



The Tower Digital Arts Centre, Helensburgh Community Buyout

Feasibility Research Report
September 2024



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1. Introduction and background

1.1 The Tower Digital Arts Centre

The Tower Digital Arts Centre was a cinema and arts venue operating out of part of the B-listed former St. Columba's church building in the centre of Helensburgh. It opened in 2014 and hosted regular cinema screenings, concerts, community events and training programmes. It closed for most of 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Cinema screenings resumed for a time in 2022, and the business began to bounce back with the help of volunteers. However, in March 2023, the sole director and trustee of the Tower Digital Arts Centre Limited, the charitable company limited by guarantee which leased and operated the venue, announced his intention to close.

At present, the building is closed to the public, although the community buyout steering group (see below) has access with the owner's permission for specific activities. A condition survey has been conducted (awaiting results) and a valuation will be commissioned.

The building is owned by a private limited company, Visit Helensburgh Limited, whose only director is also the director of the Tower Digital Arts Centre Limited, and who has expressed interest in selling the part of the building which held the Digital Arts Centre to the community. The sale would be on a vacant possession basis (purchase of the building, not the business).

Another part of the church building is leased to the Scottish Submarine Trust (SST), trading as Helensburgh Submarine Centre, which has an X-51 Stickleback Submarine and 360-degree projection and audio experience. The Submarine Centre remains open for visits and events.

At present, the owner intends not to sell this section of the building, but to enter into a management agreement under which the new operator of the cinema and arts centre would retain access to shared toilet and kitchen facilities, which sit within Submarine Centre's part of the building. Splitting title to the building in this way raises risks to be addressed at the business plan stage, and legal advice will be required.

To avoid confusion in this report, we refer to the entire building as the former **St Columba's Church**, and references to **the Tower** mean only the part of the building that the community will purchase.

1.2 The Steering Group and company

A Tower Digital Arts Centre Community Buyout Steering Group has come together to find a sustainable future for the Tower Digital Arts Centre. Their vision is to keep a cinema open in the community, to make it an inclusive hub for cultural activities with an expanded range of programming. The 10 members of the steering group include two former members of cinema staff and some of the many former volunteers at the Tower Digital Arts Centre, the only current employee of the Scottish Submarine Centre, and an experienced local entrepreneur.

A company limited by guarantee, The Venue @ St Columba, has been registered to take forward plans for a community buyout. At present, 4 members of the steering group are members and directors of the company. In this report, we refer to both **the Steering Group** and to **The Venue @ St Columba**, as relevant.

Volunteers' experience of running the Tower

After the closure of the Tower Digital Arts Centre was announced in 2023, the members of staff remaining at the time prepared a business plan to keep the cinema running with volunteer support, initially for a trial period of three months. With a team of volunteers, they continued film showings, changed the refreshments on offer and surpassed the revenue targets set (as described in more detail in section 6.1).

Most screenings have now stopped while the steering group prepares for a community buyout, although the steering group have held one-off events as part of community engagement and consultation, as well as monthly free screenings through the Escapes programme, which have been well-attended, and will be using the building for monthly fundraisers from November.

The learnings from this period of regular opening in 2023-24 are a key source of information for this report, and will feed into the business plan.

1.3 About this report

With funding from the Scottish Land Fund at Stage 1, the Steering Group commissioned Community Enterprise to carry out feasibility research. This report compiles findings from desk-based research and community consultation to enable the group to make informed decisions about how to proceed with the project. It is intended primarily as an internal document for the Steering Group to consider.

This will be followed by a 5-year business plan, much of which will be informed by the contents of this report.

Methodology

Activities carried out by Community Enterprise as part of the feasibility study include:

- Analysis of previous data gathered by the steering group, including their sold-out community engagement event in February 2024 (250 attendees), and data from the trial period.
- Community consultation at public events on September 7th 2024 and October 26th 2024, organised and promoted by the steering group.
- Community survey distributed online and on paper during September.
- 1-1 discussions with 5 individuals, organisations and businesses with an interest in the project or the community.

- Analysis on the market for cinema and relevant live events nationally and locally, and research into competitors and comparators for the Tower.

Other feasibility-stage activities

Alongside this report, the Steering Group has also commissioned or will commission the following, and all will feed into the Business Plan:

- Condition survey (complete, see Building Survey report)
- Valuation (to be commissioned)
- Support from Mustard Studio, a consultancy firm specialising in the cinema sector, funded by DTAS (ongoing)

2. Context to the project

2.1 Community profile

A full report on local demographics is included in the Appendix. Key points are:

- Helensburgh has **15,184 people living within the community council boundary**, based on the most recent census in 2022. It has grown slightly since the 2011 census, and remains Argyll and Bute's largest settlement.
- 58% of Helensburgh residents are aged 16-64, about average for the local authority area, but less than average for Scotland. Helensburgh has slightly more people aged under 16 than the local authority area, and slightly fewer people aged 65+.
- Helensburgh has mixed levels of deprivation, as measured by the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#). 3 of the Helensburgh datazones in the centre and eastern part of the town are within the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. On the other hand, 9 datazones in the Helensburgh Community Council area fall within the 20% least deprived areas in Scotland.

2.2 Policy analysis

The following section shows how plans for the Tower Digital Arts Centre fit with national and local policy and strategy.

Planning policy

The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the long-term plan for Scotland to 2045 and sets out where development and infrastructure is needed. Within this, local Authorities must also prepare a Local Development Plan. The Argyll and Bute [Local Development Plan 2](#) was adopted in February 2024, and applies to Helensburgh. This plan “recognises the growth potential in the Helensburgh and Lomond areas” associated with growing employment at the Faslane naval base (“around 1700 new naval staff and their families by 2030”), although it calls for a “measured approach” to further development, given proximity to green belt areas.

The LDP includes provisions on built heritage: most relevant to this project, the Council sets out its intention to “work closely with, and support, other environmental bodies and local community groups and trusts to promote conservation of our built heritage”. The LDP states that listed buildings must be protected; that Historic Environment Scotland will be consulted for listed building consent on works to category B-listed buildings (the category of The Tower). Proposals for demolition of these buildings would be accepted only if the authority is satisfied that there is no practical way of keeping them.

Under the LDP, Helensburgh Community Council has developed a [local design statement](#), which should be consulted at the stage of planning relevant external works to the St Columba building.

Council plan

[Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan 2023-27](#) is the council's overarching plan, and ties in with the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework. Within this Plan, the most relevant priority is: "we will build up and strengthen our communities as attractive, vibrant places to live, work and do business". The council states that it will seek to maximise scope for community involvement and participation.

Community planning

Helensburgh Community Council, via the Visions for Helensburgh forum which it hosts, has begun consultation for a Local Place Plan. There does not appear to be a published plan. The steering group has a positive relationship with the Community Council, and should continue to engage with them as to how the Tower project can contribute to priorities identified in this consultation.

Arts/creative industries

In Argyll and Bute Council's Economic Strategy 2019-23 (still listed as current at present), one of three key priorities is place and people: attracting skills, residents, visitors and businesses. Within this, the plan references the challenge of "creating a vibrant cultural experience and strong creative industry", and notes that the council has previously supported cultural hubs including Campbelltown cinema. External funds previously available to councils for capital developments are now very scarce, but there is an aspiration to support the growth of creative industries as resources allow. The CHARTS network is a council-initiated network for culture in Argyll and Bute, and could be a future partner.

Tourism

The [Argyll & The Isles Strategic Tourism Partnership](#) is a 3-year strategy to align tourism activities around the recovery priorities from Covid-19 and to ensure the most appropriate use of partner resources. The Strategic Tourism Partnership includes Argyll & Bute Council, Visit Scotland, Argyll & Isles Tourism Cooperative and Highlands & Islands Enterprise.

Strategic priorities include extending the season and spreading visitors out beyond existing hotspots. As an indoor, year-round entertainment venue, the Tower could contribute to this. The Submarine Centre already caters to the visitor market (primarily coach tours), and an opportunity to be explored is providing evening entertainment to these groups.

The Helensburgh Waterfront development has been a key project within partnership, and its stated [aims](#) include encouraging new businesses to open in the town and contribute to an attractive and vibrant town centre, attracting residents, businesses and visitors. Retaining and reopening the Tower could be expected to contribute to similar aims.

Argyll and Bute's LDP, mentioned above, also notes that Helensburgh and the surrounding Lomond area is a potentially attractive area for growth in tourism.

Heritage

[Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment](#)

Scotland's national strategy for the historic environment for 2023-2028. Retaining a viable cinema and arts centre to keep the former St Columba's Church in community use fits all three priorities, but there is a stronger fit with the second two:

- Priority 1: Delivering the transition to net zero. Although this is not primarily a project with an environmental focus, energy efficiency upgrades have been identified in the condition survey and will be prioritised. By keeping an existing historic building in sustainable use, the project will minimise additional 'embodied carbon' that would be involved in demolition and new building on site.
- Priority 2: Empowering resilient and inclusive communities and places. This seeks to ensure that organisations that care for the historic environment have the right skills and are more resilient. The project involves a transition to ownership by a locally led and accountable group, which has emphasised community involvement from the outset.
- Priority 3: Building a wellbeing economy. The strategy seeks to promote fair work, responsible contributions to Scotland's economy and increasing engagement with the historic environment, particularly through activities that enhance wellbeing. Keeping the Tower as a cinema and arts venue will sustain at least four permanent, high-quality local jobs. Living wage has been built into all financial projections. Research elsewhere has shown that local cinemas can attract evening footfall, benefiting other businesses both from increased trade and a greater feeling of safety (see section 3.3). Consultation with local businesses is ongoing, to explore how the Tower could benefit them.

3. Market research

3.1 Market trends and analysis

Cinema and event attendance

In the decade prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, cinema audiences rose and stabilised, having reached historic lows in the 1980s. 2018 saw the highest cinema admissions since 1970. During the Covid pandemic in 2020, admissions fell to an all-time low, but admissions began to recover from 2021¹. Data on the extent of this recovery is still somewhat limited.

The annual Scottish Household Survey tracks people's attendance at the cinema and various other types of cultural events over the previous 12 months. The table below shows attendance of relevant event types in 2019, the last year before the Covid pandemic, and in most recent publication (2022).

¹ [BFI Statistical Yearbook 2022](#)

Type of event	% attended in 12 months to March 2019 ²	% attended in 12 months to March 2022 ³
Cinema	58%	49%
Live music	37%	32%
Theatre	33%	24%
Comedy performance	Not included	10%
Streaming a live performance	7%	8%
Dance show	11%	6%
Classical music performance	8%	5%

From 2019 to 2022, attendance fell at all event types, other than streaming a live performance. However, data from 2022 covers the period from March 2021 to March 2022, so it is likely that some people's participation in cultural events was still affected by the Covid pandemic during the 2022 research period.

Demographics in cultural event attendance

Rates of attendance vary with age, socioeconomic status, disability and gender, as shown in SHS 2022 and 2019 data:

- Young adults aged 16-24 are more likely to attend cultural events than the general population, and older adults 75 or over are less likely to attend. However, the Independent Cinema Office notes that this is different for independent cinemas, which tend to rely on older audiences⁴.
- Attendance at all cultural events is highest among people living in the 'least deprived' areas as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), and among households with greater net annual household income. As discussed in section 2, Helensburgh includes both areas among the least deprived and the most deprived.
- Only 56% of disabled adults had attended any cultural event or place of culture, including the cinema, compared to 80% of non-disabled adults.
- In data from SHS 2019, attendance at many types of cultural events was higher among women than men, including cinema, theatre, classical music and streaming live events. Live music (other than classical) was an exception, with equal attendance among men and women. Data by gender is not available in the 2022 publication.

Impact of the cost-of-living crisis

Cost was cited by 13% of SHS 2022 participants as preventing them from attending live events, the second most frequent factor behind lack of time. More recent research on

² [Scottish Household Survey 2019: Culture and Heritage Report](#)

³ [Scottish Household Survey 2022: Key Findings \(Culture and Heritage\)](#)

⁴ Independent Cinema Office (ICO): [How to Start a Cinema – Understanding Audiences](#)

the implications of the rising cost of living carried out for Creative Scotland in 2023⁵ showed that people were in fact *more likely* to consider attending the cinema, live music, theatre and live comedy over the following 12 months than in the past 12 months, while they were *less likely* to consider attending a classical music performance or opera or a dance performance, perhaps perceived as being more expensive.

Among the Creative Scotland study participants who considered themselves less likely to attend events now, cost stood out as a deciding factor: 56% referenced high costs or poor value for money, and 36% cited the cost-of-living crisis or affordability. About three quarters of all participants said that ticket prices had become a more important consideration when deciding whether to attend cultural events, and this was more pronounced among women, younger people and people who indicated that they were struggling financially.

For rural and small-town audiences, the cost of going to a local cinema or event venue is usually lower than that of traveling to attend events elsewhere, however. A 2016 consultation with audiences at 12 independent cinemas and multi-arts venues for Regional Screen Scotland⁶ suggested that people experienced fewer barriers to attending the cinema at these venues than elsewhere, and only 10% of respondents found cost to be a barrier to going to their local cinema, while 29% said it was a barrier to going elsewhere.

Asked more specifically about how increased cost affected their decisions on whether to attend cultural events, most participants in the Creative Scotland study agreed that they needed to be more certain in advance that they would enjoy the event (62%). Over half (56%) agreed that they were now more likely to watch films at home rather than go to the cinema, and this was more pronounced among women, younger people, people struggling financially and those with young children.

3.2 Learning from comparators

Case studies have been carried out on other independent and community cinemas in towns of comparable size (see Appendix 2). Where possible, we have spoken to staff or board members, and we have also gathered information from the organisations' websites, accounts and other published sources.

As well as The Tower Digital Arts Centre in its original form, there have been several high-profile closures within the independent cinema sector in recent years.

- The **Edinburgh Filmhouse** and the **Belmont Cinema** in Aberdeen closed in October 2022 when their parent company, Centre for the Moving Image, went into administration. This was attributed to the pandemic, rising energy bills, inflation and debt. Two attempts to buy the Filmhouse building failed in 2022, and it then sold in 2023 to a commercial operator. [Filmhouse Edinburgh Ltd](#), a new

⁵ [56 Degree Insight for Creative Scotland. Audience Intentions Survey: Impacts of rising costs of living. March 2023](#)

⁶ [Social Value Lab for Regional Screen Scotland: Your Cinema, Your Community, 2016](#)

charitable organisation, has leased the building and aims to reopen in 2025. The organisation's [Crowdfunder campaign](#) has raised over £300,000 at the time of this report, and funding was also secured through the Community Ownership Fund (currently closed).

- The community-owned, two-screen **Oban Phoenix** closed in June 2024, citing rising costs and ticket sales not keeping pace. The last set of annual accounts show income from cinema ticket sales of £174,000. Assuming average ticket price of about £8, this suggests footfall was about 21,750. Food and drink sales were £56,000: about £2.50 per customer.

On the other hand, community cinemas and arts venues that have managed to remain financially viable employ various strategies.

- Multiple income streams, including special events (live, sports streaming etc.) and room hire.
- Making use of targeted fundraising techniques for ongoing revenue support. For example, the Birks Aberfeldy runs a seat sponsorship programme (more on this in section 7.2) and [legacy giving](#). Income from donations and gifts (including these) was £6,537 in the last financial year.

3.3 Social impact of independent and community cinemas

The 2016 Regional Screen Scotland study cited above found very high levels of satisfaction among the audiences of local cinemas and multi-arts venues (including some of those covered in case studies). Factors that these audiences liked about their local venues included their atmosphere, the sense of community, and affordability. Most respondents felt that their local cinema compared positively to others they had attended.

The study participants felt that small cinemas and multi-arts venues can help build a sense of community:

- 72% felt that their local cinema was “extremely important” to the area – almost none felt that it was of limited or no importance.
- 95% felt that their local cinema was a safe and trusted place.
- 85% felt that it was a focal point for the community.
- 81% felt that it was important for young people growing up in the area.

Many participants in this study also reported positive effects on their personal wellbeing as a result of attending a local cinema or multi-arts venue:

- 51% felt less alone or isolated
- 49% had a more positive mood or outlook

- 45% felt better able to cope with everyday stresses.

More recent research by the BFI⁷ has also found that local cinemas can:

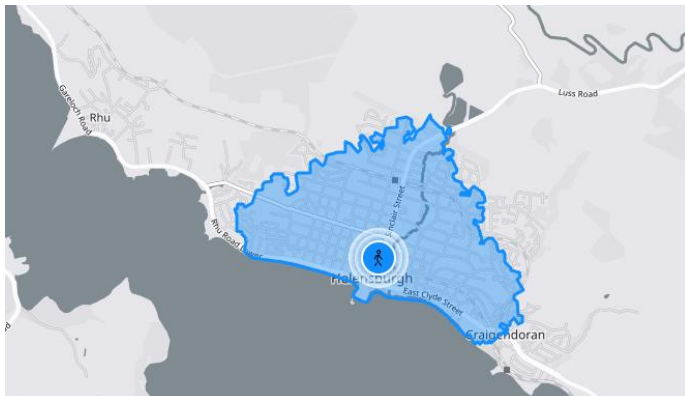
- Foster a sense of community as a place to meet and socialise.
- Have a positive effect on other businesses nearby, encouraging evening footfall and making the area feel safer.
- Widen the range of cinema-going opportunities for residents, including some of the groups facing barriers to attending cultural events mentioned above. Groups mentioned in the study include older people who may feel excluded in a multiplex setting, local ethnic minority communities who can be better catered for in programming, and parents with young children.

