

Appendix A

Feedback Summary Report Combined Welshpool Library and Museum Survey

Context:

A survey was launched on Monday 22 October and ran until midnight on Sunday 25 November 2018.

The survey provided the context around the proposal to co-locate the library into Powysland museum. People were asked to provide their views on:

- how best to use the space to provide for both services,
- what else might need to be considered,
- whether they had a preference around keeping the library or museum open.
- if there were any alternative ideas they would like to put forward instead of co-location.

The survey was publicised via a mix of channels including a media release and posts on the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Contact was made with the high school and also the youth service to seek views from younger people.

This document provides the key findings from both the survey and all other forms of feedback received during the consultation period.

Feedback Summary:

- 1) 389 survey responses received
- 2) Several emails including a group response from the Save Welshpool Library group
- 3) Over 50 comments on the council's corporate Facebook/Twitter accounts.
- 4) Several comments monitored on two community Facebook sites – Save Welshpool Library and the Welshpool Melting Pot
- 5) a business case submitted by Welshpool Town Council
- 6) a petition signed by over 4000 people

This summary report will highlight the feedback from each of the above listed channels and provide an overall conclusion based on the combined responses and how feedback will be given due regard.

A note about consultation and market research.

When consulting it is important to consider how representative the feedback is in relation to the population of interest. The population of interest in this instance is all residents of Welshpool and surrounding towns who may not only be library users or visitors to the museum, but who may also need to access the front line services that need a base within the town after exiting Neuadd Maldwyn. It also includes tourists to the area.

It is worth noting that a consultation isn't market research and thus when seeking views on a service change or policy – especially a controversial or emotive one – it is likely that those most affected will respond. Consideration needs to be given to whether the results are reflective of the whole population of interest or a percentage of it and whether there are missing views or enough feedback to take a decision.



Powysland Museum illustrates the archaeology and social history of Montgomeryshire from the earliest prehistoric settlers to the 20th century. It's housed in a renovated and restored warehouse beside the Montgomery Canal. It had 7500 visitors in 2017/18.

Welshpool Library provides a range of services to residents from the town and surrounding areas including access to PCs, books, videos, story time sessions and more. It had 36,000 users in 2017/18.

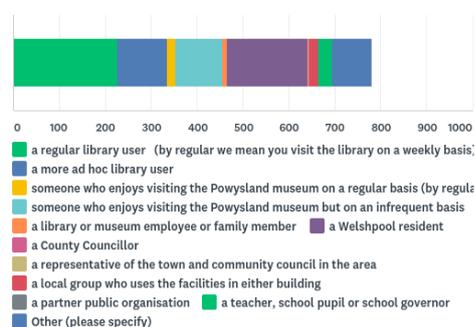


Survey Findings:

Stakeholder Analysis and Profile Data

- 60% of respondents were regular library users
- 28% were more ad hoc library users
- 5% were regular museum visitors
- 27% were ad hoc museum visitors
- 46% were Welshpool residents
- 22% said they were in the “other” category as a stakeholder

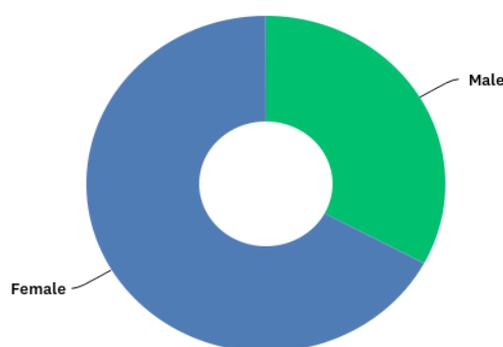
Q1 Firstly could you please state on what basis you are responding to this survey. (Please tick all that apply) Are you...?



Of the 22% who choose “other” the majority were residents from surrounding towns and communities including Forden, Churchstoke, Pont Robert, Llanfair Caereinion, Leighton and Ardleen. A few people said they were library users but didn’t fit the descriptions provided, a few worked in the town but were not residents, and several respondents gave views about the library service and not type of stakeholder they were.

