

Witney Town Council

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Press Release

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Public Halls – Corn Exchange Consultation Update

Despite a Facebook Campaign with almost 600 members, an appeal made during a news item on the BBC Radio Oxford's Phil Gayle's Breakfast Show and the wide availability of the Public Halls Consultation forms, the feedback continues to be slow.

Forms are available directly on the Town Council's website: <http://www.witney-tc.gov.uk/publichalls.html>, and from links within the Facebook page 'Save the Corn Exchange'. Councillors have taken hard copies to User Group meetings. It has been made available at Public Halls Meetings and is also available in all of the Public Halls and the Town Hall or simply on request to anyone that would like one.

So far just 24 forms have been returned and while this is a big improvement on the initial 4 responses it still represents a very small number (less than 1 in 1000) of Witney's tax payers. Of those received 10 have come from Dance and Drama groups, 4 from cinema supporters, 9 from members of the public not affiliated to any groups and 1 from a Community/Charity group.

Deputy Town Clerk, Claire Swan commented,

'We have tried various methods of encouraging public participation in developing future plans for the Corn Exchange. It is vital we put together a brief that is as inclusive of all the potential users as much as considering the views of its current user groups. It is disappointing, so I am appealing again, for anyone who has any strong feelings about how they would like to see the Corn Exchange develop to get a form or email or phone in your views to me.'

There have been some suggestions and the wish list includes, a Youth Centre, performance area with stage, rehearsal rooms and dressing rooms; space for sales and dances; a cinema; a non-elitist arts centre of the kind they have in Cirencester or Wallingford; a café; a centre similar to Chipping Norton Theatre; an onsite booking office for ticket sales and something that can be used as a large music venue.

Given the Grade II listed status of the exterior frontage external restoration has been arranged, taking advice from experts and advisors from West Oxfordshire District Council and relevant authorities. Work on the outside of the building will begin in the next 3 weeks. Local business OG Stonemasonry Contractors Ltd of North Leigh has been engaged to undertake a sympathetic restoration and deep clean of the façade and external balcony. The business has shown outstanding skill in similar projects at some of Oxford's most beautiful colleges and has also worked at Blenheim Palace and undertaken projects for the National Trust.

ENDS

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