



Friends of Carnegie Library, Crosby

FOCAL
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EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

**A business case to Sefton Council for the asset
transfer of Carnegie Library, College Road,
Crosby, as a community resource.**

August 2013

"I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading...I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library." - Jane Austen, Pride & Prejudice, Chapter XI.

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Appendix A - Revenue Model

Friends of Carnegie Library, Crosby.

“Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation.”
– Walter Cronkite.

“Cutting libraries during a recession is like cutting hospitals during a plague.”
– Eleanor Crumblehulme library assistant University of British Columbia

Business Plan

1.0 Background Information

On 23rd May 2013, Sefton Council’s Cabinet as part of its budget review resolved to implement a phased programme of Library closures across the Borough and that Crosby’s Carnegie Library in College Road could close by December 2013.

The Carnegie Library dates from 1904 and was purpose-built as a community library of that period. It is approximately 440sq m, essentially square on plan with elevations of smooth red Accrington brick and sandstone dressings, a slated roof and a stone turret with a copper capping.

The Council proposes that the historic Grade II Listed building would be closed and “mothballed” pending a decision on its future disposal. Fixtures, fittings and book-stock would be disposed of, subject to any plans for a community-run library on the site.

This Business Plan has been prepared by the Friends of Carnegie Library, Crosby, (FOCAL), which is a non-political, not-for-profit, community organisation. FOCAL was formed in response to concerns from local residents and library users, with the intention of working with the Council to explore opportunities to provide a library service as a community-run venture, supported by volunteers and offering other complementary activities to support the wider community.

1.1 Our Vision therefore is to promote and maintain an inclusive, voluntary-based public service that:

- 1. *delivers the benefits of a viable and sustainable library service to the people currently served by the existing Carnegie library;***
- 2. *interacts with voluntary and public professional services to offer complementary community services within the proposed library.***

1.2 Our Primary Aims to achieve our Vision will be:

- 1. *to secure discretionary use of the Carnegie Library building on College Road, Crosby***
- 2. *to create an enterprise that delivers financial margin, sufficient to sustain the on-going discretionary use of our proposed library service.***

1.3 Progress to date

FOCAL was formed as a result of several public meetings held at Marine Football Club, when members of the public nominated and approved the appointment of a Steering Group, which has signed a Constitution and Rules.

The Group has appointed Adrian Hughes of Batten Hughes & Co as Honorary Treasurer.

In May 2013, FOCAL met with Officers from Sefton Council who have invited the submission of a business plan to demonstrate how we would provide a viable and sustainable library service, run by volunteers.

In May 2013, FOCAL discussed with representatives of the Plaza Community Cinema, Waterloo, their experiences of asset management and self-funding a community project.

In June 2013, FOCAL, through their property advisers Keppie Massie, applied to have the existing building listed as an Asset of Community Value. The Council's response to that application is awaited. (See Section 6).

In June 2013 our Steering Group met with Officers from Sefton CVS and who have acted as our "critical friends" in reviewing this Business Plan. We have also developed positive links with CVS in exploring the most applicable model for our proposed corporate structure and for skill training (See Section 6).

In July 2013, we met with Trustees of Grappenhall Community Library, Warrington, which opened in 2012, to obtain practical understanding of the opportunities and challenges in operating a library run by volunteers.

1.4 Our proposed services

The delivery of library services is our key priority, including the issue of books and DVDs as at present. We would also seek to provide ICT services, akin to the People's Network. However, we also see an opportunity to offer other complementary community services from the same building. (See Section 3).

Our aim is to develop services which provide for:

- Conventional library usage
- Support for older people
- Support for families with babies and young children
- Support for young people
- Support for jobs and enterprise

1.5 Location of services

The existing Library building is our preferred location from which to deliver community services for the following reasons. It was part-funded by the Carnegie Trust and purpose-built in 1904 for the provision of community library services.