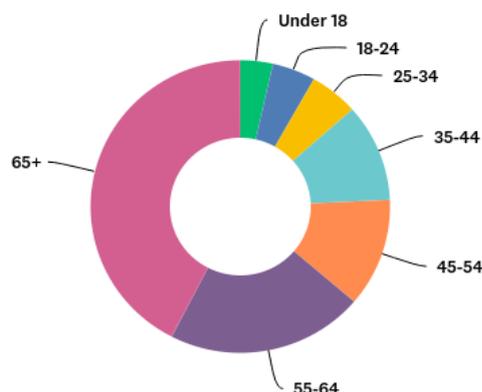
Gender

Q7 Are you... ?



Age

Q8 What age category do you fall into?



The majority of respondents were female (67%) compared to 33% of men. When comparing against the registered library users for Welshpool the figures are 59% female and 38% male.

Just under two thirds of respondents were aged 55 years and over with people aged 65+ representing 43% of respondents and people aged 55 – 64 years of age representing 21% of the sample. Welshpool library has 8629 registered users with more adult and older customers than the average across Powys. Over 2370 are aged 60+ (27%).

Reliability and robustness – considerations

If conducting this as a market research exercise whereby we sent a postal survey to a random sample of residents from Welshpool and surrounding villages, a return of 379 surveys would provide a confidence level of 85% within a margin of error of 5%. This means the council could be confident that the views given in the survey were reflective of the population as a whole.

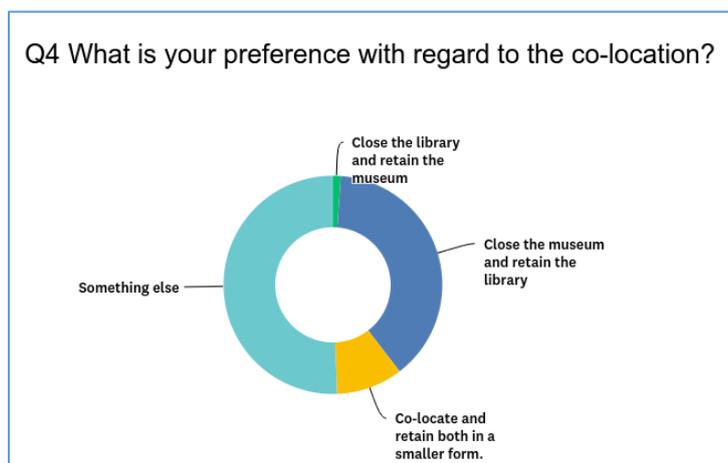
When looking at the Census data from 2011 the population of Welshpool was 6,664.

The mid-year estimate in 2015 saw this grow slightly to 6,756. Using this latest figure, the response rate of 389 responses to the survey represents around 6% of the population. However, we know that not all respondents were from Welshpool – 46% or 176 respondents stated they were from the town. This gives a response rate of 2.6%.

The wider population of North East Powys which includes a number of the towns and villages mentioned by respondents was 27,676 in the Census of 2011. If using this figure, the response rate to the survey is 1.4%.

Key Findings

- 50% of respondents choose the “something else” option when asked what their preference was from four options offered. (see chart on right)
- 38% of respondents would prefer to see the museum close and the library retained.
- 11% said their preference was co-location. Only 1% wanted to see the library close and the museum remain.



