

# Centre Vale Park Bandstand Restoration Project: Overview, Scope of Use, Stakeholder/Community Support and Engagement



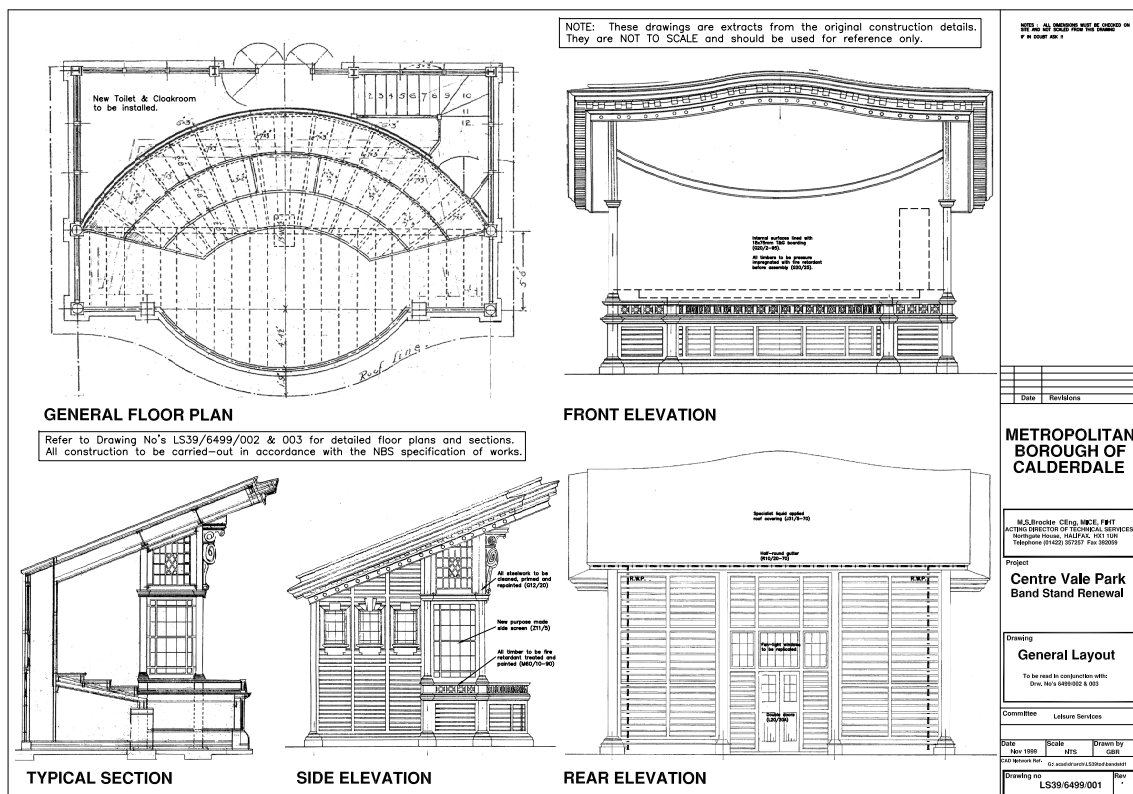
Prepared by Todmorden Community Bandstand Group



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**Todmorden**

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**Todmorden Community Bandstand Group (TCBG)** was formed in July 2019 following the announcement of Calderdale Council (CMBC)'s plan to demolish the bandstand in Centre Vale Park, Todmorden. Over the following months the group developed into a formally-constituted organisation dedicated to saving the bandstand from demolition, restoring it and bringing it back into use as a performance venue. Key achievements to date include securing Grade II listed status for the building (December 2019) and successfully campaigning to persuade the council to abandon the demolition plan (March 2020)

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## 1. Overview

The historic and iconic bandstand in Todmorden's Centre Vale Park is the last remaining example of an exceptional design of outdoor performance facility. The park's surroundings of steep woodland and views of the Pennine hills and moorland beyond provide an exceptional location to match, but sadly the bandstand has been out of use and neglected for over ten years. It has recently been awarded Grade II listed status and saved from demolition, but in its derelict, fenced-off condition it remains a depressing sight that undermines residents' enjoyment of their town's key recreational space. Todmorden Community Bandstand Group (TCBG) would like to restore it and bring it back into use as a venue for all kinds of events, performances and celebrations. This plan would provide a versatile and permanent asset that can take a significant role in the town's cultural and economic regeneration and make Todmorden a better place to live, work and visit for future generations. The key benefits would be:

