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Milngavie Heritage Centre

Chairman Eric Gotts

September 2017

The committee of Milngavie Heritage Centre welcomes this opportunity to comment on the draft Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020. We wish to address two related matters:

1. Potential contribution of a Heritage Centre/Museum in Milngavie

We agree strongly with the assertion (p.16) that “East Dunbartonshire has great opportunities for tourism but has so far lacked the visibility and profile to attract people”. We consider this applies with particular force to the communities of the West of the Authority’s area. The tourist attractions in the west are particularly accessible to visitors, given the railway service and their being en-route to and from the long-distance walks such as the West Highland Way.

We propose that the Council should facilitate public access to a Milngavie Heritage Centre or Museum open throughout the year. This would provide an important tourist attraction in its own right and also contribute significantly to the profile of attractions in Milngavie, Bearsden and the other communities in the west of the authority’s area.

The following formed part of our response to authority’s Main Issues Report in November 2013:

“Since 2011, The Heritage Centre Group has mounted a series of highly successful exhibitions, well-researched and well-attended, using temporarily rented accommodation. In any future re-modelling of council properties providing public facilities, serious consideration should be given to providing permanent space for a Heritage exhibition.”

To this should be added space for essential activities such as storage, conservation and cataloguing. (We note that virtually all the many donors to the Centre’s collections have specified that their gifts must be made readily available in Milngavie). In effect this would be a mini-museum for Milngavie and the surrounding area, reflecting in the west the Heritage provision at Kirkintilloch Town Hall.

“Such a facility, a significant visitor attraction, could share premises with library, gallery or community hub. It would augment the footfall both of any partner and of the wider town centre and present an outstanding example of collaboration between public and voluntary sectors”.

MHC’s strategy is to “research, examine, exhibit and interpret the history of Milngavie *and its surrounding areas*”

The inclusion in a standing display of materials not only from Milngavie, but also from surrounding communities such as Bearsden and Baldernock would greatly enrich a visitor's experience. For example, reference could be made to the Roman Baths and Antonine Wall and a replica of the pre-historic Bearsden shark displayed. The City of Glasgow's internationally significant A-listed Heritage in the complex of the Reservoirs and Loch Katrine aqueduct should feature, especially in view of the loss in 2009 of its on-site interpretation resource (The museum at Commissioners' Cottage).

2. Importance of the Milngavie Reservoirs complex

After Mugdock Country Park, the Reservoirs complex is the second most visited attraction in East Dunbartonshire, attracting visitors from all over greater Glasgow, and significant tourism from further afield in Scotland and even abroad. It should surely be listed in the Strategy, on Page 29 item 41, for example. An important possibility for enhancement as a visitor attraction may be presented by Scottish Water's current initiative to establish a "Community Liaison Group", to bring together representatives of the local community (the Friends of Milngavie Reservoirs), the Local Authority, Scottish Water and other stakeholders.