

Milton Rooms Business Plan2021-2023

Plus remaining money from £193k Grant and £307k ring fenced Capital Bid

Executive Summary

This Business Plan has been developed to provide a strategic framework for the Milton Rooms proposed development over the next 1-3 years. It incorporates plans to develop and improve the governance, arts and community programming and capital improvements to the building. The Milton Rooms charity is committed to providing a quality arts and community hub for Ryedale.

Covid-19:

It should be noted that the COVID -19 pandemic has and continues to impact the Milton Rooms. Trustees are monitoring the situation constantly and are working to ensure a manageable and sustainable programme which is flexible to changing restrictions and associated national or local guidance.

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1. The Milton Rooms Vision:

Malton and its surrounding areas are growing exponentially in terms of housing development and social demographics. It is even more important that we recognise the status of the Milton Rooms as a community and arts facility which is a great asset to the prosperity of the local population in terms of restaurants, public houses and hotels. We intend to become the cultural heart of Malton and Ryedale. Working are with other community centres to offer a varied programme of arts events. We have worked closely with the Fitzwilliam Estate to enhance their vision of making Malton a centre for the arts, visual and written, with the possible development of a festival weekend. We have a firm and positive working relation with the Museum developing ideas for exhibitions of local history. We have reached out to and are working with local schools offering the Milton Rooms to support volunteering activities for “Duke of Edinburgh”. Also there would be the possibility of supporting Units within the BTEC Production Arts courses. All to encourage the next generation to support their community amenity.

Our revised vision focuses on the refurbishment and moderation programme which is urgently required to improve the facilities that can be offered to the area of Ryedale as a hub for performing and visual arts with the ambition and potential to attract performers and audiences to enjoy high quality events; also to provide facilities for local organisations for meetings, conferences, workshops etc.

As requested by the working party the Studio Bar will be opening as a separate revenue stream. Future possibilities are also being considered where we could extend our opening hours to offer refreshments to those shopping in the town.

If the Milton Rooms is going to thrive then now is the time to use the enthusiasm of a new board of trustees and energy new volunteers. Strike while the iron is hot to make this venue one to be proud of.

2. Governance and Organisation:

During mid-2020 the Milton Rooms went through a significant managerial restructure of the trustees and its chair which has led to a refocusing of the organisation’s vision. Even though it is a charity it should be managed and run on a business footing.

During 2021, Covid-19 has had a limiting effect on the Venue Manager’s capabilities to move the Milton Rooms forward in terms of revenue streaming but the post has proved invaluable when considering the restraints and legislation required for when the venue can again operate at full capacity. Along with every other Arts Venue and theatre in the land we wait for when we can run at full capacity.

The trustees acknowledge the recommendations made in the Milton Rooms Working Party Report and have incorporated these into the business plan. During these unprecedented Covid-19 times it is becoming more evident that the Arts and cultural venues are more important than ever for the well-being and mental health of our community.

2021-2023

Governance area	Objectives
Board of Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We have increased trustee board numbers with new trustees bringing specific expertise in areas such as finance, inclusive arts, theatre, technical theatre expertise, marketing, social media and website building
Volunteer development and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recruit more volunteers and develop the volunteer communityDevelop volunteer policiesEstablish regular volunteer/trustee meetings at the venueContinued recognition and support for the existing and new volunteers who have worked so hard to support the Milton Rooms
Milton Rooms Membership Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Revise the Milton Rooms membership programme and develop a ‘friends’ group’
Malton Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We have mutually agreed on the outstanding tenancy issue for the Subscription RoomsWe have collaborated on programming museum activity and events in other spaces in the Milton Rooms.Explore options for a joint funding bid for collaborative heritage project
RDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continued to liaise with Ryedale District Council (RDC) and work together to develop opportunities and programming for the site.

3. Partnerships

The Milton Rooms have a renewed commitment to develop working partnerships with other cultural and arts providers in Ryedale and beyond as well as working with local businesses and community groups. Our objective is to make the Milton Rooms inclusive and accessible to all.

