

WCBC and Non Compliance with the FGA 2015

Dave Metcalfe

Sun 07/03/2021 00:13

Dear Sophie,

We regrettably must write to your office once again and your self as the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

Our Local Authority, WCBC are not acting in accordance with the FGA 2015.

The summary of which is, we have a community building, the Ebenezer that they wish to sell off, and we have offered the best price for, twice their asking price on the condition they (WCBC) work with us (the community) so we can run it as a visitor and community facility at our own expense.

This would seem to be an ideal offer that WCBC should take, but they have refused and are insisting on putting the building to auction to any bidder for any purpose.

Our community has objected to this strongly and unless there is an improvement in this matter by WCBC we will start seeking a Court Injunction at 1200 this Monday, the 8th of March.

The Leader of WCBC, Mark Pritchard has been informed.

Non-Compliance with the Future Generations Act 2015:

Sustainable Development

The Act states that “Sustainable Development” means the process of improving the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Well Being of Wales by acting, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle, aimed at achieving the Well Being Goals.

Well-being Duty

The Act places a duty that all the public bodies are expected to carry out and a duty means they must do this by law.

Sustainable Development Well Being Goals

There are seven wellbeing goals that Local Authorities are obliged by the Welsh Government to comply with.

1. A Prosperous Wales

An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

Our plans for our community supported widely by our community attain all the above which will lead to a more Prosperous Wales. We are Innovative and will make significant CO2 reduction through our program which will positively help with Climate Change.

Just taking the Ebenezer as a simple example (small) of our planned works, the plan is to make it a Carbon Neutral Building with the installation of a GSHP, Ground Source Heat Pump and well-regulated ventilation for optimum operating conditions with minimal power requirements.

This is not available at auction as WCBC are insisting on.

The Ebenezer Building is a key asset in the turn around of our community from Post Industrial Depression to that of Sustainable Tourism Development which is essential to employment opportunity and work placement training for our people.

By selling off the Ebenezer to any bidder for any reason this goal of the FGA 2015 is being ignored.

2. A resilient Wales

A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).

The campaign name for the works we plan for our community is “Back to the Future for The Cefn & Cefn Mawr” and this encompasses the remediation of the ex-Monsanto Chemical Works Site, a much larger program than the Ebenezer. This program will significantly improve the Reliance of Wales by dealing with one of the worst areas in it, while likewise improving the ecosystems and the local capacity to alleviate climate change impact. The recent Storm Christoph was an example of why we should be acting and moving on to help our community and other communities literally down stream of us on the River Dee.

To achieve these far-reaching goals for NE Wales, it is necessary to get the basics in order first and the Ebenezer is a critical asset in being able to do so.

Therefore, by selling off the Ebenezer at auction to any bidder for any given reason by WCBC is clearly not in alignment with the second goal of the FGA 2015 for our area.

3. A Healthier Wales

A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

The Ebenezer will act as both Visitor Centre and Community Facility.

As an Arts & Visitor Centre it will promote local art and area to provide cultural stimulus and education facility.

As a Community Facility there will be a small café area and quality second-hand book shop, an employment desk where local employment agencies will be providing drop in facilities, and we will be working with the Princes Trust etc. There will be a small community information and rolling film cinema for our local people and visitors alike. We will be seeking to secure the Post Office, putting it right at the centre of our community, which is where the Ebenezer is.

All these things will help our communities physical and mental wellbeing in real terms at a level they will be happy to engage with.

However, this is not available at auction and therefore WCBC are not in compliance with the third goal of the FGA 2015, whereas if they only worked with us and our community, they would be.

4. A more equal Wales

A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances).

We plan to deal with this actively at the Ebenezer as an Arts & Visitor Centre serving as a Community Facility and do so already through our work with [The Holly Bush Inn](#) and the [PKC Group](#).

However, this again is not available at auction.

5. A Wales of cohesive communities

Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.

This is where our main emphasis is, we need the Ebenezer building to act as a catalyst in our traditional village centre as an Arts & Visitor Centre for our area at the centre of the Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site. The Ebenezer has failed badly in the past through our community not being well connected. The main reason for failure of the Ebenezer was from a lack of footfall in an area that has one of the highest visitor counts in Wales!

The key is to connect our traditional village centre to the aqueduct by a means that large numbers of visitors will find attractive. We currently intend a Water Balanced Solar Electric Funicular Railway which can be made at our local engineering works. This is a part of our initial investment of £5M under Phase 1 of the “Back to the Future for the Cefn & Cefn Mawr” campaign.

However, to go with this we also need the Ebenezer as an Arts & Visitor Centre for our area in the middle of our village, half a mile from the aqueduct and 500mts from what will become the WBG, Windborne Gateway Interchange Parking, the main parking area for the central section of the WHS.

This will make our community more attractive, safer and viable by increasing employment opportunity and levels of income for our people.

However, if the Ebenezer is sold off at auction and we can not achieve this the scale will run in the opposite direction as it has for the last ten years and eventually all the good work done by the THI (Townscape Heritage Initiative) part funded by the NHLF (National Lottery Heritage Fund) to the tune of £3.5M will be lost.

Furthermore, as the social disparity increases between certain parts of our community, i.e. the haves visiting and have nots living in the area, the levels of ASB activity will increase and have a negative effect on our potential as one of Wales Top Tourist Attractions.

This is not in the auction but will be an outcome if the Ebenezer goes to auction and is not retained for community use as we plan.

Therefore, WCBC is positively acting against this goal of the FGA 2015.

6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Culture and the Welsh Language is spoken, sung, and encouraged in our pub, The Holly Bush Inn and the same will be true for the Ebenezer if WCBC will accept our offer of £200K to retain it as a Community Facility and Visitor Centre.

However, if it goes to auction as stipulated by WCBC what will it become, who will buy it and what language will they speak?

So, is WCBC in alignment with this goal or could they do better?

7. A globally responsible Wales

A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

Turning our community around in North East Wales is Globally Responsible and will send a positive message to the World given our extremely high foreign national visitor count under normal circumstances. Eventually those levels will return post Coronavirus Pandemic and we should make the most of this for our nation.

However, to choose not to by selling off key heritage assets such as the Ebenezer for any given use for any give reason other than working with the community and the unique position our community is in, is NOT being Globally Responsible.

Our community is caught in Post Industrial Depression since the closure of our only 2 main employers Monsanto and Air Products just over ten years ago. Please see [Cefn Wider Social & Economic Study 2020](#).

However our community lies at the centre of the Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site and our area sees very high visitor counts to limited parts, 330,000 visitors to the aqueduct and 70,000 to Ty Mawr Country Park, a total of 400,000 and zero or next to, for our village centre between Ty Mawr and the aqueduct.

Our pub, The Holly Bush Inn stands as proof of what can be done on the opposite side of the street to the Ebenezer, and we want to do the same with the Ebenezer for our community and ask WCBC to work with us. We also ask the Future Generations Commissioner to ask on behalf of our Children and Grandchildren as well, so that we can implement Sustainable Tourism Development for our community enabling it to move on from Post Industrial Depression to becoming a Vibrant & Viable Community.

Our community can so easily become a Tourist Destination and Transport Hub in its own right for the Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site, the Dee Valley AONB and South Wrexham and all we need is for WCBC to start working with us.

Please ask them to do so in accordance with the FGA 2015.

Please note all correspondence leading to this email can be read on our website on our [Ebenezer Web Page](#).

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted>

Regards,
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