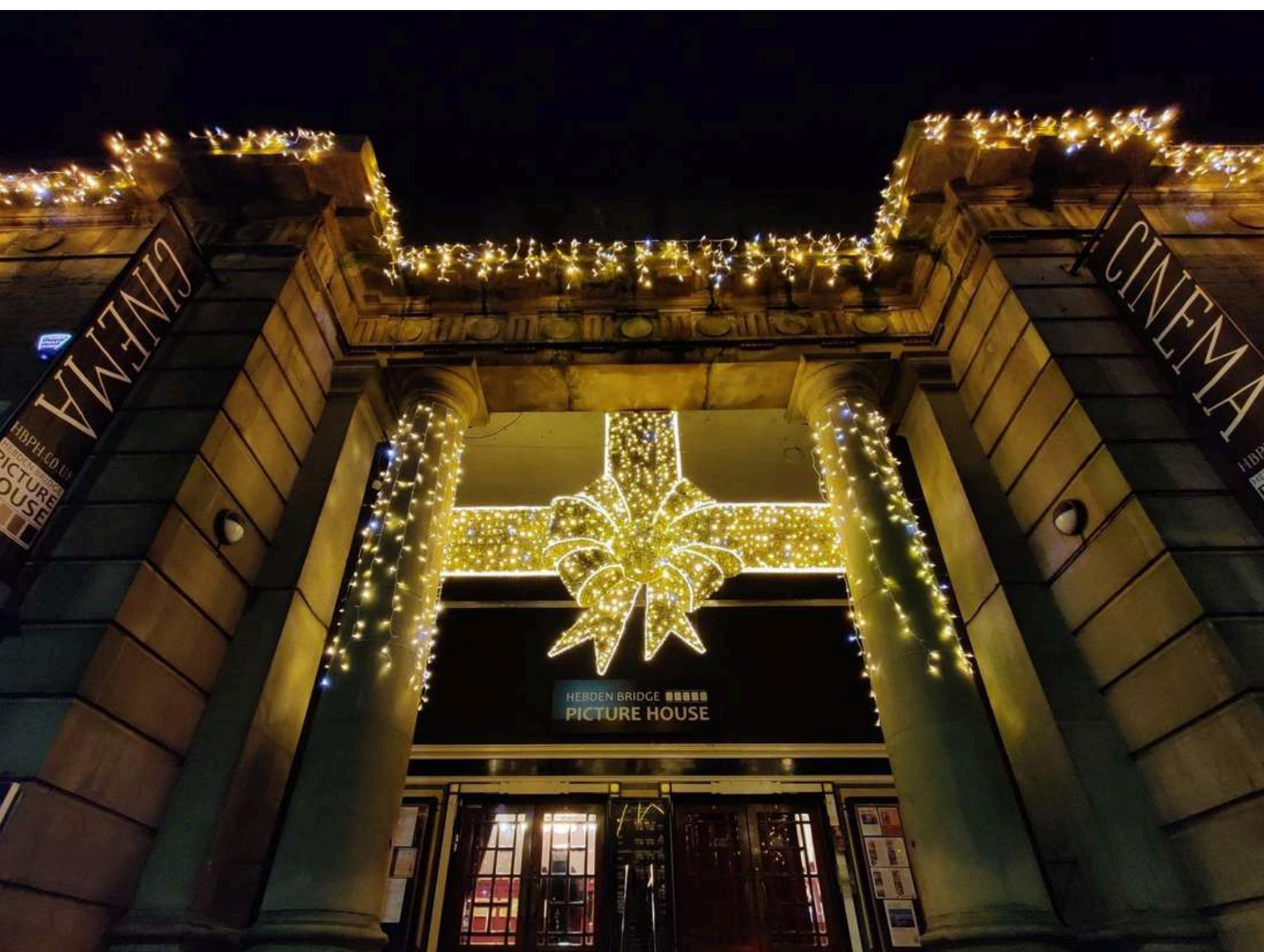


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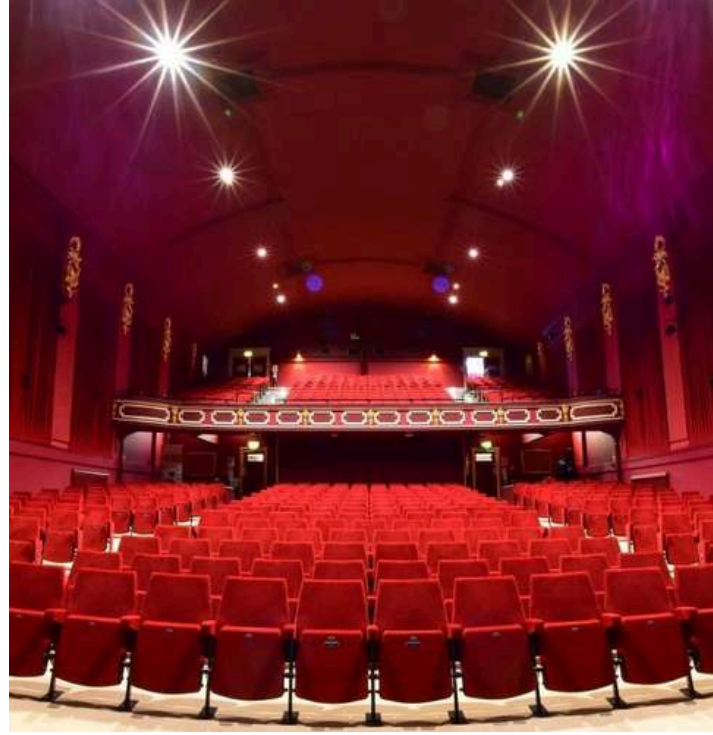
HEBDEN BRIDGE PICTURE HOUSE **PROJECT UPDATE**



PREPARED BY
Hebden Royd Town Council

Introduction

In 2023, Hebden Royd Town Council, proud owners of the Hebden Bridge Picture House (HBPH), began exploring the long-term sustainability and future of the not-for-profit cinema, which has served the community for over a century. The much-loved, single-screen venue faces a range of challenges - from adapting to the evolving demands of the modern cinema industry to ensuring the ongoing maintenance of this cherished cultural and community asset.



Executive Summary

- This report outlines the activities undertaken at Hebden Bridge Picture House during 2024-2025, focusing on the building's suitability for community use, infrastructure, accessibility, and associated services.
- The project began as an exploration into the feasibility of installing a second screen in the balcony area but evolved in response to community feedback, site assessments, and research into best practices within the independent cinema sector.
- The process has highlighted the need for a more holistic approach, examining not just the potential for a second screen but also the overall condition of the Picture House and its role as a cultural and community asset.
- Hebden Royd Town Council (HRTC) acknowledges the limitations of its capacity, budget, and scope but remains committed to ensuring the long-term viability and sustainability of HBPH as a valued public facility.
- The findings from this period of activity will guide the next steps, ensuring they align with community needs and stakeholder input.

