



Become a Patron of the New Druffitt Community Centre

We are inviting individuals and families with a close association to Christchurch to become patrons of the new building



In the very best traditions of local patronage, the development of the New Druit Community Centre provides a unique opportunity for individuals and families to become involved in supporting this new town centre building. Down through the centuries, people have sought ways to give something back to their local community through supporting local buildings and other initiatives. Such high profile opportunities rarely exist nowadays, but this project does provide an opportunity for individuals and families to demonstrate their commitment to the town of Christchurch by helping to support this Centre, which will provide a testimony to your generosity for many years to come.



For the benefit of all

The new Druit Community Centre has been designed as a landmark building for the benefit of all residents of Christchurch; from individuals dropping in for coffee or information, to local organisations needing a place to meet. It has been carefully designed to blend into the woodland setting of Druit Gardens. Unlike the existing Druit Hall, the intention is to create a 'hub' for organisations and activities, which will be open most of the day and evening. Given the extensive facilities, it will hopefully be used by many community groups across the age spectrum and furthermore, be a place where the different generations can interact with each other in an informal and attractive setting.

The ethos behind the fundraising campaign is to include all of the residents of Christchurch from the very youngest to the oldest. Accordingly, we will be planning many events targeting different sections of our community over the next 18 months. These will range from formal dinners to family fun days and much more in between. If you have any creative ideas for fundraising events we would love to hear from you.

The new community centre will become a landmark in the very heart of Christchurch and a fitting gateway to the newly restored Druit Gardens. As the town's principal community centre providing a hall, meeting rooms and café space, it will be an important focus for community celebration. It will bring people together through learning and support and serve each and every generation.



Who's behind the Fund ?

The Christchurch Community Partnership is a charitable network organisation involving statutory, business, voluntary organisations and lay people. The Partnership is already engaged in many community issues and activities. The Partnership chose this project for particular focus to demonstrate and celebrate the goodwill and generosity of the people of Christchurch and the power generated when diverse groups work together towards a common purpose.

The Old Drutt Hall

The existing Drutt Hall was built by what was then Hampshire Old Peoples' Welfare and Housing Society (subsequently known as Christchurch Old Peoples' Welfare and Housing Society, and now Christchurch Housing Society) in 1953 to commemorate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The builders were Bryant & Trowbridge whose MD was Stanley Kermode who had founded the Society in 1946. The construction, at the time cutting-edge, was of a prefabricated design invented by Stanley Kermode himself, to speedily provide mainly public buildings to meet the needs of communities after the Second World War.

The Hall was built within a period of only ten weeks from concept to completion! Hampshire County Council, the then stewards of the Drutt Gardens, leased the land to the Society and the cost of the building (£3000) was raised through a loan from Christchurch Borough Council, secured against some of the Society's properties. The loan was repaid within a period of seven years.

In 1955, the Society received a legacy from the late Alderman T H Markham, expressly to be used for "additional comforts and amenities for those old people who use the Drutt Hall". In early 1958, an extension to the Hall ("about 30ft by 16ft") was added at a cost of less than £800 and named, the Thomas Markham Room. Records indicate it was a much needed additional space and like the main hall was in almost constant use. Sadly the Thomas Markham Room was completely destroyed by arson on 11th August 2003.

The hall was provided as an 'Old Peoples' Club and Welfare Centre' and brought together many voluntary organisations, including the Society itself, The Blind Association, The British Red Cross Society, The Townswomen's Guild and The Women's Royal Voluntary Service amongst others. In addition to its fellowship, social and welfare activities, the hall also acted as a Lunch Club, a function it only ceased in 2005 after providing some 600,000 meals!

In many ways, the hall was a pioneer of the multi-use community hall concept, as it was made available at very low rates to hire to numerous local organisations and individuals for regular and one-off bookings. Today, it continues to be operated by the Christchurch Housing Society and continues to provide an admittedly somewhat dated but useful venue for many organisations and activities.

Whilst after some 55 years Christchurch Housing Society will be sad to lose its presence within the town centre, the Society is delighted that so many people have come together to work harmoniously to produce plans for a building which today's residents need and deserve.



The new Druitt Community Centre

A public meeting was held in November 2006 from which a Project Steering Board was formed to guide the design and development process. Steve Pennington of Quorum Architects has worked with the Steering Board to develop the new building's design, which finally received planning permission in August 2008.

