

**THE LOW PORT  
CENTRE  
COMMUNITY  
BENEFIT  
PROPOSAL  
FROM ST JOHN'S  
CHURCH  
LINLITHGOW**





# **THE LOW PORT CENTRE COMMUNITY BENEFIT PROPOSAL FROM ST JOHN'S CHURCH LINLITHGOW**

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# 1. OUR COMMUNITY PROPOSAL



**ST JOHN'S CHURCH LINLITHGOW IS COMMITTED TO INVESTIGATING THE SUITABILITY OF THE LOW PORT CENTRE AS A VIBRANT, ACTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE HUB TO SERVE THE COMMUNITIES OF LINLITHGOW AND WOULD WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENTER INTO THE COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS WITH WEST Lothian COUNCIL.**

## **1.1 WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ARE MAKING THE REQUEST**

St John's Church is very keen to work with West Lothian Council to investigate a Community Asset Transfer of the Low Port Centre.

St John's currently has a number of community activities and would like to expand these through working in partnership with other existing and developing community groups for the overall benefit of the wider community. St John's leadership, trustees and members are excited about the potential of the Low Port Centre but also realistic about the practicalities of owning, running and maintaining a building of this size and complexity.



St John's Church has been a presence in Linlithgow since the early 1900s. The church owns a building in Union Road, rents a shop front property at 183 High Street and also hired Linlithgow Academy for Sunday morning services. The church has 231 adult contacts on the church database which includes 176 active members and currently employs 6.5 FTE staff.

St John's has outgrown its original building in Union Road and has used Linlithgow Academy for Sunday morning services but has an aspiration to expand its activities in the community throughout the week and move to premises which can be used more flexibly for that purpose.

## **1.2 HOW WE PROPOSE THE LOW PORT CENTRE WILL BE USED.**

It is anticipated that the building would be used for St John's' regular church activities and a wide range of community activities both existing and new including:

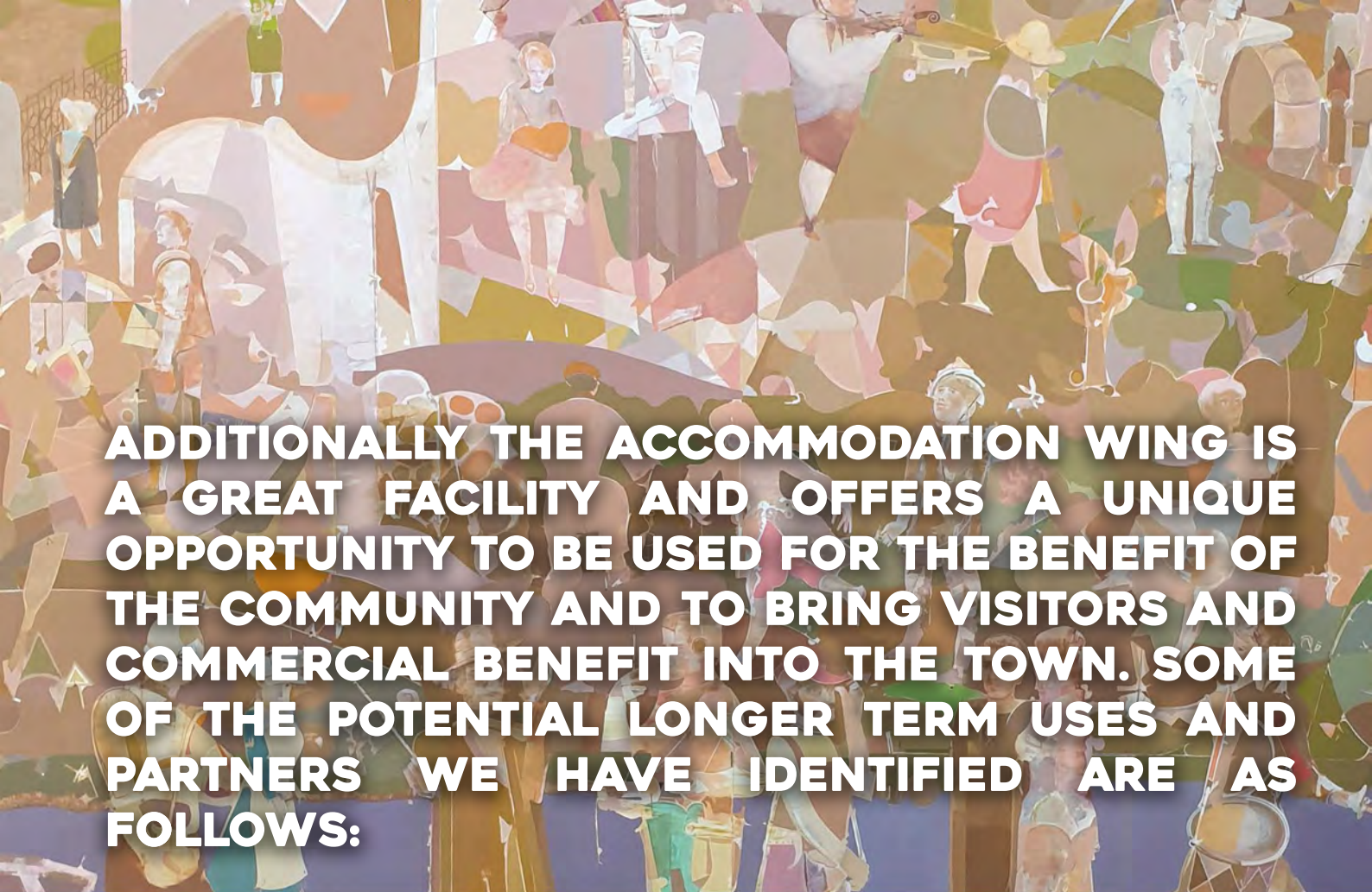
### **ST JOHN'S ACTIVITIES**

- Sunday worship and children's/youth work
- Various regular St John's Church group meetings
- Toddler group (weekly)
- Counselling
- Sew Blessed (craft group)
- Youth groups (various evenings)
- Worship band practice
- Meeting point (monthly club for seniors)
- Men 'n' Sheds
- Community café

# COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- The New Well charitable organisation
  - Counselling sessions
  - Job Club
  - Oasis café
  - Befriending
  - Training
- Office space
- The Ladies Choir
- Writers group
- Kids art class
- Sports groups - Sailing Club, Kayaking Club, Cycling, Climbing, etc.
- Concerts and practice space for drama and music groups
- 1st Step Charitable organisation
  - Bike repair and sales, in partnership with community café
  - Recovery group
  - Food distribution
- Lochside playgroup
- Linlithgow Young People's Project
  - Drop in youth sessions
  - Youth counselling
  - Holiday programmes
- Linlithgow Air Cadets
- Safe Families
- Other local groups or individuals who need regular or occasional rooms/hall space e.g. uniformed organisations, children's parties, sports groups, book festivals, etc.
- Work with local businesses e.g. Far from the Madding Crowd to have author launches and book festivals, with Low Port Music to run record fairs.





**ADDITIONALLY THE ACCOMMODATION WING IS A GREAT FACILITY AND OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BE USED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY AND TO BRING VISITORS AND COMMERCIAL BENEFIT INTO THE TOWN. SOME OF THE POTENTIAL LONGER TERM USES AND PARTNERS WE HAVE IDENTIFIED ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- The Heralds Trust is an organisation who had over 200 overseas visitors join their “Gospel Go” teams in 2019 prior to Covid and expect teams to start again in Spring 2022. An average stay for their teams is 7 - 10 days and they have been looking for a base to operate from in Linlithgow. They are interested in working with us as a delivery partner.
- Backpackers Hostel to expand tourism opportunities in Linlithgow.
- Additional accommodation for use during town-based events e.g. Party at the Palace, Linlithgow Marches, Pedal for Scotland, Folk Festival, Spectacular Jousting event, etc

We are also aware that a mural by James Cumming is part of the building and is an important piece of art which we would want to ensure is protected and able to be viewed by the public.