1. Boost to town's morale through preservation of a much-loved, historically important and architecturally unique piece of cultural heritage
2. Reduced isolation, increased social well-being and improved community cohesion through residents' participation in, and attendance at, a wide range of cultural events and celebrations
3. Residents and visitors will be able to attend events that can take place outdoors with social distancing and low risk of infectious disease transmission
4. Benefit to the local economy through increased visitor numbers and footfall, especially sectors most damaged by COVID-19 (retail, accommodation, arts, hospitality, travel and tourism, public transport, self-care industry)
5. Strengthening and capitalising on Todmorden's developing cultural and arts economy. This has been one of the town's most promising and important sectors but also one most damaged by COVID-19.
6. Training and employment opportunities for local trades and craftspeople in restoration and maintenance of the structure

The proposal to bring the bandstand back into use enjoys extremely high levels of support in the community. Some of the evidence of that support is presented in this document, with further apparent in:

Todmorden Arts and Culture Ideas Facebook Group  
<https://www.todmordentowndeal.co.uk/social-media-consultation/>

Todmorden Vision Statement feedback  
<https://www.todmordentowndeal.co.uk/town-vision-feedback/>

Todmorden #MyTown suggestions  
<https://mytown.communities.gov.uk/town/todmorden/>

TCBG led the campaign to save the bandstand and has prepared a business case for its restoration and operation, developed through liaison with architects, builders, restoration experts, and CMBC officers. Many stakeholders and interested parties in the local arts, music and performance sector have also had input. This business case will be submitted to the bandstand's current owners, Calderdale MBC, in February 2021 in support of an application for a Community Asset Transfer.

## **2. Scope of use of the bandstand**

TCBG believes that the combination of the bandstand's unique aesthetic and historical appeal and the rare quality of its location and environment mean that it has exceptional potential as an outdoor performance and celebration venue. The COVID-19 pandemic has only served to reinforce the importance and possible value of this kind of facility.

Centre Vale Park, where the bandstand is located, is currently licensed to hold up to 20 events annually<sup>1</sup>, encompassing performances of theatre, live and recorded music, indoor and outdoor dancing, and the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises between 10:00 and 21:30. The park may be closed on four occasions per year for events where admission would be charged on the gates, although Todmorden Community Bandstand Group (TCBG) has been advised that Calderdale Council (CMBC) may increase this provision under some circumstances. Management plans for events with amplified live music until 22:00 and for up to 5,000 people have been approved in the past, but a 10,000 capacity should be possible with the appropriate entry/exit supervision, security, medical cover, etc. in place. Although the building is designed to have acoustic qualities that are very effective for unamplified performances, it has an in-situ mains power supply to support sound reinforcement and lighting requirements.

## **3. Stakeholder/community support and engagement**

Over the past year, strong community engagement has been central to TCBG's approach. Some examples of the group's activities are:

- Collation of the evidence from opinion polls confirming very high levels of public support for restoration of the bandstand
- Organising a lobbying campaign and physical paper petition urging Calderdale Council to put the decision to demolish the bandstand hold to allow the community time to draw up a business plan to save it
- Setting up campaign stalls at Todmorden Market, Incredible Edible's Harvest Festival, and the 'Todwell' event at Todmorden Town Hall.
- Installation of an extensive display, over January and February 2020, at Todmorden Tourist Information Centre, composed of documents, photographs, artefacts and video material related to the bandstand's history
- Liaison with local schools to encourage young peoples' engagement with the bandstand project and understanding of its potential benefits for the community in the future.
- Gathering pledges of future intention to use the bandstand from local organisations, groups and performers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/sites/default/files/Event-Application-Guide.pdf>



TCBG working on community engagement at Todmorden Market (August 2019) and Todmorden Town Hall (February 2020)



Artwork by Todmorden High School students on display at the Platform One gallery, Todmorden, March 2020

### 3.1 Public opinion on the restoration of the bandstand

- **Almost 3,000 people signed a physical petition asking Calderdale Council to delay demolition of the bandstand to allow the community time to develop alternative plans for it**
- **In two social media opinion polls by Todmorden residents**
  - **1458 people supported restoration of the bandstand**
  - **38 people supported demolition and replacement with a ‘performance space’**
- **In a social media opinion poll by the Calder Valley MP**
  - **86% were in favour of restoration**
  - **14% were in favour of demolition**
- **In another social media poll**
  - **77% supported the repair of the existing bandstand**
  - **23% supported replacement with ‘a brick and iron one’**
- **In a survey by Storah Architecture of Todmorden**
  - **100% felt the bandstand is an important feature in the Park**
  - **94% felt the bandstand should be conserved, possibly with new features and improved access**
  - **13% felt the bandstand should be replaced with a more modern structure**

Storah Architecture of Todmorden carried out an opinion survey at the Country Fair in Centre Vale Park on 7th July 2018. 122 responses were received and the results are summarised below.

