

DISPOSAL OF FORMER TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE, KILNGREEN, LANGHOLM

1. Reason for Report

Authority is sought for the negotiated disposal of the Former Tourist Information Centre, Kilngreen, Langholm.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to agree that the Former Tourist Information Centre, Kilngreen, Langholm be sold to Buccleuch Estates Ltd for the sum of £500. Other terms and conditions to be agreed by the Service Director Support Services.

3. Plan Links and Contribution

The proposal in this report contributes to Corporate Plan principles of local decision making and strong financial management.

4. Resources/Value for Money Assessment

This property is clearly held by the Council for the Common Good of the inhabitants of the Burgh of Langholm. Any sale proceeds will be credited to a Council Loan Deposit account to be held on behalf of the Langholm Common Good Fund.

5. Risk Assessment

5.1 As the property has been empty since 1999 and will remain so, there is a high risk that its state of repair will deteriorate rapidly. The Council will remain responsible for its maintenance until such time as it is leased or sold.

5.2 There is presently no identified Holding Department or budget for this property.

5.3 The property is showing signs of lack of maintenance and due to the above it is not possible for the Council to carry out any maintenance works.

6. Authorities and Legal Implications

6.1 Council property policy has been developed from best practice established by the Audit Commission and includes the basic concept that assets must be held for a specific purpose. Where there is no identified purpose assets must be disposed of.

6.2 Disposal values will be best consideration established by either:

- advertising on the open market; or by
- negotiation where this is likely to produce a more advantageous result.

6.3 Negotiated disposals need the authority of the Resources Committee.

7. Consultations

The Executive Director of Community and Support Services, Operations Manager Accountancy, Operations Manager Legal Services and the Area Manager, Annandale & Eskdale have been consulted and are in agreement with the terms of the report.

8. Background

8.1 Kilngreen, Langholm was disposed in 1922 by his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch in favour of the Provost Magistrates and Councillors of the Royal Burgh of Langholm, for the perpetual use, benefit and enjoyment of the inhabitants of the Burgh of Langholm in all time to come. The deed prohibits any sale and therefore for any sale to proceed, the Duke would have to waive the provision in the deed by way of a Minute of Waiver.

8.2 The former Tourist Information Centre, which was erected on the above subjects (**Appendix 1**), was occupied by Dumfries and Galloway Tourist Board until they terminated their lease in 1999.

8.3 No Council service has identified a role or budget to support continuing ownership of the property; therefore, it is surplus to the Council's requirements.

8.4 This property is clearly held by the Council for the Common Good of the inhabitants of the Burgh of Langholm. Any sale proceeds will be credited to a Council Loan Deposit account to be held on behalf of the Langholm Common Good Fund.

8.5 The Council has approached Buccleuch Estates Limited (BEL) to obtain the necessary Minute of Waiver. However they have advised that they are not prepared to release the burden on the subjects by way of Minute of Waiver. The indicated reason is that a sale of the property on the open market would not be consistent with the intentions of the Buccleuch Family when they gifted Kilngreen to the inhabitants of the Burgh of Langholm.

8.6 BEL has indicated that they are interested in buying this property back from the Council with the intention of putting it to some form of Community Use, thus being consistent with the Family's original intention.

8.7 BEL intend leasing the property to the Langholm Initiative for a period of ten years at a peppercorn rent, for use as a Mooreland Education Centre (**Appendix 2**).

8.8 Annandale & Eskdale Area Committee meeting on 28 January 2009: -

- agreed to recommend to Resources Committee to expedite the disposal of the former Tourist Information Centre, Kilngreen, Langholm to Buccleuch Estates Ltd at market value. Other terms and conditions to be agreed by Operations Manager Property Services.

8.9 The Service Leader Estates Management has been in negotiations with BEL and a purchase price of £500 has been provisionally agreed, which represents market value given the restrictions on an open market sale of the property, and the current condition of the property.

