

ANNUAL MEETING OF CROWN STREET LIBRARY TRUSTEES 23 OCTOBER 2020

UPDATE REPORT ON CROWN STREET LIBRARY

Introduction

1. Edward Pease died on 13 June 1880. He left the sum of £10,000 in his will 'for the education of the poorer classes in the Borough of Darlington either by establishing or founding or assisting in establishing or founding a free library or scholarship from elementary schools for boys and girls or in such other way as my said trustees shall in their uncontrolled discretion think fit'.
2. The executors of Edward Pease's Estate commissioned the construction of a public library in Crown Street. On 23 October 1885 the new library was transferred to the 'Corporation of Darlington'. The building, which was extended in 1900 and 1930, is recognised by the Council to be held on trust by the Council for the purpose of being used as a public library.
3. Until March 2020 Darlington Borough Council was the sole trustee. In 2019 the Council recognised that its role of sole trustee should be reviewed and decided to move forward the appointment of independent trustees. The appointment of independent trustees gives more formal recognition to the wider community, given the original aims of the bequest of Edward Pease.
4. After advertising the positions in the Library, One Darlington and the Website and following interviews conducted by a Sub Committee of Cabinet, on 3 March 2020 Cabinet met and approved the appointment of the following persons as independent trustees:
 - (a) Elizabeth Dodds
 - (b) Yvonne Richardson
 - (c) Matthew Roche
5. At the same meeting, Cabinet also approved the Council's nominated trustee to be the Leader of the Council. The Terms of Reference for Crown Street Library Trustee Board are set out in **Appendix 1**. The key points of note are:
 - (a) The role is about the Crown Street Library building (and supports its founding purpose as a public library). It is not about the provision of the library service (which is the sole statutory responsibility of the Council - under the Museums and Libraries Act 1964).
 - (b) The legal estate of the Crown Street Library building continues to be registered in the sole name of the Council. The role is a custodian one as the legal interest will be subject to the terms of the trust with the building held 'for the purposes of a public library for the Borough of Darlington'.

- (c) To give more formal recognition to the wider community, the Trustee Board will comprise a Council trustee and 3 other trustees (independent of the Council). The Council trustee will have a single vote and the other trustees will each have a single vote. Decisions of the Board of Trustees will be made by simple majority voting. The quorum will be the Council trustee and at least 2 other trustees.
- (d) It is intended that there will be an annual meeting. It is suggested this should be held on or close to the anniversary of the opening of Crown Street Library (23 October 1885). The annual meeting will enable trustees to receive an update on matters concerning the Library and will also provide an opportunity to mark and remember the anniversary of its opening.
- (e) Outside of the annual meeting it is not anticipated that additional meetings will be required (though trustees will be able to call for a meeting). This is because the remit of the Board of Trustees is a limited one. As long as the library continues to be adequately maintained (which the Council is responsible for) and used as a public library the trustees will not ordinarily need to meet. Trustees will need to meet if there was concern that the library service might cease to be located in the building, or there was building disrepair that could jeopardise it continuing to remain open.

Anniversary of Crown Street Library

- 6. The 23 October 2020 is the 135th Anniversary of the opening of Crown Street Library. The construction of the library was more than just an architectural achievement in its own right, but it has and continues to contribute very significantly to the education, advancement and well-being of the people of Darlington.

Building Restoration

- 7. The 23 October 2020 is the 135th Anniversary of the opening of Crown Street Library and the Council over the next 12 months will restore the building back to its former glory, spending £2.9million on the building. The programme will include:
 - (a) Roof restored
 - (b) Mechanical and Electrical installations replaced
 - (c) Structural repairs
 - (d) New Toilets and Family Change
 - (e) Internal decoration
 - (f) External lighting
- 8. Pre-Planning consultation occurred on site and online in early 2020 with feedback being incorporated into the final scheme where appropriate. Covid-19 compliant site investigation and survey work has been carried out during summer/early autumn to enable progress with the scheduled programme. This has included ecological survey work to ensure that Bats sighted around the roof void space are treated appropriately and in line with Natural England's recommended guidelines. A Planning application was submitted early September and the outcome will be known towards the end of October. Work will commence towards the end of 2020 and be completed late 2021.
- 9. All the works carried out will be sympathetic to the history of the building. Alongside the refurbishment, interpretation will be introduced into the building to tell

the story of Crown Street Library. Plans for the building will be shared at the meeting to update trustees.