Carnegie's Formula required a demonstration of public support rather than making endowments as he believed that:

"an endowed institution is liable to become the prey of a clique. The public ceases to take interest in it, or, rather, never acquires interest in it. The rule has been violated which requires the recipients to help themselves. Everything has been done for the community instead of its being only helped to help itself."

FOCAL's proposals for a community library therefore fully embrace the spirit of Carnegie's aspirations and intentions, whilst reinforcing neighbourhood wellbeing through community governance.

Whilst trends in library usage and book issues have changed over time, we believe the premises are sufficiently adaptable (subject to any consents and physical surveys), to offer a convenient and familiar base from which services can be delivered. The building is accessible to the community by public transport.

1.6 Resources required to start the venture

A professional team will be established to undertake the asset transfer, comprising:

- financial,
- legal and HR and
- property advisors.

In addition, an extensive team of volunteers will be required to act as librarians, computer instructors, decorators, garden maintenance in addition to paid contractors to undertake more complex building maintenance.

Funding will be required for the professional team, the paid contractors and for materials and consumables used by volunteer staff. At this stage it is assumed the building will be transferred from the Council on a peppercorn rental but FOCAL will be required to undertake on-going maintenance, indicated by Sefton Council's consultants, Capita Symonds as circa £144k (June 2012 Technology Forge Report). However, not all works would require immediate implementation and some expenditure could be defrayed over several years (see also section 7.2). The Council have also indicated a willingness to help rotate the book-stock and to offer training to volunteer librarians, although the extent of this has yet to be determined.

Once open for business the building will require funding for business rates, utilities, insurances and possibly computers and licenses for public and for staff use.

Whilst we accept that the library must be viable, sustainable and free of on-going financial support from the Council, we do look to continue and grow a positive working relationship with many departments of the Council such that our respective services can together be stronger and mutually co-operative.

1.7 Short and long-term goals

FOCAL are hopeful that before December 2013 Sefton Council will have accepted our Business Plan and agreed to an asset transfer of the existing Carnegie Library Building.

Longer-term we intend to have in place a sustainable funding platform to enable the building, its services and facilities to be refreshed on a cyclical basis.

2.0 People Involved

2.1 Core team

Currently FOCAL comprises a Steering Group of some 6 individuals with many years' experience in a wide variety of public and private sector organisations with skills including architecture, business management, construction, education (primary, secondary and higher), law, research, charities and the voluntary sector. From invitations to public meetings and invitations to support the library we also have a database of over 100 persons who have expressed their willingness to become registered Friends of Carnegie Library. This database includes individuals with a vast array of skills which would be necessary to running a community library.

2.2 Volunteers

Besides staffing the library counter we will have in place volunteers to assist with day-to-day property maintenance/redecoration, grounds maintenance and fund-raising together with committee members with skills in property management, procurement, financial management, human resources, community engagement, outreach and development work.

We intend that from amongst the Friends we would readily acquire a pool of over 50 volunteers who would provide the day-to-day support required to staff the library over 4 half-days per week. Based on experience elsewhere we see this number growing over time such that we could offer increased opening hours.

2.3 School links

We have also held discussions with one of our local secondary schools who would welcome the opportunity for some of their Duke of Edinburgh Award students to use the library as a component Award. The school has 65 students at Bronze level and who would use the library for modules involving Volunteering, Helping People, Community Action, Community Leadership, and Helping a Charity or Community Organisation.

We also see the community library as offering school/business links for year 10 work experience and for Business Studies students as GCSE and A-Level.

2.4 Support and training

We acknowledge that training will be required including the use of the proposed library computer system. Here we would hope that Sefton's Library service would be supportive, together with on-going support from our local secondary schools librarians and ICT staff.

We appreciate that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certification, which has replaced CRB checks, will be required for staff involved in front-of-house activities engaging with the public and we note that this would be provided to Volunteers at no cost to FOCAL.

An induction pack would be provided to Volunteers, together with guidance on operating procedures.

