

# **COMMUNITY PURCHASE OF KENMORE CHURCH**

## **FEASIBILITY REPORT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document presents a feasibility report regarding the potential community purchase of Kenmore Church, exploring the potential benefits, challenges, and considerations for the Kenmore and District community.

The report is structured into two main parts: desirability and feasibility, providing a comprehensive analysis of the church's current status and its significance to the community.

### **Background**

Kenmore Parish Church, established in 1760, has been a central part of village life, serving as a landmark and a hub for community activities. However, due to declining congregation numbers, the Church of Scotland has deemed the building surplus to requirements and is offering it for sale to the local community for a limited time. This opportunity arises amidst concerns about diminishing community interaction and the need for improved facilities to support social cohesion and economic growth.

The report highlights the benefits of preserving the church as a flexible asset that can benefit residents and visitors alike, while also addressing the challenges posed by its potential decline or privatisation.

### **Part 1 - Desirability: Do We Need or Want the Kirk?**

#### **Contribution to the Community Action Plan**

The Loch Tay Area Community Action Plan emphasises the need for a friendly, well-connected community that fosters engagement across all ages. Utilising the church as a community space could significantly enhance social cohesion and support local businesses by attracting visitors.

#### **Alternative Ownership Scenarios**

If the community opts not to purchase the Kirk, it risks falling into disrepair or being sold to private owners whose intentions may not align with community interests. Thus, community ownership emerges as the most favourable option to retain the church as a valuable local asset.

#### **Current and Projected Demand for Community Space**

Recent community events have shown a growing demand for local activities, indicating that the community would benefit from additional space. The church could serve various functions, including social gatherings, educational programs, and cultural events, thereby attracting both residents and tourists.

#### **Potential Uses for the Church**

Potential exists for the church to accommodate a variety of functions such as a community space, children's care facilities, sports activities, and cultural events. This flexibility could

provide numerous opportunities for engagement and income generation, especially during peak tourist seasons. The resulting income, in turn would assist in the funding of the ongoing operational and maintenance costs of the building.

## Part 2 - Feasibility: Can We Make It Happen?

### General Restrictions on Use

The Church of Scotland has indicated that there will likely be no restrictions on the use of the building following its sale, although any change of use will require planning permission. This opens up possibilities for diverse community activities.

### Building Condition and Required Repairs

A recent inspection indicates that while the church is generally well-maintained, it requires significant repairs, particularly to its roof and mechanical systems. Estimated costs for these repairs range around £370k over the next decade, highlighting the need for careful financial planning.

### Purchase and Running Costs

The church is being offered at a market valuation of £80k, with additional costs for repairs and adaptations. Running costs for 2024 have been estimated at approximately £6.5k annually, depending on usage and energy efficiency measures although it should be noted that water and sewerage costs are not included in this total.

### Funding Sources

Potential funding sources include grants from Historic Environment Scotland, the Scottish Government's SME Loan Scheme, and local fundraising initiatives. However, reliance on grants alone is not sustainable, necessitating diverse income streams from events and community activities.

### Community Involvement and Management Structure

Sustained community involvement is crucial for the successful management of the church. A proposed management structure could involve a dedicated committee to oversee operations, supported by volunteers and potentially part-time staff as the project develops. We would envisage the need for the employment of a Project Manager on a temporary basis to manage delivery of the acquisition and business plan.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The report concludes that the church has the potential to be adapted into a viable community centre, offering significant benefits to local residents and visitors. However, the community must demonstrate commitment and support for the project to ensure its success. A phased approach to development is recommended to manage risks and allow for the assessment of community needs.

## Next Steps

Key next steps include community consultation, appointing a working group for the purchase process, and preparing a detailed business plan to outline the vision and funding strategies for the church's future.

Kenmore Church Working Group

10 July, 2025