
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

24 September 2019

Cabinet

Title: Community Asset Transfer – Millport Town Hall

Purpose: To agree in principle the transfer of ownership of Millport Town Hall and its grounds from the Millport Common Good to the Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, “Millport Town Hall.”

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- a) Agrees in principle to the asset transfer of Millport Town Hall and its grounds from the Millport Common Good to the Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, “Millport Town Hall;” and
 - b) Authorises officers to conclude the associated legal and community asset transfer process, subject to the granting of court authority, successful alienation from the Millport Common Good and the successful assembly of the full proposed funding package.
-

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report proposes the community asset transfer, from the Millport Common Good, of Millport Town Hall and its grounds, to the Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, “Millport Town Hall.”
- 1.2 The transfer will enable the restoration of the unlisted, historic building, which has been declared surplus to service requirements by North Ayrshire Council. The proposed use includes a heritage and conservation centre, an arts and cultural centre, a community centre and holiday let flats.
- 1.3 The feasibility study, funded by key partners, has shown this to be a viable proposition. External funders are responding positively to the proposals. Community consultations have demonstrated considerable support.
- 1.4 This report recommends that Cabinet agrees in principle to the transfer; and that officers should be authorised to conclude the process, subject to the granting of court authority, successful alienation from the Millport Common Good and the successful assembly of the full proposed funding package.

2. Background

- 2.1 “Millport Town Hall” is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation established to restore and bring back into use Millport Town Hall.
- 2.2 Millport Town Hall, built in 1868, is an unlisted building which is on the “At Risk” Register with North Ayrshire Council. It has been declared surplus to Council requirements. It is within the Millport Conservation Area and holds significant historical and nostalgic importance for the community. It has previously housed a library and a picture house. It is an extensive building with a large staged hall, two lesser halls, a smaller upstairs space and a very large basement.
- 2.3 The Cumbrae Draft Economic Plan describes this building as the one current project that would make a difference to the island’s economy. The Millport Conservation Appraisal also describes this building as key for the community. The island currently has no large venue which is suitable for community use. A temporary marquee that is used in the summer months is unsuitable for the winter and for certain types of events.
- 2.4 Cumbrae, in common with all islands, faces economic and social challenges, and with a higher than average elderly population and few employment opportunities, welcomes an intervention such as this project which would provide social and economic benefits.
- 2.5 The “Millport Town Hall” group has recently gained status as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) with an allied trading subsidiary. They have secured funding for the feasibility study from the Architectural Heritage Fund, the Scottish Land Fund, Millport Common Good Fund and through community fundraising, and are now in advanced discussions with major funding partners.
- 2.6 The “commitment in principle” to transfer the building into the ownership of the SCIO will provide leverage towards the funding package (likely to exceed £3m). Applications are “live” with the Architectural Heritage Fund and the Scottish Land Fund. An application to Scottish Government’s Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF), to seek funding of £500,000, was approved by Cabinet in June 2019. Scottish Government has recommended that this progresses to RCGF Stage Two. A successful application to the North Ayrshire Council Community Investment Fund has secured £200,000 on condition that the full funding package is assembled. Crowdfunding is commencing following a high-profile launch by Scots actor Bill Paterson last month.
- 2.7 “Millport Town Hall” SCIO lodged a community asset transfer request to North Ayrshire Council in May 2019 and this has been tested against all the relevant criteria before being presented to Cabinet. The Council recognises that community asset transfer can be a valuable part of supporting and sustaining local communities in North Ayrshire. The Council’s community asset transfer process also provides the security to protect an asset which has been transferred to a community group in the event of the discontinuation of the project.
- 2.8 The statutory consultation required in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for a community asset transfer application has concluded with no objections received. There is a further statutory consultation period relating to the alienation from the Common Good. This will be initiated as a consequence of the petition being lodged by the Council seeking court authority for the transfer, subject to the current report.

2.9 The proposed transfer process would include and be subject to:

- The granting of court authority to initiate and effect the transfer;
- Successful alienation from the Millport Common Good within the prescribed process; and
- The successful assembly of the full proposed funding package required to deliver the project by the “Millport Town Hall” group.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

- a) Agrees in principle to the asset transfer of Millport Town Hall and its grounds from the Millport Common Good to the Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, “Millport Town Hall;” and
- b) Authorises officers to conclude the associated legal and community asset transfer process, subject to the granting of court authority, successful alienation from the Millport Common Good and the successful assembly of the full proposed funding package.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 There are court dues and advertising fees relating to the alienation from Common Good which will be assumed by the Council, not in excess of £500. The project intention is to leverage in £3m of external funding to the island.

Human Resources

4.2 None in relation to the current report.

Legal

4.3 The Council will seek court authority to alienate the property and grounds from the Common Good.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 There will be considerable socio-economic benefits from the successful completion of the regeneration project. These include positive impacts for an island community in relation to socially isolated residents and the potential for additional employment opportunities and volunteering.

Environmental and Sustainability

4.5 The project seeks to provide the island with a sustainable community venue. The funding strategy sets out clear measures for contingencies and a ‘sinking’ fund to address ongoing maintenance. The project is underpinned by income from three holiday rental properties within the refurbished building. The proposed building adheres to current standards in relation to environmental and sustainability principles.

Key Priorities

4.6 The proposals contained within the report support the North Ayrshire Council Plan priorities:

- Active and strong communities
- Inclusive, growing and enterprising local economy
- People enjoy good life-long health and well-being.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 The Millport Town Hall application supports the following pillars of community wealth building:

- Advancing community enterprises;
- Advancing local ownership of underused land and buildings; and
- Supporting local business activities and increasing the variety of ownership models.

5. Consultation

5.1 There have been three formal community consultation events over the past year on Cumbrae, as well as ongoing informal engagement with the majority of the island population and many visitors, culminating in the Feasibility Report presentation event on 30 March 2019.

5.2 The consultation required in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for a community asset transfer application has now concluded with no objections received. There is a further statutory consultation period relating to the alienation from the Common Good. This will be initiated as a consequence of the petition being lodged by the Council seeking court authority, subject to the current report.

5.3 The need for a large community venue, coupled with community input to the design process, has contributed to the project proposals. Social media interaction is growing, with supporters from across the world and nearly £10,000 raised by the 1400 strong community to date. There have been 130 offers of voluntary support following the last consultation.

Audrey Sutton
Interim Executive Director (Communities)

For further information please contact **Rhona Arthur, Interim Head of Service (Connected Communities)**, on **(01294) 324415**.

Background Papers