*Do you think the bandstand is an important feature in the Park? **Yes - 121, No - 0, Don't know - 0***

*Should the bandstand be conserved, possibly with new features and improved access? **Yes - 113, No - 6, Don't know - 1***

*Should the bandstand be replaced with a more modern structure? **Yes - 15, No - 85, Don't know - 17***

*The bandstand could provide other facilities such as an event space, shelter or grandstand for football. Would you like to see a wider use? **Yes - 99, No - 13, Don't know - 7***

During July and August 2019, the question of the bandstand's future was debated on social media. On 28th July an informal opinion poll was carried out by Todmorden resident Joan Walsh on 'Tod Chat and That' (TC&T). With over 15,000 members, TC&T is the largest of a number of Facebook groups dedicated to Todmorden issues. Joan was a passionate supporter of restoration of the bandstand, but sadly passed away in October 2019. Her poll simply asked people opposed to the demolition of the bandstand, and in favour of its restoration, to reply 'yes' in response to her post. Within twenty-four hours she had 1458 positive replies, and 4 negative. A few days later, another Todmorden resident, Alan Truman, set up a further opinion poll through on-line petition platform '38 Degrees' and also publicised it on TC&C. He proposed that the bandstand be demolished and replaced with a 'modern performance space'. At the time of writing, this petition had received 38 positive responses. Combining the results of both these polls gives a total of 1500 respondents, of which **1458 (97%) were in favour of restoration** and **42 (3%) were in favour of demolition and replacement**. On the 30<sup>th</sup> July Estelle Brown carried out another survey on TC&C. In this case, **345 (77%) were in favour of 'repairing the existing wooden**

**bandstand and 110 (23%) were in favour of ‘knocking down the existing bandstand and building a brick and iron one’.** On 7th August Calder Valley MP Craig Whittaker carried out a further survey. Of 1400 respondents, **86% were in favour of restoration, 14% in favour of demolition.** Although the methods used in these surveys were informal, there can be no doubt about the strength of the evidence the results provide for an **overwhelming majority opposing demolition of the bandstand and supporting its restoration.**

Over late August and early September 2019 a group of Todmorden residents opposed to the bandstand’s demolition organised a physical paper petition urging Calderdale Council to put the decision to demolish on hold to allow residents time to draw up a business plan to ‘save this iconic piece of Todmorden History’. There was a great response and on 18<sup>th</sup> September they presented the Council with **2985 signatures, from a town with only 15,000 population,** and it was acknowledged as **the largest petition they had ever received.**

### **3.2 Expressions of interest in using the bandstand**

TCBG has received many pledges and expressions of interest in using the bandstand. These are detailed below and provide strong evidence of the need for this facility and its potential as a community asset. Although the viability and success of the bandstand project does not depend on it, we believe that this potential would best be fulfilled by securing funding of capacity for event programming and management and an associated programme budget. This would ensure maximum usage of the bandstand, the quality of the programming, and the presentation of more ‘big draw’ events, so maximising the economic and social benefits we aim to achieve. To this end TCBG is collaborating with professional performing arts project manager/curator **Sophie Cooper** (see below) in developing this element of the proposal and in making bids for funding to Arts Council England to support it. Depending on amounts achieved, some proportion of funds raised through business sponsorship and community efforts may also be available for this purpose.

The **Todstock** festival<sup>2</sup> used the bandstand as its main stage for large-scale two-day events held in 2010 and 2011. An event was planned in 2020 but cancelled due to COVID-19. The festival organiser intends to put on similar events in future and would definitely use the bandstand again if it were available.

Organisers of **Todmorden Folk Festival**<sup>3</sup>, a two-day, multi-venue event held annually since 2014, have also stated they would wish to use the bandstand if it were restored.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://todstock.org>

<sup>3</sup> <https://todfolkfest.co.uk>



Oakenhoof Cloggers and Mr Wilson's Second Liners, Todmorden Folk Festival, 2016

Todmorden-based professional opera singer Nicola Mills, founder of “**Opera for the People**”<sup>4</sup> intends to stage opera and classical concerts at the bandstand if it is brought back into use.