9. Key Issues

A sale of the property will benefit the inhabitants of the Burgh of Langholm and relieve the Council of its maintenance obligation for the property.

Author: Alastair Johnson Assistant Service Leader George W West Estate Management Service Leader Property Services Monreith House The Crichton Glencaple Road Dumfries DG1 4ZZ Date of Report: 5 March 2009 File Ref: 560x34 AJ/SW	Gordon Lawson Service Director Support Services Community and Support Services Council Offices English Street Dumfries DG1 2DD
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APPENDIX 1 – Location Plan showing the subject property outline in black

APPENDIX 2 - Letter from the Langholm Initiative setting out their proposals for the subject property.

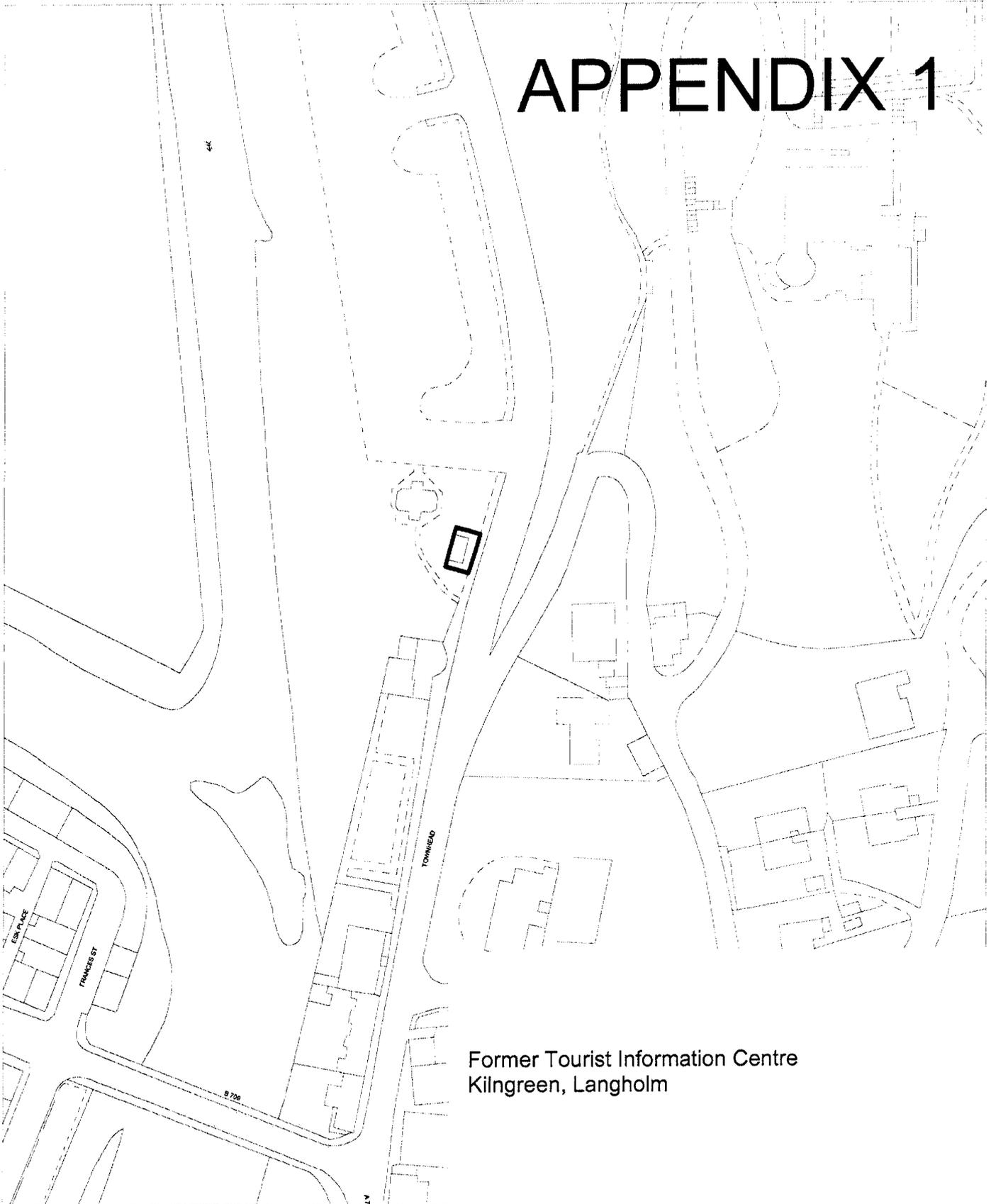
BACKGROUND PAPERS

Disposal of Former Tourist Information Centre, Kilngreen, Langholm – Annandale & Eskdale Area Committee – 28/01/09



NORTH

APPENDIX 1



Former Tourist Information Centre
Kilngreen, Langholm



The Langholm Initiative

Buccleuch Mill
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 19 January 2009

Alastair Johnston
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 Property Services
 Monreith House
 The Chrichton
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 Dumfries
 DG1 4ZZ

PROPERTY SERVICES RECEIVED	
22 JAN 2009	
FILE REF.	560x34

Dear Mr Johnston

Kilngreen Tourist Information Centre Eskdale & Liddesdale Estate

Further to a meeting with Simon Brown of Buccleuch Estates, I write to advise you of the proposals of The Langholm Initiative, should we be successful in acquiring a lease for the building which was the former Tourist Information Centre at the Kilngreen.

You will be aware of the track record of The Langholm Initiative in delivering successful projects over a period of 15 years, including The Langholm Walks, the Prehistoric Trail, The Thomas Telford Trail, The Moorland project and many others.

Funding has recently been secured from Scottish Natural Heritage and LEADER for The Langholm Initiative to employ a Moorland Education Officer, to provide a link between the community and the groundbreaking Moorland Demonstration Project (involving partners Buccleuch Estates, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Game Conservancy Trust, RSPB and Natural England) The eyes of Europe are on this high profile project, which was launched by Environment Minister Michael Russell, but the local community is largely unaware of the significance of the Demonstration Project or the potential economic benefits of the Moor to the community.

