

CLITHEROE TOWN WELLS CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN



HEALD WELL



STOCK WELL



ST. MARY'S WELL

'To secure a meaningful and lasting future for all three of Clitheroe's Ancient former Public Town Wells'

Record of CTWCC Meeting with RVBC 3rd Feb 2025

1.0 Present: RVBC: Chair of Community Services Committee; Cllr. Stuart Hirst (SH); Director of Community Services; Adam Allen (AA); Mair Hill, Head of Legal and Democratic Services (MH) CTWSS: Chair, Steve Ragnall (SR); Secretary, Steve Burke (SB).

2.0 CTWCC Overview

2.1 SR outlined why these three ancient sites these of the most importance heritage assets in Clitheroe and the Ribble Valley. There are equivalent in significance to Clitheroe Castle. 'No Water – No Town!'

2.2 All present agreed that these three ancient Tudor enclosures are unique and Significant Assets to the Civil Parish of Clitheroe and the present District Borough of Ribble Valley.

2.3 The key issue to be resolved is to secure title over for all three wells. RVBC representatives neither agreed nor disagreed to this fact.

3.0 Benefits of a Community/Municipal cooperation:

3.1 SB referred to the 2014-17 Clitheroe Civic Society/RVBC Pinnacle Project as a 'template' for Community – Municipal action - a practical and successful example of what is possible from that Community/Municipal project.

3.2 All agreed - or did not disagree -to the success of that cooperative initiative.

3.3 SR/SB recommended this approach once more to secure a meaningful future for the Town Wells. This was noted , but neither accepted nor dismissed by RVBC representatives.

4.0 Registration of All Town Wells: 'How this can be done'

4.1 CTWCC proposed three options for the registration for the unadopted Wells were proposed for consideration, including:

- a) The legal completion of The Statement of Truth Document to HMRL 'Form ST3 Q2' signed by a RVBC a 'Legal Officer' (as for Stock Well). *A draft was handed to MH, or*
- b) As (a) but 'Form ST3 Q2' signed by the Secretary of CTWCC on behalf of RVBC, *A draught was handed to MH or*
- c) Some form of wording which does not offend officers' sensibilities about their Professional Code of Conduct but does support their commitment to Clitheroe Historic Heritage Assets as set out in RVBC adopted Core Strategy ENV5 and the CLITHEROE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL.
- d) An Adverse Possession Title applied for. Of these options SB commented this was the least favoured by CTWCC.

4.2 MH remained sceptical about any of these options and did not offer any other alternatives to these proposals. At SH's request she did agree to look into this option further.

4.3 SR reminded all present that without Title the Wells cannot legally be intrusively investigated or repaired, and Public Liability Insurance cannot be obtained for them. They will then, effectively be condemned to a slow and unworthy dilapidation – contra to RVBC’s staffed Core Strategy ENV 5 and the Clitheroe Conservation Area Appraisal 2006

4.4 MH referred to External Legal Opinion which supported/determined her recommendations. SB referred to previous request for this in CTWCC’s FOI enquiry (Ref: IC-145576-P8V7). This was not provided then and was requested once again to enable comparison with the Legal Opinion provided to CTWCC and the ICO’s statements on this. **SB requested, once again, that this information which has yet to be made public.**

5.0 CTWCC Proposed Action:

5.1 Stage One:

5.1.1 RVBC to agree to make valid and credible applications to HMLR for some form of Title for Heald & St. Mary’s Wells. This will still enable Grants to be applied for and insurance cover obtained for them.

5.1.2 If RVBC agrees to this - and prior to the outcome of HMLR’s decision - CTWCC will, in partnership with RVBC - agrees to prepare and make formal Grant enquiries immediately for **Stock Well**. These to all the major National and smaller regional funders for such Community-Based projects with identified Community ‘Outcomes’.

5.1.3 Such applications will require commitment for some match funding from the owners of a site or sites. For Stock well alone this will be RVBC.

5.1.4 There was complete agreement that RVBC will no longer exist as a Municipal Authority within the next two years or so. CTWCC proposed that to ensure local responsibility for the Town Wells some form of Charitable Building Preservation Trust will best be future Guardians of these sites. CTWCC will work with RVBC and other interested Community Groups to establish such a Trust.

5.2 Stage Two: HMLR grants title over Heald & St. Mary’s Wells to RVBC

5.2.1 CTWCC includes these sites in the Grant application process, Listed Building Application Process and project preparation process as set out in its Roadmap Document CSS No2

5.2.2 RVBC, CTWCC and other interested Community Groups to establish some form of Charitable Building Preservation Trust.

5.3 Stage Two: HMLR refuses to grant title over Heald & St. Mary’s Wells to RVBC

5.3.1 CTWCC will with others continue to work with others to secure a lasting future for Stock Well as enabled by access to any and all available funding and the establishment of some form of Charitable Building Preservation Trust.

5.3.2 CTWCC will continue to explore such limited options as may be available to the two Town Well sites that do not have the benefit of Titles.

RVBC representatives acknowledged these proposals but did not commit to any. SB & SR requested that they do so being the only credible and viable future for the Town Wells.

6.0 RVBC Proposed Action

6.1 AA indicated that RVBC were about to invite applications for funding to enable interested community organisations viz. The Town Team, Clitheroe Civic Society, The Clitheroe Chamber of Trade & Commerce etc. This to encourage the use and promotion of these ancient sites.

6.2 SR & SB, noted this and requested applications forms for a grant to assist promote this Campaign. However, on the information available, they did not accept that this would do anything to promote **a lasting and meaningful future** for the Town Wells. Given the ever-deteriorating condition of all three sites (*including Stock Well which has had no repair works since being adopted by RVBC in 2019*).

6.3 CTWCC's opinion of such action is that significant additional Public use of these sites, in their present dilapidated condition. will only

a) add to their deterioration

b) potentially expose the Public to Risk and

c) be a diversion from the most pressing action to secure a future for the Town Wells – to obtain Registered Titles for all.

SR & SB thanked SH, A.A and MH for the time spent with them and the open discussions which had taken place. CTWCC looks forward to receiving the responses set out above and any other comments on this record from those present.

AA thanked SB for the complimentary copies of Andy Bowes' book 'Reflections on the Water' and SB's loaned personal copy of the 'Pinnacle Project Book'.

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CTWCC Conclusions

The Clock is ticking for both RVBC and our ancient Town Wells.

RVBC is fully aware of the significance of these sites. Legal & Democratic Services Dept should now be both encouraged and prepared to accept this significance, overcome unsubstantiated reservations and make further valid and legal Registered Title applications. This can be done in full accord with HMLR recent

Guidance ^{*} and this Campaign's substantiated Legal Opinion.

CTWCC looked forward to receiving the outcome of the review by MH as to how this can be achieved rather than why it shouldn't.

CTWCC will continue to lobby Clitheroe and Ribble Valley Councillors for this more positive approach and outcome.

Fin

^{*} www.gov.uk/government/publications/first-registration-of-title-where-deeds-have-been-lost-or-destroyed/practice-guide-2-first-registration-of-title-if-deeds-are-lost-or-destroyed

Clitheroe Town Wells Conservation Campaign

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