



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

KENDAL

Kendal Indoor Market Hall Refurbishment

Notes from Engagement Sessions – October 2024

Approach

Engagement sessions were held in the Kendal Indoor Market on Wednesday 16th, Thursday 17th, Friday 18th and Saturday 19th October between 10am – 5.30pm. This covered the Indoor Market Hall's opening hours as well as the outdoor market days on Wednesday and Saturday, which are the busiest shopping days for Kendal.

The project team made use of an empty stall within the indoor market, which is located at the front of the market hall, giving optimum shop frontage to encourage more engagement. The stall was set up with project information covering the proposed refurbishment works, including funding, our Council markets across Westmorland and Furness, decarbonisation interventions, suggested improvements to stalls and how the market supports Kendal town centre.



Engagement sessions in Kendal Indoor Market with information boards used to discuss the refurbishment works

Eight council officers supported the engagement sessions on the stall over the four days, with cross-team support from economic development & regeneration, markets, cultural services, community development and capital programmes, with support also from Kendal Town Council officers and councillors, and Kendal Futures officers and board members.

This approach enabled officers working within the project team to engage directly within the indoor market and better understand the habits of people using the space. It was also an opportunity for prospective new traders or those who have expressed an interest in trading from the refurbished space to come and speak directly with the project team to understand what types of work are planned.

The project team have further engagement activities planned through November until the Market Hall closes at the end of November, with particular focus on engaging younger audiences and encouraging new users within the market hall prior to the temporary closure to facilitate the refurbishment works.

Engagement

Approximately 220 people spoke to officers over the course of the engagement sessions, with Saturday being the busiest day. Comments and ideas were provided based around the following themes:

- stall design;
- internal and external decoration and design;
- events and activities;
- accessibility and inclusivity; and
- type of traders and preferred offer within the market hall.

Feedback was largely very positive about the project and there was overall consensus that the indoor market needed investment to support the future of it within the town centre, with this being viewed as an opportunity to modernise the building and the markets offer and revitalise the town centre offer.

A summary of feedback for each topic discussed is provided below.

Building interior and exterior

Stall design – suggestions included slightly larger stalls which are uniform in shape and design were preferred. The branding and colour of the stalls should be varied and specific to each trader. A water supply to each stall (both hot and cold) was suggested, otherwise enabling access to the café water supply for traders when the café is not trading or separate welfare facilities for traders.

Layout – a few suggestions included that some or all stalls should be in the centre of the hall, but most agreed with the proposal to keep them positioned in the existing layout (around the perimeter of the market hall). Generally people liked the current layout of the hall. A couple of options were discussed around the positioning of the café; remain as is or relocate to the far end of the market hall. One comment did dispute the idea of relocating

the café to the far end of the market hall as they prefer the current position, however the suggestion to relocate the café was largely recognised as an opportunity to improve the food and drink offer within the market hall, and options are being considered for the café location based on timeframes and budgets.

Toilets – the toilet provisions within the market hall is very well used as part of the town centre's Courtesy Toilet Scheme, and supports the welfare provisions for the outdoor market traders on market days. Suggestions for a Changing Places toilet, baby changing and breast feeding area (the latter could be accommodated within the café offer as a breastfeeding friendly space also), general improvements to the facilities such as more discreet access where the cubicle door does not open on the Hall.

Doors – proposals included glass frontage to the market hall to support decarbonisation efforts. An automatic door at the main entrance was supported. A separate push pad door in the main entrance panel was also suggested to increase accessibility.

Decarbonisation – improved lighting would help to create a more welcoming atmosphere if designed appropriately. Support for all decarbonisation initiatives to support the sustainability objectives of the Council and the traders.

Signage – a range of signage issues were raised including having clear consistent branding, improving the entrance signage on and within Market Place and into the Westmorland Shopping Centre atrium, replacing the old SLDC sign above the main entrance, improving wayfinding from the link corridor and Blackhall Road rear courtyard and adding markets to the town's brown highways signs (replacing K Village). Displaying the Market Charter, a map of the town centre, and decorative engraving were also suggested.

Access

Link corridor from multi-storey car park – it was suggested by a number of people that this corridor needs to be enhanced with artwork, murals and display features to make it more attractive and create an improved town centre gateway and arrival point between the car park and the Market Hall and provide a better welcome to Kendal.

Access from Blackhall Road – there is currently no disabled access from the rear courtyard on Blackhall Road into the Market Hall. If no new lift or ramp can be installed then improved signage is needed to make clear that disabled access is from the link corridor through the car park entrance or Market Place entrance only. General enhancements to the signage, lighting and public realm here are also supported to improve safety, wayfinding and the look and feel of the space.

Later/longer opening times – to better support trading, a pop-up bar, events and through access to the car park. Lockable stalls would allow for them to be secure but still allow people to walk through the building to and from the car park after trading ends if access can be arranged with Praxis. Sunday opening was also suggested, particularly during busy periods such as summer or in the run up to Christmas, and it was suggested this be done on a trial period to test the market.

Parking – various issues raised including the lack of parking spaces in the town, price, the potential for free parking offers and longer opening hours into the evening for the multi-storey to support a night-time offer in the Market Hall and the wider town centre. This is linked to later opening hours for the Market Hall for trading, events or through access to the car park.

