

Caerphilly and District Miners Hospital Survey

January 2009

Fifty Plus Forum

INTRODUCTION

The Steering Group for the Future of Caerphilly and District Miners' Hospital undertook a survey to establish the views of local people about the possible future uses of the original hospital building.

The Steering Group was set up in September 2008 because it was felt that local people valued the hospital as part of Caerphilly's industrial heritage and would wish to see a community after-use for the building. Also, as the Minister for Health had pointed to the possibility of housing for older people, it was felt that a community after-use might well be targeted to that age group.

Members of the Fifty Plus Forum were therefore approached to ascertain their views. Because the Fifty Plus Forum covers the whole of Caerphilly, the survey posed two groups of questions: 1) about the Caerphilly and District Miners Hospital and 2) about respondents own experience of using community facilities in their local community. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as an appendix to the report, together with the introduction to the project.

WHO TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY?

A total of 36 people responded to the questionnaire of which:

- 14 had postal codes CF83 1, 2, 3, or 8 (Caerphilly Basin)
- 7 came from CF82 7 or 8 (Ystrad Mynach)
- 5 came from CF81 8 or 9 (Bargoed / Gilfach)
- 6 came from NP12 0, 1, 2, or 3 (Blackwood)
- 4 came from NP11 4, 6, or 7 (Newbridge / Crumlin)

The ages of the respondents were as follows:

50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+	n/r	Total
0	1	5	3	12	7	5	0	3	36

Most respondents reported that their physical health of respondents was good (15 respondents) or fairly good (15). A total of 6 respondents felt that their health was sufficiently poor to restrict their ability to get out to activities they would like to use in their locality or volunteer for 2-4 hours a month.

The mental health of respondents was very good (27 respondents thought so) or fairly good (8 respondents thought so). Only one respondent did not answer this question.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO THE BUILDING?

Respondents were asked to comment on the importance of retaining the building for community use. They were also asked to comment on the following options:

- to retain the whole building (Option 1)
- to retain the ground floor part of the building (Option 2),
- to retain the front façade only and replace the building with purpose-built centre (Option 3)
- to take the whole building down (Option 4).

Of the 36 respondents, a total of 21 respondents (58%) wished to retain the whole building; 3 (8%) wished to retain the ground floor; 7 (19%) wished to replace the building with a purpose built centre but retain the front façade; 1 person wanted to take the building down (3%) and 3 people (8%) did not know.

Two respondents stated that their preference for retaining the whole building was conditional on a feasibility study, including a structural condition survey, and an assessment of the financial viability of the project.

Where respondents came from seems to be a factor in the options chosen. As the table below shows, 13 / 14 people from the Caerphilly Basin wanted to retain the whole building, whilst all of the respondents from Newbridge / Crumlin anticipated a more limited after-use. This is understandable because these areas are some distance from the catchment area of a community building in Caerphilly.

Table showing options selected by postal code

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	D/K	Total
Caerphilly Basin / Bedwas CF83	13		1			14
Ystrad Mynach CF82	5	1			1	7
Bargoed/ Gilfach CF81	3	1	1			5
Blackwood NP12	3	1	2			6
Newbridge/ Crumlin NP11	0	2	1	1		4

Reasons for retaining the whole building

The contribution of the miners for the benefit of the community was a particularly important factor in advocating the retention of the building.

The original concept for the benefit of the community when the miners made their generous contributions should be preserved for all time

The hospital is part of Caerphilly's built heritage and has provided a community service since the mid-1920s

The miners invested in the future of their community. There is a need for facilities and for opportunities for volunteering to benefit the community (1)

I can recall my father donating 6d per week from a total income of 12 shillings and 6d during the 1930s. We were a family of four and experienced poverty unknown to this generation. It's so easy to 'improve' in the name of progress and forget earlier sacrifices.

My father contributed to the hospital

This is what the miners contributed their money for, and Caerphilly needs more community facilities particularly for the older residents

It was built with miners' money

It's part of our history, plus I have had very good service there

Historical reasons for the building and its link with the community to be maintained for future generations

Miners paid for the building when they were on a meagre salary

It was also felt that the community – especially its older members – needs activities and facilities to support their day to day living:

It would be a shame to pull the hospital down – it could have some use for older people in our area

We need to use the building and make it a health and well centre for the elderly, but allow younger people also to use the facilities when possible

To give the community somewhere to go and something to do

It was suggested that whilst the building might have ended its life as a hospital, it nevertheless had further uses for other purposes:

A solid, well-constructed building, with historical significance in this former mining area, there is probably plenty of space in the building for multiple use.

They are destroying too many old buildings – these old buildings should be retained and restored to former glory.

My group voted to retain the whole building for medical use / place for elderly to meet

Increase facilities for all residents of CCBC – maybe sports activities etc

Some people hoped that health uses would be retained:

There is a need for a convalescent hospital to stop bed blocking in Ystrad Mynach

CCBC has no hospice for palliative care – this could be a centre of excellence for the terminally ill and small flats could provide for relatives to stay during the bad times. It could also generate funding from other areas if patients came from other NHS Trusts

Some people were resigned to the whole site being allocated for housing:

It will probably be used for more housing, whatever we say

Built with miners' money – there are numerous uses for the building – but the planners will steamroller through their plans for housing – affordable or not

Reasons for retaining the ground floor

Similar reasons were given for retaining only the ground floor.

