

**Business case for acquisition
of
Garmouth Water Tower
by
Garmouth & Kingston Community
Association**

**Garmouth & Kingston Community Association
February 2022**

Background:

Currently the Water Tower is leased by the Garmouth & Kingston Amenities Association (SC004777) from Moray Council. The lease was for 50 years starting in 1991. As such there are under 20 years remaining of the lease.

Garmouth and Kingston are twin villages which in practice operate as a single community. In the recent past they have lost their last shop and their last hotel/restaurant/pub. There is a bus service during the daytime weekdays but none in the evenings or at weekends. The population of the area is disproportionately elderly compared with the national average.

The Amenities Association (and its successor the Garmouth & Kingston Community Association) exist to provide a range of services and opportunities for the people of the villages.

The Amenities Association is an unincorporated charity. It has a track-record of successful operation going back over many decades. Its most recent project was to acquire funding that enabled the purchase of a cottage in Garmouth and convert it into a Community Hub. While the purchase price and some running costs were covered by grant, the vast majority of the conversion works were carried about by volunteers who collectively donated many hundreds of hours of their time. The Hub project was completed within budget despite unforeseen costs arising from disability access and fire safety and despite all of the complexities and delays caused by the pandemic.

The Water Tower was used as the villages' water supply from about 1900 to the 1960s. It was built at the instigation of a committee composed of local residents but in due course its management was taken over by the Laich of Moray Water Board. When it was no longer used its ownership passed to Moray Council who were considering selling it to a developer when community pressure led to the granting of a lease so that it could be retained as a local landmark and amenity area.

The Water Tower stands on the highest point above Garmouth and Kingston and is visible from many directions. Adjacent to it is a grouping of standing stones that it is thought date from about 1500BC.

It stands on the Moray Coastal path long-distance route and is close to the Speyside Way long-distance path. Garmouth also stands on National Cycle Route 1. It is frequently visited by locals, walkers and visitors. It has been used a venue for weddings, because of the spectacular backdrop the view provides for photographs.

During the 30 years plus since the lease was granted the Community has maintained the Water Tower at its own expense with no access to grant funding. This has included repairing the harling, painting the harling and the woodwork, cutting the grass around the Tower, maintaining benches, keeping the access path clear, and installing an information board.

However, any work carried out was subject to Moray Council approval.

The current situation

The Amenities Association is currently undertaking work to transfer its assets to the newly created Community Association (SC050545) that is in a SCIO format.

As well as owned properties to transfer we have leases, including the one on the Water Tower, which needs to be transferred – or to be replaced by ownership.

This then is an appropriate moment to consider seeking to acquire the ownership of the Water Tower.

The rationale for seeking to acquire the Water Tower

The Water Tower, if acquired, would become one of a quintet of properties owned by the Community Association – the others being the Village Park (which is just the other side of the Moray Coastal Trail footpath from the Water Tower, albeit at a lower level), the Village Hall (which is at the other side of the Park), Mill Lane amenity land (which is next to the Village Hall) and the Community Hub (which is about 5 minutes walk from each of the others). Together they represent a fantastic resource for the villages, each playing its distinct part in services and activities for the local population.

The distinctive role of the Water Tower would continue to be as the main local vantage point (with spectacular views across the Moray Firth to the east and to the north) but would be further developed to enhance the experience of visitors (who are not well served in the area) and to provide an enhanced amenity area for local people.

Specific further developments would depend on the aspirations of local people and what was allowable under the restriction of the local plan and national planning regulations – but would include:

- enhanced interpretation boards
- improved landscaping
- upgraded footpath signage

and could potentially include:

- a (possibly seasonal) venue for refreshments for passing walkers
- covered seating
- a diorama
- a ground-mounted telescope for use scanning the scenery, bird-watching and star-gazing

Benefits of the proposal

If we had ownership we foresee the following specific benefits:

- more control on how we maintain the site
- more sense of community buy-in as the property would be community owned
- the opportunity, as owners, to apply for grant funding that as leasees might not be open to us

- the ability to upgrade the location to include: further information boards to highlight the history and culture of the villages; improved landscaping; upgraded footpaths
- the possibility of creating: covered seating; a diorama; a ground-mounted telescope; a seasonal venue for refreshments for walkers
- the long-term certainty that the site can be retained for community and amenity use

Arising from these would be the generic benefits of encouraging recreation and exercise, and stimulating interest in the local heritage, flora and fauna benefits and thereby benefiting the health and well-being of both local residents and local residents

Capacity to manage the proposed acquisition

The Association has 12 elected trustees.

These people have a wide range of experience, including:

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The former Amenities Association (SC004777) has a long track record of success.

Most recently it raised funds to purchase a cottage and organised its refurbishment and conversion into a community hub, with much of the work being carried out by volunteers. The project was completed within budget and within the anticipated timescale.

In carrying through projects the one area where we have paid for professional support is in relation to legal matters – specifically in relation to conveyancing and related actions. Issues relating to financial planning and control, project planning and project management have all been successfully dealt with from the skills within the Trustees or the wider community.

