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The Editor, Western Telegraph.

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Dear Editor

Campaign to Save Newport Visitor and Information Centre for the Community

You have reported that residents are fighting to save this “significant” facility in Newport (WT - 26/10/16)

Although there is now widespread fear that Newport’s Visitor Centre is to be closed and sold on the open market by the National Park, this is NOT a decision that has been made by the Members of the Authority, nor is it something that has been stated in public by Officers. Members have simply resolved to consult with the public “*on a proposal to change the way information services are delivered in Newport in order to invest in a new package of initiatives*”. Nor have Members been told that local community groups and businesses have not been asked if they will be willing and able to cooperate in delivering such alternative services. The new initiatives have not yet been tested as suitable to this area. No survey of alternative venues for delivery of information to ensure accessibility has been carried out.

Meanwhile, Newport Visitor Centre uniquely serves the special, Welsh speaking North East of the National Park and is vital to the local economy and to the community. This consultation is in fact a belated opportunity for the public – residents, visitors and businesses - to tell the National Park what a grand job the Newport Centre does. This can be done by going on line to <http://SaveNewportVisitorCentre.naeg.org.uk> and adding a comment to the petition, and/or by writing to the Chairman of the National Park, County Cllr Mike James (St Dogmaels) mikeja@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

Newport Visitor Centre costs just over 4% of the National Park’s expenditure on its five Centres – that’s very little compared with the others - but Newport attracted 13% of those Centres’ total footfall last year. It punches well above its weight: the fact that Newport Visitor Centre was top in the whole of Wales in the Visit Wales Mystery Visitor Analysis has not even been reported by Officers to Members of the Authority.

It already performs a multitude of functions for the local community and is in a unique location in Newport for contributing to community life, being by the public car park and designed to be fully accessible. The newly formed community library would like to share the premises and would have the support of the County Council to do so.

It provides a vital outpost office for the National Park (so far from HQ in Pembroke Dock) and more could be done to exploit this fact in improving relations between the Authority and local people of the North East.

Improved relations could start right now: with goodwill and cooperation from all parties involved we can start working together to find the best solutions for everyone. If any readers would like to help, please get in touch.

Yours sincerely, Sandra Bayes, For Newport and District Community Forum Officers.