

Kelburne Hockey & Community Sports Club

Formal Response to those 'AGAINST' acceptance of this Community Asset Transfer

Attached is the KHCS response to the "AGAINST" feedback received through the CAT process. At this stage we would like to re-affirm that in putting our proposal forward for a new Vision for the Ralston Community Sports Centre, we will continue to engage with local residents through this process to ensure they are fully considered in our quest to make this a true Community Asset for many sports in Renfrewshire and used by more people in our local community.

Our proposal enhances the current operation by providing not only a wider range of sports, but a wider ranges of fitness classes for local residents to participate in more social and health & well-being group opportunities for everyone in the area.

Our business case is borne out of a need for Hockey to thrive and grow as the 2nd largest team sport in Renfrewshire and we have approached this as an internal move within Ward 3 Paisley East & Ralston, 1.2 miles along the road from our current Whitehaugh base to this location, as part of a 50-year lease proposal from Renfrewshire Council to provide a unique and different legacy for hockey & sport in Renfrewshire.

We have an experienced team already in our Club and on our Board however with this Community Asset Transfer, we will grow our Board by another 5 Trustees and actively seek local experienced people to fill these slots and provide a better balance of sports, skills and local community experience in the new Kelburne Hockey & Community Sports Club.

We have kept our responses brief in order to ensure we answer points raised however you can also find our proposal and more information behind these answers on [THIS LINK](#) on the Kelburne web-site.

We feel it's also important at this stage to advise that our KHCS petition (for a national hockey pitch in Renfrewshire – see this [LINK HERE](#)) which is a legally acknowledged process through Change.org, was only "noted" by Renfrewshire Council when it should be recorded. In this petition of **967 signatures** (with post codes/areas), these were signed IN FAVOUR of a pitch in Renfrewshire Hockey being made available for Kelburne to play in their own County and own Ward. Signature details below

- 300 individuals from Renfrewshire (80% of those from SIMD areas of PA1 thru to PA5)
- 423 signatures from individuals in other Scotland local authorities (who have National pitches)
- 208 signatures from other UK areas
- 36 signatures from International locations

Please note our feedback below to the themes stated in Renfrewshire Councils submission

THEME 1: Football Provision and Ralston Skills 106 (14)

Comments include:

- [Ralston Skills] "programme is a massive asset to the community, a local treasure, well respected and a very celebrated part of the local community with local children at the heart

of it", Local Resident

- "It's a myth if anyone who says there are plenty of facilities to use...all football pitches are booked to capacity for Training Monday to Friday 1730 -2130...as a team we have struggled to book other pitches when Ralston is not available", Parent Local Football Club
- "Over 1000 children, boys & girls, play matches and train in Ralston on a weekly basis", Various
- "As a league we use this facility every Saturday and Sunday... the grass area has never been suitable for young people to play football on. I hope you consider the impact to the wider community", Renfrewshire Football League
- "This piece of land has been incredibly well used by youths for over 2 decades who wish to play football. Over 1000 youths and adults use the football pitch every week. If this CAT were to go ahead, hundreds of these youths would have nowhere to go and it would see the end of the current Ralston skills class that runs every Saturday that gives young kids the chance to develop their skills before they can join a youth team. This would be incredibly detrimental for the future of football in Scotland", Local Resident
- "My son, like many other children in the local area goes to Ralston Skills faithfully every Saturday morning. It plays a big part in developing his social skills as well as his overall health and well-being. If Kelburne Hockey Club are successful in their application, Ralston Skills would cease to exist which would be an absolute travesty", Local Resident and Parent
- "I object because this transfer would directly impact on my own club....we have teams who use this facility on a regular basis...impact on wider local YFL... now looking to perhaps taking all of their business to Inverclyde", Renfrewshire Football Club
- "For this asset to be given to a hockey club would be the wrong decision as football has more participants and this facility has been utilised by [local] league for many years", Renfrewshire Football Club

Kelburne Response to Theme 1 : Football & Ralston Skills

For our response in this area, we will separate out 'football' and 'Ralston Skills' in 2 separate feedback sections

