



Mill Road Lanterns

A spotlight on our distinctive community

With the latest news about the Covid Emergency Road Scheme, Mill Road and its special community spirit will be much in people's minds. We don't yet know if the Mill Road Winter Fair (MRWF) will go ahead in its usual form this year; the MRWF Committee will make a decision by 1st September, the date when we would need to open the online stalls application process. However, in the meantime we are planning an inspiring new community project, which can take place even if the Fair can't and which will be funded by a new charity, Love Mill Road.

Love Mill Road has grown from the Fair and from the legacy of the Suzy Oakes Trust. It has been established to provide a way to channel sponsorship and donations to local Mill Road community projects, including the non-commercial aspects of the MRWF. As a charity, it can benefit from Gift Aid and will help to ensure the long-term sustainability and community focus of the Fair while also supporting community projects throughout the year, including (currently under discussion) a Repair Café at The Edge, support for Jimmys' 25 year celebrations and a series of Mill Road Fringe events.

Mill Road Lanterns will be organised and led by the MRWF Committee and funded by Love Mill Road. It will celebrate the identity and culture of Mill Road, highlighting the diversity, history and independence of its community. We will cast a spotlight on the stories of some of Mill Road's inspiring personalities, community projects, shopkeepers, buildings and history, pairing narratives and performances in the Mill Road buildings and online with a street-side light-show. We are planning that a new 'story' will be added each day in the fortnight leading up to Saturday 5th December, the date set for the 2020 Mill Road Winter Fair.

The project is evolving and we recognise that the plans outlined here are likely to change. The MRWF Committee is keen to work with other organisations (eg. the Mill Road Traders' Association, Mill Road Bridges, Makespace and the Mill Road History Group) to develop the ideas. Funding depends on donations to Love Mill Road, from local residents and businesses and there will be publicity, with a call for donations, during August.

So far we have the following preliminary plans for the Mill Road Lanterns project:

- Mill Road personalities are interviewed by volunteers and their stories written up as a series of short articles.
- The stories provide inspiration for creative projects – video performances of music, poetry and dance or artworks by local artists – which will be made available online.
- Participating shops and buildings receive a decorated Mill Road Lantern, which is hung in a prominent window so that it is visible from Mill Road. Ideally each lantern will be an individually designed piece, inspired by the story associated with the place where it is to be displayed. The shops/organisations that receive a lantern will be encouraged to keep it for future display so that the project builds year-on-year.
- There will be a step-by-step 'release' of the stories and creative projects during the fortnight before the Fair date; one will go live each day and the moment will be celebrated with a colourful projected light display which will illuminate the featured shops/buildings for one evening only. There may be scope for shadow puppets and the light display would ideally reflect the story that is connected with the place.
- Images from the display will be captured and used online and in the local media, alongside the story and featured video performances/artworks.

- There might also be a treasure hunt or curiosity trail which encourages people to explore Mill Road, following clues to solve in association with the lanterns along the street.
- On the 5th December, all the lanterns will be 'lit' and there may also be scope for a celebratory display of laser beams along the street.

The Mill Road Lanterns project would bring together and use expertise from many volunteers and local organisations. It can be done with social distancing, is flexible and would be very media-friendly.

NOTE – the project cannot promote the commercial aspects of local shops and businesses as Love Mill Road can only support community projects that meet its charitable objectives. However, there would be obvious indirect benefits for the local Mill Road economy.

Please get in touch to get involved

Mill Road Lanterns will rely on involvement from many people and we would be thrilled to hear from anyone who would like to help. We hope that these outline plans will be shaped by the ideas and skills of all the participants.

Please get in touch if you would like to help us to:

- **develop the Mill Road stories** – interviews, research, writing and community engagement
- **coordinate the creative stuff** – video performances/artworks, which would 'go live' during November
- **work with our IT manager** to make this happen on our website
- **manage our PR and Communications** – we are looking for someone to lead on this key role for the MRWF Committee (a fantastic opportunity for someone who is looking to launch their career in this field)
- **make the Mill Road Lanterns** – we are hoping to inspire creative crafters and makers who have the skills to create a set of simple decorative lanterns – ideally each would be individually designed, but we are thinking that there would be a template to work from. Perhaps laser-cut steel?
- **create the colourful projected light displays** tailored to express the story and character of each of the selected shops/buildings
- **design the way it looks** – graphic design for our website and publicity
- **photograph** the participants, light displays and lanterns

Project manager - we are also seeking someone to manage the project, which would involve coordinating the volunteers, participants, performers and makers. If this could be you, please contact Kate as below.

Please also feel free to suggest for further roles – if reading this has sparked any further aspects/additional elements that you might have skills to contribute

We are looking for volunteers, but hope to be able to pay costs and would make a point of publicising and crediting the work of the volunteers and organisations we work with.

Just email Kate - chair@millroadwinterfair.org to find out more.