



Connect, Inform, Include, Collaborate Consultation Report June 2018



AWARDS
FOR ALL
SCOTLAND

**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**

CONNECT, INFORM, INCLUDE, COLLABORATE CONSULTATION REPORT

Contents

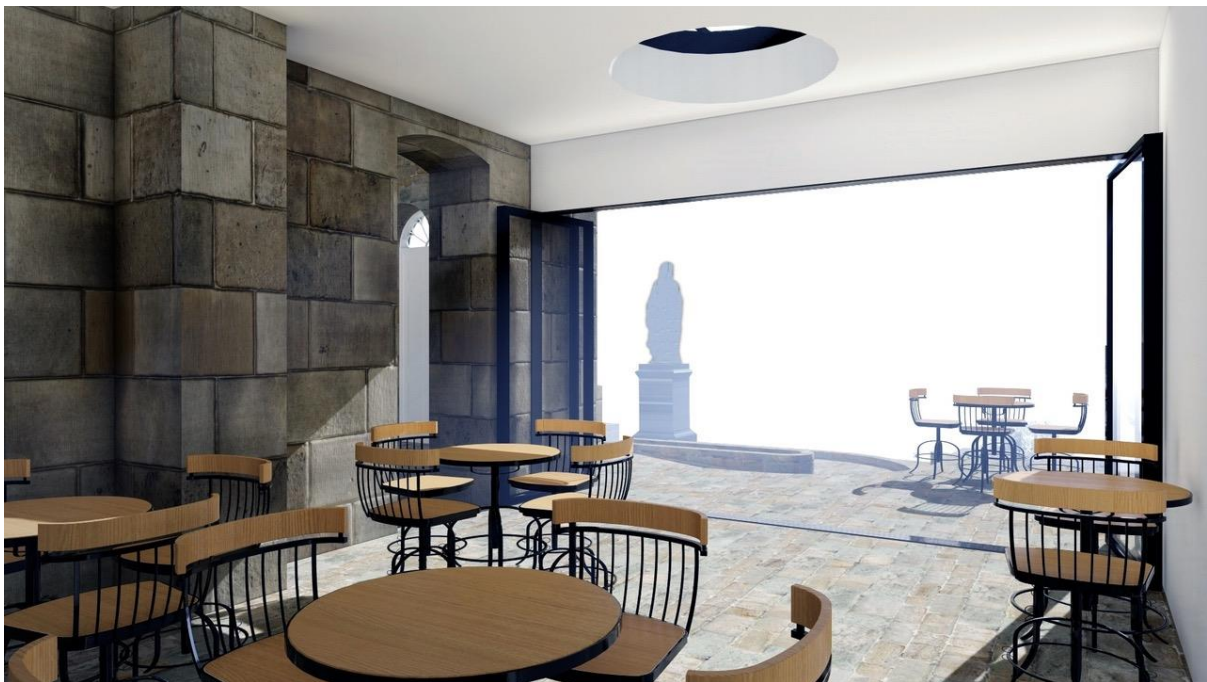
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Background.....	2
3. What we did	4
4. What we learned	7
General points	7
Support for proposals	9
Community Café.....	9
Conference/Events Space.....	12
Voluntary Sector Office Suite	14
Ideas for Service Development	17
5. Conclusions	26

CONNECT, INFORM, INCLUDE, COLLABORATE

CONSULTATION REPORT

“A safe, peaceful place but with a community buzz”

1. Introduction



In March 2018, The Yes-U-Are Partnership¹ received a grant from the National Lottery Awards for All to undertake a programme of consultation and dialogue with communities and other stakeholders around the potential for the former St Andrew’s Erskine Church in Pilmuir Street, Dunfermline.

Following a competitive tendering process, the Partnership appointed Colin Duff, an independent consultant with extensive experience of community engagement and supporting community organisations to acquire and manage building assets, to work with Partnership staff and board on the implementation of this programme.

The consultation is intended to produce high quality information that can then be used as a basis for seeking funds to refurbish the building and supporting the development of new service provision where this may be lacking. The varied sources and methods of collecting views offers a robustly triangulated evidence base from which to progress the Partnership’s ambitions for the building.

¹ <http://www.yesuare.org.uk/>

2. Background



The Yes-U-Are Partnership is a registered charity which was formed by a group of individuals from a cross-section of professional, church and community backgrounds who all live in the Dunfermline area. It is run with limited financial resources and presently has one part-time member of staff. The Partnership is established to provide facilities, activities and services with and for a wide spectrum of people, groups and communities of interest in Dunfermline and its neighbouring towns and villages, Fife and Scotland through:

- the advancement of citizenship or community development
- the advancement of arts, heritage and culture
- the relief of those in need due to age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage
- the advancement of education
- the advancement of religion
- the provision of recreational facilities or the organisation of recreational activities

Prior to incorporation, and in the period after incorporation, the partnership developed and delivered a number of activities, including:

- Support to vulnerable people with substance misuse problems
- Action research – Road to Recovery report published in November 2015
- Family Support Project
- Writing Project
- Court Case Support Project
- Gardening Project
- Dog Walking Project
- Arts Project

Key to the realization of the Partnership's vision was the purchase in 2012 of the derelict former St Andrews Erskine church building. The building is B listed and categorised as 'At Risk' by Historic Environment Scotland. Its significance is also noted in the Dunfermline Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and the Dunfermline Conservation Area Appraisal.

The purchase was achieved through raising £735,000 (£635,000 in legacy funding, £75,000 from The Alfred Stewart Foundation) in funding that enabled the purchase of the building and two years running costs with part-time and voluntary staff.

The Partnership ambition is to raise a further £3 million for full restoration and refurbishment of the building and to bring it into 21st century use. Funds are required to redevelop the building to include:

- A community café, opening at times when there is demand from local people
- A conference and events space
- Offices for hire or lease to other charitable and community organisations

In 2015, the Pollock Hammond Partnership, an architecture practice specialising in building with a heritage element, were appointed as architects. A vision for the redeveloped building and high quality Computer Aided Design images were produced.

Earlier community consultation, undertaken in 2013, found support for the principle of establishing a community hub in the centre of Dunfermline, and believed that it would enable local people and community organisations to overcome disadvantage and inequality and to develop skills and knowledge.

A business plan, produced in 2013, states that *"commercial activities are focussed around three key areas of income generation: the proposed community bistro, venue hire (including short and long-term room hire), events and weddings"*. A proposal to also include office space for lease to voluntary organisations was developed after the business plan. The revenue funding requirement is estimated at £120,000 per annum, to be achieved from trading activities and trust funders.

3. What we did



The work programme for the consultation was designed to obtain the best possible quality and volume of responses from the key stakeholders considered to have valuable views on the future of the Erskine Building. The work programme was implemented by a team from the Partnership that included, the commissioned consultant and Partnership staff, volunteers and board members. One volunteer obtained paid employment, supported by the National Lottery grant, for the period of the consultation. Other volunteers assisted in setting up events and preparing the building for presentation to the public.

