



Temporary Closure of Folkestone Library

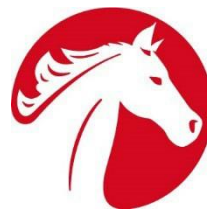
Folkestone update- February 2024

We wanted to update you about some minor works taking place at the library building in Grace Hill, Folkestone over the course of February. As you will be aware the building is temporarily closed due to building condition issues, with alternative locations available for residents to access a library service. The works taking place are all necessary precautionary measures to ensure we do not risk damage or loss to the valuable library stock and materials and will include:

- Minor maintenance works will take place, to protect one area of the building from further water ingress. Scaffolding will be put up at the front of the building in February.
- During February, we will also be removing library stock, furniture, and other items from Grace Hill to another KCC building. Here it can be safely sorted and stored before returning to Folkestone library when a long-term solution is found.
- The remainder of the local studies collection will move to the former youth hub building which is currently temporarily the Folkestone Library - Heritage and Digital Access.

Longer term options for the library continue to be explored and KCC will update as soon as there are any further developments. We recognise the continued interest in this locally and can assure residents we all want these brought to a positive conclusion as soon as possible.

We will continue to keep our library page updated as well as updating on the [Folkestone Library web page](#).



About the closure

Folkestone Library closed in December 2022 because it is unsafe for staff and customers. Since then, we have been investigating the extent of works needed to bring the building back into use and exploring ways to fund the necessary repairs.

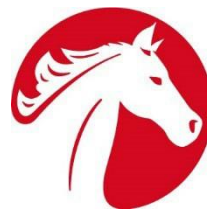
The work required is significant and funds are unfortunately not available in the current financial climate. This means that Folkestone Library will remain closed, at least until further notice.

Continuing library services

In the meantime, we will continue to deliver a library service from the nearest alternative libraries, and we have extended opening hours at Wood Avenue, Cheriton and Hythe libraries. You can find your most local library using the [find a library tool](#) online. We also have lots of eLibrary and mobile library services. Find more information on our [libraries pages](#).

We have some important library collections that need to be preserved and protected. As much of these collections as is possible will go to the Shepway Youth Hub to be publicly accessible as part of the temporary service offer.

We are sorry for the inconvenience caused to our library users. We will continue to update you here and on social media as we look for a longer-term solution.



Frequently Answered Questions

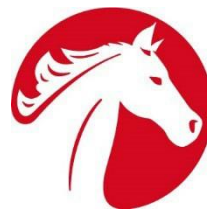
The repairs to Folkestone Library have been estimated to cost in the region of £1.8 million. What are the reasons for this cost?

The library needs extensive work for it to open again due to the condition of the building and its listed status. The listed status contributes to the cost of repair, which must be carried out on a like-for-like basis in places. Some work is highly specialised – for example, purpose-built scaffolding would need to be made and erected from the top down because of the shape of the building.

An overview of other key works includes:

- Removal of birds' nests and other materials and new, wired bird mesh.
- Installation of new gulleys, cast iron downpipes and guttering and other protective fittings to guard against rain.
- Detailed survey of roof, creation of safe access to enable ongoing maintenance with less need for specialist scaffolding. Repair/ replacement of any broken or dislodged tiles. Reinstallation of spikes to deter birds.
- Repair and refurbishment of windows inside and out, full replacement where required.
- Repair library parquet floor that has suffered water damage.
- Repointing brickwork.
- Internal works to remove mould, treat all areas to protect against mould. Re-plaster where required.
- Renewal on a like-for-like basis of ornate listed plaster features, which have incurred serious damage due to leaks (required due to the building's listed status).
- All walls and woodwork to be treated and painted and made good.
- Replacement of all carpeted areas due to mould and damp.

What are the health and safety issues within the building that have led to its



closure?

Most significant damage internally has come from the levels of damp and mould caused by water leaks. The building was closed for staff health and safety reasons. Testing and surveys have been carried out to measure the damage and understand the work required to reopen. Upon testing, significant water ingress and damp/mould have been found throughout the building. Because of this, there are concerns about the safety of systems such as electrics. We are continuing to survey and monitor the building to protect it as a historic, listed building.

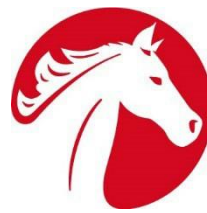
Who is responsible for the maintenance of the building?