3.4 Catchment

This section looks at the size of the population that is likely to use the Tower.

Helensburgh community

The Venue @ St Columba Ltd has been established for the benefit of the community of Helensburgh, as defined by the community council boundary. This community is also likely to make up the most frequent user base of the Tower. As shown on the map below, most of Helensburgh is within a 20-minute walk of the Tower (based on Google maps directions). The venue is well known in this area, and during the trial period, the steering group found that there was already a loyal local audience that would attend films and other events *because they were on at the Tower*.



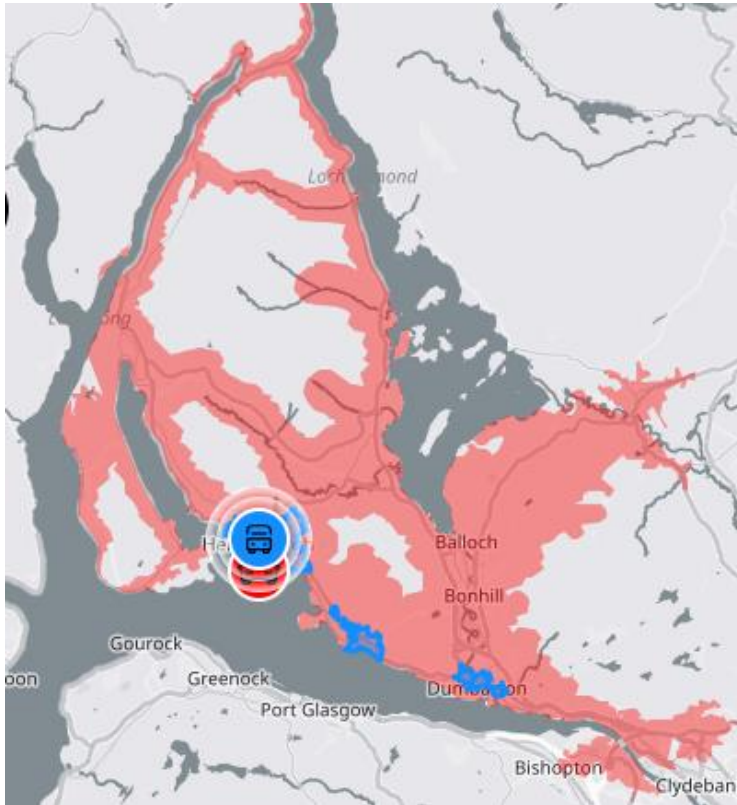
Map of area within 20-minute walk of The Tower

Further afield

The maps below show areas within 30 minutes by public transport (blue) and driving (red). Both were produced using the [Travel Time app](#), based on Google maps directions, at 6:15 on a weeknight evening when people are likely to travel to evening events.

⁷ [BFI: Impact of Local Cinema](#)

As well as Helensburgh itself, areas within 30 minutes by public transport include Cardross and Dumbarton. Areas within a 30-minute drive include Balloch, Alexandria, parts of Clydebank and Bishopton, as well as villages along the west side of Loch Lomond – **over 45,000 households, with a total population of just under 98,000⁸**. Cinema and entertainment options within this area are limited (see next section), so people within this area may travel further to watch a film they are particularly keen to see on a big screen, or attend a live event, or as part of a day or evening out.



Left: Map of areas within 30 minutes, public transport (blue) and drive (red)

Specific marketing effort will be required to promote high-profile events to people in the wider catchment areas, which could include:

- ‘friends’, ‘supporters’ or customer loyalty scheme open beyond the Helensburgh community (unlike formal company membership), with member perks and regular communications.
- targeted advertising on social media, by location
- press releases to media in key locations
- considering public transport timing when scheduling high-profile events

⁸ Based on Census 2022 data, by output areas within 30 minute drivetime area

- working with a restaurant or events such as the local market to promote Helensburgh as a place for a complete day or evening out

3.5 Competition and displacement

This section looks at the organisations and businesses in and around Helensburgh which provide similar services to those proposed at the Tower. It is important to consider both the impact of competition, and how the Tower can avoid negative impact on existing organisations and businesses.

The full map of potential competitors can be viewed in more detail via [Google MyMaps](#). It should be noted that aside from Stopgap Cinema (described below, but not on the map as it has no permanent premises), all establishments existed when the Tower Digital Arts Centre was running at full capacity, and operated alongside it for a decade.

What other cinema, arts and entertainment options are open to people in Helensburgh and the surrounding area?

In Helensburgh:

- There is no other cinema.
- **Stopgap Community Cinema CIC** is a new project, incorporated in May 2024. In a crowdfunding appeal, its aim is described as “to continue to offer large screen cinema whilst the Tower Cinema is closed”, but also “long term aims are to have a Cinema Day once a week with a matinee and evening showing”⁹. At the time of writing, there has been one trial screening at a local pub.

Community Enterprise have interviewed the founding director of Stopgap about the organisation’s plans. The organisation was founded in the belief that there is demand for a cinema in Helensburgh, but that purchasing and reopening the Tower building may not be necessary or best suited to deliver this. At present, the directors’ intention is to close Stopgap if the Tower buyout proceeds and once it has demonstrated that it is operating sustainably under community ownership.

With regards to live events:

- [The Victoria Halls](#) run by Live Argyll has three halls with capacity for 300 / 120 / 50 seated theatre style. It holds 1-2 theatre, music and comedy events a month, tickets for upcoming performances £18-30.
- [The Civic Centre](#) run by Argyll and Bute Council holds theme nights, street food pop ups and live music events about monthly (tickets around £12-15), an annual beer and gin festival and Christmas party nights.

⁹ <https://www.gofundme.com/f/stopgap-community-cinema> accessed 29/08/2024

- Pubs: **The Commodore Hotel** hosts a [monthly traditional music session](#), and occasional other events. The **Clyde Bar** has hosted [standup comedy](#). All pub spaces are much smaller than those available at the Tower.

Steering group members have had verbal feedback from contacts in the live events industry that the Tower would fill a gap for a high-quality venue for touring acts between Glasgow and Fort William/Oban.

Within 30 minutes' drive:

- **[Cinema at Cameron House, Loch Lomond](#)**: 29-seat cinema with premium seating at Cameron House. Tickets £12 (adult), £6.50 (child), including popcorn. Soft and alcoholic drinks, ice cream and snacks. Afternoon and evening showings. Programming includes new releases and classics. No frequent public transport from Helensburgh and other surrounding areas **(1 on the map below)**
- **Omniplex Cinema Clydebank**: Nearest multiplex by car or public transport, with 3D capability and some recliner seating. Tickets £10.95 (adult), £8.50 (student), £7 (child). **(2)**
- There is no permanent cinema in Dumbarton. The Civic Theatre trialled a Sunday family matinee screening, and the Concord Community Centre has hosted occasional community cinema screenings in the past (past events £3 a ticket, mostly classic/older films), but neither is currently running: community organisations have found that occasional film screenings without cinema equipment, seating or atmosphere do not attract much demand. **(3)**



Cinemas within around 30 minutes' drive of Helensburgh

What other venues for hire are available in Helensburgh & surrounding area?

It is likely that the hire offering at the Tower will focus on large private catered events such as corporate dinners and birthday ceilidhs (Screen 1), small private events making use of the audiovisual facilities such as screening parties (Screens 2 & 3) and studio use by community arts groups (Screen 2).

As above, the two large venues with a similar offering to Screen 1 are:

- The Victoria Halls run by Live Argyll. The function rate is £35/hour off-peak and £50/hour on weekends and Friday evenings, or £95 for corporate hire.
- The Civic Centre run by Argyll and Bute Council. The hire rate is £56.

The steering group will reach out to Live Argyll and Argyll and Bute council to discuss their view on the project.

Smaller venues include:

- The Submarine Centre in the same building, which, under current plans, will continue to operate under current ownership. This is promoted online for corporate and private events, including weddings, with an option of 360-degree projection. In future, hosting events at both venues will require a detailed management agreement to ensure compliance with building capacity and health and safety. There are opportunities to jointly host events, taking advantage of the variety of spaces and multimedia experiences within the building.
- Helensburgh Community Hub is a multi-use space, also community owned. It hosts various support organisations and a programme of events. Private hire is not actively promoted. The Hub manager was interviewed, and did not see the Tower as a threat to this facility: local groups often struggle to find space for meetings and events. The manager also identified the possibility of collaborating on events across multiple venues, such as an upcoming book festival.
- Drumfork Community Centre caters primarily to Navy families. Its weekly schedule shows that it is in use morning to evening daily through the week.
- Golf and bowling clubs are available to hire for private parties, and are licensed but do not offer the audiovisual facilities available at The Tower.
- Helensburgh and Lomond Leisure Centre has a meeting room to hire (£10/hour) as well as fitness studios (£30-55/hour). Both are open only during building opening hours: until 21:30 through the week but only until 6pm on weekends. Neither of these facilities are similar to the offering at the Tower.
- Monty's Farm Park, a private venue specialising in birthday parties and similar.

Screens 2 and 3 can be hired for private screenings, with comfortable seating and high-quality audiovisual systems: there is no other local venue offering this service. Screen 2 can also be hired as studio space; similarly, there is no similar facility in Helensburgh.

4. Community consultation

4.1 Events

Steering group community engagement event, February 2024

The steering group held a community engagement event in February, which over 200 people attended. This event focused on sharing the proposals with the community and gathering details of people who wanted to be involved.

Community engagement event, Saturday September 7th 2024

Building on their previous experience engaging with the community through events at the Tower, the steering group hosted a second event during feasibility research, with involvement from Community Enterprise.

The events were publicised on social media, in the Helensburgh Advertiser¹⁰, on local events websites, at the Saturday market in Helensburgh the week before, via a large poster at the Tower and by email to existing contacts.

Two sessions were held in Screen 1 (comfortable seating capacity around 200, also maximum building capacity) to give people multiple chances to attend. Tickets were free, with advance booking either online or at the Submarine Centre. In total, 400 people registered for tickets and about 300 attended (despite it being an unusually warm and sunny day!)

Each session consisted of:

- A short update on the project.
- A Q&A session involving Steering Group representatives and Community Enterprise.
- Interactive session using 'Menti' tool to gather live feedback and display it on screen. Participants scanned or entered a code to answer questions on their mobile device, which popped up on the cinema screen. As an alternative, participants could also answer the questions on paper. In total, almost 1200 individual comments were submitted.
- Finally, a screening of a film chosen by community vote (Sunshine in Leith).

¹⁰ "[Helensburgh Save the Tower community buyout group plea](#)", Helensburgh Advertiser, August 16th 2024

For notes of questions and answers given, and responses to the interactive session (already shared with the Steering Group), see the appendix. Key points are summarised below:

- People want the Tower to feel welcoming, friendly, comfortable and warm. Attending events should be a happy, relaxed, exciting and inclusive experience.
- There was huge interest in live events, especially music.
- Rather than specific film genres, people want a mix of new and classic, and different formats such as festivals, themed screenings and Silver Screen screenings for older people.
- People had a variety of questions about the process for purchase, plans for funding and fundraising (including how to support these efforts), revenue generation and the business plan, community engagement and inclusivity and facility management.

Businesses and employers event, October 2024

Community feedback event, October 2024

An additional event will be held in October to feed back on the findings so far, answer questions raised and promote membership in the community organisation.

4.2 Survey

Community Enterprise distributed a survey during September 2024 to gather more information on the level of support for the project in the community and gather information for market research.

The survey was advertised:

- via flyers to all attendees at the community engagement event.
- regularly via the Save the Tower Facebook page.
- by email to all existing Save the Tower email subscribers, and to the Tower Digital Arts Centre's mailing list, with the owner's agreement.
- by email to community groups, businesses and individuals identified as stakeholders (see next section), plus all elected representatives.
- by email to residents at the military base.
- via a stall at the community market on September 28th and stalls at Morrisons and Co-op supermarkets the same weekend.
- Members of the committee contacted schools in the area and asked staff to include the survey in parent communications and for older students to complete.

In all communications, the steering group encouraged people to pick up copies of the survey and flyers to share with their friends, family and neighbours, particularly those less likely to be reached via the methods above (including younger family members).

Paper copies of the survey were distributed at the events and stalls listed above, and were also available to pick up and drop off at the Submarine Centre.

Key points are below, and information from the survey has also fed into other sections of this report.

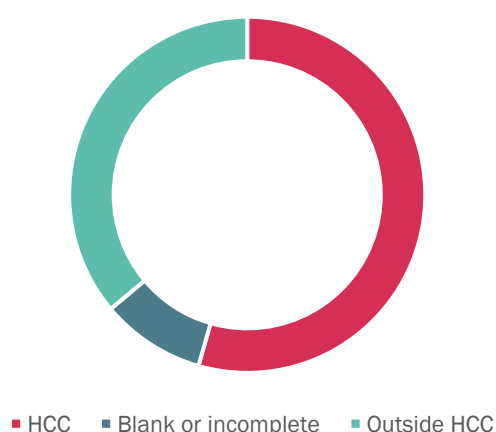
Respondents

- 2,289 people have completed the survey:
 - 79 have completed paper copies.
 - 2,210 have completed the survey online.

Input of paper copies is still in progress. Preliminary results shown below are from 2,237 responses (2,210 online, 27 paper responses processed so far + ~50 more on paper). Percentages may therefore change slightly, but this is unlikely to be by more than fractions of a percent.

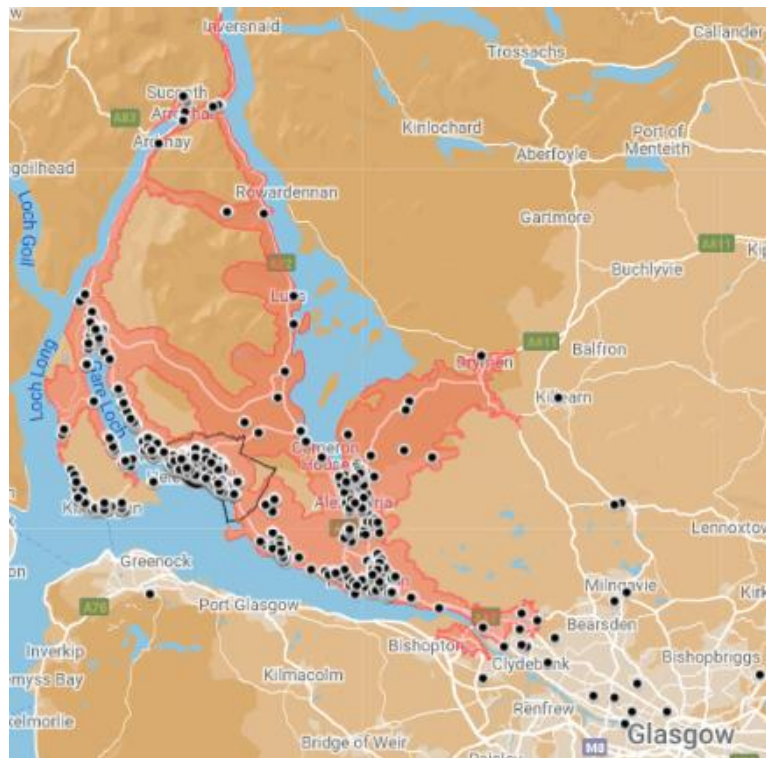
Respondents were asked to provide a postcode, to determine whether or not they live within the Helensburgh Community Council boundary. This question was optional, and 10% either skipped the question or provided only a partial response (e.g. “G84”). 54% (1,203) were from within the Helensburgh Community Council boundary, and 36% provided a postcode that was outside Helensburgh.

% of responses from Helensburgh
(within Community Council Boundary)



Postcodes with survey responses are shown on the map (black dots). Responses from outside the Helensburgh Community Council boundary (black line) are clustered in the area within 30 minutes' drive (in red on the map). Given that most survey respondents said they had visited the Tower in the past and all said they would visit in the future, this

reinforces the assumption that the Tower will have a wider market catchment area, as set out in section 3.4.