Partnerships opportunities are already being explored with organisations in Ryedale and beyond; including increased collaborative work with Malton Museum.

2021-2023

Area	Objectives
Arts and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities and collaborations with organisations in Ryedale and beyond including Helmsley Art Centre, Pocklington Arts Centre, Pickering Memorial Hall, The Wesley Centre, York Theatre Royal and SJT Scarborough, The Picturedrome Holmfirth and charitable organisations including “Musical Memories” and Malton Museum. Joined the Small Venues Network; a partnership of mostly Yorkshire-based arts venues which share news and support joint programming.
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborated with local schools who offer media and performing arts on their curriculum enabling students to practice and gain accreditation for units studied in the classroom giving them vocational experience.
Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of community groups using the site. Provide space for and develop revenue from business events and conferencing

4. Main Facilities:

The trustees intend to develop the opportunities for use of the different spaces with the building; including greater promotion of the rooms available for hire.

Room	Capacity	Features
Main Hall	Max 300 (theatre style) 60/70 under Covid-19 secure guidelines	Hall with stage
Assembly Rooms	80. 30 under Covid-19	Multipurpose hall space
Subscription Rooms	N/A	The subscriptions rooms are currently occupied by Malton Museum.
Bar	Closed to public – Table service only at this time in Main Hall – (Cabaret Style)	Small bar with seating and adjacent kitchen. Also used for micro performances.

The Assembly Rooms have recently been revamped and the trustees aim to capitalise on this addition to the available room hire over this business plan period (indeed, we do now have our first wedding booking in August). As well as being suitable for workshops, lectures and performances, this space could include events such as weddings, christenings, birthdays and wakes.

5. Programming:

The trustees and the Venues Manager have created a marketing group who are keen to develop a vibrant arts programme for the Milton Rooms, maximising the full potential of what the venue has to offer and providing a rich and vibrant programme for the public to enjoy.

Some successful community programming has taken place already and meetings and discussions are underway with performers, stage acts and various arts development professionals.

Successful events took place from September 2020:-

- September 2020 – Musical Memories, Blues Club, Three Men In a Boat
- October 2020 - Musical Memories x 2, Taphouse Burnout, Blues Club
- November 2020 – COVID Closed
- December 2020 - Taphouse Burnout, Dickens Christmas, children's Christmas show Magical Quest
- January, February, March, April 2021 – COVID Closed
- May 2021 – Martin Gough, Dickens Flowers, Blues Club, Mandy Muden
- June 2021 – Charity Event, Taphouse Burnout, Hilarity Bites comedy club, Kick in the Head - theatre production, Blues Club

All took place within the Covid-19 safe guidelines.

2021-2023 plans include:

- Continue to provide the traditional and successful acts that have worked in the past.
- Develop a programme of at least 3 x new types of acts/events each year:
- Develop the marketing of the programming with proactive and consistent publicity
- Initiate and consistently evaluate programming; collate the feedback to inform future programmes and ensure the Milton Rooms can be responsive to visitor comments, suggestions and complaints.

A Sample of audience feedback comments:-

- A – Wonderful evening, great venue
- B- Fantastic night, volunteers at the venue are exceptional
- C – Wonderful atmosphere, great music, bar was well organised with table service
- D – Fantastic to be back out, volunteers were brilliant
- E – Brilliantly organised, table service very attentive
- F – Venue very COVID safe, volunteers helpful and friendly
- G – Great to be out after a year
- H – A very safe evening, sound needs working on

Taken from 30 feedback forms from various events: - Out of 150

How did you rate the event /5	How did you rate the venue /5	How did you rate the performance /5
148	147	147

6. Beyond Covid-19 - 2023:

Similar to all other venues and community centres 2020/21 has been a difficult year for the Milton Rooms due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the subsequent government orders to close and limited numbers due to social distancing when allowed to open.