Specific training will include:

- Health & Safety
- Safeguarding
- Manual handling,
- Data protection,
- Equality and Diversity
- Complaints procedure

We would hope that many of these training requirements could be met via Sefton CVS courses or through the Local Authority.

2.5 Existing staff

We note that under Sefton's plans to close the existing library the existing staff would be managed as part of the Council's procedures agreed with the Trades Unions and that there would be no entitlement to TUPE as a result of the asset transfer. Naturally, we would be delighted to discuss with existing staff who may be made redundant as a result of the Library Review their willingness to offer their services voluntarily to the community library.

The existing staff have many years' experience of engaging with the local community in College Road and familiar faces would be appreciated by the library users as demonstrating continuity. Even with chartered librarians serving on the Friends group the retention of existing staff expertise on a voluntary basis would be a valuable resource to FOCAL. However, discussions with existing staff will not be held until their individual circumstances are known and until FOCAL's offer has been accepted by the Council.

We understand UNISON's position regarding volunteers being used alongside salaried library staff but in our case the entire operation would be staffed by volunteers and hence the 2-tier workforce would not become an issue.

Whilst it is regrettable that Council funding is insufficient to support Carnegie Library we would hope that opportunities provided by volunteering may act as a stepping stone for those individuals who are actively seeking employment and for whom volunteering may provide a stepping-stone into salaried employment in the library service or other sector of the economy.

2.6 Support from others

In addition to those individuals who have pledged their support, FOCAL is developing a schedule of potential space users within the library, either as outreach bases for existing public bodies or by individuals seeking compatible space. Once the process is further developed we anticipate being able to offer the Council letters of support from a variety of key players.

3.0 The Service

3.1 Primary purpose – a Community Library

Council data shows that in 2011-12 Carnegie Library had 2,550 active borrowers, 6,637 registered borrowers, and 76,288 physical visits during which 78,270 items were issued. The People's Network received 8,018 uses. Whilst trends have declined during the last 5 years we strongly believe that such numbers demonstrate a need for conveniently located library services. This was further evidenced by the public petitions when library closures were first proposed.

Our aim is to develop services which provide for:

- Conventional library usage
- Support for older people
- Support for families with babies and young children
- Support for young children
- Support for jobs and enterprise

With the support of the Library Service, we intend to undertake an analysis of the extent of the existing book-stock in Carnegie Library, the percentage and variety of books currently loaned. We wish to work closely with staff of the Waterloo Central Library, who we would see as partners rather than competitors for library services and from whom bespoke books could be ordered on request.

In addition to the demonstrable need for a convenient local library service, we have reviewed community services in Crosby and believe there is a strong demand for additional complementary services, which are unavailable locally. We anticipate that the amount of space for traditional library uses could be slightly reduced and that space given over for other uses. However, library uses would still occupy the majority of the new floor area, in line with our core purpose.

For example, we would look to support older people by offering a small meeting area for casual conversation or more formalised meetings, courses or therapy, including the "Reminiscences" sessions. We would also seek to continue the library facility as a venue for young children and their parents, carers or child-minders for social interaction, craft activities and informal learning and continuation of the popular "Storytime" and "Baby Bounce and Rhyme" events.

In time we also see an opportunity for the library to arrange downloads of e-books and periodicals via Kindle-type devices, as suggested in William Sieghart's review for DCMS (March 2013). Sieghart concluded that Public libraries should be able to offer a remote E-lending service to their readers, free at the point of use. He also noted that *"if a digital sales platform is developed, as part of the library catalogue, through which local booksellers can be promoted, this may support the development and sustainability of these retail outlets as part of the local high street."* We therefore intend to examine how the community library could interact with local commercial booksellers to mutual advantage.

We will seek to support those with disabilities, including the continued access to large print books, talking books and DVDs and will discuss with Sefton Council how to interact with the home delivery book service. We outline in 5.3 our aspiration to include toilet and baby change facilities for library users.

3.2 Community benefit

The Library, as a Grade II Listed building, has for over 100 years provided a strong and identifiable focus within the local community. Its existence demonstrates historic stability and provides confidence within the local neighbourhood which we believe can be sustained if the library was to continue in community ownership.