# 2. BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL



## **2.1 THE BENEFITS THAT WE CONSIDER WILL ARISE IF THE REQUEST IS AGREED TO**

West Lothian Council's mission statement is - "striving for excellence... working with and for our communities". We consider that our proposal for a Community Asset Transfer will help the council in its mission to work with, and for, the community of Linlithgow and beyond. St John's has a similar aim in being a community-focused church, seeking to find ways to develop and expand our community work.





The proposed asset transfer could assist the council in fulfilling the values of ‘making best use of our resources’ and ‘working in partnership’. It could also help to support some of West Lothian Council’s multi-agency strategies such as the Anti-poverty strategy. The Low Port Centre is a significant building that, despite being identified as surplus to council requirements, is still a valuable and useful resource. If the council was willing to work with St John’s Church and our associated charities and organisations, the resource of the Low Port Centre building could be made ‘best use of’. An asset transfer would demonstrate a powerful message, showcasing council and local partnership to the people in this community.

The proposed activities that we expect to facilitate from the Low Port Centre will support the council in achieving all the identified priorities in West Lothian Council’s Corporate Plan 2018-2023. The following are some examples for each of the eight priorities:

## **1. IMPROVING ATTAINMENT AND POSITIVE DESTINATIONS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN.**

- Partnering with LYPP in their work with young people locally
- Providing space for other children’s and youth groups, sports clubs and uniformed organisations
- Providing the possibility of volunteering and work opportunities for young people in the café and Men’s shed
- Running parenting groups

## **2. DELIVERING POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND EARLY INTERVENTIONS FOR EARLY YEARS.**

- Expanding the long-running St John's Toddler group
- Partnering with the local playgroup

## **3. MINIMISING POVERTY, THE CYCLE OF DEPRIVATION AND PROMOTING EQUALITY.**

- Partnering with 1st Step, providing space for support groups and work opportunities.
- Running the Christians Against Poverty Money Course
- Having close links with the West Lothian Food Network, Foodbank and CAP Debt Centre

## **4. IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OLDER PEOPLE.**

- Continuing to run Meeting Point for older members of the community
- Encouraging intergenerational, all-age activities to include older people

## **5. IMPROVING THE EMPLOYMENT POSITION IN WEST LOTHIAN.**

- Expanding The New Well CAP Job Club for local unemployed people
- Work alongside local businesses to help them grow and expand e.g. Book Festivals, Record Fairs, etc.
- Providing employment in maintaining and running the building, in the café, in the hostel/residential wing, in social enterprise projects

## **6. DELIVERING POSITIVE OUTCOMES ON HEALTH.**

- Increasing capacity for The New Well counselling service
- Running Oasis café with befrienders to support those struggling with poor mental health and with loneliness
- Developing trauma aware practice across the organisations using the building

## 7. REDUCING CRIME AND IMPROVING COMMUNITY SAFETY.

- Being part of the Police Scotland's 'Keep Safe Initiative'

## 8. PROTECTING THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

- Maintaining and upgrading the Low Port Centre building for generations to come in as sustainable a way as possible
- Developing and implementing a Carbon Neutral Strategy
- Working with the Sailing Club and Kayaking Club to encourage water sports on the loch
- Supporting cycle tourism with the Linlithgow Community Development Trust and 1st Step



# 3. CAPACITY TO DELIVER



To allow St John's to make a decision on whether or not to progress with an offer for the Low Port Centre we conducted a comprehensive feasibility study. The outcome of this detailed study was that St John's should pursue a Community Asset Transfer of the Low Port Centre. The building represents an opportunity to constructively engage with the community in an unprecedented way which meets the vision of the church. It also found that there is a strongly supported community interest in the Low Port Centre being retained for community use and benefit. A number of other partners have also indicated their desire to make use of the building if it were to be obtained by St John's.



We believe that we have a unique offering and identity which will allow the much-valued community asset of the Low Port Centre to continue to be used for the benefit of the local community. Our interest in the building has cross community support from groups and individuals who are supporting our application and have a desire to see the Low Port Centre retained as a significant community asset.

Since January 2021 we have been in regular discussion with Scott Hughes, West Lothian Council Asset Manager in the pre-application stage of our asset transfer. The information received from Scott has been invaluable to get us to the stage of submitting an offer with a view to proceeding with a Community Asset Transfer application. We have also received support from Lynn Mollison of DTAS and are keen to continue these relationships as we develop our plans further.

Following discussions with Martin Thomson, West Lothian Council Business Growth Adviser we are aware of the valuable help and support that he can provide. If West Lothian Council decides to engage with us to progress a Community Asset Transfer we will work closely with him to further develop our business case using the modelling tools that are available to financially assess the social and health benefits which could be realised.

As part of a Community Asset Transfer application, we understand that the following three pieces of information must be included and these will be developed as we progress through the process.

### **3.1. BUSINESS PLAN WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?**

- Carried out an internal feasibility study containing information on:
  - Services which we will provide and service providers
  - Options for use
  - Organisational Structure
  - Schedule
  - Financial analysis and forecast
  - Funding opportunities
- Engaged with Martin Thomson of West Lothian Council Economic Development Team regarding general support and assistance and specifically to understand how to identify the economic benefit from social and health improvements.

### **WHAT WILL WE DO DURING THE COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS?**

- Submit for review a draft constitution for the new legal entity, and then proceed to form that entity which will qualify as a community body under the relevant legislation to acquire the property.
- Detail a full and comprehensive business plan for the running and sustainability of the Low Port Centre.

- Further engage with the Economic Development Team to calculate and quantify monetary benefits from social and health improvements.
- Engage building professionals to create upgrade, refurbishment and maintenance plans for the sustainable use of Low Port Centre.
- Develop a fully costed commercial plan for efficient and effective operation of Low Port Centre as a vibrant community hub aided by utilising the offer of local business expertise. e.g, Jim Hay, Court Residences.
- Fully develop workable partnership agreements with willing organisations, local businesses etc.
- Develop a funding and financing strategy to ensure surety and stability in capability to operate Low Port Centre in a cost effective and sustainable manner.
- Develop robust plan for residential wing using learning from other organisations experience e.g, Callander Youth Hostel, Edinburgh Backpackers, Heralds Trust.

## **3.2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS**

### **WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?**

- We have engaged with the Community Council and have kept them informed of our interest in the Low Port Centre. They fully support our intention to pursue an asset transfer for the benefit of the community.
- We have had an article in the local 'Black Bitch' magazine, delivered to every house in Linlithgow, to inform local people and ask for interested parties to contact us. Individuals and organisations have begun conversations with us and there has been considerable interest in our plans.
- We have had an initial conversation with Low Port Primary School to inform them of our plans and listen to their concerns about the future use of the Low Port Centre.

- We are in ongoing discussions with both St Michael's Church of Scotland and Linlithgow Community Development Trust and are jointly undertaking a wider Community Consultation exercise in Linlithgow. The outcome of this will give clear insights into the needs and aspirations within the town and will ensure that we are working together to address the needs and use the various premises across the town most appropriately.

## **WHAT WILL WE DO DURING THE COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS?**

- Engage further with the community by developing the existing relationships which have been identified so far to more clearly define the shared use of the building.
- Consult further with Linlithgow Community Council for support in the planning and development issues and the local impact of the use of the Low Port Centre.
- Investigate and detail further opportunities for community and individual partnerships including any requirements relating to the Community Regeneration team.
- Continue to be part of the Community Consultation led by St. Michael's Church and Linlithgow Community Development Trust, and work together to implement the outcomes identified by the community as they relate to the Low Port Centre building.
- Consult and liaise with local businesses to ensure mutually supportive solutions.
- Consult and engage with Low Port Primary School, as potential neighbours, to prioritise safety for the children.



## **3.3 SKILLS AUDIT**

### **WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?**

- Initial analysis of manpower, skills, experience and roles required for efficient and successful operation of the Low Port Centre.

