



AMBITIONS & PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS



BY
THE GREGSON BOARD
MAY 2021

PLEASE SEND YOUR COMMENTS & FEEDBACK TO US BY THE 6th JUNE

**Are we missing things?
Do you agree or disagree?
Are we hitting the needs and ambitions of the community?
What else should we be planning to do?
You can email us at...**

Gregson2025@gregson-community-association.org.uk

or pop a copy through the letter box.



These ideas are the work of the GCA board and a number of other volunteer advisers who have given their time and ideas. The work continues and we plan to have an agreed and costed long-term plan by July 2021.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

In 2020, the management company appointed by the Gregson Community Association (GCA) to run the Gregson operation gave notice that they would be filing for insolvency. Coinciding with the Covid pandemic, this forced the GCA to think carefully about how the Gregson could be run most effectively in the future.

The decision was taken by the board to 'bring back' the Gregson into its own hands, the charity in future managing the building directly. Since then, our focus has been in four areas: renovating and re-decorating the building, planning for re-opening, running a crowd-funding campaign and, longer term, developing a new vision and strategic plan for the charity.

This paper looks at the last of these areas, setting out some of the priorities and approaches we are considering.

Between April and June we want to test these ideas out with the different communities and groups we serve.

We want to understand if we are hitting the needs and ambitions of the community and if not, what else you think we should be planning to do?

VISION FOR THE GREGSON

A fantastic, thriving community centre which is:

- o Warm, welcoming and inclusive.
- o A meeting point – of people, ages, ideas and cultures.
- o A place to drink, dance and celebrate.
- o A space to dream, to inspire, to make things happen.
- o Ethical and environmentally aware.
- o Connected locally, across Lancaster and beyond.
- o A force for change and a force for good.



COMMUNITIES

An inclusive approach needs to be at the centre of everything we do. We know that for many people the Gregson is an important part of their life: a place to feel at home, feel safe, be creative and social.

We celebrate this. We also know that some groups and communities don't use the centre as much as they, and we, might wish.

We will be responsive and welcoming to everyone who wants to connect with the Gregson. Over the next four years we will also look hard for new opportunities to reach out and welcome young people, our local community, economically and socially disadvantaged groups and creative artists into the centre.

HIRES

Working with long-standing hirers and new groups too, we will develop a new approach and system for hires from summer 2021. This new approach will have:

- o Varied rates, allowing us to offer subsidised rates to priority communities and partners, also to maximise income for the charity from those who can afford commercial/higher rates.
- o New offers, including trialling a 'Working from the Greggy' approach to hiring tables in the bar during weekdays.
- o Increased bookings, maximising the use of all hire-able spaces during daytimes and evenings, weekdays and weekends.

By 2025 we plan for all our hireable spaces to be in use for the majority of the time.

BAR & CAFE

The bar and café is at the heart of the Gregson offer for many. During lockdown the board and volunteers have re-furnished and re-decorated the bars and spaces. There is a small commercial kitchen on site which was installed prior to lockdown. Our priorities are to develop a drinks and food offer which is:

- o Brilliantly run, offering stand-out customer service.
- o Excellent value.
- o Distinctive, with an ethical procurement policy and innovative approaches to welcoming everyone who wants to use the Gregson centre.
- o Connected to and supporting all aspects of the GCA offer.
- o Financially buoyant, making a significant contribution to the financial health of the GCA.
- o Responsive and evolving, embracing new ideas.

We are discussing the best way to deliver a food offer. As Covid restrictions allow we plan to try out different approaches and we would welcome people's ideas.



PROGRAMMES & EVENTS

Arts, health and wellbeing programmes will be at the centre of the Gregson's work. Sometimes we'll deliver events ourselves and often we'll play a different role:

Venue, Partner, Facilitator, Supporter, Connector, Inspirer.

We'll develop mutually supportive relationships and partnerships with other health, social care, cultural, education and community organisations. We will prioritise ways of working that help partners and communities achieve their creative and social ambitions with us.

Our work will include:

- o Continuing to support the great work of the Gregson Festival Group, Friends of Miss Whalley's Field and Highfield Regeneration Project.
- o Reaching communities in need through initiatives like the Lend-a-Hand support project.
- o Trialling a daytime arts, health and wellbeing offer with a focus on taking part, personal creative development and improving mental health.
- o Supporting quality live events, with a particular focus on: live music, dance, cabaret, comedy, spoken word/new writing, film and visual art exhibitions.

CONTINUED...

- o Developing a Gregson night-time events programme, focussed on Friday and Saturday evenings, supporting home grown, national and international talent.
- o Supporting young artists and grass roots initiatives, making the Gregson a place to try new ideas out.
- o Supporting established local community activity, such as the Lancaster Music Festival, as well as new local and city-wide initiatives.

Across all this activity we will support projects and programmes which seek to minimise their carbon footprint and spread their benefit as widely as possible.



MAKING IT HAPPEN

Making all this happen will be a shared endeavour, driven by the community. We aim to combine strong organisation with a commitment to generating and supporting new ideas.

The GCA will prioritise:

- o **Involving people:**
Building a vibrant volunteering programme, offering lots of different ways for people to connect with and support the Gregson, at the same time improving their health and wellbeing.
- o **Giving:**
Encouraging all kinds of giving – of time, donations, ideas, expertise.
- o **Listening to centre-users and the community:**
Finding out what they want and need from us and responding. This will include community consultation events and gathering day-to-day feedback on how we are doing.
- o **Communicating:**
Keeping people in the loop, making sure information is available to all.
- o **Celebrating successes and community endeavour.**



ORGANISATION

Behind the scenes, there is lots to do to make the new Gregson work. We will be organised, efficient and ambitious in our approach. The charity will adopt a strategic plan to achieve the following ambitions:

GOVERNANCE

Be a well-run, effective and stable charity, characterised by:

- o Excellent leadership and governance based on the seven principles of good governance in the Charity Governance Code.
- o Fulfilled volunteers working at all levels across the charity.
- o Clear and transparent organisational structure and decision-making.
- o A dynamic approach to projects, new ideas and 'making things happen'

FINANCE

Become a financially stable organisation, underpinned by:

- o Diverse and growing income streams: earned income, giving and project grants.
- o Effective operational financial systems.
- o Effective financial oversight.
- o Effective cost control.
- o Growing levels of reserves.

PEOPLE

Become an excellent employer and place to work, with an emphasis on:

- o Fair pay and good employee benefits.
- o An effective and gradual approach to increasing staff numbers as the charity grows.
- o Effective working relationships between paid and volunteer staff.
- o Clarity of organisational structure and the relationship between board, paid staff and volunteers.

COMMUNICATIONS

Be outward-facing and communicate effectively with all of our communities, with an emphasis on:

- o An excellent and well-managed website.
- o A new approach to using social media.
- o Being current and connected, keeping abreast of new communication opportunities.

PREMISES & EQUIPMENT

Developing the Gregson centre as a comfortable, efficient and contemporary space, with a focus on:

- o Environmental impact - exploring how we achieve a carbon neutral operation.
- o Modernisation - of equipment and systems.
- o Distinctiveness - seeking new ways to make the Gregson a unique environment to be in.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

When the new Gregson has 'bedded in' and been up and running for a year or two, we will carry out an Options Appraisal of potential legal and organisational structures for the Gregson. This should allow consideration of different models which could be adopted, for example Community Interest Company, and their potential.

NEXT STEPS

Please send your comments and feedback to us by 6th June.

You can email us at...

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...or pop a copy through the letter box.

The Gregson Board 1st May 2021