Offer

Future offer and new traders to attract – overall the consensus for the types of stalls supported an increase in variety of stalls. Ideas for new traders included fruit and veg, cards, community banks or banking hub, florist, Growing Well, video games, butchers, bakery, cheese, quality local produce, food hall, crafts, an offer for young people, stationery, street food, bar from a local brewery or distillery and opportunity for pop ups to trial new businesses, new product and Kendal high street.

There was preference for a wide variety of different traders and offers. While there was support for a café to be retained within the space and potential for other F&B stalls such as street food and a bar, the idea of a food & drink led offer or dedicated food hall was not generally favoured. There was support for continuing to focus the offer on retail with space for community use also allowed. Communal seating (not just for the café) was also suggested to support lunch clubs, break out space and rainy weather days.

Events and activities – ideas included providing communal space for young people, Christmas themed events and festivities (including decorations), guided walks and talks, kids clubs, visiting coach parties, busking, music, art and crafts workshops and a dog show (outdoor). Generally an events space within the market hall was favoured, and traders and the public were supportive of a programme of events and themed activities to support the town centre offer and drive new footfall in to the market hall to support an increase in trade.

Promotion – creation of a leaflet to promote the new Market Hall and traders, promoting Kendal to visitors to the Lake District including the Market Hall as a rainy day option, creating a 'destination' venue, having clearly defined branding, having a social media presence that markets the space and the traders.

Pop up stalls – there was strong support for retaining in some form the tables in the centre of the Hall for use by charities and small pop-up traders on a flexible or ad hoc basis. Having a dedicated pop-up stall which new starters could use on a short term rota basis to create a pipeline of new traders was also suggested.

Traders

Support for traders – ideas included cheaper/free rent and short term contracts to attract new traders and start-ups, particularly for younger people trying new products, providing consistent leases and rent arrangements for all traders to support a fair approach to our markets offer that can be widely promoted, providing training packages from the National Market Traders Federation, trader parking permits and access all day to a cleaner. It was suggested that a 'code of conduct' be developed in consultation with new and existing traders to encourage good practice and dissuade bad practice within the market hall.



Ideas provided by shoppers, traders, market hall users and the wider public through the engagement sessions

Requirements for traders – good quality business cases to be submitted when applying for a stall to vet traders and filter out those that don't fit the vision, a code of conduct, preventing stalls from overflowing beyond their limits, parking permits to be returned if the stall is given up, longer opening hours for the café.

Opportunities

A number of opportunities presented themselves during the engagement sessions, including speaking to potential new traders (food and drink, retail, charity, community groups as well as disability and inclusivity groups), creative practitioners offering their services and professional capacity to increase the impact of the refurbishment, and partners seeking to work more closely together to during and following the refurbishment. These opportunities will be followed up directly by the project team.

Concerns

The main concerns raised were the timing of the closure in December before Christmas and the support that the current traders have been offered when they have been required to vacate at short notice. Most were placated once the reasoning behind the closure and the type of support offered to traders was explained.

Other concerns noted were doubts about being able to attract and sustain new traders, that the offer should not be focused on food only, that younger people and College students were not a suitable target audience, and the capacity of local infrastructure such as parking to cope with additional demand.

It is worth noting that there have been many rumours around the market hall for some years now, and generally it was appreciated by the public that officers were on hand to dispel any of these rumours and clarify some of the assertions that have been made relating to the indoor market, emphasising the importance of engagement activities like this to offer clarity and an opportunity for the public to hear directly from the Council on these matters.

Recommendations

While all of the above will be considered as part of the refurbishment project and the operations of the market hall in the future, the following recommendations are put forward based on the prevalence and popularity of the suggestions put forward through the engagement sessions:

- new fixed stalls similar to existing layout, with slight increase in stall size with uniform stall designs;
- new fixed stalls positioned as now next to the walls and the café moved to the back of the hall if timeframe and budget allows, with the centre having moveable seating and tables which can facilitate events and community use, though not to impact on through access;

- continue to allow the tables in the centre of the Hall for use by charities and small pop-up traders on a flexible or ad hoc basis, with the potential for one of the fixed stalls to be dedicated for pop-ups on a short term rota;
- enhancing the link corridor with artwork and displays in partnership with Praxis and Kendal Futures, working with Praxis to improve the rear access on Blackhall Road;
- clear branding, new signage and promotional campaign for reopening;
- a new process for accepting traders including requiring a business case submission on application, signing up to a code of conduct and standardised leases and rents;
- focus on increase in variety of traders across the retail, F&B and community sectors;
- continued engagement throughout the course of the project and refurbishment works.

Please note that the inclusion of the above recommendations does not necessarily mean that these will all be included within the final designs for the market hall refurbishment, though the design team will seek to include as many feasible recommendations as possible based on the project budgets and timeframes.

Further engagement activity is planned through November 2024 to encourage an increase in footfall while trading continues and to better engage with younger demographics and families through pop up shops and creative art workshops.

The Council would like to thank all those partners, traders, market hall users and members of the public who took their time to come to speak to officers in a respectable and engaging manner.