### **WHAT WILL WE DO DURING THE COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS?**

- Carry out a full skills audit detailing to understand what will be required to successfully operate and run the Low Port Centre.
- Work closely with organisations and individuals who can support and assist us in the process - Scott Hughes, Lynn Mollison, Martin Thomson, Jim Hay, John Kelly, etc
- Investigate funding opportunities for skilled resources and suitably qualified staff

The St John's Church Property Team members who will be working on the Community Asset Transfer application are as follows:

- Billy Fraser - Property team lead who has lived in Linlithgow and been a member of St John's church for 20 years. Has over 40 years business experience in senior management positions in the energy industry and most recently Business Project Director for company wide IT transformation programme.
- Heather Begarnie - Community Development Manager for St John's church responsible for connecting with the local community to find ways to work together for mutual benefit. Lived in Linlithgow for over 14 years and teaches part-time at Springfield Primary School.
- Stuart Aitken - Lead Pastor for St. John's Church. Previously led a similar project as part of role as Operations Director for Central Church, Edinburgh where £150k was raised annually from conference income and income from renting office space.
- Amanda Campbell - Property professional bringing 16 years experience of working in the residential property sector including owning and managing a property business. Lived in Linlithgow and has been a member of St John's Church for over 30 years.

- Richard Steedman - Lived in Linlithgow all his life and has been a part of St. John's Church since a child. Started the "Autobits" business on the High Street in 1997 which is still trading today. Responsible for St John's properties since 2008.
- Andy Clark - St John's Church youth worker who has worked within the church community and wider community for the past 7 years. Has professional training in informal education and community work.
- The St John's Church Trustees is a group of 8 individuals and is chaired by Stephen Pashley, who has led the group since May 2020 and was previously the Church Treasurer from 2009. Stephen is a Chartered Accountant who has lived in Linlithgow since 2008.
- St John's also has access to support from professionals with experience in building structures and professionals with legal experience in Community Asset Transfer applications.

### **3.4 PROGRESS SO FAR SINCE EARLY 2021 WE HAVE:**

- Engaged with Scott Hughes of West Lothian Council regarding the potential for a Community Asset transfer of the Low Port Centre
- Continued to meet monthly with Scott to understand the Low Port Centre in more detail to allow us to complete a detailed feasibility study
- Visited the Low Port Centre on three occasions to fully understand the scope and nature of the building
- Consulted with St John's Church membership on the proposed Community Asset transfer and received full support
- Initially consulted with community groups, organisations and individuals to understand extent of community support
- Carried out onsite non disruptive testing to ascertain extent of repair work required
- Fully reviewed available documentation supplied by West Lothian Council on the Low Port Centre
- Held initial discussions with professionals and technical experts who will be able to assist us if our offer is successful and West Lothian Council confirms our preferred bidder status



**THE COMPLETED BUSINESS PLAN, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS AND SKILLS AUDIT WILL BE ST JOHN'S OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE THAT WE ARE IN A POSITION TO COMPLETE A COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER SUCCESSFULLY. IT WILL ALSO GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERSTAND IF THE BUILDING IS ENTIRELY SUITABLE FOR OUR NEEDS AND IF WE HAVE THE FINANCE AND CAPABILITY TO DO THIS SUSTAINABLY. THERE IS A LONG WAY TO GO BUT WITH DETERMINATION AND THE WILL OF THE COMMUNITY BEHIND US, WE ARE HOPEFUL OF SUCCESS. WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL WILL UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS UNREALISTIC TO COMMIT TO FURTHER EXPENDITURE ON ALL THESE AREAS WITHOUT CONFIRMATION OF PREFERRED BIDDER STATUS.**



# 4. LEVEL AND NATURE OF SUPPORT


## 4.1 DETAILS OF THE LEVEL AND NATURE OF SUPPORT FROM OUR COMMUNITY

St John's Church has received significant local support for a Community Asset Transfer application from active community groups and individuals including the following:

- Linlithgow Community Council who have stated that they “fully support the proposal for a Community Asset Transfer with St John's Church being the lead partner and overall manager of the Low Port Centre” (See article published in the Black Bitch magazine in sect. 6)
- Linlithgow Community Development Trust who are keen to find ways to partner and work jointly with us, particularly around sustainability, cycling and social enterprise.
- There has been significant community wide support from local individuals and organisations. These are included in sect. 6.

We are also aware that St Michael's Parish Church is involved in a building renovation project which will potentially involve the creation of additional space at Cross House for community purposes. The old library building is also going to be available for community use through the Linlithgow Community Development Trust (LCDT). We are in ongoing discussions with both St Michael's and LCDT and are jointly undertaking a wider Community audit/consultation to ensure that we are working together to meet the needs across Linlithgow and talking about the most appropriate uses of the various premises across the town.

# 5. FINANCE



**ST JOHN'S CHURCH IS OFFERING TO ENTER INTO THE COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS WITH WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL FOR THE LOW PORT CENTRE. DUE TO THE SUBSTANTIAL FUNDS REQUIRED TO MAKE THE BUILDING COMPLIANT AND TO RENOVATE AND REFURBISH THE BUILDING WE ARE LOOKING TO ACQUIRE THE LOW PORT CENTRE FOR NO COST. WE INTEND TO RAISE THE FUNDS IN THE NEW COMMUNITY BODY FOR THE NECESSARY WORKS WHICH ARE INITIALLY ESTIMATED AT BETWEEN £1.1M AND £1.5M.**

## **5.1 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As part of our internal feasibility study we undertook a financial analysis of the Low Port Centre. We have used information provided by West Lothian Council and West Lothian Leisure to inform our analysis. Included in this information was a condition survey report which had been published on 24/12/16. The purpose of the report was to determine the condition of the property and provide life cycle costs attributed to each element of the property. These costs have been included in the financial projections. Similarly an electrical condition survey report was included with an estimated cost of £250,688 to be carried out over a 5-year period from 2016. For both these reports it has been assumed that any work required in the last 5 years will have to be carried out immediately and any other phased work for years 6-10 will have to be done in the next 1-5 years.

We have also had a visual inspection by an engineer of an area where the condition report indicated that there was significant cracking to the external walls and a window lintel. The preliminary view is that the remedial work could be in the range of £20k to £200k. Further onsite investigation will be required to fully understand the scope and nature of the issue before an accurate costing can be obtained.

All of the above requirements will have to be verified but we have included them in the projections although it should also be noted that these are at 2016 prices and no ROI/ RPI increase has been applied. The more detailed costings which we will carry out during the asset transfer process will require to include the increased building costs for certain materials which are currently rising faster than inflation due to a combination of Covid and Brexit. We have also been advised by professionals that there is a shortage of labour at present which will likely impact on costs and timeline estimates for undertaking the work.

Of additional concern is that this survey undertaken in 2016 is the most recent information available on the condition of the Low Port Centre and no information is available on current condition and any associated repairs and maintenance requirements.

Additionally we estimate that our current operating costs will increase significantly to operate and run the Low Port Centre. Our initial forecasts indicate that these costs may be partially, if not fully, offset by increased income. This will be clarified in our detailed business plan which will be prepared if our offer is accepted.

We are also aware that we will be required to investigate and understand the current planning status of the Low Port Centre and that this could lead to a change of use application for our use of the building. Any development of the building will be in line with the Local Development Plan being aware that the building is within the Linlithgow Palace and High Street Conservation Area and adjacent to Low Port Primary School, with associated safety issues. We will be guided by the West Lothian Council Planning Department regarding planning regulations.

Having considered the additional expenditure and investment which will be required to make the building fit for its renewed purpose, we consider it reasonable that we would not be expected to pay for a Community Asset Transfer of the Low Port Centre.

