

Community Asset Transfer Request

Lochhead Gardens, Lochhead Avenue, Lochwinnoch PA12 4HW (Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust)

LCDT Response to Representations 17th 24th of March 2023

Supporting Representations

Thank you to everyone in the community who has taken the time to write in support of our CAT application. It is heartening to see that the work within Lochhead Social Gardens is making a difference to the community. We will continue to seek residents' advice for future development within the gardens, and welcome suggestions on how the space can be used to benefit those who live here. Thanks once again!

Opposing Representations

#59	<p>I am writing with regard to the above CAT Request Representation. I do not agree with the LCDT plans for the site. I am not involved with LCDT and / or its associated groups. I do not wish LCDT to take over development of the site for ten years. I do not agree that the site should be open to purchase by LCDT.</p> <p>I would like to make the following comments:</p> <p>I have looked at the application with the outline plans for the site, but so far, have been unable to find out how much has been spent to date, how the project will be funded, nor how the site will be funded and maintained both during the development period and later, if the site were to be purchased, and how funds would be found for the purchase.</p> <p>Renfrewshire Council has spent a considerable sum renovating the McKillop Hall, and I feel it should be encouraging greater use of this facility, rather than encouraging the relocation of activities to Lochhead Avenue. The Hall is an ideal place, right in the centre of the village, for recreation, films, clubs, groups, exercise classes, play groups, social meeting groups, birthday parties, festivals, art exhibitions, flower shows, further learning classes, shows, plays etc. It may be that the Council could consider how they price the rental of the Hall, and finish off the upgrading, so that more of such groups can afford to use the Hall, rather than provide funding for a new project such as the Lochhead Garden one. If the Hall is not used to its full potential, the expended money will go to waste. Lower rent must surely be better than no rent. Encouraging use of the Hall would bring people into the centre of the village, increasing the footfall, and allowing the existing shops, Takeaways, cafés at No 8 cafés and the Junction, etc to continue to exist, and for new businesses to fill up the empty shops in the High Street, e.g., where the former St Vincent Charity shop and the Heritage Farmers Market were, and some of the empty premises in Church Street.</p> <p>Farmers' markets could be set up on the pavement area in front of the Hall. There is ample space for stalls, and this too would increase activity in the existing businesses in the High Street and encourage others to follow suit. It would also encourage more tourists to visit Lochwinnoch and eat in the local cafés and restaurants.</p>
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	<p>The Library has excellent opening hours and provides a warm and safe place for all ages to sit and chat or read. The ROAR lunch club meets in the McKillop and is an easily accessible location for those seeking warmth and company.</p> <p>With regard to the question of providing outdoor spaces for specific activities, there is a brand new, state of the art, play ground which is close to the High Street, with adjacent playing grounds. There is ample space there for many different activities in these grounds. Castle Semple, the walk along the loch, the cycle path and the woodland paths in Johnshill, Parkhill and Courtshaw Hill provide all ages and abilities with wonderful places to explore and learn about wildlife and plants. Again, money has already been expended on all of these outdoor spaces, and full use of these should be made, rather than spreading the available funds too thinly by having a further project.</p>
<p><i>LCDT Reply to #59</i></p>	<p><i>Thank you for your comments.</i></p> <p><i>We understand your concerns and are keenly aware of the issues you have raised. The site has grown over the years and has been planned and developed through numerous consultations with the community, Thus far the project has primarily been funded by Renfrewshire Council grants, and details on funding are provided within the CAT application. Information about how funding is spent can be found on our website lochwinnochtrust.org.uk. which has helped us to identify solutions for many of these problems.</i></p> <p><i>Our business plan includes cash-flow for the project for the next three years and complete details are available on the CAT Application portal. Now we're really only thinking of a lease for this site and purchase is something we would consider in the future only if it were truly financially sustainable. Our business plan demonstrates that at the end of the three-year period, we should no longer be reliant on grant funding. We are currently speaking to several funders who are interested in the project due to the wide spread of benefits it would offer to the community.</i></p> <p><i>Information about funding so far, and how funding is spent can be found in the business plan or via our website lochwinnochtrust.org.uk.</i></p> <p><i>We agree that the newly refurbished McKillop is a great venue and LCDT support local venues such as the McKillop in various ways. Most recently, LCDT created the Warm Spaces Network, which invested more than £20k of funding into local groups, businesses and venues. where we supported several groups and activities, including the ROAR lunch club and re-establishing the tea bar within the McKillop as well as activities in the Library, Castle Semple Visitor Centre, Lochbarr and the Community Annexe.</i></p> <p><i>The McKillop is not suitable for the activities planned at Lochhead Garden as it is an indoor venue - the essence of our project is that it provides outdoor activity. Access to outdoor space is vitally important for community wellbeing. While the hardstanding on Main Street at the McKillop might be suitable for a few stalls, there are issues with health and safety there as stalls cannot be pegged into the ground on windy days, and there is limited space. Our vision for markets at the gardens would allow for children to run and play around the events, and for other activities to spiral out from, and exist alongside the markets.</i></p> <p><i>We understand your concerns about increasing footfall to the village shops and businesses, and we believe this project will support that. We have researched the impact of markets on other communities and found that it has had a positive effect on local businesses. Essentially, what we want to do is encourage villagers to remain in the village, on foot, and prevent them from needing to get in their cars and go to retail parks. LCDT is working with local businesses at this site as well as throughout Lochwinnoch Business Network and a new Lochwinnoch Online website.</i></p>

