

Falcon Centre Action Group

17 February 2021

Inaugural General Meeting - *Background*



Centre history and current uses

What is now the Falcon Centre was built as the village school in 1910. In 1974 the teachers and pupils moved into new buildings up the road and the building, owned by the County Council, became vacant. In 1976 the County reopened part of the building as a branch library. Other parts were set aside for community use and in June 1981 the Parish Council opened the Railway Museum in one room at the east end.

The library and museum remain today, though as always with limited opening hours. Other parts of the building less well used, especially with closure of the preschool playgroup in late 2020. The former playground is attractive to young people for informal recreation. The layout of the building and its age and condition limit what can be done in it and it is not clear right now how the use of the building will evolve.

The Action Group & its ideas

Recognising this, many people living or working locally have contributed to discussions over the last 2 or 3 years as to how to bring more activity to the Centre. A User Group was set up in 2018 and has now been renamed the Falcon Centre Action Group and is open to all. The Group is now looking at what the Centre might become and how it would get there

The overall concept for the Centre is for it to become a *Community Hub*. This has been described elsewhere as multi-purpose building at the centre a community, providing safe spaces for people of all ages, so everyone, toddler, teenager to the retired can participate in the education, economic and cultural life and the village or town.

The exact activities that might happen in our Community Hub are not necessarily the same as in other locations, especially as Wylam has lots going on already in other buildings. But in broad terms the new constitution (see below) says we will look at “recreation, education, arts and culture, heritage, environment, health and wellbeing and community based business activity”.

To help move things along the Group is working towards commissioning a feasibility study and a draft brief for this is ready. In preparation the Group has recently undertaken a resident survey and consultation with existing community organisations will happen soon. Funding is needed for the study, so ideas for that welcome!

Constitution

As plans have become a bit firmer it has become clear that the group needs to have a more formal legal status including a written constitution. Amongst other things, this will make it a bit easier to raise money. So a very important function of the meeting on 17 February is to agree the draft constitution as circulated. This stops short of making the group a charity, but could lead to that or similar in the future.

The constitution is therefore being presented for adoption at the meeting and will then become operational. It requires officers and committee members to be elected annually, so the meeting will also do this.

For more information go to <https://colinwpercy4.wixsite.com/falconcentre>.