

Grant Lodge
Short Life Working Group

Final Report

November 2014

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Background

12th May 2014, The Chief Executive of Moray Council hosted a meeting in Elgin Academy for interested parties to discuss the future of Grant Lodge. Interested individuals were invited to come forward to form a Short Life Working Group.

The remit of the Short Life Working Group was agreed at the meeting on the 12th of May to be numbers 2&3 below:

1	Establish a Short Life Steering Group to take the project forward. With support from the Moray Council. Those interested in being involved to contact John Ferguson.
2	Wider consultation with the public on options previously reviewed by the Friends of Grant Lodge.
3	Encourage representation once the vision and focus of the project has been agreed in order to appoint the appropriate professionals and expertise.

Those present were happy with the remit and support offered from Moray Council.

Given the numbers of individuals who came forward a group was selected based on skills available and which also represented a number of community organisations.

The organisations represented from the nine volunteers on the Short Life Working Group was as follows:

- Friends of Grant Lodge;
- Elgin Community Council;
- Elgin South Area Forum;
- The Elgin Fund;
- The Lieutenancy of Moray/The Moray Society;
- Elgin Museum.

The skills base within the Short Life Working Group included:

- Financial planning;
- Business planning;
- Building Surveyor;
- Project management;
- Community Involvement;
- Formation and management of Charitable Bodies.

The individuals who made up the Grant Lodge Short Life Working Group were:

Ian Urquhart, Chairman of the Elgin Fund, a charity improving the amenity of Elgin, experience with charities and not for profit organisations, also Chairman of Johnstons of Elgin.

Sarah Nicholson, has worked with The National Trust for Scotland, part of the team taking over Brodie Castle from Ninian, Brodie of Brodie. Subsequently working with a heritage architect in a private capacity compiling the quinquennial surveys of Brodie Castle; giving a great deal of insight into the structure of historical buildings and the pitfalls of their ownership.

Sara Marsh, retired librarian with experience in education and working with young people. Committee member, Friends of Grant Lodge since its inception

Stewart Halkett, retired Head of Service from Moray Council with experience of Planning, Building Standards, Economic Development and Project Management. Involved in Elgin Benevolent Trust, Elgin Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, Elgin Castle to Cashmere Heritage Experience and volunteering to help at Elgin BID events and application assessor for Foundation Scotland.

Grenville Johnston is Lord-Lieutenant of Moray, a Chartered Accountant and acts as a Trustee on numerous charities. He is President of The Moray Society who own Elgin Museum.

Caroline Webster, Chartered Building Surveyor with more than 20 years experience.

Alastair Kennedy, retired business man and Current Chairman of both Elgin Community Council and Moray Joint Community Council, extensive expertise of community involvement and representation as being one of the people who set up SPICE. Also a member and past president of Elgin Speaker`s Club and has been chair of MVSO and VAM and remains a director and vice-chair of tsiMORAY – the director roles have been over a period of 12 years.

Alex Gentleman, retired business man and member of Friends of Grant Lodge.

Robert Anderson, retired from a career spent in the fabrication of offshore facility's within U.K. North Sea Sector; also onshore fabrication industry and latterly in field of Quality Assurance/Welding Inspection Auditor also representing Elgin South Area Forum.

Eric Marriott, retired and a member of Elgin Community Council.

Advisors to the Short Life Working Group consisted of:

- Moray Chamber of Commerce;
- Historic Scotland;
- HIE;
- Visit Scotland;
- Elgin BID.

Support to the Short Life Working Group was provided by:

Moray Council, Community Support Unit.

The Short Life Working Group met for the first time on the 11th June 2014. Since then have met roughly every two weeks since, sometimes twice a week when the need arose.

At the first meeting of the Short Life Working Group, the remit of the group was also agreed to being “to identify and explore commercial options for use of Grant Lodge ensuring it’s sustainability with a specific timeframe” arising from the Policy & Resources Committee decision.

It was also agreed that in order to fulfil the remit the Short Life Working Group would:-

- Research documentation of what has been previously identified for Grant Lodge;
- Identify options for sustainability i.e. replacement options for the previous archive/registrar’s proposal and Moray Council uses;
- Liaise with partner organisations/public in identifying sustainable options;
- Research identified options – to ensure sustainability and practicability given the buildings limitations (input may be required from Historic Scotland/planners);
- Engage the wider community in order to identify alternative commercial options instead of the registrar/archives proposal.

