**Liskerrett and the Cattle Market**

Prior to 2015 the centre business plan was to replace the seventies build old hall that is nearing end of life. Considerable public consultation was undertaken, discussion with key stakeholders both on site at Liskerrett, in the town and with external organisations eg. theatre companies who offered feedback on their expectations for suitable space. Architects drawings were created to reflect the new hall that was needed for the community in 2013.

There are several iterations of plans for the regeneration of the cattle market site going back a couple of decades. When Kivells Auctioneers indicated they were planning to vacate the cattle market site, Cornwall Council began a refresh of the consultation and planning for the site. The previous plans had been written before changing retail patterns driven by internet shopping and the collapse of large retail on the high street.

From 2015 to 2021 Liskerrett Community Centre were considered a key stakeholder in the plans that developed during that period as a valued community asset adjacent to the site. Both the Point Bradbury and JTP consultation and designs produced for Cornwall Council included Liskerrett fully in discussions.

The charrette was a large scale government funded public consultation that led to a master plan for the site. It was felt important to avoid piecemeal development without joined up thinking. There has been no acknowledgement publicly that the charrette master plan is no longer the predominant working document for the site.

An important part of the community ambition for the site was a new community space. As the body with an existing community asset in the vicinity with known challenges due to the age of its buildings, Liskerrett were invited to consider sale of their existing site and relocation. All other organisations in the town with and without similar capital assets were asked if they would like to partner to develop plans for the new community space. Sterts indicated they would be interested in joining a partnership, their existing operation did not give them an adequate winter space.

There was a Memorandum of Understanding between Cornwall Council, Liskeard Town Council and Liskerrett signed in 2018 that formed the basis of working together to realise this new community space on the cattle market site.

Many of the public are still unaware but by the end of 2021 Liskerrett understood there would not be progress on the community space element of the cattle market at that time. Liskerrett have never been formally told of this but a new draft of the MOU that was circulated made it clear. It was worded in such a way that Liskerrett would not be able to progress funding bids for a new space. It would appear that the change of political leadership at Cornwall Council had caused a significant change in direction on the cattle market site.

Some of the challenges Liskerrett faces maintaining its old buildings were exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, and undoubtedly decisions about investing in the current building were put on hold because the plan was to move and sell the existing site.

Funding had been secured from The Fore for a centre manager to bring back activity post-covid and concentrate on operations at the centre while trustees focused on the plans for the new build. Liskerrett had to explain to The Fore that the remit had changed substantially.

Liskerrett began the process of rebuilding post-covid and turned its focus to the existing site. If the money that had been spent on consultations had come to the centre instead, the fabric of the building would be in significantly better shape. It has been, and continues to be a real labour of love by many volunteers who value what the centre can offer to the community.

We estimate now that we have approximately 3,200 visits a month to Liskerrett for a huge range of activities focussed on improving well being. Our public facing programme includes various dance and exercise classes, film performances, visiting theatre productions, repair café, community well-being drop ins, art workshops and much more. Cornwall College run Art and Gardening for Wellbeing courses throughout the college term.

Many essential support groups meet at Liskerrett regularly: the Breathers COPD group, Next Steps Stroke Support, The Macular Society, Your Voice women’s mental health, Man Down, WEB, a Women’s Centre group for sexually abused teenagers, AA, Cornwall Mind, Penhaligions Friends, the Foodbank’s Cooking Club, Wild Young Parents, Lyskerrys Youth Club, SPACE Disabled Youth Club, a Lego Club, an Inclusive Art Club for adults with learning difficulties and we house St Petrocs resources for the homeless in South East Cornwall.

In addition, rooms are regularly used by Cornwall Council and Devon Council Social Services for contact visits, family assessments and training. We have over a year’s worth of bookings diarised for Fire Safety Training for the NHS, several cohorts of NHS prescribed diabetic prevention courses and NHS diabetic eye screening.

Liskerrett has many tenants who are small businesses that contribute to the community offer including dance studios, artists studios, a popular vegetarian café and the local office of the RVS community transport.

**Integrated Service Hub**

Fast forward to 2024 and news that the build of the Integrated Services Hub is planned to cut off pedestrian access from the Cattle Market car park and reduce significantly parking in the car park visitors to the centre rely on.

Our own car park is a dozen spaces at most which is clearly not sufficient for the volume of visitors to Liskerrett. Visitors have been vigorously encouraged to use Cornwall Council’s Cattle Market Car Park where they are able for the last twenty years, to ensure that those with the most significant mobility needs can access our offer. Visitors to Liskerrett’s use of the Car Park have tended to park in the far end of the car park which is less attractive to the visitors of the town, and had no need to use blue badge spaces as a result.