KCC is responsible for the maintenance of the building. We have been making every effort to protect the building and repair damage where possible without having to close the library, as an important and much-loved local resource. However, its listed status and lack of easy access, particularly to the roof, has made this difficult to do. Unfortunately, as a result of increasing water damage, the difficult decision was taken to close the building for customer and staff safety. The level of damage found has left us with no choice but to close the building for the safety of staff and customers.

There are a number of factors that are causing issues at the library including the gutters and hoppers that are hidden behind the parapets that run along a significant proportion of the roof edge, particularly to the rear of the library. During significant rainfall events, the parapet gutters, hoppers, and down pipes do not have enough capacity to take the water from the roof into the drainage system. In addition, many of the down pipes are cracked and in some areas the pipes are restricted with narrow bends around Grade 2 listed stone facade features and simply not enough pipes to cope with the quantity of water. This has also been compounded by seagulls and their nests in the valleys behind the parapet walls where large amounts of earth and other debris cover and block the parapet gutter outlets. Due to these issues, the library has suffered significant water ingress at various points throughout the building including at the roof junction with the external walls, water coming in through the brickwork and through windows and doorways. Water ingress has been particularly significant to the rear of the library which has led to damp, building deterioration and mould issues over time.

KCC's building maintenance budget is managed across our entire building portfolio. In the current financial climate, especially with the rising cost of inflation, we cannot afford to undertake all the work needed on our buildings, and unfortunately this is the case for Folkestone Library. We will continue to look for ways to fund the repairs needed so that we can make the building safe for public use again.

Why are the lights being left on in the building?



We are continuing to carry out investigations and preventative maintenance during the closure of the building to protect it while further funding sources are being explored for fuller repair. This is why lights will sometimes be on.

The statement says that KCC will explore all funding streams. What are these? (Updated)

We have looked at a number of potential sources of external grant funding including the government's 'Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF)', Heritage Lottery Fund as well as funds associated with Listed Buildings. Unfortunately to date we have not found a fund we would be eligible to apply for or which is about repairing buildings. The libraries improvement fund is for example about developing the service within a building not a fund for fixing a building. We would explore a funding bid if it enabled us to do the works needed to get Folkestone library open again in the Grace Hill building but won't explore funds at this time that do not enable this objective.

Has the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) been advised of the closure?

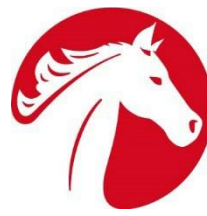
Yes, the DCMS is aware and is being kept fully updated.

Will the library be relocated within Folkestone Town Centre and which alternative locations have been identified?

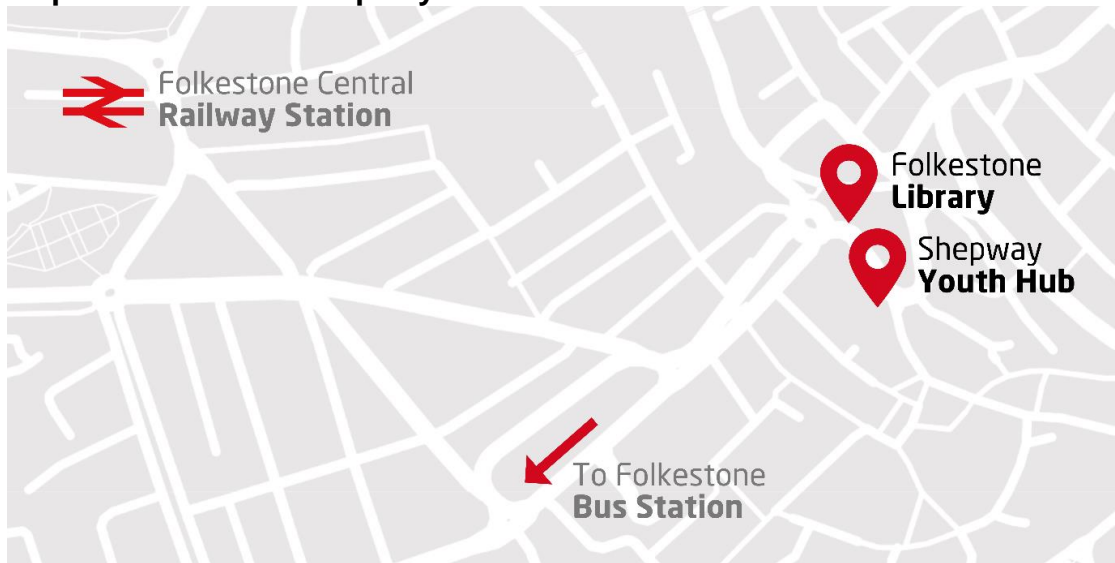
We are committed to a central town centre location for the library and will continue to explore other building options alongside those for repairing the existing building. In the meantime, we will continue to deliver a library service from the nearest alternative libraries, and we have temporarily extended opening hours at Wood Avenue, Cheriton and Hythe libraries. We will also have the further temporary provision at Shepway Youth Hub. You can find your most local library using the [find a library tool](#) online.

