

1875 Victorian School Case Study

Project Title:	1875 Victorian School Feasibility		
Delivered by	Talgarth & District Regeneration Group		
Start date:	01/01/2022	End Date:	01/04/2022
LEADER Theme:	Theme 1 - Adding Value to Local Identity and Natural and Cultural Resources		

Total Expenditure:	£9,125.86
RDP Funding:	£7,000.00
Match funding:	£2,125.86

1. Introduction and Challenges

Back in Autumn 2021, after the Old 1875 School in Talgarth had been causing increasing concern to residents, due to the danger of long-term dereliction, Talgarth & District Regeneration Group launched a bid to assess its development options. The former Talgarth School, opened in 1875, was the town's principle primary school for over a century, and, as well as being a dominant building of note within the Talgarth Conservation Area, it is also linked to the personal stories of many local families.

The principle challenge was to engage with local residents on the future of a key building, which currently belongs to Powys County Council, and served in more recent years as a Youth and Community Centre until its closure in 2008. The challenge was all the greater because, during the initial project period, Covid - 19 restrictions were still a constraining factor.

2. Solution

It was clear to the Regeneration Group Committee that we needed to draw in some expert external resource, with architectural, conservation and community engagement skills to help focus minds in the town and surrounding area on the challenge and opportunity presented by the 1875 School. We applied for Arwain funding in December and were delighted to be offered support to the tune of £7,000 to assist us with taking this forward.

3. Benefit

One of the clear benefits from the public engagement that has taken place during the early months of 2022 is the realisation that, despite having slipped into a certain dereliction, the Old School is viewed with considerable affection, combined, naturally, with some concern at its current physical state.

Talgarth, has, like many communities, experienced its share of issues around disconnection and isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic and as our life returns to a “new normal,” we have identified and logged people’s evident wish to have more opportunities to come together, after the many months of lockdown, online meetings and restrictions. At the same time, as a result of the project, we have concluded that the pandemic has led to several trends in public attitudes, which may be relevant to the Old School’s future use.

4. Results

The identified, interim results include the following findings:

There is an increased interest in people seeking ways of learning artistic and practical skills, with heightened demand for face-to-face learning. The well-being benefits of engaging with the arts through supported learning are well known and local providers, such as Black Mountains College, are amongst those looking for locations to provide creative activities in the Talgarth area. The whole

Black Mountains region has an active arts scene with many practitioners seeking space to work and exhibit.

Changes in working practices mean that facilities supporting remote working and self-employment such as shared, flexible working spaces with super-fast fibre optic broadband are in increasing demand too. These forms of provision can boost productivity, facilitate networking and collaboration as well as fostering well-being. This can also offer a more social and mutually supportive workplace atmosphere, often absent when working remotely.

Holiday accommodation is also shown to be a significant potential income generator, although it is seasonal. It could, however, form part of a mixed-use proposal to support other community activities at the Old School.



5. Project Outputs/Outcomes

Output (Case Level Indicator)	Achieved
No. of feasibility studies	1
No. of networks established	
No. of jobs safeguarded	
No. Of pilot activities undertaken / supported	
No. of community hubs created	
No. of stakeholders engaged	28
No. of participants supported (awareness raising events only)	41
No. of jobs created	
No. of communities benefitting	
No. of businesses benefitting	