Three established local promoters have expressed interest in using the bandstand:

- **White Rabbit Promotions**<sup>5</sup>, having started at Hebden Bridge Trades Club and over the last five years operating mainly at their home base in Todmorden’s Golden Lion, has gained a national and international reputation for their exceptional programme of music events featuring top-tier artists in the dance, alternative, experimental and psych genres
- **Slomanmusic/Dark Matter** are operators of the excellent 200-capacity live music and comedy venue ‘The Mill’<sup>6</sup> in Walsden.
- Todmorden resident **Sophie Cooper**<sup>7</sup> is a project manager for Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and runs experimental music agency Tor Bookings. For several years Tor Bookings has staged a programme of events in Todmorden showcasing international experimental and new music artists, including six editions of the weekend-long, multi-venue ‘Tor Festival’. Sophie has expressed an interest in working the bandstand into the plans for future festivals, and helping community stakeholders to develop the longer-term possibilities for professionally managed events programming.

<sup>4</sup> <https://iamnicolamills.com>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/psychrabbit/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/themillwalsden/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://sophiecoopermusic.com/about/>



Andy Kershaw



Todstock

Broadcaster, journalist and Todmorden resident **Andy Kershaw** told the story of the campaign to save the bandstand on BBC Radio 4's 'From Our Home Correspondent' in March 2020<sup>8</sup>, following which Jean-Jacques Burnel, leader of celebrated new wave group **The Stranglers**, contacted him to say the group would like to perform at it. Sadly keyboard player Dave Greenfield passed away in May, but Jean-Jacques remains committed to bringing his band to Centre Vale. Andy has also pledged to use his experience and contacts in the music business to bring other high-profile acts to the bandstand. He brings great knowledge of promotion and event management. He booked acts such as Ian Dury, Dire Straits, the Clash, Elvis Costello, Iggy Pop and Duran Duran in his days as Leeds University Entertainments Secretary, worked for the Rolling Stones on their 120,000 capacity Roundhay Park concert, instigated The Who's 2006 reprisal of their legendary 'Live at Leeds' concert, and has had close association with events such as Live Aid, Glastonbury and WOMAD.

Expressions of interest in using the bandstand have also been received from many other music and performing arts organisations and groups in Todmorden and its neighboring areas. **Music for the Many**<sup>9</sup>, a charity providing music education services for children in Todmorden, would like to use the bandstand as a performance space for future projects, commenting "This will be a great formative experience for the children and will encourage community cohesion." **Vocal Highs**<sup>10</sup>, a local choral group, are keen to use the bandstand for performances. **Secret Singers**<sup>11</sup>, a 'busking choir' rehearsing in Todmorden and Nelson, would be interested in sharing afternoon slots with other choirs in the locality. **Todmorden Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (TAODS)** has expressed an interest in performing as part of a larger community-run event.

<sup>8</sup> From 16:23: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000gm8x>

<sup>9</sup> <https://music4theman.com>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/vocalhighs>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.secret-singers.com/a-new-secret-singers-group-starts-in-todmorden/>

**Burnley Music Centre** (based at Shuttleworth College, Padiham<sup>12</sup>), which caters for young musicians, has written to say that staff are always looking for different performance opportunities for their youngsters. **Lancashire Music Services**<sup>13</sup> has informed us that they have a number of Music Centre groups, County bands and an orchestra who would benefit from this opportunity. Lancashire Music Services have good links with **Calderdale Music Trust**<sup>14</sup> and say they would welcome the opportunity for joint concerts and events at the bandstand.

The **University of Salford**, which pioneered band musicianship, has asked to use the bandstand for performances by the University Brass Band, Wind Band, Jazz Ensemble and Latin Ensemble. A member of staff at Salford who gives quartet concerts, has also expressed an interest in performing there. Moving to the broader national picture, requests to use the bandstand have been received from the **Kent Police Brass Band**<sup>15</sup> and for a celebratory **British Legion** concert involving a youth band.

TCBG also has written pledges from **Todmorden Carnival, Todmorden Game and Country Fair, Todmorden Orchestra, 8<sup>th</sup> /26<sup>th</sup> Calder Valley Scout Group** and **all schools in the Todmorden area** have expressed their wish to use the bandstand when repaired.

