

Observer Building, Hastings

Creative Digital Hub
Emily Berwyn, Meanwhile Space



meanwhile
SPACE

ECOSYSTEM organisations

Digital peer-peer sharing/open source philosophy

investors



*community engagement
and long-term owner*



project art works

inclusion partner



animator

L
&
L

developer



I A G

*independent
advisors*

builder



*co-housing
partner*

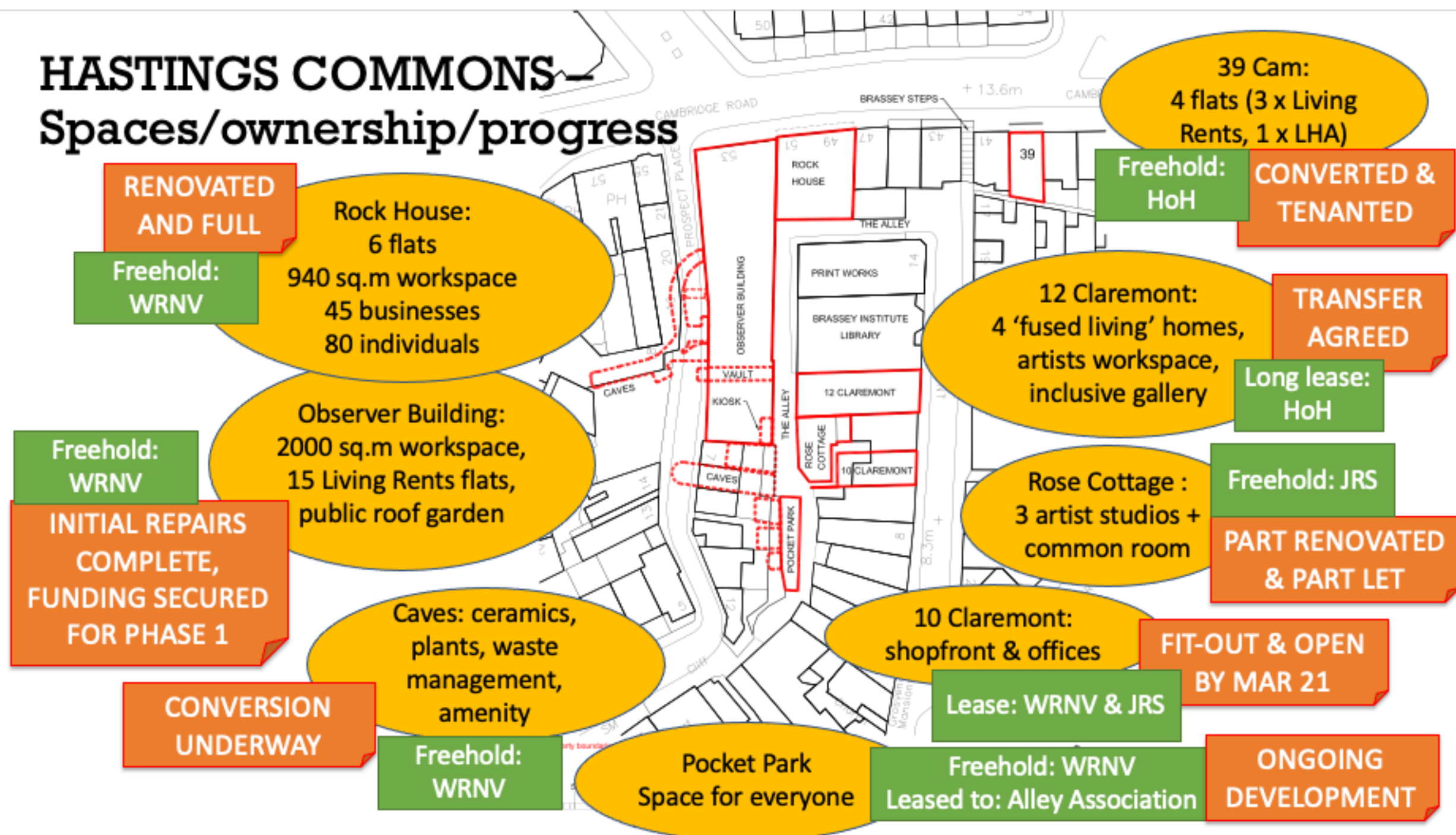
housing manager

Living Rents

***The organisations are the tools that
we use to achieve the shared vision***

HASTINGS COMMONS

Spaces/ownership/progress





Creative Digital Hub @ The Observer Building

- Has £717K allocated as part of Hastings Town Deal Fund for GF
- The team is currently developing the business case in partnership with Hastings Borough Council
- Project expected to commence delivery subject to approval by Summer 2022.
- Working with the phased organic development model proven to work at Rock House
- Including Meanwhile uses to test activities, refine business model and build networks



VIRTUAL REALITY

Hastings' leading virtual reality company,
creating ground-breaking immersive VR
experiences, from filmed & hybrid VR, to fully
CG virtual worlds.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED



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Why Digital?

- Digital is the new bridge to and between inspirational employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, everyday life management and enriching entertainment experiences.
- The sector can create quality employment opportunities in Hastings in desirable jobs.
- It can form a major tourist attractor to town and leisure experience for local people.
- It can also support the community to upskill and have the same access to opportunities and financial benefits that digital access unlocks.
- Situating this in a physical space at the heart of the Observer Building and the Hastings Commons will bring people together to work and socialise and catalyse the regeneration of the area.

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What is a Digital Hub?

- People's views vary widely – could be a workspace for digital businesses, VR lounge, makerspace, hackspace, gaming, bank of computers for community access.
- Process:
 - Engage and understand
 - Aspiration and inspiration
 - Viability and business case
- Vision:
 - Provide inspiration for tech and digital businesses, attracting them to the town through provision of equipment and infrastructure, creating a valuable asset and facility for the town.
 - Working from the ground up it will source young people with enthusiasm and talent to engage, co-deliver and grow the offer into an inspirational environment.
 - Support from industry leaders in the form of sponsorship, mentoring and training. This will provide learning and skills development as well as routes into employment within the sector.

Stakeholder engagement

- Kick-off workshop (September) to define what a CDH means
- Interviews with selected stakeholders (overview on next slide)
- Visioning workshop (November / January) to explore themes that have come forward from our research
- Reporting to OB Project Board
- Outcomes to form a strategic case for the CDH

