

Glen Urquhart Rural Community Association

Drumnadrochit TIC Asset Transfer Request

**An Update on
Community Support
&
Community Benefit**

September 2019





- The GURCA Community Asset Transfer in agreement with Highland Council was paused in May 2019 and a licence to occupy the building granted through November 2019
- To allow GURCA
 - To capture and evidence community support for the proposed social enterprise
 - To develop the community benefit framework for the utilisation of the asset and its potential profits
- To allow the Council
 - To collect user income data on the toilets
- To allow both GURCA and the council time to form a view on the value of the asset following the completion of valuation and conditional survey's

Community Support – January 2019, Drop in session for community feedback on the Proposed Social Enterprise.....

The Proposals Presented to the community in January 2019

- Pursuing a formal Community Asset Transfer of the Tourist Information Centre building from Highland Council, to bring it into community ownership.
- GURCA purchasing the Loch Ness Travel business to underpin the financial viability of the TIC
- GURCA seeking grant aid for the purchase of Loch Ness Travel and the purchase of the TIC
- GURCA borrowing to finance the purchase of Loch Ness Travel

- Shortly after the submission of the GURCA Asset Transfer Request in Dec18 a drop in session and community consultation took place to present the plan for the proposed social enterprise and obtain the views of community members
- **The drop-in session** was well attended, with **84 attendees** recording votes on the proposals for the social enterprise.
- The result showed support for the proposals with **95% of those that voted in favour**. The results were recorded in minutes from Open meeting 21st January 2019 and are available on-line at <https://gurca.co.uk/downloads.html>
- The drop-in session also attracted over 20 new members to the community association (GURCA) and resulted in 6 volunteers coming forward to sit on the board of the proposed trading subsidiary to manage the social enterprise.
- **An on-line questionnaire** which was advertised locally and on social media was available between 29th January and 7th February and attracted 64 responses. In relation to the same proposals voted on at the drop-in session 80% of the votes cast were in favour

The licence to occupy provided by the Council in June 19 has provided an opportunity to further test the level of community support that exists for community involvement in the running of the TIC

Community Support – June 2019, the Tidy Up and Re-Painting the TIC Ready for Opening Day.....



**Local Volunteers
provided time and
materials to clean
paint and get the
TIC ready for use**



Before



During



...and After



Community Support – June through Sept 2019 Local Groups, businesses and others....



Great support from
Local groups and
businesses.....



Local Heritage Group provide a display describing the history of John Cobb

Visit Inverness Loch Ness Promotion of the Loch Ness 360



Leaflets & Visitor resources from Landmark Press



....and a big thank you from the community to long-time council employees who retired this year

Local Group "Grow Urquhart" transform the exterior to promote sustainable living and plans for their own local project



Community Support – June through Sept 2019 Local Groups, businesses and others.....

Some facts & figures.....

TIC open for an average of 3 ½ days per week over the summer period

Over 20 volunteers and arts and crafts groups providing 553 volunteer hours

An average of 100 visitors per day



A popular venue for the promotion of local arts and crafts, alongside visitor information & the local displays



Additional Feedback



- **Information service**
 - Well received by visitors
 - We saw more demand for information than retail
 - Visitors value locally provided information
 - Re-affirmation of information obtained digitally "Is such and such actually as interesting/worthwhile as it says on the internet"
- **Toilets, car-parking and other services**
 - Two or three complaints each day in relation to charges, inability to pay, function and cleanliness of the facilities
 - Expectation by some that parking would be charged for
 - Many enquiries relating to the transportation available to Urquhart Castle from the village

Community Benefit



- The business plan for the social enterprise has been developed over the summer
- **GURCA now working in partnership with Soirbheas (Local Community Charity) on the introduction of a Community Transport Hub** in addition to the visitor information and baggage transfer services proposed to date
 - Reflected in the latest update of the business plan
 - Work is now underway to determine the scope of the services to be provided by the transport hub and the revenues and costs associated with this
- **Transport Feasibility Study completed over the summer**
 - Over 300 local people (154 adults and 156 young people) took part in the survey plus a workshop involving the key stakeholders on 1st July and a public consultation event on 28th August
 - Consultation and survey identified a number of challenges and a range of options to tackle these
 - The transport hub provides a focal point for the delivery of many of the options

Funding Update



- The overall project cost is around £264k
 - Project initiation and start-up - £14k
 - Building purchase - £95k
 - Establishment of the social enterprise - £155k
- Funding package being developed
 - Grant for project initiation
 - Land Fund for the building
 - Combination of grant, community share and borrowing for establishment of the social enterprise
 - **Positive engagement to report with SSE, Soirbheas & others**

Asset Valuation & Condition



- Valuation jointly instructed by GURCA and Highland Council
 - Valuation undertaken by Graham & Sibbald £95,000 with vacant possession of toilets
- Conditional & M&E survey – No major structural issues noted condition described as fair
 - EPC building rating G – 170 kg CO₂ per m² per year
 - Funding being sought for improvements to make for viable year round use

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