

Where's the lift? Sadly, we don't have disabled access yet...

In April 2019 the Gallery & Tearoom celebrated its 5th birthday, so where's our lift?

Well, here's our story so far –

In **Spring 2012**, through fate, destiny or just being in the right place at the right time Heather Burgess & Ed Gransden had an opportunity to turn this empty commercial block into a new independent arts space for Medway – Sun Pier House Community Interest Company.

We sourced our own match funding and worked in partnership with Medway Council to secure further EU funding to refurbish the 2nd floor into a new large events venue. But we knew creating disabled access was essential to our ambitions. We needed to convert this 1980's office building into an accessible public space. Officers at Medway Council allocated funding for the lift from another bid they were submitting – Coastal Communities - assuring us that the lift would be funded from that grant.

In **Winter 2012**, we were informed that the EU funding was a success! Heather & Ed began working on Sun Pier House CIC full time. In January 2013, the first artists moved into the studios and we began hosting exhibitions, events, room hires, we launched a new co-working office space and established ourselves in the Medway art community. All while doing renovations and refurbishment works to the ground and 1st floor of the buildings (where the EU funding would not stretch).

In **March 2014**, the EU funded refurbishment works to the 2nd floor of the building finally took place, much later than we had anticipated and planned for in our cashflow forecasts.

In **April 2014**, with the paint still wet the 2nd floor Gallery & Tearoom opened! We celebrated a hugely successful opening weekend and ran 6 days a week to the public thereafter. When asked, we told customers we had funding for a lift and hoped work would start within the year. Meanwhile, we were regularly chasing the Council Officers for an update on the Coastal Communities grant for the lift.

In **March 2015**, a year after we had opened, we received a letter from Medway Council to inform us the Coastal Communities funding had been reallocated to a new project. After being told repeatedly since 2012 that there was a secured fund for the lift, suddenly there wasn't.

Since **April 2015**, we have been trying to navigate our own way to secure funding for a lift. This has proved hard work for several reasons, including; as a new business our accounts have not been attractive to funders; we're a small business and lack the resources and staff; some funders would not fund a large capital project before a smaller fund had been awarded and seen to be a success; we have to be able to prove the *need* for a lift; we've had two children along the way (a game changer for the amount of time we have available).

Where are we now?

- We have planning permission for the lift,
- We have the drawings and plans for the lift,
- We know the lift company and type of lift we need,
- We know the estimated costs of the work (£75,000),
- We have sourced several pots we plan to apply to for the funding,
- We've developed our business governance and established an Advisory Board to support our bids,
- Our business accounts are in a healthy place and we're now a more viable option for investors to consider,
- In 2018/19, we were awarded and ran our first Arts Council funded project, showing funders we're responsible and set up correctly to receive and manage large funding.
- To date, we have invested approximately £15,000 in time and money to get to this point and we are confident we will write a successful bid,

Ways you can help –

- We are always open to ideas and offers of help. We'll be the first to admit we don't know everything, and capital funding certainly isn't our skillset. If you can help us we would love your support -
- Do you have bid writing experience and think you can help us with securing funding?
- Can you or your organisation offer match funding or donations? However big or small.
- Have you or anyone you know been affected by our lack of disabled access? Tell us in an email so we can add this to the 'Supporting Evidence' of our funding application.

Contact Heather and Ed - info@sunpierhouse.co.uk

We'll be posting updates about our funding applications on our website and social media pages -
www.sunpierhouse.co.uk / [@SunPierHouse](https://www.instagram.com/SunPierHouse)

We are very sorry if our lack of access has affected you.