## **5.2 OUR POTENTIAL OPTIONS FOR FUNDING**

Taking these costs into account and including refurbishment costs we have estimated that we will require to raise between £1.1m and £1.5m to make the building compliant and fit for purpose. Following this we will then be required to invest significant sums on an annual basis to bring the building fully up to standard. Raising the required capital is a significant challenge to the viability of the project and will likely be best achieved by combining a range of funding options such as:

- Gifts and donations
- Loans e.g., Stewardship Services who specialise in provision of loans to charities (<https://www.stewardship.org.uk/loans>)
- Specific funding for community and church projects - for example:
  - ▲ UK government levelling up fund – providing investment and infrastructure to improve everyday life in the UK
  - ▲ Community Ownership Fund - UK government fund to help community groups buy or take over local community assets at risk of being lost
  - ▲ Investing in Communities Fund – Scottish Government Empowering Communities Programme
  - ▲ Local Authority fund of £1m to help organisations who have agreed a Community Asset Transfer and require to carry out upgrade work
  - ▲ National Churches Trust - A charity dedicated to supporting places of worship of historic, architectural and community value used by Christian denominations throughout the UK
  - ▲ Allchurches Trust - provides grant funding, advice, resources to support churches and charities to meet community needs and protect heritage buildings/skills in UK
  - ▲ National Lottery Community funding
  - ▲ The Robertson Trust - Community Building Grant for capital funding
  - ▲ Centre for Local Economic Strategies - national organisation for local economies



## **6.1 EVIDENCE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

Attached is an article from the Black Bitch magazine and letters of support from:

- The New Well
- Linlithgow Young People's Project
- Linlithgow Community Development Trust
- The Heralds Trust
- West Lothian Sailing Club
- Lochside Playgroup
- 1st Step
- Linlithgow RAF Air Cadets
- Linlithgow Contract Bridge Club
- Linlithgow Folk Festival Association
- Scotch Hop
- Linlithgow String Orchestra
- Linlithgow Players
- Linlithgow Speakers
- Enjoyaball
- Far from the Madding Crowd bookshop
- First Adventures Parents' Forum
- Laura Cumming



# TACKLING TWO MAJOR COMMUNITY ISSUES

LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS THE ISSUES

## Low Port Centre - what next?

Low Port Centre was conceived as a purpose-built outdoor pursuits centre, promoted by Mel Gray, constructed by Lothian Regional Council, and opened in 1987. Low Port Centre was initially managed by a dedicated committee of local residents to provide outdoor education facilities for young people locally, and from all parts of Scotland and indeed overseas. The centre provided catered residential accommodation for up to 36 people. It contains a games hall, an indoor climbing wall, lounge, general purpose room and café. Water sports on Linlithgow Loch and climbing at nearby crags and quarries were popular, with many courses run during school holidays. West Lothian Council adopted the ownership and the running of the centre in 1997.

**In 2017 West Lothian Leisure took on the tenancy of Low Port Centre from West Lothian Council and continued to provide a more limited offering of outdoor education.**

On 1st January 2020 the residential wing was closed and the centre became a day centre. In late February 2021, West Lothian Leisure announced their plans to give up their tenancy (which should run until March 2022) to vacate the site and provide outdoor learning and activities from other locations in West Lothian.



On 23rd February 2021, responding to a Facebook leak of West Lothian Leisure's intentions to close Low Port Centre, Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council included a discussion of the future of Low Port Centre at its monthly online public meeting. Representatives of Lochside Playgroup spoke of their concern at the sudden closing. **Councillor Tom Conn** stated that if a group wished to take forward an asset transfer then West Lothian Council had information on the condition of the building and running costs which would be freely available.

At the March monthly online public meeting of the Community Council, **Heather Begarnie, Community Development Manager for St John's Church and Manager of the New Well**, introduced the aspirations of St John's Church and the New Well to consolidate and expand its activities in new premises. Heather is currently at an early stage of discussions with West Lothian Council to consider the feasibility of using the Low Port Centre and the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer. St John's Church and the New Well are keen to consult with local organisations to determine the most beneficial ways to partner across organisations to share space and join up services and activities. They envisage any space being multiuse, supporting the local community whilst also meeting the needs of St John's church members. Heather emphasised their enthusiasm to talk with any individuals and/or organisations who are interested in being part of the conversation about the future of Low Port Centre.

**The Community Council fully supports the proposal for a Community Asset Transfer with St John's Church being the lead partner and overall manager of the Low Port Centre.**

### Linlithgow Community Council

Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council hold a public meeting each month to discuss matters of interest to residents. Previous articles in the Black Bitch have described town planning matters on which a community council has a statutory right to be consulted. This article describes two other recently discussed matters which are of importance to the community.





4 August 2021

To whom it may concern.

### **Support for St John's Church Community Asset Transfer of The Low Port Centre**

The New Well is actively supporting St John's Church as they seek to take over the ownership and running of the Low Port Centre building for church and community use.

The New Well is a charitable organisation (SC050173) which has been established from St John's Church and retains a very close connection with the church.

The charitable purpose of The New Well is the relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage. The New Well's vision is to journey towards a flourishing community where people experience hope and connection. The strategy is to bring this through enhancing emotional, financial and spiritual wellbeing by providing community support services.

The New Well requires space for:

- Counselling sessions (3-4 small rooms to be used most weekdays)
- Job Club (weekly session and additional 1:1 support each week)
- Oasis café (for those struggling with poor mental health)
- Drop in community café
- Befriending support
- Money Management and Life Skills courses
- Training courses and events

The Low Port Centre would provide suitable accommodation for The New Well to expand and develop services. It would also allow us to work in closer partnership with other organisations with whom we already have good links such as LYPP and 1<sup>st</sup> Step as well as with St John's Church.

Kind regards,

Audrey Couper

Chair of Trustees, The New Well



**29 The Vennel  
Linlithgow  
EH49 7EX**

**August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Dear West Lothian Council,

As St John's church in Linlithgow begin the journey of finding a new premises in the town, we would like to extend our support in their desire to secure the Lowport Centre as part of a community asset transfer. St John's Church and Linlithgow Young People's Project have a long standing partnership with LYPP being established by St John's Church and St Michael's Parish church more than 30 years ago. Over the decades we have worked together to provide many community events, often partnering together to run joint provision on Marches Day, youth work events and schools work in the town as well as drawing on the members of St John's as part of our volunteer base.

LYPP reaches around 1000 young people each year and employs 5 staff. We have 2 sessional staff, funded by Stewart Investors and West Lothian Council as well as a strong volunteer base. LYPP is a community based youth project which aims to support young people in all aspects of their development. The central focus of our work is to foster a sense of 'hope' in the lives and circumstances of the young people we work with, many of whom are disadvantaged. We do this by engaging them in relevant activities, enabling them to express themselves in a wide variety of ways and by creating opportunities for them to learn about themselves and develop new skills.

LYPP has 5 main areas of work which include 2 weekly sessions at our Youth Centre, 'Lounge', (topic based discussion, activity programmes and accredited learning opportunities) Schools work (Linlithgow Academy, Lowport Primary, Linlithgow Primary and Bridgend Primary), Holiday Programmes (low cost holiday programmes throughout Easter, Summer and October), Mental Health (focussed group work, Mental Health Champions programme at Linlithgow Academy, schools based mentoring and Youth Counselling service) and our work in Bridgend, a small village just outside of Linlithgow (2 youth clubs, football project, accredited learning opportunities, mentoring and schools work).

We plan, deliver and evaluate all our work around the following 5 outcomes:

- 1- Increased capacity to make informed, positive and healthy lifestyle choices
- 2- Increased belief in self and ability to achieve goals
- 3- Increased sense of belonging and ability to take responsibility for the communities of which they are part
- 4- An increase in young people taking steps towards positive destinations in education, employment or training
- 5- Increased number of young people developing key life skills

Our commitment to working together is still strong and since we ourselves are to lose our premises for the last 21 years (our site in the Vennel, Linlithgow is currently up for sale), we would be interested in discussing how the Lowport Centre could work for some of our needs too.

