

Coupers Yard

Helmsdale & District



Development Trust

Proposal

Prepared for The Highland Council

By Mary Stewart

Helmsdale & District Development Trust

Table of Contents

1	Introduction
2	Context: Helmsdale’s Location/Fragility
3	Summary Of Proposal
4	Location
5	Market Assessment
6	The Role of this Project/Addressing Fragility
7	Project Strategic Fit With Government Objectives
8	Critical Path
9	Associated Costs

1. INTRODUCTION

Helmsdale & District Development Trust is a Company limited by Guarantee, Company Number 420622 in Companies House on 25th March 2012, and Charity Registration Number SC043078.

Helmsdale & District Development Trust (HDDT) is represented by a board of 7 Volunteer Directors.

HDDT currently employs 1 part-time member of staff:

- Trust contact - Mary Stewart, Local Development Officer, HDDT, Community Centre, Dunrobin Street, Helmsdale, Sutherland, KW8 6JA Tel: 01431 821141

An overview of the board personnel is outlined below:

- **Chairperson** – Rona Ellis, employed Part-Time as Marketing Manager and Café Manager for Timespan, and relief Librarian as well as running own business support services. Volunteer of several community groups.
- **Vice Chairperson** – Ruth Whittaker, Retired Music Teacher. Involved with several other community groups and volunteers as music Teacher at local primary school.
- **Treasurer** – Karen Sutherland, employed Full-Time as an Accounts Manager, Involved with several community groups, and providing financial accounting support on a voluntary basis.
- **Secretary** – Jean Sargent, retired and involved in Timespan and provides the cultural and heritage link with HDDT, and also volunteers with several other community groups.
- **Barbara Jappy** – Employed Full-Time with Highland Council, Member of the Helmsdale & District Community Council. Involved with the Helmsdale Highland Games.
- **Grace Maxwell** – Self-Employed Writer and Music Producer.
- **Garry MacMillan** – Employed full-time as a Health & Safety Track Manager, also involved in Community Association, Community Transport & Christmas Lights.

HDDT covers one of the community areas defined by Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE) as 'Fragile, Rural and Remote' and through the Community Capacity Building Programme (CCBP), provides the support and intervention to enable the community to lead its own development.

A major aim of the CCBP is to assist in nurturing an environment in which a community may become self-sustaining, through income generation by identified projects from within the development plan.

2. CONTEXT: HELMSDALE'S LOCATION IN A FRAGILE RURAL & REMOTE AREA

Definition of fragility

HIE undertook a Fragile Areas Review (publication: Review of Fragile Areas and Employment Action Areas In the Highlands and Islands 2015), which are characterised by declining population, under-representation of young people within the population, lack of economic opportunities, below average income levels, problems with transport and other issues reflecting their geographic location.

Four final indicators were chosen to measure fragility:

- (1) Percentage change in population between 2001 and 2011
- (2) Drive time to a mid-sized service centre (defined as having a secondary school, NHS hospital and a large chain supermarket).
- (3) Median household income.
- (4) Average unemployment during 2013

11 areas in Sutherland were identified as fragile – with Helmsdale and Kinbrace being the most fragile. From the 79 areas highlighted across the Highlands and Islands, Helmsdale and Kinbrace was scored as being in the top 10% fragile areas.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland. It allows effective analysis for targeting of policies and funding where the aim is to wholly or partly tackle or take account of area concentrations of multiple deprivation. SIMD ranks small areas from most deprived (ranked 1) to least deprived (ranked 6,976). SIMD shows where Scotland's most deprived areas are, so organisations know where their work can have the biggest impact. 'Deprived' can mean fewer resources and opportunities, for example in health and education as well as poor income.

The 2016 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) shows Helmsdale & District as follows, with Helmsdale's position shaded yellow:

SIMD Rank
2312
SIMD Decile
4
Quintile
2
Vigintile
7
Percentile
33

SIMD Rank		
Quintile (20%)		
	From	To
1	1	1301
2	1302	2602
3	2603	3903
4	3904	5204
5	5205	6505

SIMD Rank		
Decile (10%)		
	From	To
1	1	651
2	652	1301
3	1302	1952
4	1953	2602
5	2603	3253
6	3254	3903
7	3904	4554
8	4555	5204
9	5205	5855
10	5856	6505

Note however that deprivation tends to be understated in rural areas. The SIMD is based on data zones which, in urban areas, present an accurate picture because households experiencing multiple deprivations tend to be located together. In

rural areas, data zones cover a wide area and deprived households are frequently hidden amongst households of comparative affluence, presenting a false picture of low deprivation.

3. SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Helmsdale & District Development Trust (HDDT) aims to maximise the use of existing assets within the community to encourage sustainable development. With this in mind, there is an opportunity to purchase and redevelop a little used site within the Helmsdale village known as Coupers Yard. The site is currently owned by the Highland Council (HC).

