

**LOANS VILLAGE HALL
FEASIBILITY STUDY
AND BUSINESS PLAN
FINAL REPORT**

*Prepared for the Loans Village Hall Trustees and
Loans Community Centre Limited*

by the

Small Town and Rural Development Group

August 2010



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This study was commissioned by the Loans Community Centre Trustees to help them plan for the future of the Community Centre. The trustees own the Hall on behalf of the community of Loans, and the hall is managed on their behalf by South Ayrshire Council. The council have intimated that this arrangement will eventually come to an end and that the community should take on a greater role in the hall's day to day operation.
2. The study has been carried out by the Small Town and Rural Development Group with funding support from Ayrshire LEADER and South Ayrshire Council.
3. It has focused on:
 - An assessment of the current uses and associated income and expenditure incurred in the operation of the hall
 - Identifying views from existing user groups and local residents on the hall and how they would like to see it used and developed in the future
 - Drawing up and costing outline design proposals for the redevelopment of the hall
 - Preparing guidelines and financial forecasts for the community operation of the hall
 - Recommending a course of action for the Trustees.

Current Use

4. The hall is fairly well used but as was pointed out is used more by people outwith Loans rather than from Loans itself. While it is well used in the evenings it is rarely used in the mornings with afternoons also well under capacity. It is used less now than it was in the past when it was the base for youth clubs, nursery and a lunch club.

Current Income and Expenditure

5. The hall currently operates at a loss. Revenue is currently under £4,000 per annum while expenditure is over £16,000. However much of this is attributable to the £11,000 plus costs of the hall caretaker. If the community was running the hall it would be unlikely for this cost to continue and other savings would be made on rates if the hall was being run by a charitable body as is planned. It is therefore not as daunting a financial proposition as at first sight.

Views from residents and existing users

6. Views of residents were gathered at the local Loans Gala Day, a Village Hall Open Day to which all residents were invited, and by notifying all user groups.
7. The key findings were that:

- People were fond of the existing hall and its place in the community and thought that it should be retained. They liked the vernacular, "comfortable" style of the building.
- They felt that it needed to be brought up to date through renovation and improvements. Key suggestions included improvements to the kitchen and the toilets, extension of the main hall, relocating the entrance ramp, making more of the garden, and extending the small hall out towards the garden area.
- They thought that a more attractive redeveloped hall would be used more for a range of activities.
- In particular people thought that the hall had a future role as a 'Social Hub' for Loans. The most popular suggestions for increased use included: book clubs, drama clubs, gardening clubs, art clubs and other forms of local recreational activity. There was also thought to be scope to run a cafe on a part time basis for local people as well as visitors to the area.

Design drawings and costings

8. Following consultation, STAR prepared two outline design options for the consideration of the Trustees. The trustees opted for the more modest option as it seemed to best address the needs of what local people wanted. A guideline budget for this option has been prepared by the STAR Quantity Surveyor and is estimated at around £220,000.

Redevelopment and Operation of the Hall

9. Income and Expenditure projections have been made for the next four years. They show that it would be hard for the community to overturn the loss currently being made - although it could be significantly reduced - unless the hall was renovated to make it more attractive to use.

10. Once the hall had been renovated it could be operated by the community at a break even or small profit once it had been promoted and there had been a modest increase in use backed by some small scale fund raising activities such as the suggested cafe operation.

Next steps

11. It is recommended that:

- The trustees continue to establish a local management company - Loans Community Centre Limited as a charitable company limited by guarantee.
- That they press on with recruiting local members for that company and appointing a Board of Directors.

- The Trustees working with the management company and South Ayrshire Council aim to work towards the redevelopment of the hall and a community management model over the next 3 years.
- In the interim this should include an ongoing subsidy from the Council to the management group in recognition of the difficult financial situation the hall is in.
- Jointly the organisations should work towards making funding applications for a capital redevelopment programme based on the proposals in this report.
- This will require in the first instance commissioning full detailed architects drawing and costings.
- Funding for this next stage and for the redevelopment could be directed towards LEADER and the new Big Lottery Programme for Growing Community Assets.
- There is a need over the next 6 months for the community to develop their own hall management systems based on the good experience of other community run halls. We have included some guidelines in the report but there is also a need for the Trustees and the new Company to visit and learn from other community run halls.