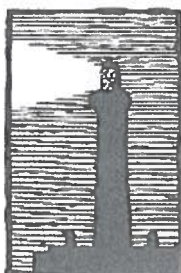


Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust Ardnamurchan Point Kilchoan



Community Asset Transfer Business Case

The Proposal

Following on from the Trust's submission of an 'Expression of interest' to Highland Council seeking to transfer of the ownership of the land & buildings at Ardnamurchan Lighthouse using the Community Asset Transfer legislation (CAT), this paper sets out the Trust's business case to support this proposal.

The Trust proposes that the asset be transferred at 50% of the valuation, i.e. £137,500.-. The Trust reserves the right to amend this offer if/when further information becomes available or circumstances change.

The organisation

The Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust has operated its Visitor Centre - including cafe, shop, exhibition, and tours up the lighthouse - and two letting cottages at the most westerly point of the British mainland for the last 21 years. The site, excluding the lighthouse itself, which is operated by the Northern Lighthouse Board, is leased from its owners, Highland Council (HC), for a small rent. The Trust is responsible for the upkeep of the buildings, the grounds and the access road.

The Trust was set up as a registered charity by members of the local community in 1996 (SC025610). There are currently 11 directors and 31 members. From the start, it has employed a full-time manager, and up to nine part-time staff during the season from 1st April to 31st October. The number of visitors has risen to over 20,000 in 2017.

Background

- The Trustee's have for a number of years recognised that the visitor attraction at Ardnamurchan point requires upgrading and that money needs to be found to carry this out.
- Currently the Trust lets the site from HC for a peppercorn rent. HC are not able to invest in the site and neither are the Trust.
- To assist with this aim we are working with Highland & Islands Enterprise, the local development company and have sought guidance from 3 consultants in the relevant specialist areas, heritage, architectural and fund raising. These consultants have

visited the lighthouse and are all enthusiastic about the site and positive about what could be achieved.

The Site

- Workshop building used as a Café / shop / toilets
- The former Lighthouse Keepers' cottages partly used as self-catering visitor accommodation
- 1955 building housing original machinery and an exhibition
- Fog horn housing and look-out
- Car parking, paths and benches.
- Area of land adjacent to the Site access plus area of land at water extraction point
- Walled areas (currently lying fallow but with potential for joint venture with West Ardnamurchan Community Garden).

Area context

The total population of the West Ardnamurchan area is 281 with the largest village being Kilchoan with settlements at Achonish, Portuairk, Sanna, Kilmory, Swordle Glenmore, Glenborrodale, Laga & Camas Inas.

- The population has grown over the past 5 years, mainly through private investment by Ardnamurchan Estate and Marine Harvest.
- Tourism is a crucial element of the local economy, providing income and employment for a significant proportion of local residents, many of whom are crofters.
- Visitors are attracted for a range of reasons including the wild and rugged landscapes, the area's natural heritage, its history archaeology, its world recognised volcanic geology, plus all types of outdoor pursuits.
- The lighthouse is the "anchor" visitor attraction for the whole area, located at the UK mainland's most westerly point.

Vision

- Redevelopment of the Lighthouse site in order to "raise the game" for the whole of the peninsula, by increasing both the number of visitors to the area and the length of visitor stay in the area; and in doing so generating additional income and employment opportunities.
- Achievement of UNESCO World Heritage status for the site, to generate additional visitor numbers by raising awareness of the area's unique attributes.
- Protection of improved facilities for the community (For example, we aim to work with local partners such as West Ardnamurchan Community Garden, allowing them to use the walled gardens to increase the amount of fresh produce available locally, secondly; provide accommodation for the local History and Heritage group to mount exhibitions, and thirdly we are keen to house the Viking longboat uncovered at nearby Swordle beach a few years ago).
- Provision structured work experience / placements / apprenticeships to local young people.

Options for phased development of site

Through our relationship with HIE and our consultants we have been granted stage 1 development funding from the Scottish Land Fund to prepare the site for the ownership to be transferred. With this funding we will produce a business plan to show how we will tackle the lack of investment in the site over the last few years.

