

QC aims to disprove claims about green

K.E.
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A BARRISTER will attempt to disprove widely-held claims that a community centre cannot be built on Hythe's green.

by Doug Wythe

Objectors to the plan by the town council say the green has been left to the people for leisure and recreation. The QC, paid for by the newly-formed Hythe Community Hall Trust, will say differently.

Geoffrey Roberts, chairman of the trust, said: "The myth about the green is based around the 1862 notice on the green."

"It is misleading. In the deed the piece of land was reserved by Hythe Corporation for the amusement, recreation and benefit of the public in perpetuity."

"As trustees, we feel a community centre is an amenity for the people. This notice means there should be no building like housing development."

Mr Roberts said the 1988 referendum resulted in the people saying yes to a community centre in Hythe but no to the green. "We feel the position about the legal aspect was not made clear at the time," he said.

"Other halls have been built but they are only for clubs or church organisations. They are not good enough for Hythe and its population of 14,000."

Environmentalist David Plumstead, campaign co-ordinator for the green preservation society, asked: "Where is the money coming from to be able to retain a QC?"

"This is a second example, Eaton Lands being the first one, of an elected body looking for ways to break the protection of land set aside for use by the very people who elected that body in the first place."

Delved into archives

"We have delved into the archives and are getting a legal opinion from a QC."

"On September 19 at the town meeting, we shall offer that opinion."

In the two weeks since the trust has been formed Mr Roberts has met with representatives of the Hythe Green Preservation Society.

He said the contact was "valuable in as much as we were able to air misunderstandings".

The community hall trust has made applications for finance to Shepway council and the county council. Shepway has to agree first.

The maximum grant available is £128,000. Two years ago Hythe town council set aside £500,000. Total cost of the community hall is £600,000.

Mr Roberts added: "If all goes well we could start building next spring."

"Hythe needs a new hall similar to the old institute. The only public hall we have is the town hall which has no stage and no sports facilities."