

PRESS RELEASE: Radstock Roads, Civic Buildings and the Future

ROAD PROPOSALS NEED A RETHINK - NOW

Radstock Action Group and supporters are continuing their campaign to find a better, more sustainable alternative to the road proposals agreed by B&NES cabinet last week. Though the attempt to get the decision called in was unsuccessful, it became clear during the week that an increasing number of people have reservations about the wisdom of constructing a road and changing the centre of the town when they are likely to lead to anything but regeneration.

We are appealing to B&NES to talk to the residents and traders of Radstock about finding a better way forward. It is not too late to reconsider. We are united by our wish to bring regeneration to the town and to retain its distinctive character - we are proud of its history, its prospects and its current town centre boasting a wide range of unusual shops, a museum and beautiful open spaces. Rather than destroying all this, we must build on it. We welcome all councillors to come and see for themselves just how much the town already has to offer.

VICTORIA HALL EVENT

***Saving the Victoria Hall* event opened by two experts on Historic Buildings**

On Saturday 21 January, 35+ people took part in Radstock Action Group's day of discussions on the topic of *Saving the Victoria Hall*.

Ian Lund, B&NES Historic Environment Team leader and Varian Tye, B&NES Senior Conservation Officer opened the event, with a presentation that focussed on understanding the significance of the building to the local community, and its physical condition, before formulating detailed proposals.

Variety of speakers set the scene for lively debate

Cllr Eleanor Jackson gave an overview of how earlier plans to safeguard the Victoria Hall had been put together and what had happened since people last gathered to discuss the future of this key civic building. She was followed by Chris Dando, the deputy chair of Radstock Town Council, who made lots of positive suggestions about ways of moving forward in the search for an acceptable solution to the problems faced. RAG Secretary, Amanda Leon, presented examples of how other local communities were in the process of breathing new life into precious old buildings with civic

roles and then people got down in earnest to discussing the next steps.

All the community groups, members of the public, and members of the Radstock Action Group agreed that the Victoria Hall should carry on functioning as a community resource, that the current users of the hall should be enabled to continue their activities and that there was a need to encourage others.

The dominant issue was how to stop the hall being boarded up and neglected when Radstock Town Council moves out at the end of February. At the very end of the meeting, an interim Management Group was created. It will be meeting this week, under the acting chairmanship of Rupert Bevan, to plan the next steps and put activities on a more formal footing.

The meeting also welcomed local MP Jacob Rees-Mogg who took time out from his Saturday schedule to drop into the event, catch up on the lively debate and pledge his support for efforts to save the Victoria Hall for the community.

People who couldn't make it on Saturday can still get involved - everyone will get a chance to take part in looking after the Victoria Hall and making it a landmark building to be even more proud of.