

Vale of Usk RDP report Rogiet Community Junction (RCJ)

Rogiet Community Shop & Cafe

Our initial plan at the outset of the grant period was to have applied for capital funding by the end of the 12 months. Our timetable has been affected by the issues with Rogiet Community Council (RCC) (Sept to Jan) and Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) (Feb onwards) and COVID (March to present) which has delayed us considerably.

What we achieved

RIBA stage 0, 1, 2, 3. Feasibility to design.

We have drawn up the plans for the Rogiet Community shop and café and teaching kitchen. A regular customer constructed a 3D model from the plans so people could have a real sense of what it would look like. We have consulted with the community from idea to design using face to face meetings pre-COVID and our website and leaflets plus the 3D model which could be viewed. We have submitted to planning (DM/2020/01687). Decision expected by Jan 12th. This means we have completed up to stage 4 of the RIBA scheme. Our costs for this element of the project did go over due to us using the Pre Subs report to ensure our plans fitted with MCC/Welsh Government sustainability strategy which led to us needing a landscape architect. MCC increased the cost of planning by 20% in August. We had to pay the full cost of planning as RCC were not comfortable submitting on our behalf (which would have meant a 50% reduction.) These additional costs were covered by RCJ.

Further funding: We have submitted our application to People and Places for funding to complete Stage 4 (construction designs and build costs). We expect a decision by the end of January. This funding would enable us to progress to the next stage which is applying for capital funding. We will be seeking this from People & Places, The Community Facilities Programme and our own fundraising.

Lease for the land: RCC are drawing up a lease with MCC solicitor which will be activated if funding for the build is successful. They have offered us a no break 25 year lease rent free. We have managed to change the relationship with the community council for the benefit of all involved. This is in the light of the fact that in September they withdrew the land and it was only after long negotiations, patience and much explanation about what a community enterprise not for profit business model looked like that in January they agreed to the lease in principle and joined our steering group. Since then we have developed a much closer working relationship.

Trialling products: We had planned to run a series of pop up shops at the café from March through to June but COVID has prevented that. We did surveys at the design consultations with the architect in February (over a 100 people) and asked what would be the products they would most like to see in the shop. We then used online surveys to gain additional information about products. We also used our Cakeaway service (which ran from September until firebreak and is now closed again) to talk to people and get ideas. This also resulted in more offers of help with the project from decorating to graphic design, working in the shop, benefitting from the teaching kitchen, fundraising.

Thank you for the grant.

RCJ. December 2020