

DADCA

New Build Project
- Big Lottery Bid -

Consultation Document

October 2013

DORNOCH & DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Scottish Charity No. SC013716 - Company Limited by Guarantee registered in Scotland No. 375856 - Registered Office: Rubhan Beag, Hilton, Dornoch, Sutherland, IV25 3PW

Contents

1. Initial Consultation (2008)	3
1.1 Concept	3
1.2 Methodology	3
1.3 Results	4
1.4 Conclusions	5
2. General Public Consultation (2013)	6
2.1 Concept	6
2.2 Methodology	7
2.3 Results	7
2.4 Conclusions	9
3. User Groups Survey	10
3.1 Methodology	10
3.2 Results	10
3.3 Conclusions	11
Appendix A - Original Questionnaire (2008)	12
Appendix B - Main Questionnaire (2013)	13
Appendix C - Main Questionnaire Results	14
Appendix D - User Groups Survey	39
Appendix E - User Groups Survey Results	40

1. INITIAL CONSULTATION (2008)

Following their election in 2007, one of the first tasks that the committee undertook was to consult with local people about the future of the Dornoch Social Club building.

1.1 Concept

The consultation took the form of a simple questionnaire one side of A4 paper (*see Appendix A*) which was designed & printed by the committee. The aim of the questionnaire was threefold :

- A. to heighten awareness of the DADCA organisation and the Social Club building
- B. to better understand what events and activities people wanted in the hall
- C. to better understand what people thought about the future of the building

1.2 Method

Posters were printed and placed around the town in prominent positions, advertising the consultation. We arranged for 'post boxes' to be placed in the local Post Office, Highland Council Service Point and main supermarket as well as in the Social Club itself.

The questionnaires were printed in-house and copies placed alongside the post boxes. In addition, copies of the questionnaire were left at the Dornoch Academy and senior pupils were encouraged to complete forms.

The process created a good amount of interest within the local community and the results were announced at a Public Meeting held in the Social Club on 24th April 2008, after the AGM.

The meeting was well attended (over 70 people), many questions were asked, particularly about possible locations for a new building, and the survey results were well received.

1.3 Results

(Q1) What activities are you likely to support in a new/refurbished facility?

This was a multiple 'tick-box' question and from the results we compiled a 'Top 12' list of preferences.

1	Live Music / Concerts	218
2	Film Shows	213
3	Swimming	203
4	Dances	199
5	Ceilidhs	181
6	Gymnasium / Fitness Suite	166
7	Private Functions	158
8	Snooker / Pool	147
9=	Charity Auctions / Boot Fairs	143
9=	Discos	143
11	Sales of Work	140
12	Art & Craft Exhibitions	135

(Q2) In principle would you prefer?

The existing Social Club building refurbished	74	(20.1%)
A new Community building in a different location	199	(54.1%)
Not bothered either way	95	(25.8%)
Did Not Answer	21	

Total Responses **389**

(Q3) Personal Details?

Gender	Male	158	(40.6%)
	Female	231	(59.4%)

Total Responses **389**

Age Range	Under 18	162	(41.6%)
	18 - 40	40	(10.3%)
	41- 60	63	(16.2%)
	Over 61	124	(31.9%)

Total Responses **389**

1.4 Conclusions

Activities

From the Top 12 list generated by the survey, Swimming and the Gymnasium / Fitness Suite were initially set aside by the committee as being aspirational goals rather than immediate possibilities, given the available time and current financial constraints.

However, there were a number of 'quick wins' upon which the committee decided to focus. For example, the public dance following the Highland Games day was immediately reinstated as a fund raising event. Likewise, one committee member (secretary Judi Sutherland) arranged to hold a Ceilidh in the hall to raise funds.

Other events took longer to organise, but as a direct result of the consultation the Dornoch Cinema was formed (thanks to start-up funding from Hi-Arts), an Arts & Crafts Group was formed, which then led to the formation of the Dornoch Gallery and the now annual Grand Fibre Fest event.

We were also fortunate to receive a large, high quality Pool Table as a donation, which still resides in the Social Club to this day. Furthermore, monthly Car Boot Sales were started (which now run from March to October and includes a Farmers Market) and raises enough money to almost cover our annual electricity bill.

