

# Meanwhile Use

Business Case and Learning Points

May 2010



# Key Findings

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## Introduction

1. **‘Meanwhile use’** is the temporary use of vacant buildings or land for a socially beneficial purpose until such a time that they can be brought back into commercial use again. It makes practical use of the ‘pauses’ in property processes, giving the space over to uses that can contribute to quality of life and better places whilst the search for a commercial use is ongoing.
2. As leader of the Meanwhile Project, the Development Trusts Association (DTA) commissioned SQW Consulting in April 2010 to research the nature and extent of ‘meanwhile use’ in the UK today and to prepare a business case for this activity.

## Key findings

3. These are our key findings:
  - The best available estimates suggest that there are over 250 meanwhile projects in place or in preparation in the UK today and that this figure is growing.
  - Meanwhile uses are evident in almost every region of the UK, although there are ‘hotspots’, particularly in London and other large cities. The majority of projects are presently in deprived urban areas.
  - Nearly 75% of meanwhile projects are in vacant retail units, but other types of space are increasingly being brought into use, including offices, housing, pubs, car showrooms and building sites.
  - A rich mix of activities take place through meanwhile projects – more than half are arts/culture related, but many are also providing informal learning opportunities or providing useful advice and information to residents and businesses. The length of time of these projects lasts from one week to several years. Most are being delivered by local community groups or social enterprises.
  - The Meanwhile Lease is increasingly being taken up as a simpler means of arranging a meanwhile use, particularly for projects in shop units.
  - There are evident benefits from meanwhile projects for all the groups of stakeholders involved:
    - Property owners/leaseholders – improved security and maintenance of premises, lower running costs for the site and improved prospects for commercial re-use;
    - Community groups – low cost, low commitment space that allows for innovation in trying out new ideas, the growth of existing groups and for

social enterprises often a higher profile space to improve marketing and better secure an income stream.

- Wider public – more vibrant and attractive streets, attracting visitors and prospective investors and preventing blight or decline where there are lots of vacant premises. The services delivered also benefit the community and in turn strengthen the third sector.
- There are some modest costs and risks from meanwhile use, but the new Meanwhile Lease manages the risks effectively and the costs are very modest, particularly in comparison with the benefits.

## Conclusions

4. The savings that accrue to each of the groups of stakeholders in both the short term and long term makes meanwhile use a viable and intelligent option in many circumstances. It is a relatively simple and effective way of making efficient use of existing property assets.
5. Support provided by government thus far has helped to build the momentum of meanwhile use but further modest investment at this point would help to ensure that meanwhile use becomes an integral part of how the public and private sector manage their assets efficiently. At a time of pressure on public spending, meanwhile use has a contribution to make to the more efficient use of existing assets.

# 1: Introduction

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*Waste is worse than loss.*

*(Thomas A. Edison)*

*It is clearly better that property should be private, but the use of it common; and the special business of the legislator is to create in men this benevolent disposition.*

*(Aristotle)*

- 1.1 The idea that we should make efficient use of private property is thousands of years old. At a time of unprecedented concern with efficiency, it has a new urgency – for both property owners and society.
- 1.2 **‘Meanwhile use’** is the temporary use of vacant buildings or land for a socially beneficial purpose until such a time that they can be brought back into commercial use again. It makes practical use of the ‘pauses’ in property processes, giving the space over to uses that can contribute to quality of life and better places. Meanwhile use is not the same as a normal temporary lease or license because it recognises that the search for a commercial use is ongoing.
- 1.3 The Development Trusts Association (DTA) commissioned SQW Consulting (SQW) in April 2010 to research the nature and extent of ‘meanwhile use’ in the UK today and to prepare a business case outlining the costs and benefits of this activity. This report sets out that business case.
- 1.4 In undertaking our research we have:
  - Conducted in depth interviews with a handful of key stakeholders to provide an overview of the issues relating to meanwhile use and potential future opportunities associated with the concept
  - Completed an online mapping exercise to develop a ‘snapshot’ of the nature and extent of meanwhile use in the UK today
  - Undertaken five case studies of meanwhile use projects encompassing a range of areas, premises and types of use
- 1.5 The remainder of this document is set out as follows. **Section 2** provides a brief description of meanwhile use, how it works and how government has supported it to date. **Section 3** sets out a snapshot of the nature and extent of meanwhile activity today in the UK. **Section 4** sets out the case for meanwhile use, looking at costs and benefits. **Section 5** summarises the help and support available to make it happen. **Section 6** briefly explores future opportunities and prospects for meanwhile use.

## 2: What is Meanwhile Use?

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### What is Meanwhile Use?

- 2.1 There are many reasons why spaces, whether buildings or land, fall out of active use. There may be a lull in a redevelopment process as land or properties sit empty awaiting demolition or refurbishment. There may be a void in letting out properties, as demand for space in an area falls. At any one time, a significant amount of space in our towns and cities lies empty, awaiting re-use. The recent recession pushed the issue to the fore as many high street shops fell empty and provided a very visible reminder of how much space lies unproductive.
- 2.2 It is estimated that in the region of 25,000<sup>1</sup> shops closed during the recession in the UK, including well known high street chains such as Woolworths and Borders as well as independent shops, resulting in 13% of UK shops sitting empty. Twice as many independent shops closed as shops in chains. As many as one in five shops were empty in some of the worst hit areas.
- 2.3 Why does it matter? Empty properties represent a cost and a wasted resource for the property owners. They can also blight neighbouring properties, particularly if there is a concentration of empty properties in one place. They also represent an opportunity for organisations that may be able to make use of such space, particularly if it is made available at low cost. There can also often be a wider social benefit to making use of empty space or unused land.
- 2.4 ‘Meanwhile use’ is the temporary use of unused land or buildings for a socially beneficial purpose where commercial letting is not presently viable. Bringing vacant land or buildings into use, even for a short period of time, usually saves the property owners money. The use of such spaces at low or no cost by community organisations can in turn be very helpful for them and can often benefit the wider area and community. Meanwhile use is not the same as temporary lease or license because it explicitly recognises that the search for a commercial use will be ongoing. It is a ‘stop gap’ use which recognises that a low cost use is better than no use at all.
- 2.5 The promotion of meanwhile use became a formal government policy commitment in April 2009 following the release of CLG’s ‘Looking after our town centres guide’<sup>2</sup>, which was a response to the challenges created by the recession.
- 2.6 Some specific examples of meanwhile use are provided below:

Table 2-1: Illustrations of meanwhile use

Meanwhile project	Description
<b>Beginspace, Cambridge</b>	<i>Beginspace</i> was housed in a former bank building in the centre of Cambridge. Its overall aim was to support people with “an idea to start something to benefit themselves or others”. This took the form of a drop in centre providing support for social enterprise, community projects and new businesses. Along with the mentoring services, incubation space was

<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Space, 2010, Empty Shops & Premises: Researching the Baseline

<sup>2</sup> CLG, 2009, Looking after our town centres

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1201258.pdf>

Meanwhile project	Description
	available in the form of hot-desk facilities, shared work spaces and meeting rooms. The centre opened on Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2009 and the lease period was extended from an initial end date of Christmas 2009 to run to April 2010.
<b>Bradford Urban Garden</b>	The <i>Bradford Urban Garden</i> is based on the development site for a large shopping centre being built by Westfield, which has stalled. The hoardings on the site have been moved back to the two thirds of the site which have already started to be developed, revealing a four acre space to be used as an urban garden in the centre of the city for the next 2-3 years. The Council, Westfield and Yorkshire Forward have all committed £100k to make the site safe. Fabric, an umbrella arts organisation, has been provided with a small grant to animate the space with arts and community projects.
<b>Nomad Creative Space, Hastings</b>	Based in a former bank building in Hastings, <i>Nomad Creative Space</i> is a shared space organised by Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and Meanwhile Space, where artists can work, exhibit and stage special events and workshops. The lease ran for six months from late September 2009. Six artists formed the core group and used the building throughout the period; others were involved on an occasional basis.
<b>Seacroft Digital Lounge</b>	LS14 is a new development trust based in Seacroft, Leeds. They plan to take over an empty corner unit in a parade to create a digital lounge, which will be the first community run space in the area. The shop is to be leased from the local housing association for a period of 12 months during which time the trust hope to have successfully obtained a former pub through asset transfer.
<b>Scarborough Maritime Heritage Centre</b>	The centre opened on the 5 <sup>th</sup> of November 2009 in a former shop building on one of the main streets leading to Scarborough's harbour. The centre, run by volunteers, is used to archive and display Scarborough's maritime heritage. The shop front is set up as a museum and typically receives 10-25 visitors each day; this is likely to increase significantly during its first summer.

