

NETHER STOWEY LIBRARY

LAST CHANCE

The Somerset Library Service has now confirmed its recommendation to the County Council that Nether Stowey Library should be closed and replaced by a Mobile Library. It will close on 31st March 2019 **UNLESS** the village community can enter into a partnership with the Library Service to secure the Library building and maintain its Library function with the help of volunteers.

The Parish Council has been in discussion with the Library Service for some time, but unfortunately it has been unable to agree an affordable solution for the preservation of the Library with the Library Service. The only possibility open to the Parish Council would have seen the already high village precept increase by an unacceptable amount. The Friends of Nether Stowey Library (FONSL) have been holding joint discussions with the Parish Council as a result of which FONSL has produced a proposal which could see the Library remain open.

The FONSL proposal is that it becomes a Registered Charity – specifically a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This would allow it to gain 100% Business Rate relief, reducing by a third the annual running costs of the Library building. The building would be leased by FONSL from the County Council, probably in the first instance for 25 years.

Contributions that have been promised, including £5000 pa from the County Council, income from Library transactions and funding by FONSL itself should more than cover the basic annual running costs. Fund raising will be needed in due course to pay for one-off items, such as an upgrade to the heating system. Under what they call a ‘core offer’, the Library Service would still provide books, internet access etc., at its cost, and so the day to day provision of Library services would be the same as it is at the moment.

In the future it may be possible to create a Quantock Hills information centre in part of the building and for the heritage of the village and surrounding area to be promoted.

Unfortunately the FONSL proposal does not extend, at the moment, to the funding of our Librarian. We will therefore need volunteers to staff the Library on the 3.5 days that it is open. A number of people have already come forward, but we need more. We especially need more to join the committee/trustees to take the roles of responsibility that will be required by the Library Service and the Charity Commission.

A public meeting will be held in the Village Hall on 13th November at 7.30pm to explain the proposal in greater detail, answer questions, and enlist your help. Without more help it will not be possible to proceed with the FONSL proposal. Please come to the meeting, offer your services and take this last chance to keep the building and the library in village hands.