Five years after the initial consultation we can report that of the Top 12 activities identified by the community, 10 have been catered for in one way or another in the Social Club building - the two exceptions being swimming & the fitness suite!

Demographic

The DADCA Committee were heartened by the total number of responses (389) and by the feedback regarding the type of events that people said they would support.

The age profile of the respondents appeared to highlight two things.

First, Dornoch has an elderly population with a significant number over 60 - figures later confirmed by more detailed studies as part of the *Dornoch Economic Masterplan* document commissioned by HIE.

The second point highlighted by the study was that the youngsters at the Academy were keen to voice their opinions about the community centre. Subsequent to the survey a weekly Youth Cafe was re-started in the hall during term time - making use of, amongst other things, the pool table and cinema equipment (see above).

Social Club Building

The question regarding the future of the Social Club building was answered by over 90% of respondents. Prior to the consultation process the committee were unsure of the feeling in the community regarding the future of the building, given the strong emotional ties to such an iconic building. However, in the event only 20% voted in favour of staying put.

Many of the questions and comments at the public meeting concerned the suitability of the building in the long-term, and the committee explained that after careful consideration of the short-comings of the Social Club (e.g. running costs, maintenance backlog, accessibility, layout, etc.) we were minded to explore the possibility of a new build somewhere in Dornoch. This approach was wholeheartedly approved of by the meeting, with the only dissenting voices coming from residents in the area of Meadows Park!

2. MAIN CONSULTATION (2013)

Following the publication of the Phillips Aitchison Feasibility Study in 2009 (*see separate document*) the DADCA committee subsequently took a decision to put the new build project on hold. This decision was based on two main factors :-

- “ The Dornoch Academy Parent Council (DAPC) had plans to build a much needed Sports Hall facility at the Dornoch Academy. We were approached by the DAPC and asked to postpone our project to allow them a clear run at potential funders as their plans were more advanced than ours.
- “ At about the same time we realised that the DADCA committee was not robust enough to deliver a large new-build project. Crucially, the specific areas of weakness were in financial management and business acumen.

We decided to concentrate our efforts on running the Social Club efficiently, strengthening our committee expertise and improving our financial position. In any event, a new Sports Hall within Dornoch would have a significant impact on the facilities required in a new community centre - once their plans were finalised our remit and requirements would be much clearer.

In late 2012 it became clear that the ‘ownership’ of the Sports Hall project had been transferred from DAPC to Highland Council (HC). We held meetings with the Rector of the Academy (John Garvie) and our local Highland Councillor (Jim McGillivray) and from these discussions it became clear that the Council preferred plan was for a sports hall designed to serve the needs of the school, but crucially no fitness suite was planned. The Sports Hall eventually appeared on the HC Capital Spending programme published in June 2013.

We were also coming under increasing pressure from members of our community who, frustrated at our failure to deliver the Fitness Suite in August 2011 (*see separate Feasibility Study (Update) document*), were becoming disillusioned at the progress of the new build project.

Therefore, with the Sports Hall plans clarified and a more robust committee (now Board) with a good track record of running the Social Club, we decided to re-visit the Community Centre new build project.

Our next step was to check that the local community, existing user groups and other interested parties were still in support of our plans to replace the existing building, and so we decided to hold a second round of consultation.

2.1 Concept

We wanted to exceed the scope of the 2009 survey in terms of our local community, and in particular try and reach more of the ‘middle sector’ age groups that we had previously missed.

At the same time, we wanted to take opinions and views of the many user groups now using the building, and also reach out to those groups active within Dornoch who did not currently use the Social Club to see if they had any needs which were not being met.

Accordingly, we decided to run two separate surveys - the first one open to the General Public and then followed by one specifically for user groups.

2.2 General Public Survey - Method

From the experience gained with the 2009 survey we wanted to keep the survey short, but soon realised that a single sheet of A4 would not be enough space this time. For this reason we went for a single A3 sheet folded to 4 sides of A4, of which we had 2,500 copies professionally printed (see *Appendix B*).

