

Penrith Town Hall

Visioning session 2

Priority Programme:
Future Use of Council Buildings



Project summary...

£3m Levelling Up funding is providing the opportunity to transform this important Grade II listed building into a vibrant **community and creative hub**, that celebrates its heritage while adapting it to meet the evolving needs of the community.

This adds to the £500,000 previously ringfenced from Borderlands Place Programme funding to create a sustainable future for the Town Hall by creating a central facility for the curation and programming of cultural activity and supporting creative enterprise.

Penrith Town Hall will serve as a thriving community hub using creative arts as one of the threads to bring people together. It will be a space for the third and community sector but also an incubator for local creative talent - acting as a launchpad for creatives and providing a collaborative environment for artists, creatives and entrepreneurs, whilst remaining a civic resource for residents. Through a range of cultural, heritage, educational activities and events, coupled with civic functions, our aim is to contribute to the local economy, encourage innovation, and build stronger community ties. Transforming the space will contribute towards preserving the local character and identity of the town.

It has been identified as a W&F Priority Project. Completion date: March 2028

Why Penrith Town Hall?

Redeveloping Penrith Town Hall presents a unique opportunity to preserve its rich history while creating a vibrant space for the future. Here's why it matters:

- **History and heritage:** dating back for centuries, the Town Hall has been a place where important decisions were made, shaping the town's future.
- **Architectural gem:** with its stunning Georgian design, the Town Hall is an architectural icon. Redeveloping it will preserve its beauty while adding modern features to enhance its functionality.
- **Community Hub:** the Town Hall has long been the heart of community life, hosting civic and cultural events. Redevelopment will ensure it continues to serve as a vibrant gathering space.
- **Symbol of Penrith:** as a symbol of Penrith's identity and civic pride, the Town Hall embodies the town's history and growth. A redevelopment will cement its place as a lasting landmark for the community.
- **Tourist Attraction:** The Town Hall's rich history and beauty make it a must-see destination for visitors. A revitalised Town Hall will continue to draw tourists and offer a modern, welcoming space.

Redeveloping Penrith Town Hall ensures this historic gem remains a dynamic, central part of Penrith's community for years to come.



For Penrith, by Penrith.... Community Engagement Principles

- Meaningful and timely - woven throughout the whole process.
- Emphasis is upon listening and co-creating a vision based upon need and insight.
- Build trust and connections; use the existing expertise of our local teams and partners to support community conversations.
- Focus on reaching into our communities; outreach activities to reach the unheard voices and underserved groups.
- Work with our key stakeholders to inform our engagement activities.
- Use creative approaches to capture the imagination of our audiences.
- Highlight the outcomes of our conversations to demonstrate how stakeholder involvement shapes a shared vision.
- Learn from what has already been done.

A new creative approach to community engagement

Our phase 1 engagement plan was a mix of broadbrush with residents and targeted activity with our known stakeholders to maximise reach and input.

A completely open, intensive and creative engagement process over 4 weeks intended to draw out the community aspirations for the future use of Penrith Town Hall.

The plan adopted a range of qualitative and quantitative methods, tailored to the needs of different audiences, to ensure the process was inclusive and accessible for all. The approach facilitated engagement with many different cohorts from the community.

Co-created themed sessions with a range of targeted groups adding colour to our robust survey work to capture a wide range of views and voices from the community.

Local press, visual displays and online marketing were all used to proactively raise awareness with the public of the community engagement opportunities.

This is just the start.



A “Community Conversation” about Penrith Town Hall

“A space for music practice and performance”

“A centre for health and wellbeing support services”

“A dedicated youth space offering arts and creative activities”

“A community café “

“An indoor market with pop-up stalls”

Themed activities and target audiences

Audiences	Activities
Children & Young People	Co-creation workshops led by The Knotted Project: Stomping Ground – 27, Young People 8-16 years Brunswick Primary School - 42, Year 1 and 2 students Kirkoswalds C of E Primary school- 11, Year 5 and 6 students St Catherines Catholic Primary School - 32, Year 5 and 6 students Penrith Players Youth Theatre Session Youth Engagement – Pop up Pump Track
Adults	Visual Arts Workshops led by Japanese Artist Yoko delivered with Cold Springs Care Home and the Talkin Tables group Attendance at existing community led sessions at Penrith Library – Baby Bounce n Rhyme, Knit n Natter, MacMillan Coffee Morning,
Underrepresented Groups	Attendance at a series of Penrith Library “drop-in” group sessions including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Penrith Refugee Network
General Public Engagement	Penrith Market Stall with the Comic Artist Mollie Ray Penrith Leisure Centre Drop-In
Cultural & Community Sector Partners	Visioning workshops led by Farrell Renowden for Cultural, VCFSE, Town Team, and Locality Board



