Peckham Rye Station Old Waiting Room: now it has been restored, what will it be used for, and who will decide?

The Old Waiting Room (OWR) has been restored by local community effort with Southwark Council support through the CGS programme and small grant funds. Further work to complete the restoration has already been initially mapped out by the locals involved in the detailed work, and is estimated to cost in the region of £150k-£200k. The restoration of the space so far has already demonstrated that it is an attractive draw for the area. Its location at the railway station, which is itself a gateway to Peckham, makes it a highly significant local asset.

It is now sufficiently attractive for Southern Rail to be interested in adding it to their station lease, so they can sub-let it. This space is in Network Rail’s property portfolio, but it is a public asset, and it is clear that the local community and the local Council have significant stakeholder interests in its uses. The rail companies should take no decisions or develop any plans without discussions with the local community and the local Council to develop an agreed way forward.

The aim should be to utilise this space, just 10 to 15 minutes from central London, to be an effective showcase for Peckham as an attractive place to visit, to visit, to shop and to live. Any enterprise in such a high profile place should also contribute to the local economy, appropriate training and employment for local people, and opportunities for local community events. It is ideally suited to a multi-purpose venue for refreshments, music, drama, exhibitions, meetings, conferences, public events and other flexible uses.

There is much interest being shown locally in the Old Waiting Room and the opportunities to use it to benefit Peckham as a commercial centre, and also the local community. A wide variety of professions and occupations that are skilled in using such spaces are represented in local residents. In the light of this, local discussions between residents are now under way to explore the possibility of creating a Community Interest Company (CIC) or some other form of social enterprise. This would enable such local people to join together to maximise the use of the space for the local area and create a viable business project to manage the space as a venue. This approach is in tune with the revival of interest at government national and borough levels for local community initiatives through cooperatives, mutuals, CICs and social enterprises, especially for the use and management of important local public assets, which clearly the Old Waiting Room is. We aim to discuss these ideas with the railway companies.

In the UK, local groups have a good track record of raising substantial funds for the restoration of local historic assets, as numerous church roof campaigns have demonstrated. The discussions currently underway in Peckham are also encompassing the setting up of such a local fund raising campaign to complete the Old Waiting Room restoration. We believe that in the local area there are enough local residents who have relevant skills and experience to manage such a fund raising campaign successfully. The challenge is to secure their participation.

*Can you take part in developing a viable project for uses of the Old Waiting Room or to develop a fund raising campaign for the restoration?* If interested, please email [oldwaitingroom@gmail.com](mailto:oldwaitingroom@gmail.com)

**Background information from:**
[www.peckhamvision.org](http://www.peckhamvision.org)
[www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Peckham_Rye_Station](http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Peckham_Rye_Station)

Peckham Vision 7 January 2011