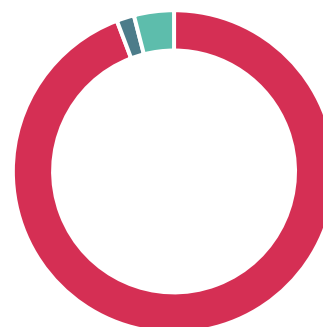
Distribution of responses to survey

Support for community ownership

Respondents were asked whether they support “a community organisation buying The Tower and operating it as a cinema and arts centre” (Q5). Support was extremely high:

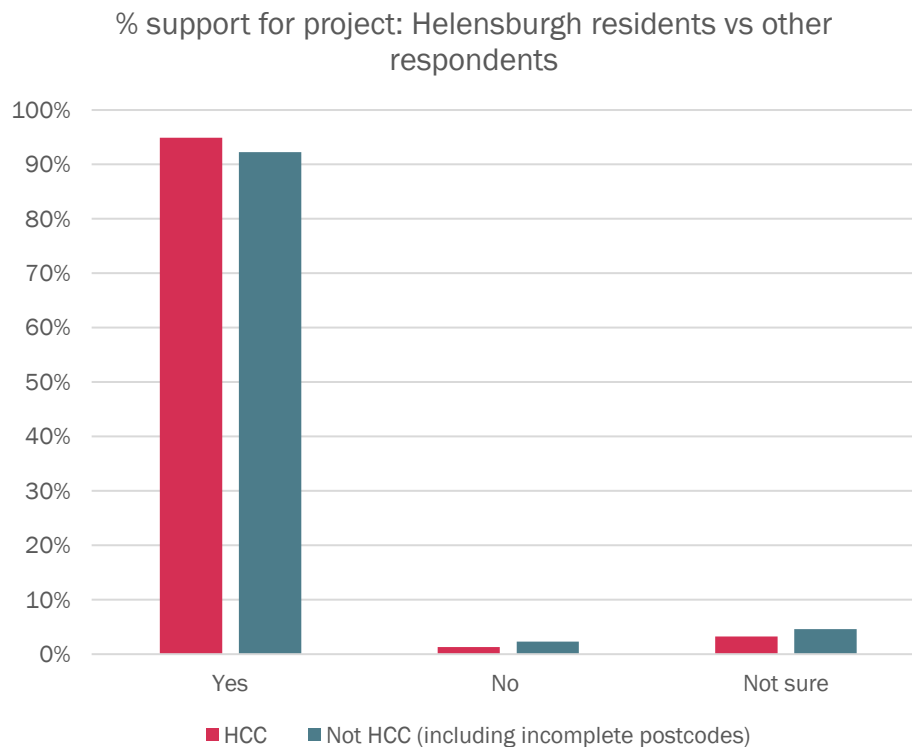
- Just over 94% answered yes
- 4% answered not sure
- Just under 2% answered no

Do you support a community organisation buying The Tower and operating it as a cinema and arts centre?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

As shown below, there was very little difference in support for the project between Helensburgh Community Council residents and non-residents. **95% of the 1200+ Helensburgh residents who responded support the project.**



Comments on this question give some additional detail on people's reasoning:

- The Tower is seen as a community asset: "The Helensburgh community would benefit immensely if the Tower was reopened"; "The Tower is a fantastic community space which is loved and appreciate by all."
- Many see it as a vital cultural hub that provides access to arts and entertainment locally, reducing the need to travel to larger cities like Glasgow: "Without this, the town lacks any cultural entertainment or access to films"; "Helensburgh needs more access to things to do during the day and in the evening. This venue caters for people of all age groups."
- Having a local venue for cinema and arts, is especially important for those who cannot travel far: "It is important that the type of entertainment provided by the Tower is accessible to locals, rather than having to travel outwith the town"; "It makes films/cultural events far more accessible as being in the local area, I can visit without it interfering with caring responsibilities."
- Keeping The Tower open is believed to support local businesses by attracting visitors who also spend money in nearby restaurants and shops: "Keeps business local and potentially brings people to the town"; "Ensure that spend stays in the town benefiting businesses in Helensburgh."
- The venue is viewed as a place that fosters social interaction and community spirit, helping to combat social isolation: "Seems like a force for social cohesion/involvement"; "A lot of people living alone benefitted hugely from

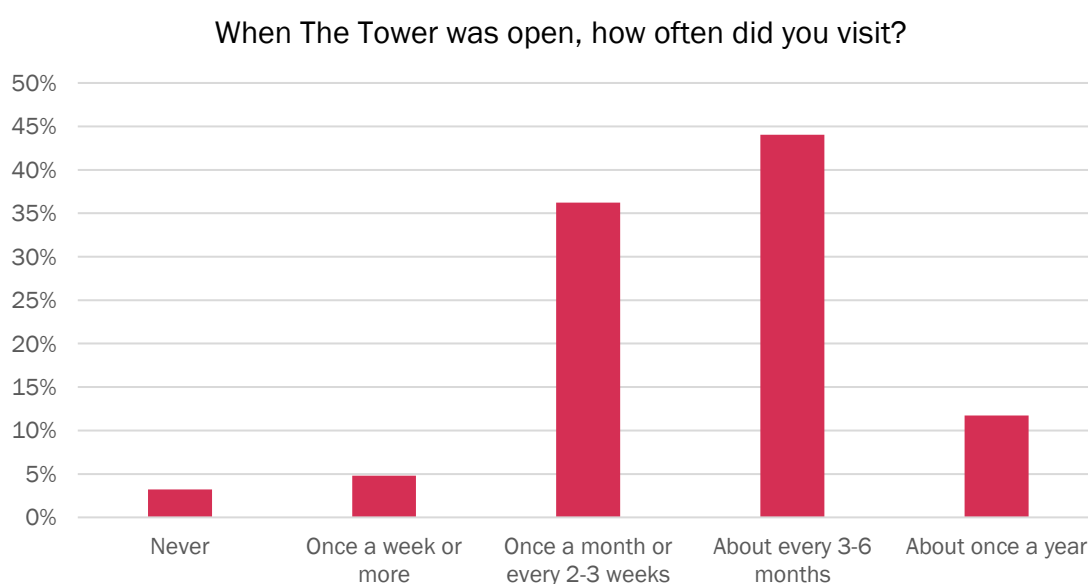
coming along on their own to a welcoming space for much needed social contact.”

- Many believe that community ownership and involvement will ensure the venue reflects local needs and preferences: “Community operation ensures offering will be relevant to broadest possible audience and be more able to flex to respond to local needs”; “It felt like ‘our’ venue that we could be proud of in a way that could not be said of merely attending a chain cinema.”
- Nevertheless, some comments on this question (even from those in support) highlighted concerns and reservations about the Tower’s financial viability: “I’m not sure it is financially viable.”; “I hope that can be financially viable, especially in such a building which is likely to need considerable work, which I’m sure would be expensive, in the future.”

Frequency of visits

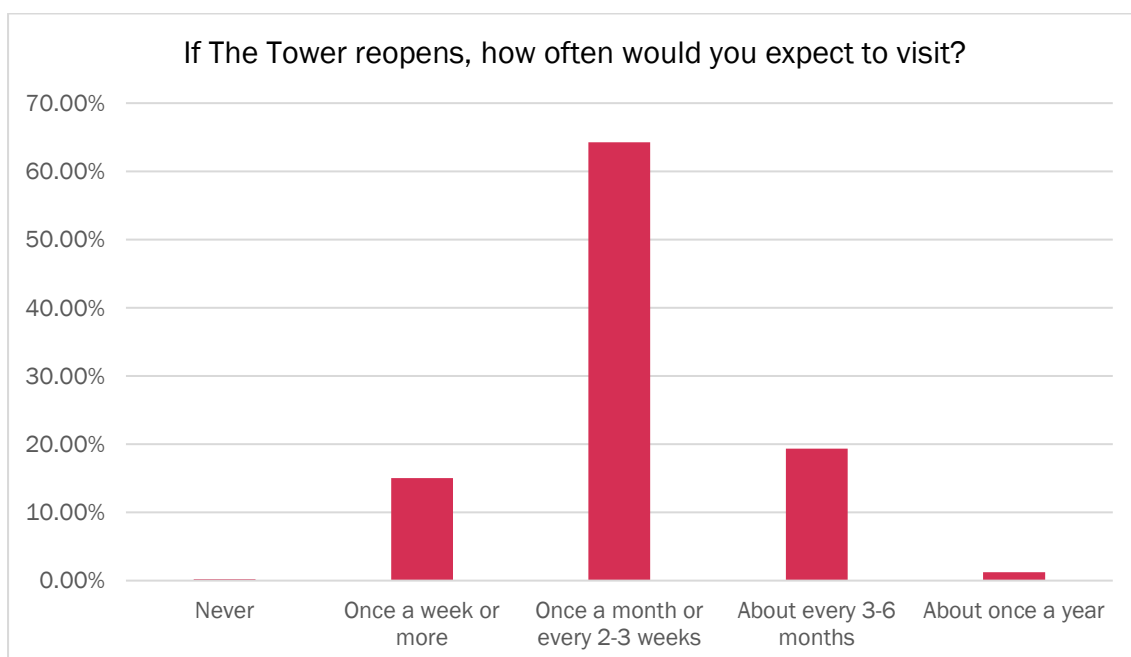
The survey asked (Q1) how often people visited the Tower in the past. **Results show that this was already a well-used community asset:**

- 5% visited once a week or more.
- The largest segment of survey respondents, 44%, visited about every 3-6 months.
- A smaller although still sizeable group, 36%, visited once a month to every 2-3 weeks.
- 12% visited about once a year.
- Only 3% of respondents never visited (although obviously, people with a past connection to the Tower were more likely to complete the survey).



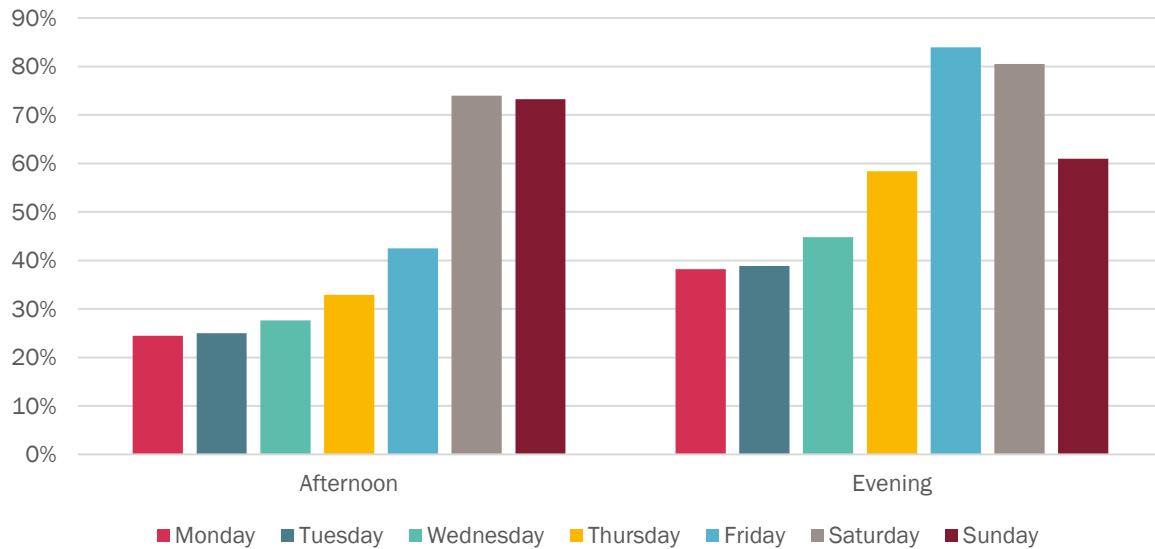
The survey also asked how frequently people would visit “if The Tower reopens showing first release movies 6 days a week, running regular movie events and festivals, hosting live streams of arts entertainment from around the UK as well as live events (music, theatre, comedy, etc.)” (Q6). **Respondents would, overall, attend more frequently.**

- 15% would visit once a week or more.
- 64% would visit once a month or every 2-3 weeks.
- 19% would visit about every 3-6 months
- Only just over 1% of respondents would visit less frequently, and none would never visit.



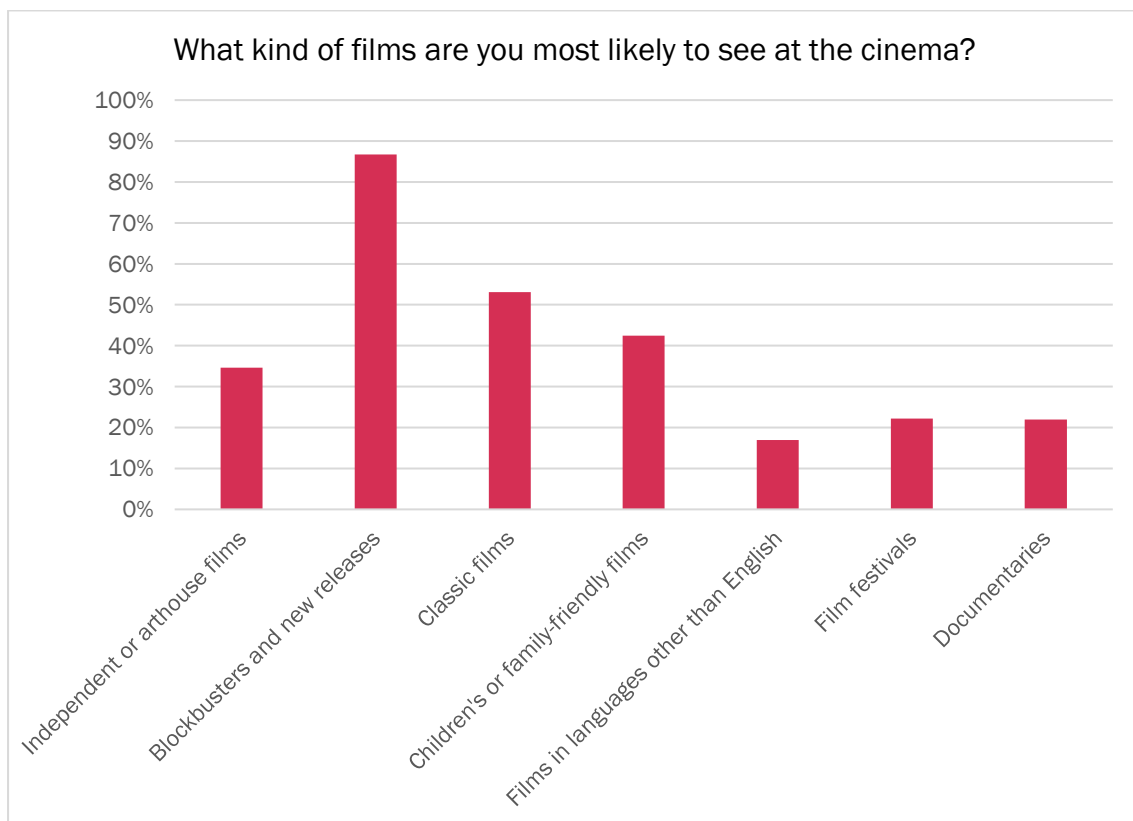
People were also asked *when* they would be most likely to attend films and other events. The pattern in these responses is fairly unsurprising, with weekends and evenings most popular.

When are you most likely to attend films and other events at The Tower?