Engagement Questionnaire

An online questionnaire was launched on 17 September to start a conversation with the community to ensure people had an opportunity to share their ideas to a community and creative space in Penrith. The outcomes of the survey capture the needs and aspirations from respondents:

Penrith Town Hall Community Conversation

452 responses received



59% Female



34% Male



6% Prefer not to say



17% of respondents had a disability or long-term health condition

What space and facilities would you like to see offered at Penrith Town Hall?



63% Community venue that supports meetings, learning and social events



56% Performance, studio or exhibition space



57% Space for events and ceremonies



57% Free wi-fi

Community Conversations

- Alongside a schedule of stakeholder workshops, community drop-ins, and tailored activities, a series of community conversation events in and around Penrith took place. Their aims was to capture qualitative outputs from the community on a vision for Penrith Town Hall.
- These events resulted in over 80 engagements with the public, presenting 116 views on what would be good or useful for Penrith, to help shape the vision for the Town Hall.
- 96% of people who engaged with the community conversations were supportive of the Town Hall being used as a space for the community.
- From community conversations, the services, activities and facilities the public would like to see fall across four key areas; culture & heritage, arts & creativity, community and enterprise. Of the four key areas:
 - Heritage & Culture – total suggestions 12
 - Arts & Creativity – total suggestions 34
 - Community – total suggestions 40
 - Enterprise – total suggestions 30



Our community, our Town Hall. What would we like to see?

Heritage and Culture

- Large Museum Space.
- Centre for Penrith Heritage.
- Meeting place for groups.
- Venue for talks and workshops
- Regional and national heritage events.
- A new library.
- Lakeland book of the year venue.

Community

- Warm space for elderly.
- Lifestyle club 50+
- Health Centre, GP and Dentistry outreach.
- Mental health support.
- Counselling services.
- Women's health, Family hub.
- Support for disabled.
- Changing places and toilet.
- Dyslexia and Autism Centre.

Arts and Creativity

- Music, arts, performance venue.
- Concert hall, indoor festivals space.
- Art and craft gallery / studio.
- Creative workshop space.
- Early years activities.
- Role play café for 0-5 / Sensory space for children.
- Youth activities.
- Youth art gallery.
- Dance studio for all.
- Music and drama hub.

Enterprise

- Tourist Information Centre
- Registry Office and Wedding Venue
- Community café
- Business Hub, retail space, support for SMEs
- Indoor market with pop-up stalls
- Support for homeless



Next steps and timelines

- Feedback from all the community engagement activities will be collated into a series of reports, and used to inform the developing vision for Penrith Town Hall, finalise the investment objectives and the development of an options long list for an asset that fits into the community and creative fabric of Penrith.
- The Project Team will work with Consultants to develop the Outline Business Case for shortlisted options with associated high-level operating and financial models.
- It is intended that this will be tabled for Westmorland & Furness Council Cabinet decision as to which option will be progressed in April 2026.
- Concept design will then begin taking into functional requirements, digital needs, operational / lifecycle expectations and accessibility / inclusion priorities. The successful contractor will be selected based on competitive selection ensuring value for money and adherence to our brief.
- A second round of engagement based on more specific concepts and visuals is targeted for May 2026.

**August to
October 2025**

Phae 1
Engagement

**October to
December 2025**

Business case
development

April 2026

Cabinet decision on
which option to
proceed

**January to
May 2026**

(RIBA Stage 2)
Concept design

May 2026

Phae 2
Engagement

**May to
September 2026**

(RIBA Stage 3) Final
design complete

February 2027

(RIBA Stage 4)
Technical Design &
ODD/Cab briefing:
Business Case/
Capital Programme
Allocation

**January 2027
to March 2028**

(RIBA Stage 5)
Construction

March 2028

Completion

All timings are based on estimate and may change



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Translation Services

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