Open Day for Politicians

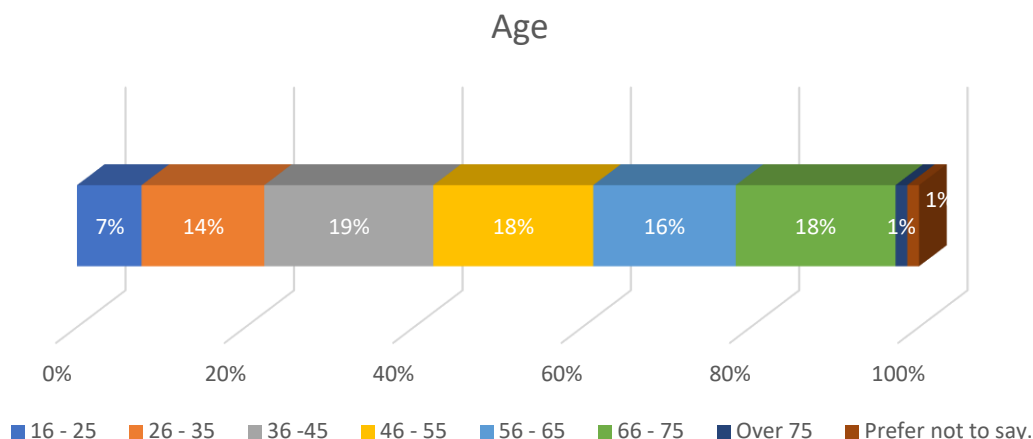
All local politicians at community council, Fife Council, Scottish and UK Parliament level were invited to an open day for politicians on 21st May 2018. It was attended by 9 people, including political and officer representatives from Fife Council and staff from local MP and MSP offices. The open day included a tour of the building and a facilitated discussion around the topic of *“How can the Erskine Building and Yes-U-Are Partnership contribute to the regeneration of Dunfermline Town Centre?”*

Community Survey

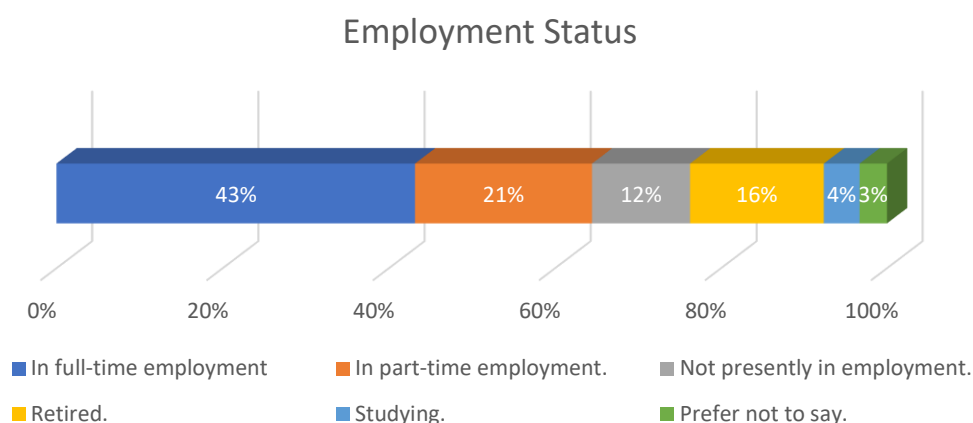
The original plan for the consultation suggested a postal survey. Questions were raised about the value of a postal survey, the challenges of effectively targeting and distributing it, and the potentially low response rates. The consultant prepared three options for the postal survey, from which the board selected an option to target distribution of a paper-based survey at sections of the population who were likely to have more limited access to the internet, mainly older people. Partnership staff produced a long list of organisations and outlets where older people were likely to access and complete paper-based survey forms and distributed the forms to these organisations and outlets. This produced 60 completed survey forms.

An online survey was produced and promoted via the Partnership database of members and supporters, social media and on the Partnership website. Two prizes of £50 in shopping vouchers were offered as an incentive to encourage people to complete and submit the survey. Of the 429 respondents to the community survey, 61% were female, 37% were male and 2% preferred not to say.

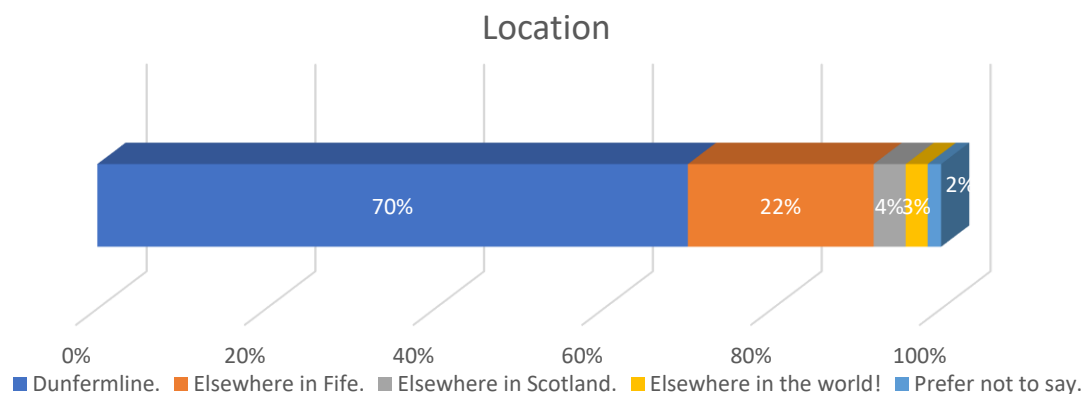
Half of respondents were aged 26-55. The age distribution was as follows.



The majority of respondents were in employment.



Almost all lived in Dunfermline or elsewhere in Fife.



A street survey was carried out in the Kingsgate Shopping Centre adjacent to the Erskine Building on 15th June 2018. This produced 30 completed survey forms, distributed hundreds more and generated dozens of conversations with passers-by around their views on the future of the Erskine building.

Voluntary Sector Consultation

An open day for voluntary sector organisations took place at Fife Academy for Performing Arts on 28th May 2018. Invitations were sent to 104 organisations on the Partnership database, 21 people registered to attend, and 9 participated. This included a tour of the building and a facilitated discussion around the proposals for the building and the gaps in resources for the voluntary sector in Dunfermline. Due to the lower attendance at the event, it was decided to offer representatives of voluntary organisations a further chance to contribute their views through an online survey. This was promoted via email to all 104 organisations on the Partnership database. It attracted a total of 24 responses from voluntary organisations.

The consultant undertook a small programme of interviews with key individuals to produce greater detail on the local context for development of community building resources, gaps in services and local needs. The consultant also attended meetings of Design Dunfermline, a separately managed consultation exercise to develop a design-led solution for Dunfermline town centre, which ran concurrently with the Connect, Inform, Include, Collaborate programme.

4. What we learned



General points

The clear majority of people and organisations consulted were in favour of something happening with the Erskine building. There was concern about the impact of the vacant building on the general appearance and amenity of central Dunfermline and a sense that, given its prime location, it was a waste for it to be unused.

There was some concern over the number of other large buildings in the town centre which were also vacant, the inference being made that multiple empty buildings indicated a low level of investment in development with a potential depressing effect on the value and utility of all of them. There was therefore a greater urgency and importance in developing the Erskine building as a means of preventing this and providing motivation for other regeneration developments.

There was some concern over the availability of parking in the vicinity of the building and assertions that parking was too limited to support larger numbers of people using the building².

Although the building has an extensive history and heritage value, discussions with local people tended to highlight its more recent living history, and the personal connections and experiences that many people felt in relation to it. This suggests that proposals for community use of the building are likely to attract greater support than proposals which focus more narrowly on heritage.

² www.parkopedia.co.uk shows 2,141 parking spaces within 15 minutes' walk of the Erskine Building. This does not take the parking available for 3 hours at a nearby supermarket into account.

There was strong support from voluntary sector organisations for the establishment of some form of physical space which provided resources, e.g. office, hot-desking, meeting facilities, which enabled more efficient working practices and allowed greater contact between staff across voluntary organisations. This was expected to produce outcomes of better use of staff time, reduced operational costs, greater organisational sustainability and better services for people.

