

The Coach House
23 July 2018

A Reader Community Update

A very big thank you to everybody who joined us for our tenth birthday celebrations at the Big Reader Picnic recently; what a magnificent day!

We really enjoyed having an opportunity to talk to lots of people about The Reader's wider work and what we're doing here at Calderstones Park, in amongst the packed programme of live readings, crafts, games and activities.

As we discussed with many of you on the day, we are a community-based charity that exists to bring people together and books to life. A small number of people we spoke to at the Picnic were wondering why we haven't played an active role in opposing the proposed Redrow development in Calderstones Park, so we thought it would be helpful to issue another update on the refurbishment of the Mansion House and our work in the FAQs that follow.

Thank you for continuing to support The Reader and for caring about our work.

All my best wishes,



Dr Jane Davis MBE Ashoka Fellow
Founder and Director

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does The Reader do?

We exist to bring people together and books to life: we believe that literature is a force for social good and that reading can change lives. As a national charity, we raise money through grants, commissions and social enterprise activity like the Café and Ice Cream Parlour. We use our funding to deliver projects for our beneficiaries, as governed by our Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The Reader's aim is to make literature part of the fabric of life. We do this by delivering weekly *Shared Reading* groups to improve people's lives: 475 of these groups run every week.

We have 862 volunteers and 95 Reader staff delivering projects across the UK.

Our *Shared Reading* model has also spread around the world. We work in partnership with groups in 8 countries and have trained people from as far afield as Norway, Mexico and New Zealand.

What's The Reader's relationship with Liverpool City Council?

Liverpool City Council own the Mansion House, the Coach House and the Courtyard at Calderstones Park, and we are the long term tenants, with a 125 year lease.

Liverpool City Council is key to the success of the current Mansion House refurbishment project and The Reader will continue to work in partnership with the Council for many years to come.

What's The Reader's relationship with the community at Calderstones Park?

We began creating relationships when we first moved in January 2013. We have held several key consultation events and we talk to park-users, dog-walkers, artists hiring the Gallery, customers and members of our groups every day.

Maintaining effective working relationships with local representatives is important to us. When bidding for the International Centre for Shared Reading project in 2013, key local stakeholders strongly supported our application.

It is our view that there is no single 'community' at Calderstones. We are open to direct personal communication with everyone and we're always happy to talk about our work.

What are the plans for the Mansion House?

We are building the International Centre for Shared Reading and a community based on *Shared Reading* here at Calderstones, and we are committed to this project for the next 100+ years. We're bringing the Mansion House back to life, as we have already done with the Barn and Courtyard.

This is a large and ambitious project which costs a lot on time and energy as well as money! The International Centre for Shared Reading is the first of its kind, for us, for the country and for the wider world.

What facilities will it include?

When the Mansion House re-opens to the public in Spring 2019, there will be reading rooms with free *Shared Reading* groups running every day, new toilets and an improved and much larger café. The building will have office/workshop space for tenants, and it will house The Reader's national HQ.

There will also be a Heritage Centre telling the story of the Mansion House and the Calder Stones. The Stones themselves will be located in a new purpose-built facility at the back of the Mansion House with better access, more information and protection.

We'll continue to run our national and international training courses, bringing many additional visitors to the park and to Liverpool. We'll also continue working with communities all over the Liverpool City Region (as we do now) and we'll be inviting lots of our community group members to come to Calderstones for Big Days Out.

Why are the Stones being moved?

The Stones are not currently in their original location (they've only been in the glasshouse since 1964, a fraction of their 5000+ year history) and the glasshouse setting is not good for them, as they experience too many fluctuations in temperature. Moving them is vital for their long-term survival.

Later this summer, they will be removed from the park for much-needed conservation work. They will return to the park when the building work is complete in Spring 2019. Their new Heritage Centre home will be a more accessible space that's better for them and more fitting given their archaeological significance.

What kind of events will be held at the Mansion House?

The garden theatre will be brought back to life as a multipurpose events space and people will once more be able to get married here as they did years ago.

We'll hire out spaces for a range of events, meetings and functions. There will be rooms available for wellbeing activities, such as Pilates or drawing, and there will be offices to let.