Film programming

People were asked what kind of films they would be most likely to see at the cinema (Q2). Respondents could choose more than one answer. This question **shows interest in a mix of programming, to include new releases as well as other films.**

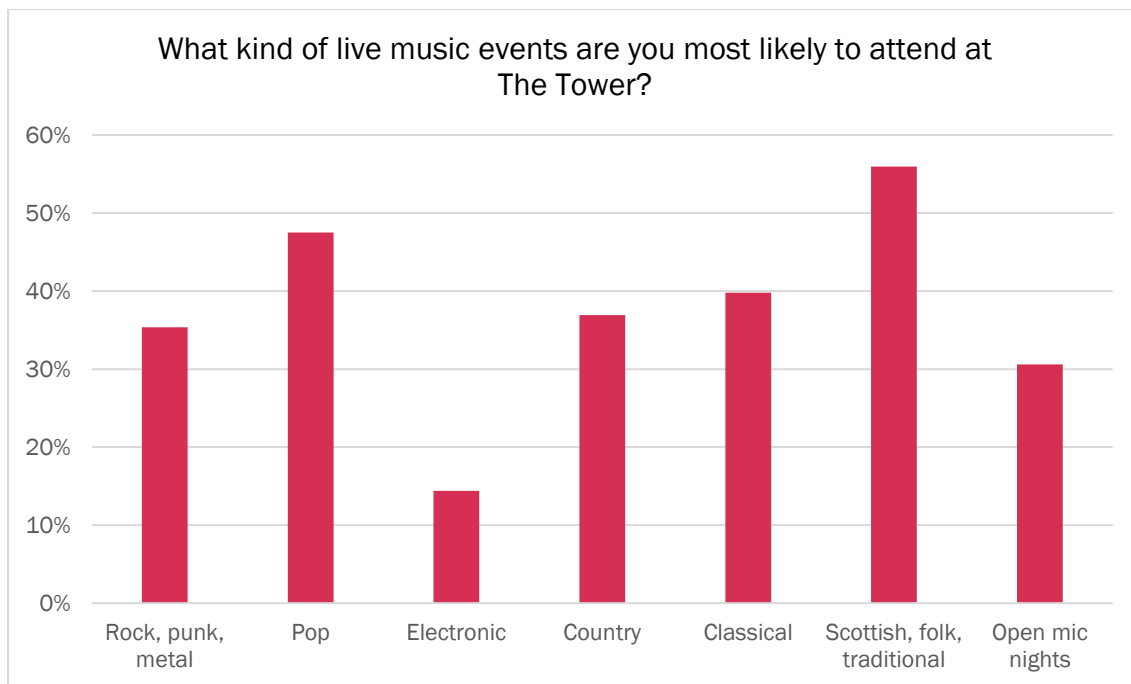


Respondents were able to comment or leave additional suggestions, and comments on this question include the following ideas:

- Showing live streams of opera, drama, ballet, concerts and sporting events: “I am most interested in live streaming of opera, ballet and concerts”; “National Theatre Live”; “Live streaming of major sports events”
- Hosting themed nights for different movie genres. Musicals, sing-along events and classics were popular suggestions. “I also like the movies that have a singalong theme e.g. Sound of Music, Mamma Mia etc.”; “Showings of musicals i.e. Heathers which showed at The Tower in 2023”; “I enjoyed the singalong movies! Bit different”
- Seasonal Specials: Showing films appropriate for holidays like Christmas, Easter and Halloween. “Christmas classics in December, Halloween movies in October” “Love the classics around Xmas time”; “Time of year appropriate films such as Christmas films in December. With snacks following the theme”; “Seasonal film festival, family friendly option ie Easter – Hop, Peter Rabbit. Halloween – Ghostbusters, Camper etc.”
- Screening all films in a series or celebrating film anniversaries. “Series showings e.g. The Godfather, Back to the Future, Bladerunner, etc. Either over few nights or couple a night.” “TV series binges would also be really fun.” “Theme 90s-00s classics, previous films when a new one in the series comes out.”
- Hosting film clubs or events where a movie is followed by a discussion, talk or Q&A session: “Film club, showing of a film followed by a discussion”; “I’d really like to see more film screenings which are followed by Q&A with the director, writer or producer”; “Events where topical documentary films are shown alongside a talk or Q&A by the filmmaker or campaign group.”
- Exhibiting films created by students and new filmmakers: “Exhibitions of films created by students studying film making”; “Films by new filmmakers or students”; “Local/university projects”

Live music programming

People were asked to specify what kind of live music events they would be most likely to attend at The Tower (Q3). Respondents could choose more than one answer. **Scottish, folk and traditional music was the most frequently chosen music genre.**

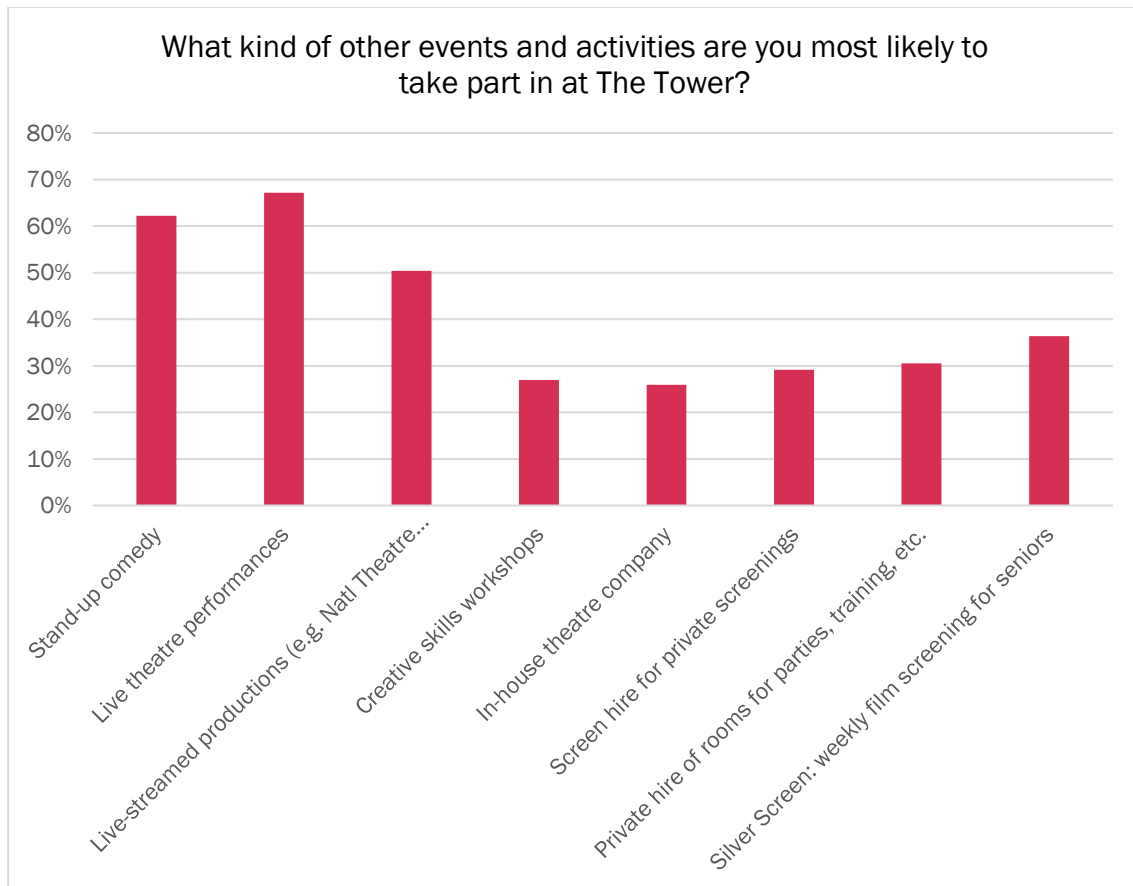


As with the previous question, respondents had the ability to make additional comments and suggestions. Key points from these were:

- Jazz was another genre of music that was popular among the responses. There was the suggestion of a jazz brunch and making it BYOB.
- Screening concert films and live streaming performances. Examples included ballet, opera and events similar to Candlelight Concerts.
- Seasonal events: Christmas carols and themed events.
- Dance events, for example, silent disco.
- High interest in both amateur and professional musicals and theatre productions, as well as comedy shows (these are covered under the next question).

Other event & activity programming

Respondents were asked what other live events and activities they would be most likely to take part in at The Tower (Q4). The most frequently chosen event types were live theatre performances and stand-up comedy, both of which over 60% would attend. Options involving community arts activities and private hire fell lower on this scale, although still with significant interest (at least 25% of respondents).



Respondents could also provide additional suggestions and ideas for other events and activities that they would take part in at The Tower. Below is a summary of the suggestions:

- The Tower could be a venue for different community groups. Examples included the local drama group, Helensburgh and Lomond Autism group, Jean's Bothy, Silver screen, school groups and dance groups. Using the space for fundraising events was also mentioned.
- Family-friendly showings for parents and special needs sessions (covered below)
- Small film or book festivals or conferences.
- Christmas carols, pantomimes, and other seasonal activities.
- Music competitions for young musicians and pipers.
- Art exhibitions integrating art exhibitions with other events.
- Audience participation events, such as sing-alongs, karaoke, quiz shows and bingo.
- Educational talks and screenings on topics like mental health, local history and environmental issues.

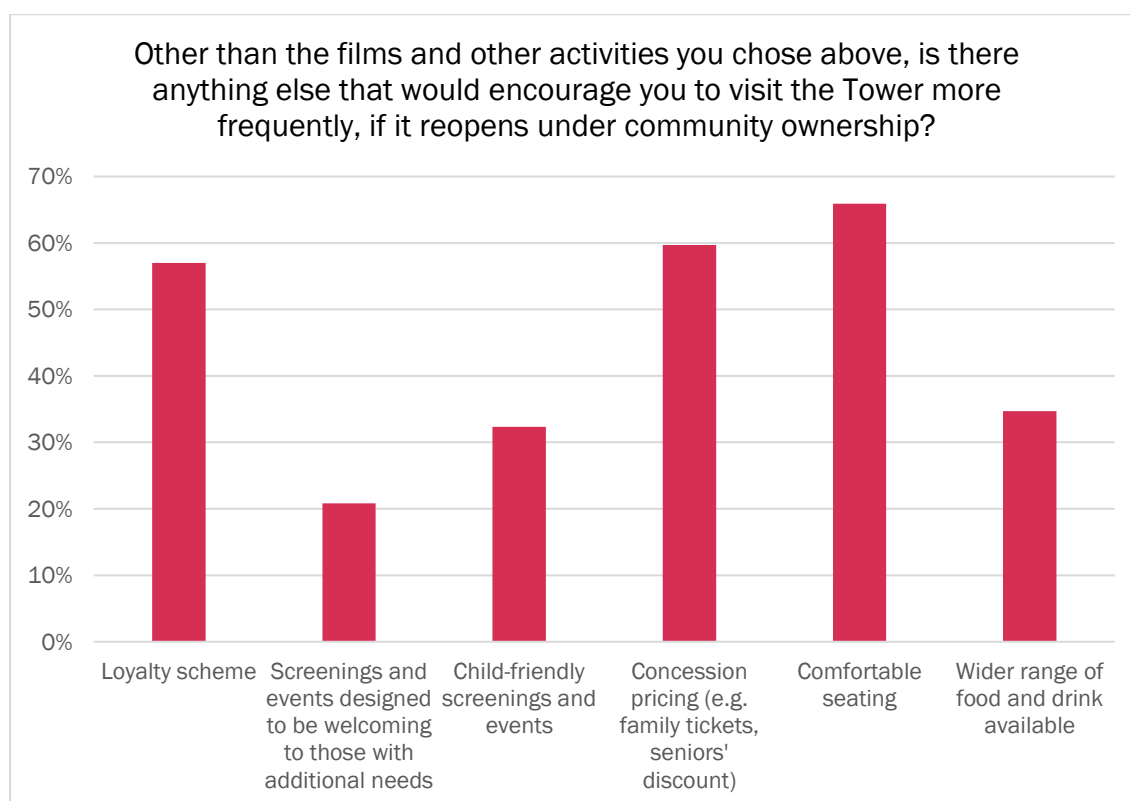
- Video game parties, connecting gaming consoles to the big screen for parties.
- Burlesque shows

What else would encourage people to attend frequently?

The survey asked what else, other than the films and other activities covered in the previous questions, would encourage people to visit the Tower more frequently if it reopens under community ownership (Q7). Respondents could choose more than one answer.

- 66% chose comfortable seating. There were some comments about current Screen 1 seating lacking cushioning, and various comments in support of the sofa seating in the smaller screens (although also a couple of mentions of these spaces feeling “cramped” or lacking leg room. On the topic of comfort, some comments mentioned feeling cold at the Tower in the past (“warm” was one of the biggest aspirations for the Tower at the community engagement event!) Another comment said that heating was not an issue, however: “The Omniplex cinema in Clydebanks is just as cold if not colder”.
- 60% chose concession pricing. This may need further thought: one comment pointed out that “some seniors, especially in Helensburgh, have more disposable income than younger people who may be working and struggling to make ends meet”. Another asked for student discounts and there was also mention of an armed forces/veterans discount. Some other comments pointed to a general need for affordability, both in ticket pricing and food/drink.
- 57% chose a loyalty scheme (more detail on this is provided under customer spending below).
- 34% chose a wider range of food and drink options. One commenter noted that this is often a reason why people go to bigger cinemas. From comments, specific suggestions included gluten-free and allergen-free food, savoury popcorn, a wider range of alcoholic drinks: “No Limits beer”; “to be able to buy a glass of wine or bubbly”, and coffee. There was also a mention of keeping the snack boxes offered during the trial period.
- 32% chose child-friendly screenings. One person explained “I loved the mum and baby screenings when my boy was little”.
- 21% chose screenings and events designed to be welcoming to those with additional needs – the least frequent choice, but still a high level of interest in these types of screenings. Comments provided more suggestions on the topic of accessibility, including providing better information on disabled access at the booking stage: “not having to wait and see if anyone books the sofa or not to know if my friend could sit beside me or was she going to have to sit somewhere behind me because I’m in a wheelchair”. Some cinema chains offer bookable

companion seats beside their disabled seating. Another commenter felt that the existing disabled seating was too close to the stage.



Comments provided some additional ideas on what would encourage people to attend:

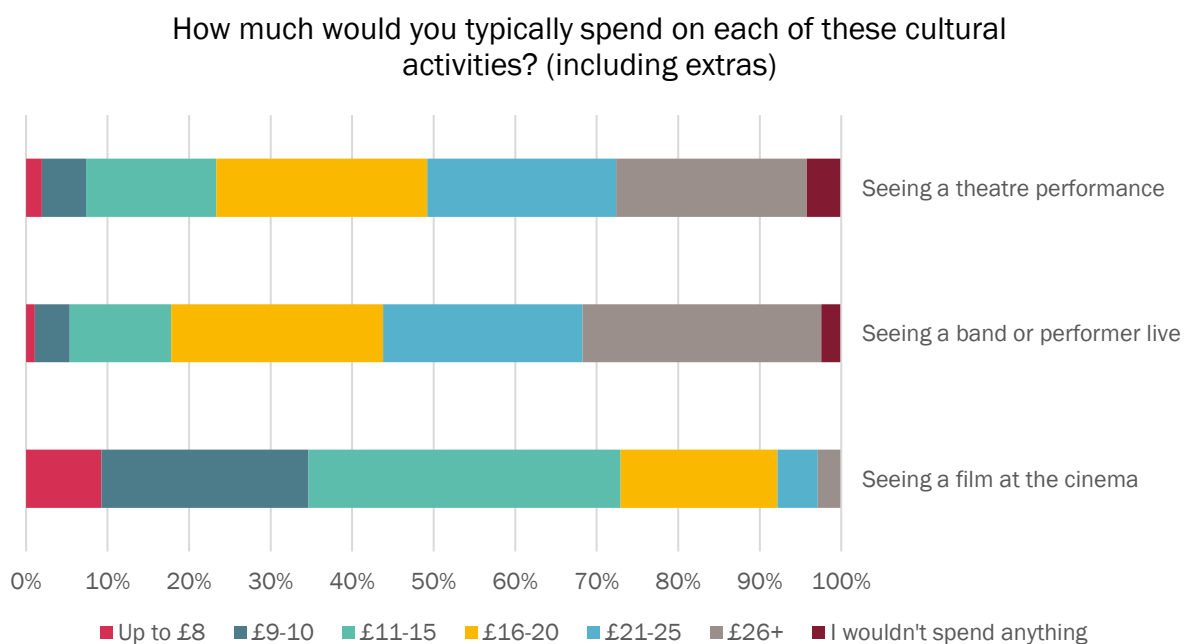
- Film screenings fitting better around full-time work (later in the evening), school (“timings of showings often didn’t give enough time for school finishing to get there”, or family commitments (“more day-time screenings of adult films so I can come and watch something while my wee one is at school”))
- More activities of the type covered in the question above: creative writing classes, talks, bingo, tabletop sales, activity taster sessions
- A café. One person suggested that this could have film-related décor. Another thought that a café could be combined a soft-play area for children and toddlers (which they felt was sorely needed in the town).
- Better toilet facilities, including a baby change unit
- Packages with local businesses, e.g. meal and ticket
- A regular slot for films chosen by the community
- A kids club with discounts for family-friendly films
- Gaming events to attract a younger audience.

- Special screenings paired with themed food or drink tasting
- Dog-friendly screenings
- A weekly What's On email
- Easy booking available via smartphone; gift voucher sales
- Closer working with the naval base

Customer spending

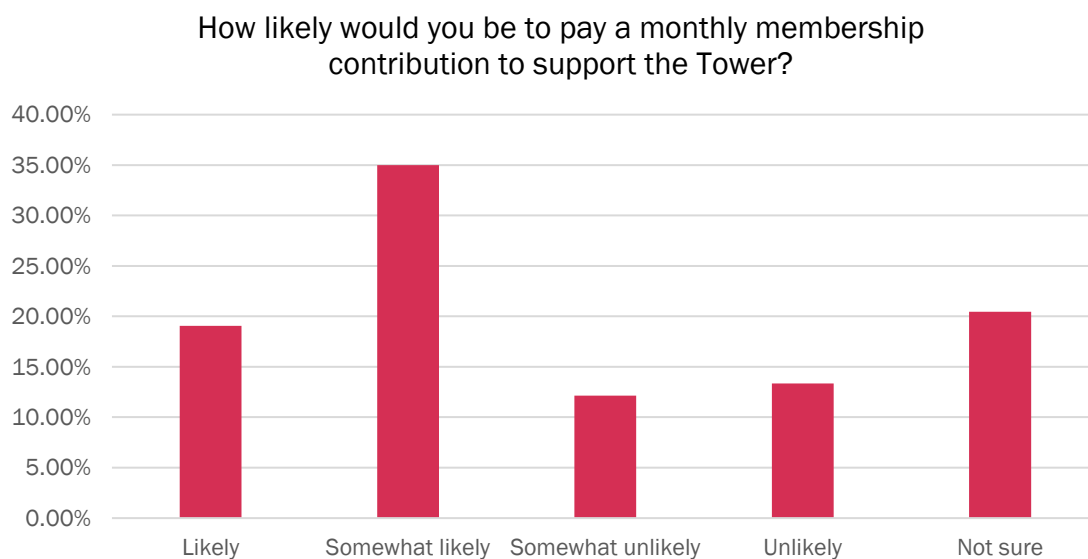
The survey asked people how much they would expect to spend per person each time they attend the cinema, see a band or performer live, or see a theatre performance, including any additional purchases such as snacks and drinks (Q9):

- For the cinema, the largest group (38%) expect to spend £11-15 a head, including extras, but almost the same number would spend less. Nobody said that they would not spend money on the cinema. Just under 20% would pay £16-18. This suggests that there is scope to increase general cinema ticket pricing slightly at the Tower, if necessary, while still meeting most customers' expectations, but some discounted screenings should continue for the budget-conscious segment.
- Expected spend on live events and theatre was higher. For each, there was about an even split between those expecting to pay £16-20, £21-25 and £25+ a head. Fewer than 10% of respondents would expect to pay less than £10.
- A slightly larger number of people (just under 5%) would not pay anything for the theatre than any other event types (would not attend, or would only go if it were free).



