

From: [Keith Wheatley](#)
To: [Strategy](#)
Subject: Wellington Mills CIC Ltd
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Please find attached a copy from our CIC in respect of Tone Works, Wellington

Best wishes

Wellington Mills



Keith Wheatley

Director

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To: Somerset West & Taunton Council

From: Wellington Mills CIC Ltd

Submission to Local Plan consultation re Tone Works, Wellington TA21 0AB

Tone Works dealt with the washing, drying and finishing of cloth produced at the nearby Tonedale Mill for the Fox Bros company. It was established in 1790 and operated until the early 1990s. The brick factory building is now profoundly neglected but capable of regeneration if action is taken soon. The River Tone flows through the complex, indeed waterpower was crucial to the processes at the mill – once known informally as the Wet Works.

A decade ago, a promising initiative from the Prince's Regeneration Trust (PRT), the district council and the Somerset Building Preservation Trust sought to regenerate the site to provide a new home for the present incarnation of Fox Brothers and enable public access and interpretation of the historic woollen industry but this proposal came to nothing. Planning permission was granted in 2012 for a range of repair and alteration work and the conversion of spaces to provide lettable employment space; but this permission has never been implemented.

One factor that has become increasingly clear in the intervening years, as climate change increases, is that intermittent flooding of the Tone Works site at certain times must be accepted and engineered into any future redevelopment scheme. For the same reason, the kind of residential conversions of factory buildings envisaged at Tonedale Mill to the south would not be feasible at Tone Works. However, using the shell of the main building it would be entirely possible to create a network of pods or containers, linked by raised walkways, that could provide workspaces for a wide range of industries and activities.

Outdoors the proximity of the river and the adjacent storage ponds provides a range of opportunities from renewable energy to leisure and recreational use. Taking inspiration from the Eden Project, our group believes it possible to transform a derelict, inaccessible and degraded site into a self-sustaining, wildlife-rich and biodiverse community hub: with raised walkways, a café, education workshops, surrounded by water-loving native tree and wildflower planting.

At its heart would be the sensitive restoration of some of the historically unique (Grade 2* listed) machinery and mill buildings for use by local artisans, community groups and small businesses. By linking the site by footpaths and cycleways to the rest of the town and other nearby villages, we would like to cut down car use, and to encourage walkers, cyclists and people with mobility issues to get out into the countryside and off the roads. The increasing likelihood of Wellington Station re-opening just 1km away massively enhances the potential connectivity of Tone Works

A hundred years ago, the mill was powered in three ways: with coal, steam and water. Our vision is to redevelop the site so that it is again self-sustaining in terms of power generation, only now, for the 21st century, these will be from renewable and non-polluting sources: hydro-power from the streams that run through it, solar from the ample roof space we have for panels, and possibly wind or biogas by installing a biodigester to take local household food waste.

Our vision is to restore and regenerate this, now relatively deprived and run-down part of town, to its former glory - a hub for the community, with workplaces, living spaces, green spaces, educational opportunities: a place to meet, connect, buy, create, imagine, live and breathe. With imagination and creativity, and with the huge amount of local, community support for the project, this iconic and



historically unique site can become an example of how human activity can enhance, rather than (as is so often the case) degrade the local environment and its wildlife. The bold and visionary plans for multiple power-generation (solar, biodigester gas production, hydropower) makes this site a vital element in the region's target to move to drastically reduce carbon emissions by 2030, in line with the declaration of a climate emergency by Somerset West and Taunton Council in autumn 2019.

The watercourses, ponds, weirs, bridges and walkways that crisscross the sites and run through them provide a rich wildlife habitat to bats, birds, mammals, amphibians, insects and fish. We see enhanced biodiversity, tree plantation and community access as vital to the success of the Mills development, with selective rewilding, flood mitigation, soil improvement and managed decay as part of the overall plan.

