



Strathnaver Museum

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ASSET TRANSFER UNDER THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015 NOTICE OF ASSET TRANSFER REQUEST BETTYHILL VISITOR CENTRE

Thank you for this opportunity to respond. We will endeavour to address the petitioner's points where appropriate. Strathnaver Museum, the community transfer body, are delivering our request to the Highland Council under the community empowerment act and believe we are working to the guidelines for community groups. If there is argument that the community empowerment act undermines other acts we are not in a position to debate this.

The business plan was created from in depth consultations following the topics and sections required covering the aims and objectives with discussion on methods of reaching these. There is clear evidence that these intentions are achievable with adequate resourcing. All business plans are aspirational and optimistic in this case this stems from the enthusiasm and ambitions of the community group but we have identified feasible and realistic targets.

Taking issue, our business plan does acknowledge existing catering options. They were all accredited. At time of application, The Bettyhill Hotel was not regular or reliably open year round catering for passing trade. The Farr Bay Inn was also unpredictable in opening hours. 12 miles to the west the nearest facility is the Weavers café, open seasonally, and to the east Melvich Inn. They both exist with the current facility operating. We reiterate that in Bettyhill the fact remains there is a lack of catering facilities for locals and visitors if this facility is not continued.

With respect our bold part figure costing were based on market research and we do not agree they are "over optimistic". they are realistic. Finer details we consider to be commercially sensitive and not for a public scrutiny. Regarding potential funder's commitment this can only be made on applications. We have discussed our probable applications with funders and we will fulfil the required criteria. We have no reason not to believe applications submitted, with all the conditions satisfied, we will receive financial assistance. As a community group we have vast experience in this field.

To reply with a detail we would have to be made aware of the "bold statements" we are accused of making "without comprehensive research or market testing." Our business plan and vision was based on the accepted tried and tested SMART concept.

We carried out 3 methods of consultation and community engagement. Workshop and presentation with public opportunity to pose questions, answer questions and to be informed, a door to door paper survey of every house hold in Bettyhill distributed and collected by volunteers, to consult and an online survey with opportunities for feedback and comment. These were widely advertised by local poster, social media and local press. The results and conclusions show broad support for the asset transfer and a high percentage of local participation.



Accredited Museum

Scottish Charity Number: SC 012016

Strathnaver Museum is a company limited by guarantee No: SC 297877



Strathnaver Museum has an excellent track record in delivering community projects at many levels and running a highly respected museum facility with a small commercial enterprise since 1972. This is evidence of the ability to deliver and commitment of volunteers. The recognition of the abilities of community groups to run and maintain local facilities that are assets to the community is what the empowerment act is about. We are sure, because we have discussed the potential leasing of the catering to potential caterers, we can secure a long term catering partner. Such definitive commitments cannot be prepared in advance of a successful transfer request.

Our information from the Highland Council have indicated that the Highland Council wish to cease responsibility of the facility for various reasons. A community asset transfer is decided on many factors but the purchase price is recognised as a token to allow community empowerments and a release of the responsibility from a public body. Addressing the petitioner's hypotheses we understand conditions would be attached to prevent profits from the property being realised by the community group making the purchase. Strathnaver Museum feel they could make better use of the property and our plans are designed to strengthen the community in a sustainable way.

Justification for the responsibility being transferred to the community transfer body will ensure the facility remains in operation and in times of austerity community groups are more able to source funds unavailable to public authorities. Our costs were credibly calculated on survey of the necessary repairs and proposed improvements.

We dispute that any state aid or the de minimis threshold is not fully complied with in our application and argue that the amount of detail given in the application is appropriate and complies as the final cost to Strathnaver Museum will be directed by The Highland Council. Strathnaver Museum are anxious this facility remains, is improved and has guarantees the service provision continues. If there was no concern that the provision would continue the community group would be contented with the status quo.

As this is an existing business displacement of trade from existing, unaided local businesses has no credence.

The museum currently has a very effective marketing plan in place and has the highest visitor footfall of its contemporaries, Timespan and Caithness Horizons. The facility under consideration for asset transfer is recognised as an integral part of Strathnaver Museum's refurbishment plans and we cannot over emphasise the guaranteed continuation of the café/visitor centre open all year are paramount to the Museum's plans.

Section 5 and 6 of the redacted representation we consider an extraneous nonsense in the context of this asset transfer request. In our opinion there is no grounds for the points raised as in principal they are unconnected to any consequence to a successful asset transfer.

We trust this addresses the relevant points raised and consider the application makes an important contribution to the local circumstances.

Yours faithfully



Ronald WG Lansley



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