The survey also asked whether people would be willing to pay a monthly membership contribution to support the Tower (Q10).

- 19% of survey respondents say they are “likely” to pay a monthly membership contribution. A further 35% are “somewhat likely”.
- 20% are “not sure”: unsurprising given that (as comments point out) any benefits associated with this payment have not yet been defined. Some people who are currently unsure may be likely to subscribe once the pricing and offering is more clearly defined.



About half the people who answered this question wrote in how much they would be willing to pay.

- Among those who wrote in a number only, the median suggestion, and also the most frequent suggestion, was **£10**. Among people who suggested a range, the median was £10-15, but the most frequent was ££5-10.
- Comments on this question showed that **many people would expect some kind of benefit in exchange for a monthly contribution**. Some people compared pricing to all-access passes at other cinemas (e.g. Cineworld and the Clydebank Omniplex, which people thought charged between £12 and £15 a month for all-access, as well as a previous scheme at the Tower), or to other subscriptions e.g. gym. Other suggested benefits included discounts on films or at the bar, one free film per month (or four a year, as at Campbelltown), “first dibs” on tickets for popular events. Some people did specify that they would pay amounts up to £10/month with no material benefit.
- While perks are clearly attractive, if The Venue @ St Columba asks for for a smaller monthly or annual donation with *no* material benefits, it could claim Gift

Aid on these contributions (assuming charitable status). See examples in section 6.3.

Future involvement

Respondents were given the option to select how they would like to be involved in the future. 390 people left this question blank, and of those who completed it, just under half were not interested in future involvement.

- 896 people expressed interest in receiving updates about the project.
- 122 people expressed interest in volunteering and 88 of them have given their details and consent to these being passed to the Steering Group.
- 148 people said they would like to be members of the organisation that owns the Tower (i.e. The Venue @ St Columba), and 105 of them have given their details and consent to these being passed to the Steering Group.
- 427 people have asked to be kept updated (e.g. added to a mailing list) and provided contact details and consent.
- 21 people have an idea they would like to discuss, and provided contact details and consent.

Community Enterprise will provide contact details from this question separately, for all individuals who gave consent to their details being passed to the Steering Group.

4.3 Stakeholder interviews

Community Enterprise spoke 1-1 with the following local organisations and businesses with information relevant to the community and its needs or the development of the Tower.

- Business Gateway Argyll & Bute
- Destination Helensburgh
- Helensburgh Community Hub
- Stopgap Community Cinema CIC

The following organisations have been contacted, but have not yet responded or a full interview has not yet taken place: Jean's Bothy, Helensburgh and Lomond Carers, Helensburgh Stroke Club, Helensburgh and Lomond Autism.

Additionally, the Steering Group have also contacted stakeholders:

- Presentation to the Helensburgh and Lomond Community Planning Group in May 2024 - support was expressed for the project¹¹.

¹¹ [See minutes](#)

Below is a summary of findings from stakeholders. Information gathered has also fed into the previous sections on market trends and analysis and competition and displacement.

- Helensburgh is an active community, with hundreds of local groups including many creative groups. These currently use the Victoria Halls or meet at church halls, but these are well used and there are often clashing bookings.
- Although the Victoria Halls can host events, it does not actively seek touring artists to host and there are not many opportunities to see live music locally. The steering group should maximise the potential for unique events that people will travel for.
- Helensburgh also attracts many visitors, and the Tower was seen as an added attraction (possibly working with local businesses, as also highlighted in the survey: dinner and show offers). The Tower (alongside the Submarine Centre next door) could offer dry space and an added attraction.
- The Save the Tower group need to be clear on communication and avoid any confusion with the previous charity. Some people were uneasy about how the Tower was managed in the past.
- There is potential to work with the John Logie Baird TV Trust on a hundredth year anniversary event, if The Tower can open in time. There is also potential to collaborate with other venues on events, such as the Helensburgh Book Festival.
- Other local charity groups would like to see opportunities for volunteering and skills training at The Tower, as well as a continuation of previous good relations with groups that used the facilities.
- People are uncertain over the business case for the Tower, and would like further information.

5. Organisational capacity

This section covers the capacity of the steering group to buy and operate the Tower Digital Arts Centre.

5.1 Current legal structure and governance arrangements

A company limited by guarantee, The Venue @ St Columba (SC813270) formed in June 2024 to take the project forward. Its purposes are to benefit the community of Helensburgh, as defined by the Helensburgh Community Council area, by providing recreational facilities available to this community and the public at large.

The Scottish Ministers have confirmed that the company's articles of association are compliant with all relevant provisions of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, so it is eligible to apply for the Community Right to Buy if required, although the group plans to negotiate a sale without initiating this process.

At present, 3 of the 10 members of the steering group are also members and directors of the company limited by guarantee. The steering group (including but not limited to these directors) meets regularly, and short-term subgroups have been formed to work on specific tasks such as fundraising.

5.2 Skills audit summary

The 10 members of the steering group at the time of this report (including the 3 company directors) all completed a skills audit. From this, some priorities for recruitment and/or development have been identified, summarised below. The full results are in the Appendix.

Specific areas with less experience in relation to **Finance** include:

- Managing and monitoring grant funding (80% of the group have limited - no experience of this).
- Applying for grant funding (80% of the group have limited - no experience of this). An appeal for more help in this area was made at a community engagement event and the group is already in touch with people who have offered to help.

Specific areas with less experience in relation to the **Context of the project**:

- Legal expertise (4 people have no experience).
- Legislation and support for community empowerment/ownership (4 people have no experience). However, the group is well linked with sources of support, including the Community Ownership Support Service.

Specific areas with less experience in relation to **External comms and engagement**:

- Managing a website (5 people have no experience, but 1 person has significant experience and 2 people have some).

- Community fundraising/crowdfunding (1 person has no experience, 6 people have limited experience and 3 have some experience).

Experience in relation to **Governance and Leadership** is good overall, especially chairing meetings etc. A bit of work could be done to increase understanding of the role as a charity trustee in general and more experience for specific trustee roles like treasurer and company secretary.

- 70% of the group have limited - no experience of being a treasurer.
- 80% of the group have limited - no experience being a company secretary.

5.3 Growing membership

As well as directors, attracting many ordinary (voting) members in the company is a way to demonstrate that the organisation is supported by the community, representative of local people and accountable to them.

When recruiting members, people should be made aware of what being a member does and does not entail: they will get a say in key decisions at the Annual General Meeting, but they are not committing to further involvement (unless they want to as trustees or volunteers). Given the nature of the project, there may be separate categories of company members and supporters/friends/subscribers.

Members can sign up via a simple printed or online form. Information gathered should include the person's age or date of birth and postcode, so that their eligibility to be an ordinary (voting) member can be determined (given that people will not necessarily know whether they live within the Community Council boundary – a list of Helensburgh Community Council postcodes has been obtained). A statement on privacy and GDPR should also be included.

The Venue @ St Columba has a quorum of 10% of members for general meetings (those involving all members, required for key decisions such as changes to the governing documents, as well as the AGM). This may become an obstacle to decision-making if membership reaches very high numbers and members, so the focus should be on recruiting local residents who are keen to play an active role as members.

5.4 Obtaining charitable status

It is likely that The Venue @ St Columba will seek charitable status before taking ownership of the Tower. The table below sets out the advantages of obtaining charitable status in general, along with additional requirements that the steering group should be aware of.

Advantages	Additional requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widest eligibility for grants (see section 7, which identifies various grants which 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors become Trustees and assume additional duties.

<p>do and do not require charitable status)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No corporation tax on profits from trading carried out towards charitable purposes, or within small trading limit. • Better public awareness and perception, which could be an advantage for community crowdfunding. • Ability to claim Gift Aid on donations, including crowdfunding and small cash/contactless donations through the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme. • Mandatory 80% rates relief. • Possible exemption from water and sewerage rates, but this has other criteria which the Tower is unlikely to meet (see section 6.4). • Widest eligibility for software discounts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under charity law, charity Trustees cannot be paid unless a number of conditions are met. Implications of this discussed further below. • Charities are subject to regulation by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). OSCR's consent is needed for some changes to the charity. • There is a requirement to produce annual accounts and Trustees' Report meeting Charity SORP standards – possible increase in accountancy fees. Charity accounts must be externally scrutinised – for smaller charities, independent examination is usually sufficient.
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Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee

The simplest way to achieve charitable status is for the existing Company Limited by Guarantee, The Venue @ St Columba, to apply.

The table below sets out some advantages and disadvantages associated with becoming a charity as a company limited by guarantee:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for charitable status is for the existing legal body, with its existing governing document. This has been confirmed to meet SLF eligibility criteria and be suitable for community right to buy, if required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual reporting - report annually to both Companies House and OSCR. • Tax implications – a CLG must file a corporation tax return and pay tax on any taxable profits (which may be zero). If the activity of a CLG is non-business and purely philanthropic, it may be possible to get HMRC to make the corporation tax record dormant, but this would not be the

Advantages	Disadvantages
	<p>case with the new entity proposed which intends to trade.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must prepare accrued accounts, whereas smaller SCIOs (income below £250,000) may prepare simpler receipts and payments accounts. However, projected income for the Tower exceeds this level so this may not be a significant benefit. • All of the above is likely to mean that accountancy fees will be on the higher end.

SCIO

Once charitable status is granted, it is possible to [convert a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee to a SCIO](#). The main advantage of this legal form is to give an organisation the benefits and legal protection of an incorporated body plus the benefits of charitable status in a single legal format. Administration of a SCIO is simpler, as OSCR is the only regulator. This could be considered in future if the Steering Group wishes to simplify accounting and reporting as much as possible.

Payment of directors and future trustees

The constitution of The Venue @ St Columba already states that:

- Article 32: Employees of the Company may not be nominated as or become Directors
- Article 41.3: No Director shall be appointed as a paid employee of the Company.
- Article 41.4: No benefit (whether in money or in kind) shall be given by the Company to any Member or Director except the possibility of:
 - Article 41.4.1 Repayment of out-of-pocket expenses to Directors
 - Article 41.4.2 Reasonable remuneration to any member or Director in return for specific services actually rendered to the Company (not being of a management nature normally carried out by a director of a company).

If The Venue @ St Columba becomes a charity, its directors, who would become trustees, would additionally be subject to restrictions in charity law¹²:

¹² [OSCR: Trustee Remuneration](#)

- Fewer than half the total number of trustees can be paid for services, or be connected (e.g. by marriage or blood) to people who are paid.
- There must be a written agreement between the charity and the trustee, which sets out the maximum amount to be paid.
- The charity trustees must be satisfied that the arrangements are in the interests of the charity. A procedure for avoiding conflict of interest on decisions relating to payment of the trustee(s) in question will be needed.
- For charitable companies, payments to charity trustees should be disclosed in the organisation's annual accounts.

If The Venue does not change its existing constitution, it cannot have directors who are employees at all (with or without charitable status). It may pay a director for a specific service provided, outside the scope of the director's role: e.g. a director who is an electrician upgrades wiring, having provided a competitive quote which the other directors have approved in line with a suitable Conflict of Interest procedure.

Restrictions on trustee remuneration are relevant when it comes to recruiting additional directors, as some of the Steering Group have previously been employees of The Tower and may wish to apply for any paid roles available in future.

Trading

Charities can carry out trading and enterprising activity but there are some restrictions on the type of trading that can be carried out.

Where the trading contributes to the charity achieving its purposes, this is unlikely to be an issue under charity law and no tax will be paid on profits – assuming these are used for charitable purposes.

There *are* restrictions relating to trade which does not advance the charity's purposes or provide public benefit – e.g., activities which are primarily about generating income. This is known as non-primary purpose trading. Non-primary purpose trading can only be undertaken if there is no 'significant' risk to the resources of the charity. Corporation tax will be due on profits from non-primary purpose trading, unless it falls within a specific exemption in tax law or is below the small trading tax exemption applicable to charities (for charities with gross annual income of £32,001 to £320,000, the limit is 25% of the charity's total annual turnover).

If a charity wants to undertake non-primary purpose trading beyond these limits, it can set up a trading subsidiary (i.e., another legal entity without charitable status which is wholly owned by the charity and donates any profit to it). This is common, but involves additional complication.

The current purpose of The Venue at St. Columba Ltd is *"to provide or advance the accessibility of recreational facilities, and/or organising recreational activities, which will*

be available to members of the community and public at large with the object of improving the conditions of life of the Community”. Before applying for charitable status, it would be advisable to review whether this purpose is suitable: for example, much of the planned activity relates to the recognised charitable purpose of “the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science”. An explanation of the recognised charitable purposes can be found in [OSCR’s guide to meeting the Charity Test](#). Any changes to the organisation’s purposes prior to obtaining charity status must be made in line with the organisation’s own constitution. On the other hand, if The Venue were to change its purposes *after* it becomes a registered, charity, it would also need to [apply to OSCR](#) for consent to do so.

Of the activities being planned at the Tower:

Likely to be considered primary purpose trading (assuming the Venue has suitable charitable purposes)	Likely to be considered ancillary to primary purpose	Likely to be considered non-primary purpose trading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event ticket sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cafe and bar sales <u>at events</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating a cafe bar open to the public <u>outside of events</u> (if relevant in future) • Merchandise sales

5.6 Staffing and volunteers

For the business plan, it will be important to plan staffing required for the Tower under community ownership to deliver the planned programme of cinema and events.

The following staffing needs were identified during previous support through the Accelerate programme:

Role	Indicative salary (annual)
Technical Operations Manager - 20hr/week	£21,000.00
General Manager - 40hr/week	£35,000.00
2 Part-time Staff, 16 hrs/week	£18,137.60
Front of House mixing engineer for live events	£1,569.60
Staff for events	£120-200 per event
Cleaner 6hrs/week	£3,400.80
15 Front of House/Bar trained volunteers	£- (allowance in financial projections)

	for training and expenses)
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Becoming an employer

The Venue @ St Columba does not currently employ any staff. Its directors will need to determine who is responsible for managing staff payments, dealing with HMRC and pension payments for staff.

Many small organisations outsource payroll either to their accountancy provider, or to another service provider. For example, GCVS provides [payroll and HR advice](#) (including access to a library of policy templates) to third sector organisations nationally.

Because the Tower Digital Arts Centre does not currently employ any staff, [TUPE regulations](#) covering the transfer of employees from one organisation to another do not apply. However, if the Technical Director currently employed by the Submarine Centre moves wholly or partly to being employed by The Venue at St. Columba, these regulations may apply – further HR support may be needed.

Volunteering

There has historically been a high level of interest in volunteering at the Tower, and 8 people volunteered regularly during the trial period. Via the recent community survey, over 100 individuals expressed interest in volunteering for the Tower under community ownership.

[Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface](#), as mentioned above, offers support in recruiting and managing volunteers.

Employee and volunteer support

If The Venue @ St Columba joins Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (TSI), among other support it would gain access to the [Spectrum Life employee assistance programme](#) for all staff and volunteers. This offers a range of wellbeing support and advice, and is free to eligible organisations.

5.7 Operations

Policies and procedures

By the time of taking ownership, The Venue @ St Columba will also need to have developed (and/or updated and formalised) suitable policies, procedures and risk assessments, including but not necessarily limited to:

- **Fire:** the premises will require an updated fire safety risk assessment after the title to the former St Columba's Church is split. Follow [Scottish Government guidance](#).
- **Health and safety** policy covering the Tower. Make use of the template available from the [Health and Safety Executive](#).

