

## Rowntree Park Café – Project update April 2012



### **Background:**

Rowntree Park is York's premier park and has held Green Flag status since 2004. The café, located in the lodge building, was brought back into use as part of the HLF funded scheme in 2003 and is an important amenity of the park. It has been operated by private operators under lease agreements but has never achieved its full potential. In recent times it has been the subject of customer and member complaints. Furthermore, the condition of the decor, equipment, fixtures and fittings has deteriorated to the extent that major investment is now required if it is to continue in use. The agreement with the last operator was terminated in order to facilitate a new approach to use of the facility.

The aspiration to improve the café facilities by the Park's team and the Friends of Rowntree Park, have ignited a partnership with the library service to come up with a unique concept of a reading café. The vision for the reading café will include:

- Welcoming and friendly atmosphere
- High quality café and function room
- Venue which offers reading, borrowing and learning opportunities
- Free Wi-Fi
- Programme of activities and events that bring the venue alive

The Library service already run two successful catering outlets within Explore centres and have the ability and resources to provide a professional café service.

The lodge has a fantastic elevated view of the lake and park. The café balcony offers a unique place to unwind, enjoy a good book or just enjoy the view, whilst sampling the café's food and drink. This is definitely the café's USP.

### **The business case:**

To enable the Library service to refurbish and launch a reading café in the park, a level of investment is required to make the alterations to ensure the building is fit for purpose. A capital loan has been secured by the Library service that will make the investment and operate the reading cafe with the profits repaying the capital loan.

### **Customer demand and footfall of the park**

As York's premier park, the facilities on offer are extensive; children's playgrounds, tennis courts, bowling greens, basketball court, skateboarding area, lake, event spaces and general areas for picnicking. These facilities bring a whole range of visitor groups into the park from teenagers to sports teams.

There are many strengths and opportunities in attracting people into the park including:

- Millennium Bridge and National Cycle Network
- Neighbouring caravan site which is 100% occupied 90% of the year, which presents an ideal market of approximately 250 people. The caravan site is interested in a recommendation scheme to the reading café.
- The children's playground attracts an average of between 50 visitors an hour, up to 250 at weekends.
- The park hosts numerous family and sporting events and festivals which provide approximately 20,000 to 30,000 visitors over the year. For example, last year's annual summer fair attracted over 5,000 visitors in one afternoon.
- The Friends of Rowntree Park are going to be a key group to work with to develop programmes of activity for their members.
- The park is ideally situated next to a large residential area and provides a pleasant commuting route for many residents on a daily basis.
- Sports clubs which practise and compete include tennis, running and model boat clubs.

The park's actual footfall is unknown, but an estimation just made from visitors to the children's playground would be in excess of ½ million visitors a year.

### **Refurbishment**

Property services have assessed the current condition of the café building and made recommendations on the level of refurbishment needed. An accessibility report was also carried out and detailed alterations required making sure the café was accessible to all residents and meets DDA regulations.

The assessment has concluded that the following works are required:

