



6 March 2014

On 28 February, Rob Close, Chair of Friends of Seafield House (FoSH) made a Request for Messages of Support in Calling on NHS Ayrshire & Arran Seafield House Viability Group to base its Recommendation on Offers Received in the Sale of Seafield House to the Board of NHS Ayrshire & Arran not only on Best Price but other factors that it set out. The full text of the letter is given below.

Should the Viability Group's Recommendation be to Reject Offers Received, Friends of Seafield House Calls on the Board of NHS Ayrshire & Arran to Consider the strongly argued Case that SAVE Britain's Heritage has made with the support of FoSH & others to SAVE Seafield House and the following Messages of Support in Coming to its Decision.

The Messages of Support received thus far are listed in the order in which they were received. FoSH is grateful to all those who set messages. We know that we are to receive further expressions of support. We will collate & email them as a second grouping to arrive with the Board in advance of its next meeting on 31 March.

Messages of Support:

"You have my support."

Malcolm Fraser, Malcolm Fraser Architects; Chair, External Review Group, Scottish Government National Review of Town Centres

"Here's hoping for a positive outcome."

Professor Roland A Paxton MBE MSc PhD HonDEng CEng FICE FRSE, Institute for Infrastructure and Environment, School of the Built Environment, Heriot-Watt University

"I am delighted to support the development of Seafield House and its environs. Such development is not just about the history which is, of course, very important but also about an important legacy which this community will leave to those that follow. The acquisition and development is not just a commercial transaction, it is truly about the value that a resurrected Seafield House will add to the community and the message that it will send to the much wider communities of Scotland and Internationally."

Chic Brodie MSP, Scottish Parliament

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my support for Friends of Seafield House campaign and to urge NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Viability Group to consider carefully and favourably offers received in respect of the former Seafield Hospital site. I believe that due weight should be given in

the Viability Group's considerations to the desirable social outcome of retaining the Seafield House building, with a view to its future restoration, and that on that basis no offer should be rejected simply on the basis of price."

John Scott MSP, Scottish Parliament

"Please take into account the condition of the building, the constant water ingress due to blocked gutters and no roof on parts of the building and unboarded windows. The cost of security lighting. The depressing site of the neglected building to all attending the nhs clinics on the site, a far from uplifting experience? This situation has gone on for far too long and it is perhaps time to allow a new owner to refresh the site which will benefit all including nhs patients on the site."

Rosemary Paterson, Seafield Resident, FoSH Seafield Co-ordinator

"I strongly support the Friends of Seafield House in their petition to the NHS Viability Group to base its recommendation for the sale of this gracious and significant building not only on achieving best price but taking account of the neglected state of the premises, blanket TPO and provision for community buyout."

Sheila McIlwraith, Ayr, Supporter of Friends of Seafield House

"This Trust and its Trustees would urge the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Viability Group, in determining which body is to become the owner of Seafield House, to give prime consideration to which ever body is likely to succeed in restoring the mansion, rather than seek to obtain the maximum commercial price possible from a less sympathetic developer. We are sure that the reasons for this approach have been fully covered, in detail, in other correspondence on the subject."

Robert G M Clow, Trustee, Heritage Building Preservation Trust

"I support Friends of Seafield House in all its endeavours to save this beautiful house. I was born in that house."

Mrs Isabel Conway

*"I would wish to support Rob Close and the committee on the basis of his letter." **

J. Douglas Brown OBE. M.B.Ch.B.FRCS(Ed.)

"I totally support the Friends of Seafield House in their letter regarding the sale of the House."

Christine Fremantle, Ayr, Supporter of Friends of Seafield House

"Having watched the decline of yet another historic building under the care of the NHS, I would ask that NHS Ayrshire & Arran Viability Group carefully considers the offers made at the recent closing date of Seafield House in Ayr. Their recommendations should reflect not only the best price put forward but also the neglected state of the building, the blanket TPO and the provision for community buyout in the Community Empowerment & Renewal bill that is before the Scottish Parliament. The restoration of the building is paramount to both the local community and the nation as a whole and its historical importance in terms of design, construction and the association it holds with Sir William Arrol should not be underestimated."

