Quaife

**Re: St Werburghs Community Association
Tender for Easton Community Centre**

SWCA has discussed their potential bid in great detail. It would make a great deal of sense to run the two centres as parallel projects, using the sound management systems that have been established so successfully at St Werburghs, but with each centre reflecting the interests and profile of its local area. St Werburghs Centre is and will remain an essential resource for the inner city and we would like to build on this.

SWCA can offer sound and experienced management, cost effectively, splitting management time over two sites and using a pool of trained staff and caretakers to maximum benefit.

However, we are extremely concerned about the financial future of Easton. There are both revenue and capital issues that need to be clarified if we are to continue with our bid. Continued under-resourcing will make a further 'crash' almost inevitable. SWCA is not in a position to underwrite Easton Community Centre and must ensure that both centres are sustainable. There is potential to increase income at Easton, but this would only be possible if its current condition and access problems are addressed.

BCC must be clear in its dealings with Easton Residents. There seems to be an expectation that the organisations who tender will be offering a range of activities. There is simply not the funding or the infrastructure for this at this stage.

It is the function of SWCA to support local groups and communities of interest to develop their own activities; we also submit funding bids for community activities

in consultation with the community. We aim to reproduce these successes at Easton Community Centre. However the centre will require substantive revenue and capital funding to enable it to be sustainable in the long-term.

Please see attached financial information which indicates the projected loss to the end of year two and which was produced in conjunction with Chris Chapman from Easton Business Centre. This information endorses our position, as stated in Para 2 above, that SWCA would be unable to underwrite such projected losses. SWCA will be unable to further this bid without assurances that Bristol City Council funding is available to underwrite such projected losses.

Yours sincerely

Graham Bottrill
Chair St Werburghs Community Association

Julie Perkins
Treasurer. St Werburghs Community Association

Linda Bell
Director. St Werburghs Community Centre.

St Werburghs Community Association

Expression of interest - Easton Community Centre

Proposal

The St Werburghs Community Association (SWCA) is a Development Trust which has been involved with running one of the oldest community centres in Bristol on behalf of its members for over 30 years.

Members and users comprise individuals, community groups and voluntary organisations. Last year 202 groups registered to use the centre, representing over 42,000 visits, of which 60% were from black and other ethnic minority groups, and 5% were people with a disability.

Underpinning SWCA is a community-led management committee whose depth and breadth of experience brings valuable leadership to the management team. A competent operational and administrative organisation has been developed which scores consistently high in its annual monitoring by Bristol City Council.

The Association adopts a fully inclusive approach to the provision of its facilities and services, and achieves this by involving all sectors of the community in its decision making and planning. It is a membership organisation and its management committee is accountable to the community through open meetings and an annual public meeting.

A management committee profile is attached (Appendix 3).

What we can offer:

- Registered Charity and Company Ltd by guarantee since 1999.
- Meets Charity Specifications as outlined in the Brief.
- SWCA has experience of managing two centres consecutively: St Werburghs and, for the past 3 years, St Agnes Lodge.
- SWCA has been working to Bristol City Council Baseline Standards for some years.
- Excellent office and centre management systems; SWCA has developed a database which provides a sound information base.
- An experienced, flexible and knowledgeable team: we can offer a pool of trained staff to both centres.
- Dedicated management committee with a broad range of skills and backgrounds, with local roots in both Easton and St Werburghs (see Appendix 3 for profile).
- Strong and established links with many local agencies and organisations across the area.
- Experience with the provision and management of UK Online centres in partnership with Malcolm X, Easton CC, CSV and City of Bristol College.

- Knowledge and experience of raising funds from a variety of sources including Neighbourhood Renewal, Objective 2, LankellyChase, Sustainable Neighbourhoods, Business Development Fund, etc.
- SWCA works closely with local voluntary and community groups in the St Werburghs Community Alliance.
- We work effectively with the black and ethnic minority community who represent 60% of SWCC users.

We have discussed this bid with BACEN, who can offer advice and support, and Easton Business Centre who assisted with the Cash Flow and will continue to be involved as a support agency.

What we plan to do:

- **Open Easton community centre** as a local community venue. Encouraging a strong mix of local users and a wide range of provision.
- **Provide office space** for local voluntary groups who provide services relevant to the area.
- **Open** a minimum of 6 days per week.
- **Respond to local needs by:**
 - Meeting local groups and organisations
 - General meetings - twice yearly
 - Offer resources - Fax photocopy, mail box
- **Support residents with activities** by offering a 'start-up' service including free/cheap room rent, advertising and advice.
- **Seek funding to run classes and activities** in response to local needs. SWCA has obtained funding from a variety of sources in order to do this at St Werburghs.
- **Provide UK Online facilities** - Promote and develop the existing resource. SWCA are members of the Central Bristol UK Online Partnership and have been successful in running a UK Online centre for three years.
- **Review the current structure of the organisation**, change the area of benefit and add Easton to Articles. Change name to East Bristol Development Trust.
- **Liaise with major statutory agencies**
Discuss Youth Provision in the area, and how the centre can be involved in the coordination of services locally.
- **Liaise with Voluntary Agencies**
To encourage local involvement, information, and to enhance provision.
- **Newsletters/newspaper**
There is the potential to re-establish a local community newspaper
- **Set up a clear and accountable finance system**
SWCA has a Financial Controls Policy which ensures that all financial transactions are dealt with effectively and legally. We commission an annual audit, and employ an accountant to produce annual accounts, which are publicly available.

St Werburghs Community Association

Expression of interest - Easton Community Centre

Issues of concern for SWCA

This section outlines several areas of concern and some specific questions for which we would need answers before any commitment to run Easton Community Centre could be made.

Licence

BCC are offering a one year initial licence. Will this license require us to insure/repair the building? The cost of building insurance last year was £9,000.

Lease

The Access Audit identified £61,600 of high priority costs; in addition a new lift is necessary at a cost of £100,000.

The Schedule of Condition identified £60,825 of repairs and refurbishments outstanding.

Total = £222,425

Will the lease be on a full repairing basis? If so will the building be put in good repair before the lease is signed?

Equipment

What equipment is available for use (to include computers, furniture, etc)?

Finance

The attached cash flow (Appendix 1), prepared in conjunction with Chris Chapman of the Easton Business Centre, shows a substantial deficit for the first year. We have calculated the minimum staff time required to return Easton to full community use.

Income is currently very low. There is potential to increase this but this will take time, consultations, publicity, health and safety, lettings policy, staffing would all need to be in place. Bookings outside of core hours will need to be underwritten initially and may not cover costs.

A further detailed audit (Appendix 2) has been made of all of the available spaces to let at Easton. This gives us potential values for each room and a more accurate assessment of potential long term income. The draft figures carry serious implications for the long term sustainability of Easton.

Any development of the space for community, social enterprise, and the voluntary sector would be limited by the current access problems and outstanding repairs; if this is not resolved the financial picture may well be worse than indicated.

We understand that there was some arrangement for the repayment to Bristol City Council for the centre building costs. What is the current status of this loan?

Security

The Security Systems at the centre are inadequate leaving the building vulnerable to vandalism and theft. Will this problem be solved prior to a new management group taking over?

UK Online Centre

The UK Online Centre is not included on the plan provided.