There was an overarching concern about cost, and a commonly made assumption that services from and resources available through the Erskine building would be lower cost than comparable services and resources available elsewhere in Dunfermline. This may or may not be the case. The comparative cost, once known, may influence the views and decisions of potential users and partners.

The Design Dunfermline consultation theme 'New uses for vacant buildings' referred explicitly to the Erskine building. A key finding of the Design Dunfermline consultation exercise was the proposal for the establishment of 'Erskine Square'. These proposals seek to maximise the amenity and use of the public realm space in front of the Erskine building. There is significant complementarity between the proposals for the Erskine building and those for the establishment of Erskine Square. Individually, either would make a substantial contribution to the regeneration of central Dunfermline; jointly they have the potential to transform the area.

Overall, there was near universal support for the development of the Erskine Building as part of a strategic plan to regenerate central Dunfermline. There was a sense of urgency however; many respondents were in favour of opening the community café as a first step. It was hoped that the visible presence of the community café, and the footfall it would bring to the area, would help develop other activity in the Erskine Building and across central Dunfermline.

Support for proposals

Community Café



Almost all the respondents to the consultation were broadly in support of the idea of a community café. There were a smaller number of views which noted a perception of overprovision of cafés in central Dunfermline, or the potential for a negative consequence for local business if a community café were to draw trade away from them.

The idea that the community café should not simply be a commercial venture, but should have some aims to benefit people, attracted almost universal support. This was felt to offer a unique selling point, make it attractive to a specific market, limit the potential to impact on local business, and ensure that people who were not well served by the existing commercial offer could find something different which may be closer to their needs.

“Anything which doesn't have profit as the motive, for the good of the town. Pret isn't necessarily a bad thing, but where it is the overriding motive, then commercial rates can apply, preferably elsewhere. A collection point for the local foodbank is a must.”

There was broad support for some programme of activities in the community café, although ideas and priorities varied widely. The idea of the community café being unlicensed and open in the evening was universally supported. No similar service in central Dunfermline could be identified by any respondent. It meant that people who, for whatever reason, wished to avoid licensed premises would have somewhere social to go in the evening.

“A place to offer friendship/ companionship to older people, over a coffee, or place for young mums to meet and support one another. It would be the ideal place for communities in need of strengthening to meet in a less formal way”

There was some concern from a small number of respondents about the challenges of developing a programme or work with vulnerable people in a community café shared with the general public, even taking partnerships with other organisations into account.

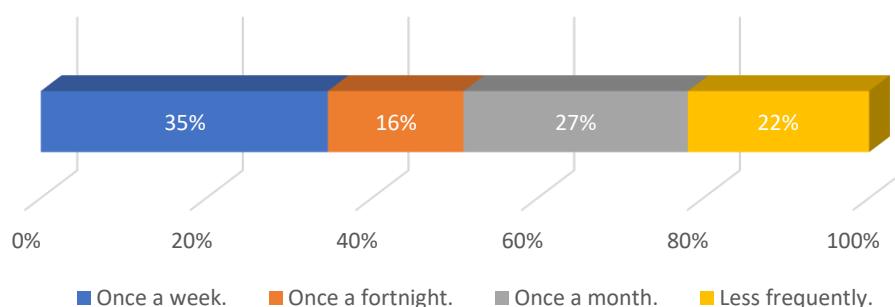
The Serenity Café, tucked off Edinburgh's Canongate, provides a safe drug and alcohol free social space where people can support each other and strengthen their recovery. Members and volunteers are entitled to discounted food and drinks and non-members (the public) are also welcome to use the cafe at slightly higher prices. The cafe provides access to Trained Volunteer Recovery Coaches and Financial Inclusion workers. The cafe has also a full programme of activities, including learning programs, social/hobby group as well as fellowship and recovery support groups, and a women's project.

The location of the community café in the town centre, and its proximity to public transport links meant that most people were confident that it could attract sufficient custom to generate surplus income. The proposed design, which maximises the outlook of the building on to a busy commercial retail square, was felt to both ensure that passers-by would notice the community café and would offer an attractive place to observe activity, particularly if the Erskine Square proposals are realised.

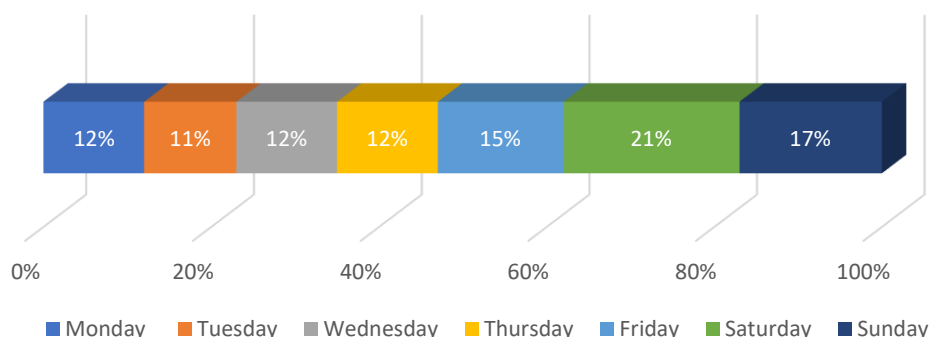
"A little internet/gaming area would be good for adults and children alike. And a small soft play area ... Having both of these would mean I could meet up with anyone (business or leisure) and my children would also have something to do."

More than a third of survey respondents said that they would visit the community café at least once a week. This corresponds with most of conversations we had with people participating in the street survey who said that they would visit the community café on a weekly trip to town.

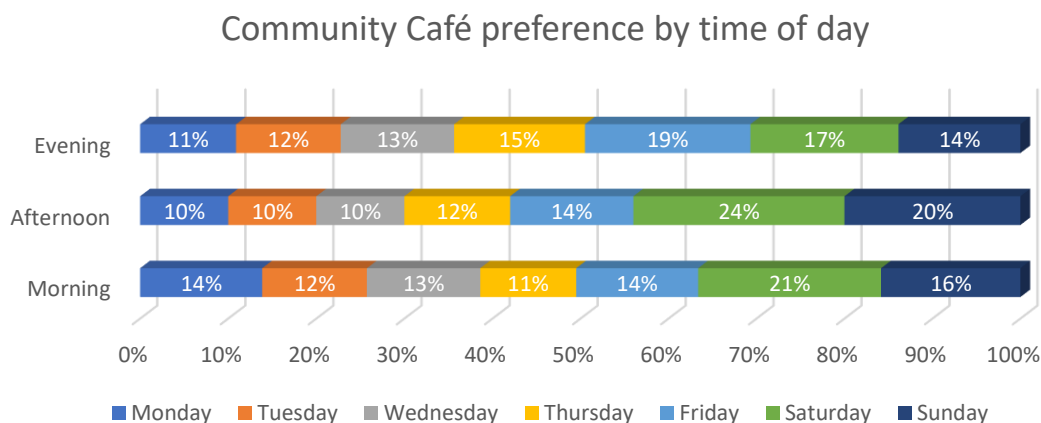
How often would you visit a Community Café?



Community Café preference by day of the week



Friday/Saturday/Sunday were the most popular days for the community café. The most popular times for visiting the community café were Saturday afternoon, Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon. This may reflect the fact that the majority of respondents are in employment and may have less free time during the week.



The higher level of interest in evening community café provision may reflect the view encountered in dialogue with people that there was little available in central Dunfermline for people who, for whatever reason, did not wish to visit licensed premises. This is further supported by the fact that Friday/Saturday/Sunday evenings are more popular than weekday evenings.

There was a theme in much of the discussion at the street survey that the commercial night time economy provision in central Dunfermline was not suitable for older people who still had an active social life. The idea of an evening community café was popular with this demographic.