Brian Williamson, Arrol Researcher, Co-opted Member, Friends of Seafield House Committee

"Quite clearly, apart from being a particularly fine example of an Italianate villa, Seafield House is one of the most historic houses in Scotland as the home of Sir William Arrol, contractor of the Forth Rail Bridge."

David M. Walker, former Chief Inspector of Historic Buildings at Historic Scotland, Professor Emeritus at the University of St Andrews and Founder Editor of the Dictionary of Scottish Architects online.

“We understand that we are close to the point at which NHS Ayrshire & Arran’s Viability Group will meet to discuss its recommendation on offers received in the sale of Seafield House. We further understand that offers were made. We would like to support you in calling for NHS Ayrshire & Arran’s Viability Group to base its recommendation not only on achieving best price but taking account of the neglected state of the building, blanket TPO & provision for community buyout in the Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill that is before the Scottish Parliament. Grounds for best price not being the only factor are: neglected state of the building. The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) says clearly ‘A huge investment of money, energy and materials went into these buildings – it would be poor stewardship of this inheritance to neglect it.’; blanket TPO; community buyout provision in the Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill that is currently before the Scottish Parliament.”

Charles Blackett-Ord C.Eng, FICE, CARE, Engineer Accredited in Conservation, Blackett-Ord Conservation Engineering

“In deciding which offer to accept for the sale of Seafield House, Ayr, I urge you to take account of the following; Because of its intimate connection with that pinnacle of Victoria Engineering - the Forth Rail Bridge - Seafield House is a building of national, even international importance. As such, it offers a very important opportunity for the vital tourist economy of Scotland. A great responsibility therefore rests on all those involved in any decision about its future. This decision must take into account not only the price of the property but, crucially, all the credentials of each bidder, with a view to sympathetic restoration and enabling development. Despite prevailing economic pressures, in exceptional circumstances a long term view must be taken. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to take this view with Seafield House.”

John Butterworth, Ayr, Supporter of Friends of Seafield House

“I understand that offers have now been received for the sale of Seafield House which is an important step forward to save this important building, the former home of one of Scotland’s greatest engineers, Sir William Arrol. I hope that the consideration of the offers takes due account of the wider benefits to the community for this important property and not just highest economic offer. “

Gordon Masterton, Chairman, Scottish Engineering Hall of Fame.

“I am delighted to add my message of support for the future of Seafield House and hope that the NHS can decide to sell it to a suitable buyer who will honour the significance of the building itself, its construction and technical history and also its social history, as well as the importance of it having been Arrol’s house.”

Nina Baker, PhD, BSc, Engineering Historian and Consultant on Gender Diversity in STEM

“Kyle and Carrick Civic Society welcomes the efforts made by Friends of Seafield House to progress the restoration of the building. We understand an offer has been received as a result of a new marketing strategy and we hope NHS Ayrshire and Arran will look favourably on it. We also hope they recognise the concern felt by the public over the continuing uncertainty of the future of Seafield House. Kyle and Carrick Civic Society strongly supports Friends of Seafield House in their campaign to save such an important building and we look forward to a successful outcome.”

Sheila Penny, Secretary, Kyle & Carrick Civic Society

"I should like to add my support to the Friends of Seafield House's bid for this important and neglected historic property. The home of one of Scotland's foremost engineers, Sir William Arrol and a building of considerable architectural importance it deserves to be owned and restored by those who appreciate its value and can make it an asset to Ayr and the West of Scotland. The long period of negligence reflects badly on the Health Board and the Scottish Government's duty of care to the historic environment and the recognition of those who have made important contributions to Scotland."

Anne Riches (co-author with Rob Close, "Ayrshire and Arran: The Buildings of Scotland", Yale University Press, 2012

"I confirm my support of the Friends of Seafield House campaign in their fight to save Seafield House and call on NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Viability Group to base its recommendation not only on achieving best price but taking account of the neglected state of the building, blanket TPO & provision for community buyout in the Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill that is before the Scottish Parliament."