- **Building handbook** covering [statutory checks](#) and routine maintenance of building fabric and equipment.
- **Staff handbook and policies.** SCVO has many model documents, but some are for members only. The Venue @ St Columba can access these by joining (free while income remains below £100,000 a year), or may be able to access similar guidance through Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface. As above, the organisation may consider an HR contract, which could include provision of template documents.
- Continue to follow guidance from [Food Standards Scotland](#) on **providing food** at community and charity events (e.g. Silver Screen), and consider whether food hygiene training is needed for key staff and volunteers.
- Policies covering **volunteers:** recruitment, induction, code of conduct, wellbeing, expenses and management. Support and tools are available through [Third Sector Argyll and Bute](#).
- **GDPR and privacy:** see [SCVO guidance](#).
- **Safeguarding:** given planned use by schools and disability groups, some people using the Tower will be children and vulnerable adults. Many funders also need to see the organisation's safeguarding policy, where relevant, and may also check how this policy was approved and how frequently it is reviewed. SCVO has a set of [safeguarding resources](#), Third Sector Argyll and Bute can offer support in this area, and it may also be useful to review relevant policies such as those of [the Birks Cinema](#).
- It would also be beneficial to develop a **Fair Work** policy or statement in line with [Scotland's Fair Work Framework](#), setting out the organisation's stance on issues such as paying the real Living Wage, zero hours contracts, flexibility at work, opportunities for professional development and channels for staff input on working conditions. Payment of at least Living Wage is a condition for some public sector (e.g. Scottish Government, council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise) funding, and other major funders promote this as good practice.
- **Equal opportunities policy.** This is also required by some funders, and for charities requesting discretionary rates relief from Argyll and Bute Council. It may be useful to review relevant policies such as those of [the Birks Cinema](#).
- **Booking terms and conditions:** Use of the Tower for a variety of events means that the organisation will need a clear booking policy to clarify users' access to facilities (including those shared with the Submarine Centre), their responsibilities and what happens in the event of a cancellation.

Licensing

The following licenses must be obtained (or transferred) and kept up to date:

- **Food:** The Venue @ St Columba should [register as a food business](#) at least 28 days before opening if required. This is free and is required even when taking over premises that have previously been registered.
- **Alcohol:** A personal alcohol license covering the premises at the Tower is already held under the name of one of the steering group members, having been modified during the trial period. The Argyll & Bute Council Licensing Officer has stated no change is needed, so the license just needs to be renewed annually at £280 a year.
- **Public Entertainment:** In Argyll and Bute, premises hosting concerts and theatrical performances require a public entertainment license. The application fee for a 3-year licence from Argyll and Bute Council from 1st July 2024 is £617¹³.
- **Cinema:** In Argyll and Bute, premises used to exhibit films to the public require a cinema license. There are exemptions for occasional or non-commercial film showings, and the Tower currently holds an exemption until 2027. Seek advice from the Argyll & Bute Council Licensing Officer as to whether this would apply following a change of ownership. Regional Screen Scotland provides [instructions on seeking a new exemption](#). Otherwise, there is a fee of £600 for new applications for a cinema license¹⁴.
- **Music:** Given that live and recorded music will be played at events, a music license will be required. Information on the cost of music licensing for community buildings is available at [TheMusicLicense](#) website. There is a [discount for charity and community groups](#). The cost for the Tower has previously been £299 a year.

¹³ [Argyll & Bute Council: Public Entertainment License](#)

¹⁴ [Argyll & Bute Council: Cinema License](#)

6. Financial viability

This section considers how the Tower Digital Arts Centre could be run as a financially self-sustaining social enterprise, drawing on experience from the trial period and information gathered during the feasibility study.

6.1 Overview of recent operations

For a period of around a year in 2023 and 2024 after the owner announced his intention to close, volunteers and the remaining staff ran the Tower with permission from the owner but with minimal input. There was no formal lease. During this period, they were able to:

- Sell around 27,000 cinema tickets over about a year (although this was a year with high profile releases such as Barbie and Oppenheimer).
- Organise several live music events each with 120+ tickets sold. Arrangements with the performing artist varied, but each event ran at £1000+ profit, taking into account both the venue's share of ticket sales and bar profits, minus staff costs.
- Run two 'Silver Screen' showings each week for older people, with a roll included, averaging about 75% seats sold per showing.
- Trial one-off events such as the Exhibition on Screen: Klimt and The Kiss, which attracted audiences from Glasgow and beyond.
- Attract regular screen hire bookings for both smaller screens (2 and 3) – about two a month, with limited promotion.

During this period, however, the Tower was subject to several constraints:

- Access to the building was on a temporary and informal basis, so the staff and volunteers could not seek funding or reinvest revenue to upgrade the facilities. For example, fixed seating in Screen 1 meant the Tower could only host live events suitable for a seated audience, and the small space available for food and drink sales prevented sales of hot food or fresh coffee, despite interest from the public.
- The owner and tenant's relationship with some of the Tower's key suppliers was difficult. Volunteers had to negotiate payment plans for services such as maintenance of projectors to provide a reliable service to the public.
- Utilities contracts remained under the previous owner's name, and there was a risk of services being cut off, which limited the Tower's ability to promote events or private hire: the opportunity to test demand and generate income had to be balanced against the risk of cancellation.

6.2 Screens, capacity and opportunities for growth

The table below shows capacity of the main spaces in the Tower. Maximum capacity of the whole building is limited at present by the number of toilets available: only 200 people can be in the building (including the Submarine Centre) at a time.

The table also shows how each space was used during the period described above, and potential additional usage under community ownership, with the above constraints removed:

	Maximum capacity	Usage (recent opening)	Potential additional usage under community ownership:
Screen 1	Constrained by whole building max. capacity of 227 for cinema/theatre performances with alcohol – 150 for live events with alcohol. Could seat 300, not including upper level (which would only be usable with an additional fire escape).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional private hire (schools, charity) Free community consultation events for Save the Tower project 	With current seating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live bands (genre and profile of acts constrained by seating) Theatre Live streaming Occasional new release/iconic films Private hire (schools)
			With pews removed & flexible seating (subject to further discussion and planning): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider variety of live bands Weddings Corporate events
Screen 2	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current film screenings 'Silver Screen' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morning studio hire (seating is flexible)
Screen 3	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classic film screenings French film festival Private hire Film clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased promotion of private hire (outside of regular programming and Screen 1 live events) Smaller events: book clubs etc.

6.3 Income streams

Cinema ticket sales

During the pilot, cinema tickets across all screens were priced as follows:

- Adult - £10
- Concession - £7

- Young person 12-18 - £6.50
- Child under 12 - £5

This pricing is cheaper than most city centre cinemas, as well as all nearby cinemas identified in section 3.5 (outside of specific promotions).

During the trial period, ticket sales varied depending on the films on offer and peaked during the school holidays, when families are looking for things to do and large films are released. However, the steering group's experience was that there was relatively little variation through the week compared to city centre venues, which most customers travel further to attend. They also found that some people in Helensburgh would attend films at The Tower out of loyalty or preference for a local evening out even if they had relatively little interest in the film otherwise.

In future, income from film screenings could grow by:

- Increasing overall building capacity by building the toilet block, if feasible, which would mean that films can be screened at Screen 2 and 3 even when Screen 1 and/or the Submarine Centre are in other use.
- Offering more film events such as themed screenings, film festivals and so on, which are more likely to attract people (especially younger audiences) away from home streaming. As covered above, secure tenure and control over supplier relationships will mean that special events like these can be widely promoted.
- Carrying out promotion for unique events like these, targeting areas within easy travel distance as identified in section 3.4.

Food and drink sales

During the trial period, **each film attendee spent on average £3 on food and drink**. This is more than double the £1.25 illustrative spend per head included in the Independent Cinema Office's guide to key income streams and costs¹⁵. The steering group attribute this to the product range, which they have tailored to local demand: for example, they ensure that there are always some cheap options available, which discourages people bringing in food from elsewhere.

The steering group found that additional customer spending varied depending on the type of event, with family-friendly events and 'girls' night'-type films attracting the highest customer spend. Discount "Funday Monday" screenings had a lower additional spend per head, but so did more expensive one-off events such as theatre and opera live streaming.

Some supplies were purchased via a wholesaler, delivered weekly, and from supermarkets or discount retailers when cheaper. On average, the **gross margin on food**

¹⁵ Independent Cinema Office: ["How to start a cinema" guide, chapter 10: "The economics of the operation"](#)

and drink was 50%, which is in line with the Independent Cinema Office's guide. Profit margin on popcorn is much higher than this.

During the trial period, the Tower sold popcorn, confectionery, soft drinks and alcoholic drinks. Under community ownership, both this offering and average customer spend are likely to remain similar initially, but variety and spending could increase if the building can be extended to create additional retail space.

Live events

Several live events were held at the Tower during the trial period, and the steering group intend to offer a much wider programme once the venue is under community ownership. Community consultation has shown widespread interest.

Income from live events comes from:

- Ticket sales, typically and split with the performing artist at a rate of between 50/50 and 70/30 in the artist's favour, resulting in **income between £6 and £12 per ticket sold**. To date, the steering group have had some success in negotiating a favourable cut of tickets.
- Bar sales at the event.

There are some variable costs associated with running events like these:

- Additional staff wages, which have been **between £120 and £200** per event.
- One-off marketing costs, which have been kept low: **around £15 per event** to print a large poster to display at the venue. The artist's team typically provide other promotional material, with the only other resource needed being staff or volunteer time to repost social media content, contact the press (if not already informed by the artist) and distribute posters. There has been no paid advertising to date.
- Cost of goods sold at bar.

After the transition to community ownership, there are opportunities to increase live event income by:

- Converting Screen 1 to flexible seating, making it usable for a wider range of events. Feedback from touring artists' teams and promoters is that flexible seating venues have the widest appeal.
- **Building up relationships with promoters.**
- Carrying out promotion for live events, targeting areas within easy travel distance as identified in section 3.4.

Screen hire

During the trial period, all screens were available to hire, at the following rates:

- Screen 1: £500 per day
- Screens 2 and 3: £300 per day

Screens 2 and 3 were generally booked about twice a month for events such as private parties. The price to hire a screen for a children's party is comparable to taking a group of children to an attraction such as a trampoline park, and for local parents this option eliminates the need to travel outside of Helensburgh. Screen 1 was booked on average about once a month for larger events.

Under community ownership, there are opportunities to increase income from screen hire by:

- Redecorating and making all spaces for hire look attractive.
- Converting screen 1 to flexible seating, which would enable use for a wider variety of private events. Events at The Tower can be catered if food preparation is done off-site, or there are opportunities for partnership with food truck operators. Opportunities to explore would include conferences and weddings. This would, however, be dependent on the management agreement with the Submarine Centre.
- Potentially, removing the organ in Screen 1 to create dedicated backstage space. At present, Screen 3 is used as a backstage area for the large event space, so no events can take place in Screen 3 on days when live events are held in Screen 1.
- Promoting hire of all spaces more widely to the public. The Tower's current website, used during the trial period, is limited to box office, but information should be added including room capacity in different seating layouts (with flexible seating in screens 1 and 2), details of how to book, and attractive photography of the rooms set up for different types of events.
- Promoting hire specifically to schools. The Tower is within about 30 minutes' walk or about a mile of 7 schools in Helensburgh, eliminating the need for bus/minibus travel which can be a major cost for schools organising days out. There was some interest during the trial period, but this was limited by lack of promotion. Bringing in school groups has additional benefits in terms of attracting a younger audience and raising awareness of the venue among parents and families.

Advertising and sponsorship

- During the trial period, there was no income from advertising. The steering group estimate that a deal with an advertising agency to screen a monthly package of ads before each film screening would generate around £8,000-£9,000 a year, net of agency fees.
- There is also potential to pursue local business sponsorship opportunities, such as branding on fire curtains (visible to the audience before and after a

performance). It will need to be determined whether the focus for a business sponsorship campaign would be one-off contributions to help cover start-up costs, or ongoing (e.g. annual) sponsorship.

Supporter scheme and donations

The community survey asked whether people would be willing to become a supporter of the Tower, paying a monthly fee. There has been no scheme like this at the Tower in the past, or during the trial period. 19% of survey respondents said that they would be likely to do this and 35% would be somewhat likely, and the average amount suggested was £10 a month (though lower may be better if not offering material benefits in exchange).

Among the comparators reviewed for this report:

- The Birks Aberfeldy charge £30 a year (or more, by donation). In their most recent accounts, income from membership is £5,967, which equates to about 200 members. Paid membership is combined with Trust membership, so paid members have voting rights. Members receive advance invitations to certain events.
- Friends of the Broadway in Prestwick (which is pre-launch but running pop-up events) charge £10 a year and report at least 200 members in their latest annual accounts. As above, paid membership is combined with Organisation membership, but members may either be Full members (voting) or Associates. All members receive discounts on some events, and access to a member's area on the website with exclusive online content.

A well-placed and well-designed donation box could also bring in a small amount of income, for example from people taking part in free or funded events.

If the Tower has charitable status, it could potentially claim Gift Aid on a membership scheme, provided that no material benefits are provided – membership fees must be donations rather than payments for services. It could also boost income from donation boxes via the [Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme](#), but this is excluded from projections at present.

6.4 Operating costs

This section sets out estimated operating costs, based on experience during the trial period, comparison to the Tower Digital Arts Centre Ltd's most recent annual accounts (from 2019) where relevant¹⁶, and information gathered during the feasibility study.

Staffing

The Tower has benefited from having many willing volunteers, both during the trial period and under previous ownership. This has reduced staffing costs.

¹⁶ [Companies House](#) Accounts have not been published for The Tower Digital Arts Centre Ltd since those from 2019.

An initial idea on staffing requirements is included under section 5.6 above. Based on this, **total staffing costs, including employer's National Insurance and pension contributions where applicable, are estimated at £80,036** (including casual staffing for 12 live events a year). All staff in this model are paid at least the Real Living Wage of £12.

Utilities

Based on bills available in 2023, **heat and lighting has been estimated at £49,000** a year. It may be possible to improve this tariff or improve energy efficiency.

Business rates

Rateable value listed for The Tower Digital Arts Centre is £49,250¹⁷. With no relief, this would result in total non-domestic rates of £24,526.50 a year¹⁸.

The property as currently valued is not eligible for rates relief as a small business, which applies to properties with a rateable value of less than £20,000¹⁹.

However, although the listing with the Scottish Assessors is under the name of the Tower Digital Arts Centre, it appears to apply to the whole of the former St Columba's Church, as there is no separate listing for the Submarine Centre. If this is the case, the property will need to be reassessed as distinct units when the title is split.

If The Venue @ St Columba obtains charity status, it could qualify for 80% mandatory rates relief, with potential for an additional 20% discretionary relief. Even without charitable status, the Tower under community ownership could qualify for up to 100% discretionary relief as a non-profit making organisation whose purposes are charitable, or which provides social benefit. Argyll and Bute Council say in the application form that the property being licensed to sell alcohol can affect the amount of relief available.

Given the above, it is not possible to calculate the exact amount due in non-domestic rates. An **estimate of £3,443** has been used for the financial projections, assuming a new rateable value of 70% of the current value and rates relief (as a charity or organisation with charitable purposes) of 80%. Further discussion with Argyll and Bute Council will be required.

Water rates & rubbish collection

Charities may qualify for reduced water and sewerage charges through the Water and Sewerage Charges Exemption Scheme²⁰, but only if:

- There is no permanent alcohol license for the premises.

¹⁷ [Scottish Assessors' Portal](#), accessed 27/08/2024

¹⁸ [Scottish Government: How your rateable value and rates are calculated](#)

¹⁹ [Argyll & Bute Council: Help with business rates](#) – assuming the Tower Digital Arts Centre is the only property occupied.

²⁰ Scottish Water: [Charities Exemption Scheme](#)

- Income is below £300,000 per year.

Given that the Tower is currently licensed, and the Steering Group intend to continue hosting events for which a permanent license is beneficial, we can assume that there will be no exemption even with charitable status. An **estimate of £4,880** is used in financial projections (comparable to previous years for which financial data is available).

Insurance

In accounts from 2019, insurance for the Tower was £19,176 a year. This is more than double the £8,000 in the ICO guide. As another point of comparison, the Birks Aberfeldy paid just over £5,000 in the last financial year. A higher insurance cost may be partly to do with this being a historic building and the wider range of events potentially hosted at the Tower, but it would be worth getting various quotes. An **estimate of £10,000** is used in financial projections.

Cinema management, content, programming and ticketing

Under the previous owner and during the trial period, the Tower used Indy, a cinema management tool which is widely used in the industry. Indy books films from distributors according to audience data, schedules films, and provides a ticketing platform.

Assuming the Tower under community ownership continues to use this service, the cost is **around £1,000 a month**.

Repair & maintenance

Former Tower staff estimated during previous support that property repair & maintenance will cost around **£20,000 a year**.

Equipment repair, maintenance and replacement

The Steering group have obtained a quote for a routine maintenance contract from Omnex, a company which has previously repaired the projectors at the Tower. A previous quote is for **£3,144 a year**.

Advertising and marketing

Advertising costs have been minimal to date, relating only to promotion of specific events. However, future plans rely on more active promotion, so a level of marketing budget will be needed. An **estimate of £100 per month** (excluding event-specific print costs) is included in the financial projections.

Stock, supplies, postage etc.

Estimate of £3,870 a year, covering postage of physical media and sundry costs.

6.5 VAT

VAT advice is outside the scope of the feasibility study, and information below is included only to give an indication of the need for professional advice.

The Venue @ St Columba Ltd is not currently VAT registered but it is likely that once open its income will soon surpass the VAT threshold (£85,000). This means that the organisation must charge VAT on relevant services, such as cinema tickets.

On the other hand, some of the planned programming may be VAT exempt. There is a VAT exemption for admission charges to cultural events such as live musical, theatrical or dance performances held by an eligible body (one that is non-profit making and administered on a voluntary basis)²¹.

The VAT status of streamed theatrical performances has been the subject of a recent tribunal case, which upheld the classification of these as cinema (subject to VAT) rather than live cultural events (exempt)²².