We intend that this will be a library for all age groups (see 3.1) thereby helping to foster social interaction between generations and reducing social isolation. We also see opportunities for health professionals on a rolling programme to take space within the building, promoting healthy lifestyles, diet, personal well-being, physical fitness and overall happiness and social inclusion. We see an opportunity for the Library to support agencies involved in the new Health and Well-Being Strategy.

3.3 Neighbourhood wellbeing

For most residents, being empowered requires significant barriers to be broken between them and 'distant' decision makers, who can seem inaccessible and 'out of touch' with what is happening within neighbourhoods. FOCAL, a socially diverse democratic organisation with a large team of supporters, Friends, and volunteers, will demonstrate that the community is genuinely empowered at 'grass roots' to make a tangible difference and actively participate in activities within their own community.

In this respect, we would be clearly able to demonstrate the implementation of the objectives contained within the Localism Act 2011 in which power is devolved from central and local government to local communities. For example, our use of the Community Right to Bid (see Section 6.2) demonstrates our appreciation of how the asset can be listed when its primary use furthers the community's social well-being and is likely to do so in the future.

Our proposed community library, by catering for a wide range of age groups, would seek to build social networks and encourage neighbourly contact. For example, older people would assist young people with reading whilst secondary students could interact with the elderly. Our aim is to break down barriers and facilitate social engagement and well-being by offering a family-friendly facility, encouraging learning and thus having the potential to be a catalyst for change in promoting social well-being and happiness.

3.4 The demand for economic development, jobs and social enterprise

From discussions with the College Road Traders Association, we know that the Library provides a focal point within the streetscape. We know that library users will often travel by bus to the library and, having exchanged their books, will continue their shopping along College Road or meet friends in one of the nearby cafés.

We therefore see the library as offering a service which complements the local traders, not introducing facilities which will compete with or under-cut some of the more fragile businesses.

Based on data from the Council we know the income from library services alone will be insufficient to meet running costs. However, we do know from discussions locally that there is a demand for ancillary services and for flexible space for a variety of income-generating sources to provide the financial margin necessary to sustain the library.

For example, we envision space for mini-enterprises, linked to schools, where art and craft items could be displayed and sold. We see potential for small starter businesses to use 'hot-desking' to

display their products and services, without having to commit to costly long-term leases in commercial shop premises. However, we would ensure that this was relatively modest non-primary income in accordance with charity legislation.

We know from evidence provided that the People's Network of computers offers a valuable resource within Carnegie Library, demonstrating that there are members of the community who do not have access to personal computers or the necessary digital skills for their use. We therefore see the library as a focus for local residents to reduce digital exclusion by utilising public computers to access claims for universal credits, seek jobs, research hobbies, etc. There is scope for outreach training in IT skills, via 3TC and the Secondary and Higher Education sectors.

4.0 Marketing

Our core purpose is described in Section 3 above and we have already begun to promote our intentions via public meetings, local radio, a website and through Facebook and Twitter.

We have strong links with the Crosby Herald and the Crosby Champion, both of which have included articles about our proposals to support the library. We have written to every primary school within the Crosby / Blundellsands area inviting their support and have also held positive discussions with secondary schools, where we believe we can be mutually supportive with work experience, Duke of Edinburgh work and school displays.

Once we have obtained 'in principle' support from the Council we shall use our modest income from Friends of Carnegie and from the Area Committee to raise awareness and to more actively canvass for a range of volunteers using simple handouts. These could be distributed with local newspapers and freely available on the enquiry desk within Carnegie Library, where we also hope to be allowed consent for a Bulletin Board.

The Council's 'in principle' support will also enable us to actively pursue other stakeholders in this community venture and firm-up on individuals who have expressed an interest in taking space within the library.

