

Time to sort out The Forum, a reminder of past failures

THE 11th June 2010 was just another day.

It rained and the Forum off Blackhorse Way flooded. Once again, the people of Horsham, who braved the Forum, waded through rainwater, which refused to drain away. What's gone wrong with the master plan of two years ago?

The Forum seems to have been plagued with problems from the beginning. These problems became so serious that in May 2008, Horsham District Council, who leased and managed the surface of the Piazza, Carillion, the original building contractor, Sainsbury, the owner of the underground car park and Morleys, who owned



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the shops fronting the Piazza, agreed on a required schedule of work.

It was announced that the Forum would face months of disruption as Carillion, the original building contractor, would seek to remedy the existing problems, which included water penetration into the car park below.

The plan was that from the 2nd June 2008, there would be extensive disruption

over a period of 30 weeks, as the work would involve removing and relaying sections of the stone surface over much of the Piazza area. The initial promise, i.e. disruption, proved to be true but what about the fundamental reasons for undertaking the work.

Some two years later, the Forum still floods whenever it rains. The stone surface of the Piazza is scarred in places by a grey cementitious surface, where sections of the stone were removed but never replaced.

The steps leading down from the Piazza into the surface car park deteriorate and loosen regularly and present a major health and

safety risk to the public.

The two-storey stack of Carillion container-type buildings between the Forum and the library remain as an unsightly reminder of the unfinished work to the Piazza.

There can be little doubt that the original plan failed. Is it unreasonable to ask when the interested parties intend to come up with another and hopefully viable plan to complete the work that still needs to be undertaken?

One would hope that any plan would be comprehensive and include any other matters giving cause for concern. One obvious item is the outstanding question

of the necessary work with respect to the replacement of the damaged glass panels adjacent to the lifts. The approach taken of covering the panels with advertising posters may have seemed to be a quick fix at the time but can now only be viewed as yet more unfinished business.

What does the future hold for the Forum? Will it always be a reminder of past failures? Will it always be an area to avoid when showing visitors the delights of Horsham?

If this negative scenario is to be avoided, one has to ask when the Forum will be restored to a condition, which the residents of Horsham can view with

pride and safely access even during inclement weather? We should expect our Council to be proactive in ensuring that these key objectives are achieved without any further delay.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone, who shares these concerns. For more information, visit our website www.horshamsociety.org or to join telephone 01403 263870.