	<p><i>We are indeed fortunate to have such amazing outdoor resources in our community.. LCDT delivered the consultation, fundraising, design and implementation of the new play park. Unfortunately, it isn't suitable for the activities we provide at Lochhead Gardens as it isn't a private space and there are no toilets or services there. Please be assured that activities proposed at Lochhead Gardens will be developed to work in collaboration with rather than in conflict with other venues.</i></p>
#62	<p>Renfrewshire Council should adopt the policy applied by Knowsley Council, England to community groups and speculative approaches for asset transfer. They state - " the Council does not invite speculative approaches for asset transfer. There is a need to demonstrate a sustainable business plan."</p> <p>Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust have not demonstrated a sustainable business plan. They are entirely dependent on funds from charities. There is no guarantee this funding will continue especially in the present economic crisis. There is a possibility that their organisation could fail and be liquidated. There have been 28 officers and 21resignations indicative of a failing organisation.</p> <p>Their business plan lacks a track record of delivering services. Like many organisations dependent on grant funding they don't properly budget and take time to consider if money is being carefully spent. This is in contrast to the cautious approach people take when they are budgeting for themselves from their own money. As an example they paid £9,200 to pay for soil testing and community consultation costs including paying a professional garden designer. This expenditure is ridiculously high. There was no need for a professional designer. Amateur gardeners could easily have drawn up basic plans.</p> <p>Their " Empire building" mindset includes an intention of working towards community buyout of some of the farm and peat lands in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. Why do they want to do this? How will it benefit the community?</p> <p>On the website in Companies House under the heading Nature of Business they list</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- growing vegetables, melons, roots and tubers - this aim may have been met . 2- Production of electricity - this has not happened. 3 - Water collection and supply - this has not happened. <p>When Struthers Lemonade Factory ceased to trade there was talk of a local takeover of the bore hole and of being able to supply water to another lemonade business. However unsurprisingly this never happened.</p> <p>If the asset transfer is granted Lochwinnoch will lose the potential of an ideal site well placed for a care home and for sheltered housing being all on the flat and accessible by anyone disabled.</p> <p>LCDT should update Companies House with an accurate Nature of Business list and delete the electricity and water references which are not applicable.</p> <p>LCDT also aim to buy the vacant Church of Scotland building. Apparently their aim is to provide an indoor space for villagers. This makes no economic sense.</p> <p>There are currently ample indoor spaces in Lochwinnoch .They include the council owned McKillop Institute, the Primary School, the Annexe and also Lochwinnoch Golf Club, Bowling Club where a room can be rented cheaply.</p> <p>If LCDT purchased the church building they would also take over all the further running costs, maintenance, heating and insurance. Yet more costs for them to pay although they</p>

	would be seeking the funding from a charity.
<i>LCDT Reply to #62</i>	<p><i>Thank you for your comments.</i></p> <p><i>Our Business Plan has been developed with the assistance of the Development Trusts Association Scotland. We have carefully considered the expenditure and income and feel it is a sustainable plan. Our voluntary Board comprises of seven Directors, supported by a member of staff which has really helped to establish stability. LCDT have delivered tangible projects including the newly refurbished Park development and the Warm Spaces Network which invested over £23k of funding into local venues, businesses and community groups over the winter. We are also actively supporting various other projects which include the development of a local website stimulating tourism and economy, the setting up of a Business Network Forum. We are also investigating the possibility of an Asset Transfer of a portion of Clyde Muirshiel as well as setting up the Lochwinnoch Shed and supporting the Senior Forum. More information about our activities is available on our website.</i></p> <p><i>Because the site is a community space, there is a requirement to ensure we adhere to the site policies and regulations, ensuring that any development on the site (including soil testing) is carried out by an approved supplier. We obtained three quotes for the work carried out on site and we do not take spending money lightly. Our volunteers help with the day to day maintenance of the garden. However, we did employ a professional garden designer to help us include the ideas gathered from consultations and garden users.</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your comments on the Nature of Business at Companies House. This information is updated on an annual basis and will be reviewed by the Board.</i></p> <p><i>Please see our response to representation #73 with reference to the land being used for housing needs.</i></p>
73	<p>Whilst LCDT have fair proposals I am of the view that the ground should be used to meet the housing needs of the village which are priority.</p> <p>There is a lack of sheltered housing for our older people and very sheltered housing or supported accommodation for younger adults.</p> <p>The location of the ground is central to village amenities and on flat ground.</p> <p>Investment in this type of housing should be considered as a spend to save development for the Council. Savings on care home and residential care costs are substantial. Additionally there is opportunity to build social housing with options to rent to buy affording economic opportunity for our local people</p> <p>The village requires to maintain it's community as much as possible.</p> <p>The LCDT proposals duplicate amenities that the village already has apart from the community larder which can easily be relocated within the village.</p> <p>The Council has a duty to effectively manage resources to meet local community priorities.</p>
<i>LCDT Reply to #73</i>	<p><i>Thank you for your comments.</i></p> <p><i>LCDT cannot comment on land use as these are Renfrewshire Council responsibilities both in the short and long term.</i></p> <p><i>We believe we have made good use of the land and you will see by our plans that the space is developing into an asset for the community.</i></p>
#77	<p>As a resident of Lochwinnoch I have positive feedback and also some concerns to raise.</p> <p>In terms of positive it is good to see a group coming together with the intention of</p>

