

ToRs for short-term project consultant(s) to look at options for re-purposing Torridon Primary School buildings

Background

In November 2021 an action group consisting of community groups and other organisations was formed under the Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC). The group undertook a community survey, and after an extensive process of consultation, a development plan has now been finalised and can be found at <https://www.tkcc.scot>. The plan covers the Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council area which is classed as very remote rural. Torridon District Community Association (TDCA) has become the organisation under which the plan would be implemented. The action group has become a Development Plan sub-committee of TDCA (hereinafter called the sub-committee) and consists of 5 volunteer members who will have a specific responsibility for supporting the implementation of the Development Plan.

One of the key issues that arose out of the Community Development Plan consultations was the need to re-purpose Torridon Primary School, which has now been mothballed for 13 years. The Highland Council Education Department (the owner of the building) is currently conducting consultations on the future of the school but the expectation is that the decision will be to formally agree its closure. This decision is likely to be finalised by early 2024 and the Highland Council have indicated a willingness to consider a community asset transfer (CAT) if there is a sustainable, costed plan in place for the building's future use. Moving quickly on this is important not only to secure the building's future as a resource for the community but also to halt the deterioration of its fabric, which after 13 years of little maintenance is beginning to show serious signs of wear. The buildings consist of the school itself and the former school house, and thus represent a significant potential asset that could be used for community benefit. A layout and site plan are attached. It is sited in the village of Fasaig in a prime location close to the doctor's surgery and the community centre and would be easily accessible to all communities in the area and to visitors.

The consultancy will consider three main areas of interest for the school buildings: affordable housing; a broad-based educational facility; and the provision of employment, goods and a local meeting place through creation of one or more small scale businesses that will provide specific benefits to a wide section of the community. The outcome of the consultancy will be a clear recommendation on the most viable option including capital and revenue costs, likely funding options and revenue generation potential, and proposed management structures and operating modalities.

There is also a plot to the side and rear of the school premises, part of which has been used as a playpark (hereinafter referred to as "the playpark"), it is owned by Highland Council Housing Department and is on the Housing Revenue Account. The community would also wish to acquire this as a CAT and both this and the application for the school CAT should ideally run in parallel. A plan is attached. It is important to note that vehicle access to the school buildings is at present only available via the playpark.

Initial discussions have been held with the Community Regeneration Fund, Scottish Land Fund and with the Lottery Community Ownership Fund on funding for a redevelopment of the school. Other funding avenues will be explored as necessary. The sub-committee has also taken advice from the Highland Council (HC), Highlands and Island Enterprise (HIE), Communities Housing Trust (CHT), the Scottish Community Development Centre, the Development Trusts Associations Scotland (DTAS) and the Community Ownership Support Service (COSS).

Purpose of the contract

The objective of the consultancy is to enable the TDCA to develop a sustainable proposal for the school buildings and for the playpark that would help meet some of the community needs identified in the Community Development Plan, while at the same time realising an income stream that would secure their long-term viability. Having such a proposal in place by early 2024 should enable the TDCA to make a strong case to the Highland Council for community asset transfers. The consultancy will be in three parts, the first looking at a range of options for the school buildings, based on identified priorities; the second developing a detailed

feasibility study for the option deemed most appropriate and viable; and the third concerning the playpark. Consultations with the community will be important throughout. After consideration of the final reports, the TDCA will formulate the request for the two CATs.

The required outputs are:

Part 1: an options paper for the school buildings, including

Options appraisal

- To look at four broad options for re-purposing the Torricon school and make recommendations as to preferred uses. This should include:
 - Consideration of converting the entire school site (school itself and school house) into affordable housing.
 - A mixed-use option, with the school house being turned into affordable accommodation and the school building itself used as a community asset.
 - Turning the buildings into a broad education centre/community space, which could include a range of activities for both residents and visitors. A number of specific suggestions have been made as part of the consultation process and the sub-committee will share these with the consultant(s).
 - Developing the buildings as a small-scale business venue that will be of benefit to the community, providing needed services and/or a year-round meeting place for local residents. Again, a number of specific suggestions have already been made and will be shared.

Options for the building should not divert activity from other community assets or impact on their sustainability.

In considering the options the consultant will be expected to show how the options will benefit people from across the community, with no one being excluded or disadvantaged from benefitting from the project. They should also consider its environmental impact.

Ownership and management structure

- To research and report on various ownership and management options and recommend the most suitable for this project. This would include analysis of the willingness or otherwise of existing institutions to take on management of the re-purposed school and/or associated accommodation units or of the formation of a new organisation. The skills and resources within the proposed organisation, or within the community if a new organisation is proposed, to manage such a project should be assessed and recommendations made for addressing any gaps in skills and resources.

Technical assessment

- To assess the condition of the buildings, their structural integrity and likely repairs needed to meet basic health and safety requirements;
- To prepare initial ball-park figures for the re-purposing of the buildings for the proposed options.

Feasibility and business planning

- To review the appropriate business model for running the options identified above.
- To assess the risks associated with the proposed models of ownership and management of the asset, and recommend appropriate mitigation and management of these risks.
- To review funding availability for the proposed project, including the necessary works to convert it into its new use.
- To make broad financial projections for the options being proposed including the costs of running and managing the asset and the likely income that could be generated from the asset.

