

Portway Annexe Community Group

Have your say on the future of the Portway Annexe as a community hub.

Wells City Council's vote to buy the Portway Annexe was great news. We believe that the building offers amazing opportunities to the communities in and around Wells. Members of the PACG core team have proposed a potential "Vision" for the building based on reviewing community needs and wishes from two previous public consultations. We have also managed to have a look around the building with a local architect and have pulled together inspiration and ideas from similar styled 'community hubs' around the country. We fully support the newly formed WCC Portway Annexe Committee to carry out a wider public consultation, hopefully using the Vision as a basis for starting discussions and getting your input. Is it the right one? Could it be improved?

The Vision aims to offer something for everyone, both needs and some dreams. Education is a key feature, bringing back both vocational and leisure courses to Wells. But it is more than that. It aims to be a vibrant community hub that is not only a great place for clubs and societies to meet, but also a place to nurture new enterprise. Alongside provisions for arts, crafts and IT access we have developed ideas for makers and for musicians to rehearse. A drop in café would also serve for informal meetings. The old Assembly Hall (it was part of the Blue School) is a great space for small performances and exhibitions, as well as larger group meetings or parent and toddler groups. We are aiming to add and not replace existing activities in Wells. You can find a brief presentation on our Vision at <https://portwayannexecommunitygroup.wordpress.com>. We hope it will stimulate your ideas to for the forthcoming WCC public consultation.

This Vision is not just a wish list. It has helped us assess potential business plan ideas. WCC has been clear that it would like the Portway Annexe to pay for itself. In creating the Vision we have identified a range of income generating ideas. Recently WCC published its initial business plan that supports the acquisition. The PACG has reviewed this and provided WCC with a range of ideas for further developing its plan. We are convinced that the Portway Annexe could provide huge value to our community, and not be a burden on future council tax payers. We have also shared with WCC other information we have generated over the last few weeks to help the PA Committee get going. Whilst the PACG has been formed with the support of numerous community groups (see the website for details), we want to involve the whole of Wells, including surrounding rural communities. We are looking forward to playing a role in and supporting the Portway Annexe Committee and are truly excited about the opportunities this is creating. Please visit our website to have a look at our Vision and objectives, and please keep an eye out for news on the upcoming consultation. Should you wish to support the PACG or get in touch please email portwayannexe@gmail.com let us know what you think.

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