Football

- Our proposal is one which has wider-based sporting principles with Hockey as the Primary sport on the artificial surface which would continue to be used by Ralston Primary school as they do today (free-of-charge). Use would also be extended to local Skill Groups, other sporting groups seeking space for physical training activities, and free-of-charge to all secondary schools as part of their sporting programmes and the new vision of growing the sport of Hockey across the whole of Renfrewshire. The grass area will be re-generated with planned works at the artificial pitch installed during artificial pitch construction and this will continue to be made available to support football and other potential sports like American football through an "anchor tenant" process. We expect demand to be high for the grass area when the remedial work to the ground is undertaken.
- In essence, we are providing a 1 for 1 football pitch change (from artificial to grass) which makes provision for football and other formal arrangements with anchor tenants who need a regular home/pitch to play on. We will not be installing floodlighting for the grass area as this requires planning permission and during the winter evenings, playing on grass will be restricted due to extreme weather conditions. One-Ren currently offer almost 60 pitches (mix of 14 artificial and 46 grass) for football to take place and in previous discussions with their leadership team, we are led to believe that football demand would continue to be covered, even with the change of the Ralston Community centre football pitch to Hockey, and this coverage would be withing a 1 to 4 miles radius of the Ralston facility.

- In addition, there are on-going football pitch developments in the immediate pipeline which will serve football only and expand the overall number of pitches available in the next few years. Eg
 - Seedhill - up-graded facilities for football (11s and 5/7s) to support UWS expansion after the sale of Thornly Park complex
 - St.James (Racecourse) – 4 new grass pitches currently under construction with new pavilion changing areas
 - New Paisley Grammar High School (Renfrew Road) - new artificial pitches to support school & public hire
- In previous discussions with football clubs, claims of anywhere between 3 and 6 bookable artificial pitches are quoted as being 'available' to book but too busy, whereas on the One-Ren website there are 14 artificial pitches available for booking, all within a 4 mile (20 minute radius) of Ralston. We believe more needs to be done with football groups and One-Ren to review and fix these booking anomalies to ensure pitch-booking is easier to make and available to all clubs which will maximise the use of the substantial financial investments made by Renfrewshire Council.
- Also known is the fact that the artificial football pitch at Ralston is booked regularly by football clubs outside of Renfrewshire. Why is this the case if clubs can't get bookings.? The pitch booking process is that Renfrewshire clubs get first crack at the bookings and any free space is available to anyone. It therefore must follow that not all the space is being booked or needed by Renfrewshire Clubs which contradicts previous statements that football cant get bookings.
- In direct contrast, Hockey in Renfrewshire has 2 low-grade pitches available which DO NOT comply with governing body regulations for National competitions, therefore our Club cannot play on these pitches due to Scottish Hockey rules. Football has almost 60 pitches to book/play on locally, and our Club have none to book/play on and have to travel 11 miles through Glasgow to Glasgow Green to play – this is unacceptable.
- We believe it is absolutely vital that a diverse range of activities are created for people from all backgrounds, ensuring the health & well-being of all groups are catered for equally and inclusively. Currently this is not being provided in Renfrewshire and our proposal aims to change that for the benefit of not only hockey, but a wider range of sports (including football), fitness and health & well-being activities that exist today. Our proposal is well thought out and addresses all of the sporting diversity issues that exist today and allows for a wider range of sport to take place at a currently under-used facility in Renfrewshire.
- Casual football use for local youths/residents - we will be making provision for football goals and lines for kids to use at any time when the pitch is free of bookings. This is meant as a simple, casual kick-about area for any groups of kids in Ralston to come along and enjoy today, but on the grass pitch area which will be renovated.

Ralston Skills

- Are a well-established operation played formerly on grass and now on artificial grass on Saturday mornings between 0930-1100am. Their ethos is identical to our Jockey Group of

- players and having two youth sports played on a Saturday morning we believe is vital to the image we want to project that our young kids of today can come along and play multiple sports at our centre and have fun and be part of the social fabric of their club in their area.
- In our timetable, we have scheduled 0900-1045hrs on Saturday for Ralston Skills and 1045-1200 for Jockey Hockey, both on the artificial pitch. Both groups are able to co-exist on Saturday mornings with Senior Hockey taking place directly afterwards
- There is no physical or time/logistical reason for Ralston Skills to cease to exist if the CAT is awarded to KHCSC. We want Ralston Skills to continue playing at this location which helps meet our overall objectives, however if they choose to close then this is a matter purely for their own leadership team to decide, however this timetable slot will continue to be reserved for their activities
- It is important to note at this juncture that the communication process with Ralston Skills has been disappointing. We have always urged respect and consideration for any club or organisation involved in this process however Ralston Skills leaders have regularly disparaged our Club directly on Social Media feeds and called our organisation in to disrepute. There is no doubt that individuals and organisations will have their own views on our CAT which is part of the process however tarnishing the reputation of our Organisation of 50 years plus in Renfrewshire was wholly unacceptable to us, however we chose a process of 'no-response' to this type of social media correspondence.

