

Appendix 1: Executive Summary – Business Plan for New Town Hall development by All Roads Lead to Whithorn Charitable Trust

The proposal is to acquire and completely renew the New Town Hall for a mixture of community, sporting and tourism uses. Existing community uses are important to Whithorn's social fabric and the Hall is the base for the championship-winning Braveheart's Boxing Club. The Hall currently does not adequately accommodate the mix of sporting and community users nor attract new users.

The new proposal is to insert a fully accessible mezzanine level in the Hall, to accommodate a sports suite, with dedicated boxing area and a community gym. The ground floor accommodate existing uses, with brand new catering kitchen, but also be adaptable – for instance, for exhibitions by Whithorn's lively arts community – and for public hire. To the rear, the "supper room" would be demolished for a two storey self-contained pilgrim/walkers' bunkhouse to cater for walkers from the new Whithorn Way route from Glasgow, with galley kitchen, bike storage, and laundry. The Hall would be managed by a full time sportsman/manager and supported financially by a mix of bookings, gym memberships and revenue from accommodation, bike hire and laundrette.

Benefits

The current facility has not been upgraded in decades and user income is falling, so that costs of maintenance will rise while income declines. The cost saving to the Council would be on-going maintenance plus annual employment costs of caretaker.

- Whithorn Bravehearts are one of the country's most successful boxing clubs with national and international titles to their name; bespoke facilities will offer the chance for 7-day training and more sporting wins
- The New Town Hall is an important Listed Building within the Outstanding Conservation Area and the proposal presents the possibility of preserving the building for the future
- Existing users are accommodated within the scheme and facilities upgraded to suit their needs; new hires can be attracted with a catering kitchen
- Resilience facilities, such as gas cookers, automatic generator and defibrillator, will be incorporated, with the bunkhouse being readily converted to an emergency shelter
- Energy costs and installations have been carefully considered and the carbon footprint of the building will be much reduced
- Whithorn's health record is poor, even by standards of the region, which lags behind the rest of Scotland : the possibility of a community gym with equipment to suit all ages and abilities, with accessible lift, will offer the chance to improve public health

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- This project dovetails with the Whithorn Way project, which is well advanced and will open up the 127 mile ancient pilgrimage route from Glasgow to Whithorn; this project will meet the need of long-distance walkers for low cost accommodation and provide bike hire and laundry facilities once in Whithorn.
- Walkers travel light and slow and will make use of local shops and attractions, contributing to the sustainability of Whithorn's retail economy and town centre; meal packs for pilgrims reservable in advance from local shops will sustain food outlets
- The Whithorn Way project supports and increases the footfall for other initiatives such as the Whithorn Trust, Biosphere, Dark Sky Park, Book Town, and Creetown bunkhouse.
- The mix of income streams – bookings, memberships and social enterprise at the bunkhouse, has the real possibility of supporting a full time employee, part time cleaners for accommodation, and of long term sustainability.
- The project has been well-researched with local support on the basis of a full community consultation, feasibility study by ARPL Architects, and a community study trip to other successful community-run bunkhouses operating as social enterprises
- The Whithorn Way, which will leverage other grant funding for a brand new marketing strategy, has the potential to achieve national recognition as one of Scotland's Great Trails; it will link Whithorn with the centre of Glasgow (the Cathedral) via dozens of heritage sites associated with pilgrimage to Whithorn over 1000 years. The Council has the possibility, through this Asset Transfer, of participating in a landmark project by helping achieve a national profile for Whithorn and the area and bring benefits to other communities along the 127 mile way.
- The Board of the All Roads Lead to Whithorn charitable trust has a variety of experience to manage a project of this scale and are supported by a wider steering group of users, as well as partnerships with other organisations such as Creative Whithorn and the Whithorn Trust
- The project will leverage approximately £1.8m in grants, and the ARLW Board is keen to see contractors within D&G involved in the build.