Any refurbishment work on the Tower will be subject to VAT. It may be beneficial to opt for VAT registration at an earlier date than otherwise necessary, in order to reclaim some of the VAT on early refurbishment costs.

A formal VAT assessment should be sought to provide guidance on these issues (approximate cost from previous correspondence with specialists: £2,500 - £3,000 + VAT).

6.6 Corporation Tax

If it registers as a charity, The Venue @ St Columba Ltd would only be subject to corporation tax on profits from activities which do not directly contribute to its charitable purposes, if these exceed the Charities Small Trading Tax Exemption: 25% of total income, with a minimum of £8,000 and a maximum of £80,000.

Our full financial projections, once completed, are likely to show income from trading that is likely to be considered non-primary-purpose at less than the threshold. Levels of income from non-primary-purpose trading must be closely monitored, however.

If this does exceed 25%, the organisation may choose to set up a trading subsidiary to carry out this activity. This is usually a company limited by shares, in which all shares are owned by the charity. The company undertakes non-charitable trading activity, and gifts its profits to the charity. [More information is available via OSCR](#). Among the comparators we reviewed, the Birks Aberfeldy uses this structure.

For cash flow projections, we have therefore assumed **no corporation tax**.

²¹ [HMRC Guidance: Admission Charges to Cultural Events \(VAT Notice 701/47\)](#)

²² AccountingWeb: [Dramatic win for HMRC in live theatre VAT case](#)

7. Funding

Although, as outlined in the previous section, the intent is for the Tower to run as a financially self-sustaining social enterprise, some funding will be needed to cover start-up costs before and at the time of reopening, and to provide working capital for the first year.

7.1 Funding sources

Grants

The following funds cover relevant themes and priorities and are open to the project given its location. This will be developed into a funding strategy in the business plan. Databases such as funding.scot should be regularly monitored for any new opportunities and upcoming deadlines.

The Venue @ St Columba, as a company limited by guarantee without charitable status, would be eligible for the following funds:

Pre-acquisition: further technical fees, legal, startup costs

- Architectural Heritage Fund, project viability grant **up to £10K**. Typically covers technical fees and site investigations, can cover legal fees. EOI submitted and encouraged to proceed. Upcoming decision dates for full application: applications in by the end of September will go to mid-November decision meeting, or if submitted by end of October, to mid-December decision.
- Crown Estates Coastal Communities: Community Capacity Grants, **£20,000 to £50,000**. Aims to support early-stage projects which will create self-sustaining community enterprises. Will fund salaries of new posts, feasibility/technical/legal/professional costs, planning and building warrants. Eoi submitted for £50K. Next stage if successful 21/10/24 - 02/12/24, final decisions March 2025. Grant can be approved conditional upon SLF decision.
- Scotmid - Community Grant, £500. Helensburgh has a branch, which is a requirement. Arts & culture projects benefiting local community are eligible. Must be spent on a specific, one-off cost. Decisions take about 8 weeks. Application in.

Post-acquisition costs (repairs, purchases, first year operating costs)

- National Lottery Heritage Fund will fund smaller projects **£10,000 to £250,000**, or larger ones up to several million pounds. It has four investment principles: saving heritage, protecting the environment, inclusion, access & participation and operational sustainability. Applicants must demonstrate all four, and projects must have a clear focus on heritage: being in a listed building alone is not sufficient.

- [Awards for All](#) is the National Lottery Communities Fund's small, open programme: grants **up to £20,000**. This could cover start-up costs or operating costs in the first year. The lottery's larger funding programmes (including [grants for community-led activity and wellbeing](#)) are currently closed for review.
- [Argyll & the Isles Community Led Local Development Fund \(CLLD\)](#). **£10,000 to £75,000**. Currently closed, but likely to reopen in 2025. Projects must link to one of four priorities, of which the closest fit is growing the economy (by bringing people to Helensburgh for events).
- The project is eligible for funding through the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund, as it is within the required 10-mile distance of landfill sites²³. Grants of up to **£50,000** distributed by various bodies; applications can be made to more than one ([list available here](#)). Projects involving "the maintenance, repair or restoration of a historic building" are eligible, providing the building will be open to the public. These funds must be used for capital costs (including purchase of equipment). Most SLCF funders request a "contributing third party" payment, generally around 11% of the funding requested.
- Screwfix Foundation provides small grants of **up to £5,000** for capital projects. Examples of projects funded include installation of a new kitchen or bathroom, painting or decorating, improving building safety or efficiency. This small grant should cover the majority of project costs, so this is best suited to small renovations or upgrades at an early stage.
- [Dalrymple Donaldson Fund](#), up to £5,000 for restoration of buildings of historic interest (including many church buildings). Best fit would be small repairs, in sympathy with the building's past e.g. using traditional materials. Application by October 31st for decision in December (assuming they require secure tenure, this would need to be in 2025).
- [People's Postcode Trust](#), open to non-charities, with a lower funding limit of £2,500, or to charities (funding up to £25,000). Priority to small organisations and communities within [SIMD](#) 15% most deprived – Helensburgh contains 1 of these (the Tower itself sits within a datazone in the 20% most deprived, but outside the 15% most deprived). Will not fund organisations which have been formed for less than a year and do not have annual accounts, so for an application mid 2025-on.

The following funds are only open to charities, but would become relevant if charity status is secured:

²³ [See SEPA National Grid Reference search tool](#)

- [Garfield Weston Foundation](#) supports arts projects and will cover capital costs **up to 10% of total project cost**, but generally not exceeding £30,000 for local community projects.
- [Cruden Foundation](#): grants of **up to £20,000 (but more commonly £3,000 or £5,000)** for charities working in areas including community development, social activities preventing isolation among vulnerable people, and artistic activities. Generally does not support capital, so an application could cover some of the first year operating costs.
- [Barcapel Foundation](#): grants **up to £20,000** (occasionally up to £100,000) for charities working in areas including heritage (built environment and cultural heritage).
- [Hugh Fraser Foundation](#): grants for charities working in areas including arts & culture. A few major awards over £100,000 each year, with others **averaging £5,000**.
- [Weir Charitable Trust](#), **up to £25,000**. Next deadline is February 28th 2025, for decision in May 2025. Best fit would be for projects with a specific cultural focus, like developing performance/rehearsal space. Although they also fund provision of recreational facilities, this is only for spaces specifically catering to people with disadvantages.
- [Barrack Charitable Trust](#), **£500 - £5,000**. Will only support registered charities, so next likely window after charity status is obtained is April 30th 2025, for decision May. Arts, heritage and culture and provision of recreational facilities are among its core purposes.
- [Wolfson Foundation](#) will fund charities carrying out conservation/restoration work to listed buildings of historical significance, generally **£15,000-£100,000**. However, Grade A-listed sites will be prioritised, so an application at the lower end of this scale may have better chances.
- [Scottish Power Foundation: Annual Grants](#) of **£35,000 to £200,000** are likely to reopen summer 2025. Funding priorities may be revised, but Art & Culture, particularly protecting and safeguarding artistic and cultural heritage, has been a priority in the latest round. However, the funder requires minimum income of £75,000, so the project will not be eligible until the Tower is open and generating income.

Community and crowdfunding

The crowdfunding page set up in early 2024 for Save the Tower on GoFundMe has raised £6,491 to date towards a current goal of £12,500, from 154 individual donations.

- Input from Colin on targets, campaign (e.g. donor rewards, pitching, etc)

- Several cinemas and theatres run an ‘**adopt a seat**’ scheme, where members of the public can have a name or message inscribed on the back of a seat, for example, a memorial or advertising message, in return for a sizeable donation. This could be promoted as part of initial start-up funding, but, as the ‘adoption’ period is usually limited, it could also bring in a small amount of ongoing donations.
 - The Birks, Aberfeldy: £500-£1000, no time limit with a higher character limit; acknowledgement on seat sponsors’ board.
 - Exeter Phoenix: £120 for 5 years, also payable monthly
 - Chapter Cardiff: £250 for 10 years
 - Mercury Theatre, Colchester: £475 for 10 years, also payable monthly
 - Queen’s Film Theatre Belfast: £250 for 2 years / £500 for 5 years, monthly payment also available

As well as an engraved plaque, some organisations offer a custom certificate or badge. Some of these organisations claim Gift Aid on donations made through their ‘adopt a seat’ scheme.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship and local business contributions may be used to raise start-up funding, as well as on an ongoing basis.

The following fund may be used to boost sponsorship income:

- [Culture & Business Scotland](#) aims to support partnerships between businesses and the arts, and will contribute £1 for every £2 invested by the business, up to a total of £10,000. This may include in-kind contributions (e.g. an equipment manufacturer providing equipment free of charge, or a hotel hosting touring musicians for a festival). The minimum business investment is £2,000.

Loans and social investment

Loan funding is a possibility, but the costs and benefits should be carefully analysed. A good source of information on social lenders is goodfinance.org.uk.

Secured longer-term loans are typically used to finance the purchase of fixed assets, with the asset used as security for the loan. If security is granted over the building or other assets, there is the potential for the security to be called in if payments are not made. However, some lenders such as Social Investment Scotland (with a less commercial focus) will provide as much flexibility as possible to prevent this happening. Unsecured loans are possible but likely to have a higher rate of interest. Loan repayments must be made monthly and on time, which can impact cash flow.

Institutional lenders will often require their permission before the borrower enters into any other new debt finance agreements.

8. Key findings and recommendations

Meeting community needs

1. The Tower was already a well-used asset to Helensburgh and its surroundings before closure: about 95% of survey respondents visited at least occasionally. During the Steering Group's trial period running the Tower (despite various constraints), about 27,000 cinema visits took place. Its importance to community groups (including people with disabilities and health conditions) has been highlighted in stakeholder interviews.
2. Levels of community participation and support have been extremely high. About 300 people have taken part in community engagement events at the feasibility stage (with one more to go), submitting thousands of comments and ideas. 2000+ people have completed the survey, with over 94% overall support for the project.
3. Within the Helensburgh Community Council area, which is the primary area of benefit and the area of membership for The Venue @ St Columba, at least 1200 people filled in the survey and support for the project is similarly high, at around 95%.
4. Community engagement has been weaker among young people and younger adults: almost half the respondents were in their late forties to early sixties. Only 2.5% were under 18, 3.6% were 18-25 and even the 26-35 age group lagged behind people in their late thirties and up. The importance of engaging with young people was rightly highlighted in several comments at the community engagement event. The Steering Group have made efforts to address this during feasibility research (for example, circulating the survey via schools), but should continue to work on engaging with young people at the next stage, using different methods as time allows: for example, holding focus groups at The Tower.

Demand and financial viability

5. Most people are willing to pay £11-15+ for a cinema visit, including spending on snacks and drinks. They will pay significantly more for live events.
6. Diverse income streams, including live events, screen and studio hire, private events, bar and snack sales, are critical to viability: many of the small cinemas which have experienced financial difficulties recently had a less diverse business model.
7. Many people are willing to pay either a small fee to become a supporter or friend (with no significant material benefit), or a larger sum as a subscription in exchange for perks. Supporter schemes, alongside other ongoing fundraising such as "sponsor a seat" promotions, contribute to community cinema revenues both pre and post launch.

8. There is potential to tap into a market beyond Helensburgh for high profile film releases and live events. Judging by the spread of survey responses, the areas where people are interested in developments at the Tower are broadly those within a 30-minute drive (if not slightly further to the north and west, where there is no other cinema nearby). These communities should be considered in marketing strategy.

Capacity to deliver the project

The Steering Group has made significant progress to date. As the project moves forward, the group should consider the Tower's future staffing structure, and, relatedly, board capacity.

9. The Venue @ St Columba's constitution states that no director can be appointed as a paid employee. Do any of the current directors intend to seek paid employment?
10. The Technical Director has previously been employed by the Submarine Centre, but worked across both parts of the building, and has been a member of the steering group. He has extensive knowledge of the systems in place in the building. Will he continue working at the Tower?

As the organisation moves towards registering for charitable status, it should also:

11. Review its core purpose (the provision of recreational facilities), and check whether this is a good match for planned activities. This is important because trading outside the organisation's charitable purposes may be taxable, if it exceeds a certain threshold. Although it is possible to adjust a charity's purposes once it is registered, this process is more complex.

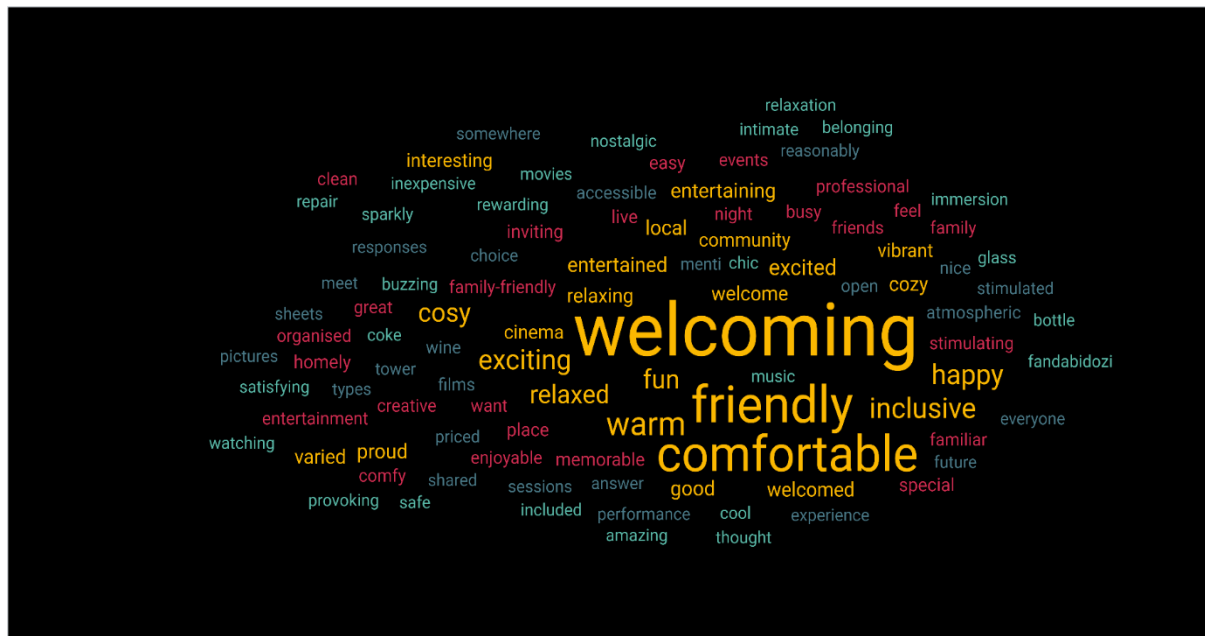
Appendix 1: Feedback from Community Engagement Event

This summary was also shared separately with the Steering Group on September 10th 2024.

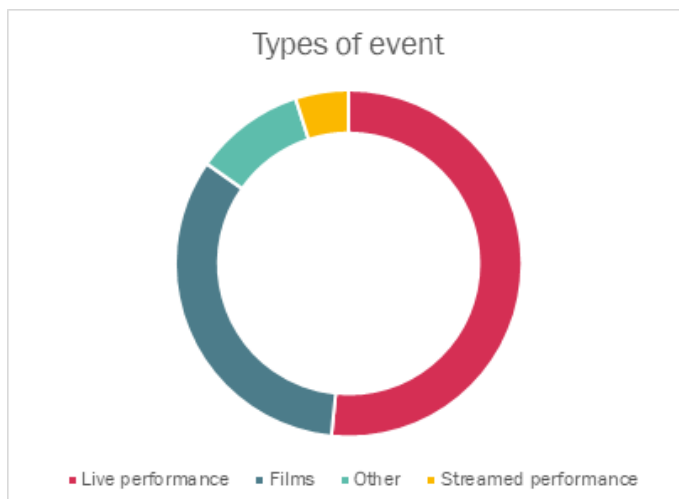
We asked three questions at two sessions, and people were able to answer either using the Menti live voting tool on their phones or on paper. All answers from both sessions are combined here. Some comments contained multiple ideas – they have been split up. In total, 1,194 individual ideas were submitted.

Q1: When you come to the Tower in the future, how do you want it to feel?

Combined word cloud (size of word indicates frequency in answers). Welcoming, friendly and comfortable were the most frequent answers, followed by warm, happy, relaxed, exciting and inclusive.



Q2: What are the top types of events you'd like to go to at The Tower?



Event type:	Mentions:
Live performance	291
Films	187
Other	58
Streamed performance	28

Answers showed a big interest in live events, which made up about half the responses.

Among the types of live performance, live music was most popular, mentioned 141 times. Most people didn't say what kind of live music events they wanted to go to, but among those who did specify, folk/trad was most popular (10).

Types of live performance (if specified):

Music	141
Theatre	56
Comedy	31
Talks & discussions	20
Musicals	14
Improv (café improv mentioned various times)	5
Recordings (TV, radio, podcast etc.)	4
Pantomime	3

Genres of music (if specified)

Folk	10
Jazz	2
Classical	2
Blues	2
Tribute bands	2
Choral	1

The next most popular live event types were theatre and comedy. There were also quite a few suggestions for live talks, including book festivals/author appearances, TEDX style events, etc.