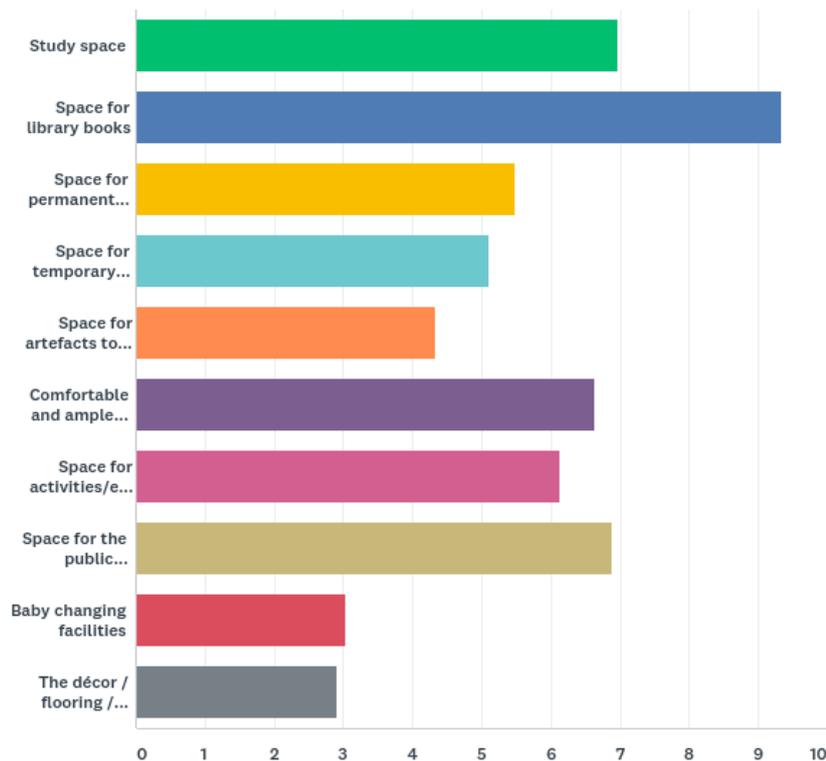
- Of the 38% (134 respondents) who felt the library took precedence over the museum and thus the museum should close, 72% were regular library users and 16% more ad hoc users. 14% visited the museum. Several respondents gave reasons why the library should be sustained in its current home and how important it was to the town per se. A number of respondents also stated that they had chosen this option on the basis that by closing the museum, employees from Neuadd Maldwyn could relocate into the Powysland building and the library could remain in its current home.
- Of the 11% (39 respondents) who said co-location would be their preference, just over half (20) were residents of Welshpool. 16 of these respondents said they were regular or ad hoc users of the library and 14 visited the museum. Some respondents proposed that they supported co-location but that the two services should be housed in the library rather than in the museum primarily because it provided a bigger and more suitable space.
- Those who choose “something else” were asked to provide additional ideas or suggestions. The majority of these were more comments which highlighted how the community felt the library benefitted their lives. These respondents felt that co-locating wouldn’t provide enough space for people to enjoy either service and asked the council to “think again”.
- There were some concerns expressed around parking at the museum site if the library were to relocate there. Tourism was mentioned as important for the town and the wider economy by a few individuals who felt that exhibitions about the history of the town would be reduced. Comments were also made around the library building being purpose built so it should stay as is, the location of the museum being out of the town and thus a longer journey/walk for some residents and a call for us to lobby the government for more funding so we didn’t have to consider this proposal in the first place.
- In terms of alternative options around co-location some suggestions were made including the town hall, the old Iceland building, Dolanog house, the visitor centre, the job centre or the police building. At least one person suggested moving the library into the new school, whilst another felt the library could relocate into the Youth Centre as per the town council’s proposal.
- There was also criticism on how the council had handled this issue and a view expressed by several that this was a fait accompli and we were not conducting a genuine consultation.



The current library

- Some respondents argued that the library should stay on the ground floor and that this would allow some staff from Neuadd Maldwyn to relocate onto the second floor thus providing a compromise and both a front line and agile working space.
- When asked what should take priority if co-locating the two services into the one smaller space at Powysland Museum, respondents wanted to see space for library books take precedence over anything else. This was followed by study space, space for public computers, photocopiers etc. and then ample seating to allow people to read or use Wi-Fi. (See chart below).

Q2 What do you think are the most important things to consider if co-locating the library service and museum service into one building? (Please rank in order of importance with the most important aspect number 1 and so on and so forth).



A sample of some of the qualitative comments given

In favour of both services staying as is

“As a regular user of the library and therefore an observer of how well it is used and provides necessary access to books, fictional and informative as well as other information sources i.e. internet, newspapers, magazines etc. It seems then that the proposal to reduce such services by squashing it in to the museum building from a purpose built facility totally prevents it from providing a meaningful service.”

“Both facilities need their own space. There should be no need for them to share.”