Business Case

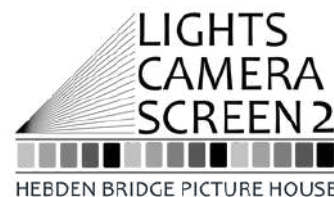
- The proposal for a second screen aims to enhance the Picture House's financial sustainability, programming flexibility, and audience experience.
- A second screen would allow for a broader selection of films, increased screening frequency, and more opportunities for community and private events without disrupting regular programming.
- This model is in line with recent renovations at independent cinemas such as Hyde Park Picture House, Ilkley Cinema, and Wetherby Cinema, demonstrating its viability for sustaining cultural venues.
- The project remains focused on balancing financial sustainability with preserving the cinema's historic character and community significance.

Lights, Camera, Screen 2 Consultation

Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement efforts targeted three key stakeholder groups:

- Hebden Bridge Disability Access Forum (HBDAF)
- Friends of the Picture House (FoPH)
- The wider public, including cinema-goers and other Hebden Royd residents



Hebden Bridge Disability Access Forum (HBDAF)

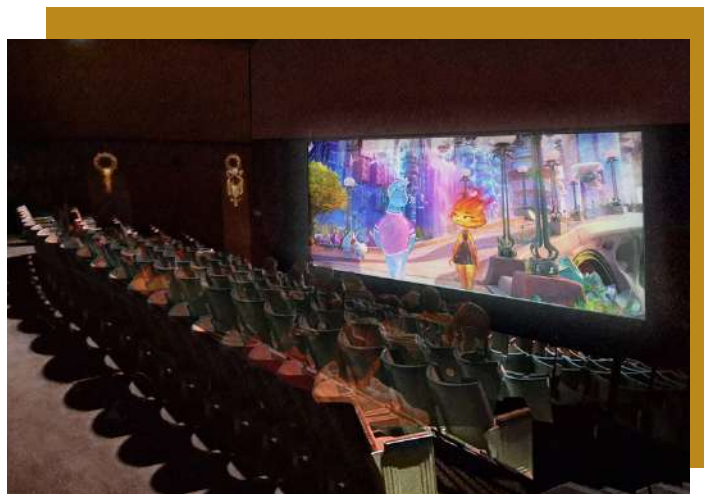
- In early 2024, HRTC conducted a focus group session with HBDAF to gather insight into the accessibility challenges at HBPH.
- Recognising that any renovation must prioritise inclusivity, this consultation aimed to understand the experiences of disabled visitors and identify improvements that could be made.
- The discussion took place at the cinema, ensuring a practical assessment of the space.
- HBDAF issued a report outlining actionable recommendations for both the current facilities and potential future renovations, helping to shape the direction of the project.

