

Shetland Library
Open Consultation Meeting on Library Provision in Lerwick
Tuesday 11th July 2006

Notes of views arising from the meeting and those submitted by folk unable to attend. A total of 22 people attended the meeting, with around 20 unable to attend, but wishing their views to be noted.

INTRODUCTION

Silvija Crook, Library and Information Services Manager introduced the evening with a summary of how the matter of library provision in Lerwick had been raised at the council through a Member's Motion, leading to the approval of £30,000 to carry out a technical feasibility study and widespread consultation .

The study ,involving architects, Quantity Surveyors, library staff and allied departments would be carried out internally by council staff, and would consider the need for the project, space required and the appropriateness of the various ways forward, whilst the consultation process would include public, staff, school and young people's discussions, contributions via the library's web-site and a questionnaire to a cross-section of Shetland residents through the Your Voice process.

It was stressed that the process was at a very early stage and that there were no firm decisions yet made; the purpose of the feasibility study being to enable elected members to make an informed decision on the way forward, with options ranging from the status quo to a new build project.

PUBLIC VIEWS

ST RINGANS

- 'I probably use the library more online than in any other way'
- 'I like the library in St Ringan's. I like the way the bookshelves are not too high for a "shorty" like me. I like its airiness and, of course, the helpful staff.'
- Customers have commented that they feel the library is nice as it is, but can see why there is a need to expand.
- It has been suggested that it would be nice to see computer access to internet in the main building
- Visitors have also asked why there is not a path to the main door from the side gate – as some customers have admitted taking a shortcut under the bar rather than walking all the way around and up the path!
- Everyone liked the location (fine and near the street and easy to park)
- Others were wondering what is happening to the Museum gallery – if there is not going to be one in the new museum then this should be a feature for the new library perhaps.
- Some felt that the feasibility study was a complete waste of money

- Ridiculous!
- St Ringans was said to be totally inadequate
- Others felt St Ringans was lovely
- 'Most of the shelves are knee high to a grasshopper. After visiting the library a few times I just got fed up going around on my hands and knees. This I found was the worst aspect of the library.'
- There is insufficient space between the shelves
- Only a limited amount of stock on display
- 'This is a complaint about many libraries that the books are often just old enough to be out of date, but not old enough to be antiquarian. I really do appreciate money and all that. Sometimes it is worthwhile, if one has an eye for it, to not sell off some books just because they are old.'
- 'There is a collection that is locked. Are they to be read, or just looked at? If they are just to be looked at, then maybe they should be in the museum.'
- No study area

LEARNING CENTRE

- There has been much appreciation of the coffee machine in the learning centre – some customers have even admitted popping in for a coffee and a comfy seat even when they don't use the computers!
- Disabled customers have admitted getting to the Learning Centre is a bit 'cumbersome' and would appreciate it if everything was on one floor.
- Has 'super atmosphere' 'By all means have more computers distributed about the reading library but PLEASE KEEP the exclusive computer section.'

FACILITIES – PROBLEMS

- Children's section woefully inadequate
- Concerns about Adult Learning
- Safe, separate children's area
- Old place (now Old Library Centre) has no character but was functional
- Complaints from members of the public to councillors

FACILITIES – IMPROVEMENTS

- Lots of browsing space
- A bigger and more comfortable bairn's lending/reading area
- A play area for peerie ones
- Coffee/tea/food
- Public phone (just the one!)
- Desk space for working/writing/researching (including laptop dial out)
- A film lending video/DVD section
- Some soft seating
- Free and easy access and display space for local artists/poets

- A comfortable and equipped general-purpose room for events, meetings, etc.....
- A room that could be used for library activities with some of the clients who currently come in with a one to one escort. A separate room could be an events room that would be less worrying to the clients than the library itself, with all its activities/people, but still a place for working with books/music/stories etc. Seen as used by several carers plus clients at a time for an hour or so, with ready access to sink/toilet.
- Safe, separate children's area
- Teenage 'zone' which is customised and separated from children's area
- Youth café library
- Youth info
- Need to encourage Young People
- Holistic?
- Café
- Meetings, Exhibitions
- Loop System
- Accessible
- People here need to have good facilities
- Library needs to be seen as educational
- Kirkwall library has lovely architecture – new library to be architecturally aesthetically pleasing
- Self service machines for confidentiality
- Books – enough room for them and enough of them on display
- Books should come before the beauty of the building
- Important to be able to relax and sit comfortably
- Video/ Tape collection - don't go down that route – a distraction
- LACK OF SPACE
- 'I don't go along with the open all hours idea, but that is just personal. (If I had my way everywhere would be open 9-5 Mon-Sat, and at no other times!). Certainly not Sundays.'

LOCATION

- A main site which can be walked/cycled to, and near a bus route
- Keeping the library distinct and focused on being a library – maintain the identity of the library
- 'A new library should be central. Perhaps it could occupy the old library and museum. If a new building is required, what about the space where the archives were.'
- 'Rather than having the Council spending more and more money, what about reorganising Islesburgh Community Centre to suit?'
- 'As long as it's not too far out of the way, it will be fine.'
- Around 6 customers have been unanimously in favour of a new library at the Hay's Dock site.'
- One customer complained of the council's lack of strategic accountability, reminder of the "too small" comments when it opened, praise was given however to the Learning Centre and its success.

- Current Library – Very near bus stops – Annsbrae or Islesburgh
- Hay's Dock – Either Viking Bus Station or Bolts – much further
- Current Library – 'in "Old Lerwick" with interesting buildings – Town had and prosperous ones in King Harald Street – from heyday of fishing
- Also, lodberries etc on waterfront – ATMOSPHERIC!
- Hay's Dock – Surrounded by council houses.
- Old Museum could be used for bairns' library and activities. Ideal as downstairs door could be locked to prevent escape! or is that all changed now?
- Location is ideal where it is! Accessible to street for tourists located around e.g. Islesburgh House (for computer use) and many guest houses
- Also for bairns – playing park nearby and older folk have the flower park nearby
- Hay's Dock site is a nice idea but inconvenient to tie in with banks etc on street if a person is in a hurry and has a limit on the amount of time spent in town
- Also, car-less folk find the current location of the library very handy – and there are plenty of cafes around, it is near the harbour and near craft shops for the tourists
- Some elderly customers would prefer the library centrally located rather than with the museum. These are pedestrians who said of the Hay's Dock location: "I will not be walking down there!"
- Others have commented that they have now got used to the St Ringan's library and rather liked the place!
- Others have stated "As long as it will have character and not just a big box". Plenty of parking space is also an issue
- It would be good to have Study Areas within new location
- It is important that the new library is flexible and can be altered.
- Kirkwall library is a beautiful building and not just a library

STAFF

- It has been suggested that an enquiry desk person may be a good idea, however probably only seasonal

CONSULTATION

- People would like to be kept up to date with plans for the new library, and hear the feedback from consultation meetings on Radio Shetland and in the Shetland Times.