

Cullen Deskford and Portknockie Heritage Group

The Need for Permanent Premises

Business Plan

Cullen, Deskford and Portknockie Heritage Group – the Need for Permanent Premises

Executive Summary

1. To establish a permanent base for the Cullen, Deskford & Portknockie Heritage Group (CDPHG) from where it can exhibit a permanent heritage display, hold meetings, undertake administrative work and store its growing collection of unique historical records and artifacts. Now with charitable status, the CDPHG intends to provide a more active service to the local community (including schools and other groups and societies) and to ex-pats seeking their origins. The Group would also provide an attraction for the many visitors to the area, and not least as a focal point for ancestral tourism.

CDPHG Profile

2. The CDPHG currently has some 47 members and has at its core a Committee of dedicated and enthusiastic people. It meets monthly in the Community Centre, Cullen where members share their research and enjoy presentations by invited guests. Research work is archived along with a growing collection of old photographs, documents and other records. The Group gives talks and presentations to other organizations such as the Woman's Guild, and sets up heritage displays for events such as library open days and the Deskford Flower Show. The Group's modest income is derived from a current annual membership fee of £2.00, tea charges at monthly meetings, from donations, occasional grants and the sale of heritage publications. Its outgoings include hall hire, purchase of display and IT equipment, display materials paper, postage stamps etc. The Group already assists in heritage-based initiatives, most recently participating actively in the Moray Connections initiative, and joining the Mason's Mark Project of the Aberdeenshire Council. It should be noted that the average age of the Group is high, and many members are not sufficiently able to undertake outside research although all are rich in knowledge of local heritage.

Current Holdings and Limitations

3. The Group owns 3 filing cabinets and a display case currently located in the foyer of the Community Centre, Cullen containing the bulk of its documentary holdings and some other artefacts. The more bulky artefacts are stored in a concrete single garage to the rear of the Community Centre and are deteriorating rapidly from the dampness within the building. The Group enjoys the dedicated use of a PC and associated facilities located in the Cullen Library for the electronic storage & retrieval and printing of display material etc. Other IT and audio-visual equipment, display boards and other artefacts are stored at members' homes; this arrangement is most unsatisfactory as it depends of the goodwill of members to store equipment which is consequently ill-insured, and, as some is in lofts, it creates a health and safety hazard in its movement. Moreover, collating and transporting all the equipment needed for displays is a considerable logistical challenge and brings with it the risk of damage or loss.

Business Opportunity – Products and Services

4. The aims of the Group are made clear in its Constitution¹ with a principle purpose to research and record local heritage, and to promote knowledge of that heritage within the community. Be it for historical understanding, simple nostalgia or for other reasons, there is considerable interest in the activities of the Group. At presentations, talks and displays given by members of the Group, many enquiries are received, and especially for help in tracing past family members, their dwelling places, and their occupations. Old documents and photographs are key to fulfilling this need, together with the wherewithal to collate the information needed. The CDPHG is not a commercial business and depends on volunteers from within its ranks. Nevertheless, the Group is passionate in its quest to provide a service to the community, not least through a manned Heritage Centre as the portal for enquiries, advice and assistance. A limited research service is envisaged, linked to e-mail and internet, and the Groups own archive material.

5. The CDPHG intends to expand to provide the following services and activities:

- Permanent Heritage Centre. With a permanent and secure Centre the Group can establish for the first time a base from which it can direct its resources. Such a base would act as a visitor centre, manned initially on weekdays over the summer season and by request at any other time.
- Sales. The Centre would enable the sales of local heritage-related books, maps, cards, photographs, etc.
- Research Group members, in addition to the prime interests of the CDPHG, would undertake a preliminary search in response to enquiries by the public. A more detailed investigation would be the subject of a private arrangement. However, research that would be of benefit to the Group, or as part of a larger project (i.e. the Mason's Mark Project led by the Aberdeenshire Council) would be considered valid use of the Group's resources.
- Assistance to Other Groups/Organisations. The CDPHG would have a base from where it could offer assistance to other groups or organizations. With permanent premises, the Group would be able to host displays such as the recent Thomas Telford initiative undertaken by the Moray Council and the current 'Year of the Homecoming (2009)'.
- Displays/Talks/Presentations. Group members would continue to provide external displays and presentations but would be also be able to host visiting groups to the Heritage Centre where all research and documentation, photographs etc would be immediately to hand.
- Community of Interest. To act as a local point of contact and voice for like-minded people in the community for all heritage related matters, linked with other heritage groups in the area. The Group would also promote local interest such as its recent new initiative to relate local people with the history