However, we are pleased to report we have a new enhanced board of trustees with more valuable business as well as relevant theatrical experience, and a venue Manager now complements the team.

The fresh approach and enthusiasm from the trustees as well as a warm welcome to all enquiries has also resulted in an increase in new volunteers, including people with useful skills in design and marketing.

Periods of lockdown have been actively spent updating all H&S and Safeguarding policies as well as general maintenance, decorating and cleaning of the venue. Having achieved the 'Visit Britain We're Good to Go' Industry Standard we continued to monitor and update our Covid-19 risk assessments so that we were ready to open as soon as restrictions allowed.

The performances and events we have held were successful and received very positive feedback from the public that attended. (See comments above)

During periods that venues were allowed to open, the Milton Rooms was able, due to its size to offer space to local community groups who otherwise would not have been able to meet under the social distancing restrictions. These included Kirkham Henry Performing Arts Centre who used the venue as a second campus to enable their children's classes to be taught, Swinton brass band, Yoga classes plus RDC full council meetings, the Museum AGM and the Malton and Norton Lions meeting.

Our main achievement this year was that the trustees vision and plans for the venue, as well as our 'can do attitude' instilled enough confidence in the officers and members of Ryedale District Council who awarded the Milton Rooms a grant of £193,000, plus a further ring fenced £307, 000 for a programme of refurbishment, renovation and enhancement works.

Plans for the future

Agreed £193k Grant from RDC: breakdown of intent:

From our changed bid put forward to P&R in September 2020 which was heard in February 2021 we would wish to start our first phase of works that will include a complete renovation of both the main hall and the Studio Bar toilet facilities. A new lift will be installed in the foyer to allow access to a unisex disabled toilet with baby changing facilities. The kitchen will be upgraded to allow outside caterers a useable space to cater for functions. The Studio bar will be enhanced to allow it to open independently of any performance and thereby supply another revenue stream. The total sum from the £193k bid would be £136,450.92 which includes a contingency for £8,245.00. We have included a contingency which we feel is essential and forward thinking when taking on any works dealing with

plumbing and electrics in an old building. This contingency will also be used to cover the rising prices of materials due to the protracted time between applying for the grant in September 2020 and now. It would be short sighted of us not to do so.

- The £56,545.29 is left from the £193k grant represents our second phase of our first bid. This would include the technical infrastructure to be put in place to allow the upgrade of the sound and lighting systems. Also within this money new security grills would be purchased making the bar a secure area, new flooring in the Ladies Powder Room to match the flooring in the unisex disabled toilets and the ladies toilets plus the decorating of the Green Room and stairwell outside the Assembly Rooms as these two areas are too high for volunteers to undertake.

The Importance of the Infrastructure:-

The technology with reference to the lighting and sound is out dated throughout the Milton Rooms, Studio Bar and the Assembly Rooms. The infrastructure is part analogue and part digital and the electrics supporting the lighting and sound although safe to operate at the moment would not under current regulations allow for any further alterations or additions as certification would not be given. We have three electricians and two theatre technical companies who have verified this. Therefore it is now a major priority that the whole infrastructure be refurbished and replaced securing at least a further 30years before revisiting this area of the Milton Rooms. This would allow for the state of the arts equipment to be put in place with our second bid of £307k ring fenced money. There is little point in ploughing ahead with our original bid if this means we cannot meaningfully use the £307K ring fenced money in terms of best value for money.

Bar Security Grills (addition as present grills are not secure)	£2,125.00	Our vision for the initial £193k has changed because of the extra £307k ring fenced money. We are pleased that the unchanged refurbishment grant money has been approved subject to the legal agreement. Here is how we propose to use the remaining £56,436.69 money from the £193k grant. We sincerely hope that our explanation for changing some of our priorities will be understood by the members of P&R when it is presented at the next meeting which would allow us to start work henceforth as the cost of materials are forever going up.
Infrastructure/Refurbishment for digital LED Lighting and Sound Line Array system, Wi-Fi plus infer-red hearing loop, rewiring through out the building to reach present day electric regulations for certification for lighting and sound. Equipment to be installed in phase 2 using £307,000 ring fenced money	£46,875.00	
Ladies Powder Room to enhance the entrance to the Ladies and Disabled toilet with non slip flooring	£3,813.60	
Decorate Green Room & Stairwell	£3,622.69	
Total request of from £193k agreed grant	£56,436.29	

