

## **Falcon Centre Action Group**

### **Annual Report 2021-2022**

#### **Annual General Meeting – 27 April 2022**

Despite the restrictions of the continuing Covid pandemic the Falcon Centre Action Group (FCAG) has worked towards securing long-term future of the Falcon Centre as a valued community resource. We continue our commitment to safeguarding the future of the Library and the Railway Museum. Additionally, our aim is to maximise the use and potential of the building as a community hub complementing other local provision such as offered by the Institute, the faith groups and Jubilee Playing Field initiatives.

**The Falcon Centre Action Group appreciates local support and recognition.** In 2020 we received an excellent response to our survey which we had distributed to every household in Wylam. The feedback was overwhelmingly in favour of retaining the Falcon Centre as a community hub as well as extending the use and range of activities. Whilst we are ambitious it will not be possible to meet all of the needs identified in survey. Nevertheless, we have no shortage of ideas to work on to help us maximise the possible range and quality of future community provision.

#### **We have so far identified the following priorities for the future use of the Falcon Centre:**

- Maintaining and facilitating increasing use of the library
- Improving access to the Railway Museum and promoting understanding of local history
- Enhancing Health and Wellbeing
- Adult and continuing education
- Tourist information and associated activities
- Promoting community wealth building and local community enterprise
- Cycle proficiency training and cycle repair
- Youth activities and initiatives for young people
- Nursery and child care provision
- Café and social meeting place

#### **Finding resources and nurturing a communications network**

Progress has been slower than planned due to issues arising from the covid pandemic, however these are some of our recent achievements:

1. We have successfully applied to Northumberland County Council (NCC) for the Falcon Centre to be designated an 'Asset of Community Value'. This places restrictions on the NCC should they wish, for example, to sell the Falcon Centre for housing development.
2. We successfully bid for a grant from the Northumberland County Council Community Chest Fund and have received £2,500 towards the cost of new flexible use furniture comprising tables and chairs.
3. We conducted a 'yard tidy' with help of more than a dozen volunteers who cut back overgrown shrubbery and generally tidied up the surrounds of the Falcon Centre.
4. We have had regular communications with officers of Northumberland County Council regarding the present and future running of the Centre. The NCC have provided us with a file of documentation covering the costs of running, maintaining and repairing the building.
5. We have liaised with our counterpart organisations particularly those in Corbridge and Wooler and have shared information and ideas on how best to achieve our goals for the Centre.

6. We have welcomed Wylam Parish Council's initiative to produce a Village Plan and are engaging with them on how we can contribute to the plan and thereby help to refine and share ideas on the future of the Falcon Centre.
7. We are developing working links with the regional Rural Design Centre who have resources and expertise in nurturing community initiatives.

### **Forward Plan and Next Steps**

We have recently received notice from the Estates Department of Northumberland County Council that they want to see speedy progress on our part toward an application for transfer of the running and maintenance the Falcon Centre from NCC to the local community. We think it is important to keep open this option of proceeding with a Community Asset Transfer. If a transfer were to go ahead it is likely that the NCC would wish to retain the ownership of the Falcon Centre but that they would grant a lease of the property to the local community who would become responsible for the management of the Centre.

Before we can consider taking over the running of the Falcon Centre from the NCC we will need to produce a robust business plan demonstrating that our plans are financially viable and sustainable. We have identified a number of organisations providing consultancy services who might assist us with the necessary feasibility studies required to prepared and finalise a business plan. Fundraising for the costs of a feasibility study has proved a challenge and although the Wylam Parish Council have indicated their willingness to assist will still require matched funding from another financial donor.

The Falcon Centre Action Group is currently an unincorporated but constituted voluntary community group. In order to be considered a competent body to potentially take over the future running of the Falcon Centre via a Community Asset Transfer we will need to become incorporated. We intend to take a decision on this matter within the next few weeks.

For further background documentation and information please see our website [HOME | Falcon Centre - Community Hub for Wylam England \(falconcentrewylam.org\)](https://www.falconcentre-wylam.org)

This report has been prepared on behalf of the members of the Committee of the Falcon Centre Action Group.

Steve Grinter (Chair)

Colin Percy (Membership Secretary)

Gray Mytton (Treasurer)

Susan Ewart

Melanie Dunnett

Victoria Strassheim

Jim Robertson

Tony Pierre

April 2022