¹ Cullen Deskford and Portknockie Heritage Group Constitution adopted 3 September 2007.

of their own houses, and the work being undertaken with the Cullen & Deskford Community Council in the formulation of a Community Plan. The establishment of a permanent centre would promote such causes, especially with the ability to 'pop in' and discuss progress and share the research effort.

6. The Group urgently needs the dedicated use of secure premises to provide an established Heritage Centre complete with permanent displays and an advice and assistance capability including e-mail and internet connectivity. Such a Centre would need adequate parking facilities and sufficient dry storage for the Group's artifacts and records. A resume of the Group's accommodation need is at Annex A.

7. The 'business' side of this enterprise will present a friendly, helpful, personal and timely service. The Group already enjoys a strong reputation on which it can build further. It is expected that the Centre would need one, or possibly two, seasons to develop into a fuller role than currently exists, and to gain real credibility and recognition amongst professional historians for the level of understanding and the quality of the service provided.

Markets and Competitors

8. There is an acute interest in Heritage-related issues along the whole of the Moray Firth and the area is supported by a number of heritage and historical groups, each having their own area of coverage but linked through the Moray Museums & Heritage Forum. Amalgamation of any of these groups would be a retrograde step since the interest is acutely local – even the dialect changes from village to village. Members of the CDPHG and those who enjoy the work of the Group are, without exception, focused on their own district where fortunately the majority of their past families have remained relatively static. However, there is a need to share discoveries and developments with other like-minded groups for the common good of the area's heritage; these other groups include:

- Buckie Fishing Heritage Museum
- Fochabers Heritage Group
- Keith Heritage Group
- Banff Preservation and Heritage Group
- Local Libraries
- Local Schools

Marketing

9. The services offered by the CDPHG are not unique but are largely area bound in terms of research. Its customer base is worldwide, witnessed by the number of ex-pats who regularly receive information from the Group, and the enquiries it receives from people as far afield as Australia and America.

10. Advertising. The Group needs to attract new members, not least to introduce new thinking, but also to maintain an impetus for research. Much of the

area's heritage is in the minds and memories of its people; this 'living memory' needs to be tapped whilst the opportunity is extant. Advertising the aims and achievements of the Group is a crucial element in gaining recognition and widening its membership. Methods of reaching a wider audience include:

- Website. Invaluable in this day and age is the use of a dedicated website to provide details of the Group, its services and commitments, including a diary of events and links to other sites of common interest.
- e-Bay. A considerable number of historical effects are offered on e-Bay, some of which are directly related to the heritage of this region. E-Bay can provide the means to secure such items that would not be available otherwise.
- Flyers. Flyers will be used to target the local area, primarily shop windows/display boards and libraries, to advertise events hosted by the CDPHG.
- Local Press. The Local Press is key to reaching a large number of local people quickly, as proved with the recent launch by the Group of the book 'Portknockie Memories' aided with an article in the Banffshire Advertiser.
- Local Events. To offer suitable displays at local events, museum promotions etc, or to have a sales stand/table.
- Other Heritage Groups. To liaise with other heritage groups where interest in specific subjects or projects extends across area boundaries.

Operations

11. Location. A permanent base would form the focal point from where the Group can undertake its work. Moreover it would provide a service to the community who can visit the Group directly. To be fully effective the Centre would need to be readily visible and accessible to passing visitors.

12. Safety, Health, Environment & Fire (SHEF). Due regard for SHEF issues will be paramount, including the provision of adequate safety and fire suppression equipment. Risk assessments, including COSHH, will be undertaken and displayed in the Centre. Mains powered/battery back-up fire detectors will be installed throughout the facility. Moray Council (Environmental Health) will be informed and invited to comment/visit. Consideration will be given to the provision of intruder protection equipment. Suitable access and associated facilities must be provided for the disabled.