As mentioned in Section 2.2 our volunteers will play a major role in marketing the services and organise fund-raising events either within the library itself or via outreach into the local community. Our links with the Plaza Community Cinema will also prove mutually beneficial in promoting both community organisations.

5.0 Delivering the Service

5.1 Backlog maintenance – Landlord's obligations

Our primary aim is to acquire the 440 sq m building in a condition where it is wind and watertight and with all safety certification in place, as one might expect from a responsible landlord. We are mindful of Sefton Council's Condition Survey which indicates some £144k being required as backlog maintenance. However, we believe that not all of those works require immediate attention and we would look to undertake an independent condition survey to review the extent and priority of repairs. We would then seek to negotiate with Sefton Council whether identified works would be carried out prior to transfer or a one-off capital grant offered to FOCAL such that we could independently arrange to procure the works.

Little significant capital works have been undertaken to the Listed Building, the most recent being in 2005 when a disabled ramp and steps were added by the Council to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

5.2 Maintaining the asset

FOCAL's Business Plan includes provision for routine maintenance and provision for cyclical repairs based on a combination of voluntary labour and locally-based private contractors, including T.E.A.M. Sefton. This extends not only to the building but to the external environment, grounds and planting which have been sadly neglected and which could themselves offer a valuable community asset.

5.3 Planning and design proposals

As mentioned in 3.1 we anticipate a slight reduction in the book-stock held within Carnegie Library which will free-up space for other uses, within the constraints of the current Listing. Amongst the features we would wish to include would be toilet facilities for ambulant and disabled library users. The presence of toilet facilities would greatly enhance the library users' stay within the building, offering more time for browsing, meeting and general social interaction – especially for the young and the more elderly users. We would also seek to include a small kitchenette where tea and coffee could be served for small group meetings. We would be seeking a one-off capital grant for these works.

We have examined the Library's Listing on the Council's website, dated 20th December 1996, wherein the interior comments noted ***"Nave and Aisles almost a single space, open to the roof."***

We would not seek to detract from this general appearance but would ultimately seek to enhance the interior character, subject to any necessary planning/Listed Building consent, through sensitive redecoration and the use of lower height mobile bookshelves which would enhance the general airiness and visibility across the library, which itself would aid security.

We would look to create defined space for publicly available computers, young people and for meetings, together with an area for complementary uses, outlined in 3.4.

5.4 Information Communications Technology

We will explore in detail with the Council the feasibility of acquiring the publicly available computers and also the library's management system computer hardware and software.

We understand there maybe issues of confidentiality and data protection associated with accessing the Council's network and, if so, would introduce our own Microlibrarian software system to manage our local book-stock , issues and returns. We are also exploring with BT the practicality of accessing their Community Connections programme for the provision of computers, broadband services and Wi-fi connectivity.

6.0 Governance and Legal Issues

6.1 Incorporated organisation

Currently the 'Friends of Carnegie Library' function under the terms of its Constitution and Rules, with a Steering Group appointed at a public meeting on 23rd April 2013. However it is our intention to become an incorporated not-for-profit organisation, operating either as a Limited Liability Company and Registered Charity, or seeking registration as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The organisation will be non-political and non-denominational. The current Steering Group would become the designated Directors/Trustees of such an organisation. We would also invite members of the community to become subscribing (but non-voting), Friends of Carnegie Library.

Based upon discussions with CVS, Brabners Solicitors and Grappenhall's Friends it should be practicable to establish an appropriate governance structure relatively swiftly before asset transfer.

6.2 Asset of Community Value

FOCAL have sought to nominate Carnegie Library as an Asset of Community Value, under the Community Right to Bid provisions of the Localism Act 2011. This has been undertaken to allow FOCAL an opportunity to formally be recognised as potential bidders for the property and to introduce a moratorium period for us to develop our business case should the Council wish to dispose of the premises.

6.3 Anticipated lease

Whilst Sefton have not formally clarified the terms under which they would transfer the asset, FOCAL would anticipate this to be on a peppercorn lease over a mutually acceptable timescale, with the usual review periods and step-in rights.