Given the previous years of neglect, one of the options for the site may well involve part of the site being allowed to achieve a state of "curated decay". However, we hope the whole site can be regenerated and regardless of the state of the site & its buildings the regeneration provides an opportunity to link any development to its rural surrounds.

Our Vision;

- The site has difficult vehicular access which presents an exciting opportunity to forget cars & focus on walking & cycling
- The opportunity to link with the wider footpath & cycle network
- The opportunity to link with the possible reopening of the railway station at Wellington
- The opportunity to link in to Taunton's wildlife corridor
- Renewable energy generation – solar roof panels, wind turbines, biogas & hydroelectric. If possible we want this to be a showcase for these technologies & possibly a centre of excellence / learning & development for the local community to promote small scale usage in the local area.
- To develop vertical hydroponic agriculture providing produce for the community café – again perhaps developing a showcase / centre of learning
- To provide a base for community projects such as those supporting mental health and retirement activities
- To provide a base for local artisan businesses
- To provide a base for community food processing – eg apple pressing at harvest time.
- To provide a base for community health projects – walking, cycling, kayaking – to cater for all abilities but especially older / disabled people
- To provide employment opportunities to local people & reduce their journey-to-work carbon footprint



4. About Us

WMCIC Ltd is based in Wellington, Somerset & was formed in 2017 before being formally incorporated in May 2018. It was established to galvanise the regeneration of the former mill buildings at Tonedale & Tone Works both of which are listed Grade 2* sites and are suffering from over 30 years of neglect.

The CIC comprises 5 directors who are all from the local community, each having differing skills, backgrounds & experience but united by a strong desire to positively affect the dilapidated sites

The directors are;

Keith Wheatley; Keith is a journalist, author and publisher. After a successful career in national media writing for titles such as the Financial and Sunday Times he founded (and later sold) a regional magazine company. He currently runs a hyper-local news website called aroundwellington.co.uk and is a trustee of a major £3bn pension fund. In May 2019 he was elected to represent Wellington East on the new Somerset West & Taunton district council.

Anita Roy; Anita has worked in the publishing industry for thirty years – both in the UK and in India, where she lived until 2015. Formerly editorial director of Dorling Kindersley publishers in Delhi, she now lives in Wellington and works as a writer and freelance editor. Of mixed Indian and British heritage, she is a passionate environmentalist and is an active member of the Transition Towns Wellington group.

In 2019 she collaborated with both the Dorset and Somerset Wildlife Trusts to produce a book of her own writing entitled *A Year in Kingcombe*, and holds an MA in Travel and Nature Writing from Bath Spa University.

Ben Fox; Ben has a social and environmental entrepreneurial background. His former businesses include a London based pasta (bicycle home/office delivery) business and a re-cycle/re-employ charity (*On Your Bike*). He has been a director of Fox Bros & Co Ltd and then Coldharbour Mill Ltd. In 1996 he co-founded The Big House Co., which is based in Wellington, Somerset. Ben has an Executive MBA from Bath University, loves pottery and enjoys road biking.

Nicky Saunter; Nicky has lived on four continents but Wellington has been her home town for over 20 years and much of her work now centres on its adaptation to climate change. She is an entrepreneur and writer, who has started a series of green companies and NGOs, including The Boston Tea Party restaurant group, UK wool acoustics firm the Woolly Shepherd, and the ethical consultancy Learning From the Land. She is currently working with the Rapid Transition Alliance on case studies for a carbon zero world, and co-founding Beaver Trust, celebrating the return of the beaver to Britain. She is a monochrome photographer and printer, a writer of short stories and poems, with degrees in Chinese and Responsible Business Practice.

Nigel Morris; Nigel is a graduate from Durham University who has lived and worked in and around Wellington for nearly 30 years. He is an experienced finance director having worked in a range of businesses since he achieved his CIMA qualification in 1989. Through his Oak View Consultancy he continues to provide business support to a range of local businesses. He is the joint owner of Taunton Joinery and has been a director of Bishops Lydeard Football Club CIC Ltd since June 2008.



For more information on this submission contact:



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