

CA 02

Ymgynghoriad ar asedau cymunedol

Consultation on community assets

Ymateb gan: Unigolyn

Response from: An individual

I am appalled that many of Powys held buildings are empty or up for sale rather than being allowed to be used by the community.

Brecon Market was sold to a private investor despite interest by a local community asset transfer. The market car park was sold as part of the deal with no transparency and shock of the local community.

I have an art studio at Talgarth Workshops owned by Powys County Council. The tenants are currently in dispute over rent increases of 35-50% with less than 30 days notice after the council neglected to renew our contracts for months or years. This rise they say is in line with current market value, which the council has a monopoly on workspaces in the county and most potential spaces are empty-I was told part of the steep increase was due to high demand, which is infuriating as we had local schools, libraries and community centres closed, empty, sold off or demolished. My art space was also quoted to me as good value in comparison to a storage container, which one cannot work from and would be considerably bigger. Tenants of Talgarth workshops pay a 20% service charge, but we carry out a majority of maintenance ourselves, in fact I was informed at my lease signing not to expect Powys to do any improvement or maintenance work, despite being in the contract, I could paint my own door.

3 years ago it took a lot of pushing to get my art studio space as I needed to move. It took months to get them to offer the space to me. There were other tenants in the building and the unit I wanted had been empty for 2 years, with no effort to find a tenant or engage with me as prospective tenant. I had to push really hard. I couldn't believe how many empty buildings there were I could have used for my business, but the council was not interested in letting them. Many of those same buildings are empty 3 years on. If it is true that the council has demand for workshop space for small businesses, why not use existing community assets rather than placing the burden on existing tenants?

I have been a commercial tenant of PCC 3+ years, and now a housing tenant as well in a new build property. I am appalled how badly managed both departments are.

They are losing so much money under poor management, poor communication, and the commercial lettings office does not know how to use community assets to the benefit of their community.

I do not believe selling these assets off or community asset transfers are the answer as that then limits who has access to use these spaces. I think the community should be allowed to use these spaces. There are many artists in the Brecon/Talgarth/Hay area who could use affordable workspaces, affordability being approx £50-£100 per month taking into account many artists self fund their craft or artworks. The creative sector, especially in rural areas, disproportionately favours those who own their own properties. Social tenants are not allowed a spare bedroom or storage to allow for a home workspace. Flexible workspaces are less than ideal as creative small businesses have supplies and equipment that require dry space that can be used as storage and workspace. Shipping containers do not have lighting and vary too greatly in temperature changes-so fabric, woodwork, paints etc could not be stored in a metal container.

The Brecon Community centre would be ideal for small businesses and art studio spaces. The Talgarth Victorian school would be a brilliant art studio/gallery/community space, but would require significant investment as the building has deteriorated.

Powys leaving empty buildings decreases their value significantly as they rapidly fall into disrepair. I was a property guardian for years living and looking after old buildings to prevent vandalism and minimise damage from damp. Using buildings for art studios could help preserve community assets, bring some income, but help retain value. Artists and open studios bring character and value to communities, as artists are skilled at making something out of nothing. Never discount the contribution creatives bring-they may not bring high rental income, but put a lot of work in making spaces presentable loved and lived in rather than dilapidated buildings.

Thank you.