Source: SQW case studies

## How does it work?

- 2.7 The core of a meanwhile use arrangement involves identifying and bringing together the landlord, leaseholder or property agent of an appropriate property with a community or voluntary organisation that wants to use it, and agreeing the terms of use. A model 'Meanwhile Use Lease' has been developed to simplify this process. It is designed to be a simple legal instrument to make the process easier and to provide appropriate reassurance to both landlord and occupant
- 2.8 Three types of standard Meanwhile Lease have been developed:
- A **Meanwhile Use Lease**, to be used for direct lettings by a landlord to a temporary occupier
  - A **Meanwhile Use Intermediary Lease**, to be used for lettings by a landlord to an intermediary, such as a local authority or voluntary body (this is particularly attractive where a local authority wants to promote a variety of short term uses)
  - A **Meanwhile Use Sublease** for lettings by an intermediary to a temporary occupier.
- 2.9 The leases all follow the same format and are substantially on the same terms, with the addition of the right, in the intermediary lease, for the intermediary landlord to underlet the premises. They have all been drafted to be as user friendly as possible and avoid technical legal terms wherever possible so that they can be readily understood by those that are unaccustomed to commercial lettings.

- 2.10 The lease is freely available from the Meanwhile Project and CLG websites<sup>3</sup>. Its key features are outlined below.

Table 2-2: Meanwhile Lease

Key features of the standard Meanwhile Lease include:

- A zero or peppercorn rent for the occupier
- A fixed term which provides the landlord with full vacant possession at the end of the lease with no tenancy rights being deemed to have accrued to the tenant
- Landlord and Tenant lease-breaks on short periods of notice (suggested periods are 2 weeks for the tenant, 4 weeks for the landlord). There is a suggested minimum occupation period of 3 months, although this can be deleted to allow a notice to be served at any time.
- Responsibility for business rates by the tenant
- Option for a damage deposit to be held by the landlord
- Limitations on alterations to the property, only to allow for signage and installation of loose shop fittings (or otherwise as agreed)
- Limited repair obligations for the tenant, with a photographic schedule of condition required and a provision that excepts "fair wear and tear"
- Use and hours restrictions and an option to provide that the use may not be for commercial gain or profit
- The possibility of inserting additional agreed terms (in Part II of the lease). Service Charge arrangements may vary – some landlords may recoup the buildings insurance and possibly some overheads through a monthly service charge.

Source: CLG Meanwhile Lease

## Government recognition and support

- 2.11 Meanwhile use is not a new concept and has been happening successfully for many years. However, the practise only received more formal recognition and support from government in 2009 following the release of its *Looking after our town centres* guide as a response to the challenges present by the recession. It recognised the importance of managing vacant retail premises to maintain the attractiveness and vibrancy of town centres. The government's strategy for seaside regeneration<sup>4</sup> also identified meanwhile use as a valuable tool in making seaside towns more attractive and active places all year round. The strategy makes specific reference to the work carried out by Meanwhile Space in Hastings, Scarborough and Margate to facilitate the creative and enterprising use of buildings and land.

- 2.12 Practical support to promote meanwhile use has been delivered in the following ways:

- Working with the Development Trusts Association and Meanwhile Space, CLG commissioned Denton Wilde Sapte to develop, a model **Meanwhile Lease** to facilitate community use of otherwise empty properties.
- The Development Trusts Association and Meanwhile Space established the Meanwhile Project in June 2009, funded with £500,000 from Communities & Local Government. With ongoing leadership by DTA and Meanwhile Space, the **Meanwhile Project** has directly supported 24 projects in 17 places throughout the country with grants of up to £25,000 to help with cleaning and decorating vacant

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.meanwhile.org.uk/useful-info/view/legal>  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/citiesandregions/meanwhileuselease>

<sup>4</sup> CLG, 2010, Strategy for seaside success: Securing the future of seaside economies  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/citiesandregions/pdf/1518282.pdf>

premises, basic refit for temporary uses, publicity and other activities to help attract and retain visitors, as well as negotiation support, business planning advice and, in some cases, taken on the role of intermediary landlord. More generally the Meanwhile Project supports landlords, local authorities and town centre managers to work with potential occupiers such as community groups and social enterprises to develop innovative and creative meanwhile uses for empty premises and land. The Project showcases successful meanwhile projects on its website and has developed a shared interest network<sup>5</sup> with over 500 members. The Project has the ultimate aim of making meanwhile use a mainstream part of the way we do business.

- In 2009, the Government gave grants totalling £5.6m to 107 of the most deprived<sup>6</sup> local authorities suffering from the **highest vacancy rates**, to help them improve the fortunes of town centres including finding new uses for vacant premises. The grants were issued as part of the wider *Real Help Now* package. Each council received a £52,000 non ring-fenced grant. It was intended that non-commercial occupiers would contribute to town centre vitality by creating new interest and stimulating footfall on the high street, relieve landlords of some of the burden of having empty properties and support existing businesses.
- The most recent addition to government support for meanwhile use was the launch of a scheme in March this year to hand over unused sites and derelict land to **gardeners**. In conjunction with the Federation of City Farms and Gardens the government is hoping to create a land bank of publicly and privately owned sites for allotments, city farms and gardens. The Meanwhile Project has commissioned the development of two ‘meanwhile licences’ for temporary land uses – one for recreation and the other for ‘community growing’.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.meanwhitespace.ning.com](http://www.meanwhitespace.ning.com)

<sup>6</sup> According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2007

## 3: The Extent of Meanwhile Use

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- 3.1 This section provides an estimate of the nature and extent of meanwhile use in the UK today based on new ‘snapshot’ mapping.

### Mapping the extent of meanwhile use

- 3.2 By their very nature meanwhile uses can spring up and disappear quite quickly so measuring how many might exist is a challenge.
- 3.3 The Empty Shops Network estimate that there are in the region of 100 meanwhile projects currently taking place in the UK with an additional 100 in the planning stages. Given that meanwhile uses include a wider range of spaces than just shops (perhaps 25% of projects are in non-retail spaces, see our survey below), we estimate that there are likely to be **over 250 meanwhile projects** in place or in preparation today in the UK. Evidence from our consultations suggests that this is growing, spurred on by the publicity of successful projects, campaigns (like Property Week’s *Site Life* campaign), networking from those involved and government-supported approaches like the Meanwhile Project and CLG’s town centre grants to local authorities.
- 3.4 In order to understand the nature of these projects SQW completed an online ‘snapshot’ survey in April. Invitations to participate in the mapping exercise were sent to the 500+ members of the Meanwhile Project Ning Forum, those on the Spacemakers Forum and the Empty Shops Network. The survey generated responses detailing over 50 projects in operation or preparation. Additional projects that the Meanwhile Project are currently involved with or are aware of were added to the responses resulting in a total of **68 different projects**, which is a significant sample.
- 3.5 Key messages from the snapshot survey are set out below, with additional information drawn from our wider consultations with key stakeholders:

#### Geographical location and characteristics

- Meanwhile uses are evident in nearly every region of the UK.
- The distribution of meanwhile uses varies between regions (see Figure 2.1). There is a wealth of meanwhile activity in London and Yorkshire and Humber in particular, each accounting for 20% of the total projects identified. More specifically, a key focus of activity remains in the East End of London, especially around Hackney where there is an abundance of artists and creative industries, cheap and interesting space and a community that is well rehearsed at working in innovative ways. There is also a concentration around Leeds. Coastal areas also have a higher degree of activity as communities, local authorities and town centre managers located in these areas are focused on tourism as well as retail and are therefore quick to pick up on opportunities that may create visitor interest. The only region with no registered activity was the East Midlands.

