

## CHURCH FUTURES – UPDATE NEWS September 2023

Grant applications update; consultants short-listed; valuations received; timeframe flexibility mooted.

LATEST: Funding of up to £10,000 has just been confirmed by the Architectural Heritage Fund – a promising start!

Documents were submitted in August to the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), to support the exploration and testing of options for the future, requiring a Conservation Architect and Business Planning consultancy. These would comprise:

Conservation Statement;  
Feasibility Study, and  
Business Plan.

This follows the Community Engagement work sponsored by the Community Council, and the establishment of the Group in May. In the interim a deal of sleuthing work on the history of the church and related matters since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century has been spearheaded by Stephen Green, assisted by Douglas Breingan and Bob Hay; all of which has enabled more information to be available for consultants.

A number of Architects' practices and Business Consultants were invited to become involved in the planned studies, of whom 17 requested details of the Brief and related documents; and 7 joint bids were submitted by late July. These were sifted down to the three strongest candidates, as the preferred bidders. Interviews will be underway shortly and subject to clarification of recent funding news, appointments will be made to embark on the staged programme, running up to the end of the year.

Meanwhile, in early June the Church of Scotland (CoS) Legal team arranged valuations for the two assets which are potentially to be disposed to the community - subject to the community's eventual decisions, of course! - the Church and the Church House (aka the Wee Manse). The results were received recently and are, broadly: Church: £25,000; Church House: £225,000. It is understood that the small CoS Legal team have been significantly over-burdened with large numbers of disposals to deal with across Scotland, hence the extended time taken to process matters.

As a consequence of these delays, the option for extending the end-of-year 'deadline', initially set by the CoS, is being explored. The CoS Legal team have advised that the General Trustees have a policy of allowing a community body a six month period in which to get its charitable status in place and to progress funding; and provided the congregation are willing to continue to take responsibility for the assets, the CoS can be reasonably flexible.

The Group has also been applying to have a borehole drilled at a location suitable to serve the potential future needs of both assets, as part of the borehole programme being co-ordinated across the Island sponsored by Glensanda Quarry.

It should be noted that the Session have been very supportive throughout.

We will be relaying further updates as and when appropriate; but if anyone wishes to know more about the Group's work - beyond that reported publicly, please contact Mandie Currie on:

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Email: [mandielismore@btinternet.com](mailto:mandielismore@btinternet.com);

The Lismore Church Futures Group comprises:

Group Reps: Community Trust - Archie MacGillivray; CELM - Jennifer Baker; Community Council - Mandie Currie (Secretary);

Individuals: Bob Hay, Sebastian Tombs (Chair), Rosemary Barry, Clare Haworth, Stephen Green, Douglas Breingan, Rev Dugald Cameron - with additional guests and interested parties from time to time, so far: Sally Chapman. The Session is copied in to all meeting Notes.

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