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# Local Charity Launches Bid to Re-Open Wash Common Library

### Over two thousand local residents to be asked to support plan to re-open library

A charity formed by local residents –The Friends of Wash Common Library – is launching a major leafleting and survey campaign in the Wash Common area of Newbury in a bid to demonstrate the support of local residents for its plan to re-open the Wash Common library in 2018. The library was closed by West Berkshire Council in March 2017. Since that time, local residents have attended a series of public meetings and fund raising events in large numbers. At the meetings there have been many strong and heartfelt expressions of sadness and regret at the closure of the popular community library.

West Berkshire Council, which closed the library for cost cutting reasons, has indicated that it will not be able to provide any financial assistance to re-open the library. The new library will therefore have to be an independent community library, which must be completely self-funded and run by volunteers. The charity must show that it can generate income - through fund raising initiatives and donations - every year going forward. It must also show that it has commitment from the local community to support, use and fund the library.

Since the library’s closure in March 2017, the Friends of Wash Common Library Charity has been highly active and has galvanised the support of the local community. The leafleting and surveying campaign will provide a useful indicator of the level of support there is in the community for the re-opening of the library. It is hoped that this support will encourage the Council to work with the charity to enable the library to reopen next year.

Julia Calvert, a library user of many years and who has led the campaign since the library’s closure in March 2017 said: “We were all very sad to see the library closed in March. Many people of all ages used the library regularly to borrow books, socialise and spend valuable time with their neighbours and friends. Many people find it difficult, and costly, to get into Newbury to use the library there. There has been real sadness and frustration that this excellent facility has been taken away from the local people, and many of them have told us that they want it back, as soon as possible!

“We have been delighted with the support we’ve had so far. Over £6,000 towards the £18,000 re-opening costs needed has been pledged by generous donors. Now we need to test the overall level of support that there is for what we are trying to do. We think we will get a great response, but it will be good to see what local people tell us. If we can show that the community is committed and we can raise enough money, including the £7,000 needed every year to run the library, this will convince West Berkshire Council to support us. It would be wonderful if this were to be the catalyst to getting the library re-opened next year.”

-ends-

**Notes to editors**

Over two thousand residents of the Wash Common community will receive a leaflet and survey form from the charity over the period 9-16 December. (Copy enclosed).

Completed survey forms can be returned to Budgens, St George’s Church or Falkland School, who have all kindly agreed to support this initiative.

Residents can also give their views on the website: [www.washcommonlibrary.org.uk/contact.aspx](http://www.washcommonlibrary.org.uk/contact.aspx)

**Progress to date**

Since March 2017, the following progress has been made by the Friends of Wash Common Library:

* A constitution has been agreed
* Local people are acting as trustees
* A management committee has been formed.
* A list of 60+ supporters has been drawn up
* Talks have taken place with West Berks Council (WBC) and Newbury Town Council (NTC), in a bid to take over the library building.
* An application to take over the building has been placed with WBC.
* We have already been promised over £6,000 from generous donors.
* Acceptance on The Good Exchange fundraising platform. Search for us at **https://thegoodexchange.com/**
* Greenham Trust Price Match funding: For every £1 donated they will give £1 up to £5,000.
* A logo competition was held over the summer.
* We raised over £150 (over £300 with price match funding) at a recent coffee morning in Newbury.
* Find us on Facebook: @friendsofwashcommonlibrary
* A Website has been created: [www.washcommonlibrary.org.uk](http://www.washcommonlibrary.org.uk)

**Picture**

A picture is attached showing members of the Friends of Wash Common Library as they begin their campaign to survey the local residents and secure their support to re-open the library**.**

**Media Information**

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