Necessary to keep a reminder of the foresight and sacrifice of those miners who gave the building to us. This could provide a community asset to the new housing – it could be developed as the housing estate grows

The building was built and paid for by local miners for the benefit of the community and so I think it should be kept as such in memory of them and respect for them

Reasons for rebuilding a purpose-built centre behind the front façade

It was suggested that a more eco-friendly building would be more cost effective and efficient to run, whilst retaining the historical façade:

*Retaining the front façade would address both history and sentiment.
What needs to be behind the façade should be eco-friendly and fit for purpose*

A new centre would be more economic and efficient to run

Important to retain CMH heritage in a cost effective workable building

The Watford area lacks facilities for the elderly

Keep the front of the building as part of our history

Reasons for taking the building down.

One respondent wanted to have the building taken down:

Too antiquated – we need to move with the times

WHAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

As part of the introduction, respondents were given some ideas for a health and well-being centre for older people including the following:

Active well-being

Walking for health, Pilates, Tai Chi, dance, exercise classes, singing
Improving mental health, looking good, self-esteem

Healthy eating

Food co-op, healthy eating care, cooking classes – e.g. Cook it! project

Social care support

Care and Repair, Carers, Age Concern, Help the Aged, Crossroads

Therapies, complementary and alternative therapies

Physiotherapy, podiatry, homeopathy, aromatherapy, reflexology, health
Information library, acupuncture, chiropractic, osteopathy

Economic skills

Computer skills, basic skills, learning skills, and information literacy
Financial literacy, energy efficiency, credit and debt advice, job seeking

Opportunities for volunteering and active citizenship

Centre run by older volunteers

Environmental benefits

Sensory garden, allotments etc

Support for this approach was widespread. There were no significant differences in what was required between respondents wanting to retain the whole or part of the building. The following were suggested:

- All the active well-being activities mentioned in the cover letter – place to meet; healthy eating café, indoor exercise, learning opportunities, therapies
- Community education, voluntary organisation use (Red Cross) and for residents' use for meetings etc
- Activities listed under active well-being, healthy eating, social care, learning, volunteering and active citizenship
- Everything suggested on page 1 – the WEA have lost their centre at St Illans – this would be ideal; active well-being, food co-op, alternative therapy; drop in for older people; advice for all ages
- Day centre with facilities for people who are housebound to have a day out, with lunch and a cup of tea and a chance to talk to each other
- Restaurant, library, some shops, learning centre especially for unemployed
- Library, reading rooms, computer suites, craft room, play centre, facilities for all ages, information centre
- A new library – a centre like the White Rose Centre in New Tredegar, which serves a much smaller community than Caerphilly; toilet facilities, a small café; lifelong learning, recording studio; computer suite; good public transport and parking
- A meeting place for charities; education activities (not too heavy); film shows; personal advice (health and well-being); drop in café/meeting place; reading room / library facilities; holistic medicines – but don't duplicate existing provision
- Short mat bowls, dancing, exercise classes
- Cover letter activities plus gymnasium for all ages and possibly an indoor pool
- Social activities for all ages; healthy eating and cookery classes, chiropody, physiotherapy, health information; computer classes etc
- Social care and support; learning facilities for all ages
- All aspects of promoting health and well-being to reduce reliance on long term support that often smother progress and recovery – prevention being better than cure. All prospective services should be fully accessible and aimed at local communities – this model should be provided across the whole of CCBC

- Concerts, meetings, communal activities, information bureau
- Social care support and complementary therapies
- Medical use especially emergency services; library room; health and well-being ideas welcome
- A day centre for the elderly with additional provision of rooms for convalescence / respite care
- Residential nursing care
- Rehabilitation centre for all ages
- Facility for young children/ adolescents – attractive activities, maybe computers
- Community forums, youth forums, base for the Big Cheese, learning computers

Some 13 people did not respond and 2 people lived too far away to comment.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO VOLUNTEER?

Participants were asked if they would be willing to volunteer say 2 hours per month to provide a community facility in their area. A total of 26 people out of the 36 responding (or 72%) said that they would volunteer and many people already do so. Poor health was a factor in preventing some people from offering to volunteer.

USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

Just over half the respondents said they had a community facility in their neighbourhood (19 /36 respondents). Of these 8 used them weekly or more frequently, 2 used them monthly; a further 7 used them less often; whilst 2 were unable to use the facilities at all because of health problems.

Those people using community facilities less often cited the cost of hiring the hall, lack of targeted advertising to promote usage, difficulties of access to the hall and their caring responsibilities as reasons for not using the community facility more frequently.

Respondents used local community facilities for the following purposes (several people mentioned the first four):

- OAP / over 50s meetings
- Coffee mornings / Ladies Club / WI / meetings
- Village hall activities – political party meetings, jumble sale, scrabble club, weight-watchers
- Public meetings / village partnership meetings / Communities First
- Church services / Christian fellowship
- Choir concerts
- Learning – computers / calligraphy
- Library
- Credit union
- Private parties

Additional comments were:

There are now so many more people of retirement age who are fit and able to take on extra activities. This centre would be ideal – use it or lose it (your brain!!)

Caerphilly Miners Hospital is part of our history and we should do all we can to preserve it

I would like to see more community health help in the area

I would like to see the plans that are in place for my area come to fruition – seems to be much talk but no action

CONCLUSIONS

This survey provides a small snapshot of views, but it reflects clear support for the idea of developing a centre supporting the well-being particularly of older people in the community.

Respondents indicated the need for a feasibility study, a structural survey and an assessment of the need and viability of centre. It is proposed that the focus of provision be to support the active citizenship and well-being of a growing number of older people in the area.

We wish to thank Steve Thomas, GAVO, for his help in administering the survey on our behalf and the participants for their help in completing and returning questionnaires.

Katherine Hughes

On behalf of the Steering Group for the Future of Caerphilly and District Miners' Hospital, February 2009