Copies of email messages detailing all the expressions of interest alluded to above are available on request.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.shuttleworthcollege.org>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/youthzone/things-to-do/groups/lancashire-music-services-county-bands-orchestra/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.calderdalemusictrust.org.uk>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.kentpoliceband.org>

### 3.3 Example messages of support

*“I really, really hope the bandstand can be saved. I would love to see it restored to its former glory. Too many of the town’s fine historic buildings have already been lost and it would be tragic for the bandstand to go the same way. Restoration would both preserve a unique and irreplaceable piece of cultural heritage and provide a superb venue for performances of all types.*

*A building as beautiful and historically significant as the bandstand is an attraction in its own right. It is part of the town’s collective memory, of its sense of self and identity. More than this, it has huge potential as a focus for entertainment and community involvement in the performing arts in the future. It could be an asset that really brings people together and give a tremendous boost to the community’s well-being.*

*“When I come back to visit Todmorden these days I’m struck by the great surge of artistic and creative energy in the town. There is a something of a cultural boom happening – especially in music - and Tod now seems to be ‘on the map’ nationally and even internationally. To me there is no doubt the bandstand project should both benefit from, and contribute to, this upward trend. Don’t let the opportunity go to waste Todmorden people! Once the bandstand is gone, it’s gone forever. Celebrate and treasure your history, and bring the bandstand back to life!*

*Best of luck with the project!”*

Mark Makin (co-director of **makin projects** (<http://www.makinprojects.co.uk>), one of the UK’s most respected national and international tour management companies in the fields of theatre, dance and comedy



*"For the time it was built the bandstand in Todmorden’s Centre Vale Park is quite revolutionary in its design and concept. The tiered stage, and the special soundboards behind and above the players, are arranged to provide a very high level of acoustic performance, and It still remains a highly functional design. It is a very special feature of the town and it deserves to be preserved!  
Yours sincerely, Steve Tilston."*

Celebrated UK singer-songwriter and guitarist Steve Tilston <http://www.stevetilston.com/>



*“The best bandstand I ever played on”*

*“We have fond memories of playing on the bandstand when it used to have Sunday afternoon band concerts. It was a lovely stage to play on with brilliant acoustics to amplify the band across the park. It would be great to see it restored to its former glory and to once more stage afternoon concerts”*

*“It’s such an iconic bandstand and a great piece of heritage which needs to be saved”*

Elland Silver Band Members <http://www.ellandsilverband.co.uk>



*“I would like to add my support for the restoration of Todmorden’s bandstand. I have been a resident of Calderdale for 35 years now, and have loved roaming across the moors and through the woods (climbing, walking, wild swimming, tree climbing). In my professional life, I have taught Public Health, Health Promotion, the Sociology of Health, and Health Psychology at universities for the last 30 years, and one of the crucial and powerful themes that has emerged from my reading and research - that I have embedded at the heart of my teaching - is the vital importance of the social environments we live in for the creation and nurturing of physical, emotional, mental and social health. Over the last 30 years, our societies seem almost to have become unwilling participants in experiments in how to undermine these crucial environments. In some ways, I see this erosion of the health-affirming institutions and settings of public space as analogous to the decimation of wildlife wrought by environmentally harmful policies.*

*The fundamental determinants of health aren’t to be found in a bottle of pills, or even within the corridors and wards of NHS hospitals, they are in our communities. A healthy community requires a commitment to developing its social capital – ensuring that local people have settings in which they can live (play, work, learn, philosophise, share, chat, meditate) freely - and take civic pride in. Undermine or efface these opportunities and people tend to become more inward-looking, isolated, and lonely. In addition, there is much research demonstrating the health benefits of access to green spaces - parks, woods, lakes. The Victorians who created public parks – and bandstands! – recognised the importance of enshrining such green spaces amidst the noisy, dirty, frenzied activity of industrial towns and cities. For me, Todmorden bandstand has a venerable past, but it also can have an inspirational future – as a hub for a wide variety of community events and activities (musical, artistic, educational, celebratory).*

*Therefore, I wholeheartedly support the campaign to protect and restore the bandstand. The old political slogan exhorted us to “think global, act local”. Old-fashioned wisdom also reminded us that it takes a village to raise a child - and, those who make decisions affecting Todmorden, should heed that it also takes a town to grow proud, healthy, creative inhabitants.”*

Dr Marc Chrysanthou <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/our-staff/marc-chrysanthou/>  
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