Community consultation

- To consult members of the public and local tourism, business and community organisations to raise awareness of the project; gather and report on local perceptions of the project; explore ideas for use

with the local community; understand local need for new facilities and the parameters that will likely determine take-up of the proposed facilities.

- To present options, including a realistic assessment of management requirements and of funding and revenue raising possibilities, for community consideration, followed by a community meeting and discussion around these.

The sub-committee and the TDCA will consider both the consultants' report and discussion at the community meeting and a decision will be made as to which option to pursue, this will then trigger part 2 of the consultancy

Part 2: a detailed feasibility study and final community meeting for the school buildings

- Building on part 1, to prepare a detailed feasibility study over a five-year period for the preferred option. This should incorporate:
 - initial acquisition costs.
 - capital costs to re-purpose the school to create the proposed facilities, including technical fees associated with the works.
 - potential funding sources for capital works.
 - access options if access via the playpark is not granted.
 - ongoing maintenance costs for the project.
 - projection of likely revenues (source and amount).
 - projection of operating costs, including staff costs.
 - the proposed management structure and operating modalities.
- A risk analysis for the entire project over a five-year period should be prepared, including an environmental assessment and measures to mitigate any negative outcomes from the proposed re-purposing, including the likely impact of additional traffic generated.
- A final public meeting to report back and discuss the proposed plan should be held within 2 weeks of submitting the feasibility study. Any final amendments to the study should be made within one week of that meeting.

Part 3: the playpark

- Building on work already done by members of the sub-committee, the consultant(s) should prepare the case for a CAT of the playpark.
- In addition, in case the CAT of the playpark does not go ahead the consultant(s) should outline the options for using part of the playpark site for access to the school.

Methodology

The consultants will also be expected to develop their proposals through a participatory methodology that engages actively with the community. The use of an inception report as part of the methodology (see management of the contract, below) will help ensure that the consultant(s) and sub-committee share the same understanding of what is required.

Key Skills

The consultant/consultancy team will be required to demonstrate skills and experience in the following:

- Technical expertise in re-purposing existing assets, including assessment of the structure of buildings and experience of designing conversions.
- Experience of working with community organisations involved in owning and managing assets.
- Proven ability to listen to and communicate effectively with members of community organisations and with the wider community.
- Solid experience of preparing proposals and business plans to be used in support of funding applications.
- The applicant(s) must be willing to travel and spend time in the Torrion and Kinlochewe area.

Management of the contract.

The consultancy should take place between early October and mid February in order to fit with the funder's timelines. The sub-committee will manage the consultancy and will continue to be actively engaged in

development of proposals for the repurposing of the school and the consultant(s) will be expected to work closely with this group. The outputs outlined above should be submitted to Chris Johnson: mail4chrisj@gmail.com with a copy to Sally Cook, sallyathome@gmail.com. The outputs should be in printable electronic copy. The information gathered during the consultancy, including draft and final reports, shall remain the sole property of the TDCA.

Timeline

The anticipated timetable for the study, dependent on securing funding, is

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| • Appointment of consultant | 1 October |
| • Submission of inception report | end Oct |
| • Submission of part 1 (options) report | end Nov |
| • Community meeting on part 1 report | mid Dec |
| • Submission of part 2 feasibility study | end Jan |
| • Final community meeting | early Feb |
| • Final submission | mid Feb |

Any slippage to planned timescales must be highlighted with corrective action outlined.

Remuneration and conditions

The work is offered as a fixed-term contract, dependent on securing funding to carry out the work.

- The successful candidate(s) will be self-employed and responsible for their own tax, national insurance and personal insurance
- Payments will be made as follows: 20% on receipt and acceptance of the inception report, 40% on receipt and acceptance of Phase 1 options paper, and 40% upon acceptance of the final report (phase 2 feasibility study).

Procedures for tendering

The response to this brief must be submitted by 17.00 on Monday 7th August 2003 to Mat Webster, Chair TDCA, e-mail: chair@lochtorridoncentre.co.uk with a copy to webstermat@gmail.com

Submissions should include:

- Name, contact details of the lead consultant.
- Background, skills and knowledge of the lead consultant and (if applicable) other members of the team.
- An outline of how they propose to undertake the consultancy, including how they intend to engage with the community.
- Breakdown of costs for conducting this study, including number of days allocated per task, all fees, expenses, charges, meetings, presentations and interviews, including VAT.
- A timetable showing the various milestones including the anticipated dates of submission of draft and final reports.
- Examples of similar tasks/studies undertaken recently.
- Names and contact details of people from two separate organisations for whom similar studies have been undertaken, one to be within the past year, and from whom references can be taken.

If you wish to discuss this opportunity before submitting a tender, please contact either Chris Johnson: mail4chrisj@gmail.com or Sally Cook, sallyathome@gmail.com

Submissions will be evaluated on a quality/price basis (70:30) and will include the following:

- (i) Understanding of the brief;
- (ii) Methodology and approach;
- (iii) Skills and experience of the team;
- (iv) Price