Kind Regards,

Elaine Kinloch

## Acquisition of the Low Port Centre

Dear Heather,

I am delighted, as Chair of the Linlithgow Community Development Trust (LCDT), to write in support of St. John's/ New Well acquiring the Low Port Centre for community use. I know from our informal discussions that you and friends are very open to suggestions that will complement and enhance the community use of the building. In particular, we at LCDT see common areas of activity around at least three topics - active travel and cycle repair use/ activities, tourism ( we think the Cycle Circuit when constructed will bring a new tourist sector to the town ) and the promotion of renewable energy.

All good wishes for a successful outcome on the asset transfer.

Fraser Falconer

Chair, Linlithgow Community Development Trust (LCDT)



**From:** Rob Bell <rob@theheraldstrust.org>

**Sent:** 29 August 2021 15:37

**To:** billyfraser0503@gmail.com

**Subject:** Low Port Centre Linlithgow

Dear Billy,

The Herald's Trust Go Teams & Interns Accommodation- Low Port Centre

Further to our meeting I can confirm we will be withdrawing our note of interest with West Lothian Council for the Low Port Centre.

We will now explore opportunities to be a preferred stakeholder partner to use accommodation and training rooms of Low Port Centre directly through St John's Church.

We had over two hundred visitors join our gospel go teams in 2019 prior to Covid and expect teams to start again in Spring 2022. An average stay is 7 -10 days. We look forward to working with you in the coming months in this partnership.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Gods best,

Robert Bell

Director of Ministry

Heather Begarnie  
Community Development Manager  
St. John's Church  
Linlithgow, West Lothian EH49 7EN



**West Lothian Sailing Club – WLSC**

c/o John Parkinson  
[japzapp@gmail.com](mailto:japzapp@gmail.com)

2<sup>nd</sup> August 2021

Dear Heather

I write with the backing of and on behalf of **West Lothian Sailing Club** with the strongest possible support for the plans in progress to bid for the retention of the Low Port Centre, Linlithgow, by means of a community asset transfer, for future use by the community and organizations that have had the benefit of operating out of the Low Port Centre for many years to date.

**West Lothian Sailing Club** was constituted as a club around the year 2007 and has been in continual operation since then. The club was founded on the back of a highly successful After Schools Sailing Programme based at the Low Port Outdoor Education Centre. This enabled youngsters who had come through the programme to continue exploring and developing their sailing and windsurfing skills in their own time whilst attracting parents and other adults to frame an enthusiastic, fun loving, lively and entertaining community organization with water sports at its heart. The club was always going to use the Low Port Centre as its base owing to a number of key factors:

- Access to sailing/windsurfing equipment
- Access to suitable safety and wet gear clothing
- Access to changing facilities
- Access to a drying room
- Access to toilet facilities
- Access to safety boat and tender
- Access to rooms for committee meetings
- Access to Linlithgow Loch

The club has also used the catering facilities during fund raising events, the accommodation facilities during international exchange visits with clubs visiting us from Germany, the lounge facilities during awards ceremonies, the barbeque area and the sports hall.

**West Lothian Sailing Club** has therefore always had a very close alliance with the Low Port Centre, so much so that its continued existence as a club relies wholly upon it being able to gain access to the above facilities through written agreements and suitable agreed charges levied for their use.

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown has prevented the club from meeting to sail since the close of the sailing season in November 2019 but we have continued as a committee to meet and discuss the ways and means of returning to sailing throughout the period since March 2020.

Despite the Centre being closed, the club is once more about to embark on a late sailing season from 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 now that COVID restrictions have eased.

The restrictions imposed by the Centre being closed has made this arrangement extremely difficult to achieve but we are determined to continue to operate as a sailing club on what is one of the most iconic stretches of water in Scotland. With its stunning backdrop and an ideal sail training environment, Linlithgow Loch provides a fantastic place for families to come together on the water for life giving leisure activities each week.

Continued access to the Low Port Centre as a base for the club will allow it to continue to thrive as a community organization that attracts young and old alike onto the water in a safe and carefully managed fashion and under the governance of the Royal Yachting Association (RYA).

As an absolute minimum, the sailing club needs to be able to retain access to the secure Yard, the Fuel Store, the Peel Gate, the Lochside Shed, the Changing Facilities and the Toilet Facilities to be able to operate at all. Additional preference would be for retaining access to the workshop for carrying out boat repairs and to a committee/club room to serve as a base for club members to meet together on non-sailing occasions. The club would seek to purchase its own vessels in the event that the existing equipment are disposed of through sale or auction.

The club strongly supports the bid to see the Low Port Centre transferred to the community of Linlithgow through a community asset transfer agreement, which would allow the club to continue as a thriving entity for outdoor water sports leisure activities for years to come.

Sadly, West Lothian Sailing Club will not survive in the absence of access to the Low Port Centre and under its constitution would be required to call an AGM or EGM to dissolve the club and dispose of its assets. This would be a catastrophe for the community and for the club members and it is unlikely that sailing would ever take place again under the auspices of such a sailing club as the one currently operating on Linlithgow Loch out of the Low Port Centre.

I hope that this does not come to pass and that instead, through the asset transfer agreement, access to the facilities provided through the Low Port Centre will continue to allow many youngsters, adults, families and friends to learn and enjoy the pleasures and freedoms of sailing on Linlithgow Loch in future years.

With warm regards



Dr. John Parkinson (WLSC Committee Member)  
For and on behalf of WLSC



'Gowan Cottage'  
13 Strawberry Bank,  
Linlithgow  
EH49 6BJ

[lochsidecommittee@yahoo.com](mailto:lochsidecommittee@yahoo.com)  
[lochsideplaygroup@yahoo.com](mailto:lochsideplaygroup@yahoo.com)

St John's Church  
1 Union Road,  
Linlithgow,  
EH49 7DY

Date: 03<sup>rd</sup> August 2021

To Whom it may concern,

### **Letter of support**

Lochside Playgroup, an established community-run charity childcare provider in Linlithgow for children aged 2yrs 3mths – 5 years (the last of 5 playgroups that have operated in the town), would like to voice our support for the proposed Community Asset Transfer of ownership of Low Port Centre to St John's Church and their New Well Charity.

Our Playgroup has used Low Port Centre for approximately 7 years and with a heavy heart we have had to vacate the building due to the closure of the centre. Low Port Centre was such a wonderful space for our children and families to use, particularly due to its accessibility to various high-quality outdoor spaces, which more than satisfied both Scottish Government and Care Inspectorate early years outdoor childcare standards – the children went on daily walks to the peel to immerse themselves in the history of the town whilst they played in the shadows of Linlithgow Palace, they used the swings, fed the swans and also had access to the 'Secret Garden' (a wildlife garden owned by West Lothian Council that Low Port Centre users used as well as Low Port School). In addition to this, the central location of Low Port Centre and its parking provision made it the perfect space for us – we regularly ventured out into the location community and frequently visited the local Independent Bookshop for story time and to choose our books on World Book Day. Whilst we continue to try and negotiate our relocation to other premises in the town we are well aware that no other space in Linlithgow can offer us such a high quality learning environment.

We really feel that the people of Linlithgow, particularly young people and their families, should be able to continue using Low Port Centre for years to come. We would like to be considered as a local community group that would use Low Port Centre when St John's/New Well take ownership of the premises.

We wish St John's the best of luck – as a church which has children, families and the local community at its very core they would be a perfect fit as owners of Low Port Centre going forward.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Greig', written in a cursive style.

Helen Greig, Chair of Trustees, Lochside Playgroup





## ***Inspiring Recovery Together***

***Working towards communities that make addiction recovery real. That means challenging stigma, supporting people to see their own strengths, and creating opportunities for them to rebuild social connections and find purpose and fulfilment in their local communities***

To whom it may concern,

1<sup>st</sup> Step is a local charity that supports individuals and families affected by addiction and mental ill health in their recovery journeys. We provide safe spaces, and opportunities that empower people to improve their lives and make positive contributions to our community.