- 74% of the projects identified were located within urban<sup>7</sup> local authority districts and 69% were located in the 30% most deprived local authority districts in England.

Figure 3-1: Location of meanwhile projects

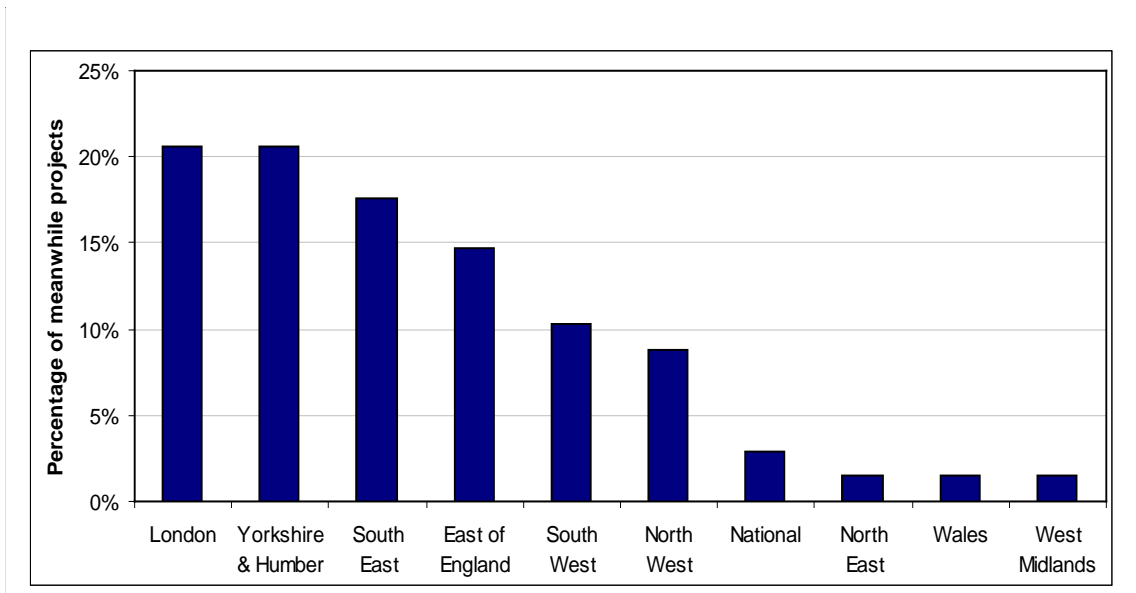
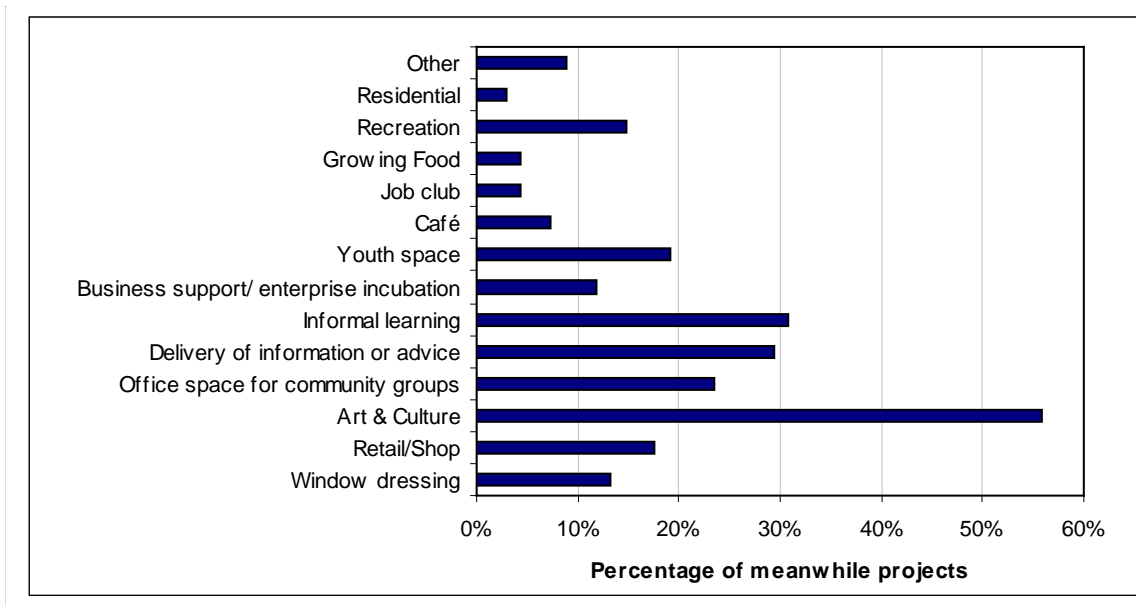


Figure 3-2: Types of projects/uses



## Types of organisations engaging in meanwhile use

- Social enterprises and development trusts (31%) are the most common users of meanwhile space, followed by established local community or voluntary groups (27%). New local community and voluntary groups account for 12% of the users of meanwhile space, with local authorities themselves making up 4% of the total users. It appears that national charities are in fact the least likely to use space of this nature, with only one featuring in our project sample. The other 25% consist of individuals, informal groups, community partnerships, development agencies, and private businesses.

## Business rates

- A significant proportion (39%) of the projects responding were unable to confirm whether or not business rates were being paid, very few (7%) actually confirmed the payment of business rates. Some 30% of the projects captured in the mapping exercise have been awarded 80%/100% business rate relief, with a further 24% having sought it.

## The growing diversity of meanwhile uses

- 3.6 There is a growing diversity of spaces being used for meanwhile projects. Retail units remain the most common type of space, but projects are now using offices, civic buildings, housing, places of worship, car parks, green open spaces and even building sites.
- 3.7 Meanwhile use is beginning to spread to the residential sector, with organisations such as Fresh Horizons Ltd (a social enterprise concerned with providing sustainable employment for people in areas of deprivation) looking at meanwhile use as a way of tackling clusters of empty properties, providing affordable housing and employment opportunities such as modern apprenticeships. Fresh Horizons have received a grant from the Meanwhile Project of £25,000 to develop a template for how meanwhile use can be used for residential purposes in a similar way to shared equity schemes, whereby the lease is developed so that the period of meanwhile use is related to the level of refurbishment investment. The National Housing Federation is keen to see how the process develops.
- 3.8 More recently, there has been a growing trend in the temporary use of building sites. Not all of these are for charitable purposes, some are commercial in nature, but all make use of the available space. Examples include:
- **Bradford Urban Garden** is a good example of the meanwhile use of a stalled development site. The development site for a large shopping centre being built by Westfield is currently in the process of being transformed into a community urban garden for use over the next 2-3 years. The Council, Westfield and Yorkshire Forward have all committed £100k to make the site safe. Fabric, an umbrella arts organisation, has been provided with a small grant to animate the space with arts and community projects.

