

COMMUNITY* LAND SCOTLAND

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CORONAVIRUS RESPONSES

Govanhill Baths Community Trust



Govanhill Baths is a community hub based in the heart of Govanhill providing free health and wellbeing workshops and classes for the local community. We spoke to Katherine from the [Govanhill Baths Community Trust](#) at the beginning of May about how the Trust is using the £500 outreach grant from Community Land Scotland to help in their response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The Trust is going to run a Postal Stories engagement project – the aim of which is to engage with people without any internet access. It can be completed alone and will be very light on text, which together with using clear pictures and symbols will help people to engage with the activities who do not have good literacy levels in English. The idea is to send a weekly activity postcard to all 100 existing Wellbeing Programme participants. Each postcard will have a suggested activity, which participants can complete and then post back to the Trust.

The Wellbeing Programme has been running since 2012 and normally consists of face-to-face activities including Tai Chi. The Programme is so popular that there is a waiting list. Many residents on the Programme and in Govanhill more generally do not have good online connections. The area is the most diverse borough in Scotland and many people are faced with multiple deprivation and disadvantage. The idea of the Postal Stories will allow participants to continue their weekly activities and provide a valuable source of community connection.



The funding has enabled the Trust to commission a freelance artist to design the weekly activity postcards and to print them out. As well as sending to all Wellbeing Programme participants, some postcards will be left in local supermarkets and other venues in the area where members of the public can pick them up and join in at home.

The Trust has set up a FREEPOST address to enable participants to engage without any cost to themselves. This took longer than anticipated as the Post Office had to run a credit check on the Directors of the Trust to set up the FREEPOST address.

The Trust held a team meeting to decide on the themes of the weekly activities and was divided between project leaders to scope out. It is anticipated that the project will run for about six weeks and include, amongst others:

- Tai Chi
- Massage
- Daily walk ideas
- Poetry and stories

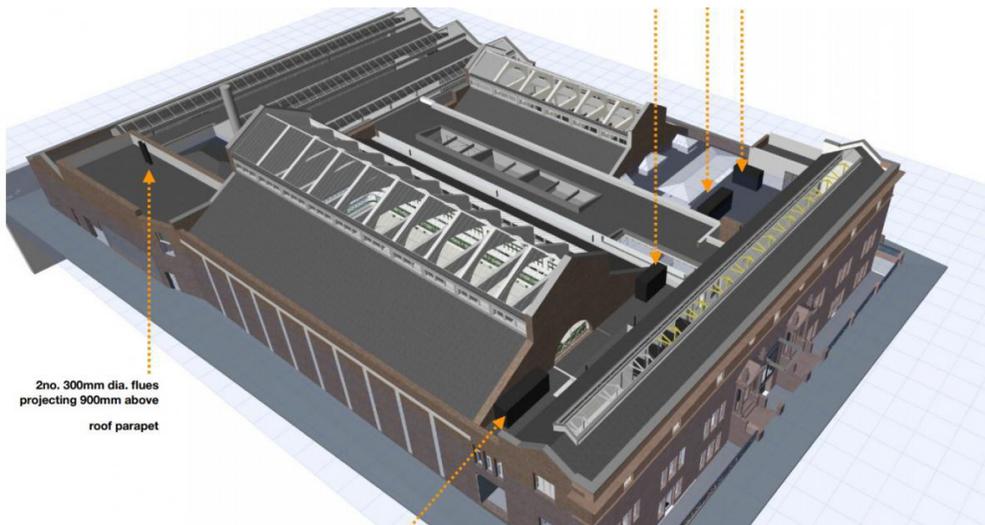
Each activity will run for two weeks. So, for example, the poetry and stories activity postcard might start off with half a postcard of story which participants can continue and then post back to the Trust or if poetry, the start of a poem which participants can complete and post back. For more physical activities, instructions will be given on how to do a certain movement in Tai Chi and participants can write about how easy / hard it was, did they enjoy it or any other comments and send back to the Trust.

One of the longer-term aims of the project is to collate all of the responses from participants in a publication to commemorate the impact of COVID-19 and how lockdown has affected local communities. There is also the possibility that participants' creations will be transformed into a tile mural once lockdown has ended, in collaboration with Rags to Riches upcycling project.

The Trust team is maintaining morale by meeting regularly via Zoom, messaging via an organisational WhatsApp group and a 'buddy' system has been implemented to ensure that all staff members have another dedicated staff member to talk to. The latter is specifically non-work related.

One of the wider impacts of COVID-19 on the local residents of Govanhill, is how BAME communities have been one of the sectors of society that has been hit hardest by the virus. Many have jobs on the frontline, cleaners for example in hospitals, and have been subject to a backlash and false accusations of spreading the virus. This has resulted in many residents feeling uncomfortable, unwelcome and extremely isolated in their own community. The Trust is trying very hard to reach residents and offer support and assistance where possible.

Katherine says that, 'The Trust and other local community organisations have been able to respond so quickly and effectively to the crisis as they are more able to adapt and to make decisions very quickly without getting bogged down in bureaucracy. It is also easier to collaborate when there isn't the strict hierarchy that can sometimes be found in some of the larger, statutory organisations and agencies'.



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