

## Report for Coalfield Area Committee – Strategic Initiative Budget

### **Heritage Resource Centre**

To date we have been working with the professional Heritage Interpreters and have paid them a commissioning invoice initially and then an invoice for research, site visits, meetings, interpretive and design planning and the production of a final report. As you are aware we had a huge archaeological interest in the community when the floor was excavated and the archaeology practice were in church for a number of weeks. Some of their findings will be exhibited in the Heritage Centre and to this end we used some of the money to fund the 'dig'. Altogether their fees for the watching brief and their archaeological investigations came to the sum of £21,000 where initially we budgeted for a mere £5,000 for this work to be carried out. The remainder of the interpretation and invoices that have been paid to date involve stage payments for the design and production of the displays.

We have been very successful in attracting funding from numerous Charitable Trusts for the whole re-ordering and restoration of the church. Included in this is a grant from Biffa who paid for the installation of the mezzanine floor and staircase. This will house some of the interpretation when it gets delivered. We have also been successful in drawing down community chest grants to help with the furnishings of the church. We are very pleased with the whole re-ordering and we are confident that the church will become a venue for many events and concerts in the future.

I cannot say at the moment what success the project has had as far as the interpretation is concerned as the bulk of the displays are being delivered on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> December and the remainder some time in January. It is not until everything is in place and the church open to the general public for viewing that we will be able to monitor the degree of success of the Heritage Resource Centre.

The future of the Heritage Resource Centre will be down to the church community. As a vibrant body of willing volunteers, plus volunteers from the community who are keen to play their part in order to staff the building, we are confident that this project will be a valuable community resource for the people of Houghton and beyond. We are aware that the staffing and opening hours will take some time to organise and that eventually, we will need to keep the displays and interactive material updated which would require additional funding from time to time. We have not at this stage contacted any further funding sources for continuing to support the ongoing life of the scheme. Any advice for future funding would be appreciated.

I anticipate that by the end of December when next I can submit a claim form, that all the funding will have been used up, as I am getting invoices all the time now for completed work and after Thursday there will be another batch of invoices coming in for payment early January.

Jean Henderson  
Director of Restoration and Re-ordering  
16.12.08.