- **Phased development in King's Cross** – the 67 acre Kings Cross Central Scheme in London is being developed by Argent, DHL Exel and London & Continental Railways and is one of Europe's largest building sites. Due to the long term nature of the development, the later phases of the development site will lie unused until they are ready to be developed. Working with charity Global Growing, the developer has introduced 'skip gardens' which can be relocated to other parts of the site as the phased development takes place.
- **Dinosaurs in the West End** - One developer established "*London's largest interactive dinosaur encounter*", an exhibition of 24 life sized dinosaur animatronics on a development site on Oxford Street for a period of four months.
- **Fitness academies in Manchester** – In Manchester, Ask Developments are to let their First Street site to be used by one of the UK's first urban fitness academies from June 2010. The Chief Executive of Ask, Ken Knott, was quoted as saying that *'Creating alternative uses to bring a development back to life is vital...it shows the developer's continuing commitment to the scheme, highlights what is happening at the site and builds stronger ties with surrounding residential and business communities.'*<sup>8</sup>
- **Open spaces** - A development site in Fareham, Waverly was grassed over for the community to use shortly after it was recognised that the scheme was not able to go forward. Similarly, in Liverpool, the developer Grosvenor owns a site near to the recently completed Liverpool One retail site who is already considering allowing temporary public art exhibitions on the site, a plan which is welcomed and supported by the Hotel Company Base2stay which has plans for a hotel nearby.
- **Architectural designs on space** - One particularly innovative example of the use of meanwhile use is what British Land is doing with its delayed 'Cheese Grater site' on Leadenhall Street in the City of London. The developer has held a small competition to attract bright young architects to develop small projects on the empty site in an attempt to nurture talent and to help sustain and build working relationships for the future with young practices that are unable to compete for private finance initiative projects.
- **Major investors showing interest** - Land Securities are showing interest in proposals from Meanwhile Space for use of their large development sites
- **Digging up silly ideas?** - Bureau of Silly Ideas undertook a series of projects for Transport for London, including animating building sites using remote-controlled diggers.

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<sup>8</sup> Property Week Magazine, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010

## 4: The Case for Meanwhile Use

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### The benefits of meanwhile use

- 4.1 Meanwhile projects have begun to spring up around the UK, offering an array of services and uses in a diverse range and size of spaces. From ‘pop-up shops’ on struggling high streets to community organising space in back-offices through to the greening of or community growing on becalmed building sites, it is clear that meanwhile use represents a very flexible response to short-term opportunities.
- 4.2 Drawing on our consultations with property owners and communities alike, including some in-depth case studies, we have sought to define the benefits of engaging in meanwhile use for three groups of stakeholders:
- Property owners/leaseholders
  - Community groups/occupiers
  - The wider public

### ***Benefits to property owners or leaseholders***

- 4.3 The owners of property or land which is vacant or unused, even for short periods of time, usually incur costs during those periods – whether it is business rates on empty space, ongoing buildings insurance, or the maintenance and security costs of protecting sites. Together with the ‘opportunity cost’ of the lost income stream from the property being out of use, it means that there is nearly always a very real cost to ‘doing nothing’. The core advantage of a meanwhile use for property owners (or the leaseholders letting out the space) is that it can remove some of the costs of ‘doing nothing’ with a relatively simple process that is also designed to limit any risks to the owners.
- 4.4 Typical benefits to the property owner or leaseholder from meanwhile use include the following:
- **The security of active occupation** – By having an active occupier in a property or using a space, the building will continue to be maintained in good repair and it will actively discourage vandalism (or even squatting), which can be a real risk to vacant premises, particularly if left unused over the longer term.
  - **Lower costs during vacant periods** – During most meanwhile uses, utility bills, security and insurance costs will be covered by the occupiers, providing direct savings to the owner/leaseholder. They can also save money by not having to pay empty property business rates as the responsibility for business rates passes to the tenant and many meanwhile uses are eligible for business rate relief. In our case studies, the landlord of the city centre property in Cambridge saved £18,000 of business rates over 6 months, whereas the landlord in Hastings saved £4,500 over 6 months.

- **Increased prospect of future commercial use** – Meanwhile use often increases the level of awareness of the property to prospective tenants or owners, particularly if it provides a home for an eye-catching project. It also gives prospective tenants an easier opportunity to access the property and see its potential, while it is in use. This is particularly advantageous for retail and leisure spaces, where profile is a key issue for tenants.

4.5 Clearly, property owners/leaseholders have legitimate concerns over any use of their property – particularly how to ensure that any appropriate maintenance/repair costs can be recovered and above all, how to ensure full vacant possession at relatively short notice when commercial use becomes viable again. The Meanwhile Lease addresses both of these concerns, ensuring that landlords are protected:

*‘The ability to point to ‘meanwhile’ as a recognised term was comforting for the developer, it reassured them that it was a recognised feature of regeneration and a solution being explored by others’ (Gideon Seymour, Fabric, Bradford)*

4.6 In some areas, the risk for property owners is removed virtually altogether where local authorities or other established organisations step in as intermediaries and take on the leases themselves and then in turn sub-let to community groups, taking on any risks themselves.

4.7 In the main, meanwhile uses are for charitable or socially beneficial purposes, run by community or voluntary groups. As noted earlier, there are also sometimes commercial occupiers who are interested in such spaces, which obviously increases the potential for landlords to make profits out of such arrangements as the occupiers are profit-making, although this represents a small proportion of meanwhile use today.

### **Benefits to community groups and occupiers**

4.8 The principal occupiers of meanwhile spaces are small, local charities, community groups or social enterprises who want to make use of low cost (or no cost) space to promote their aims. There are many advantages to meanwhile use for such groups:

- **Low cost, low commitment space** – For community groups with few resources there are obvious benefits of being able to use space for a few months (or even a few years) at low cost and without a commitment to a long term lease. For groups looking to get established or evolving quickly, short term space can be ideal.
- **High profile space** – For some projects – like arts or cultural activities or ethical shops – where profile matters, being able to use a vacant shop unit in a busy shopping street can provide high visibility that they would simply not be able to afford otherwise. This can also improve the chances of generating an income for these organisations and helping them to establish themselves on a more secure financial footing. Nicola Greenan of the LS14 Trust in Leeds commented that the meanwhile use *‘...has given the Trust the ability to start generating an income and has increased its chance of survival’*.

- **Space for innovation and growth** – A short term space can also provide the chance for a group to try out something new and pilot a service or an activity with relatively low costs and commitment, enabling an informal demand assessment to inform a subsequent case for the activity becoming permanent. The examples below illustrate this. The first example shows how a charity promoting social enterprise in Cambridge was able to use a former bank building in the city centre to pilot the stepping up of its activities. The second example tells how meanwhile use provided the breakthrough required for a new visitor attraction in Scarborough, which has been able to secure greater funding since.

Table 4 -1: Examples of innovation and growth...

**Beginspace, Cambridge: Social enterprise in a former bank...**

Beginspace has allowed City Life to promote themselves within the city and to test new models of business support. This is likely to enhance future projects: for example, they are planning on having drop-in business support within a new multi purpose centre currently under development. They have also learned simple elements, such as the success of providing coffee to put people at ease and engage them in a substantial conversation. They also learned that the informal setting, due to the limitations in terms of furnishing, created a beneficial relaxed atmosphere.

City Life will shortly be making a presentation to Regional Cities East, to explain the model for Beginspace, as they believe that this kind of short-term drop-in centre could be reproduced in other cities.