The survey questions and layout were all designed in-house. The front cover explained about the history of the existing building, our organisation and our project. In addition to the main questions we took the decision to also offer the respondents the chance to join DADCA.

We launched the consultation at a Public Meeting in our hall in March 2013, which was advertised using posters around town, on our website and on our Facebook page. The aim of this meeting was to introduce the new consultation to the public, but more importantly to recruit a band of 'volunteers' to distribute the questionnaires and an information sheet (FAQ) to every house within Dornoch.

The meeting was a success and we distributed over 1,500 copies through every door in the town, as well as to Embo and most of the outlying houses in the hinterland - all done by the Board members and volunteers. The distributors were encouraged to spend time knocking on the doors and chatting to people about the project, and a lot of good will and ideas were generated by this. Additional copies of the paper questionnaire were placed in prominent locations around town (Post Office, Service Point, Social Club, etc.) where we also placed postboxes for completed surveys.

We made separate presentations to both the Academy and Primary school assemblies, and the Academy pupils were encouraged to complete surveys as part of their school curriculum.

Following a suggestion made by one of our younger Board members we also ran, in parallel with the paper questionnaire, an identical on-line version (using SurveyMonkey) which was promoted on our own website and Facebook pages. The thinking behind this was that it might connect with a different part of our community, and the results of the on-line survey in terms of responses exceeded our most optimistic expectations!

The consultation ran for over 4 weeks and culminated in an exhibition of the results (where we also unveiled our outline plans for a new building) and a second meeting in the hall. Invitations to the results meeting & exhibition were posted through letterboxes in town in the week leading up to the event, and the exhibition was attended by over 60 people with a further 80 attending the meeting in the evening.

The results were then displayed on posters in a local empty shop window and in the Highland Council Service Point for another 3 weeks after the meeting.

2.3 General Public Survey - Results

The on-line survey closed on Monday 8th April and all the paper copies were collected together. The paper copies were then input into a separate SurveyMonkey data set and the two sets later merged to take advantage of the analysis and reporting features.

The full results of the survey as shown at the exhibition on 19th April 2013 are covered in *Appendix C*, but the highlights are as follows.

Question 1 dealt with respondents' usage and perception of the existing building.

Answers to the first two questions revealed that the survey had reached a significant proportion of users who either never used the Social Club or were irregular users (less than 6 times per year). In total 65.84% of respondents fell into this category.

The next question revealed that people had a fairly good opinion of the building, but only 2.81% felt it was great with twice as many answering awful. The vast majority were in the 'Poor' to 'Good' range with the most popular response being 'Fair' (34.8%).

The final question in this section sought to discover what put people off attending events in the Hall. The top 5 responses were unsurprising, with Poor Heating coming out first overall (27.76%), closely followed by Difficulty Parking (25.52%).

However, there was a significant variation in the on-line responses, which voted Poor Toilets the top issue (29.56%).

The most surprising response was that 'Don't know what's on' was the third most common barrier to attendance - and something which the Board took away as an action point, resulting in a regular 'box' advertisement in our local paper.

Question 2 asked about the need for a new Community Building and the facilities it may need if required.

There was an overwhelming response in favour of a new Community Building to replace the existing Social Club - greatly increased over the 2009 survey. In all, 517 people answered this question and 75.82% said 'Yes' to a new build, with a further 14.31% voting for 'Don't Know'. Less than 1 in 10 of all respondents answered 'Don't Care' (4.06%) or 'No' (5.8%).

There was little variation in the on-line and paper response levels, although proportionally more of the 'No' responses came from on-line surveys than paper copies.

From the tick list of suggested facilities offered in Question 2.2, a Fitness Suite was the winner. This was closely followed by Catering Facilities, Cinema and Coffee Lounge, all of which were ticked by over half of the respondents. The popularity of the Fitness Suite could be related to the work done in 2011 in trying to buy the industrial unit, and may have been affected by Q3 (although this was deliberately placed after this section). However, for whatever reason the responses from Q3 do show a significant interest in using a Fitness Suite in Dornoch (see below).