The money from the £193k would complete the refurbishment of the toilet areas, unisex disabled toilet, disabled lift and accessible toilets in the bar area making the Milton Rooms accessible to all. It also includes the refurbishment of the bar, bar kitchen, Green Room and stairwell decoration. Thus making the bar a viable revenue stream for the Milton Rooms to open independently from the main hall.

Hopefully with the RDC approving the remaining money from the £193k grant and the £307k ring fenced bid we would use that success to bid for national grant funding to complete our vision for the Milton rooms.

National Grant funding for £500,000: breakdown of intent:-

We intend to seek national funding to extend the lighting system within the Milton Rooms and to include the exterior which will make the drab corner of the market place into a stunning attraction. This would enable the building to change colour, e.g. blue for the NHS or offering the facility for a “Son et Lumiere” for the Museum to depict historical exhibitions of the town by using a state of the art data projector to project on the building itself. This idea has been endorsed by the Fitzwilliam Estate during one of our site meetings with then this year. The projector would be used inside to decrease the use of fixed scenery for theatrical productions.

Our vision in this phase extends to glazing between the front pillars and fixing behind the glass interactive TV screens to advertise local Ryedale events on one and forthcoming events at the Milton Rooms on the other. With no tourist information office in Malton this would be a further community asset we could offer. Retractable seating would give the main hall the flexibility to have performances in the round, avenue or thrust which would link with new square lighting rig installed within the £307k bid.

The End Game:-

All three bids have been meticulously thought through to create a jigsaw puzzle that when fitted together would create a fantastic Arts and Community Venue worthy of the North East and beyond all set in Ryedale. The spin off for the local economy would be a well-deserved boost after a fraught couple of years with COVID restrictions. Restaurants would benefit from meal bookings prior to shows and hotels for people seeking weekend breaks away with entertainment on their doorsteps.

It will work if RDC members and officers have faith in this new and visionary board of trustees and has the foresight to leave a truly stunning legacy for future generations.

The aim of all the planned renovations and refurbishments is to upgrade the Milton Rooms into a sustainable business, fit for purpose in the 21st century as a community venue for Malton and the whole of Ryedale. We will offer a wide and diverse programme to suit all ages and tastes with a mix of both professional and amateur performances and events.

**Our ethos is:-
‘Run by the community for the community’**

7. Capital Improvement Grant Request

Plan:

£307k ring fenced bid: breakdown of intent:-

Within this second bid we would be using the technical infrastructure installed by the first grant to upgrade the main hall lighting rig, lighting bars over the stage plus new stage curtains, lighting in the Assembly Rooms. Plus a Line Array sound system which will include a new infrared hearing loop, blackout curtains to create a theatrical atmosphere need for productions and gigs but most importantly to enhance the poor sound quality in the main hall. We have had the main hall acoustically mapped by Leeds Beckett University (Music and Sound Department) which shows the sound properties of the room as it is now and again with the new proposed sound system. The quality of this new sound system would attract quality performers giving the audiences an enhanced and professional experience. A “state of the art” sound and lighting system will broaden our appeal not only to bands and performers but will also enable us to attract well known artists to “play” the Milton Rooms. It will also help us to work more closely with community groups such as Ryedale Special families, as we will be able to offer multi-sensory shows that will cater more for children and young adults with severe disabilities. The new sound system will also encourage use of the hall for large meetings and conferences by groups such as RDC, as it will make it possible for all to hear clearly the proceedings. It will also be a great asset for working with the Ryedale Sight Group on various performances. One project we would be excited to develop, using the new data projector, is extending the accessibility to our growing group of multi-cultural residents in Ryedale. We would offer original language films and other themed evenings, to not only foster a sense of community but to help embrace and enhance our knowledge of the differing cultures within our locality. We intend in this phase to redecorate the main hall back to its original colours lightening it for day events but allowing the blackout curtains to offer the atmosphere required for theatrical events. We also will have the oak sprung dance floor cleaned and restored to all its glory as it is one biggest sprung floors in the North.

