

ANNUAL MEETING OF CROWN STREET LIBRARY TRUSTEES 19 OCTOBER 2022

UPDATE REPORT ON CROWN STREET LIBRARY

Construction Update

1. The restoration of Darlington Library is ongoing. External and internal scaffolding has been erected and works to the 1930's side of the building is well underway.
2. The works to the roof include removal and storage of tiles, replacing guttering, and fitting the new damp proof membrane, before systematically reinstating the tiles.
3. Internally in the 1930's section of the building, plasterwork is being restored and mechanical and electrical improvements undertaken. New flooring will be laid and redecoration throughout before the furniture fit-out completes the reinvigorated spaces.

Adult Lending Library and The Study

4. The Adult Lending Library will provide a dedicated space for Darlington's largest collection of borrowable reading materials within the ambience of our unique library. Customers will experience a welcoming entrance, with clear wayfinding, and be able to borrow independently, or speak to knowledgeable staff for queries. There will be dedicated forward-facing displays to entice different audiences.
5. The previous Reference Library will become The Study, offering a purposeful and practical space for studying, set amongst Darlington's non-fiction collection of books. A variety of seating options will fill the grand space, allowing customers to meet others, or work independently at desks or accessing the computers. Printing will be available, alongside a modest offer of purchasable refreshments enabling customers to visit for a prolonged time.

Current Operations

6. The building on Crown Street is temporarily inaccessible to customers to allow the refurbishment works to progress.
7. An alternative town centre location for customers to visit has been selected at the Dolphin Centre. Customers can borrow and return books, select, and order titles for collection at The Dolphin Centre, Cockerton Library, or as part of our Home Delivery Scheme. Alongside this we promote our offers to residents who don't already access library services.

8. We continue to offer our popular Home Delivery Service, which is free to Darlington residents aged 60 or over and is currently utilised by around 270 households.
9. We continue to support schools and nurseries with regular deliveries of books for enjoyment and education.

Cockerton Library

10. Cockerton Library benefited from modest refurbishment and reopened in November 2021 with a new team of dedicated staff.
11. Activity has increased, including regular Rhymetimes, Lego Groups, Story and Craft experiences for children as well as school visits. Experiences for adult audiences include the Rock of Ages Musical Meets Ups, Watercolour Groups, author talks, and publishing workshops.
12. Borrower figures show that we are lending more books than pre-pandemic with book issues in September 2022 at 5411.

Performance

13. Library loans increased by 55% from 108,030 in 2020/21 to 167,170 in 2021/22. However, they are still behind on pre-pandemic borrowing shown at 250,074 in 2019/20.
14. Interestingly our Home Delivery Service maintains its customers with 28,168 items delivered during 2021/22. This is an increase of 4% from 27,178 in 2020/21, and a massive 391% increase on our similar scheme which ran pre-pandemic and loaned 5,734 items in 2019/20. (241 customers).
15. Book borrowing from Darlington Library is consistent with during the pandemic showing a 31% decrease from 198,979 in 2019/20 to 136,403 in 2021/22.

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Group Director of Services