The proposed timescale for fulfilling the remit was identified as being:

Access to building	Early July 2014
Consultation end	End of August 2014
Collation and report	Mid September 2014
Feedback to community	End of September 2014
Identify trustees/committee	Oct/Nov 2014
Meet with funders	December 2014
Set up legal structure	January 2015
Inaugural meeting of new organisation	January 2015

In order to deliver on the timescale and encourage limited public access to Grant Lodge, members of the group undertook Health and Safety training (delivered by Moray Council) in relation to access to Grant Lodge. Group members also attended “The Re-use of Historic Buildings” a one day seminar in Inverness as well as “Making the Case” again based in Inverness in relation to for funding for historical buildings. Both of these sessions were delivered by Historic Scotland.

“The Short Life Working Group dynamic gave a remarkable opportunity for gathering ideas in contrast to many building preservation projects where it might be down to one project officer to identify uses.

In the case of Grant Lodge the discussion arising between the members and any external contacts they engaged in conversation allowed for a pooling of ideas from a very wide sphere of knowledge and experience which I haven’t seen before”.

Simon Montgomery, Senior Heritage Management Officer, Historic Scotland - November 2014

Key Events

Public Display – based in both Elgin Library Café and Grant Lodge.

Members of Moray Camera Club were given access to Grant Lodge over two evenings in June, to photograph the entire building. These photographs have been used in displays and during the consultation events. Moray Camera Club has kindly agreed to the copyright of the photographs being held by Grant Lodge Trust.

The display which was used as part of the consultation process gave the public not only the historic importance and history of Grant Lodge but also the current condition, Deed of Trust issues and the importance of the future for the building.



First Floor, large room – Elgin Camera Club, July 2014

Importance of Grant Lodge

“Grant Lodge and Cooper Park feature in a number of strategic planning documents which were intended to improve the environment and economy of Elgin and Moray”

“Developing a high profile, high value tourism office and visitor facilities; for example. The Moray Story”.

“It shall not be in their power (i.e. the Town Council) at anytime to give off feus of, sell or let on long lease the whole or any part of the same.”

Deed of Gift, Sir George A Cooper

Short Life Working Group display boards –, July 2014

Consultation

Initially the plan had been to undertake a two stage consultation process:

Proposed Research/Consultation

Stage 1 – Review of suggestions usage already received;

Stage 2 - Open consultation;

Stage 3 – Consultation on packages identified from stages 1&2.

Given the responses to stage 2 it was apparent at the collation exercise that one package was possible covering a multitude of uses if the building was adaptable enough.

The detail contained in many of questionnaires showed that respondents had carefully considered their responses. Some had taken the opportunity to view the inside of Grant Lodge and suggest uses and development based on examples of restoration of historic buildings for community use elsewhere.

“Having now had a visit I realise there is more potential than I originally thought for this building. There are endless possibilities for smaller units in the basement which could be rented out smaller office space or artisans work places etc.

On the ground floor there is potential for larger office / restaurant space (bearing in mind a kitchen could be build on the side extension).

The upper levels now (having seen the pictures) are beautiful big places suitable for renting out as marriage rooms, ceremonies etc (wedding venue, dances etc).

The upper levels – servants quarters would lend themselves to bedrooms perhaps done out in period style, which could be let out as part of the wedding experience etc”.

Grant Lodge Consultation response - August 2014

Consultation summary:

The summary of the consultation carried out in Elgin Library over the summer months, was collated in September 2014 and clearly shows that the majority of respondents were in favour of a community/arts/theatre use for Grant Lodge. The following summary shows the collation result of consultation results and the preferred uses to be.

Potential uses of Grant Lodge:	Collation results:
1. Community/Arts/ /Theatre	80
1b Theatre	2
2 Facilities for the elderly	2
3. Sports	1
4. Accommodation	8

General uses in no weighted order *(which could be included in Number 1 above)

- Arts Centre (consisting of music, cinema, theatre, studio accommodation);
- Restaurant/Café;
- Conference facility;
- Wedding Venue;
- Heritage (Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere) Information, Whisky Heritage;
- Community Facility (including sports changing room/locker room, small units);
- Wi-Fi hotspot;
- Rental accommodation (alternative therapies, physio, massage);
- Sprung floor for dancing.

“Keep costs down: be cost effective”

Grant Lodge Consultation response - August 2014

The Short Life Working Group originally intended to consult the public a second time on the outcomes of Stages 1&2. The Short Life Working Group decided, however, that the results of Stages 1&2 were clear and that it would not be necessary to do this.

Having taken this decision the public were informed of the preferred package of uses through local media, web and Facebook.

Analysis of respondents

Under 18	18-30	31-45	46-65	Over 65
0	10	33	66	64

The analysis of the consultation respondents identified the level of respondents according to age range and although high levels of responses were achieved, youth responses were relatively low.

