

Tighnabruaich District Development Trust

Call for tenders – Feasibility Study, Technical Assessment and Options Appraisal for Community Purchase of Tighnabruaich Petrol Station

Tender and selection process

Tighnabruaich District Development Trust (www.tddt.org.uk) would like to invite tenders from suitably qualified consultants to conduct a feasibility study, technical survey and options appraisal on the potential community acquisition of the Tighnabruaich Petrol Station.

The consultant should be able to demonstrate experience in community engagement, business planning and community acquisitions. Your tender should include a CV and a detailed scheme of work matching the timescale set out below.

In quoting for the work we require that you supply an overall price and subsidiary quotes for the environmental survey (including soil sampling and remediation assessment), quotes for new equipment and structural survey. Sub-contractors should be identified prior to submitting the tender document and their costs and availability to meet the timescale detailed in the submission.

Tenders will be scored on the headings: experience of community acquisitions; clarity of planning (including hours to be devoted to each element of the task); knowledge of community engagement; and, ability to meet timescale. The quality of the application and relevance to the brief will account for 70% of the scoring and cost will represent 30%. In line with the principle of Community Wealth Building there will be additional consideration for consultants and sub-contractors from Argyll.

Our aim is to make a selection based on scoring of the tender documents we receive by the closing date. We will only move to conduct interviews in the event we are unable to separate two candidates by scoring alone. Interviews will take place online if they become necessary.

Overview

Tighnabruaich District

Despite it's southerly position on the Cowal Peninsula, Tighnabruaich District exhibits many of the features and issues shared by communities in the rest of Highland Scotland: geographic isolation from essential services; narrow employment and further education opportunities; an ageing population; limited public transport; and, a high level of under-occupied (holiday) properties.

The Petrol Station

Tighnabruaich Petrol Station has been under the current ownership since the early 1980's. In that time the business has had three main activities: car repair and servicing; operation of local bus services; and, sale of fuel. After four decades serving the village the current owners plan to retire by early 2025 and aim to put the business on the market.

The business is situated on the shore front in the Auchenlochan area of Tighnabruaich. It occupies the old pier house that gave access to a pier where coal, oil and passengers were brought landed. The steel

uprights of the pier can still be seen on the foreshore.

The Victorian pier house is of aesthetic and historic value but it is not a listed building. It will need significant renovation to make it usable for any new purpose. The current owners hold a licence for the sale and storage of fuel. Any new owner proposing to continue this activity would be obliged to apply for a new licence and, given the age and condition of the storage and pumping equipment, securing the new licence would require significant investment.

Tighnabruaich sits at the end of the bulk fuel supply network and the petrol station has limited storage capacity. These factors increase the local wholesale price of fuel to the level of forecourt retail prices elsewhere. This puts a severe constraint on potential margins for the sale of fuel.

The contract for the local bus service has now passed to West Coast Motors, the main operator in the area. There is one other mechanic in the village. The existing business model will no longer be viable after the retirement of the current owners.

The transition away from fossil fuels for private transport is far from complete, and the sale of fuel in the village will be essential for years to come. The petrol station provides fuel for the local RNLI lifeboat, the Fire Service and Coastguard team. While sale of fuel may not be profitable it is vital to the local area and emergency services. Losing a point of sale in the local area will force people to make long journeys out of the village, adding to carbon emissions and likely affecting other local businesses – if individuals have to drive to Dunoon to buy fuel, for instance, they are likely to do all their other shopping while they are there.

Without intervention in the form of a community purchase, recent local experience would lead us to believe that the historic building will be demolished for construction of a private dwelling or refurbished as a potential holiday home or holiday let.

The Tighnabruaich District Development Trust conducted a community survey over summer and autumn 2023. Among other things, it demonstrated clear community backing for any action by the Development Trust to intervene in support of local services where a business case can be made. Having begun discussions with the current owners of the petrol station and the Scottish Land Fund, this invitation to tender will allow us to map the challenges and opportunities presented by a community purchase, examine alternative uses for the pier building while maintaining a point of sale for fuel (if viable), and assess community support for a range of options to be outlined during the consultation process.

Scope of Work

The consultant will be tasked with:

- examining alternative or complementary uses for the petrol station building and site in partnership with TDDT and wider community;
- assessing appropriateness for installing electric vehicle charging points;
- engaging a structural engineer to report on the condition of the building, and any works needed to keep it in a state of repair to support any alternative use;
- engaging suitably qualified environmental surveyors to conduct soil contamination tests and indicate remediation and contamination prevention measures;
- desk-based research on similar community enterprises in Scotland;
- obtaining quotes for the installation of new fuel storage and pumping equipment in the event

this is viable;

- presenting interim findings at a community event where members of the public will be able to feedback on options for future use of the site; and,
- presenting a final report containing a costed options appraisal based on outcomes of the tasks listed above.

Methodology

For each of the studies to be completed (equipment installation, building condition and environmental appraisal) the consultant will identify sub-contractors and include their quotes for the work in their tender bid.

The consultant will carry out a community survey and targeted interviews aimed at establishing community support and community benefit arising from the various alternative use of the petrol station building and site. Staff from TDDT can assist with contacting our membership and helping the chosen consultant to reach stakeholders.

The consultant will present their interim findings to a community event and gather feedback from local residents.

Outputs

The consultant will present a final report containing the results of the structural and technical studies, an appraisal of the alternative uses of the building and a summary of feedback gathered from the community.

Timescale

Submission of tender documents – Wednesday 14th February 2024

Successful consultant confirmed by TDDT – Monday 12th March 2024

Community consultation event – Saturday 11th May 2024

Final report submitted to TDDT – Friday 7th June 2024

Fee

Up to £20k total (including fees for separate studies).