The new Community Centre is a one and a half storey building with a gross internal ground floor area of 315 sq.m. The first floor is accommodated in the roof space, to minimise its height and visual impact, and provides a further 95 sq.m of accommodation. The ground floor comprises a main hall which will sit over 100 people and 2 meeting rooms which can accommodate 25 people and 20 people, respectively. These rooms will have a removable partition so that they can be combined into 1 larger meeting room, as and when needs arise. A central entrance foyer accommodates a cafeteria and provides a central focal point and public space, rising to the full height of the building and being overlooked by a 1st floor glazed gallery. Further meeting rooms will be accommodated at 1st floor level. Outside, a terrace and covered verandah provides more seating for the cafeteria and provides views over what will hopefully become a new and improved Druitt Gardens.

The location and orientation of the new building has been given careful consideration. It has been sited to minimise its impact on Druitt Gardens whilst maximising its accessibility from the adjacent public space of Bank Close car park. It has been orientated on an access so that when you enter the building from the car park and walk through the foyer the backdrop of Druitt Gardens opens up as you walk through onto the covered verandah.

The design of the building makes use of traditional building materials so as to fit in with the character of both Druitt Gardens and surrounding buildings. The main external walls will be constructed in facing brickwork with contrasting detailing through the use of string courses and terracotta panels. Cedar boarding, decorative mosaic panels, glazed entrances and canopies provide further contrasting details and help to break up the scale and mass of the building. Pitched roofs will be finished in natural slate with stone slate perimeter courses.

The old stone wall that provides the boundary to the car park is an historical feature and contributes towards the character of the area. Unfortunately, it is in a state of disrepair. As part of this project, it is proposed to rebuild the entire wall and incorporate part of it into the front elevation of the new building, thus fitting the old with the new.

The capital cost of building the new Community Centre is estimated to be around £1,000,000.

The building of the new Community Centre is closely linked to the wider improvement of Druitt Gardens. Over a similar period of time, the Council has been preparing a draft Landscape Master Plan for the Gardens, as a whole. The Council's consultant Landscape Architect, Hilary Martin of Integrated Design, has worked closely with Steve Pennington to ensure the proposals for both the new Community Centre and the improved Gardens fit well together. The Master Plan will be published for public consultation for a period of 6 weeks, commencing Monday 12th January 2009.



Druitt Gardens Landscape Master Plan

The evolution of the Master Plan has involved the preparation of several background studies including a Topographical Survey, a Tree Survey, an Ecological Survey and a desk-top Archaeological Assessment; and has been guided by the recently established Druitt Guardians Steering Board, a type of Friends Group.

The key proposals of the Master Plan include • The laying out of a new footpath network including shared surfaces for use by both pedestrians and cyclists • Felling 65 'unsafe' trees (includes new Community Centre site) but with the retention of some tree stumps to help with new habitat creation • Felling 25 other trees to achieve Master Plan objectives • Tree Surgery to 7 trees recommended for felling but to be retained for habitat and aesthetic reasons • The retention of 200 existing trees some of which may require tree surgery • Planting 86 new large native trees (4.5 – 6 m high at planting) • Planting 750 new native trees (40 – 80 cm high transplants) • Planting approx. 2000 new shrubs • Planting new Hawthorn based mixed native hedging to boundaries • Planting areas of new amenity grass and species rich grassland • New directional signage • The creation of focal points, gateway features and seating areas • The creation of a new lighting scheme to include bollard lighting, LED and feature lighting • The creation of interpretation panels and other features to tell the Druitt Gardens story • The creation of interpretation features to tell the historic story of the area • The creation of areas of public art and sculpture.

The form and layout of the Master Plan have been carefully conceived having been informed by the background studies. Recommendations from these studies have been used to identify the best location for establishing areas of native woodland, habitat retention and creation, areas of native scrub, shrub and hedge planting and areas of open grassland. While the principal access points into the Gardens are already well established, it is proposed to relocate the Wick Lane car park access to produce better views of the Priory when leaving the Gardens.

The preparation of the Master Plan is designed to make a significant improvement to the local environment and to the character of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The improvement of the Gardens will bring with it indirect economic benefits to adjacent businesses, improved pedestrian and cycling linkages, improved access and mobility in and around the Gardens, making them a more safer and pleasant place to visit. The creation of new improved habitat will increase bio-diversity while archaeological studies and investigations will help identify and interpret local history.

The capital cost of implementing the Landscape Master Plan is estimated to be around £500,000.

The physical implementation of commencing the improvements to Druitt Gardens is planned to commence in October 2009 with building works on the new Community Centre commencing a month later, in November 2009.

Copies of the Master Plan will be available to be viewed at the Civic Offices, Christchurch and Highcliffe Libraries and the Tourist Information Centre; and furthermore can be accessed via the internet on dorsetforyou.com