What will happen to the local studies collection and how can it be accessed while the library is closed? (Updated)

We recognise how valued these collections are to local history researchers and we will be moving as much of the collections as possible temporarily to the Shepway Youth Hub. They will be publicly available to use during opening hours alongside microfilm readers, public computers, and a free library reservation pick-up point. We expect this service to be open in November and will announce more specific details around the service available and opening hours as soon as possible.



Map of the local of Shepway Youth Hub



The Shepway Youth Hub is on Grace Hill, a 1-minute easterly walk along the same road as the library.

How can I find out where events and services that were previously available at Folkestone Library are now available?

The Folkestone webpage [Folkestone Library | Local Kent Directory](#) has been updated so that customers can find the current location for events and services. There are also links available to the Folkestone district libraries homepages with details of events and services as well as opening hours. We will also put posters up on the front doors of Folkestone Library.

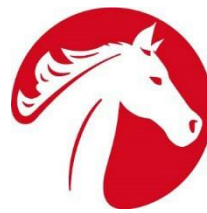
What will happen to the valuable artwork currently located in Folkestone Library?

We are exploring options for the future of the artworks currently in Folkestone Library. These will of course be protected.

How are Registration Services currently being delivered? (updated)

We are offering appointments at [Hythe Library](#) and are now also offering appointments at [Wood Avenue Library](#) in Folkestone. For more information, please visit [Births, ceremonies, and deaths - Kent County Council](#) or call 03000 414141.

How can I access an alternative library service in Folkestone?



There are seven libraries within the Folkestone & Hythe district in Hythe, Cheriton, Wood Avenue, Lyminge, Sandgate, Lydd, and New Romney. The opening hours at the libraries closest to Folkestone, in Hythe, Wood Avenue and Cheriton, have been increased so that there is a library provision available six days a week. The library opening hours can be found using our [find a library tool](#).

We have a large digital offer with thousands of free eBooks, audiobooks and online newspapers and magazines for all ages and interests. Information on how to access the digital service can be found by visiting our [eLibrary](#) or you can speak to our Ask a Kent Librarian team who will be happy to support you. You can email AKL@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 41 64 38 (9am to 6pm on weekdays and 9am to 5pm on Saturdays).

We also offer library services direct to you, including the Home Library Service – book deliveries to your door and also the Mobile Library Service. Further information can be found at [Library services direct to you](#) or by contacting Ask a Kent Librarian as above.

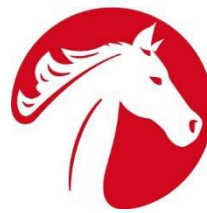
Will the temporary closure impact on library jobs?

The closure will not impact on library jobs. The local library team are working across the Folkestone & Hythe district libraries.

How will the closure of Folkestone Library impact on the plans for Hawkinge Children's centre as co-location has been suggested in a recent KCC consultation?

The Kent Communities Programme is currently reviewing the location of our community buildings, including Children's Centres. The public consultation closed on 26 March, and we are now reviewing the feedback received from respondents. In the consultation proposal there were no plans for co-location at the Folkestone Library site, although we are continuing to review whether any library locations would be suitable for more flexible outreach activities.

While the proposals in the consultation included the closure of the Hawkinge Children's Centre, this is subject to further review following the feedback and eventual decision later this year.



Kent **Libraries**

Got another question?

If your question has not been answered here, and you would like to lodge your question, comment or make a formal complaint please [visit our complaints page](#).

Please do not contact individual KCC staff about this matter as they will be unable to respond directly.

Please [check our website](#) for other library opening hours nearby including our Mobile Library service.