We will also hire out space to people and organisations that are going to add to what is happening on site and help us achieve our aims. In the past we brought Shakespeare's Globe to our back garden, and we hope to do that again, as well as perhaps a programme of summer music, film nights and touring exhibitions.

Will the Mansion House be open to the local community?

Many local people already play an important role in projects here: attending *Shared Reading* groups, volunteering with us, visiting the Storybarn and using the Café and Ice Cream Parlour. 12,000 children and families have visited The Storybarn since it opened, the Café and Ice Cream Parlour serve thousands of people every week and hundreds of people attend our weekly groups

We hope that the International Centre for Shared Reading will provide opportunities for even more people to feel happier, healthier and more connected.

We're currently arranging a series of Mansion House site visits for staff, volunteers and members of our community. Numbers of visits, as well as numbers of visitors and accessibility are restricted as the site is a working building site so please contact info@thereader.org.uk if you'd like to book a place on one of these. We cannot guarantee everyone who is interested will be able to get a place, but we will do our best.

How is the refurbishment being funded?

Our first confirmed funding came from Heritage Lottery Fund which, in December 2015, pledged to support the project with a grant totaling £1.99m. Further investment was also secured from a variety of trusts and funds including The Garfield Weston Foundation and The Tudor Trust.

Liverpool City Council provided The Reader with a grant of up to £3.4m towards the refurbishment of the Mansion House, a council owned asset. This investment will be recovered through the long term lease with The Reader.

Do you have all the money you need?

With a building of this size, age and condition there are a lot of things that could add to our costs but we have worked with people with lots of experience to get the budget right. We've got enough money for the basics: the new roof, the new Café, the new toilets, the new wiring!

We're still looking for donations to support the transformation of the Mansion House that will help us to make the most of the building in the early years of operation. If you think you can help, please get in touch with us by email to info@thereader.org.uk.

What is happening with the park?

Liverpool City Council submitted a paper to their Cabinet seeking approval to undertake a procurement exercise for a new operator for the park (whilst committed to maintaining public ownership and free access). We are waiting to find out what the next steps are for this process.

What's The Reader's view on proposals to build housing on a section of the park?

We can't and don't get involved in political matters.

The Reader does not have any involvement with, or influence on, local authority decision-making.

We remain committed to maintaining good relationships with the local community, however, we are not a lobbying charity and it is not part of our charitable purpose to campaign. Our focus is on our charitable work and the life changing benefits that reading can bring.

Is there any connection between The Reader's charitable grant from the Steve Morgan Foundation and the proposed housing development?

No, the grant and the proposed development aren't connected.

All charities apply for grant funding from charitable trusts to support their charitable objectives and The Reader is no different in this respect. We are currently in receipt of funding from over 30 organisations and we have received charitable funding from the Steve Morgan Foundation since 2010, long before we started working here at Calderstones.

When looking at funders who could help us to improve the impact our programmes for families in the North West last year, we decided to apply for a grant from the Steve Morgan Foundation because they fund work that changes children's lives. The Steve Morgan Foundation

is an independent charity with a legal and fiduciary duty and an independent board of trustees. We applied – via a fully transparent process – for a restricted grant which was awarded to us to benefit families across the City Region.

The Reader is independent and will remain independent. The grant does one thing only: to help us significantly improve the life chances of over 2,000 children living across the region, particularly

- Children under 8 years old (and their parents and siblings) living in areas of high deprivation.
- Children and families receiving additional support, be that for health or socio-economic reasons.
- Children living with disabilities and their families.
- New parents and parents-to-be.

The project has two key strands:

1. Partner-led activity within local communities, supported by a high-quality programme of training and support delivered by The Reader. This will happen across Wirral, Liverpool, Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, Warrington and St Helens. Partnerships include Homestart and PSS.
2. Reader-led activity at The Storybarn, creating meaningful connections with families living across the region.

We very much look forward to completing the work, and bringing the power of *Shared Reading* to so many families across the region, just as we do here at Calderstones.

This grant is in no way connected to the decision making around the proposed housing development. Whether or not the housing project moves ahead, The Reader will not gain financially and the grant will be unaffected.

Thank you.