



New £1million Community Library for Strathblane

The community of Strathblane and Stirling Council are proud to jointly announce a pioneering partnership to build a new £1million library for the village.

Thomas Graham Library Ltd (TGLL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Strathblane Community Development Trust, will begin work next month on constructing a striking architect-designed building that will house a wide range of community services as well as the Council's library service.

Scheduled to open in October 2022, the building will be owned and operated by TGLL on behalf of the community.

This remarkable project breaks new ground in two ways:

- The 211 sq metre building has been funded entirely through personal and charitable donations, making it the first community-owned public library to be built in Scotland in living memory. A total of 270 local people donated to a library crowdfunding appeal that raised £985,000.
- Stirling Council will lease the library facility from TGLL, equip it and deliver its popular library service in a unique partnership with the community.

The new library will replace a 40-year-old mobile cabin which houses Strathblane's current library. It will be named after Professor Thomas Graham, the great-uncle of Angus Graham, a local landowner and businessman who is principal donor. Professor Graham was a Glasgow-born chemist who pioneered the science of diffusion and became a leading British scientist in the mid-19th century.

"A visit to a library should enrich the mind and the soul but to do that we must invest in the contents, the staff and the buildings," said Councillor Chris Kane, Convener of Stirling's Community Planning and Regeneration Committee.

"Local Government finances are getting tighter all the time and it is incumbent upon the council and communities to work together to find innovative solutions to ensure our libraries have a bright and secure future. This project is an excellent example of what is possible, and I am excited to see the results of this unique and positive collaboration when it opens its doors in 2022."

Margaret Vass, chair of the development trust, added: "This is a staggering commitment by our community, led by Angus Graham, to secure such a huge sum. It demonstrates people's strong loyalty to their local library and its wonderful staff. Our aim is that the Thomas Graham Library will provide the community hub that we have sought for so many years."

Pamela Tulloch, chief executive of the Scottish Libraries and Information Council, said: "SLIC is delighted to see this example of community/public partnership result in a state-of-the-art community library and hub.

"The collaboration between the community and Stirling Council has demonstrated that it is possible to provide a sustainable future for public library services through a non-traditional financial and operational model.

"This new venue in Strathblane very much brings to life what a 21st Century library should be. I look forward to seeing what this innovative approach to library service delivery brings in the future, not just to Strathblane but also to the public library sector in general"

The new library will be carbon-neutral thanks to its state-of-the-art renewable energy system, supported by a grant from the Scottish Government's CARES Local Energy Programme. The complex installation comprises roof-mounted solar panels and an air-source heat pump, together with battery and thermal storage facilities, all managed by a sophisticated control programme donated by a local company, CC North of Killearn.

From the outset TGLL has sought to use local companies and expertise. The building's design came from Thomas Robinson Architects of nearby Croftamie, and it will be constructed by Fleming Buildings of Lenzie.

This is believed to be the first time that a local community in Scotland has partnered with its council to deliver such a significant investment in a new public asset. And the project represents one of the largest community fund-raising to date in Scotland.

It has taken two years for the volunteer-directors on the boards of TGLL and its parent development trust to bring the library project to fruition. "As well as the negotiations with Stirling Council over a joint operating agreement, we've had to find architects capable of producing a strong, attractive design that will sit well within the centre of our village, surrounded as it is by green hills and woodland," said Margaret Vass.

"We have consulted extensively with the community during the design process to clarify what people want from a modern library, which provides a much wider range of services than just books. The result is a building that, in addition to a library almost half as big again as the present facility, will house community spaces equipped with computing and video-conferencing systems that can be booked by local people and organisations for their own events."

A user group will be established to ensure the smooth operation of the facility. TGLL will run the building with the Council leasing and operating the library space.

Cllr Scott Farmer, Vice Convener of the Council's Community Planning and Regeneration Committee, said: "This announcement is fantastic news for the people of Strathblane. The Council is thrilled to support this exciting project that will transform a much-loved community facility for the 21st century to ensure it continues to meet the needs of local people for years to come."

Strathblane is one of the region's most popular libraries, used by 1,500 of the village's 2,300 population including the 150 pupils of the adjacent Strathblane Primary School.