“Local artist exhibitions but make sure to have opening nights, talks, live music sessions. Some things you can do at night on the weekend that doesn't involve going to the pub as that is nearly all Dunfermline has to offer at the moment.”

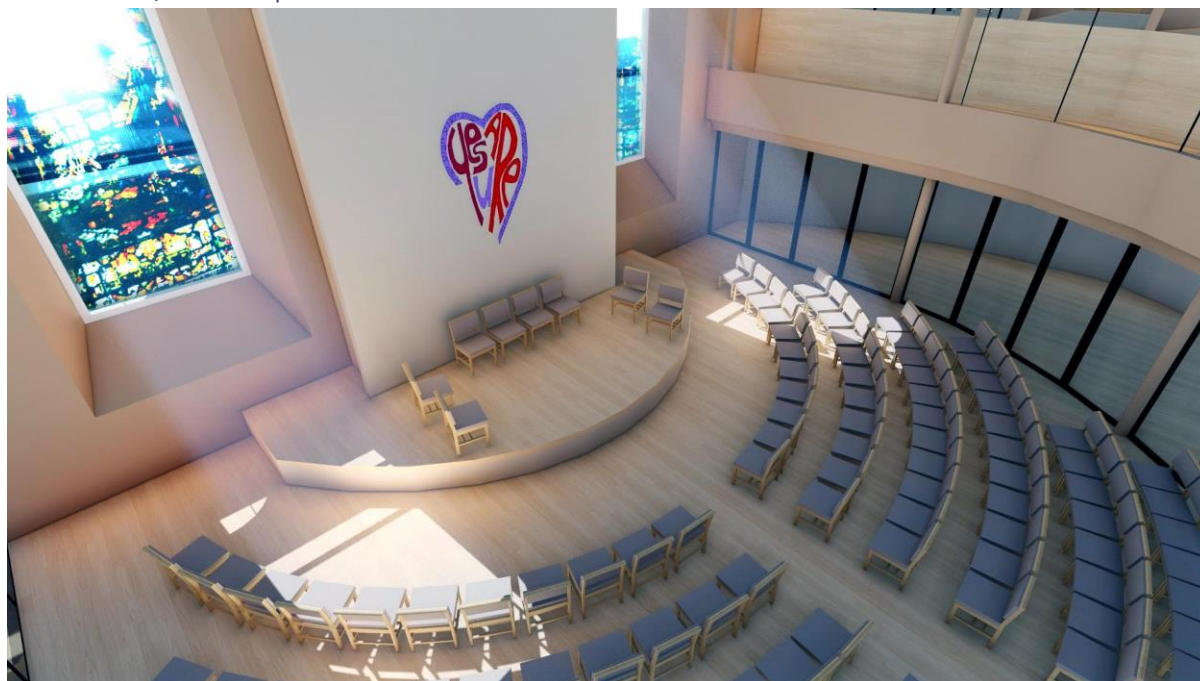
“Games, puzzles etc so people (especially older people) could meet others for a coffee and a chat while playing cards, doing jigsaws etc”

There was strong support for the community café to offer a range of lighter entertainments in the evening - with live music – preferably not too loud – being the most popular. It was anticipated that the community café would present a range of entertainment as a means of testing the market, and eventually develop a programme which had been proven to be popular. One respondent suggested the idea of giving space and time over to local musicians and allowing them to manage the programming of music in the cafe.

“A place to go a watch entertainment such as stand-up comedians, magician shows etc and also used as place for school plays etc”

There was strong support for the community café from staff of voluntary organisations who felt that it would offer them a safer, more professional and more appropriate space in which to meet clients and colleagues or to catch up on work in time between appointments.

Conference/Events Space



Just over a quarter of the general public supported the idea of the Erskine building accommodating a conference space. Among voluntary organisations there was almost universal general support for a conference space.

This was felt to provide something that local people and organisations could benefit from, and draw new people and organisations to the city, with a consequent benefit for the local economy.

“If there was a conference space in central Dunfermline it would have the potential to attract businesses and organisations willing to establish themselves in a central area.”

The availability of other conference spaces in central Dunfermline was noted, and there was a small amount of concern about overprovision. It was noted that conference space would need to be marketed to a niche that differed from that available elsewhere in the city. The idea of a conference space that was marketed primarily towards the public and voluntary sectors was supported as a valuable niche. This was also felt to contribute the idea of the Erskine building as a resource which helped to bring different elements of the voluntary sector and public sectors together to develop more coordinated and better services.

“What would be beneficial is more space to be able to carry out in house training, support and development opportunities for our Volunteers and Families that we support. A drop-in type facility with some staff support would be a valuable type of resource.”

Local people had a greater interest in the use of the Erskine building as a space for parties and life events, than as a conference centre. There was substantial support for the building’s use as a wedding venue. Respondents noted that internal and external space and light were likely to be very good for weddings and wedding photography.

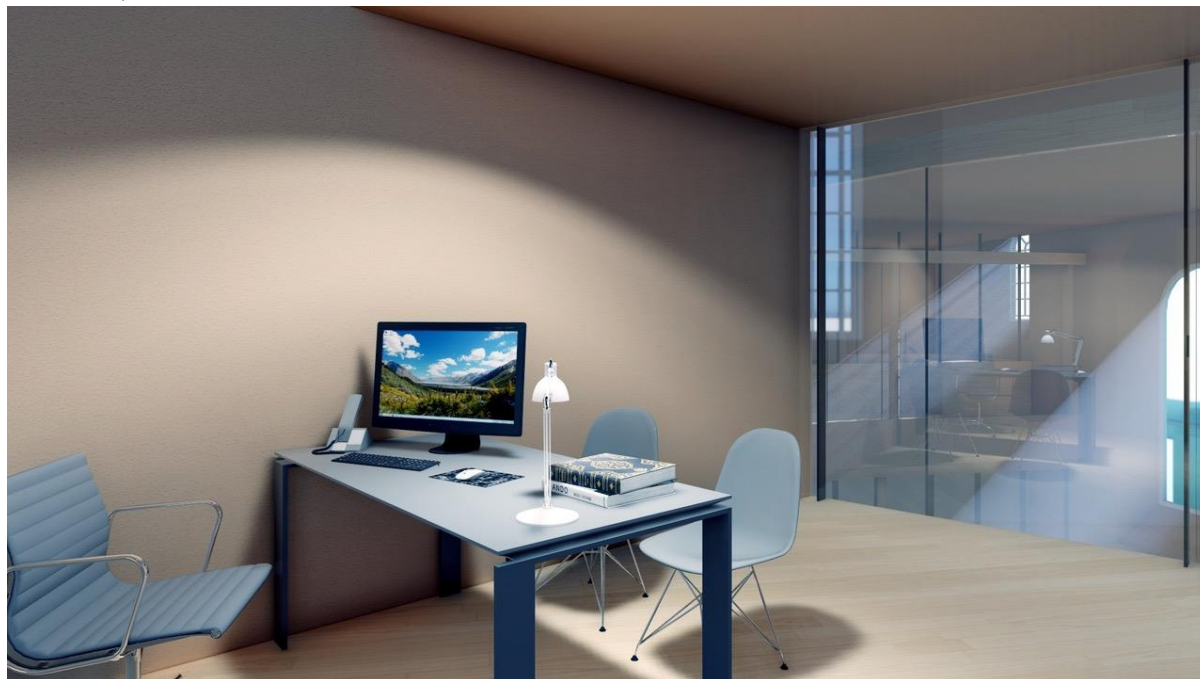
Several people reported that they had, in fact, had a marriage ceremony in the building. It was noted that the standard of decoration and design would have to be relatively high to compare favourably with other wedding venues in Dunfermline and the surrounding areas.