We do however accept this is a challenge for all of us and will continue to work with anyone involved in this process to make a success of our proposal.

THEME 2: Loss of Greenspace 75 (5)

Comments include:

- "Do not take away this public space from the children of Ralston and the wider Paisley community that need this hub space for organised football", Local Resident
- "...potential that youths who used this ground would then turn to anti-social behaviour, hanging about on the streets as they no longer have green space to play on", Local Resident
- "If the CAT goes ahead then there will be no public, open green space in Ralston", Various
- "Without this area, there is nowhere for local people to allow their kids a little freedom, come to play with their friends in a safe environment, no traffic and away from the main road...not to mention the many of us that use the grass and surrounding area to walk our dogs again with no traffic", Local Resident

Theme 2 : Kelburne Response to Loss of greenspace

- In our published business proposal (click this link [HERE](#) for our top-level presentation, see page 32), we have no plans to change what is already enjoyed today as free public space in allowing local residents, youths and our community, free use of the grass and surrounding grass areas, as if there was a seamless changes from One-Ren to KHCSC. It will be open to all as a public space providing there is no interference with any bookings at that time. We are fully supportive and commit to free public access in the following areas
 - Ralston Primary (pitch, car park and drop-off/collect)
 - Active Schools

- All Renfrewshire High Schools
 - Joggers & runners welcome
 - Responsible dog-walkers more than welcome
 - Ralston Community games
 - Community Notice Boards
 - Grass football pitch provision with Goals/lines etc.
- Grass area will be more regularly maintained (grass cutting etc)

THEME 3: Concerns about Ownership of RCSC 77 (5)

Comments include:

- “...our community sports centre should remain in public ownership”, Local Resident
- “It’s important to ensure the whole grass area, including the sports centre, remains a public asset. It’s space for young and old to use freely”, Local Resident
- “I would like to see the Sports Centre stay within the community”, Local Resident
- “I completely object to the single public green sports space available in the Ralston area being transferred to a single private sports club. (Kelburne Hockey Club)”, Local Resident
- “I wish to have Ralston Community Sports in public ownership”, Local Resident
- “I believe that RCSC should continue to be run by One-Ren on behalf of Renfrewshire Council”, Local Resident
- “The only way to ensure this facility is available for the maximum benefit of Renfrewshire residents is to retain it as publicly owned and managed”, Local Resident

Theme 3 : Kelburne Response to Concerns about Ownership of RCSC

- We fully understand the debate on publicly owned facilities versus KHCS run as a charitable organisation. As explained in the previous sections, our intentions are to grow the profile of the centre by having a wider range of sports, more activities in the Pavilion, more use of the grass pitches and increased used by social and health & wellbeing groups, which we believe will increase the profile of the centre over time
- It seems odd to KHCS that there have been many complaints over the years (Theme 6) of the centre being under-resourced by One-Ren yet not much has been done since 2016, yet they appear not to be prepared to support a new vision and a new plan which would address this with more opening hours, more activities and more opportunities all-round.
- We believe a more logical approach would have been for these objecting organisations to share their own proposal of improvements for the centre, rather than challenge a new vision and offer nothing in return other than trying to re-ignite the same 2016 arrangements which cover the past 6 years, have not worked out.
- Our proposal is for a 50 year lease and if we don’t meet the conditions proposed by Renfrewshire Council, then it could be their approach that they terminate our lease if we are not providing what we committed in our proposal
- In previous years prior to Covid, operating hours of the centre were severely restricted due to the lack of use of the facility. In our business proposal, our weekday operating hours will

- be 9am to 9pm and weekends will be 9am to 6.30pm. This is a significant improvement in facility availability from the years prior to Covid and now, after it's recent re-opening on restricted hours.

Theme 4 (use of Public Grants) - We are unable to respond in great detail due to the redaction of the financials, however we would like to share a couple of observations

- Public money & grants are designed to support the development of Community Clubs and hubs and the health & the well-being they serve. The centre itself currently supports one sport on a pitch with money which came from the same public funds KHCS are looking to access and our model supports more than one sport and is more diverse in gender & age
- Our financial planning model, both start-up budget and our 10 year business plan, are with Renfrewshire Council officers to decide if this is acceptable or not and they will reply accordingly.