The output of this development phase (over 6 months) would be the stage Scottish Land Fund stage 2 application and a

Business plan and 5 year cash flow projection (including options appraisal, market research, capital fund identification / strategy, marketing strategy etc.)

In addition, the development phase, culminating in the SLF2 bid would include:

- Identifying immediate actions to improve the marketing of the attraction
- Conduct a review and update ALT's governance structure and legal framework to meet the needs of current and future funders
- Survey costs to provide a site valuation and report on the condition of the site and the buildings, highlighting any major deficiencies
- Engage with suitable professionals to assess the current state and capacity of the existing site infrastructure, i.e. fresh water, waste water and energy usage and propose options for future provision and indicative costs including micro generation potential
- Commission an architect's feasibility study to identify options which would improve the cafe operation and increase the kitchen food preparation space to enable the cafe to offer hot dishes such as soup and hot prepared snacks etc.

Within 2 years (additional income generators and improved visitor experience)

If we become owners of the site and are granted funding we will undertake a phased development of improvements to the site as follows:

- Implement improved marketing
- Upgrade former lighthouse keepers' cottages including upgrading the second self-catering unit
- Access improvements (ramps, railing, surfaces, toilets)
- Programmes of cultural / learning events
- Improved interpretation through digital delivery of information to visitors (through their own hand-held devices).
- provide space for the community gardening group to operate in the sheltered walled areas (including providing produce for the café / shop).
- Enter a joint venture with the Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Society as part of their new Whale watching Trail

Longer term (taking care of assets, expanding facilities, more footfall):

- Upgrade / renovation of the key heritage assets
- Enter a partnership with Ardnamurchan History & Heritage Association to host an exhibition of local finds including the Viking longboat discovered at Swordle
- Re-purposing of existing buildings e.g. create bunk-house within Principal's house or, extend building to house cafe/shop & create new exhibition in current cafe block
- Potentially a new build visitor / community centre.

The Trust's and it's consultancy team possess skills and experience in the following:

- Operating an iconic visitor attraction for over 20 years at the most westerly point of main land Britain in the remote Ardnamurchan peninsula
- The economy, culture and heritage of the local area

- o Working with community organisations involved in owning and managing assets
- o Heritage strategy
- o Financial sustainability
- o Design team
- o Preparing business plans to be used in support of funding applications

Conclusion

Over the last few years the Trust has recognised that due to the reduction in the HC support grant and the turbine not being operational, together with the attraction becoming tired, it had to look to new ways of maintaining a viable visitor attraction and ensuring its long term sustainability. Therefore the Trust wish to become owners of the site to then be able to access new sources of funding, so it can improve and expand all aspects of the tourist provision it makes at Ardnamurchan Point; and at the same time preserve it's historic buildings, and it's very special location, for future generations. The physical assets will be owned by ALT and will be better protected, developed and will provide better visitor facilities. Such a development will undoubtedly increase visitor numbers, per capita spend, and length of visitor stay in our remote and fragile community. This, in turn will help to promote tourism in the immediate area of West Ardnamurchan, the rest of Ardnamurchan, and indeed the neighbouring areas of Lochaber. By increasing visitor numbers, we expand employment opportunities, and enhance the viability not only of local businesses, but also of the community itself, and that has to be good not just for HC, but also for the Highlands as a whole.

Appendix

- Electronic copy of Articles of Association (updated for CAT & SLF)
- Electronic copy of Site valuation
- Electronic copy of Lighthouse timeline
- Electronic copy of directory of Trustee's and Members
- Electronic extract from the West Ardnamurchan Community Development Plan
- Electronic extract of Historic Environment Scotland listing for Ardnamurchan lighthouse site

Contact details:

The proposal will be managed by, Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust and all queries etc should be submitted to as follows: Ritchie Dinnes, Trust chair, [REDACTED] email: [REDACTED]

The information gathered during the commission, including draft and final reports, shall remain the sole property of Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust