



Newport Visitor Centre Action Group

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To: Newport Town Council

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018

Dear Town Councillors,

Newport Visitor Centre: CAT process

Now that the EOI form and the CAT Application Assessment Matrix have been received by interested parties, can we please be informed, what is the Town Council's proposal with regard to the provision of the Visitor Service in the Asset?

We need to reassure our hundreds of supporters that the Visitor Service will continue and be safe in the Council's hands

Although you have asked the Library if they would be willing to move into the Asset, there has been no consultation as envisaged in Criterion D, (*Community and Partnership Impact*), and there would appear to be difficulty in meeting Criterion D4.

There was a joint plan prepared by the Council-led Visitor Centre Working Group in August 2017, the use of which, would seem to strengthen the CAT application now considerably.

It was the Newport Visitor Centre Action Group's intervention, in response to the community's wish to retain a Visitor Centre in the building that has allowed the Centre to stay open until now. It was the Action Group's proposal to use the building for the Community Library and a Visitor Centre, with the Town Council acquiring the building, possibly by a CAT, that was endorsed by the Council and which produced the draft joint business plan. That joint proposed way forward resulted in the proposal that the Parks would provide core staffing and pay for the office use. There was a similar offer by the National Park, albeit in the present Library premises, under Option 3 in September 2017.

Because of public pressure at the November meeting of the Authority, the Chief Executive clearly agreed in November that the National Park would work with interested parties to have a presence in Newport, and the interpretative materials would be retained. In his letter to us in December, the Chief Executive said that the closure date was not finalized, that they remained prepared to consult, but that there had been no indication by the Town Council as to your intentions for the use of the building.

There does not seem to have been any dialogue between you and the Parks since that November meeting, and despite our request to you, no effort made by you to keep the building open, pending negotiations. The building is now closed and we understand that plans to relocate materials are well underway.

The community and visitors alike have made it very clear that they hope you will be able to acquire the Building for a Visitor Service and community use. We fear that this will not happen unless your EOI includes clear proposals for a Visitor Service, and unless we can show a united front on a joint approach by the interested organisations, of which we are clearly one. As we understand it, the only other interested party you have included in the consultations which you need under criterion D for a successful bid, is the community library with whom we have common aims.

In order to deal with all the matters in the EOI and to complete the Matrix, it is clearly essential that there should be discussions and agreement between all the interested parties, including our organisation, as soon as possible so that the best possible case to achieve a CAT is made.

The reason why we are where we are today and why the Parks are even considering a CAT, is because of the strength of the community and wider public support to keep the Visitor Service in the building. We have not received replies to any of our recent correspondence to you. Would you be good enough to discuss this letter under the relevant Agenda item at the Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January, and respond fully, proposing when we should meet with you, so that we can reassure our supporters by email, and the wider public through our website.

Yours sincerely

*Mary Hallinan* Lady Hallinan, Chairperson, Newport and District Community Forum  
Newport Visitor Centre Action Group