Stakeholder engagement

Name	Organisation	Key take-aways
Jess Steele	Jericho Road Solutions	<p>Aspirations for the hub:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Framework for community engagement to facilitate the exchange of skills, interests and opportunities 2. Not to strictly define content but to creating a space to facilitate the growth and development of the digital industry 3. Maximise local assets and knowledge: large number of people who have experience working in the TV, film and music industry who currently are not getting involved in skill sharing locally
James Sharpe	DV8 college - Bexhill	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Game courses are the most popular and DV8 is looking to broaden their offering in the game courses to include coding, script-writing, voice-overs, managing and promoting 2. Significant increase in mental health issues and anxieties since COVID 3. Large number of digitally excluded young people who need to be provided with facilities, equipment and travel contributions 4. Lack of ambition and aspiration is a key factor in the transition from education to industry. Multiple generations of unemployment lead to a lack of ambition. 5. Key element of the hub is to provide young people in Hastings with role models, aspiration and a way for them to connect their learnings at college to industry jobs
Ben Dawson	Napster	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Digital Creative Hub as an experiential hub with an immersive structure; collection of digital experiences with a VR arcade in the middle; digital/physical hybrid incorporating physical structures and projection mapping that uses heritage as well as looks to the future. 2. A flexible space with different exhibits, open to bigger events or learning activities. Acts as an incubator for experiences that can then be toured off. 3. Industry led and acting as a tourist destination for Hastings
Simon Wilkinson	Circa 69 and BrightBlack	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong focus on the indie gaming, AR and VR technology 2. Emphasis on the hub element: creating a digital community to develop and share knowledge. Supporting talent to evolve into industries 3. Developing a framework for engagement and co-authorship. Grass-roots content creation. It's key to have minimal hierarchy and to feel welcoming and collaborative.
Shelley Feldman	HoH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mobile or satellite hubs to reach digitally and socially excluded in outer wards 2. Limited access to facilities is a key issue for those who are digitally excluded 3. It requires a long-term solution to resolve the issue around digital exclusion, those who already disconnected from their community, isolate themselves even further from new opportunities 4. (Affordable) Leisure and entertainment offer to draw people in for a fun day out. The space needs to be accessible and welcoming. 5. A pricing schedule offering very affordable rates to those who don't have a disposable income
Ian McInnes	Technology box	Participated in visioning workshop (15th Nov)
Andrew	Leisure and Learning	Participated in kick-off workshop (September) and visioning workshop (15th Nov)
Jay Simpson	WRNV administration and PA	Participated in kick-off workshop (September) and visioning workshop (15th Nov)
Adam Wide	Leisure, tourism and entertainment	Unable to attend visioning workshop. Outstanding invitation for interview.
Tor Evans	The Roundhouse, L&L trustee	unable to attend visioning workshop. Outstanding invitation for another visioning workshop in January
Sally Lampitt	Fat Tuesday	Pending invitation for interview

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Aspiration & Direction

We have identified 3 potential themes around which the Creative Digital Hub could focus, based on the engagement process, case studies and needs analysis:

- Leisure
 - Aspiration: Creating a cutting-edge, evolving, high-profile space that enables people in Hastings to experience the newest VR technologies, and attracts tourists and creatives to Hastings
- Talent
 - Aspiration: Providing an inspirational and aspirational space for (young) people in Hastings that opens up training and employment beyond formal learning institutions, and retains local talent
- Community
 - Aspiration: Developing a place that is accessible for all and can bridge the gap between digitally included and excluded

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Leisure

DESCRIPTION

Offering a day out and putting Hastings on the map through an entertainment offer

Digital entertainment, this could include:

- VR playground with team sports / playing games / e-games
- An immersive AR experience with projection mapping
- Beta-testing site for big tech companies
- Immersive entrance to draw people in
- Provide an outlet for local creatives and digital businesses to showcase their art / products

NEED

Diversify town centre offer, attracting different audiences, increasing visitor numbers and increasing footfall, dwell time and spend (TIP)

Boost tourist economy, which currently accounts for 22% of jobs in town

Celebrate local heritage (OB is a core project within Heritage Action Zone)

Support OB / neighbouring small retail and f&b businesses to start up and thrive by increasing footfall

Address lack of local visitor attractions (Visit England's only Hastings entries in its top 80 East Sussex visitor experiences are the town itself and the Country Park; compared to 15 in Eastbourne and 29 in Brighton)

DEMAND

Hastings population boosted on busy days in tourism season by up to 50%. A leisure attraction will extend visitor stay time and the season.

35,000 foreign students stay in Hastings each year

Covid has resulted in more staycations and a change to younger families and couples

3.8 million day trips to Hastings in 2019 (12% more than 2018)

Success of Wondergolf proved appetite for new, fun, locally-produced entertainment. Sold out.

Talent

DESCRIPTION

Collaborative user-organized and programmed space for 14 -24 year olds

This could include:

- an indie gaming hub / hackspace.
- Co-create digital content
- Sharing knowledge
- Areas for workshop / events.

Offers routes into employment, peer-to-peer learning, aspirational environment, industry links. Showcase for talent.

