



Foundation Project
New London Centre Project

activity report 2008

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1 Aims of the New London Centre Project

To purchase a large, centrally located property that can present Diamond Way Buddhism to London and its many visitors. This will include a meditation room of greater than 100 square metres, as well as suitable communal facilities.

2 The property

Although the UK sangha continues to be open to the possibility of finding other suitable properties, we have currently identified a property known as "Duthy Hall" as the most suitable property for our purposes.

Duthy Hall is located in the heart of London, five minutes from the world-famous Tate Modern Gallery. With its central location, excellent transport connections, and close proximity of all necessary amenities, the property is ideally situated for our purposes.

The building is an early-20th century, red brick, purpose-built theatre. At the peak of the theatre's prime, it was home to a significant Shakespeare festival. Duthy Hall has been owned by the same family for over 20 years. Although it has ceased to be a theatre for some time now, the owner operates a successful business by renting out the space for rehearsals.

3 Planning status

Although the property's large hall offers a good starting point for our needs, it is unsuitable in other respects. A considerable amount of work will be needed in order to bring the building in line with our requirements. This work will take the form of a considerable re-design of the internal and external structure of the building. Our team of architects (P. Westhoff, R. Assis Rosa, and R. Skok) has come up with some impressive preliminary designs that would provide for the meditation, communal and residential space that we required for a Buddhist centre for London.

The owner has previously applied successfully for planning permission from the local authority that would have seen the entire existing structure removed and replaced with extensive residential blocks. Further, we have become aware of a Christian organization that operates a religious/communal/residential complex nearby; the local authority accepts this in the same local authority area. As obtaining planning permission is potentially a significant obstacle to the project, we see this as a positive indication that our plans, when we get the stage of presenting them to the local authority, will be positively received.

4 Finance

Although this offers the most substantial obstacle to completing the project, this is an area in which the UK sangha has increasingly demonstrated its ability to excel. Over the last few years, we have shown that our spontaneous enthusiasm can be converted into raw, physical currency. As the project as a whole continues to gain momentum, so does the fundraising aspect of the project.

The 108 Club (www.108club.org) is the branch of our charity through which we collect money for the new centre. Although we generate a considerable amount of income from fundraising events like auctions, the 108 Club functions mainly by encouraging people to give to the project on a regular basis. Since its creation in November 2006, membership has grown to an impressive seventy-six regularly contributing members. Collectively, these members currently contribute in excess of GBP 3,800 each month, although this amount increases constantly (almost 50% since September 2008).

Through the use of a special tax relief for charities (Gift Aid) we are able to increase all donations (made by UK tax paying individuals) to the charity by 28%. For example, this increases the monthly 108 Club donations to almost GBP5,000. Additionally, we receive a sensible interest rate from our bank, which means that we have earned almost GBP5,000 on our capital sum so far.

As of 14 January 2009, the 108 Club has generated contributions of GBP225,899. We see this as impressive proof of our ability to financially handle this project.

5 Negotiation

Our first contact with the property's owner was made in August 2008. Since then we have been repeatedly in contact with the owner. In late 2008 Lama O. Nydahl, C. Hartung, Dr. S. James, M. Mueller, and C. Ferrando went to visit the owner. The contact was very positive

and there was a definite amity between our team and the owner. Since then our architectural and construction teams have visited the property to conduct a more extensive investigation of the property.

In early 2009 a small team (Dr. S. James, M. Mueller, Dr. M. Huddleston) went to meet with the owners. At this meeting we presented the owners with the current architectural designs; these were very positively received by the owners, who showed a great deal of interest in and enthusiasm for the project.

6 Project Representatives

In the UK, Diamond Way Buddhism takes on the legal form of a company limited by guarantee. It was incorporated as a company on 12 June 2002. This company is registered with the UK's company registration authority (Companies House). As it is a charity, the company is also registered with the UK's Charity Commission. The charity's constitution consists of its Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association, as well as any legally effective decisions that the charity's trustees have taken. The charity's constitution grants the trustees (Andrew Paul Young, Anthony Hopson, Matthew Richard Huddlestone, Peter Malinowski, Steve James, Cristina Ferrando) the power to act on behalf of the charity, and to enter into legal transactions on its behalf. Beyond that, the trustees have the duty to act in the best interests of the charity.