	<p>supporting the village and the environment and making some use of what has been an unused piece of waste land for some time.</p> <p>Concerns about the plans are:</p> <p>> Sustainability of the group - currently from communications shared it appears to be a group of volunteers delivering the various initiatives and maintaining the site. I am concerned that individual circumstances or appetite for a project change and therefore significant concern for the viability of this longer term plan. I understand the application is by the trust however again are they a viable and sustainable group to take this forward. Others have commented about lack of transparency or progress with past initiatives. Work is needed to build confidence and backing for this project to ensure the wider community supports. There are very mixed views and again negative feedback in terms of the consultation process which seems to be lacking and particularly with groups and businesses more directly impacted.</p> <p>> Funding - this seems to have progressed from recycling waste food to branching into many different initiatives however relying on grants and most recently asking villagers to donate to a Go fund me page to cover the expenses of “volunteers”. Presumably for this to be agreed Renfrewshire council are carrying out due diligence to ensure the group can self fund / secure funds for the time suggested (10 years)?</p> <p>> Maintenance of the site - volunteers have removed a lot of the greenery that was previously shielding the eye from what is an unsightly area and now this is on full view to passers by. There is no adequate storage facility for items that are stacked and somewhat unsightly for what was previously a green space. Presumably this extension of use would require adequate and ongoing formal management of the site beyond relying on volunteers?</p> <p>> Wider use proposed in terms of markets and events. I agree with all other objection emails that there are other building and green spaces in the village that would benefit from the income generated, already have suitable licences and insurance (presumably) and therefore why distract and reduce the viability of those already established businesses.</p> <p>> Parking - Lochhead Avenue is not the place for multiple cars and the activities have already increased the car traffic to this area. Market stalls and day or evening events could not be managed safely in this current space.</p> <p>Overall, despite seeing the positive and negatives of the project I object to the longer term asset transfer of the site on the basis of lack of infrastructure in and around the site to support the initiatives being proposed.</p>
<p>LCDT Reply to #77</p>	<p><i>Thank you for your comments, and we appreciate you taking the time to highlight your concerns. It is so helpful for us to better understand any apprehensions residents might have about the development of the site.</i></p> <p><i>Sustainability – Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust is a member of the Development Trust Association for Scotland. Established in December 2018, LCDT has 7 Directors who help to guide the mission and strategy of the Trust. Part of the Lochhead Gardens project plan is to appoint a Project Officer, who will offer direction and support for the project, including the management of volunteers.</i></p> <p><i>Funding – It is important to firstly establish that the plan for the project is for it to be self-sustaining as it develops. Whilst we will be looking at grants to support the project with capital expenditure over next three years, it is our expectation that income from activities, including the market, will support the project to continue. We plan to be financially self-</i></p>

sufficient by the end of the three years when the main phases of development are complete.

Maintenance- Our fabulous team of volunteers have been busy this winter removing the overgrowth in preparation for the springtime. It is vital that routine upkeep of the site to ensure that it is not overrun with unwanted growth. You will see from our garden plan that we will introduce a programme of planting that will require minimal maintenance and offer shelter for local wildlife, whilst also giving privacy to neighbours.

We have plans for storage to ensure the site remains tidy, but we are unable to move forward with any further development until the CAT application has been approved.

Markets and Parking - We understand that the introduction of monthly markets on site may be cause for concern. As mentioned in our reply to Respondent 59, we have carried out research into other community markets as well as surveying local vendors and residents. Evidence has demonstrated that a regular market will have a positive impact on the community. However, we understand that there are still questions around this issue, and we will continue to seek feedback and concerns from residents.

With regard to parking, we are really aware of how important this is. We will be encouraging and supporting active travel to the site. We have committed to ensuring there are stewards to manage parking on event days. We're in a prime position to meet cyclists coming off the cycle track so it would be great if we can encourage those from nearby villages to access us that way. We will consider ways to incentivise this. We will also ensure that our promotion of the site directs people to the public parking available in the area.

Please Note: We will be registering a more robust reply with reference to markets in our final summary to respondents.