NEED

Need for better opportunities for young people: Hastings has a comparatively high unemployment rate and low job density, and an hourly rate in employment of 74% the South East average

29% of children in Castle Ward live in low income families

Claimant count Hastings 18-24 yrs is 10.1% (South East 4.9%)

University of Brighton withdrew from Hastings 2019

Centres for those seeking access to digital careers ./ further education currently Brighton (31 miles) or London (54 miles)

DEMAND

Source Park demonstrates the potential success of this type of subculture-led ecosystem of space, events and small businesses

There are 405 video game developers and publishers in the South East (Ukie). Gaming course at DV8 is over-subscribed.

The UK market for video games grew by 30% in the year from 2019, reaching a record £7bn

Creative sector (incl interactive, performing, visual and fine arts, gaming, digital, story-telling) employs approx. 800 Hastings residents across 260 organisations and accounts for 9.4% of Hastings businesses

New Ashford Film and TV studio opening in 2022

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Community

DESCRIPTION

Focus on improving wellbeing and economic opportunities of local community. Could include:

Training programs; self-taught software packages

Talks, events and workshops; clubs.

Access to digital equipment (high spec for creatives or basic for the digitally excluded).

Hirable events space.

Digital tools used to make creative / heritage community projects

NEED

Hastings is the 14th most deprived LA nationally;

Low level of qualifications compared to South East average.

7.2% claimant count (second highest rate in SELEP)

Multiple generations of unemployment in Hastings

High levels of digital poverty preventing engagement and access to services

DEMAND

Isolation Station Hastings proved desire to engage with creative digital media. Demonstrate appetite for community and leisure. [7000 people]

Creatives currently travelling out of Hastings for access to digital equipment and facilities – anticipate demand for local provision

There is a lack of access to IT which currently excludes people digitally (online banking, DWP benefit claims, applying for jobs)

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Impact comparison

	ASPIRATION			
	INNOVATIVE	INCLUSIVE	ATTRACTOR	OPPORTUNITIES
COMMUNITY	👍👍👍👍	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍	👍👍👍
TALENT	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍	👍👍👍	👍👍👍👍👍
LEISURE	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍👍	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍

	OUTPUTS								
	LEARNING / TRAINING	JOBS CREATED / SAFEGUARDED	ENTREPRENEURSHIP / BUSINESS GROWTH	DIGITAL INCLUSION	PRESENTATION OF HERITAGE	TOURISM / LOCAL ECONOMY	COMMUNITY / INTERACTION	WELLNESS	FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
COMMUNITY	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍	👍👍	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍👍	👍👍	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍👍👍👍	£
TALENT	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍👍	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍👍		👍👍👍	👍👍👍👍	👍👍	£££
LEISURE	👍👍	👍👍	👍👍	👍👍	👍	👍👍👍👍👍	👍👍	👍👍👍👍	£££££

OUTPUTS SUMMARY	
COMMUNITY	Strong on learning opportunities, equality of access, strengthening community and wellness
TALENT	Opportunities to learn, find pathways to employment and start businesses, and to collaborate and be inspired
LEISURE	Less social impact but strong on boosting tourism and bringing vibrancy to local area

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Key risks

LEISURE	
RISK	RAG
Not enough content yet	
Can't keep up with technological change; offer loses uniqueness	
Admission prices limit access	
Program doesn't have broad appeal, only used by young / male	
Links with cutting-edge companies don't materialise	
Training / educational opportunities sidelined; jobs mostly low-paid visitor experience	
Economic trickle-down effect doesn't materialise	
Boosting tourism industry has negative impact on residents	

TALENT	
RISK	RAG
Need expert guidance to build framework; may not be available	
Needs to be led by inspirational people; these may not be found	
If driven by a few people, can it be sustained if they leave / there is dispute with WRNV?	
Fails to find audience	
Narrow appeal	
Undefined business model, may not be financially stable	

COMMUNITY	
RISK	RAG
Funding cannot be found, financially unsustainable	
If relies on volunteering; insufficient committed	
Funding not sustained, equip cannot be maintained / updated	
Offer fails to excite; underused	
Offer fails to reach digitally excluded	
Vulnerable users difficult to incorporate alongside other uses (appropriate staffing / other users)	