**Maritime Heritage Centre, Scarborough: Breakthrough for a new attraction...**

In November 2009, the new Scarborough Maritime Heritage Centre opened for the first time, in a former shop building on one of the main streets leading to the town's harbour. The Trust that runs it had tried for years to attract support for the idea but had struggled to attract funding without demonstrating the demand for it. The ability to pilot the idea in a low-cost meanwhile arrangement has provided the breakthrough they were looking for. They were given advice and some modest up-front financial support from the Meanwhile Project, to help them get started.

Since opening they have secured a regular flow of visitors and have now received:

- A £20k grant towards their archiving work and £1k from the Major's fund
- Donations of further artefacts expanding their collection by 10-20%

The project is now looking to build momentum and secure the support for a permanent centre. Lindy Rowland from the Centre commented:

*"The process was really straightforward. Once we got the funding and got the keys we were open within 10 days!"*

- 4.9 For community groups, issues of concern can centre on the potential complexity and risks of taking on a lease, sometimes for the first time. However, the experience shows that for most the process is relatively straightforward and quick with arrangements often put in place within a few weeks. The availability of expert help from such organisations as Meanwhile Space can also help a lot. The potential for ongoing support from DTA can help the meanwhile use lead to longer term community asset ownership, as in Seacroft.

**Wider public benefits**

- 4.10 There is also evidence of benefits from meanwhile uses accruing to the wider community, neighbouring properties, future generations and society more generally. These benefits fall into a number of categories:
- **Maintaining vibrancy** – bringing an empty property back into use can help to maintain levels of activity on a street, including the number of pedestrians, which can have a direct benefit to neighbouring shops and offices.

- **Improving visual attractiveness** – refurbishing or reusing premises or land usually results in improving its aesthetic appeal, benefiting the quality of life for local residents. As one council officer confirms:

*“It does help to brighten up areas, especially where there are lots of empty shops...”* (Michael Hambridge, Hastings Borough Council)

- **Attracting visitors and investors** – a new use, particularly if it is retail, leisure or cultural, can be quite eye-catching and can raise the profile of the premises or site itself, bringing new visitors to that place and even investors. Sometimes a meanwhile use can accelerate the search for a new commercial user for a building.
- **Preventing area blight or decline** – where a concentration of premises fall out of use, the collective impact on an area can be quite serious, sometimes attracting crime and vandalism. Maintaining active use can deter problems like this and help to manage areas that have suffered in the recession, until more permanent solutions can be found.
- **Making community services more accessible** – many of the community groups that take up meanwhile use are providing services – e.g. learning, debt advice, counselling, business start up support – to their local community and such use can allow them to provide these services in more accessible places. This can raise the profile and take up of their services.
- **Strengthening the third sector** – providing cheap and low commitment space for small local groups can provide a boost for the local third sector, helping to unlock local innovation and creativity and enabling the development and growth of community groups. The opportunities that are developed can also help to strengthen working relationships and local partnerships between third sector, public sector and private sector. As one group in Leeds reminds us, they exist to benefit others:
 

*‘Meanwhile use has given the Trust a base to operate from and to demonstrate they have a role to play in the community...it gives small organisations the opportunity to work within communities and to have a social and economic impact on an area’* (Nicola Greenan, LS14 Trust)
- **Promoting wildlife and green space** – temporary building sites can represent a surprising asset for local wildlife as well as open green space, making for more attractive spaces.

4.11 All of these benefits are to the advantage not just of the occupiers or the property owners but neighbouring properties, the local council and the wider community. The modest costs of meanwhile use can sometimes help to prevent more serious urban problems developing, which may cost significantly more to manage in the long term. The types of wider benefits that can be delivered are illustrated with these examples:

- The *Bradford Urban Garden* is promoting biodiversity and promoting environmental education and has attracted interest from local businesses looking to support it, and the Royal Horticultural Society nationally.

- The *Coventry Canal Basin Warehouse* has been used as a meanwhile space since 1980, providing studios and workspace for artists, makers and small start up creative businesses
- The *Peoples Supermarket Camden* has established a community supermarket that is owned, run by and serves local people, selling local produce.
- The *Music Mentoring Scheme* in Bradford offers the opportunity for local young people excluded from school to develop skills and confidence through music.

## Costs, risks and issues

4.12 Clearly, the process of establishing meanwhile use does entail some costs, as already noted:

- For the property owners/leaseholders there is usually a financial upside to most arrangements. The main issue is in managing any risks from a short term occupation, and the costs of establishing the new lease, which is why the standard Meanwhile Lease was developed to address these concerns. Practical experience suggests that this is sufficient for most owners' purposes and is easy to use.
- For councils, the waiving of empty property business rates entails a modest loss of revenue in the short term, but the wider 'place benefits' should outweigh this. The national system of business rates at present contains some disincentives for local authorities to engage in meanwhile use, which would benefit from review.
- For occupiers, the use of premises usually entails some running costs – utility bills, insurance, basic maintenance and sometimes adaption of the space for temporary use – but these are usually significant lower than any commercial arrangement.

4.13 The savings that accrue to each of these groups of stakeholders in both the short term and long term makes meanwhile use a viable and intelligent option in many circumstances.

## 5: Making it happen

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- 5.1 This section summarises the advice and support now available to promote meanwhile use in the UK.

### Available support

- 5.2 There is a growing range of support available to support property owners, local authorities or community groups interesting in progressing a meanwhile activity.

- 5.3 The initial and primary source of formal good practice advice is the *Looking after our town centres* guide, previously mentioned in this report. This has been supplemented with a dedicated programme of support. The *Meanwhile Project* is a dedicated initiative set up to support meanwhile activity, led by the Development Trusts Association and Meanwhile Space. Its recently launched Meanwhile Project website<sup>9</sup> provides a wealth of information and tools to facilitate the uptake of meanwhile use. These include:

- Meanwhile Leases for property and land
- Access to the experiences of over 500 members of the shared-interest network ([www.meanwhitespace.ning.com](http://www.meanwhitespace.ning.com)) and to the expertise of the DTA's practitioner consultancy service, the Pool
- 'How to' guides including the Meanwhile Intermediaries Handbook capturing the experiences of Meanwhile Space in fulfilling this role
- A Business Rates matrix<sup>10</sup> to explain and simplify the current position around non-domestic rates and clarify recommendations for local authorities in considering their rate relief strategies
- A Meanwhile insurance policy, provided by Oxygen Insurance, currently only available for properties in which Meanwhile Space is the intermediary
- Cash grants including 'Go and See Grants' available through the Empty Shops Network to cover expenses for Meanwhilers to visit other projects.

- 5.4 The Meanwhile Project's mission to promote meanwhile activity also includes monthly features in New Start magazine and a forthcoming round-table hosted by Property Week. In addition, the team are in the process of arranging for an expert in empty shops projects to run UK training and promotional activities in the near future.

- 5.5 In January 2010, a broader *Meanwhile Coalition* was formed which includes Meanwhile Space, Spacemakers, Empty Shops Network, Ethical Property Foundation, Federation of City Farms & Gardens, Beekeepers and Slackspace Colchester. Actions that have emerged so far include the 'Go and See Grants' detailed above and a series of Meanwhile Tours (week-long

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<sup>9</sup> [www.meanwhile.org.uk](http://www.meanwhile.org.uk)

<sup>10</sup> Checked by CLG Business Rates Division

training events run by the Empty Shops Network) in Brixton, Shoreham, Carlisle and Coventry, to build the capacity of local authority officers and property agents to help them become effective enablers of meanwhile use.