“I do not think that the library and museum should co-locate into one building. I think the library should remain in the building that was specifically built for it. Welshpool has very few facilities in the town centre. It does not have a cinema, theatre or art centre so moving our library into a smaller building shared with the museum with no parking except a few spaces for the disabled is absolutely ridiculous!”

“The library needs to be located somewhere accessible to users - preferably on a main road and close to car parks. It's really important to keep BOTH the library and museum - probably the library for local residents and the museum for residents and tourists. THE LIBRARY MUST NOT BE CLOSED.”

"I think you need to find other ways to make cuts. The library is vital to the town exactly the way it is. You need the current amount of space for books so adults and more importantly children can browse through a good selection. Don't change a thing, when my kids were young we spent hours in the library every week. My daughter did a week's work experience in the library and now plans to be a writer. Her love of books started with the library. Please leave it alone!"

In favour of closing the museum and keeping the library open

"The library is an essential service for the town which the museum is not."

"From my experience the Library is used by a great many people from children to seniors and a light airy building is important. The Museum is used by visitors and are not inviting buildings. Quite dismal and not convenient to access."

In favour of co-location

"The location of Powysland Museum adjacent to the canal is ideal to attract to attract tourists and people walking the Severn Way."

"I think the library merging in with the museum building is a good idea albeit both on a smaller footprint. Both facilities will still be in existence which is a good solution and letting the remainder of the Welshpool council staff have an office base in Welshpool at the existing library building. A good solution all round. The existing library is too large anyway and could be reduced in size even if less books on display - people can still order books or use kindles. Any PC computer workstations for public to use can be reduced in number but a 2-hour booking slot system introduced in advance to save the number of PC work stations available due to downsizing library space. No one wants to pay any more council tax and it is the only way forward to have a good compromise to keep all the existing facilities of local library, museum and Welshpool council staff in Welshpool."

Other comments

"I don't accept this document as a valid consultation. The people have been given no information as to the costs of relocating the library and the council workers. There is no necessity to move council workers to the library, what is wrong with Dolanog house in Welshpool or Ladywell House in Newtown? Welshpool Library was stated as being a library+ site and essential in the last council review of libraries. To massively downsize the second busiest library in Powys is ridiculous. It is an essential community hub and actively used by many people for a variety of activities, not just for books!! Your consultation is invalid as you are not providing the population with the real information."

"The library currently can be used for film shows, reading groups, etc. and these facilities should be retained."

"All the above points have equal importance. Share library and build extension. Retain parking."

"You totally missed out that to keep the library wheelchair accessible, you cannot have a library effectively in the museum building. It does not fit and you need to meet the access legislation."

2) Emails and comments on social media

A handful of emails were received by the library service and the council's Customer Services team. The key thrust of these emails were from concerned residents seeking to make a case for the library to remain in its current building, highlighting the key benefits that a library played in a community and suggesting some alternative options around use of buildings in the town. These have all been considered and acknowledged. One respondent had highlighted a list of 20 points whilst another was a group response from the Save Welshpool Museum campaign group.

3) Welshpool Town Council's business case

As part of the North Office Review work, discussions have been ongoing with Welshpool Town Council and a business case was submitted to the council during the consultation period. This business case proposed purchase of and then relocation of the library into the Youth Centre instead of Powysland Museum. This would create the same outcome regarding employees from Neuadd Maldwyn who would relocate into the current library building. The town council were also proposing to take over the management of the museum. The council provided some initial feedback to the town council around their business case and agreed to give it further consideration as part of the consultation process.

4) The petition signed by over 4000 people

A petition signed by around 4000 people was handed into the council during the consultation period. This will be considered as part of the decision-making process. The petition stated:

“We are objecting to the relocation and/or downsizing of Welshpool Library, which is a valuable community hub as well as a resource for the lending of books. We request that the council consider the long term impact of cutting library services, and commit to supporting Welshpool Library and its users. Keep Welshpool Library as it is.”

Conclusions, considerations and next steps

All responses given during the consultation period will be given due regard before a final decision is made.

All views given on the preferences and how best to incorporate both library and museum services into a shared space will also be taken into account if co-location is recommended going forward.