



## **ELLIOT GROUP TO SUBMIT ITS PLANNING APPLICATION FOR TRANSFORMATION OF BEETHAM PLAZA**

### **New boutique hotel planned. Permission sought to re-site 'bucket fountain'**

Liverpool developer Elliot Group will tomorrow, Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April, submit a planning application for the multi-million pound transformation of Liverpool's Beetham Plaza. The developer acquired the long leasehold on the site in the new year.

Its proposals centre on re-siting Richard Huws's famous 'bucket fountain' and developing a new luxury boutique hotel on the plaza's eastern boundary.

Discussions, described as 'positive', remain on-going with Liverpool council regarding a new home for Huws's unique water installation, which is acknowledged as being hidden from the majority of Liverpool's residents and tourists alike.

Should permission be granted the fountain would be refurbished and re-sited at the developer's expense and £15m invested in a new boutique hotel and the refurbishment of the plaza's public realm.

The mixed use development was a trail-blazing regeneration project in the late nineties and its 42 luxury residential units have continued to hold their value since. The scheme includes the highly-regarded restaurants Etsu and Silk Road, a 4,500 sq ft office occupied by a local law firm and an underground car park.

Commenting recently on his proposals, Elliot Lawless of Elliot Group said: "Beetham Plaza remains one of the most successful residential developments on Liverpool's waterfront but the public square behind needs more animation and life to support its commercial tenants. If we re-site the fountain it will enable us to develop a new hotel and new ground floor restaurant and café space whilst investing in the public realm and a new lighting scheme. Residents and businesses will share in the benefits of this investment and the extra footfall."

The developer recently asked the public for ideas as to suitably visible locations for the fountain, with Williamson Square and a refurbished Strand both popular suggestions.

“The fountain is a one-off but it’s hidden away in a corner that both locals and tourists rarely find. It merits a more prominent location so that it can become one of the city’s ‘must Instagram’ attractions,” he said.

The proposed hotel development, if granted planning permission, would support 25 new jobs when operational and would be managed by Liverpool-based EPIC, who recently opened the new Seel Street Hotel that forms a centrepiece of Elliot Group’s £100m Wolstenholme Square project. Elliot Group has briefed existing residents and business owners of Beetham Plaza about its proposals and invited them to comment further on them prior to submission.

The architect for the proposals is Falconer Chester Hall. Zerum is acting as planning consultancy.

**Ends.**

#### **About Richard Huws’s *Piazza Fountain*:**

Richard Huws’ remarkable *Piazza Fountain*, known to Liverpoolians as *the bucket fountain*, was commissioned by Merseyside Civic Society in 1962 to commemorate the start of the Tryweryn Scheme, which would provide drinking water to Liverpool. It was completed in 1967.

The scheme itself was controversial, involving as it did the displacement of an entire Welsh-speaking valley community and the loss of their farms, homes and places of worship. They even had to disinter their dead. Huws, being Welsh, personally distanced himself from this.

The focus of the fountain was rushing water and Huws memorably noted that he spent ‘a week on the design and two years on the engineering.’ It is the last such fountain of its type in the world.

Beetham Plaza (then called Goree Piazza) was the promoters’ fourth choice location, the fountain originally having been proposed for a new pedestrian precinct at the junction of Bold Street and Hanover Street. Planning and other considerations meant that this site, along with ones at the junction of Parker Street and Church Street and in Williamson Square, were all discounted.

As luck would have it, the developers of Goree Piazza, Thames Estates and Investments Ltd, were looking for something to animate the square behind their new office development and offered the space for the fountain. And so, a whole five years after it was commissioned, it finally found a home.

The fountain was built by engineers from Cammell Laird shipyard, where Huws had once worked. They placed a commemorative plaque on the installation in the shape of an African shield in acknowledgement of Goree’s place in Liverpool’s slaving history but, of course, the fountain itself was all about Welsh water and its link with slavery mere happenstance. (Goree is an island off the coast of Senegal at which Liverpool slaving ships bought slaves for the second leg of their infamous ‘triangular trade’).

Similar confusion exists about it being a ‘sound sculpture’. It isn’t, although Richard Huws did however acknowledge that “the acoustic value [of the sculpture] would be tremendous” and that

siting it in a more enclosed space would aid appreciation of such. He favoured Williamson Square for that purpose, but his wishes were ignored.