Renfrewshire Council Spokesperson responded: *The Council does not automatically provide funding to community bodies in relation to community asset transfer requests, regardless of whether the application is successful or not. The Council has a range of funds available for community bodies to request support from e.g. the Community Empowerment Fund, which may support a CAT application, however each application is judged on its own merit.*

THEME 5: Concerns about Environmental Impacts 23

Comments include:

- "The proposal.... inevitably will evolve to include a license, which of course brings its own issues.... no concerns addressed regarding additional traffic flow whilst there were abrasive responses from the Kelburne representative during the meetings", Local Resident
- "Many parents use the sports centre car park to drop their children off at school and pick them up again. This is an extremely busy place at these times without adding more cars from Kelburne Hockey Club into the mix", Local Resident
- "With heavier traffic, comes the additional risk of traffic accidents - I'm especially worried for the young children who play locally", Local Resident

Theme 5 : Kelburne response to Concerns about Environmental Impacts

- We have stated many times before that KHCS have no intention of requesting a licence for a bar. Our business proposal we believe is sound without requiring this, with the majority of income coming from membership costs, artificial pitch letting, Gym & Studio groups using the Pavilion for a 3-fold activity increase and the Café. Other activities like Sponsorship, charitable grants and income from the grass pitches from football/other sports hiring on the grass pitch, make up the balance of income generated. Renfrewshire Council are perfectly capable and within their right to include this as a specific legal clause to ensure we are held to our 'no-bar' commitment if they so wish.
- On a normal Saturday, activities will be spread throughout the full day so it follows that traffic will be spread more widely through the day and therefore a more even flow of traffic over a longer period will ensue.
- There is currently an issue on parking at the centre which is well-documented. Our aim is to address something that hasn't been addressed for many years. To assist local residents at peak times, we will be more pro-active in working with visitors to ensure the existing car parks (main car-park and Ralston Primary) are used in full and this will be done with advance communication, hands-on management by our staff and volunteer members working

- directly with visitors. We also have plans for a small internal & discreet overflow car-park which would be put in to use if required at weekends.

THEME 6: Long-term Lack of Investment in RCSC 17

Comments include:

- [The facility] "...is well used by the community but there is no doubt it could be enhanced and better used", Political Representative
- "Renfrewshire Leisure/One Ren has not promoted the centre. While it has become a successful football venue, the gym and fitness classes available at Ralston Community Sports Centre have never been promoted as they could have been.", Local Resident
- "The mere fact this facility has been wilfully neglected in an attempt to meet the criteria for asset transfer is a scandal", Local Resident
- "Renfrewshire leisure have failed to promote this facility over the past three years and look as if they have actively tried to run this facility down using the COVID pandemic as an excuse", Local Resident

Theme 6 (long term lack of investment in RCSC) we can,t respond to as this directly relates to Renfrewshire Leisure (now One-Ren) and we will defer to Renfrewshire Council to decide how to respond with just one observation on our part

- It is our view that what we are offering at KHCS is a wider range of activities which are geared to more sports, more activities in the Pavilion based around fitness, social & health & well-being groups, and a longer term investment in the fabric of an iconic Grade A listing building by a committed community club. This can only serve to be a good thing for the centre in the short, medium and the long term and shows the spirit of real investment.

A OneRen Spokesperson responded: *"OneRen operate Ralston CSC on behalf of the Council. The facility is jointly maintained by OneRen and the Council. OneRen and the Council work alongside each other to ensure that all OneRen operated facilities are well maintained and meet the expected standard in terms of customer provision. Capital improvements and largescale investment in facilities remains challenging as there is limited funding available to support a programme that requires to be spread across numerous sports, community and cultural venues. Community use of Ralston during weekdays has historically been very low, resulting in the facility operating at a significant deficit. In response to this position, the opening hours of the facility were amended in 2016 to 5pm-9pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday. The business plan supporting the CAT application suggests the applicant would welcome community use during the day and would look to facilitate that on a long term basis."*

THEME 7: Kelburne Hockey Club Capability 31

Comments include:

- "I have grave concerns on just how actually KHC aim to maintain the services and remain compliant with building services", Local Resident
- "Kelburne Hockey Club's consultation with the local community has been dreadful and it has caused much anger and dis-trust", Local Resident
- "The charity which KHC have recently set up only gives voting rights to adult hockey members...local residents can join as associate members but would not have voting rights [and] would have no way of influencing how the centre was run which in principle is wrong and makes RCSC a private club not a community asset", Local Resident
- "The CAT is a moving feast which makes it impossible for people to comment on", Local