1<sup>st</sup> Step is now a well-established charity supporting many individuals and families facing challenges and disadvantage. Our successful 1<sup>st</sup> Step Bike project refurbishes donated bikes, and offers a variety of training and participation opportunities that help people develop “recovery capital”, reduce waste and promote healthy, sustainable travel. It was established at the Linlithgow Recycling Centre and has now developed, despite the challenges of COVID-19 to require additional space to be able to support more participants.

We have worked in collaboration with St. John’s Church for a number of years. 1<sup>st</sup> Step have benefited from their support, particularly in pre-COVID-19 times when St. John’s have hosted our monthly sales of refurbished bikes.

**1<sup>st</sup> Step is supportive of the application by St. John’s Church for the asset transfer of the Lowport Centre building in Linlithgow because, in collaboration with other partners it has the potential to become an extremely valuable community asset.**

The Lowport Centre has the potential to provide a friendly, safe environment for people, many of who are very anxious, to attend supported training courses. Our current Recycling Centre base will always be essential to 1<sup>st</sup> Step Bikes to be able to refurbish donated bikes and provide additional training space but, particularly during the winter the Lowport would provide an essential warm, safe, community space enabling us to offer a more supportive environment to beneficiaries and be able to support a higher number of people referred to us by a diverse range of agencies.

The space would also enable us to offer our volunteers further opportunities to repairs bikes for local people and families and thus promoting and enabling cycling in Linlithgow and beyond. This opportunity would create local employment of people far from the workplace and has the potential to improve 1<sup>st</sup> Step Bikes financial sustainability.

Yours faithfully,

Maria Throp

Development Manager

1<sup>st</sup> Step Development Ventures



**439 (Linlithgow) Squadron**  
**Commanding Officer**  
Barkhill Road  
Linlithgow  
EH49 6BY

Tel: 01506 844 532  
Email: oc.439@rafac.mod.gov.uk  
Scottish Charity No: SC024676

25 Aug 21

To whom It may concern,

### **ST JOHN'S CHURCH LINLITHGOW – LOW PORT APPLICATION**

I am writing in full support of St John's church intention to secure ownership of the Low Port centre in Linlithgow. I believe this is a wonderful opportunity to come together as a community and for the RAF Air Cadets to work in partnership with our Church.

Information on the RAF Air Cadets can be found can be found at our national website <https://www.raf.mod.uk/aircadets/>. We are a military youth organisation open to 12–20-year-olds throughout the United Kingdom and we offer a wide variety of opportunities to our Cadets and, in Scotland, our training is accredited by the SQA to ensure our Cadets are awarded recognition of their efforts on their exam certificates.

The aims of the Air Training Corps are:

1. To promote and encourage among young men and women a practical interest in aviation and the Royal Air Force (RAF).
2. To provide training which will be useful in both the Armed Forces and civilian life.
3. To foster a spirit of adventure and to develop the qualities of leadership and good citizenship.

By having access to the Low Port centre, through St Johns, we would be able to deliver these aims in a variable learning environment. We would plan to use the centre for a variety of classroom and adventure training activities. We would be interested in undertaking canoeing and kayaking on Linlithgow Loch while utilising indoor spaces to teach our syllabus and explore key learning areas such as STEM, leadership and citizenship. Additionally, we are part of South East Scotland Wing which yields around 300-400 Cadets. The opportunity to use the centre would be available to these Cadets through my Squadron in partnership with St Johns.

As a Squadron, we accept Cadets throughout the West Lothian & Falkirk council areas. Our Cadets and Staff are from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds; indeed, I would argue that we yield cadets from extreme ends of the spectrum and the importance of having a local training resource, with minimum cost to the participant, is paramount to ensuring equal opportunities for our Cadets.

I would be happy to provide further information should it be required.

Yours faithfully,

**Thomas Reilly**  
**Flight Lieutenant RAFAC**



The Aims of the Air Cadets are:

1. To promote and encourage among young people a practical interest in aviation and the Royal Air Force.
2. To provide training which will be useful both in the Service and civilian life.
3. To foster the spirit of adventure and to develop the qualities of leadership and good citizenship.



61 Beechwood  
Linlithgow  
West Lothian  
EH49 6SE

28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Low Port Centre – Linlithgow Contract Bridge Club**

To whom it may concern,

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Linlithgow Bridge Club held club competitions two evenings a week in the Burgh Halls throughout the year. Separately, we also had league matches against other clubs, with the home matches taking place at various places around Linlithgow, none of which were ideal. I'm fairly new to the club, but I don't believe there has been a settled venue for home league matches for some time.

Since the March 2020 lockdown and the ongoing restrictions, the club has been unable to meet to play face-to-face bridge and so we have resorted to playing club tournaments and matches online. This has been very successful so, with the convenience of playing online, I would imagine some online bridge will continue even after the club is able to meet in person again. It is therefore difficult to estimate precisely the demands our club would have on any venue in future, but I would imagine it would be a minimum of two evenings a week, for a minimum of three hours for each session. It is unlikely to be more than three evenings a week.

For a small club with a small income, renting the Burgh Halls is quite expensive and is the major outgoing from the club. We also use two different rooms for the two different club nights, neither of which is perfect. If there was an alternative venue in the town that had a room suitable for playing bridge, the club would be very interested, particularly if there was a facility for making our own teas and coffees. The room would need to be able to host typically around 24 people seated at 6 small tables, although it may sometimes be higher than that, say, 32 at 8 tables.

If you require any further information, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Graham Vincent  
Secretary Linlithgow Contract Bridge Club

[grahamvincent73@gmail.com](mailto:grahamvincent73@gmail.com)

07824 815008



[www.linlithgowfolk.com](http://www.linlithgowfolk.com)

8 Chalmers' Buildings  
Main Street  
Linlithgow Bridge  
EH49 7EN

July 30<sup>th</sup> 2021

Heather Begarnie  
c/o St John's Church in Linlithgow  
183 High Street  
Linlithgow  
EH49 7EN

Dear Heather

I am writing on behalf of the Linlithgow Folk Festival Association (LFFA) to formally offer our support to St John's Church in its endeavours to obtain an Asset Transfer of the Low Port Centre.

Our Association was first established in 1998 and our main aim is to foster interest and participation in traditional music, dance, and song in all its various forms. To this end, we organise a five-day festival in Linlithgow in the second week of September, as well as music sessions, ceilidhs, and other events throughout the year. We are particularly keen to encourage young people and our Festival organises a Youth Showcase and outdoor stage at the Cross, where under-eighteens can perform at the very heart of the Festival.

Given the dearth of performance space in Linlithgow, we would envisage using the hall at the Low Port Centre for smaller concerts and the various rooms for meetings and workshops. We would like to start music sessions for young people and the Low Port Centre would provide us with facilities to do so, thereby avoiding having to take under-age people into licensed premises.

It would be very beneficial to our Festival – and to the town as a whole - if there were greater visitor accommodation in Linlithgow.

To this end, LFFA would be very supportive of some of the land at the Low Port Centre being used to create an official motorhome stopover site.

A stopover site would increase the range of accommodation options in the town, not only during the folk festival but throughout the year. Every year the LFFA receives queries as to whether motorhome parking is possible in the town, and we know that several motorhomes park informally overnight at the loch during the festival. A stopover site at the east end of the loch would provide visitors with an attractive and quiet place to stay with easy access for the town and would reduce pressure on the already busy loch car parks. It would be a great asset to the Folk Festival, and other events such as Party at the Palace, Jousting, Riding of the Marches etc, to be able to publicise that motorhome parking is available.

With ever-increasing numbers of motorhome and campervan owners keen to explore Scotland, there is growing demand for overnight parking sites. The vast majority of motorhome owners are responsible, prefer to stop in places where parking is permitted, and are happy to pay a modest sum to support communities and locations which offer such parking. A stopover site would generate income for the trust/organisation operating it, as well as generating wider income for the town businesses which would benefit from the overnight custom (bars, restaurants, cafes, shops).

Motorhome stopovers are not fully-fledged caravan sites. Some simply provide a sanctioned place for parking for motorhomes and campervans which are self-sufficient, while others also provide some amenities (e.g., fresh water, grey water disposal, chemical waste disposal point, electric hook-ups).