#### 5.6 Other sources of support for meanwhile use include:

- The Space Makers Agency, which has a forum of over 460 members discussing the development of collaborative spaces to work and play, including vacant spaces.
- The Empty Shops Network consists of people using empty shops and void spaces across the UK to create temporary pop up shops, community spaces and art galleries, in an attempt to support local businesses by increasing footfall. It provides an online list of empty shops projects across the UK. The Empty Shops Network message board has around 70 members and offers a space for people to discuss projects, ask practical questions and offer advice. It also produces practical resources like the Empty Shops Workbook<sup>11</sup> funded by the Meanwhile Project, and can provide low-cost consultancy on setting up strategies and engaging local groups to develop activity in empty shops.
- A-N (The Artists Information Company) produces publications and programmes for artists and the visual arts sector, identifying changing trends and new needs. It is involved in developing support around empty shop use.

## Local authorities

5.7 Local authorities can play a key role in promoting meanwhile use and making it easier to achieve, with a key opportunity in particular for town centre managers. The Empty Shops Handbook suggests a range of practical options for local authorities to pursue if they wish to, as summarised below.

Table 5-1: How local authorities can encourage meanwhile use

- Provide financial support for projects or start up businesses
- Work in partnership with others to find suitable community groups to occupy space
- Search for commercial landlords to discuss/negotiate potential uses for empty shops
- Reduce overheads on their own vacant properties to encourage tenants
- Provide up to 100% rate relief for charities and social enterprises
- Act as an intermediary, taking temporary leases on privately owned property and granting interim licenses to local groups
- Use Local Development Orders<sup>12</sup> to speed up change of use that would otherwise require planning permission
- Use Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Orders to grant automatic planning permission for the temporary use of land for up to 28 days in any calendar year (14 days for local markets)
- Gain/grant advertising consent to display adverts in empty shop windows
- Use licensing powers to permit community use

Source: Empty Shops Handbook

<sup>11</sup> <http://artistsandmakers.com/images/emptyshopsworkbook1.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> In June 2009, the government pledged to remove the requirement that LDOs be linked with policies in the Local Development Plans allowing them to be implemented with greater speed and flexibility

## Funding sources

- 5.8 There is a range of funding sources that can be accessed for meanwhile projects, including: The Arts Council, CLG, European funding, the Asset Transfer Unit, local enterprise agencies, Business Link, community foundations, the Princes Trust, and the Cooperative Community Dividend Fund. It should be noted that there is a mix of funding available to different parties, making partnership working on such projects extremely beneficial. For example, community organisations are eligible for landfill tax credits and charitable trust awards whilst local authorities have access to lottery funding, European funding and central government grants.

## 6: The Future for Meanwhile Use

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### Progress so far

- 6.1 Meanwhile use projects are operating in every region of the UK, encompassing a wide array of activities in a diverse range of properties and sites. Some exist for a few weeks, some last for years. They provide social and economic benefits for the property owners/leaseholders, the occupiers and the wider community.
- 6.2 The savings that accrue to each of the groups of stakeholders in both the short term and long term makes meanwhile use a viable and intelligent option in many circumstances. It is a relatively simple and effective way of making efficient use of existing property assets.
- 6.3 Dedicated organisations now exist to promote meanwhile activity, with a growing range of tools and advice available to support those engaged in it, together with standard Meanwhile Leases for use in establishing new arrangements. A significant amount of progress has been made in the last year or so since the initiative was sparked by the impact of the recession on the high street. It has been led by the voluntary sector, and supported by the public and private sector. Interest in meanwhile use appears to be gathering momentum, as does the number of projects getting off the ground.

### Challenges and Opportunities

- 6.4 Given the economic and social value of meanwhile use, how can this agenda be progressed? A number of challenges/opportunities are set out here for consideration by public policy makers, the voluntary sector and the property sector:
  - **Integrating meanwhile use into local public sector asset management** – a strategic and consistent approach to meanwhile use by local authorities and their partners could help to identify the most appropriate land and property for meanwhile use and ensure a more co-ordinated approach to arranging projects. As a cost effective use of existing resources for wider benefit, there is a case to be made for meanwhile use being an integral part of local asset management even at a time of spending cuts.
  - **Match-making made easier** – there may be willing occupiers in an area and willing landlords, but matching the two together can sometimes be harder than it ought to be. This is particularly the case for the owners of small properties who may not be well networked or part of national organisations. There may be a role for local chambers of commerce or local partnerships in putting together a brokering service that can smooth the paths to matching up opportunities with occupiers.
  - **Clarifying planning policies** – the application of planning law appears to be inconsistent between areas, with some areas proving quite restrictive on meanwhile uses in respect of changes of use. A consistent national policy or at least a ‘model’ policy for local adoption may help to iron out unnecessary problems, whilst still allowing legitimate planning concerns to be properly addressed.

- **Reviewing national business rate policy** – there are presently some disincentives for local authorities in progressing meanwhile use as it can leave them ‘out of pocket’ on business rates compared with simply leaving properties empty, for which government provides compensation. The system should be reviewed to ensure that the efficient use of property is built in as core objective.
- **Building in meanwhile use to development contracts** – for the redevelopment of significant sites, particularly those that may take several years, it may be possible for local planning authorities to insist on appropriate meanwhile uses as part of the planning permission.
- **Extending meanwhile use to ‘out of hours’ buildings** – there is a case for extending the use of public buildings beyond their normal operating hours (e.g. school halls, libraries), to make fuller use of them for community benefit. The piloting of ‘moonlight’ meanwhile uses may be worth progressing through demonstration projects.
- **Encouraging meanwhile uses as a practical test-bed approach within masterplanning processes for large sites and regeneration schemes** – meanwhile use can clarify the viability and desirability of a wide range of uses, including desire-lines, offering potentially significant savings in large-scale redevelopments by testing assumptions at an early stage.

6.5 In pursuing all of these potential initiatives, there remains a clear role for government in ensuring that progress is made and in providing the limited finance necessary to pilot and demonstrate the new ideas.

6.6 Finally, as the last recession recedes, we must recognise that some vacant sites and buildings may never return to their original commercial use and that sometimes a more permanent solution may need to be found. In these places, meanwhile uses will need to give way at some point to longer term regeneration strategies.

# 7: Case Studies

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## Nomad Creative Space, Hastings

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Based in a former bank building in Hastings, Nomad Creative Space is a shared space organised by Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and Meanwhile Space, where artists can work, exhibit and stage special events and workshops. The lease ran for six months from late September 2009. Six artists formed the core group and used the building throughout the period; others were involved on an occasional basis. It was originally intended to be open to the public between 1am and 4pm, although in practice the artists were unable to keep it open consistently within this period.

As a joint venture between HBC and Meanwhile Space. HBC set the terms and conditions and Meanwhile Space took on the management of the project. Initially Meanwhile Space worked with HBC who were leasing from the landlord. An agreement was reached to pay a fixed rate contribution to cover utilities and other running costs. Then local artists and arts companies were invited to apply to be part of the space and a participant agreement was drawn up for the artists with Meanwhile Space effectively acting as an intermediary landlord.

A business consultant was sent by HBC to undertake four sessions with the resident artists to help them understand the centre's objectives and to formulate a plan to achieve these. This part of the process appears to have had limited success and the artists remained unclear about the operation and requirements. In reality it appears to have evolved quite organically, with input from various parties.

### Benefits

Meanwhile Space brought a credibility to the artists involved allowing them to use space that they would otherwise have been unlikely to access. Specifically the artists' achievements are:

- 10 exhibitions were developed 'in house' and space was hired out for other exhibitions for 3.5 weeks
- 4 workshops were held
- 6 artists used studio space throughout, with others involved on an occasional basis
- A wide range of artists were brought together in specific projects, from school children to professional artists

HBC have also learned a lot from this and three other projects involving artists using shop space. Meanwhile Space has been a catalyst focusing attention on utilising empty spaces and this is now embedded into HBC's three year cultural strategy.