We will also be able to offer ‘technical’ training facilities and are already in conversation with local schools about students being able to work towards BTEC qualifications levels 2 & 3 in Production Arts. Plus we have young people volunteering as part of the DofE Awards scheme for which we will have all trustees DBS checked and certificated adding strength to our Safeguarding Policy and governance.

Request for the ring fenced Capital Improvement Grant for £307k:

Phase 2 RDC £307.000 Ring Fenced	
Main Hall Audio Line Array Sound System – from research we have completed within the professional world of performers they often reach out to provincial venues to rehearse before going on tour or playing at the large city centre arenas. This circuit is very lucrative but the big performers and bands will only consider this if the equipment is of the highest standard. The Line Array system offers superb sound quality and future proofs the Milton Rooms for the next 30 years. This system was used when the main hall underwent its audio mapping from Leeds Beckett University.	£167,000.00
Blackout Curtains Main Hall	£18,000.00
Stage Curtains	£7,550.00
Masking stage curtains	£950.00
Decorate Main Hall	£10,000.00
Main Hall Floor	£7,500.00

Lighting Bars over Stage	£38,000.00
Radiator Grills Main Hall	£5,000.00
Lighting for the Assembly Rooms & Foyer	£21,420.00
Material for Roman Blackout blinds Assembly Rooms	£2,900.00
Lighting Square Truss	£26,400.00
Box Office (temporary structure)	£2,219.95

£306,939.95

It is the belief of the newly formed board of trustees that the Milton Rooms requires this capital grant of ring fenced money to modernise the facilities to bring the building into the 21st century thus making it a desirable venue to hire and fit for public use.

The Milton Rooms contribution to the cultural and social activities of the local community remains of major significance. The community is keen to support moves to rejuvenate the building and retain it as an active and viable local resource. For such a small community it is amazing how many local people who have performed on the Milton Rooms stage as amateurs have gone on to the professional world of Performing Arts either as:

We are engaging with local young people who have benefited from their early engagement with the Milton Rooms and we have invited them to patrons and our supporters promoting the venue on social media.

- Laurie Scarth – Musical Theatre actor in the West End
- Lauren Hood– Musical Theatre actor in the West End
- Scott Garnham – Musical Theatre actor in the West End and Director of the internationally acclaimed Barricade Boys

Hayden Clements – Events Technical. Hayden after meeting with the technical consultancy company we hired has secured a fulltime employment with this international company. He has already refurbished a theatre on a cruise ship in France in the past three weeks. This international company has designed Ferrari World in the UAE, built lecture theatres with video conferencing links to the operating theatres on board the mercy ships to train local surgeons in Africa so that they can go back into their local communities to operate and save lives. They have created theatres for the, Silversea’s cruise ships and the planetarium on the QM2, the Frost Science Museum in Miami, the “Chaley Heritage Foundation” for severely disabled children for which the CEO of this company received a knighthood and they are based locally at Buttercrambe.

The list will be added to..... Ryedale maybe small but its influence in the sphere of performing arts is genuinely international.

This organisation requires and deserves RDC’s support. As leaseholders of the building and representatives of the local community RDC have an obligation to the upkeep of the Milton Rooms for further generations by being an active stakeholder and landlord in a community asset. This could be RDC’s opportunity to leave a lasting legacy.