Some more informal sites with no amenities are free or operate an honesty box scheme (e.g., at West Wemyss harbour, there is a request for donations for the harbour restoration fund, and at Kinlochleven there is a request for donations for general village upkeep). Other sites require payment online or at a staffed community centre (e.g., Lochore Meadows Country Park). A typical fee is £10 for basic amenities such as fresh water or waste disposal, increasing to £15 or £20 with electric hook-ups. This is a list of some of the stopover sites currently operating in Scotland: <https://www.ukmotorhomes.net/uk-stopovers/motorhome-stopover-listing/#Scotland>

The members of the Folk Festival Association wish you every success in your endeavours and look forward to hearing of a successful outcome.

Yours aye

Murdoch Kennedy

Director

Linlithgow Folk Festival Association



3 Aug 2021

Dear Heather,

I am writing in my capacity as a Trustee of Linlithgow Scotch Hop Scottish Charity (SCIO) SC046165.

Low Port Centre has been the wet weather venue for our annual programme of traditional Scottish Dancing for many years.

Our programme takes place each year for 5 Wednesdays during July and August and offers a dance programme for all in the Courtyard of Linlithgow Palace. On evenings when weather forecast is poor, we decant to Low Port and use the large hall, one of the upper floor rooms, associated communal corridor space and WC provision. We attract a wide range of participants from all over the world as well as people from across central Scotland. Some of these dancers have been regulars for years. We attract High quality Scottish Dance bands who are keen to take part.

Low Port Sports Hall is the only Hall of suitable size for these events in Linlithgow that is easily accessible from the Railway Station and town centre Bus Stops. It is easily located by visitors and strangers to the town and close enough to the Palace to enable visitors to change direction on wet evenings. It's loss would require us to reduce the number of participants on wet evenings and result in reduction of ticket sales.

Linlithgow Scotch Hop would unreservedly support any initiative that offered continuity of use into the future. On behalf of the Trustees and participants we wish you well with your efforts to take control of the premises.

Regards,

Bryan McAlister, Trustee,  
12 The Maltings, Linlithgow 07732600160

Our Website can be viewed at [www.Scotchhop.org.uk](http://www.Scotchhop.org.uk), also on Facebook





**Re: LETTER OF SUPPORT**

Linlithgow String Orchestra  
c/o Helen Greig  
'Gowan Cottage'  
13 Strawberry Bank,  
Linlithgow  
EH49 6BJ

[linlithgowstringorchestra@gmail.com](mailto:linlithgowstringorchestra@gmail.com)

St John's Church  
1 Union Road,  
Linlithgow,  
EH49 7DY

Date: 03<sup>rd</sup> August 2021

To Whom it may concern,

Linlithgow String Orchestra would like to voice our support for the proposed Community Asset Transfer of ownership of Low Port Centre to St John's Church and their New Well Charity.

The Low Port Centre is such a wonderful space that the people of Linlithgow should be able to continue using it for years to come. In terms of Linlithgow String Orchestra, we would like to be considered as a local community group that would use Low Port Centre for our rehearsals and/or concerts. This would be of benefit to the players in the orchestra as the high-quality facilities on offer, a namely the size of the hall and parking, would provide us with extra space to grow and to potentially evolve into a Symphony Orchestra. Having concerts at Low Port Centre could also bring members of the community into the centre.

We wish St John's all the best as there would be no better custodian of Low Port Centre than a church which has community at its very core.

Kind regards,

Helen Greig

President, Linlithgow String Orchestra

70 Kettil'stoun Mains  
Linlithgow  
EH49 6SL

West Lothian Council,  
With Reference to –  
The Low Port Centre,  
Linlithgow

28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Sir, Madam

I am a member of The Linlithgow Players. We are an amateur dramatic group based in Linlithgow.

During a "normal" year we present several productions, all aimed at the Linlithgow community. Our year starts with a Pantomime, involving young people from local schools and staged at the Academy theatre. Followed closely by a Spring Production and this has been staged at various venues including Donaldsons' School and the Star and Garter. We then prepare ourselves for full costume re-enactments at Linlithgow Palace. Our Autumn show, composed of several short plays is a very popular 'dinner' theatre – normally staged at Linlithgow Primary School.

For all of these shows we used rooms at The Low Port Centre for evening rehearsal. At least one room twice a week, 7.30 – 10pm, for most weeks in a year.

In the future we would like to be able to use the Low Port Centre as follows:

- as rehearsal space for our productions – two evenings a week, 7.30pm – 10pm, normally Tuesdays and Thursdays. Occasionally, for our Autumn show, we will need an extra room twice a week.
- as rehearsal space for larger productions, using the hall or canteen area. Especially when we are rehearsing the Pantomime and have a cast of up to 40.
- as a space to offer drama classes and workshops for Linlithgow residents of all ages. These would probably be at weekends.
- finally, we would like to use the Low Port Centre as a theatre. It is very likely that the Academy and Linlithgow Primary School halls will not be available for audiences for the foreseeable future, and this will have an incalculable impact on local amateur theatre, both musical and drama. If the Low Port Centre is transferred as an asset for the community, we would support the purchase of portable staging and lighting equipment in order that the large hall, and other large areas of Low Port Centre, could be, occasionally, transformed into much needed theatre space.

If you need any further information from me, I can be contacted at this email address, [susanvizard@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:susanvizard@yahoo.co.uk).

Yours truly,

*S Vizard*

Committee member – The Linlithgow Players

78 Acredales  
Linlithgow,  
West Lothian  
EH49 6JA

27<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Heather Begarnie  
Community Development Manager  
St John's Church,  
183 High Street,  
Linlithgow,  
West Lothian,  
EH49 7EN

Dear Heather,

Re: Support from Linlithgow Speakers for the Asset Transfer of the Low Port Centre to St.John's Church

Further to our previous correspondence, I am writing to you in my capacity as Treasurer of Linlithgow Speakers, to add our sincere support for the Asset Transfer of the Low Port Centre to St.John's Church.

Linlithgow Speakers (<https://linlithgowspeakers.org.uk>) is a not-for-profit volunteer group which is part of the Toastmasters International (<https://www.toastmasters.org>) organisation. We aim to provide a safe, low-cost and encouraging forum in which members can develop their communication and leadership skills.

Since our formation, in 2005, we have supported well over 100 members from very diverse backgrounds and occupations, living not only in the Linlithgow community but throughout West Lothian and beyond. Many of our members have reported advancements in their careers due, in part, to their Toastmasters experience with Linlithgow Speakers.

In 2008, we moved from our initial location to use The Lounge at The Lowport Centre, where we continued as a customer until 2019. The Lowport Centre proved to be an ideal location for us as it offered the following benefits...

Central location	Spacious, well-lit and heated room with audio/visual equipment
Car parking	Internet access
Wheelchair access	Low-cost

Not only did we use The Lowport Centre for our regular fortnightly meetings, we also hosted numerous Toastmasters contests which brought people, often upwards of 50, from all over Scotland to Linlithgow.

Following various changes in management at The Lowport and accompanying price increases, we were unable to sustain our usage and left to new, smaller and less ideal premises, in 2019.

Given the potential ongoing social distancing requirements of Covid, we feel a return to a larger space would be wiser for our existing and new members. Hence our desire to return to The Lounge at The Lowport Centre and our sincere support for a swift and successful Asset Transfer of the Low Port Centre to St.John's Church.

Wishing you and everyone at St.John's Church success with your Asset Transfer application.

Yours sincerely



James Boyd  
Treasurer, Linlithgow Speakers

**Subject:** Low Port

**From:** paulrendall@blueyonder.co.uk

**To:** heather@stjohnslinlithgow.org

**Date Sent:** Friday, August 6, 2021 7:55:34 PM GMT+01:00

**Date Received:** Friday, August 6, 2021 7:55:35 PM GMT+01:00

---

Hi Heather

It was with much sadness that I read about the demise of the Low Port Centre. I've run Enjoy-a-Ball in Linlithgow for 16 years now and run many a childrens party at Low Part. It's a wonderful facility with a great games hall, break out rooms for the birthday snack and ample parking. It's an ideal for many activities and just the type of asset that every community needs as we battle growing obesity and falling childrens activity levels.

