

Community News - Special Issue 36

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WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW WITH THE PRESTEIGNE LIBRARY SERVICE

(by Sharon Hall Shipp and Hania Bienkowska-Baker)

In March 2016, senior representatives of Powys County Council's Library Service gave a presentation to the Town Council about further cuts in library funding and various ways to move forward with the support of the community. PCC were looking for a 50% contribution towards running costs from the Town Council and/or the Town Council to provide another location ("co-location") for the library.

One idea that came forward during 2016 to safeguard the library was the formation of the Assembly Rooms Trust (ART), a body independent from the Town Council. The idea behind the Trust was to effect a Community Asset Transfer of the Assembly Rooms, i.e. the Trust would take ownership of and manage the building, including the library space. However, whilst ART continues to work towards this transfer, these plans are longer term, and the future of the library is not at present connected with the Trust.

The financial future of the library in its present location is secure for at least another year. In a Town Council meeting held in January this year it was decided that from April 2017, 50% of the annual running costs would be met from the community. Powys CC will continue to pay staff costs, but it will make the necessary cost savings by reducing the number of hours worked by professional staff.

The library currently opens on four days a week, with a total of 16.5 hours of opening time, covered by 18 hours of professional time (the extra time is for opening/closing/banking and other administration). From April, Powys CC will be funding 12 hours of professional time, equating to approx. 10.5 or 11 hours of opening time. It is not known at present how this will affect opening on particular days.

Many of you attended the meeting at the library in January at which some of the details about the future of the service were discussed, together with the idea of forming a group, the Friends of Presteigne Library. At that meeting, a number of volunteers offered their services, some to work in the library to support the work of the Librarian and to possibly extend the opening hours. Others offered to clean the library. Two people came forward to coordinate those activities.

The Friends of Presteigne Library is yet to form. This would be an independent group looking to support the library service in a number of ways, such as fund raising, and also to liaise with Powys County Council and Presteigne Town Council. It would also provide a way for the community to raise issues about its library service and to suggest ideas.

An Open Meeting is to be held on Wednesday 15 March at 7.30pm at The Assembly Rooms to discuss the role of the Friends and to move towards establishing the Friends as a formally constituted group to represent the library and the community's interests.

After the meeting a summary of the discussion will be made available - by email to those people already on the Friends' mailing list, in the PACDG newsletter, in the library and in the Parish Magazine. If you would like to sign up to receive emails please do so at the meeting. If you cannot make the meeting and would like to be part of the Friends, please email presteignelibraryfriends@gmail.com

If you have any questions on what's happening - or not happening - in our community, do let us know and we'll do our best to provide an answer, or at least point you in the right direction - simply email pacdg@icloud.com - or collar one of the Steering Committee in the street and tell us what's on your mind. You can also leave a written message at the Library for us - remember to include your name and a contact telephone number !

We're happy to help publicise community and charity activities and events (but only for events in the immediate Presteigne area) - mail pacdg@icloud.com

Feel free to tweet or forward this to others. If you would prefer not to receive further issues of the News, please email us with REMOVE and we'll immediately take you off the the distribution list.