

## Lodge to be turned into cafe

A VICTORIAN lodge is to be transformed into a cafe as part of a masterplan aimed at reviving a tired Plymouth park.

The man behind the popular cafe at Devonport Park is heading up the project to breathe fresh life into Victoria Park.

Locals have bemoaned its decline in recent years, complaining of graffiti, boarded up old buildings, dumped rubbish and overgrown weeds.

But now the park, in Millbridge, looks set for a major boost as plans to turn its Victorian lodge into a community cafe were given the go-ahead by Plymouth City Council planners.

There will be indoor and outdoor seating areas and a sloped footpath leading into the entrance of the building.

Victoria Lodge, as it is known, used to be home to the park-keeper at the start of the 20th century, but has more recently been used as flats.

The two-storey building – opened with Victoria Park in 1903 – was the site's first structure before three Anderson shelters were built to protect people during the Second World War Blitz.

The council rubber-stamped the plan on the condition delivery vehicles follow strict rules and that birds nesting in the area are protected.

There were concerns from one neighbour about the cafe facing their home. Others wel-



comed the idea. One local resident, 45-year-old Michelle Quintrell, recently told The Herald: "People sleep in the bushes, needles have been found and the play park has been cordoned off for months as it has suspected lead paint."

Another said: "I am 84 years old and live on my own. I would

find it a great asset to be able to walk down to the park, watch the activities there and be able to have a cup of tea or coffee while doing so. Other park users, particularly children and their parents, would find it a good asset."

Dr Mike Blow, a Plymouth University lecturer who lives

nearby, writing in support of the plans, added: "I think it would be wonderful to have a cafe next to the playground and would provide a real social focal point for the park."

Martin Stephens hopes to emulate the success of his cafe in Devonport Park, which opened in 2010. "Victoria Park

hasn't benefited from the same investment as Devonport Park has," said Mr Stephens.

"Should our planning application go through we would look into working with community groups to improve the park.

"The Devonport cafe is a blueprint for what should be happening in parks."

## Protest at bike policy on trains

THOUSANDS of cyclists are protesting against a new policy forcing passengers to reserve bicycle spaces on high-speed services to and from Plymouth.

Last month, Great Western Railway (GWR) introduced a new policy saying reservations for bikes will be mandatory and travellers wanting to take full-sized bikes on a train must reserve a space up to two hours before they travel, or even by 6pm the day before in some cases.

More than 7,200 have now signed an online petition, started by Bristol cyclist and regular commuter to London, Gary Fawle, demanding the operator reverses its policy.

Due to cost and "inaccessibility" for cyclists, the 40-year-old has given up on using GWR trains and now takes coaches to London.

Exeter MP and cyclist Ben Bradshaw said the move had been a PR disaster for the firm.

"But the handling of this has been nothing short of a PR disaster for Great Western who still appear to be giving out conflicting advice and not implementing the policy as outlined in a letter to me," he said.

GWR spokesman Dan Panes said: "We are the last train company to implement this across the regional rail network."

# Friends of Maker aim to keep 'vital heritage'

A DEVELOPER has submitted a masterplan to build 30 residential buildings on a much-loved community asset near Plymouth.

Since the Rame Conservation Trust, which previously owned the collection of historic buildings at Maker Heights ran into financial difficulty, a selection of the out-buildings and land were sold to developer Patrick Tilley in 2014.

Initially, Mr Tilley's business, Evolving Places' mission statement was "to create a place for the arts of national importance and international interest," but now residents have been left wondering what the direction of the plans are since the news of housing has emerged.

Maker Heights has long provided a breathtaking space for the community's talent and ventures, including artists, musicians and craftsmen as well as featuring local music, camping and previously the Maker Sunshine Festival.

In the proposal submitted by Evolving Places, it labels a patch of land earmarked as the "Development Area." It reads: "This is the

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area of land that Evolving Places has identified to construct in the region of 30 residential units.

"The land value that this development would create will be used in its entirety to pay for all of the restoration and establishment of its facilities.

"The level of development required will be directly linked to the cost delivering the masterplan to include for adequate site infrastructure and future viability of the trust."

While a portion of the land and tunnel-shaped Nissen huts are still owned by the Edgcombe Estate, Evolving Places has plans to add more Nissen huts which would house a site office, showers, toilets, laundry and washing facilities for the campsite along with car parking for around 50 cars.

Although the Barrack Building, a striking Napoleonic-era structure is said to be owned by the Rame Conservation Trust, Evolving Places has submitted plans for re-development of the building.



In its masterplan for Maker, Evolving Places states that the Barrack Building is to be restored in a manner that could see them being "used in a film set".

But last month, a survey was instructed on the Barrack Building by Evolving Places, which deemed the structure unsafe, closing the building to the artists, musicians and craftspeople with studios inside of it – much to the frustration of the tenants and community.

The Friends of Maker have proposed an alternative plan to create the Rame Community Interest Company (RCIC) to ensure the Barrack Building is saved from developer's hands.

A spokesman from the Friends of

Maker community group said: "The community is rallying together to keep Maker and its vital heritage – building 30 houses is clearly a breach of that as property development would be an eyesore to the surrounding villages of Kingsand and Cawsand.

"We have been given all sorts of information which doesn't add up – Evolving Places are not standing up and doing what they said they would do. They said they wanted to encourage live music and camping, let it remain as a place for the arts – but with 30 residential properties around the site, who will want that?"

"It is a travesty to the heritage of the site no matter who is developing on it."

Since plans to form the RCIC have been put in place by members of the surrounding community and Friends of Maker, a large portion of the £55,000 needed for the Barrack Building's emergency repairs have been pledged.

Over the coming weeks, the Rame Conservation Trust and Evolving Places will be holding public and member consultations.



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