We shall discuss with Sefton Council the apportionment of costs, if any, for legal services relative to the proposed asset transfer.

6.4 Integrated ICT

Discussion with the Council will be held regarding access to Sefton's Library ICT systems, accepting there may be issues of Data Protection. However, such facilities would enable closer integration between the proposed community library, Sefton's resources and the national library network when locating and ordering books for customers.

6.5 Public Lending Right

FOCAL also recognises the responsibility to support authors via the Public Lending Right and would wish to discuss this matter further with Sefton's Library Services.

7.0 Financial Matters

7.1 Financial model

FOCAL has included (Appendix A) a draft financial model based on the use of community volunteers to staff the library, undertake simple building maintenance and re-decoration and grounds maintenance. Local contractors would be utilised to undertake any specialist maintenance items or those which require regulatory certification.

The draft financial model is based upon Sefton's published data for current running costs, adjusted as appropriate to reflect voluntary working and adjusted opening hours. The budget would be balanced by income derived from current library transactions, by membership contributions to FOCAL, income from lettings, fund-raising, donations and grants. FOCAL are confident about the reality of their income projections, following detailed discussions with Grappenhall's Trustees and evidence from their own funding experiences in a similar socio-economic community. We would be happy to expand upon this if requested.

7.2 One-off capital support

The model provides us with the confidence that that the community library could be self-supporting without on-going financial support from the Council, although we would seek one-off capital support for the following items:

- Backlog maintenance (Landlord's obligations)
- Adaptations to provide modest toilet facilities suitable for use by library users and disabled visitors
- Provision of computer systems for public use.

We would request that the above one-off contributions could be accessed via the Council's Community Support Fund.

FOCAL has also requested via the Central Sefton Area Committee on 6th June 2013 pump-priming support of £1,000 to help with our marketing and awareness raising. The request was supported 'in principle.'

7.3 Discretionary Rate relief

As a charity, FOCAL would seek rate relief (80%) but would also invite the Council to exercise its powers to offer 20% discretionary rate relief (as Warrington Council have done), thus rendering the building rate free. We are aware that Sefton Council offered similar discretionary rate relief on community/youth facilities in Crosby.

7.4 Other financial support

Additional grants will be sought over time from charitable trusts, private businesses, individuals and other funding streams which will augment local fund-raising events, all aimed at supporting, sustaining and developing our community service.

8.0 Summary

It is our firmly held belief that Carnegie Library provides and will continue to provide a valuable Public Library serving the local community of Crosby and Blundellsands.

FOCAL can demonstrate that it has the commitment, professional skills, and access to sufficient volunteers to translate our vision into reality.

We have consulted other organisations which have followed a similar path and are confident that Carnegie Library offers a viable and sustainable community resource. The venture would be independent of on-going revenue support from the Council but would derive income to meet its costs through a variety of funding streams run by FOCAL.

In addition to conventional library functions we will develop community facilities for families, the very young and for the elderly. We shall provide support for those with disabilities. Core library services will be augmented by the presence of local and national voluntary groups, offering advice, support and counselling to a wide client base. Our library will genuinely benefit the local community and offer neighbourhood well-being, and providing synergies with Council services.

We are also committed to providing a first-class computer venue for those who lack IT facilities at home and for whom IT becomes a necessity when seeking jobs or universal credits. FOCAL also sees the Library as providing a stimulus for mini-enterprises, small starter businesses and entrepreneurs who cannot afford the costs associated with medium term commercially leased accommodation. The continuation of library services in College Road will add stability and confidence to the local business community.

The Grade II Listed Building and its grounds will be safeguarded and enhanced using voluntary labour and local contractors, requiring one-off capital support to address backlog maintenance/ adaptation issues.

FOCAL will move from a community interest group to become an incorporated not-for-profit organisation operating as a Limited Liability Company or Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

"At the moment that we persuade a child, any child, to cross that threshold, that magic threshold into a library, we change their lives forever, for the better." - Barack Obama