It was noted that there were no comparable wedding venues in central Dunfermline. The only competitors would be commercial venues, none of which were likely to be able to compete with the quality of the space available in the Erskine building. There was an understanding that the Erskine building, as a not-for-profit venture, may not be as expensive as commercial wedding venues. It was suggested that the Partnership seek to establish relationships with professional wedding planners to maximise the potential of the space as a wedding venue.

There was also interest in the building as a venue for children's activities. The range of activities for children supported was great and too varied and complex for individual analysis. There was a high level of interest in the building being used to support arts and craft activities for children and for parties and special occasions.

It was suggested several times that the location and space made the building ideal for summer programme activity which could draw children to a central point from other locations across the city. Many local people could remember the building's past use as a children's play centre, and the fact that this had not appeared to be very popular. For this reason, there was limited support for the idea of the events space specialising in activities for children.

Voluntary Sector Office Suite



The idea of a suite of offices specifically for voluntary organisations received high levels of support, particularly from local voluntary organisations (or national organisations with local branches) with staff.

“A Voluntary Sector 'hub' type facility would be of great benefit to the sector in strengthening partnerships and resources and also in ensuring cross referral for services more easily and in one central location. Often small voluntary sector organisations can be quite isolated, and this would help develop and strengthen the sector in Dunfermline.”

“Yes, there are probably a range of Voluntary Sector Organisations that would wish to have a good place to work from. Finances are tight for many at the moment. Back to lack of car parking spaces for staff and clients, if call-in centres were intended.”

There was anecdotal evidence that the offer from the commercial sector was largely unsuitable, prohibitively expensive, and often rent/lease terms were not favourable to the lessee.

“We have moved offices three times in the last three years, it causes such disruption and we lose so much work every time. We’ve never had really suitable premises, or security of tenure at any time. We still don’t, and we pay way too much.”

Where organisations expressed a preference, units designed for 2-3 people most favoured. It was felt that this was the smallest size of staff team which would be seeking to lease office premises, and that if larger teams needed space, they could rent multiple offices with no significant negative impact. The overall design proposed for the suite of offices was felt to naturally facilitate collaboration and dialogue between staff, even between staff from different organisations.

“It would be amazing having a number of groups in the same place for networking and also for sharing info and services. Also for convenience!!”

There was a high level of interest in the office suite as a core element of the Erskine building as a resource which facilitated communication and collaboration between voluntary sector staff.

“Voluntary organisations are always strapped for cash so rent for office premises is not always possible. If your suite offered rates depending on the income of the organisations, that would be great. Also, a couple of desks that organisations could use on an ad hoc basis would be ideal.”

There were suggestions that the office suites could be reserved for voluntary organisations which specialised in working with vulnerable people, and that the whole building would become a hub for the organisations and their service users. It was accepted that this, although desirable in some respects, may be challenging to achieve in practice.

Hayweight House in Central Edinburgh is operated by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations as a voluntary sector office suite. It offers modern meeting rooms, kitchens with all mod cons and lots of space to connect with other voluntary sector workers. Packages are available for a monthly rental ranging, at the time of writing, from £230 to £302 per month dependent on the level of service required.

There was substantial interest in shared facilities, e.g. group and one to one meeting rooms, kitchen facilities, printing, IT, reception, etc. This was felt to both reduce the overall cost to the individual organisation and further facilitate good working relationships.

“Affordable one-off room hire to hold network meetings for charities. Meetings which hold 20 plus people.”

“Having a hub makes sense to me -- shared central costs/overheads; mutual learning in an informal sense between organisations; people get to know that is where you go for voluntary sector input.”

There was some interest in support services which may be beyond the remit of the Partnership and fall more clearly into the remit of third sector support organisations like Fife Voluntary Action. There may be scope for the Partnership to develop a broader voluntary sector support offer in conjunction with Fife Voluntary Action.

“A drop in type facility with some staff support would be a valuable type of resource. General access to funding for organisations that deal with mental health and a better understanding of needs of an ageing population.”

“The use of photocopiers, large scale printing of flyers, laminators and expertise in IT. Expertise on how to promote charity, how to complete registration for OSCR, one stop shop for information on funding opportunities, Health & Safety, Data Protection, Protection of vulnerable people; the obligations in law that all organisations should adhere to but maybe unaware of. A point of contact to register interest in volunteering.”

“Lack of office for Fife Voluntary Action staff to share their knowledge and experience with volunteer using organisations”

If there was a café area in the building this could only add further value in terms of enabling staff from different organisations to meet and talk. Staff from voluntary organisations also felt that a public café would increase their organisations' profile and enable greater connection between them and potential service users.

"As a Voluntary Sector organisation with office base in the town centre, we would love to use the community café as a venue to have a 'cafe catch up' for our volunteers once a month or once every 6 weeks or so."

There was substantial support for the provision of hot-desking facilities. This tended to come from organisations with fewer staff or with staff who had a peripatetic role.

Many of these noted the inadequacy of existing resources for remote working while away from an office base, and the problems that this frequently caused them. The availability of good quality wi-fi was considered the most important feature of hot-desking facilities.

Quiet areas and space for IT equipment and files were desirable, but less important than wi-fi. It may be possible to develop a service which offers members access to booths, or other more private desk space, in exchange for an annual subscription or ad hoc fee. To limit the risk of voluntary organisation staff simply using the café for this, it may be technically feasible to offer lower speed broadband to café customers, and higher speed broadband access to professionals hiring hot desk facilities.

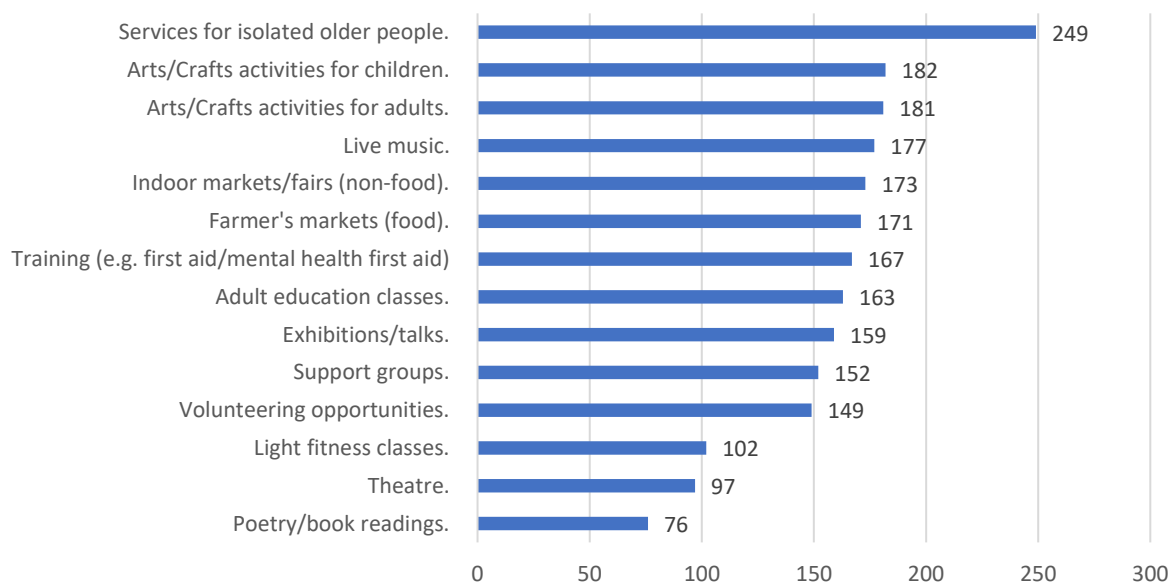
Ideas for Service Development



In addition to managing a major community and voluntary sector resource, the Yes-U-Are Partnership wish to retain the option to develop or facilitate a few smaller scale services for local people. This may be either as direct service providers or by acting in partnership with other voluntary organisations. Consultation sought to explore the ideas that local people and representatives of voluntary organisations believed would be valuable.