It would be an absolute travesty for the town to lose such an important asset and I wish you every success in your campaign.

Once gone it can't be resurrected and a long term view needs to be taken to safeguard the well being of future generations

Good luck

Paul

VOTED BEST UK ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN AGED 5 TO 12 IN 2010, 2012 & 2013

We also offer children's parties and holiday camps!

Paul Rendall

57 Baberton Mains Wood

Edinburgh

EH14 3EZ

Tel: 07932 944252 / 0333 433 0845

Email: paul.rendall@enjoy-a-ball.com

Web: <http://www.enjoy-a-ball.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/-!/pages/Enjoy-a-Ball-South-Queensferry-Linlithgow/139843829390854>

Click here to see Enjoy-a-Ball featuring on the CBeebies show Mighty Mites!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGuMeKz4IW4>



10<sup>th</sup> August, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing today in support of St John's Church Community Asset Transfer Request for the Low Port Centre here in Linlithgow. I can't think of a better organisation than St John's to be the curators of this important community asset in Linlithgow.

For a town of our size, we simply don't have that many spaces that can be used for community groups or events, and we would love to see Low Port Centre being maintained for such a purpose.

I founded the West Lothian Schools Book Festival in 2015, it is currently homeless as the marquee where it was held for five years doesn't look like it's coming back for the Civic Festival. In 2019 - the last time we ran the festival in a physical space - it lasted for three days: more than 1200 West Lothian school pupils attended a book festival, for free, right here on their doorstep. We are hoping to run the festival in a physical space again in 2022, and the Low Port Centre would be an ideal location.

The festival is just one example of how we would use the Low Port Centre for community-based events that are good for everyone here in Linlithgow and the surrounding area, and this is why I am happy to fully support the Community Asset Transfer request as we know how many other groups and organisations would benefit from the space.

On a personal level, I grew up in Linlithgow and was lucky enough to enjoy all the positives of having such a wonderful community asset right here in the centre of town, to think that future generations of children and people of all ages won't be able to use the space for similar activities is just unbelievable.

If there is anything else we can do to support the St John's bid, we are happy to do so.

Many thanks for your time,

Sally Pattle.

**Sally Pattle**

**Manager**

**Far From The Madding Crowd**

**Linlithgow's Award-Winning Bookshop**

**Best Independent Bookshop in Scotland, 2017 & 2021**

**[www.maddingcrowdlinlithgow.com](http://www.maddingcrowdlinlithgow.com)**

**Subject:** Low Port Centre

**From:** First Adventures Parents Forum <faparentsforum@mail.com>

**To:** heather@stjohnslinlithgow.org,jahartnack@yahoo.co.uk

**Date Sent:** Monday, August 9, 2021 6:54:15 AM GMT+01:00

**Date Received:** Monday, August 9, 2021 6:54:16 AM GMT+01:00

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Dear Heather,

We are writing in support of St Johns' Church application for a community asset transfer of the Low Port Centre.

The First Adventures Parents' Forum have used the Low Port Centre for our parties for some years. Every year (pre-pandemic) the Parents Forum host parties for the parents and children of the nursery, which are a rare opportunity for parents to meet and they assist the beginning of some very important childhood (and adult) friendships. The central location and size make it perfect. The year that the hire charges were increased by West Lothian Leisure we looked at alternative venues but they all had significant disadvantages such as excluding people without a car, already being fully booked for weekly activities or not big enough.

The last couple of years that we used the Low Port Centre we felt that the management was very poor. Some simple changes, some vision and some good management skills would make the Low Port Centre thrive again, and we feel that based on St Johns' activities elsewhere in the town the church would have the ability to do this.

We very much hope that West Lothian Council will see the value that you will be able to give this venue once again.

Yours sincerely,

First Adventures Parents' Forum

Jennifer Black, Mark Darragh, Dan Leeming, Ross Park, Mari O'Neill, Ruth Mordue

To Whom it May Concern, West Lothian Council

I have learned from the people of Linlithgow, and from senior figures in Scottish politics and culture, that the future of the Low Port Centre is now in doubt – and with it the fate of the mural painted directly upon its wall by my late father, James Cumming RSA RSW.

This is a work of incalculable value. It was his last and largest masterpiece, the award-winning glory of his celebrated career and ‘the triumph of his mature style’, in the words of the Scotsman’s art critic. Although his paintings are in museums all over the world, from the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as well as numerous private collections, this work is unique. It is his only public mural.

It was commissioned for the citizens of Linlithgow precisely to represent their lives as a community – within a community centre. It is a highly original depiction of the very people who would look at it, those who would come in and out of the centre, who would walk up and down the staircase. Past, present and future citizens are united in this great riverbank vision beneath a crescent moon, where time expands to embrace old and young across the centuries. Not for nothing is it called *The Community: A Festival of Time*.

A mural is an exceptional form of communication. It speaks to those who pass, often by chance; it brings art to those who might not ordinarily see it. It can represent a better world – as in Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel – or fix images in the mind, in the case of Leonardo’s Last Supper. And it can reflect society back to itself, as at the Low Port Centre. Cumming’s mural is not just a work of immense poetic imagination, it is also a historic record of humanity, from the Scottish veteran to the future astronaut.

Murals cannot be treated in the same way as other images because they are painted directly on to the wall. They cannot be separate from the substance on which they are painted; they cannot be taken down like a picture in a frame. To move a mural is to move the whole wall. This has only very rarely been achieved in the history of art, generally in the case of Renaissance murals by Mantegna and Piero della Francesca. It requires million dollar funding and extremely specialised technology.

Any attempt to move James Cumming’s mural in tact upon its wall, from the Low Port Centre, would require this exorbitantly expensive technology.

And any attempt *without* it, on the part of a future owner, would be an unprecedented act of cultural vandalism – for it would amount to nothing less than the destruction of a great and famed work of post-war Scottish art.

For further context, I am attaching the relevant extract from a book on the art of James Cumming and an article by Sandy Wood at the Royal Scottish Academy.

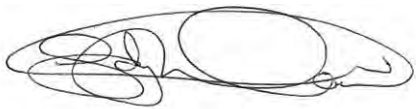
I appeal to you to reconsider all attempts to lose control of this historic building and its mural to a private buyer. Above all, I – and all the signatories below - ask that you guarantee to protect this mural in perpetuity, as a priceless asset and a landmark of cultural heritage, which is now being considered for its Historic Environment Scotland listing.

*Laura E M Cumming*

**Laura Cumming, Chief Art Critic, The Observer**

*Joyce W. Cairns*

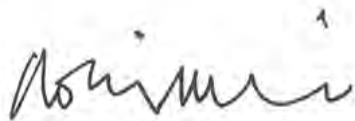
**Dr Joyce W Cairns PRSA, RSA President**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandy Wood', with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

**Sandy Wood, RSA Collections Curator**

*Robbie Bushe*

**Robbie Bushe RSA, RSA Secretary**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Webster', with a small '1' above the final 'i'.

**Robin Webster RSA, RSA Treasurer**



the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million to 13.5 million, and the number of people aged 75 and over has increased from 4.5 million to 6.5 million (ONS 2002).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people, and the UK Government has set out a strategy for the 21st century (Department of Health 2001). The strategy is based on the principle of 'active ageing', which is defined as 'the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation in society, and security in old age' (Department of Health 2001, p. 1).

The strategy is based on three pillars: health, participation and security. The Department of Health (2001) states that 'the aim of the strategy is to ensure that older people are able to live as long as possible in good health, and to participate fully in society' (p. 1). The strategy is based on the principle of 'active ageing', which is defined as 'the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation in society, and security in old age' (Department of Health 2001, p. 1).

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