As a result of potential interest from LSH Transport Ltd (previously known as Rapsons) to purchase a portion of the site there are 2 potential scenarios in terms of our Proposal –

SCENARIO A

(1) HDDT will take ownership of the whole site and accommodate LSH Transport Ltd on the western side of the site. HDDT will also provide business space for a local Builder in the North Eastern part of the site. LSH Transport Ltd and the Builders would carry out the works required to satisfy the conditions of their planning permission.

(2) The main Eastern side of the site would be developed by HDDT to provide a camping area which will be used to accommodate camper vans and therefore the yard surface should be of a hard standing material with electric hook ups located on posts and marked out bays, indicating a restriction on the amount of visitors. It will also provide much needed disposal facilities for these Campers. Glamping Pods will provide additional accommodation for Visitors to the area. There are associated services located within the adjacent community centre, such as toilets, showers and light refreshments.

SCENARIO B

HDDT take ownership of the Eastern side of the site only. The Northerly part of the site will be used to accommodate the builders Yard. The main Eastern side of the site would be developed by HDDT to provide a camping area which will be used to accommodate camper vans and therefore the yard surface should be of a hard standing material with electric hook ups located on posts and marked out bays, indicating a restriction on the amount of visitors. It will also provide much needed disposal facilities for these Campers. The Glamping Pods will provide additional accommodation for Visitors to the area. There are associated services located within the adjacent community centre, such as toilets, showers and light refreshments.

There are a few aspects that require consideration as well as removing any potential showstoppers or that will have detrimental impact to the project timeline and these include:

- 1) In both Scenario A and B - Coupers Yard and the access road into the site lies within the predicted 1 in 200 year coastal flood extent so has a medium to high risk of flooding. An alternative route out of the site for pedestrians and / or vehicles may be necessary in the event of a flood. No new development should take place within the flood plain without further discussions with the Flood Team and SEPA. – This will be addressed through design and by carrying out required assessments.
- 2) In Scenario A - the lease will be required to protect HDDT, LSH Transport Ltd and the Builders in case of the following events -
 - If HDDT ceases to exist or dissolves, its assets are transferred to another charity, the lease must protect LSH Transport Ltd and the Builders.
 - The lease must also protect HDDT's interests in case of any default.

- 3) In both Scenario A and B there may be differences of opinion in relation to the value of the site (whether it be the whole site or the Eastern side only), and HDDT are more than aware of the need for The Highland Council to maximise the value. However, The Highland Council should consider the added value that this asset could provide to a community body and the community in addressing fragility and deprivation.

Scenario A would be the preferred option for HDDT.

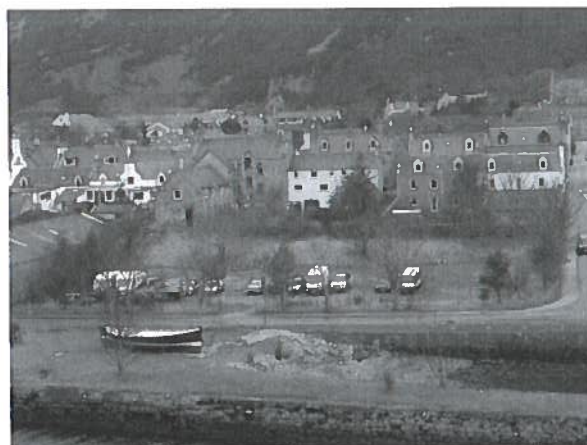
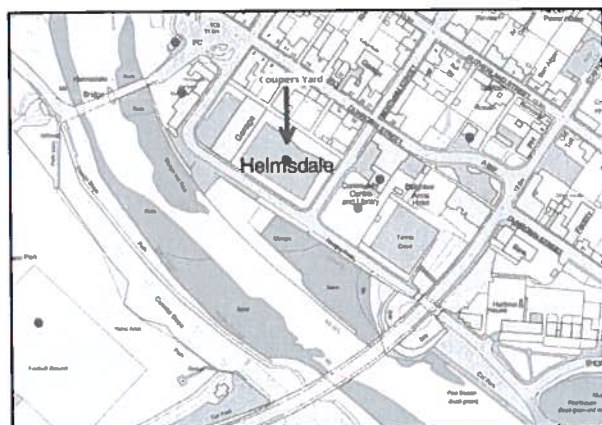
It is our intention, as part of this development, to make the yard look more attractive to improve the quality of life for the locals and to make the village a more attractive destination.

LSH Transport Ltd were granted in April 2013 a full planning permission to create four new access doors in their building facing East and close off the South facing access. During a previous meeting with HDDT, LSH Transport Ltd were in favour of the HDDT operating model which included purchasing the entire site and leasing the Western side to LSH Transport Ltd to be utilised for their use, as per planning application in 2013.