Survey respondents were asked to select from a list of potential service developments that they thought were important. Respondents were able to select as many or as few as they wished.

Service Developments



Dialogue with local people, politicians and voluntary organisations built on the detail of the above options and produced several other ideas.

Services for isolated older people

This was clearly the most popular option in the survey, and one of the most commonly raised ideas in other dialogue. Age UK estimates that loneliness and isolation affects around 100,000 older people in Scotland, and has a profound impact on quality of life, with serious implications for physical and mental health. Respondents from all demographics were concerned about this and saw the Erskine building as a suitable location for services designed to enable isolated older people to leave their home, meet with others and participate in activities which would reduce the risk of poorer mental or physical health.

“A place for single, older people to meet for companionship and discussions about both serious and light-hearted issues.”

This idea differs from the evening community café idea in that the evening community café is for older people who have the confidence, social networks and resources to attend the café through their own motivation. The target audience for the services for isolated older people in this context is older people who may be on their own, who do not have the confidence or resources to simply turn up at an event, and who may require some support or other intervention to encourage and enable them to attend and participate in activity.

The Fife Health & Social Care Partnership Approved Strategic Plan 2016-19 reports that, according to their research, 88% of those aged 75 and over reported their activities were limited by a long term health problem or disability.

Scottish Care³ has currently a development role within Fife, supported by the Older People's Change Fund and now the Integrated Care Fund. A Development Officer has a remit of supporting the work of the Independent Sector⁴ to build on existing relationships and to consider models of care which support the strategic plan.

There are a range of public sector and voluntary organisations working with older people in Dunfermline, some of whom are also working on addressing social isolation. There may be scope for the development of a partnership arrangement with one or more⁵ of these agencies.

Arts/Craft Activities for Adults

There was substantial interest in arts/craft activities in the commentary received. Many of the local people consulted already had an active interest in some form of arts and craft activity and wished to see an increase in provision in central Dunfermline. Several other community facilities in Dunfermline offer popular participative arts programmes and resources. People who were associated with these stated that demand exceeded supply and there was scope for much more if spaces could be found. The Erskine building presently has spaces designated as craft rooms with good quality natural lighting.

³ <http://www.scottishcare.org/>

⁴ NHS services use the term 'Independent Sector' to refer to any non-NHS agency to which they contract aspects of service delivery, it includes private and third sector organisations and some other public sector organisations.

⁵ There are also several national organisations working on similar themes, e.g.

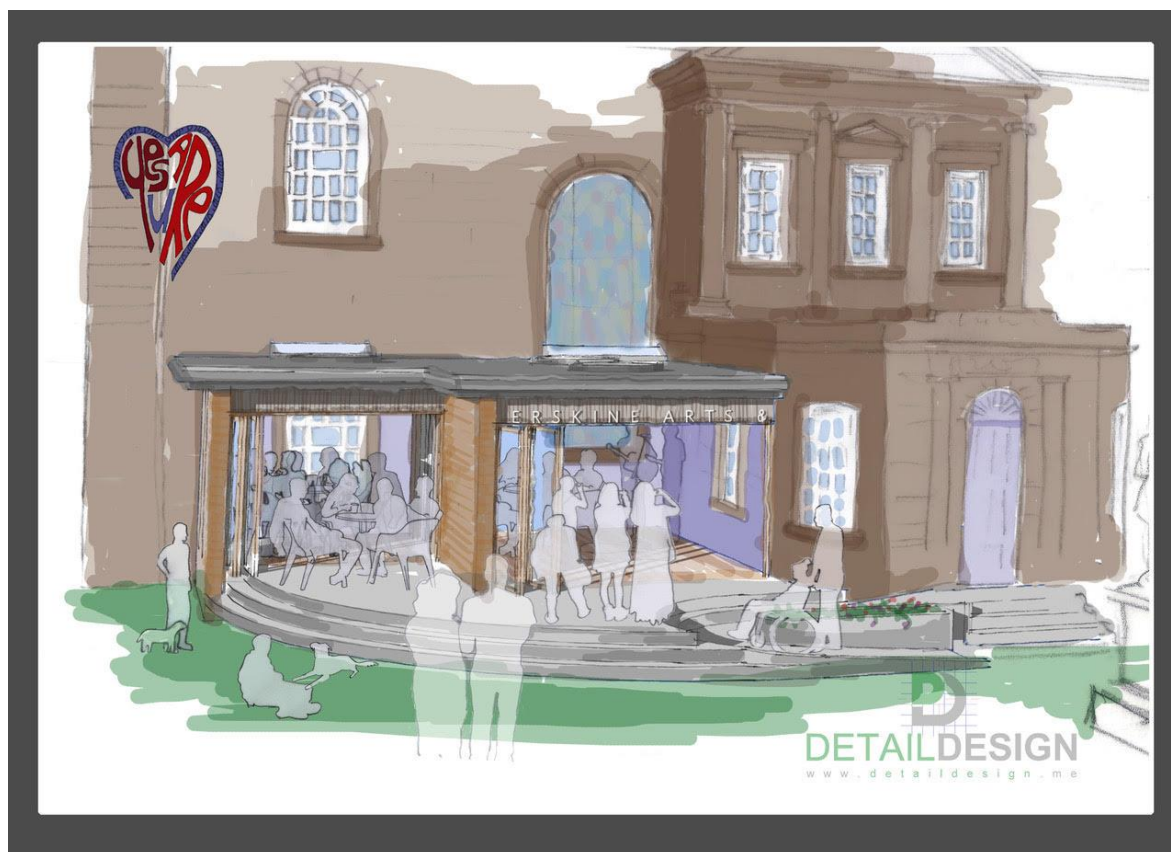
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/#.WzHh1qdKg2w>

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/>

<http://wavelength.org.uk/>

There may be some potential in maintaining these spaces for this specialist purpose and working with a selection of local arts/craft groups to develop a programme for the space.

"I reckon a small ceramic cafe for adults and children, not everyone has a car to visit the one at Pitreavie Industrial Estate. You should hold small workshops and get local crafters involved. There is a sewing shop down the high street and many gifted locals that can teach people new crafts to the old and young. You could hold craft fairs, have a learning space/ space for locals to use for art space, exhibitions, bingo! If you have a cafe/ kitchen rent to chefs, have a soup kitchen for the homeless. It's an amazing building in a fantastic location, use it well."



Indoor Markets/Fairs (non-food)

This referred to events like sample sales, vintage clothing or antique fairs, baby clothes/equipment fairs and other events which allow vendors of specialist items not easily available in shops to bring their goods to potential purchasers. There are numerous national organisations who specialise in organising such events, and they are popular in comparable community facilities in other locations. They have the potential to generate income for the building while providing a valuable outlet for local small business, and increasing the retail offer available in central Dunfermline. There may be some potential for this idea to add value to an arts/crafts programme should participants produce goods for sale. The Kingsgate Centre was considered unsuitable for events of this nature, but there was some expectation that footfall attracted to one would benefit the other.

"Flea market, jumble sale, pop-up local business showcase."

"Specialist markets throughout the year, craft, food/drink, antiques, farmers market, exhibitions, community schools projects (music/art) etc."