Of the 'other' suggestions offered, unsurprisingly a Swimming Pool was by far and away the most popular. We originally discussed adding this as a tick-box in the option for Q2.2, but eventually decided that as we had already discounted this facility as being 'aspirational' rather than 'attainable', it was better to let people raise it themselves. In the event Swimming Pool was offered as a suggestion by 51 people, more than twice the next most popular response of Youth Cafe. The other suggestions are listed in Appendix B, many of which were already in our plans, and most others could be incorporated into a flexible community facility.

Question 3 requested opinion on the feasibility of a Fitness Suite in a new Community Centre.

The most revealing response came from Q3.1, where 148 people answered that they currently use a Fitness Suite. Given that our nearest facilities are in Tain (18 mile round trip) and Golspie (21 miles), then this represented a lot of car miles and CO² emissions. This response confirmed much circumstantial evidence that many people were travelling outwith Dornoch to use gymnasiums (not to mention the Academy pupils regularly travelling by bus to Golspie).

Subsequent questions in this section confirmed the popularity of the idea of the Fitness Suite, with 85.82% saying we needed one in Dornoch! More importantly, a total of 300 people (55.56%) said they would use one if it was available, and 177 people (33.21%) said they would sign up for a membership with a further 175 (32.83%) undecided. Finally, a total of 264 people answered the question regarding membership costs, with the average being £16.25 and the median figure £15.00.

This response in support of the Fitness Suite was much greater than the Board expected, and revealed a huge demand for such a facility. Even with a high attrition rate of membership, this facility could realistically become not only self-financing in a new Community Centre, but even profitable.

Question 4 asked about other groups that respondents engaged with. The most popular groups were the main social events and activities in Dornoch (Hogmanay Street Party, Festival Week, Golf Club and the Highland Gathering). Three of these four events are run on a not-for-profit basis by volunteers, which reveals a lot about the level of community activity in the area.

We asked for any other groups that we had missed from what was a fairly comprehensive list, and apart from the Dornoch Brownies (an oversight on the questionnaire) nothing significant was revealed.

Question 5 was concerned about personal information. We decided to make answering this question optional, but included a section regarding our data protection policy. In the event over 500 people replied giving information on their age, gender and ethnic origin. The responses were broadly in line with other professional demographic reports (*see EKOS report in Dornoch Economic Masterplan - March 2013*), showing an older population than the norm in Scotland, with a predominantly white British (and Scottish) ethnic origin.

The majority of respondents were either in education or retired, with only 23.27% in full-time employment and another 15.19% in part time work. Just 1.92% of respondents were unemployed, which is significantly lower than the national average but almost matches the latest figure in the EKOS report (2.0%).

Question 6 gave an opportunity for people to comment on the idea of a new community centre.

All comments received from respondents who answered 'No' to Q 2.1 (*Are you in favour of a new Community Centre?*) were analysed and our responses to their comments were initially put on our Facebook page, then on posters displayed at the meetings and subsequently on posters displayed in the Service Point and the shop window.

The comparatively few (15 out of 108) 'negative' comments ranged from fears of a new Community Centre being a waste of money and becoming a white elephant, through suggestions that there was nothing wrong with the existing building to ideas for alternative sites. Other comments mentioned sustainability - both environmental as well as economic.

Happily, we received far more favourable comments and suggestions, and these were also on show at the events and are all noted in *Appendix C*. Furthermore, at the second meeting on April 19th there were many more people in attendance but few negative comments. All the discussion focused on where and what to build rather than if and why, which suggests that one result of the consultation was a better understanding of the issues facing the DADCA board.

2.4 General Public Survey - Conclusions

The survey generated a significant number of respondents (larger than we had expected), with the vast majority of responses in favour of a new building. We also achieved our aim of reaching more of the middle age-group bracket and came within 2% of matching the EKOS percentage figure for the 16 - 44 age group.

The 2013 survey was more detailed than the one in 2008 and attracted over 200 more replies, yet after 5½ years running the Social Club (and increasing its usage from 2 events a year to over 800) the majority in favour of moving to a new building is significantly greater now than it was then.

The DADCA Board believe that the results from the latest survey empower them to move forward with the new-build project with very strong backing from the community.