The impact of the investment:

- The community for many years have complained bitterly about the state of the toilets both female and male. They are grossly outdated and in no way reflect a community venue fit for the 21st Century. This includes the lack of a disabled toilet that can be used with dignity, there is an accessible toilet which is situated and opens straight on the foyer area at the moment. The new disabled toilet with a baby changing room is to be sited in the basement, accessed by a lift which will make the venue truly accessible to all. This refurbishment will also involve accessible comfort height toilets in the Studio Bar with handrails. With this refurbishment of the Milton Rooms toilets more members of the community will support this venue, as the poor facilities are often cited as the main reasons why people don't attend events. Black tie functions stopped for these very reasons and we will be encouraging them to come back.
- When the new Line Array Sound system is installed it will attract big named bands to rehearse before going on tour. It is common practice for these bands to seek out well equipped rural venues to prepare and rehearse for a couple of weeks away from the glare of the media. This would be a fantastic revenue stream for the Milton Rooms which could range from £500 to £1,000 per day depending on the stature of the band and the community may even get a preview into the bargain.

- Being able to attract higher quality artists will undoubtedly breed success for the Milton Rooms and success breeds success. This will have a knock on effect for the local economy where visiting audiences will pre book "before show" meals at the local restaurants plus overnight and weekend stays will boost the hotel occupancy.
- Using the new equipment we would offer "original language" films for those in our community where English is a second language. This would be accompanied by coffee mornings in the revamped Studio Bar where the Milton Rooms would be a hub for sharing cross-cultural traditions including foods, folk tales and costumes. This would evidence Malton and Ryedale as reaching out and being an inclusive environment in which to live.
- The Studio Bar is already open Thursday, Friday and Saturday 5.00pm - 8.00pm offering a further revenue stream and will be a great new facility for the local community when it undergoes its complete refurbishment. It will offer an intimate space for evenings where solo artists will perform and we would offer open mic evenings for up and coming local performers plus quiz nights.
- The new infrastructure in terms of Sound and Lighting is vital for expanding the scope of the Milton Rooms. At the moment it is part analog and part digital. As from September the halogen theatre light bulbs will no longer be sold therefore it is vital that we move wholly into the world of LED digital lighting which is environmentally friendly. These electrical systems have been added to and added to over the years where now we can add or alter no more. Five electricians have stated that if any further works were to be carried out, none of them would certificate the works under the up-to-date regulations. The infrastructure has come to the end of its life and it needs replacing, future proofing the Milton Rooms technically for the next 30 years. Making it a viable community arts venue fit for purpose and able to work alongside the Helmsley Art Centre , Pocklington Arts Centre and the Wesley Centre offering a truly varied programme of events for all in Ryedale. With the design of the square lighting rig it would make the Milton Rooms the only venue within Ryedale that could offer a performance space that is flexible for theatre in the round, avenue and thrust.
- The Milton Rooms with its new infrastructure supporting the Sound and Lights will offer immersive sensory experiences for Ryedale Special Families, Sight Support Ryedale groups and will have in place an infrared hearing loop. We will with the new Sound equipment offer special performers for the partially sighted where plays are acted as radio performances. The Milton Rooms also currently hosts a local Autism support group and the improved facilities will be of huge benefit to those involved providing greater opportunities for participation.
- This up-to-date theatrical equipment will be offered as a youth training opportunity for those interested in this form of technology. We have already joined forces with a local theatrical engineering company and "Kickstart" where demonstrations of how Audio and Visual equipment works are in place. These sessions are already up and running but with the new equipment the sky would be the limit for youth involvement. Links with local schools have proved successful with students wishing to use the Milton Rooms for their Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme for volunteering and those who are completing their vocational BTEC courses Level 2&3 in Production Arts could use these facilities to complete their DofE award and BTEC Units.
- The Assembly Rooms has already had a greater interest shown in terms of bookings for weddings, funeral wakes and christenings. Location film scouts have already been in contact and when this Georgian room is brought back to its full glory it could be used for a film location. This space is also ideal for local artists and photographers to exhibit their works.

It is not only an investment for now but for the future generations who will undoubtedly benefit from the opportunities such a joint venture as ours can offer.