Resident

- “The CAT makes no realistic provision for the up to 1000 players, many of them children, who use the Astroturf pitch currently”, Football Club
- “KHC simply don't have the finance or expertise to run such an operation as their business plan sets out....their figures don't stand up, either in running costs or maintenance”, Local Resident
- “Kelburne Hockey Club’s consultation with the local community has been awful throughout this process and very inconsistent...[initially advised] plans to bring high school pupils down to the pitch during school hours for hockey coaching....this would have big implications for Ralston Primary School...next meeting it had changed and Kelburne were saying that high school children would be getting brought down only after school hours for hockey coaching (this would have big implications for the local children who love to play in this area after school). I am left baffled why there are inconsistencies at such a late stage in their application”, Local Resident
- “A solution exists for Kelburne at the Onyx hockey pitch at Linwood. There is no need for it to move to Ralston and cause so much disruption”, Local Resident

Kelburne Response to Theme 7 : Kelburne Hockey Club capability

- We understand that change can often be seen as hurdle and to KHCS, this is no different. This is a huge project for us but our history as a successfully run club will stand us in good stead to make this a success. We have run our Club for 50 years at local, regional, national and international level, have a wide range of professional skills and tradesmen in our organisation today, and we’re fully committed and ready to manage this facility.
- We bench-marked different organisations who run facilities like this one, the most recent being Clydebank Community Sports hub and our operation is based on this model and we are hiring seasoned professionals to run the centre on a daily basis – a Centre Operations Manager, Pavilion operations staff, Gym & Studio trained staff and a Grounds Maintenance person. These skilled people will ensure the operation runs well and report back to the Board and Trustees on a daily/weekly basis as required
- Our Business Plan is with Renfrewshire Council currently and we await the outcome of the results of the CAT panel in August.
- Our Board sits currently at 4 Trustees and if we are successful, the Board will increase to 9 Trustees and we will bring specific skills (see link [HERE](#) from our presentation slides, page 35) from the local community which will augment the role of the board and provide a better balance between sport, business and local residents & community needs
- Free weekly Hockey to Secondary schools is primarily for after-school Clubs as per the schedule listed on page the link [HERE](#), see Page 27. Some irregular inter-school Cup competition matches will take place (winter) through the year and these dates when known, will be scheduled at a time that suits Ralston Primary diaries.
- It makes logical sense that from when our business proposal was made, it grows and takes shape in the months following our application and this is the case with our proposal. The principle remains the same but as we add specific operational activities into the plan, this puts more meat on the bones and demonstrates that KHCS are moving forward to make this project a success.
- We believe that One-Ren should make a statement concerning the (1000) football numbers that use the centre and whether they are sustainable at the Ralston centre or whether they can still be sustained within the capacity of the other artificial & grass pitches in the One-Ren pitch portfolio. We believe from past One-Ren discussions, they can support the Ralston football lets at other local nearby football centres however One-Ren can qualify this more directly.

- We are currently based in Ward 3 Paisley East & Ralston and want to develop our new Vision in our own spiritual home of over 50 years. The Ralston Community Sports Centre we believe is a fantastic venue to move to since we reside nearby, just 1.2 miles away, and from this base we will provide an improved facility for Hockey and our local community. Linwood is indeed a “potential” since a low-grade hockey pitch is already there, however Renfrewshire Council would have to invest in substantial sums to replace that pitch and then make it available to KHCSC and other Clubs and continue to support a 2nd hockey pitch that Renfrewshire needs to support Hockey, the 2nd most popular team sport in our county.
- For Kelburne however, our proposal at Ralston has been fully costed and involves the true worth that is re-developing and growing the well-loved facility that everyone wants in Ralston. We hope that we are allowed this opportunity to do so at KHCSC

Finally, we believe many of the ‘re-statements’ in all of the above sections could have been avoided directly and quickly by simply being allowed to take part in the ‘Open Meetings’ held by Ralston Community Council (RCC). Meeting local residents face-to-face at the start of and as our proposal took more shape, would have helped resolve many of the issues or at least achieve a better understanding. When you find that you’re excluded from meetings and others who don’t use the centre and don’t live in the area are invited, it fuels the result you want as opposed to being impartial and listening to all sides of the argument, and very quickly, a ‘them-and-us’ approach takes over and the sense of balance is lost. Despite claims of ‘zero interest’ in our proposal from local residents, it is clear that this is not the case in the FOR response provided by Renfrewshire Council. As always, we do accept however that this is a challenging topic for everyone involved and no-one is perfect, however we will continue to work with anyone involved in this process to make a success of our proposal and provide as much information as possible to local residents as we should be doing.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to answer the questions raised by those who are AGAINST this Community Asset Transfer.

The Board.
Kelburne Hockey & Community Sports Centre