Friends of the Picture House (FoPH)

- On 20 November 2023, HRTC hosted an information evening with FoPH, the first stakeholder group to be consulted.
- The session included a welcome from the Chair of the Picture House Committee, a presentation by HRTC, and a Q&A session.
- Feedback from this event played a key role in shaping the public consultation, identifying key concerns and areas of interest for the wider community.



Consultation flyer with survey QR code



Artist illustration of the proposed second screen

Public Consultation

- A formal public consultation ran from 7 December 2023 to the end of April 2024.
 - Promotion efforts included coverage in local media (Valley Life Magazine), social media outreach, website updates, and in-person engagement at key screenings. Flyers were also distributed at locations such as Hebden Bridge Town Hall
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- The consultation was structured into three strands:
 - **An online survey and feedback inbox**
 - **Public presentation events**
 - **Direct engagement with visitors at the cinema**
 - While recognising that direct engagement largely captured the views of current cinema-goers, HRTC remains committed to expanding outreach to the wider community.
 - The public survey received 899 responses, with 66.5% of respondents supporting the introduction of a second screen, provided key aspects such as heritage preservation, atmosphere, and soundproofing were carefully considered.
 - Qualitative responses reinforced the importance of maintaining HBPH's unique character and high service standards.
 - The Hebden Bridge Pumpkin Trail introduced the idea of regenerating the Picture House to over 15.000 visitors as we started to consider outreach beyond the immediate community.



Foyer presentation



Flyer with survey QR code

Site Visits & Sector-Specific Research

- HRTC staff, including the Acting Clerk and Picture House Manager, conducted visits to three comparable independent cinemas in West Yorkshire:
 - **Ilkley Cinema**, which expanded in 2018 to include a 57-seat second screen.
 - **Hyde Park Picture House**, which underwent a major 2023 refurbishment supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, adding a 51-seat second screen.
 - **Wetherby Cinema**, which introduced a second screen with 32 seats following redevelopment in 2022.
- These visits provided valuable insights into renovation processes, challenges, and benefits.
- Discussions with cinema managers confirmed that second screens contributed to financial sustainability, improved audience experiences, and increased accessibility.
- Hyde Park Picture House's success in preserving its Grade II-listed features was particularly relevant to HRTC's approach.

Building Condition Surveys

- Two building condition surveys were conducted:
 - **An internal HRTC report** assessing the general state of the building, including service areas.
 - **A structural survey by DP Squared**, examining the feasibility of a second screen.
- The internal review highlighted significant wear and tear, particularly in staff and contractor areas, with issues such as water ingress, rotten timber, and outdated infrastructure requiring urgent attention.
- The structural report confirmed that while the balcony cantilever had experienced some movement over the years, the structure remained safe. However, additional supports would be necessary to accommodate a second screen.
- A conservation officer from **Calderdale Council** was also consulted to assess heritage implications.

Reconsiderations

- Findings from the consultation and surveys led to a broader reassessment of HBPH's needs.
- The HBDAF report, in particular, highlighted the importance of a wider accessibility review, shifting the project's focus beyond simply adding a second screen.
- As a result, HRTC began exploring opportunities for a more comprehensive redevelopment while preserving the venue's heritage. A number of architects visited the venue and provided quotes for concept drawings.
- **Page\Park Architects** were ultimately selected to help us understand the possibilities available to the building. Their specialism in conservation architecture and previous projects such as the Hyde Parke Picture House, along with their obvious passion for the Picture House made them an excellent fit with our own goals.

National Lottery Heritage Fund



- A key development was the decision to submit an Expression of Interest to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NLHF) to assess the feasibility of securing funding for a larger-scale project.
- DCA Consultants, who have a working relationship with Page\Park were brought onboard with their extensive knowledge of NLHF, they were able to take the previous work and develop this in to an Expression of Interest for the NLHF.
- On 4 February 2025, HRTC submitted an Expression of Interest to the NLHF, seeking guidance on whether a redevelopment project—including but not limited to a second screen—could be viable for funding.
- A positive response to the Expression of Interest was granted by NLHF and we now have approval to submit a Development Application.



Limitations and Considerations

- The engagement process thus far has primarily involved existing cinema audiences. HRTC acknowledges the need to extend consultation to a broader demographic to ensure that future plans reflect the wider community's needs.
- At this stage, the project remains exploratory. The Expression of Interest to NLHF is an initial step, and no firm decisions have been made regarding redevelopment.
- Any future work will be subject to funding availability and further consultation, ensuring that the Picture House remains a valued cultural and community asset.

Contact Information

For further information or enquiries, please contact:

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