

## Todmorden Learning Centre & Community Hub

**Charitable community benefit society and centre of national importance, with local focus, use and benefit**



**Todmorden Learning Centre & Community Hub**

- **Unique in the UK; a Learning Centre & Community Hub with Office Space for Businesses, Courses on Natural Building, Agro Ecology, Art, Adult Ed & More....**
- **A Planet Friendly Resource with a Sustainable Future**
- **Charity Owned by its Members**
- **Hub that Maintains & Enhances Existing Services**

- **Centrally Located with Parking**
- **Fit for Purpose & Full of Flexible Use Spaces**
- **Disability Access - Lifts - Wide Corridors**

“If we had the community college in the hands of the community, we could dare to dream. The college could be the spark that fires up hope for bold actions.” Mary Clear, Incredible Edible

Our vision is to make Todmorden Community College into a member owned, sustainable hub; a multi-functional space for the purposes of education, business and the community with a USP that makes Todmorden unique in the UK, building on Incredible Edible with cutting edge courses on both natural building and Agro ecology with a research project funded by the Northern 8 Group of Universities, giving Todmorden and TLC a truly environmental purpose and vision.

TLC has a four-fold purpose; to encourage business enterprise, personal development and community engagement, in so doing enhancing the wellbeing and employment choices of its users. Central to our vision is the maintenance of the existing Children’s Centre and Youth Services in a thriving hub, whilst considering ways to support and develop their provision. The aims of each of TLC’s elements are:

1. **Education:** to provide a wide range of learning opportunities including those linked to recent cutting edge innovations in natural building and agro ecology. We will work with a range of education partners to support the development and delivery of an enhanced education offer that supports social inclusion, develops a range of skills, including employability skills and enables students to progress onto higher level provision, including

apprenticeships. The education offer will include Foundation English and Mathematics, ESOL, First Aid, Art and Ceramics, Cookery, Personal Development and Wellbeing and vocational qualifications such as Construction Trades, Counselling and Hairdressing. All of this will be under-pinned by working with leading education organisations, such as UCLan and the N8 University Group, to build an over-arching community based education institution.

**2. Business:** to nurture business enterprise by providing affordable rental opportunities of various sizes. The first floor is more suitable for smaller businesses, with co-working space and offices, and the ground floor workshop spaces are suited to larger enterprises requiring vehicle access. All businesses will benefit from the provision of Superfast fibre optic broadband.

**3. Community:** to provide space and opportunity for community based services and activities. TLC will act as a gateway for local residents to meet, converse, learn, be creative, artistic, innovative and energetic. Diverse activities under one roof, with a community café offering healthy refreshment, encourages multiple uptake of services such as the Children's Centre, Healthy Minds, Social Services and Todmorden Community Counselling together with learning opportunities on the courses and workshops offered.

**4. Town-centre continuity of vital public services:** to ensure the continuance and enhancement of services currently housed in Todmorden Community College. The Children's Centre, Youth Centre and Childcare Social Work Team are vital to Todmorden and are currently housed in a central and accessible setting. All alternative plans for housing these involve uncertainty in relation to their permanent or temporary re-location.

### **Benefits of TLC**

- Increase Todmorden's worldwide position as a place of unique green endeavours
- Increased skill levels in the workforce in order to achieve quality employment
- Increased employment for disadvantaged groups
- Increased attainment levels of young people
- Increasing the numbers of sustainable and new businesses
- Increasing the vibrancy of Todmorden town centre
- Help to reduce the differences in health, quality of life and economic prosperity within the town and Upper Calder Valley.

TLC is convinced that Todmorden Community College is a vital asset for Todmorden and is ripe for regeneration. Our conviction is that with effective planning, management and investment largely generated from space rental, TLC can become a business, education and community hub with transformative impact for the town and wider Calder Valley. The college used to be a vibrant, thriving hub at the heart of Todmorden.

“...I’d like to save the college and make the hall like it used to be. You could rent it out for weddings and parties to make money. Now our family weddings are outside the town in Bradford, Oldham or Burnley. We rented Burnley Football Club for over £5000 a day.”  
Former mayor, Abid Hussain.