10. While the role of the Trust is specifically for the building, the remainder of this report is presented as information for the trustees with regard to the Library Service, which in these challenging times has continued to support residents of Darlington.

Last Year's Performance

11. There were over 177,000 visitors to Darlington Library last year. Our visitor numbers have remained stable over the last three years but there will be a notable drop in 2020/21 due to Covid-19.
12. During 2019/20 we loaned a total of 250,074 physical books across our libraries. This includes children's and adults book stock only. This is a 6% drop on the previous year (265076).
13. However, our digital library loans have increased by 97% from 12,416 in 2018/19 to 24,426 in 2019/20. These include books, audio and magazines borrowed from our online library.

Activities Provided During Lockdown

14. As per government advice Darlington Libraries closed its doors on 17 March 2020. Online membership was introduced and within 6 weeks we gained around 200 new members. Uptake of eBook borrowing increased by 80% from September 2019 – September 2020, eAudio books by 88% and digital magazines by 122% taking the percentage increase of our digital stock to 208%.
15. To reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness in older adults who were asked to self-isolate for 12 weeks, the Library implemented a Home Delivery Service for residents aged 60 and over. We delivered books monthly to around 250 households. We also designed, produced and delivered a 1940's themed book of photographs and memories for Care Homes to enable residents and caregivers to discuss and reminisce together.
16. We hosted a weekly programme of online stories, crafts and activities to help keep families motivated to read and learn together whilst the Library was closed. More than 11,000 people accessed the first online book reading. We also purchased Reading and Learning packs for the 120 looked after children in the Borough and worked with Darlington Virtual School to deliver these to the children's homes.

Activities Following Reopening

17. On 13 July 2020 Darlington Library opened Covid-19 secure. We initially offered book returns and borrowing and maintained our free Home Deliveries for those aged 60 and over. From 28 September we introduced two computer workstations to enable customers to print documents. The Centre for Local Studies is available for email enquires only. Cockerton Library opened on part-time hours from 2 September 2020.
18. Darlington Library supplied books and learning resources to around 250 children from lower income families. We worked with the Kings Centre to distribute the

resources via food banks and targeted children from 0–11 years.

19. We offered children aged 0–16 an incentivised challenge over the summer to keep them reading and to help narrow the literacy gap caused as a result of extended time away from school. We received 218 entries.

Plans for 2020/21

20. Friday 23 October 2020 marks the 135th birthday of Darlington Library. To mark this special date, we have produced a video showcasing a collection of historic photographs of the building alongside more recent images. Throughout the week anyone who borrows from our libraries is to be placed in a draw to win a prize.
21. A digital book group is being formed to encourage participation from home. The group is offered on Facebook and open to adults living in Darlington. Members will be encouraged to read the same eBook and join in the online discussion.
22. Schools are to be offered Covid-19 secure borrowing outside of Library opening hours. Primary schools can visit before the library opens to the public for a short introduction to the library and to borrow books.
23. Primary schools are to be offered extra support from our libraries. Curriculum themed boxes of books are being produced and delivered to participating schools.
24. We are developing a trial challenge with schools; asking pupils to collectively read 100 well-chosen books. A selection will be delivered to the school for loan, and a selection will be available to borrow from our libraries.
25. We are actively promoting our digital offer and the Home Delivery Service to ensure that all customers have access to books throughout service changes. Currently no fines are being imposed and reservations are free.
26. We continue to establish the new ways of working to maintain a Covid-19 secure environment whilst developing staff and coordinating the refurbishment of the building to maximise the potential of our Library Service.

Consultative Group

27. It was agreed earlier this year that the Council would set up a Consultative Group that would be kept informed and engaged with regard to the library service. The suggested Terms of Reference are attached at **Appendix 2**.
28. An initial session was held where the role of the group was explained and then a request for those who attended to express their desire to be involved. Eight individuals accepted the invitation to be involved and the initial session was to be held in Spring this year. However, unfortunately due to the pandemic, the meeting has not taken place. We will look to hold a meeting virtually in the near future, if possible, and if not, will do so in person when appropriate.