The Officer, once appointed, will have a brief to organise activities with all age groups within the community and to develop a Moorland Education Centre where locals and visitors can easily access the research coming out of the Demonstration Project. Information on the progress of hen harriers and other species about the Moorland habitat will be displayed in the Education Centre and a remote viewing facility with cameras sited on nests and other sensitive areas. The former TIC building would be an ideal location for the Education Centre, situated as it is near the access road to the Moor, and would provide an excellent base for the Education Officer.

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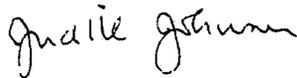
Since Dumfries and Galloway Tourist Board withdrew their service from the town, The Langholm Initiative has managed a volunteer Tourist Information service for Langholm from the Gallery at the rear of the Town Hall. Volunteers man this facility from Easter to October and provide an incredibly valuable service, providing information ranging from local accommodation, festivals and events to walking, cycling and fishing opportunities. The location is not ideal, as the entrance to the Gallery is not immediately obvious to visitors. If we were to have access to the former TIC building, the Tourist Information Service could relocate and work alongside the Moorland Education Project.

A new Town Trail is currently being developed by The Langholm Initiative with a group of volunteers, starting at the Kilngreen. Visitors will be encouraged to follow a map to walk around the town, hopefully using the shops and other local services on the way.

The proposed use of the building at the Kilngreen for the above purposes will have benefits for the whole town, for the local community and for visitors.

If Buccleuch Estates succeed in acquiring the site, we are in a position to act quickly to bring the building back into use. I do hope that the Area Committee will look favourably on the proposal.

Yours sincerely



Judith Johnson
Project Manager

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