Farmers Markets (food)

There was some interest in this, particularly if a range of high quality fresh produce was offered. The existence of Fife farmer's markets⁶ in Dunfermline and other Fife towns was noted. Although the indoor space offered by the Erskine building was seen as a positive in the event of poorer weather, there were also some questions over whether the indoor space would be suitable for some of the hot food sold and cooking equipment employed by some vendors.

As with non-food market events, the Kingsgate Centre was considered unsuitable for events of this nature, but there was some expectation that footfall attracted to one would benefit the other.

"Proper farmers market stalls, with more fresh produce and lots of food stalls, with fresh fish, meat, vegetables, fruit, sweets and chocolates etc"

Exhibitions/Talks

There was strong support for the use of the Erskine building as a gallery space for local non-professional artists. It was felt that existing gallery space in Dunfermline focused on professional artists, was expensive and was booked too far in advance to be useful for the non-professional.

"Gallery? Showcasing art from local schools, or something that community groups could use to showcase what they do /fundraiser etc"

The building's heritage and the broader heritage of Dunfermline were raised as suitable topics for talks. There may be some potential for the building to complement the kind of heritage talks already available in Dunfermline.

Other talk topics raised included current affairs, Bookbug⁷, general health and local artists discussing their work, perhaps as part of an exhibition launch event.

"From our camera club point of view, we could provide an exhibition of the club's work and rotate it on a monthly basis so as to keep the interest."

Training

There was substantial interest in the community café providing opportunities for training of unemployed or underemployed people for work in the hospitality industries. There was an equal interest in the provision of supported employment for people who were distanced from the labour market. It is possible that some respondents made no distinction between these two forms of provision.

"Could use this as an opportunity for work experience/real jobs for people who don't get the same opportunities as others to work."

"Having staff with learning difficulties who can be supported in the work place. Or something like Social Bite."

Responses to the open questions in the survey produced some notes of interest in first aid training, employability training for the unemployed and support to local entrepreneurs.

There was a suggestion that a training room for hire could be part of the building.

⁶ <https://www.fifefarmersmarket.co.uk/>

⁷ Bookbug is a Scottish Book Trust initiative aimed at interested children in books.
<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug>

Adult Education Classes

There was a reasonable amount of support for Adult Education classes expressed. Notably, few of the people who contributed to the street survey were interested in the provision of adult education classes for themselves; almost all of them felt that it would be popular with other people. There were a small number of people who expressed an interest in adult education classes for themselves, but when asked it became apparent that they viewed participation in adult education as a social activity and an opportunity to meet new people. They had no strong feelings about the content or topics of adult education in which they were interested.

A wide range of topics for adult education classes were suggested, ranging from circus skills, to furniture restoration to sign language. There may be some value in working in partnership with adult education providers to develop a programme, which is informed by their existing evidence of demand, to establish a programme.



This would save Yes-U-Are having to invest in further market research on the demand for adult education and would reduce any risk for Yes-U-Are in seeking to develop adult education with insufficient knowledge of the market.

"Life skills i.e. first aid, cooking, gardening, legal advice, adult education & support for vulnerable."

"Affordable adult classes to promote physical and mental well-being. Opportunity to talk to someone who can answer questions about where to seek help. Perhaps a weekly film showing."

Live Music

This differs from the entertainment programme discussed in relation to the community café in that it was intended refer to more formally organised and presented concerts in the conference/events space. There was a great support for live music, but little detail on the nature of the live music in which respondents were interested. Where respondents did offer detail, local and traditional music appeared to be favoured. This may be in keeping with the local history associated with the building. Dunfermline has an active folk club who may be a valuable partner in developing any programme of this nature.

“Live music like an open mic night. Teenager workshops including music”

Support Groups

There was interest in the community café and events space as a location for support groups. The range of support groups mentioned was broad, ranging from autism, to mindfulness, to addictions and homelessness. This indicates that there will be multiple options for development of this theme, and that the community café and events space may attract substantial business from support groups.

Volunteering Opportunities

The backing for volunteering opportunities was strongly linked to the Partnership’s values and mission. There was strong backing for volunteering associated with the provision of support for vulnerable people; befriending was the most frequently suggested form of volunteering.

This may provide an opportunity to address some of the themes of isolation for older people that were of the greatest concern to respondents.

“I think this could be a great opportunity for volunteering opportunities and community ownership over a social enterprise with benefits for employment and professional development for local people. It is also something that would benefit the town centre, if it was a vibrant lively place where people wanted to come and meet.”

Light Fitness Classes

There was some interest in light fitness classes, mainly motivated by the potential to help older people maintain good health. Mother & Baby fitness, yoga, and dance were all suggested.

Theatre

Despite theatre receiving a lower level of interest in the survey, a small number of people suggested theatre performances as a welcome element of a programme for the Erskine building. Cinema attracted more than twice the level of interest as theatre.

Perhaps because Dunfermline is perceived to already be well provided with theatre spaces, theatre attracted the lowest level of interest. There was some indication that the available performance spaces were either larger, professional and costly, or smaller and of lower quality. There was a perception of a gap in the market for a medium sized, good quality, affordable space.

“Dunfermline is in great need of a medium sized performance venue, Alhambra/Carnegie is too expensive for local community groups to stage a concert. Churches are prohibitive in what you can perform. There are no medium size reasonable costed venues in town.”

Dance

There was broad interest in dance as a social activity, in dance classes and in dance performances. Tea dances, particularly as a social activity for older people, was suggested by 5 people. There may be some benefit in further discussion with local providers of dance tuition around the level of unmet demand, and the potential benefit of including some form of dance studio in the Erskine building. The building's proximity to Fife Academy of the Performing Arts may be worth considering in this respect.



Voluntary Organisation Showcase

There was substantial support, from local people and from voluntary organisations, for some form of opportunity for local voluntary organisations to showcase and promote their services. The detail of this varied and is likely to require further discussion with voluntary organisations. This activity may contribute to the Partnership aim of establishing greater communication and collaboration between voluntary sector organisations and may also help generate other business for the Erskine building.

Comment from voluntary organisations indicated that similar networking lunches/breakfasts had taken place in the past, although it was not clear who had been responsible for leading on this, or why they had ceased.

"Allow local organisations and groups, such as local churches, to showcase what they do in the community."

"I remember years ago vol sector orgs would get together for networking working breakfasts to share info and benefit."

Poetry/Book Readings

There was some support for poetry/book readings. This was mostly in relation to local authors and local history.

Food Bank

Dunfermline already has at least one food bank, seeded by The Trussell Trust. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are also other foodbanks operated by independent voluntary or faith-based organisations. There was a suggestion that the Erskine building was an ideal location for the provision of food bank services. If other services for people on low incomes were also situated in the building, it may enable greater ease in referring individuals between services.



Youth Provision

Youth club type activities for younger people were also proposed. However, it should be noted that there were very few younger people contributing to the consultation, therefore this idea should be treated as older people making suggestions for younger people. Some targeted dialogue with younger people would be valuable in establishing a more evidence-based level of demand.

“A youth hub where teenagers can develop hobbies and interest not readily available/affordable, i.e. music studios/ recording/ performance venue, street art projects, volunteer hub where young people can easily dip in and out of sharing and helping others.”

Children and Parent Provision

There was substantial interest in the potential of the building to provide a location for parents and children to relax, socialise and interact with peers. The size of the building prompted some local people to suggest that it was better suited than many other venues for a combination of community café and play area.