Michael Hambridge, Hastings Borough Council:

*"It does help to brighten up areas, especially where there are lots of empty shops and it gives opportunities to people where they wouldn't otherwise have them"*

Sarah Yates, Nomad Creative Space, Hastings:

*"Meanwhile gives us more credibility."*

### Issues and learning points

- The Meanwhile Use strategy can act as a catalyst giving credibility and focus to the utilisation of empty space
  - Consultees were largely positive about using Meanwhile funding again. HBC are currently drawing up new criteria for similar schemes, following learning from this and three other arts projects. The key elements for this are (in draft):
    - It must be made a clear condition that centres must be open from at least 11am to 4pm
    - Projects must display positive images that enhance the area
    - Projects must be capable of moving if their lease is cancelled
    - Projects must have planned engagement of passers by and local communities or education groups
    - In shared schemes of this nature, there may be value in creating a network of spaces that artist can move between. This would give continuity, as things would no longer be dependent on one lease
  - Licenses for performance or trade generally take too long to apply for a scheme of this nature. It would be valuable if this could be speeded up in some way, or if specific packages of licenses could be made available as part of the scheme.
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## **Beginspace, Cambridge**

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Beginspace was housed in a former bank building in the centre of Cambridge. Its overall aim was to support people with “an idea to start something to benefit themselves or others”. This took the form of a drop in centre providing support for social enterprise, community projects and new businesses. Along with the mentoring services, incubation space was available in the form of, hot-desk facilities, shared work spaces and meeting rooms. The centre opened on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October and the lease period was extended from an initial end date of Christmas 2009 to run to April 2010.

Cambridge Borough Council approached City Life, who already ran a social enterprise support centre in a low footfall area of Cambridge, to see if they were interested in bringing social enterprise to an empty shop in a city centre location using Meanwhile funding. Working with Jeremy Parsons who already used some of their shared workspace, they formally proposed the idea of Beginspace in September. Landlord Michael Wiseman was aware that there was a lot of empty property within Cambridge and was proactively working with the council and other stakeholders to look at making use of empty shops. As a result of this process Meanwhile Space approached Michael to see if he had any suitable premises. Michael already knew Eddie through his work looking at utilising empty shops and the Council vouched for City Life, so he agreed to allow them to use the vacant bank building on a short-term basis, as long as they covered basic costs.

Meanwhile funding provided a total of £30k which covered basic running costs and furnishings and provided a basic wage for one centre manager. Beginspace is due to close at the end of April. It is likely that City Life will transfer aspects of the model to their new 600sqft multipurpose centre which is currently being developed.

### **Benefits**

Beginspace’s own records state that in the 17 weeks up to the middle of March, Beginspace had led to:

- 425 Initial Conversations
- 99 Enterprises Coached (At least 1 session. Several enterprises have received multiple sessions)
- 19 Enterprises Actively Being Incubated (Incubation as defined by: development of idea, defining business model, viability testing, marketing strategy, sales strategy, business development and general pre and post start up mentoring)
- 9 Enterprises Provided with Regular Workspace Provision
- 2 Enterprises Provided with Window Display Space
- 2 Artists Provided with Gallery Space
- 2 Volunteers Trained in Coaching Skills

### **Strategic benefits**

The short-term nature of the centre meant that clients had to be focused and want to move forward quickly.

The project has allowed the council, landlord and the delivery partners to build relationships that they view as valuable and could produce other benefits in the future.

Beginspace has allowed City Life to promote themselves within the city and to test new models of business support. This is likely to enhance future projects: for example, they are planning on having drop-in business support within a new multi purpose centre currently under development. They have also learned simple elements, such as the success of providing coffee to put people at ease and engage them in a substantial conversation. They also learned that the informal setting, due to the limitations in terms of furnishing, created a beneficial relaxed atmosphere.

City Life will shortly be making a presentation to Regional Cities East, to explain the model for Beginspace, as they believe that this kind of short-term drop-in centre could be reproduced in other cities.

### *Benefits to the Landlord*

The landlord stated that they benefited through good publicity from helping Beginspace, costs and rates being covered and through the fact that the building was occupied and looked after.

### **Issues and learning points**

- Meanwhile use can allow existing organisations to increase their profile and experiment with new models of working
  - There were difficulties around the speed of the funding, due to the general mechanics of the process and the short time scale. This caused some difficulties and meant that some costs were incurred, before the funding was available to cover them. In future, forward funding would be very beneficial to a project of this nature
  - The limited work that was possible on the outside appearance of the centre, due to the high costs involved, meant that the benefits to the high street were not fully realised. In future it would be beneficial to provide specific funding and support for this. For example, chain shops benefit from economies of scale; could Meanwhile Space facilitate this process across multiple schemes and achieve similar cost savings?
  - Michael Wiseman, Landlord: *‘It’s just a willingness to do it and try to keep it simple’*
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## Scarborough Maritime Heritage Centre

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The centre opened on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009 in a former shop building on one of the main streets leading to Scarborough's harbour. The centre, run by volunteers, is used to archive and display Scarborough's maritime heritage. The shop front is set up as a museum and typically receives 10-25 visitors each day; this is likely to increase significantly during its first summer.

Prior to receiving Meanwhile Use funding, the Maritime Heritage Trust had met approximately once a month since 2004 with the aim of establishing a heritage centre. They had made little progress, struggling to demonstrate the concept without a building and struggling to attract funding without demonstrating the concept. Trust member Lindy Rowley became aware of the Meanwhile scheme through her involvement with a number of local forums and volunteered the Heritage Centre as a Meanwhile project. A shop was identified through an existing relationship between a Councillor and a local landlord. The landlord was keen to support the project and agreed a favourable lease running for 12 months at £2.5k, around half of the building's market value.

The applications process was handled by the Council who worked alongside the Trust to fill in the necessary forms. Meanwhile funding provided £4k which covered the rent and basic running costs. The Trust also received assistance from Coast and Moors Voluntary Action who provided health and safety checks and gave advice on maintaining the necessary paperwork.

### Benefits

The funding and facilitation of the process has allowed the Trust to establish a base for the first time and this has been hugely beneficial. The relatively small amount of funding from the Meanwhile Use scheme appears to have genuinely acted as a catalyst to start a centre which, after five years with little progress, is now being recognised and building considerable momentum. Since opening they have received:

- A £20k grant towards their archiving work
- £1k from the Major's fund
- Approximately £20 each week in donations from visitors
- Further artefacts expanding their collection by 10-20%

The local council also stated that the appearance of the town has been improved as the centre has replaced an empty shop and that in the long term the centre can add to the tourism offer and the sense of community in the area.

The landlord stated that, along with supporting the community, rent paid by the centre did provide a small income to him.

Culturally, the preservation of the Trust's artefacts is also a benefit; previously they were stored around many different houses, with a large selection kept in Lindy's garage. The improved archiving process will ensure that they are both preserved and recorded.

Lindy Rowland, Scarborough Maritime Heritage Centre:

*"The process was really straightforward. Once we got the funding and got the keys we were open within 10 days!"*

*"It's given us a home and somewhere that the public can access us. It's been of enormous benefit to us and the local community and visitors. We have a sign in book where people can comment – we've had brilliant comments!"*

### Issues and learning points

This project demonstrates that small amounts of funding and assistance can have significant catalytic impacts

The personal connections with the local landlord have been a crucial element to the process. A potential barrier to Meanwhile Use in other spaces is the difficulty of engaging with large property companies who do not hold the same level of local interest.