13. Management Information Systems. A PC using Microsoft products will form basic IT support for inventory, asset management, document control, production of display material, access to e-mail, and the internet. A laptop, screen and large screen monitor will provide portable display and presentation capability.

Financial Aspects

14. The CDPHG has been in discussion with both the Moray Council and the Cullen & Deskford Community Council in its search for a permanent home. The Moray Council hope to complete its rationalization of properties and halls by mid 2009 when it is anticipated that a location for the Group can be established and a nominal lease of at least 25 years put in place. The Group is now considering how to capitalise on its Charitable Status which, in addition to other benefits, will strengthen its position in its attempts to secure grants and other funding to properly design and equip a viable Heritage Centre. Methods of fund raising will include:

- a. Donations. The work of the Group, be it research, presentations or displays, regularly attracts donations.
- b. Coffee Mornings/Car Boot Sales/Soup & Sweet lunches. It is the intention to hold numerous fund raising events throughout the year. Two such events have been held recently, raising over £1000.
- c. Counter Sales. A small shop within the Heritage Centre would sell heritage related items - cards, maps, photographs etc. There is always a strong call for photographs and text documents. Accordingly, the Group has recently acquired a colour printer and camera and intends to offer this service at a competitive price. Additionally, as a further example, sales from the CDPHG's most recent book has netted a profit of over £2,300.
- d. Research. There is growing call for research from the public, especially for family history. The Group currently undertakes research for free but enjoys donations for the work done, typically ranging from £10 to £20. As this work is now in greater demand, the Group is faced with significant fixed overheads which it needs to recover. Therefore, the Group will have to consider meeting this demand on a more commercial basis with a scale of charges.
- e. Annual Heritage Open Weekend. The Group already presents a busy open weekend in a rented hall every summer; an event that attracts people from far and wide. With a dedicated heritage centre such an event can be more focussed, not least with the ability to research in real time during the weekend. Bearing in mind the boom in ancestral tourism, it can be anticipated that the summer event will attract a significant part of the Group's annual takings and contribute to tourism income to the local community. The Group's 'Homecoming' week in June attracted over 1500 visitors
- f. Organized Walks. The Group intends to arrange short local organised walks to explain local buildings and events of historical interest.
- g. Talks/Presentations. For a nominal charge members of the Group will give talks on issues of local historical interest.
- h. Membership Fees. The existing membership fees have been un-representative and at the Group's last AGM (September 2008) the fees were raised from £2.00 to £5.00, including some 10 ex-pat members. The Group

will need to further determine a scale of charges for the various forms of membership.

In line with the development of the CDPHG, from FY08/09 its accounting system comprising of delivery receipts, petty cash account, and Inland Revenue approved income and expenditure record, will be professionally audited annually. Extracts of audited accounts and Treasurers Report are made available to Members at the AGM, and at any other time by request.

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July 2009

Annex:

A. Cullen, Deskford and Portknockie heritage group – Outline Accommodation Requirements

ANNEX A – CULLEN, DESKFORD AND PORTKNOCKIE HERITAGE GROUP - OUTLINE ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

The Group would, ideally, require the following secure and interconnected suite of rooms/facilities:

Display Hall:

A room of at least 120m², display boards, display lighting, AV area with 15 seats, 2 work/study tables with 4 chairs, rest area with 4 tub chairs and low table, display cabinets round walls and free standing, sales area, ventilation, heating, window blinds, numerous mains outlets

Store Room:

Dry storage area providing 30m² of floor space with racking to one wall with 10m² shelf space. Background heating and ventilation to maintain suitable environment for storage of paper records. 6 off 4-drawer filing cabinets, table with 2 chairs under

Office:

A 10m² area with the provision of 2 desks with placement for PC, laptop, printers (x3), scanner, laminator, 4 office chairs, 'phone and internet connections, numerous mains power outlets,

Utility Area:

A small area for the making of light refreshments to include worktop (min 2m long) with cupboards under, sink with hot and cold water, space for refrigerator, provision for kettle and microwave oven. Storage cupboard for cleaning materials including vacuum cleaner.

Other requirements:

- Statutory fire suppression, warning and alarm.
- Electrical safety certification including portable appliances
- Disabled access & facilities
- External signage
- Internet (Broadband) access/telephone
- Security /intruder protection