

I am writing to ask whether your organisation might be interested in exhibiting in the chapel in Green Street, Avebury. This offer comes about in the following way.

As you may recall, the National Trust bought the chapel from the United Reform Church in 2017. Over the course of the next eighteen months or so, it was extensively restored. By the end of 2019, a dedicated chapel manager had been appointed. The idea was to open the chapel to visitors, giving them an opportunity to learn about Avebury's wider setting. A concert and several meetings were held before the pandemic descended on us, upending the Trust's finances and throwing its plans into confusion. The Trust's Reset Programme made the chapel manager's role redundant as it did other roles in the Trust's team. Financial recovery is likely to take some time.

Instead of keeping the building locked up and unused, the Trust has offered it to Avebury Parish Council, as the community's representative organisation, as a not-for-profit engagement space showcasing the natural and historic environment. This is a generous offer and it seems too good an opportunity for the community to ignore. The Council has set up a small working group to progress the project.

The idea, coming from discussion with the Trust, is that the chapel as it is today would become a space for several exhibitions. Each exhibiting organisation would be able to display a range of activities showing what it is up to, doing so on a board or in whatever way it prefers, in order to inform the understanding and deepen the appreciation of Avebury's visitors. The purpose overall would be to demonstrate how local groups and other groups with local commitment are actively promoting informed interest in the natural environment and its history and encouraging sustainable access to it. Although the community's use of the chapel cannot be commercialised directly, the exhibitions might drive membership interest and volunteer participation towards their own websites, allowing further and perhaps enduring engagement; up to the organisation concerned to decide what it wants. Access to the chapel would remain free.

A list of the organisations invited is attached. Although the list is not complete (we welcome additions to it), it suggests the varied ways in which the character of the exhibition space as described above could be expressed by key organisations in and of the community.

If you are sufficiently interested to want to know more, we will be happy to try to answer your questions. Should there be appetite for developing the opportunity, the next step ought to be a meeting, ideally in the chapel itself, to pool ideas and explore ways forward. Amongst many other considerations, we will need to decide how best to manage and finance an exhibition space. You will have your own thoughts about ways to seize this opportunity and we would very much like to hear them.

APC Community Exhibition Space Committee
27 May 2021