The Maritime Heritage Centre Trust are very happy with the centre and say that it's only major limitation is the limited space: they would ideally like a building that's twice as big

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## Seacroft Digital Lounge

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The meanwhile Digital Lounge Project is led by the LS14 Trust, a development trust looking for a base to work from. They have been working with the local council, DTA, and East North East Homes (ENEH) to secure an empty shop for this purpose and have now found a suitable location. The project is to be located in the centre of Seacroft, a council estate in North East Leeds, with a population of approximately 18,000 which suffers from high levels of deprivation, unemployment and low levels of educational achievement. The space will continue to house the local radio station and provide a temporary home for the Seacroft Film Factory run by Space 2. The 'Front Room' steering group is to be set up to run the project consisting of the LS14 Board Members and residents who will act as an informal board. The project is to be managed on a day to day basis by two centre coordinators, with the support of one part time assistant recruited through the Future Jobs Fund and four or five volunteers. The Trust is in the final stages of negotiation with ENEH (who have been keen to utilise the property for some time) and hopes to secure the use of the property for six to twelve months.

Research carried out by the Trust within the LS14 community identified that the Seacroft estate lacked provision for access to the internet, digital resources and new technologies, outside of the basic IT offered at the local library. The residents had shown great interest in the creation of a more informal interactive 'digital lounge'. It was decided by the Trust that the project would be a public facing temporary space whilst they raise the funding to purchase a permanent base (a former pub they intend to obtain through community asset transfer). Funding has been awarded through the Meanwhile Project (£15,000) for the refitting of the shop, IT and gaming equipment, security measures, running costs, broadband, phone and a small catering facility. ENEH have offered to help with some of the work such as a new kitchen and refitting the space. They have also expressed an interest in using the space themselves for community consultations and meetings.

The process has been very streamlined, taking 2 weeks from start to finish. In late February 2010, Nicola mentioned the Trust's intentions at a DTA meeting and was made aware of the support offered by the Meanwhile Project for such projects. An application was quickly made and submitted before the financial year end. The application process itself was said to be quick and simple to follow and confirmed success in days. The Trust was put in touch with Healy Development Trust by the DTA who had experience of fitting out a digital space who assisted them with the costings information. The Meanwhile Project was also very helpful in creating some of the information required for the application. The Trust intends to keep the premises as a satellite space once it secures the transfer of the pub. The nature of the project fits well with another project being delivered by UK Online who are working in collaboration with the LS14 Trust and sharing good practice

### Benefits

- Gives the Trust a base to operate from and demonstrate they have a role to play in the community
- The funding has given the Trust the ability to start generating an income and increase their chance of survival, without the support the Trust would still be searching for funding and suitable premises.
- The project will provide the first community space in the area, access to IT and training
- Potential partnership working with: ENEH, Seacroft Womens Action Group; Seacroft Green Residents Association; Local Area Management; LEGI; Screen Yorkshire; Find Your Talent; Space 2; East Leeds FM.
- The development of long term community engagement (including intergenerational interaction) and a sense of pride and ownership over activities spaces and initiatives in their area.
- Bring service providers into the area, which in turn will generate income
- Works required are to be carried out by local tradesmen

### Issues and learning points

- Lack of funding to make the premises accessible by the disabled is something they are trying to address
- Access to a surveyor/planner during the application process to advise them on whether or not the space identified was suitable for their needs and what they could and could not do with the space would have been beneficial
- Initially the Council had little knowledge of the Meanwhile Project and need to be more aware of such schemes. That said the Trust have received a large amount of support from the three ward councillors
- The premises had a sitting partial tenant, the local radio station who were not 100% behind it, this is now resolved and the radio station will now become a tenant of the Trust.
- Danger of becoming reliant on the facility and it disappearing after 12 months. However as there have never been any community facilities before it is worth the risk. The Trust are holding an event prior to the launch of the project to inform the community of the temporary nature of the project and to decide on a name for the project as a way of generating community buy in
- The Trust would like advice on the actual running of the space and the relevant policies and procedures they need to be aware of as well as how to prepare and understand what opening a space up to the public involves. The Trust is currently unsure where they need to go for this.

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## Bradford Urban Garden

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## Bradford Urban Garden

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Fabric, Bradford's arts development organisation, is working with the Council and developers Westfield to develop a meanwhile use for its planned Broadway retail development in the centre of Bradford. Since the foundations and the basement of the development have been completed, there has been little or no activity on the site and there is no immediate prospect of building work resuming.

Westfield was approached in autumn 2009 by local artists and organisations at a regeneration conference. In October, an informal coalition of artists and activists, referred to as 'Spartacus', covered the hoardings surrounding the development site in cartoons and poems and changed the hoardings featuring the developers name to 'Wastefield'. Following this a meeting was held between Westfield, the Council and Fabric to explore alternative uses for the site. The proposal put forward by Fabric developed through discussions with local artists, to create an urban garden with opportunities for arts and creative activity, was accepted in favour of the original car park suggestion put forward by Westfield as they understood the need for community engagement.

A project team was set up which included all relevant Council departments and Fabric; members of the private sector were brought in later. The application process was very simple and a decision was made very quickly. The DTA and the Meanwhile Project provided practical help and support along the way including sites visits. The access to helpful online tools and advice from the DTA was also highly regarded.

Work has now begun on phase one of the urban garden (to be completed by June 2010) which is to include broad pathways bordered by wild flowers and grasses, spaces for sculpture and installations, art work by schools, community organisations and local artists on the relocated hoardings, spaces for performance, arts and crafts markets and film screenings in keeping with Bradford's status as the worlds first UNESCO City of Film. There are also plans for the basement area to be used for large scale installations with viewing windows cut into the hoardings. The Council, Westfield and Yorkshire Forward have each invested £100,000 to enable the transformation of the site. In addition, Fabric has received £25,000 from the Meanwhile Project to fund the arts and creative additions to the project.

Responsibility for the site sits with the Council as regards public liability, cleanliness, health and safety. A multi-partner/member advisory group to manage the programme going forward has been established including SLAs and Terms of Reference. Westfield has a 999 year lease from the Council for the site, however for the purposes of the Meanwhile Project the Council has leased the site back for two to three years with a three month notice period and will licence the space to Fabric with SLA agreement. There is also an agreement with Westfield to provide the resources to return the site back to its original state.

### Benefits

- Large areas of the site which are currently inaccessible will be opened up for public use, reconnecting parts of the city centre and creating new links between public transport hubs and shopping areas.
- Improved perception of the city centre, helping to differentiate the local authority area with other places
- It is envisaged that thousands of people will use the site each week with many hundreds actually engaging with the programme of activities planned for the space during weekends and summer evenings. Estimated that a number (in the region of 20-25) of short term (6 months) jobs will be created by the project through the Future Jobs Fund. The RHS have shown interest in the project and are looking for ways to involve the young and BMEs in the site. Bradford Chamber of Commerce are also interested in being involved as the project provides an opportunity for companies to engage in community projects and fulfil their CSR responsibilities
- Positive PR for Westfield
- Strong evidence of partnership working between the Council's internal departments and external partners as well as people offering to do much of the work for free in their own time.
- The learning from this process is being fed back to the DTA to assist in the development of a Meanwhile lease for land.

### Issues and learning points

- Delays due to Westfield's ongoing dispute with the Council over the end date for the development's completion. An agreement was reached to separate the two activities.
  - The situation was very political, especially around the amount of money that had already been spent on the site by the Council resulting in secrecy and the necessary external perception that the project was Westfield's. Fabric would have liked the opportunity to involve long term stakeholders earlier on, greater consultation would have created a greater sense of ownership and prevented the challenge of having to get people on board later on
  - The Council were project lead and had the majority of the skills required in house such as physical design, planning, legal, etc Planning has been a big issue for the site because work had to be started concurrently with the submission of the planning application due to the need to synchronise activity with the planting season. The Councils Planning Department were extremely helpful and flexible about this issue.
  - Without the funding from Meanwhile Project the development process would have been marginalised and the Council would have reverted to what they were familiar with, with limited opportunity for the VCS to participate.
-