



NEWPORT VISITOR CENTRE ACTION GROUP

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Newport Town Council Visitor Centre Working Group

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### A National Park Community Supported Visitor and Information Centre

We would like to explain why our preferred option is for the National Park to retain the Visitor Centre Building and to operate the Visitor and Information Service as at present, but with community support, whilst sharing the space with Newport Community Library, according to the agreed layout.

We were elected at a public meeting called in order to “Save Newport Visitor Centre”, and our raison d’etre is to see a full Visitor and Information Service continue as it is now operated.

*The National Park is aiming to reduce costs so as to be able to re-allocate a proportion of the current expenditure associated with the Authority’s premises in order to support the package of new initiatives ...aimed at delivering a modernised and more equitable service across the National Park*

The Authority has decided that they wish to make changes to the service in Newport, but they have not resolved that they wish to dispose of the Newport Visitor Centre building.

Our preferred option fulfils these requirements

The advantages of our preferred option are:

- It represents a change to the Visitor and Information Service in Newport, as required by the Authority, by introducing a new system of volunteer support
- It ensures continuation of a full Visitor and Information Service providing the economic, social and cultural benefits to businesses, residents and visitors as achieved now.
- It will enhance the profile of the National Park in working with a community in fulfilling its statutory purposes and its wellbeing objectives, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2017-18
- By continuing the National Park Visitor Service in Newport, a Tier 3 Centre in the Wales Spatial Plan, the Authority will be supporting this community's strategic role in the North East of the Park.
- It satisfies the Authority's requirements by saving sufficient costs to the Authority, mainly through the use of volunteer time, making possible new methods of delivery of information by the National Park
- The Community Library will be in more suitable, conveniently located and fully accessible premises, also have reduced costs compared to at present, and better security of tenure
- The Library will benefit from cooperation and sharing, with an established and well run service: there will be synergy in the two related services working together, each benefitting from the others' footfall.
- The wishes of 1200 signatories to the "Save Newport Visitor Centre" petition and all those who have signed the Newport Visitor Book seeking its retention, will be fully met.
- The standing of the National Park with residents and visitors will improve
- The National Park will retain a valuable asset

Newport Town Council has told the Authority twice that it ***"echoes the feeling of the town which is that PCNPA continues to run Newport Visitors Centre (the Visitors Centre) as at present"*** If this did not happen, the Town Council would seek to acquire the building.

However, Newport Town Council still do not have a clear policy as to how they intend to acquire the building and by what means.

It has become clear that although deciding in principle to acquire in January 2017, over the following months there were divergences of opinion in the NTC as to how this acquisition

was to be achieved, resulting in procrastination and constant delays...which we fear could continue.

It was not until a Town Council EGM on the 4th of August that NTC decided that their preferred option was to purchase.

However, on the 14<sup>th</sup> August at the Visitor Centre Working Group meeting, NTC representatives present preferred to lease, using rent from the Library, from the Visitor Centre, and from the Parks - for their use of the office space, to fund their rent to the Parks.

These divergent ideas are without any discussions with the Parks as to what the options for and costs of acquiring the building might be. Resolutions made by the Town Council that there should be such discussions and exploration of methods of funding have not been followed through.

All these matters create a fundamental and obvious conflict with the business plan prepared by NVCAG.

Our preferred proposal removes the necessity for NTC to acquire the building and to spend any more time and limited administration resources on what has proved to be a very time consuming and frustrating exercise...

Sandra Bayes, Secretary to Newport and District Community Forum, Newport Visitor Centre Action Group.

CC James Parkin, Director of Delivery and Discovery