At the time of the Amenities Association taking on the lease of the Water Tower a separate Environment Fund was established to provide resources for any materials needed for the Water Tower or to pay for any work that could not be undertaken by volunteers. A number of local people make a regular donation to this fund. At the time of writing the fund has a balance of £3947.70.

The Water Tower will be one of the assets maintained by the Open Spaces committee of the Community Association. That committee will oversee routine

maintenance and upkeep, and also manage any planned additional work at the facility – for example the installation of any additional information boards.

Funding

The proposal is to obtain the Water Tower for a nominal sum, which would be covered by the Association.

Ongoing upkeep and maintenance would mainly be by volunteers, and any costs (for repair etc) would be covered by donations to the Environment Fund, as currently.

Over the past 30 years the regular income to the fund has covered any costs of upkeep, and as mentioned above it has a current balance of almost £4000. If in the future there was a need for funding for repairs beyond the capacity of the fund, we would seek grant funding or transfer money from the main Community Association account.

Any further development would be carried out on the basis of existing resources or grant income.

A quotation that we obtained in early 2020 provided a price of £20 + VAT for 30cm x 15cm aluminium information sign boards with text an illustration and QR codes linking to more detailed information. The intention would be (subject to obtaining any necessary permissions) to have 10 or 12 of these located at various places in the villages, including the Water Tower. Allowing for a payment for design and installation the cost should be less than £1000.

We have in the past received grant funding for village projects from the SSE Beatrice Community Fund, the Lottery Anniversary Fund, the Daily Record/McEwan's, the Gordon and Ena Baxter Foundation and the Adam Family Foundation. If additional funding was required for developments at the Water Tower in the future, we would apply to similar sources of funding.

Community support for the project

There is active community support for community projects and facilities.

For example, the conversion and refurbishment of the Hub involved over 1500 hours of volunteer time, provided by over 20 people.

Other routine and repeated activities carried out by volunteers from the community include:

- mowing the village park
- maintaining the sheds, gazebos, picnic tables in the park
- strimming and mowing public areas
- clearing paths from wind-blown sand
- maintaining a sensory garden
- looking after several defibrillators

- purchasing and refurbishing a former K6 telephone kiosk as part of the sensory garden
- managing a community book exchange
- managing a drop-off point for surplus garden veg
- running the annual village fair

In relation to the Water Tower, the responsibility for maintain the fabric has rested with the community since 1990 when the lease was granted by the Council. The maintenance has been carried out by a combination of volunteer labour (for example strimming the surrounding area) and professional work (eg by builders). The cost of maintenance is covered from a specific Environment Fund that was established when the lease was granted and which derives its income from regular standing order donations from a number of members of the community.

Information about the possible acquisition of the Water Tower was posted on the village Facebook site – Oot'n'About in Garmouth and Kingston. After an explanation of the rationale this included the following:

"It is proposed that we seek to become owners of the Tower for a nominal cost.

The Community Association would like to obtain the views of residents of Garmouth, Kingston and surrounding area."

In response messages of support of the proposal to acquire the Water Tower at a nominal cost were received from 53 local individuals.

There were no messages received that opposed the proposal. An example of three of the emails received is attached (redacted for Data Protection reasons). Other messages can be made available if required.

In addition letters of support have been received from the following local organisations/groups:

- Garmouth & Kingston Heritage Trust
- Garmouth & Kingston Bowling Club
- Garmouth & Kingston Art Group
- Garmouth & Kingston Folk Club
- Parley and Sage gardening club
- 1st Mosstodloch Scouts (which includes young people and volunteers from Garmouth & Kingston)
- Garmouth & Kingston Playgroup

Scanned copies of these are attached.

(We had also been advised to expect a letter of support from Garmouth & Kingston Golf Club but this had not been received at the time of the completion of this document.)

This represents a significant level of local public support.

The Water Tower

[REDACTED]
Thu 10/03/2022 19:46

To: garmouthandkingston@hotmail.com <garmouthandkingston@hotmail.com>

We would like to support the option for the community to take ownership of the Garmouth Water Tower, this historic building must be kept safe by Garmouth community and continue to be preserved.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Sent from my Galaxy

WATER TOWER

[REDACTED]
Mon 14/03/2022 06:47

To: garmouthandkingston@hotmail.com <garmouthandkingston@hotmail.com>

We think it's a good idea for the villages to become the owners of the water tower through the CAT scheme.

[REDACTED] & [REDACTED]

Sent from my Galaxy

Water tower consultation - future ownership.

[REDACTED]
Thu 10/03/2022 18:39

To: garmouthandkingston@hotmail.com <garmouthandkingston@hotmail.com>

Dear Sir/Madam,

I refer to the recent article published on the facebook group page 'Oot and Aboot in Garmouth and Kingston' which details options for the future of the water tower.

Both my wife, [REDACTED] and myself, [REDACTED] would support the option where the Community Association seek to become owners of the water tower, for a nominal sum under community asset transfer arrangements.

I trust this is sufficient to make our support of the above motion clear. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any of the above.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]