

Old Library refurbishment – Frequently Asked Questions

The budget is too small. Can this really be delivered for £900,000?

The budget is tight but will concentrate on the essentials. The aim is to respect the original features of the building where possible, but cost and efficiency are paramount. All furniture and equipment from the current library will be re-used wherever possible.

The budget is too large. Why does it cost £900,000 to refurbish?

Very little has been spent on the old museum for decades and it will take a lot to bring it up to modern standards. The roof, windows and curtain walling needs replaced and a lift installed. Much of the budget is for overdue modernization and maintenance.

Would it not be cheaper to knock it down and start again?

The cost of demolition would be over £200,000 and the cost of a new build prohibitive. Half the building is currently used by the Library so the functions we have there – which includes public events space – would have to be replaced very close by. Various options were listed in a report to the Education and Families committee on 23/11/2015

www.shetland.gov.uk/coins/agenda.asp?meetingid=4716

Could you not just fit everything into St Ringans and the Learning Centre? After all you used to fit on one floor of the old library.

Unfortunately not. We had very much outgrown the old building. Even before the move to St Ringans we occupied the ground floor and the basement of the old library and (perhaps not so many folk know this) the big house just behind in St Olaf St. The community's library needs had grown and the building had become the base for supporting seven school libraries and two mobiles. We have also had to develop early years and public computer services as demand has increased. Meantime there is consistent demand for more access to book stock and quiet study space. The library book reserves also serve the mobiles and school libraries and there is considerable stock rotation. Therefore the St Ringans basement will be retained for storage purposes and we will do all we can to maximise the public space in the refurbished library.

Why did you not stay in the old library in the first place?

The decision at the time was to locate us in St Ringans, which was gifted to the Council and refurbished. The old library/museum needed a huge amount of work to bring it up to standard - as it still does. If we had not moved to St Ringans in 2002 we would still have had to find 'decant' accommodation for the library for a couple of years while the building was refurbished, and the refurbishment would have cost a lot too.

So you moved only to move back, is that not ridiculous, and costly?

Well, it's 15 years since we moved to St Ringans, so we have made good use of the buildings. Meanwhile, we've got good value out of the old library as it houses our offices, book reserves, processing dept, storage and Bookbug /events space. It has also been shared with other Council staff

including Adult Learning, Community Work, Child Protection and Throughcare and Aftercare. More recently 17 staff decanted from North Ness have joined us, and the Town Hall restorers have a workshop there. So all three of our buildings – the Old Library, St Ringans and the Learning Centre – have worked hard for us. The Old Library is in a very poor state and has to be refurbished, and it makes sense to get the public areas of the Library all under one roof. This will be much more efficient in the long term.

Will the money being spent on this mean cuts in the Library service?

No, because funding is allocated on the Capital Programme and is ‘capital’ rather than ‘revenue’ budget. The Council has to keep its buildings up to standard and provide suitable accommodation for services. It is an efficiency to move the library in here and the costs are for essential upgrade and maintenance rather than an expansion of our service. Therefore our annual Library running costs don’t get cut to pay for it.

However, it is important to note that the Library, like other Council services has to find cuts in our revenue budget every year. Moving the public areas of the library into one building rather than three will save on energy and maintenance costs. Sadly we cannot tell you there will not be cuts to the Library budget, because there will. But we can say it should not be because of the old library refurbishment, which should in fact help us find savings.

What will happen to St Ringans?

The Council will continue to occupy St Ringans, however no final decision has been taken as to which services will be provided from there.

How are you going to handle the ‘solar gain’ from all the windows?

We know this is an issue and the design team are considering how to deal with it.

Last update 31 January 2017

We will add any other relevant ‘FAQs’ to this list as the project proceeds.