

Gitti Coats
Project director: HAVERHUB
Community regeneration at The Old Post Office, Quayside
28 May 2021

Mike Cavanagh
Head of Cultural, Leisure, Tourism and Registration services
Pembrokeshire County Council
County Hall
Haverfordwest

Dear Mike

Levelling Up Fund

I am pleased to offer my support for the Haverfordwest Levelling Up Fund town centre enhancements proposed by Pembrokeshire County Council, to include improved access and renovations to the Castle & gaol, 16 Bridge St., and creation of an innovative link bridge across the retail stretch of the river.

I have been a community representative on the wider steering group for the Flagship Heritage Project (now Castle and Gaol development) since early 2017, contributing to scrutiny of the design proposals and wider discussions about the project scope on a regular basis. Taking the wider community into account for my contribution, I was also a secondary school parent governor, ran for County Councillor and was a freelancer working in the town, where I became increasingly concerned about the town's demise.

Since working in the town centre the rapid decline and loss of public confidence and pride was shocking. Out of town shopping localities are bustling to this day leaving a tatty void at the centre. This has increasingly concentrated socially inactive and disadvantaged demographics into the town and a far wider demographic mix is urgently needed to change perceptions and aspirations.

This led me to become interested and very active in town centre community regeneration eventually catalysing another significant town centre community led project – a community hub - which has attracted over three quarters of a million pounds in funding for the first phase of renovations. This involved securing the Old Post Office Grade 2 listed site in August 2017 and setting up a community interest company to repurpose that site for mixed community use as 'HAVERHUB' – with further plans to enhance the rear of the site onto the historic quayside (subject to funding) immediately downstream of the proposed Levelling Up Fund scheme.

This proposal if funded would provide a range of connected areas of interest and leisure and linking with the Castle at one end and Haverhub at the other would clearly increase the viability of both. The proposal offers a great deal of variety in a compact area, giving visitors and locals a genuinely unusual and impactful riverside experience.

The local authority has already tested the appetite for town centre improvement with the very popular Glan yr Afon riverside library which attracts significant visitor numbers, and further plans to improve walkways will further enhance active enjoyment of the river

corridor leading out to the green spaces and popular skate park. Haverfordwest has the potential to be a popular destination if a development like this can go ahead. Currently many visitors to the county go ROUND rather than TO the historic county town, heading for the coast.

We hope the local authority's bid will be successful as it will undoubtedly raise the bar and attract much needed inward investment in the town, repurposing and repairing the dearth of empty buildings and bring welcome additional footfall to projects such as Haverhub, enabling them to complement this commercial proposal with a sustainable 'home' for community cohesion and wellbeing initiatives so needed as part of the Covid recovery.

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