Challenges:

Intimidating subject matter, language and costs

Breadth of community feedback

Understanding hardware requirements of each type of use

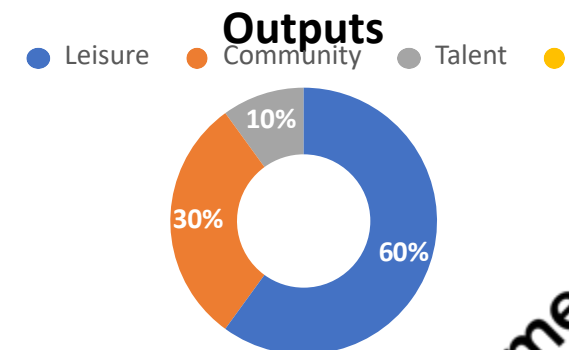
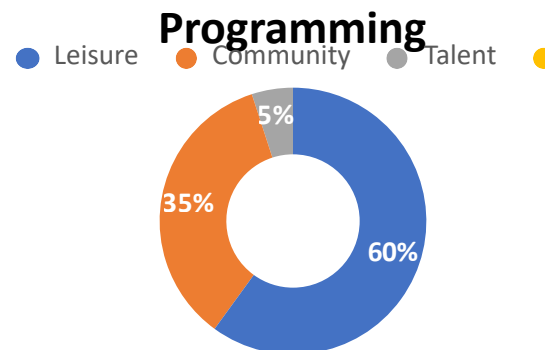
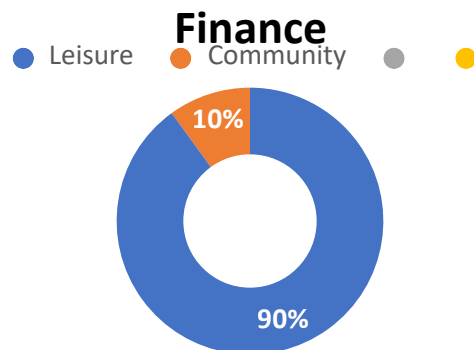
How to meet multiple needs

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Blended: Leisure-led

Leisure use offers strong financial viability but limited social impact. Any VR/AR/other experience is likely to need most or all of the larger GF space to achieve impact. There will also be a requirement for office and storage space, which could be the back room or elsewhere in the building.

- **COMMUNITY:** The space could be used flexibly – for example, weekday VR programming could focus on education and training; accessibility should be addressed. Alternatively, the back room / mezzanine could contain shared equipment or an education space for children inspired by the leisure offer
- **TALENT:** A room within the space could be created for a young people's lab (if sound travel avoided). There may be opportunities for local creation of some of the VR content; however software for this is not yet sufficiently developed.



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Opportunities

- Passionate community and Commons businesses to support delivery
- Phased development approach and Meanwhile uses allow flexibility to get it right
- Strategic lead recruiting now – programming social impact in from the start – apprentices, trainees, pathways to employment, intergenerational activities, educational opportunities.
- Through combining and juxtaposing these three themes, the social impact is amplified as new avenues are opened up, new people and opportunities encountered, and wider social gain generated by the building of connections and networks.
- The CDH will create jobs across all levels, establish training, mentoring and work experience opportunities; open up growth opportunities for small businesses; commission local artists; increase the earning potential of individuals; boost visitor numbers; present the value of Hastings heritage in a new way; develop corporate connections to the town, bring collaborative benefits; and generate positive PR for the town.

Next steps

- Input on business case for Towns Fund
- Space design
- Capex and operational budget
- Delivery and management plan
- Define outputs
- Identify partners
- Recommendation on governance structure
- Incorporate learnings from Digital Playground Jan-Jul 2022 and Digital Map Gaming Workshops Jun-Sept 2022