

## PORTOBELLO POLICE STATION: EXPLORING A NEW FUTURE

***Consultation on the Action Party Proposal to Register a Community Asset Transfer Application for the purchase of the Police Station for community use and community benefit***



Police Scotland have made the decision to close Portobello Station and sell the building. *There is no going back on this decision and the station is currently being decommissioned.*

The Police Station Building is a significant landmark in the heart of Portobello Town Centre. It has always been a public building, having previously been our Town Hall and our library, and is therefore a key part of our local heritage.

Action Party sees an important opportunity to ensure that the building remains a part of our public life, meeting local needs right on the High Street, providing space for our rapidly expanding community and wider functions for local groups and local businesses.

Under the Community Empowerment Act's Asset Transfer provision, a community owned body such as Action Party has an opportunity to secure the purchase of the building in advance of an open market sale. For the asset transfer request to be successful, we have to show Police Scotland that there is a clear proposal which meets community need, give evidence of community support for the application, and work up a viable business plan to acquire and develop the Police Station.

**To take this further, Action Porty now needs to find out what people in Portobello think about this issue. We want to hear your ideas on how the building could be used to meet local needs and get a better understanding of what viable business plans might include.**

We will also be organising an in person meeting at Bellfield and will advertise this asap.

## BACKGROUND

Action Porty have already started a conversation in the community, bringing the subject to Portobello Community Council for discussion and talking to other interested parties. We now need to expand that engagement and get a better idea of what local people think about our aims and the possible future uses of the space.

We notified Police Scotland of our interest in buying the building back in February 2024, but were not able to access the building or see any plans that might help shape a proposal.

Over the summer, and once we got access to the building, we brought in the advice of others, such as a local architect, a structural engineer, local business owners and representatives of other groups that could help test our thinking around the viability of a project. We have been working with and taking advice from Development Trusts Association Scotland, who have a wider range of experience with this sort of project.

We have also visited the building and continued to speak to Police Scotland who have given us useful information in the form of floor plans, condition surveys and operating costs for the building.

## OUR AIMS

In summary our aims are to

- 1) Provide impactful facilities and meaningful opportunities for community use of a building in a central location within our expanding community.
- 2) Provide a clearly different offer from other community owned or operated spaces within Portobello.
- 3) Bring life and activity to the building, supporting and adding to the vibrancy of the High Street in ways that are accessible to the whole community.
- 4) Work in alignment with the principles of Community Wealth Building\*, ensuring the project supports fair work, equality of opportunity, supports the success of our local businesses and recycles any profit into the building and/or other future local projects.
- 5) Look after and give life to a landmark public building, creating publicly accessible spaces and safeguarding the building for the present and future generations of Portobello residents to enjoy.

*\*further information below*

## POSSIBLE USES

The building is large and currently has 26?? different rooms or spaces over two floors, with an additional clock tower, garage and old police cell spaces.

The building has been highly modified from its original state. There are opportunities to restore rooms back to their original state or to further modify rooms for new uses. There is also the prospect of occupying the building in its current form.

## NEXT STEPS- OUR APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE PROJECT

Action Party will take stock and reflect on the feedback from this consultation.

If there is community support for it, Action Party will progress with a Right to Buy application.

We are under tight deadlines to submit an application form but we will continue with a due diligence process, exploring outline business plans, establishing possible financing options and continuing to have public conversations with interested parties on the uses and role of the building.

If our application is accepted by Police Scotland we would seek to work with the community to shape and refine proposals for the use of the building. We would further develop plans for how the running of the building could work and make sure there is suitable financing of the project. All of this would be before any purchase.



## COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING- further information

CWB principles and background information

<https://www.ourplace.scot/about-place/themes/place-based-investment/community-wealth-building>

CWB case studies

<https://regionaleconomicdevelopment.scot/case-studies/>

CWB- Five Pillars

## 5 Principle Pillars

**Inclusive Ownership:**  
Developing more local and social enterprises which generate community wealth, including social enterprises, employee owned firms and co-ops.



**Spending:**  
Maximising community benefits through procurement and commissioning, developing good enterprises, fair work and shorter supply chains.



**Workforce:**  
Increasing fair work and developing local labour markets that support the wellbeing of communities.



**Land and property:**  
Growing the social, ecological, financial and economic value that local communities gain from land and property assets.



**Finance:**  
Ensuring that flows of investment and financial institutions work for local people, communities and businesses.