CMBC is under great financial pressure but their asset review of November 2014 suggested that the college should be retained. To support TLC’s aim of delivering a suitably organised hub in which businesses, education and community services hire room space, seven well qualified and experienced individuals have committed to holding the position of TLC trustee:

Dr Robin Asby, Chair, former lecturer and school governor, Barbara Jones, founder School of Natural Building, Emma Leeming, Secretary, Marketing & Communications Lead, David Golding, former Vice Principal Stockport College, Dr Nick Green, founder Incredible Farm, Janet Peter, Treasurer and former Project Manager and Nina Stansfield, specialist in Public Law

Targeted market research, participation in local business network events and additional consultation with businesses has given TLC a clear understanding of the infrastructure needs for enhancing local business opportunities. What we repeatedly hear from all such research sources is that there’s a lack of affordable and accessible quality business units and office space in Todmorden.

Providers of community based services have again stressed the need for premises that are multi-functional, house a variety of services are socially inclusive. Those who have the most to gain by educational advancement are unable or unlikely to travel to Halifax, especially for evening courses. We have learned a great deal about the needs and views of local residents from the six public meetings, an Open Day, several fundraising and promotional events, and from direct communication by letter, email and residents’ engagement on social media sites. Broadly the message we hear is that there are many who would like to attend and utilise a variety of courses and events if available and promoted at TLC, and most would prefer services to be housed in Todmorden in this building. Such views have been linked to a number of features of the college building:

- Central location and good accessibility, including excellent disability access throughout
- Well known as a community building housing education courses and other services
- The only purpose built adult educational facility in Todmorden
- Good design and sound, built to last construction
- Well maintained as council maintenance schedules have been adhered to
- Definitely fit for our purposes

During the 6 months since TLC was constituted, significant interest and commitment for hire of space in the building has been gained from businesses, education, community and leisure service providers. To date there have been over a 100 expressions of interest for hire of

space from organisations and individuals. Of these 53 have given a firm commitment for rental of space, 16 for exclusive hire of space and 6 for co-working space.

In an era where we have come to realise the disastrous economic and social impact of exclusion and isolation from services and community, the potential for social inclusion and heightened community engagement is a powerful advantage of the TLC project. It is believed that co-location of services will enhance uptake and cohesion between them.

Stuart Honor, Director, The Basement Project says: "We know that social isolation is the biggest threat to individuals' health...What is required is a more balanced approach to the most vulnerable in society, with equal access to the services that maintain health. Local health centres (do not) fulfil this role, as in my experience such places are not welcoming of those with client groups like ours."

Careful costing and financial projections indicate that the TLC project is viable and growth producing. Current mayor Christine Potter agrees, "Saving the college is financially viable. There will be funding for training and apprenticeships...income from lets...Through a community share issue we could raise say £60,000 a year."

We are convinced we can attain year upon year growth in income to deliver our business, educational and community based objectives. Whilst we have raised over £5,000 in fundraising and membership since February 2017, there are planned start-up costs which would be required for TLC's phase 1 opening. These amount to £50,000 - £66,000 to cover:

- hall restoration to original size (enabling hire for larger and more lucrative events such as concerts and weddings)
- pop-up community café
- a new reception area
- installation of superfast fibre optic broadband.

Savings are anticipated to the cost of the above building work using our growing and committed team of volunteers who can be trained by School of Natural Building.

Despite projecting to break even within 1 year of opening, we will need some upfront capital to meet the start up expenditure requirements. We plan to gain this capital through:

- 1) community shares
- 2) grants
- 3) social enterprise loan

As detailed in the resources and financial assessment section, our legal structure offers an ideal platform to realise both income sources and an active fundraising committee has already been established.

TLC has undertaken a detailed risk assessment over each phase of the project. We have consulted with financial managers to gain a realistic appreciation of risks and their mitigation. In conclusion we believe that as is the case for all new ventures, there are some inherent risks, but that their alleviation can be adequately planned for and financed. Following professional assessment, our evaluation is that the overall risk associated with TLC is low.

We are ideally wishing for a freehold asset transfer to support our long term vision and commitment to TLC. However we would accept a 125year leasehold agreement from CMBC.

**Pam Warhurst, former CMBC Labour Lead and Incredible Edible Founder**

'To see so many talented and passionate people of Todmorden, come together and work as one for the benefit of the town provides a road map for how we all need to collaborate more if we are to live well and prosper in the future.

To those who have turned this collective vision into a compelling document and inspiring plan, we owe a huge debt of gratitude.'