

Dufftown and District Community Association – Clock Tower Proposal

Overview:

Dufftown & District Community Association was established in 1995 through the amalgamation of two groups and is the largest charity on Dufftown with 6 key sub groups that help structure and convey their works. The proposal is to renovate Dufftown clock tower into community and commercial spaces with visitor signposting and tourist information station on the ground floor and holiday accommodation on the upper levels. On completion of the capital works the project will deliver strong economic, social and physical regeneration outcomes. The indicative total cost is £831,129 with a request from RCGF of £608,860 and £222,269 (£177,000 HES indicative and £45,269 other) match funding

Background: Dufftown and District Community Association is an open membership, community owned and run development organisation in Dufftown. It was established in 1995 and holds charitable status.

DDCA purchased the clock tower from Moray Council in 2020 and consulted with community groups in Dufftown to establish priorities for the period 2021 – 2026. This consultation led to the publication of a 5-year Community Action Plan and restoration of the clock tower was identified as one of the top priorities. A further community priorities exercise carried out in November 2022 confirmed the restoration of the clock tower was again the number one priority for improving Dufftown.

What this project will actually deliver & regeneration outcomes

The restoration of the clock tower will create a long term financially sustainable and flexible facility which will serve the local community and become a destination for visitors. The ground floor will contain a visitor information centre and a shared space for community group usage and commercial use. The remaining three floors will be converted into a 1 bedroom apartment in order to attract visitors and generate income.

Economic – During the pandemic several shops closed in the town centre and Dufftown currently offers less tourist beds than similar towns per head of population. There is little on offer in terms of unique holiday accommodation in the area. Due to its central location the clock tower will work as a hub for existing community and visitor experiences, signposting to other tourist venues and increasing footfall within the town. Walking tourism is increasingly popular and Dufftown benefits both from being on the Isla Way and also having developed its own walking trails many of which start and end at the clock tower.

Environmental – The clock tower is a redundant Grade B listed building and DDCA aim to find environmentally friendly design solutions which are mindful of this during the restoration process. A conservation accredited architect has been appointed and the concept design will seek to minimise any environmental impact. Traditional and natural materials will be used where possible and renewable energy options will be explored.

Social – The project will ensure that the building with its heritage will once again sit at the core of community life, offering a space to meet and interact. The restoration of the clock tower provides an opportunity for the local community to shape their own future; increasing the sense of pride and a shared identity. Community groups will benefit from subsidised hire rates to use the ground floor area, increasing the resilience and capacity of the third sector. The project will promote co-design of local asset use, improve the sense of community identity and cohesion and improve community networks.

This project is part of wider regeneration ambitions as the clock tower restoration is one of the top priorities in the Moray Council's Dufftown Town Centre Improvement Plan 2022. Furthermore, DDCA is Dufftown's anchor organisation and is part of the Moray Speyside

Tourism Forum. DDCA have developed a close relationship with HIE who part fund their community developer and have commissioned business plan work. Partnerships are central to the success of the ground floor hub and Speyside Youth and four other local community groups have noted interest in using the proposed community space.

The proposed future use of the clock tower complements wider ambitions related to making Speyside a unique visitor destination, building on our heritage and tailoring it to increasing demand for bespoke experiences.

Total Cost

£845,000 with a request from RCGF of an estimated £608,860 and match funding to be confirmed in due course.

Timeframes for securing other funding

April - May 2023: project development funding: Architectural Heritage Fund (12/04/2023), William Grant Foundation and Dorenell Community Benefit Fund (23/05/2023).

HES - 40% restoration capital cost funding – 177k (31/10/2023)

Timescales and objectives

May 2023 - May 2024 Development work - Architectural and professional services

May 2024 - March 2025 Repair and restoration work

April 2025 – March 2026 Alterations and decoration work