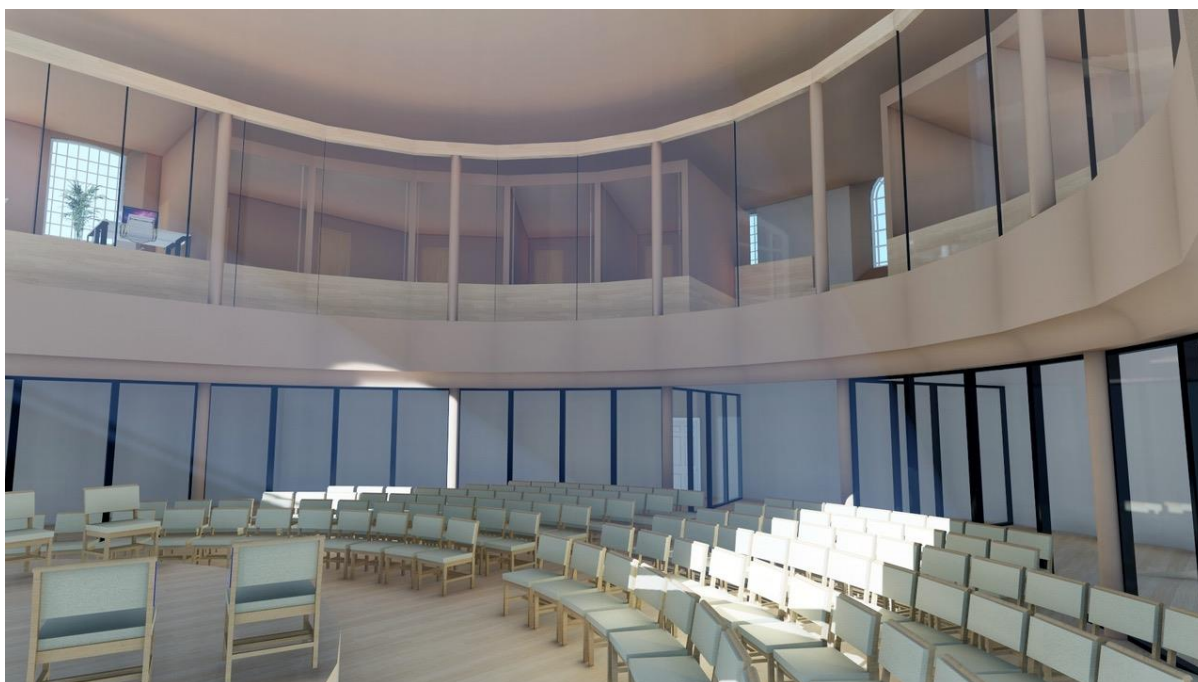
"I have a 3 month old baby and find there's actually very few places that offer activities for babies. Even getting something to eat is tricky, finding a place that is baby friendly with enough room for a pram."

"Mini animal exhibit, a soft play - even just a little one - for mums to have a chat and coffee while little ones play away. Once a week a meet up for mums. I would love to volunteer and have ideas too!"

"Mummy and baby groups. Breastfeeding support groups. Children's activities. Baby massage / sensory / weaning classes"



5. Conclusions



There was near universal support for the redevelopment and public use of the Erskine Building, and near universal support for the proposals for a community café, conference/events space and voluntary sector hub.

The potential range of service developments is immense and is likely to be beyond the resources and scope of any one agency. In this respect, the Partnership's commitment to working with other voluntary organisations is prudent. There is the potential for some developments to conflict with others, and some prioritisation is likely to be necessary if the Partnership is to deliver effectively.

There appear to be 5 major areas for development.

1. Voluntary Sector 'Hub'

Discussion with voluntary organisations built on the original vision of an office suite, supported by conference/events space and community café into a more integrated vision of the all three elements as part of an integrated resource. This integrated resource should enable increased communication between voluntary sector organisations – those with offices in the building and others – facilitate greater collaboration and improve services for key client groups. This may include the Partnership taking action to facilitate communication between voluntary organisations through networking and/or showcase events in the building.

2. Services for vulnerable people

Leading on from the idea of a voluntary sector 'hub' arrangement allowing greater collaboration and improved services for key client groups, was the idea that vulnerable people could be a key client group. The Partnership already has experience of working with this client group, and of researching the gaps in services, and the issues in the coordination of services for this client group. The establishment of the voluntary sector hub could provide an opportunity to pilot arrangements where voluntary organisations working with this client group are encouraged to deliver services from a single location, thus enhancing their own efficiency, and better enabling a seamlessly coordinated service for vulnerable people.

The scale of the building, the available space and the location of the building make it suitable for a range of activities and developments. Its central location and proximity to public transport links make it exceptionally suitable for work with vulnerable or socially isolated people.

3. Services for isolated and vulnerable older people

There was more interest in and support for services which enabled older people who may be lonely and isolated to participate in community life than for any other service development idea.

The community café and conference/events space offers the potential to deliver a wide range of activities, both formal and informal, for this target group. A model may be developed in which other agencies support the Partnership by identifying isolated older people, the Partnership – possibly with other voluntary organisations – offers activities, and all parties act to support isolated older people to attend.

There is some strategic support for services of this nature. The Fife Community Plan 2011-20 high level outcome 1i is *“Improving the health and wellbeing of older people in Fife and maintaining their involvement in their local communities.”*

The Joint Health and Social Care Strategy for Older People in Fife 2011 to 2026 strategic intent 7 is *“Community: We will actively nurture and develop communities to support and utilise older people as full participants within those communities.”* The first outcome associated with this strategic intent is *“The community will play a bigger role in preventing loneliness and isolation of older people.”*

4. Community Café de Nuit

The one idea which was felt to address a highly visible gap in the market, and therefore to occupy a valuable niche, was for a social space in the evening that differed in character from the commercial night time economy offer. The planned community café space could easily occupy this niche. With appropriate curation, an entertainment programme which suited the interests of this market could be produced and promoted, thus enhancing the cultural life of Dunfermline. The consultation identified a wide range of potential entertainments. There are many opportunities for partnership with other organisations and associations for this development.

5. Community Space Events

A similar range of entertainment and cultural events may be possible within the conference/events space through a similar arrangement with other organisations and associations. If the community café space is established and open to the public in advance of the conference/events space, then partnerships may be in place and experience may have been gained which could be transferred to the programming of that space.

Politicians at all levels expressed their support for the proposals and offered to assist in any way within their power. One elected member commented in interview;

“I am totally behind this idea and the Partnership have my complete support. They’ve done a lot of work already, and the results from this consultation should take it to the next level.”

There may be some benefit in further work to ensure that the development of the Erskine building is appropriately considered in other regeneration and planning processes, and the support of local politicians will be valuable in this.

There is some urgency to development. People want something to happen sooner rather than later. If it were possible to develop the community café as a first stage in a phased development, this would allow some visible development, build local interest in the work of the Partnership and increase commitment to further phased development. It would also allow the Partnership to commence working with voluntary sector partners on the development or delivery of other services, and potentially lead to greater joint contributions to overall plans.

The nature of many of the service developments described in this report may be within the existing capacity of the Partnership. Others will represent a step change in the scale of service and the resources required to deliver. Some consideration may be required around organisational governance and management capacity, and the staffing resource needed to effectively deliver.

There is much goodwill towards the idea from local people. There may be volunteer skills, energy and time which can be harnessed. All of this would require work for volunteers to do, and a clear vision of how their work contributed to an overall plan for change for the Partnership and the Erskine Building.

The learning from this consultation may inform a broader development plan for the Partnership, and the existing business plan for the Erskine building may benefit from some revision based on this new information.

Yes-U-Are Partnership
Erskine Building,
4 Pilmuir Street,
Dunfermline
KY12 7AJ
Charity Reg N: SC042878
Company Reg N: SC413698
<http://www.yesuare.org.uk>