This proposal will maximise the social and economic benefits to the community by supporting local businesses which may employ several local people, along with generating income to support the activities of HDDT. The dedicated camping area will make Helmsdale a destination in particular for the NC500 and therefore this will in turn encourage spending in the village. The proposal will help to meet identified needs as per community business development plan but it also fits the mixed use designation allocated to Coupers Yard by the Caithness and Sutherland Plan (CaSPlan, 2016).

4. LOCATION

Coupers Yard is located on Shore Street, Helmsdale, KW8 6JZ. The map below shows that the yard is situated near the northern bank of the Helmsdale River and its old harbour, with residential houses with backyards to its North and LSH Transport Ltd to its Western aspect.



Extract from CASPLAN

HD04: Shore Street	
Use: Mixed Use (Business and Community)	Area (ha): 1.0
Developer Requirements: No built development west of Shore Street (shore side of site); Flood Risk Assessment (no development in areas shown to be at risk of flooding); Bat species/ habitat survey for redevelopment of garage buildings; Careful siting, design and layout to safeguard A-Listed Helmsdale bridge, the historic harbour and green networks; Otter survey required where river works involved; Assessment of potential contamination issues.	

CURRENT USE

Currently the site is identified as a car park but this bears little reference to actual use. With limited access across the site, from West to East there is a post and wire fence with an access gate separating the site in half. The upper half is not used due to the gate being locked! The lower half is used mainly as a dumping ground for unused cars, vans and engines, as can be seen from the picture above. It is used as a car park on very few occasions.

5. MARKET ASSESSMENT

Tourism is a major driver of the economy in the North Highlands. The North Coast 500 (NC500) has become a phenomenal success and is now regarded as one of the top touring routes in the world. It covers the best the Highlands have to offer, with the route running through Helmsdale. The NC500 marketing and social media profile has increased awareness of the North Highlands and has benefited the Highlands and Scotland as a whole – as evidenced by the Rough Guide naming Scotland as the 2nd top country to visit in 2017. It is estimated that there were 294,000 visitors to the North Highlands in 2015. The available supporting evidence indicates that the NC500 attracted around 29,000 additional visitors in its first year and has continued to grow since then. Visit Scotland has recorded an increase in International visitors to the Highlands year on year with an increase of over 30% between 2012 and 2016.

This increased traffic has resulted in increased occupancy levels across all accommodation types. The NC500 Visitor Survey found that the most common type of accommodation used by survey respondents was motorhome/campervan (51% of visitors), followed by B&Bs and Guest Houses (37%), hotels (32%), self-catering (8%), Hostel/Bunkhouse (7%), Friends/family (2%) (Note - some residents had used different types of accommodation during a single trip). Local accommodation owners were interviewed as part of this research and it has been noted that they have seen improved bookings and increased demands for diverse accommodation types (from camping and bunk houses to glamping pods and hotels).

Visit Scotland provides a summary of statistics on tourism in Scotland's regions, gathering information from a suite of tourism monitors managed by Visit Scotland's Insight Department, and other national statistics and commissioned research. They have recorded that the average trip duration in the Highlands and Islands is longer than in any other region in Scotland. The NC500 Economic Baseline Study 2017 has recorded the following durations of stay –

1 week or more - 36% of visitors; 5-6 days – 30%; 3-4 days – 26%; 1-2 days – 9%

One night is more labour intensive for housekeeping and therefore there is evidence from the NC500 Business Survey that a small number of businesses are planning to introduce a small one-night premium on accommodation costs to reflect the increased workload of one-night stays.

Given the above findings that 51% of visitors are choosing to stay in motorhomes/campervans and the majority are staying in the area for a week or more, we can draw as a logical conclusion therefore, that services will be required for these visitors along the route. Visit Scotland data shows pitch occupancy increased between 2015 and 2016 (from 41% to 44%) and the Highlands & Islands saw the most pitch growth with occupancy levels peaking from June to August.

From the NC500 Economic Baseline Study June 2017 they found that those travelling to the North of Scotland to take part in the NC500 were travelling on the following months (split by %)

Jan	1
Feb	0
Mar	2
Apr	6
May	11
Jun	13
Jul	17
Aug	27
Sep	20
Oct	1
Nov	1
Dec	0

Scenery and landscape was considered the main attraction for visitors to the Highlands, more so than to almost any other part of Scotland. More than half of visitors to the area said they had always wanted to visit, with a similar percentage stating that the history and culture of the Highlands as a particular draw. Escaping general day to day life was a motivation for just under two-fifths, and a similar amount had visited before and wanting to return.

