

Pennyghael Old School Community Hall

Outline Business Plan and Statement January 2010

The Pennyghael Community Association (PCA) has for 25 years operated the former local school as a community hall. The successful programme of community events has included wedding receptions, funerals and christenings; art and local history exhibitions; a venue for Argyll College educational courses, public meetings and seminars; its use as a polling station; and a focus for regular community fund-raising events such as barbeques, participation in the Mull Food Festival, coffee mornings, parties, ceilidhs and similar events. Also it has been used as a practice hall for local musicians, a work space for artists and by the Mull theatre company on tour. The hall is now in such poor condition that several of these activities are no longer possible.

The Pennyghael Development Association Ltd, (PDA) formed as a sub-committee of the Pennyghael Community Association in 2000, latterly became a limited company and a registered charity. (Company Number 293630, Scottish Charity number SCO31866.) After the PCA was served notice to quit in 2004 by Argyll & Bute Council, the PDA was successful in 2006 in raising the funds necessary to purchase the Community Hall from them, at an overall cost of £95,000. Title was obtained on 30th March 2007. Subsequently asbestos was discovered within the newer part of the building, despite the missives to our solicitors stating that there was no asbestos present. The Council were in possession of a report identifying the presence of asbestos before the sale. We have now managed its complete removal with some assistance from the Council, who also provided a grant for some emergency repairs. Work to make the building weather-tight, preventing further deterioration has included replacement of the main windows, roof repairs and renewal of rainwater goods. This essential work has now exhausted our resources.

The hall is a spacious and multi-roomed facility but is in a poor state of repair. Our concerns now are with damp affecting the internal walls; the lack of facilities for disabled people; the heating system needing renovation and electrical wiring needing renewal. The kitchen area also needs complete renovation and the toilet facilities need replacing.

Our vision is for an inclusive, multi-purpose facility that capitalises both on the unique scenic setting of the hall location and the 250,000+ visitors to Mull that pass through Pennyghael every year. In so doing an expanded programme of activities and facilities could be provided, both for visitors and the local community. These are our long-term goals, and we have a Budget Cost Plan, prepared by Chartered Quantity Surveyors for a complete refurbishment of the building at an overall cost of £167,000 but in the current financial climate we feel that rather than plan for a complete

redevelopment, we should proceed in smaller steps. These are to firstly address the remaining serious defects in the building, namely the heating system, the electrical wiring and toilet facilities. Once this is complete, the renovation of the kitchen area and provision of disabled access and facilities will allow commercial, revenue earning activities to be a practical proposition. These steps will take an estimated £80,000.

Following this refurbishment, activities would be expanded to restore events like wedding receptions which not only contribute to the funding of the hall but help strengthen the social fabric of the local community. National Arts organisations touring performances could also be accommodated, which would allow the local community to experience Scottish Opera, the National Orchestras and the Scottish Ballet.

To establish the hall as a successful commercial business, it is proposed to increase the utilisation of the building. For example by leasing the kitchen facilities and part of the building during the daytime for use as a tea-room or café, targeted at the large number of tourists passing on their way to and from Iona. This will also offer some employment opportunities. Two letters of intent from interested parties have been received. A local artist has also expressed intent to use the hall both for art exhibitions and evening art classes. There is a small room that could be used, for example, as rented local office space or for local wildlife tours as a wet-weather base. It is planned to have local history exhibitions and local art on display in the tea-room to further increase the income from the passing tourist trade.

We hope that when the refurbishment project is complete the income and utilisation of the hall will then be at a sustainable level to secure the future of the Community Hall