The alternative route advised at the closure indicated that everyone was expected to use is Varley Lane. When Liskerrett first made enquiries of the council about the closure after a chance meeting with their contractors, we were told that the alternative route was a mere 200 yards detour. Clearly no one who knew the town would find this proposal workable for anyone elderly, infirm or those with small children. Varley Lane is steep and narrow with no pedestrian footpath and two way traffic. Users forced to park in Westbourne Car Park are required to cross the busy Dean Street, but there are no dropped kerbs and no crossing without walking much further towards the town centre to use the pelican crossing, adding further distance to the route.

Residents in this area were informed July 18th of a 60 week closure of the pedestrian access and have raised their concerns with us. For the community centre, the significance cannot be overestimated.

The Integrated Services Hub went through Planning June 2023 with a design access statement that reflects Policy TC4 of Liskeard's Neighbourhood Plan when it states:

'An important element of the masterplan is to ensure connectivity across this site. The principal connections being the walking route between Varley Lane and Barn Street/Windsor Place. This is a key route to the town centre.'

No one expected the build to ignore an established footpath that connects this side of the town to the centre. There is no evidence of a construction method statement involving community stakeholders.

In response to the concerns of our neighbours we called a public meeting to listen to the various different ways the area was impacted. Over a hundred people came and we’re grateful that this included Liskeard Town Councillors.

Residents and Liskerrett Community Centre are united in asking for safe pedestrian access through the Cattle Market car park to Varley Lane during the construction of the Integrated Services Hub and to ensure improved access following the completion of the build.

Now that the extent of the building site has been marked out it has become clear that the build does have a significant impact on available parking on the site which is detrimental to everyone who uses Liskerrett and residents and businesses in the town centre. This car park is now pretty much full by 9am meaning that uses of Liskerrett have to try elsewhere and the routes from the other car parks are far from ideal for our users, also having a substantially longer walk to the centre along narrow paths and crossing busy roads. This is already preventing some of our longstanding users of our facilities from attending their regular activities.

It has been acknowledged that the changes that have been made to the parking discounts around the town centre will be a great help to people who work at Liskerrett or those who visit for longer sessions.

Liskerrett actions so far:

* Launched an electronic and paper petition has over 800 signatures (combined) to date and will be sent shortly to the CC.
* Starting a Definitive Map Modification Order Application to have the access between Varley Lane and the Cattle Market declared formally as a Public Right of Way.
* Assessing the impact on our complex operations including talking to regular hirers of our space, tenants and visitors to the centre.
* Scoping opportunities to create more parking on our site
* Informing all tenants that the car park will be designated for blue badge/limited mobility from 1st September 2024
* Supporting users to find the most suitable alternative routes and parking for their visits to the centre.
* Reviewing what programmed activity will have to be cancelled, postponed or moved to another location.

Cornwall Council have worked rapidly to consider what options there might be to create access across the site and there has been some immediate movement from CC Parking to address the parking permits and discounts. We met with CC officers on site Monday morning to review those options.

You can see in the papers associated with this Town Council meeting that there is a pedestrian route proposed. A temporary pedestrianising of a section of Varley Lane is also a possibility. Liskerrett have been clear with Cornwall Council that the needs of the Family Hub, local residents and ourselves may differ, so consultation with each is required. We can only speak about how the construction of the ISH will impact the community centre.

Our considered position is that the duration of the build is going to have a significant detrimental impact on our business, particularly the NHS funded programmes.

* We need the pedestrian route to be reinstated between Varley Lane and the cattle market as a matter of urgency; acknowledging that there has been a footpath here for over 50 years.
* It also needs to be acknowledged that the access alone is not going to prevent business loss to Liskerrett due to the substantial reduction in the overall parking capacity of the Cattle Market for the duration of the building project.
* If local residents favour the temporary pedestrianisation of Varley Lane, it will help our able-bodied visitors. It will cause difficulties for driving visitors to Liskerrett as the turn in to our site is sharp and there also is potential for traffic gridlock in Thorn Place at busy times.
* We could make alterations to Liskerrett site to increase parking and alleviate some of the access issue; however we would need substantial financial support to achieve this.
* Current signage for Liskerrett is predominantly Cattle Market facing. For the duration of the build it would be essential for us to have alternate signage around the town centre to allow visitors to know how to get to us and to help our resident business owners with business continuity.
* Monthly updates on the progress of the construction and the likely increase in parking availability as the build moves from one phase to another are essential. This is so that when access does improve we will be better able to plan for the increased use of our facilities and the activities we can offer.
* We will be requesting a senior officer of Cornwall Council is empowered to review the impacts to our business regularly and make agile responses.
* Liskerrett needs an urgent understanding of what compensation will be available for business loss for the centre itself and the small businesses at risk within it.