3. USER GROUPS SURVEY

Once we had the results of the Public consultation we decided to conduct a survey of our existing user groups (and also those not currently using the hall) to seek their thoughts on our plans and ask for ideas of what they may need in a new building.

3.1 User Groups Survey - Methodology

We created a different survey (*see copy Appendix D*) to send out to our fifty affiliated organisations and groups, and also to other local groups who don't currently use the hall.

The survey was again designed in house, and attempted to discover what usage groups currently made of the hall (although our own letting records show this to some extent) and their patterns in terms of times, dates and frequency. We then asked about perceived short-comings, storage requirements (now and in future) and went on to ask for opinions about a new building and what it should contain. Finally, we asked for comments on the idea of a new community building.

We mainly distributed the surveys by hand to known group contacts, but some were posted where the contacts lived out of Dornoch.

3.2 User Groups Survey - Results

We received 35 responses to our survey and the results are detailed in *Appendix E*.

Question 1 requested information about the group or organisation. Of the 33 responses 19 groups had a written constitution, 10 were registered charities although 2 of these were DADCA sub-committees.

Question 2 asked about the usage of the Social Club. Unsurprisingly the Main Hall and the Kitchen were the two most common areas of the hall occupied by the 23 groups currently using the Social Club, with the Coffee Lounge being used by 13 groups and the Struie Room by 6.

The most common usage pattern was 'annually' with 10 replies. However, the same number reported using the hall either weekly or more often.

The most popular time for booking the hall was between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. (12 responses), with the morning session next most popular (8 responses) and then the afternoon with 6 responses.

The final question in section 2 asked for the perceived shortcomings of the current building. The top responses were :

- 14 Parking
- 11 Heating
- 6 Toilets
- 6 Access
- 4 Availability
- 3 Storage

The perceived shortcomings are similar to the responses we received from the individual users in the main survey, although poor Parking provision is regarded as more of an issue by our User Groups than the Public.

Question 3 focused on storage, which is a continual problem both inside the Social Club (items belonging to DADCA, its sub-committees and user groups) and in Dornoch generally, with many items belonging to voluntary groups being stored in the houses, sheds and barns of volunteers.

Of the 34 respondents a total of 13 currently use storage at the Social Club. This is primarily in one of the accessible (but overcrowded) store cupboards. However other areas such as the upstairs and the loft are also used for longer term storage.

When asked, 21 organisations said that they stored items away from the Social Club and of these 13 said they would use more storage were it available.

Typical of the responses to Question 3.5 was the comment from the East Sutherland Camera Club *'at the moment we have no secure storage and equipment is kept in members homes, which limits our activities'*.

Question 4 asked for views on the idea of a new building to replace the Social Club. The response to Question 4.1 'Do you think we need a new Community Building?' was overwhelmingly in favour, with 33 out of 34 organisations in favour and just 1 'Don't Know'.

When asked about future usage 16 out of 33 groups said they were likely to use a new building more than at present, with the same amount using the same.

When asked how they would cope with a small increase in hire charges no groups were completely opposed. Indeed, 1/3 of the replies said that a small increase would be no problem and the rest were noncommittal.

Finally, we asked for comments and suggestions as to how a new building might help the group's sustainability, what new activities it might promote and thoughts on the new-build project in principle. These comments are all detailed in *Appendix E*.

3.3 User Groups Survey - Conclusions

Our user-groups are overwhelmingly in favour of a new community centre - even more so than the general public.

Whilst our users are loyal in booking the main hall and other rooms for a variety of events on a regular basis, the shortcomings of parking, heating, accessibility and toilets remain at the top of their list of concerns.

The fact that almost half of the groups say they would have more events in a new hall confirms that there is a large untapped market for space for social activities which we are currently unable to fulfil. This fact is also supported by the number of bookings which we have to turn away owing to lack of available space.

In addition to activity space, the survey confirms that there is a significant demand for community storage space, the lack of which is currently hampering the activities of some groups, as evidenced by the comments in the survey.

The results of the User Groups Survey lends further support to the DADCA Board's plan to deliver a new, purpose-built community centre for the people of Dornoch and south-east Sutherland.