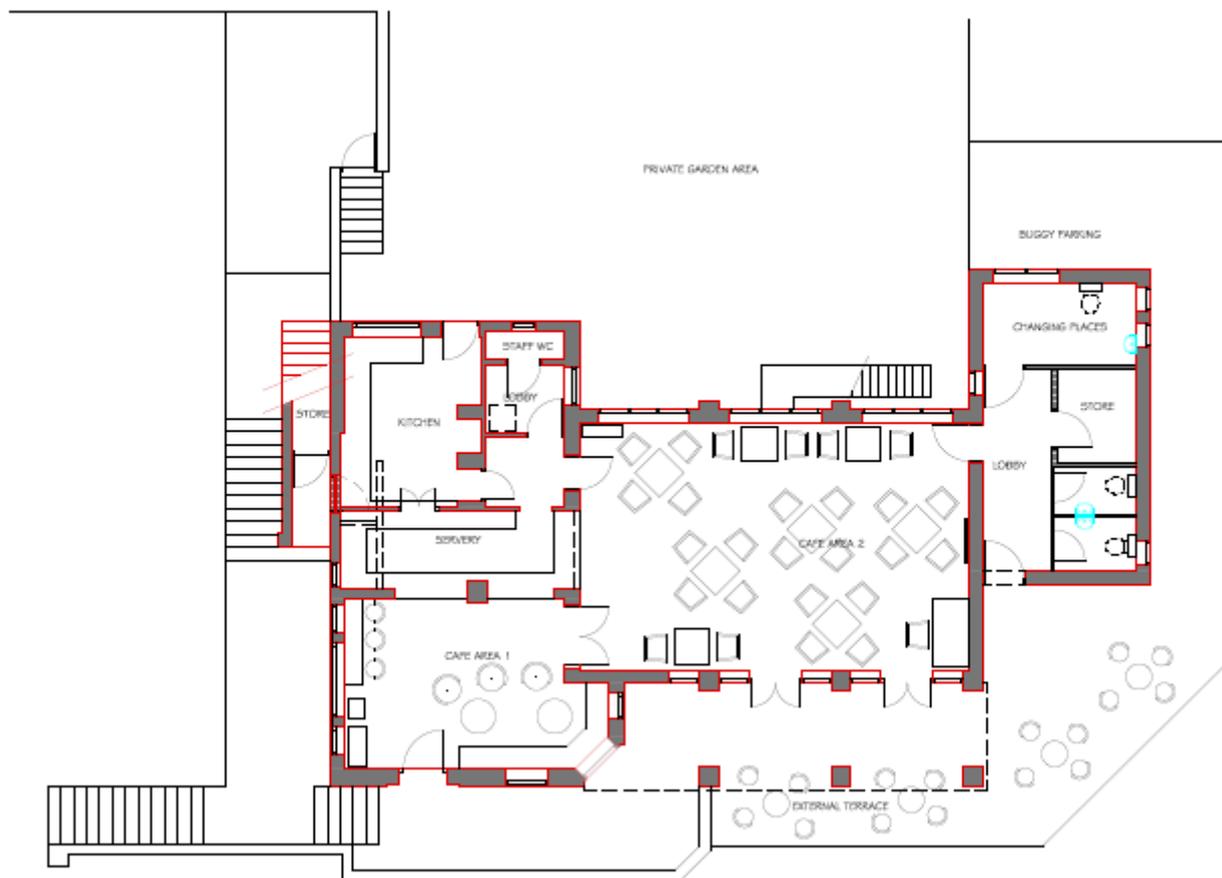
- New kitchen – completely strip out old and replace floor, ceiling and wall finishes
- All floor surfaces to be replaced or refurbished throughout building
- Some ceiling improvements including soundproofing in areas
- Internal and external doors replaced to meet DDA
- Toilet area changed to reflect DDA requirements
- Heating system installed
- Services upgraded as required

- Improvements to security and fire alarm systems
- Decoration throughout
- External stair wells repaired and hand rails installed
- External bin store required

In addition to the above the project team have also identified a number of specific alterations which are essential to deliver the reading café and additional library functions:

- All operational café equipment (Kitchen appliances, coffee machine, furniture etc)
- Installation of fibre network to provide Wi-Fi in the café, CYC network for library self issue machine
- Create covered outdoor seating on the terrace
- New external access to toilet facilities to increase flexibility of venue
- Layout change to kitchen to increase size of the front servery

Diagram 1- the proposed refurbishment plans described above. This is still subject to further design and development.



### Project timescales

The aim is to get the cafe refurbished and back in operation by the start of summer 2012, however until a contractor is appointed it is uncertain whether this is feasible. Over the next few months there is a range of work which needs to take place:

Works complete to date:

- Architect has designed the main building alterations

- Construction specification written and put out to tender
- Brand and menu design
- Kitchen and interior design
- Main maple wood hard floor refurbished

May 2012

- Tender evaluations and appoint building contractor
- Building work to commence on site

June 2012

- Building work to continue
- IT installations

July 2012

- Kitchen fit out
- Loose furnishing and equipment installed
- Library elements fitted
- Staff recruitment and training

The launch will be well publicised and the new reading cafe will be marketed throughout York.