Having identified this, the Short Life Working Group agreed to carry out a specific youth focus group. This was held in Elgin Youth Café with input from Moray Youth Council representatives and patrons of the youth café, who focussed on the preferred package of uses identified and their views on them. They were also asked what they felt was missing and their views on the wider Cooper Park.

In summary, the youth focus group felt that the identified preferred uses were good ideas and exciting opportunities for everyone. In terms of what was missing, some felt that the addition of a Parkour training venue would be beneficial in attracting young adults to use the building and the wider park.

Parkour is a holistic training discipline using movement that developed from military obstacle course training. Practitioners aim to get from A to B in the most efficient way possible. This is done using only the human body and the surroundings for propulsion, with a focus on maintaining as much momentum as possible while still remaining safe. Parkour can include obstacle courses, running, climbing, swinging, vaulting, jumping, rolling, and quadrupedal movement.

Wikipedia, December 2014

When asked about what could be done to improve Cooper Park? Responses included:

- More stuff in the park – for toddlers and teenagers;
- Football pitch;
- Putting;
- Tennis courts upgraded;
- Basketball court;
- Flowerbeds.

Additional Outcome from Youth focus group:

Moray Youth Council members came up with a proposal to use seedballs they had received from the Commonwealth Games. This idea would be taken to the next Moray Youth Council meeting to develop a project further.



Moray Youth Council reps and patrons of Elgin Youth Café - December 2014

Grant Lodge - Open Doors events

Around 30 individuals took the opportunity to view the ground floor of Grant Lodge. Most visitors were surprised by the condition of the building in that it was not as bad as they thought and reported this was a pleasant surprise. Many found the visits inspirational and emotional whilst others were frustrated and angry. The consensus of visitors was that something needs to happen to allow Grant Lodge to be a working building again and that there is an opportunity now to make things happen.

“It’s not as bad as I thought”

“Beautiful building – it must have a future”

“So many fond memories”



Ground Floor, large room leading to small room – Elgin Camera Club, July 2014

Press coverage – profile raising

Numerous positive articles have been covered by both the Northern Scot and Press and Journal since the inception of the Short life Working Group. A positive promotional relationship remains strong, it is envisaged that this will be carried on by Grant Lodge Trust.

Art Project

In the short term, the Short Life Working Group has recognised the need to keep Grant Lodge in the public focus. To this end Moray Chamber of Commerce will be taking forward the possibility of an art project for Grant Lodge. Discussions have been held with Wildbird, a local arts/theatre/film company in order to develop an art project for Grant Lodge. Any art project would not damage the building – but enhance its current visual condition. Discussions around using Grant Lodge should be expected prior to an art project being finalised.

Volunteers

The commitment, belief and vision of the Grant Lodge Short Life Working Group can be seen in the level of commitment given to date for the project. Each volunteer hour has a value of £8 (figures provided by Moray Council) all participation by volunteer members of the Short Life Working Group and other volunteer helpers was at no cost to the project.

• SLWG meetings	160 hours	= £1,280
• Training attended	43 hours	= £ 344
• Supervising GL visits	28 hours	= £ 784
• Community Engagement (displays)	20 hours	= £ 160

This does not include officer time including time from HIE/Historic Scotland/Visit Scotland and Moray Chamber of Commerce.

The Short Life Working Group recognises the input from Moray Council which has been essential to the progress achieved so far. The Short Life Working Group/Grant Lodge Trust is composed solely of volunteers and they believe see that the continued support from Moray Council is crucial in the next stages and beyond.

Venue costs

ASDA provided a free venue for meetings in kind to date with more meetings scheduled. A similar sized meeting room would have cost approx £12 per hour, a total of £240.

Partnerships

From the outset regular contact has been maintained with Historic Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Visit Scotland and others. These agencies have

offered ongoing support and advice, in particular how similar projects have succeeded in the restoration and sustainable reuse of historic buildings.

- HIE;
- Historic Scotland;
- Visit Scotland.

The short term future

Following advice from Highlands & Island Enterprise, which concluded that a constituted body would be required to take forward a redevelopment plan. It was agreed that Grant Lodge Trust be set up as a Company Limited by Guarantee with Scottish Charitable status.

The aims of Grant Lodge Trust are:

- (a) Promoting the heritage and historical significance of Grant Lodge;
- (b) Educating the general public about the heritage and historical significance of Grant Lodge;
- (c) Restoring and improving Grant Lodge and its associated environs in order that they may function as community assets;
- (d) Take regard of the disposition of George A Cooper of the College, Elgin.