Nigel Hackett, Ayr, Supporter of Friends of Seafield House

"I write to express my views, to NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Viability Group, on the sale of Seafield House. I am presently working on various pieces of research and projects to which Seafield House relates. The work of Sir William Arrol is only now coming to national attention and it would be a significant tragedy if the wrong thing is done with this component of Arrol's working life. My considered view is that sensitive redevelopment of the House should be sought and that the offer of the highest price bid should not be the deciding factor. The true qualities and importance of this building are in my view presently concealed. Only the right developer and Design team will unlock that potential. The tail should not be left to wag the dog. In ten year's time with the Forth Rail Bridge set as a site of World Heritage status via UNESCO, this House will be recognized as one of the most important domestic residences in Scotland - A house imbedded in the Industrial revolution that allowed our country to prosper. The restoration of Seafield House by way of enabling development is perhaps the only viable option. And I am relieved to hear that this will now be possible. Well done to the team that have saved it. I accord with FOSH that the grounds for best price not being the only factor are: the neglected state of the building. The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) says clearly 'A huge investment of money, energy and materials went into these buildings – it would be poor stewardship of this inheritance to neglect it'; the community buyout provision in the Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill that is currently before the Scottish Parliament. The last 2 years of VAT on listed Buildings has seen the demise of a vast array of fine Buildings and it has never been more crucial to bring this one back to its former Glory."

Andrew McAvoy, Edo Architecture, Chartered Architect, RIAS, Winner of RIAS Award for Services to Domestic Architecture, 2013

"For a building of such construction and architectural quality, as justified by the listing status, a developer with proven track record of sympathetic treatment of similar buildings must be sought. This record means that they have not received adverse comments from council planning or Historic Scotland, they work closely with registered conservation architects & engineers, they have employed specialist contractors or those who invest on traditional skills. They will also need to demonstrate their projects have been well received by the community, the public or the design professionals. If they have been involved in regeneration schemes, again they need to show they have fulfilled certain

criteria to make their schemes successful. According to SHEP (1.7) 'The remains of the past can act as a powerful catalyst and a stimulus to high quality new design and development, leading to successful regeneration and community-building'. This is the value a developer will have to demonstrate and community buy-outs, if well coordinated, can be the best way forward. All this experience, sensitivity and ability to truly engage with right professionals & contractors and the community need time and investment, and it is well known that lower bidders will undercut in the quality or range of services. They would be usually vague about things outside their core operations. The high quality of many architectural features and details is an integral attribute in the B-list status of the building and its fragile state demands someone with a particular experience in such buildings, rather than bidders interested only in maximising their profit margins. The bidder will also have to include a statement about the sustainable management of the property."

Dr Dimitris Theodossopoulos, University of Edinburgh + Cristina Gonzales-Longo, University of Strathclyde

*The text of the letter sent by Rob Close, Chair, Friends of Seafield House:

28 February 2014

FAO Friends of Seafield House (FoSH) Steering Group, FoSH Friends & wider circulation list

Dear All

Offers Received in the Sale of Seafield House : FoSH Seeks Messages of Support

We understand that we are close to the point at which NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Viability Group will meet to discuss its recommendation on offers received in the sale of Seafield House. We further understand that offers were made. This is a great success given the many years that Seafield House lingered on the market under threat of demolition. The fact that a closing date was set on 11 December last year was a real step forward.

The restoration of Seafield House by way of enabling development is a viable option. With the support of SAVE Britain's Heritage, FoSH has set out its view is that no offer should be discounted on price alone. FoSH has communicated this to NS Ayrshire & Arran and to members of its Viability Group.

Our grounds for best price not being the only factor are:

- neglected state of the building. The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) says clearly:
A huge investment of money, energy and materials went into these buildings – it would be poor stewardship of this inheritance to neglect it."
- blanket TPO
- community buyout provision in the Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill that is currently before the Scottish Parliament.

In making this case, we would appreciate you sending us a message of support to info@friends-of-seafield-house.org.uk that calls on NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Viability Group to base its recommendation not only on achieving best price but taking account of the neglected state of the

building, blanket TPO & provision for community buyout in the Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill that is before the Scottish Parliament. We will collate all messages and send them to NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Chairman & Chief Executive & to its Viability Group. In addition, we will post messages on a dedicated page on our website, Facebook & add into our Twitter feed.

Many thanks for your support at this critical time in the campaign to SAVE Seafield House.

Best wishes

Rob Close

Chair, Friends of Seafield House

www.friends-of-seafield-house.org.uk

FoSH contact: info@friends-of-seafield-house.org.uk

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