HDDT would like to capitalise on this increased demand for accommodation and services. We therefore plan to provide electric hook-ups and disposal facilities for the campers as well as additional accommodation in the form of Glamping Pods. It is our aim to put Helmsdale on the map as a major destination along the NC500 route. Helmsdale already has the potential to become a high spot on the NC500. It is a very pretty village with a beautiful harbour and a rich heritage. It also has the added benefit of a vibrant museum and arts centre, several shops, cafes and restaurants to attract tourists.

It is also our hope that our visitors experience of staying in Helmsdale could in time lead to more people considering living, working and/or starting a business in our Community, therefore boosting the local population and economy.

In addition there is potential within the yard to provide space for local businesses. Local demand has indicated that there is a need for small industrial space with two businesses already identified. There is the possibility they could move elsewhere should they be unable to find the necessary space. HDDT are therefore keen to provide the space as part of our Coupers Yard project.

6. THE ROLE OF THIS PROJECT IN ADDRESSING FRAGILITY

Our current proposal for Coupers Yard will positively impact the HIE indicators in measuring fragility.

The availability of facilities for visitors to the area makes Helmsdale a destination and will entice more tourists to spend time in the village, bringing growth to our community.

The above growth, along with available space for our local businesses, will make our Community a more attractive place to live and do business; provide more job opportunities, improve the average income, and positively impact the population shift.

7. PROJECT STRATEGIC FIT WITH GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES

If the lack of facilities and business space has contributed to Helmsdale's decline and increasing fragility, it is also the case that the creation of any additional facilities and business space supports the Scottish Government's objectives to reverse rural decline.

The Scottish Government has defined five Strategic Objectives describing the kind of Scotland we want to live in. The re-development of Coupers Yard will support three of them.

- **Scotland should be wealthier and fairer**, with initiatives to generate more opportunities to work; make Scotland a more attractive place to live, work and invest; and ensure that the benefits of increased national prosperity are shared fairly across the entire population
- **Scotland should be safer and stronger**, helping local communities to flourish, becoming a stronger and safer place to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life, creating strong communities that we are proud to be a part of, helping to increase Scotland's population and allowing us all to fulfil our potential
- **Scotland should be greener**, improving Scotland's natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it

8. CRITICAL PATH

Assumptions:

- LSH Transport Ltd /Builders fund and carry out their own works

2018					
MAR-JUL	Design idea	Develop the concept	Discuss with stakeholders	Discuss case with HIE/SLF	Pre-Planning meeting with Planning Department
AUG	Proposal to THC	Investigate Funding support			
SEP	Consult HDDT members - postal	Apply for funding to cover pre-development costs	Identify additional finance		
OCT/NOV	Complete Architect sketch feasibility	QS-Elemental Costs	Apply for match funding as required	Asset Acquisition	Acquisition Legals
DEC	Carry out surveys for planning application	Complete Business Plan			
2019					
JAN/FEB/MAR	Funding results	Submit Planning Application			
APR	Planning Permission	All Leases Preparation			
MAY/JUN	Identify Contractors through Architect/QS & invite to tender	Building Warrant			
JUL -OCT	Engage Contractor & carry out building works				
NOV	Open Day	Start of business space lease			

9. ASSOCIATED COSTS

9.1 ITEM	PRE – DEVELOPMENT COSTS	<u>COST (inc VAT)</u>
Architect – Strategic definition /prep & brief		£2,925
Surveys & Assessments (SEPA, Contamination, Topo)		£3,400
Q.S. Elemental costings		£1,140
Consultation - HDDT Membership		£180
Admin Support pre-development (1 day/week Aug-Dec)		£2,028
Planning Application		£402
TOTAL		£10,075

Below Development costs will be confirmed during Pre-Development stage

9.2 ITEM	DEVELOPMENT COSTS - ESTIMATES	<u>COST (inc VAT)</u>
Asset purchase		TBC
Legal Acquisition Cost		£875
Disbursements		£240
<u>BUILD</u>		
Construction fees & materials		TBC
Construction contingency @10%		TBC
Site set up and H&S		TBC
Building Warrant		TBC
PROFESSIONAL FEES		
Architect		£6,405
Principle Designer		£3,203
Q.S.		£3,660
Engineer		£4,575
Valuation		£480

Admin Support (1 day/week Jan-Oct)	£3,718
------------------------------------	--------

TOTAL	TBC
--------------	------------

9.3 OPERATIONAL COSTS – Annual

<u>ITEMS</u>	<u>COSTS</u>
Admin support (HDDT)	£4394
Maintenance	£1,800
Repairs	£780
Electric	£1,200
Cleaning (Average 3hrs/wk) & Materials	£2,047
Telephone	£900
Broadband	£600
Advertising	£480
Printing	£360
Postage	£120
Stationery	£180
Heating	£900
Consumables	£300
Bank charges	£114
Insurance	£264
TOTAL	£14,439