Grant Lodge Trust would be the body which would, following successful petition to the Court of Session amending the Deed of Gift take on an appropriate lease/community asset transfer of Grant Lodge in order to achieve its aims by being the lead body in applying for funding to redevelop and future manage the building for the uses as previously described.

Information from Moray Council (P&R – 4th November 2014) shows that the anticipated cost of raising a petition at the Court of Session would be in the region of £15,000-£20,000 including approximately £5,000 in legal fees for a specialist opinion (legal counsel) to commence the process.

Depending on Legal Counsels advice a successful petition could lead to the authorisation to lease, transfer or sale of Grant Lodge. In order to continue to support the Grant Lodge Trust, the Moray Council will be required to address the limitations issue of the current Deed of Gift for Grant Lodge (Cooper Park).

This will be required in order to achieve the funding requirements in relation to the re-use of Grant Lodge. This cost is viewed as a relatively small cost in relation to the capital costs involved in redevelopment of Grant Lodge.

Formation of Grant Lodge Trust

Grant Lodge Trust has been formed as a Company Limited by Guarantee, currently applying for Scottish Charitable Status. It has no shares and the Board of Directors may include individuals and representatives from community organisations as well as members of the public.

Ex Officio appointments can be made and would look to involve partners (as and when required):

- Moray Council;
- Historic Scotland;
- Visit Scotland;
- The Elgin Fund;
- Chamber of Commerce;
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise;
- Moray College.

Membership of Grant Lodge Trust will be open to anyone over the age of sixteen who submits a membership application (membership forms will be issued on an annual basis).

Directors will have the power to set up sub group/working parties which may comprise of members and at least one Director.

The first issue of membership forms were available at the Friends of Grant Lodge AGM on 18th November 2014.

The Short Life Working Group has announced the Inaugural Meeting of Grant Lodge Trust taking place on the 15th December 2014 in Elgin Museum Hall.

Funding application for Redevelopment Plan

The Short Life Working Group/Grant Lodge Trust has produced a tender brief in order to pull together elements from previous studies and to provide additional information for the package of uses identified through the public consultation. HIE have been approached to fund the Grant Lodge redevelopment plan and currently await their decision. The tender brief includes (some of which already exists and can be re-used):

- Architectural;
- Quantity Surveying;
- Business Plan/Economic viability;
- Rental Values;
- CDM Coordination;
- Building Services Engineering;
- Structural & Civil Engineering;
- Any other necessary technical consultancies required to deliver the Redevelopment Strategy;

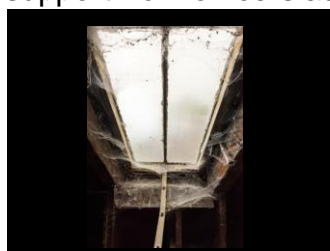
- Planning – change of use.

Outcomes

- The public support for the project was clear from day one of the consultation; with a total of 185 responses over the consultation period with 181 indicating they were in favour of a re-use of the building and that the use should be for community/arts/theatre use.
- To date, some of the maintenance the building requires has been carried out following the intervention of the Short Life Working Group by supporting the information provided by Friends of Grant Lodge. Some issues remain, although The Friends of Grant Lodge and Grant Lodge Trust will continue monitoring the condition of Grant Lodge to ensure it does not deteriorate further and is kept in a condition which will provide a good base for redevelopment.
- The original timescale was amended as appropriate throughout the life of the Short Life Working Group. This was due to the volunteer expertise and commitment along with support provided which allowed the group to advance further than initially identified. Given the level of commitment on the Short Life Working Group/Grant Lodge Trust and in order to continue this project, it is at a stage where the Moray Councils involvement and support are essential to support Grant Lodge Trust in planning for the future development and to actively consider taking over the day to day responsibility of Grant Lodge.
- The Short Life Working Group has achieved the tasks asked of them. The creation of Grant Lodge Trust which will commission a study for a redevelopment plan for Grant Lodge. That study will form a basis of information available for Elected Members to take a decision about an application to the Court of Session to vary the Deed of Gift.

Recommendations

- To receive the findings of the Redevelopment Plan at a later date (anticipated as being May 2015);
- To prepare a report for the consideration by Full Council following the outcome of the Grant Lodge Redevelopment Plan in order to make a decision on making an application to the Court of Session;
- That the Moray Council continues to provide support to the Short Life Working Group/Grant Lodge Trust in a similar manner to what has been afforded to date and relevant future support from officers as required.



Attic Window, Elgin Camera Club – July 2014

