

KINLOCH CASTLE

SUMMARY OF BUSINESS PLAN

- Kinloch Castle on the island of Rum is a Category-A listed building. The castle, built in 1897, is a monument to late Victorian/early Edwardian craftsmanship, constructed to exacting standards, and with the original contents largely intact. The castle has been called the most complete example of an Edwardian shooting lodge that there is, with the exception of Balmoral.
- Kinloch Castle Friends Association (KCFA) is in the process of applying for asset transfer of the castle from the current owners, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), who have no further operational need for the castle and no resources to maintain it. The castle has been on the Buildings at Risk Register since 2004.
- Part of the accommodation within the castle was previously run as hostel facilities, but the hostel closed in 2013, and the castle has been unoccupied since then, with only seasonal museum tours taking place. Since 2013 the building has deteriorated significantly.
- This business plan builds on numerous previous studies, in particular the Prince's Regeneration Trust study of 2014 and the April 2016 Savills report. The business plan also contains a heritage strategy setting out recommendations for conservation of the collection.
- KCFA is currently established as a registered charity, but recognises that, to be eligible for asset transfer, it needs to set up a different governance model, e.g. a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation or similar. Legal advice is being sought on the most appropriate future structure.
- A recent report to KCFA by Smith & Garratt, surveyors with expertise in heritage projects, estimates the total cost of restoration of the castle at £7.88 million.
- There is a clear lack of sufficient indoor accommodation on Rum, in particular a lack of accommodation for large groups of students, and also bedrooms suitable for families. This has been highlighted in previous reports and is supported by unmet demand figures collected by the manager of the existing 20-bed bunkhouse on the island.
- Numbers of tourists visiting Scotland, and the Highland area in particular, are rising, and this increase is likely to continue.
- KCFA plans involve a phased programme of works to the castle, the first phase being to address urgent building works and also works to enable visitor accommodation to re-open with initially 45 beds, bar and bistro facilities.
- There is political will for an asset transfer to a suitably competent community organisation, and public sector support has been offered in principle to enable this to happen. SNH is currently working in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to this end.
- KCFA's plans for the castle are broadly supported by the small resident community on Rum, who are keen to attract more visitors to the island and to work in partnership with KCFA to achieve this.
- It is proposed to apply for funding from a variety of sources, including Heritage Lottery Fund and charitable trusts, to enable the second phase of the works to be undertaken. The second phase will comprise further structural repairs to the castle building and restoration of the "museum" rooms. KCFA recognises that the current funding landscape is one of continued austerity, and that other sources of funding, including private sector partners, will require to be identified.
- Following successful completion of the second phase, it will be possible to market events, such as celebrations, weddings and parties. Initial marketing of the first phase will focus on Rum's abundant wildlife, remoteness and natural attractions. Projections of recurring costs and estimated income show a profit of £155.7K in the first year of operation, rising to £224.5K in the 2nd year and £361.5K in the 3rd year with the availability of an additional 20 beds.
- Beneficiaries of the project are principally the local community (through employment opportunities, increase in population, increased number of visitors to the island, and subsidiary business opportunities), and also educational and other groups and individuals visiting the Small Isles.