Among the comments mentioning movies or films, most comments referred either to new or older/classic films, rather than a specific genre. Some people wanted one or the other, others asked for a mix of both.

Types of films (if specified):

New	34
Classic	24
Festivals	9
Independent	8
World	3
Silver screen	2
Documentary	2
Subtitled	1

Among the comments mentioning streamed events, there were some suggestions for screening large concerts and sports events as well as theatre/opera/ballet screenings.

Types of streamed performance (if specified):

Theatre	56
Streamed concerts	5
Opera	5
Ballet	4
Sports	3

There were some suggestions of other types of events/facilities, including immersive activities such as an escape room (the 'Alien Wars' experience at the Glasgow Arches was mentioned), soft play, book festivals, art exhibitions, club nights, private events (including seasonal offers such as Christmas dinners), a book club, bingo, cooking demonstrations and arts workshops.

Q3 What questions or concerns do you have at this stage?

Broad headings and examples of questions submitted that the steering group should consider over the feasibility study period are listed below. Some questions have been combined and wording adjusted for readability.

Purchase

- Will the owner accept an offer at the valuation price?
- What are the legal issues that need addressing as part of the purchase?
- What exactly is meant by the asset being in community ownership?
- Could a discount from the owner help towards the match funding requirement?
- What is going to happen at the Submarine Centre?

Funding and fundraising

- Has the Steering Group considered from local business sponsorship?
- Is there any alternative funding or backup plan if the SLF application fails (e.g. commercial loans, community shares)?
- Will you sell merchandise (e.g., T-shirts, tote bags)?
- Payment methods for fundraising (e.g. cheques)

Revenue Generation and business plan:

- How will the Steering Group increase rentals to bring in revenue?
- Will there be reduced hire rates for the community?
- How will tickets be priced?
- Will the Tower compete with other local venues? E.g. the Victoria Halls.
- Will there be a café or other amenities?
- Could it be a conference venue?
- Is there income from communications masts in the Tower?
- What has been learned from other community projects (e.g. Oban Phoenix)?

- Will staff be employed?
- How will volunteers be involved and managed? How do you know that there will be enough volunteers?
- Will the business plan be available to read?

Community Engagement and inclusivity:

- How are the Steering Group encouraging participation from all age groups? In particular, how are we engaging with younger people?
- How will you keep people without internet access informed on the consultation and once the Tower opens?
- How will the Tower be inclusive of disabled and neurodivergent visitors?
- Will there be child-friendly sessions and quieter times?
- Is there support from local groups and organizations?
- Have you explored partnerships with schools, universities, and local businesses? E.g. partnership with UHI originally planned for Screen 2.
- How will the community be involved in feedback and decision-making?

Facility management:

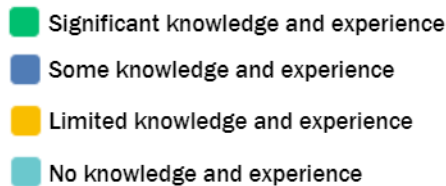
- Will the upstairs space in Screen 1 be used?
- What are the maintenance costs?

Appendix 2: full skills audit results

A skills audit survey was circulated to the Tower Digital Arts Centre Steering Group and a total of 10 responses were received.

All responses were from steering group members and 3 of those responses indicated that they are also a board member of The Venue @ St Columba Ltd.

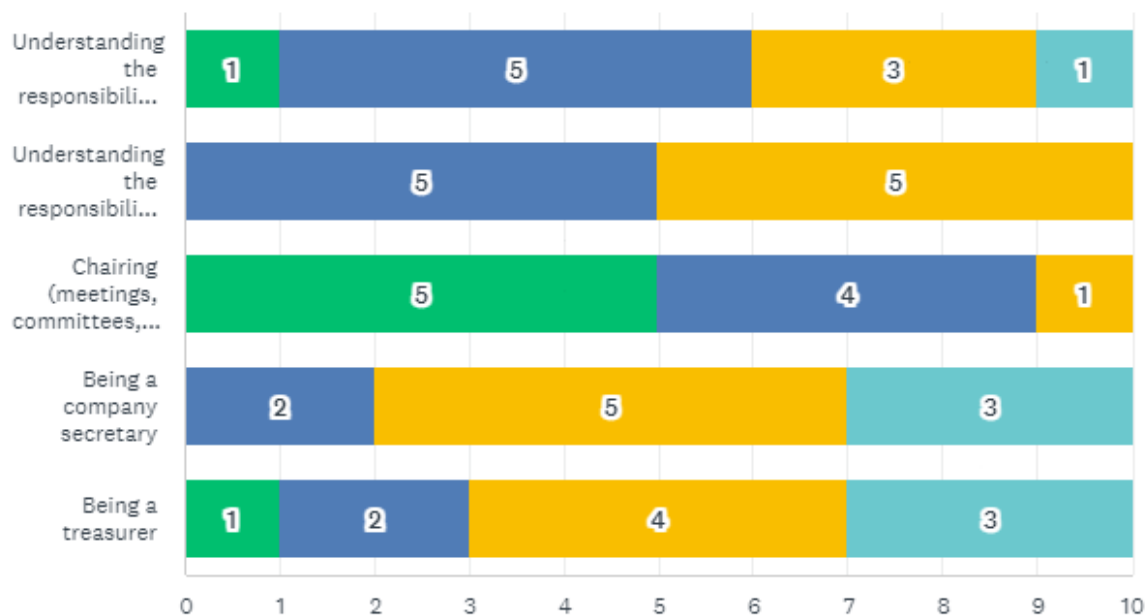
Respondents were asked to rate their skills using the scale below:



It is important to note that responses were self-evaluations and are not objective.

Below is a summary of all results.

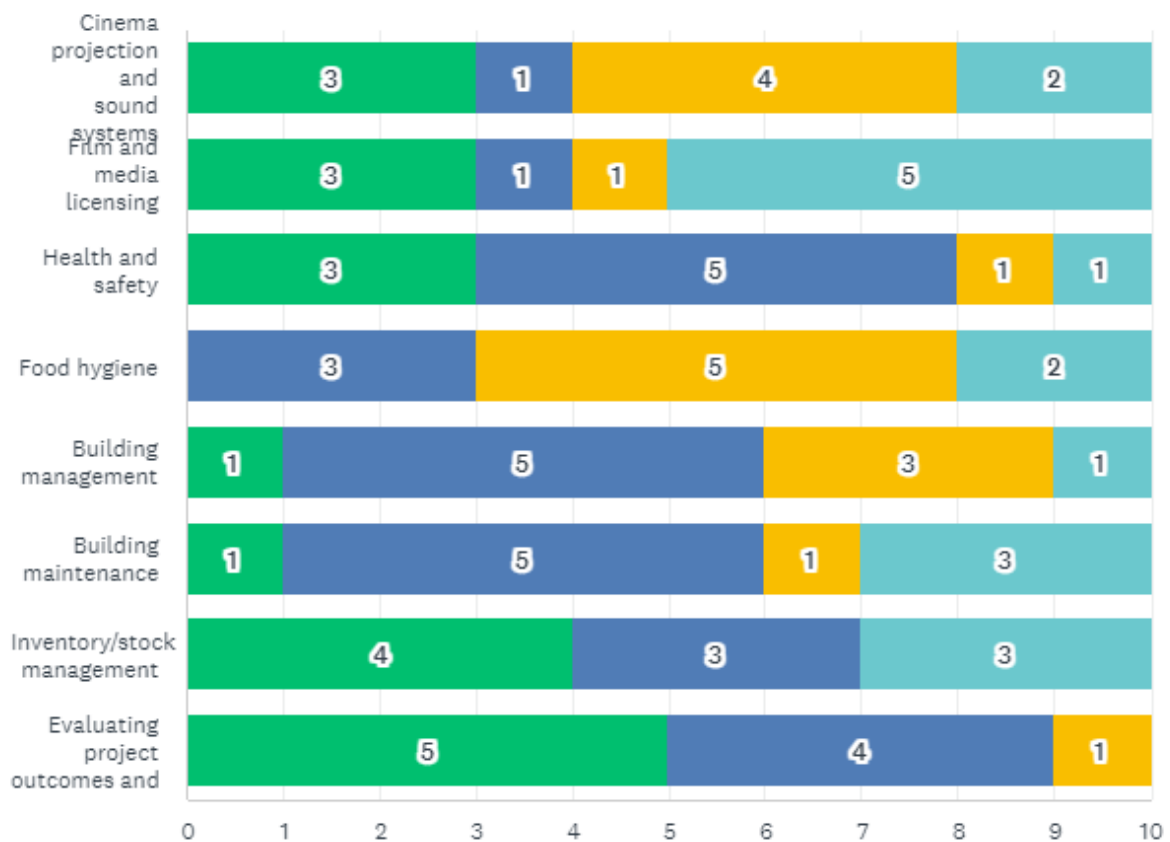
Governance and leadership



- A mixed level of experience across the group with at least 2 members having significant or some experience in each category.
- Chairing meetings, committees or boards is a strong area as half of the group said that they have significant experience and a further 4 members have some knowledge and experience.

- An area of less experience for the group is being a company secretary. Half of the group have limited knowledge and experience of this role and a further 3 members have no knowledge and experience.
- Four comments were also received about the group's experience in governance and leadership. For example, two comments mentioned experience of running a business. Other relevant experience in the comments included project management in a large multinational organisation and involvement in other boards (e.g. parent and toddler group and Helensburgh Community Hub).

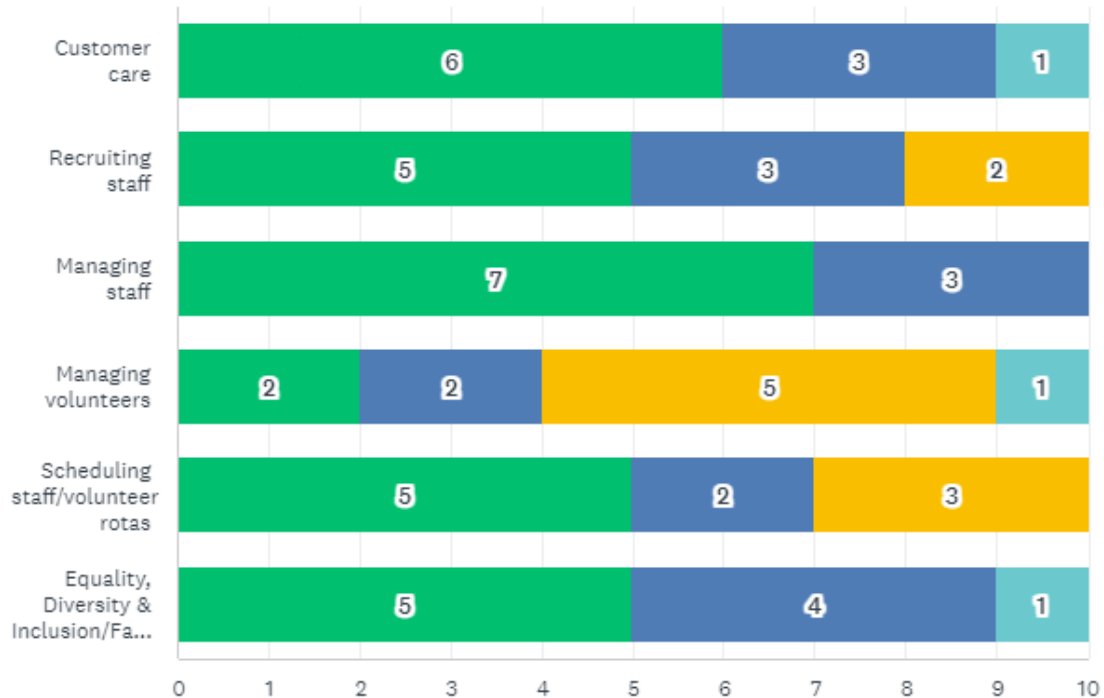
Project



- This is a strong area for the steering group as in each category at least four members have a good or high level of skills relating to projects and initiatives.
- Evaluating project outcomes and impact is a strong area as half of the group have significant experience and 4 more members have some experience and knowledge.
- Film and media licensing is a weaker area for the group as half of the group have no knowledge or experience. However, 3 of the steering group members have significant experience in film and media licensing and 1 member has some experience.

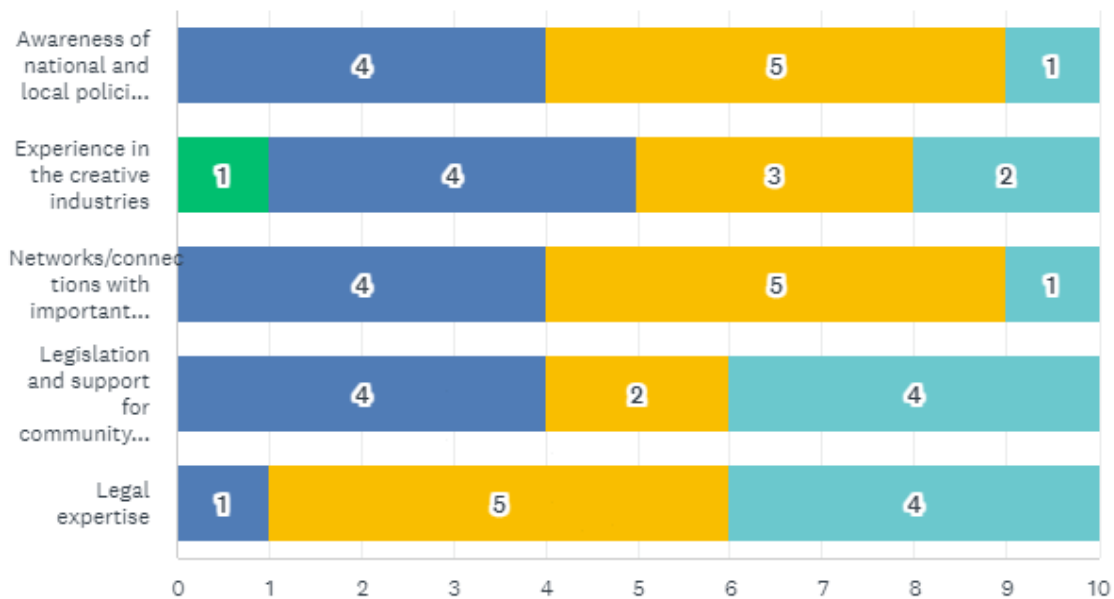
- Five comments were received noting experience in projects related facilities management, health and safety and evaluating outcomes and impact.

People



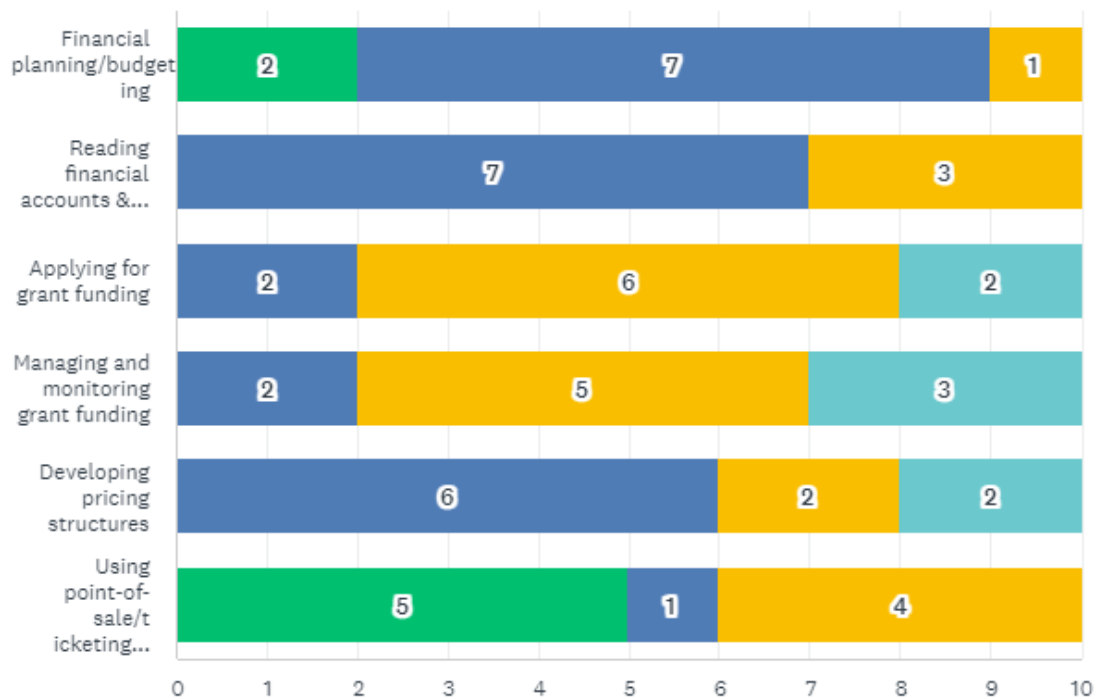
- Skills among the steering group in this area are very strong as in every category there are at least four trustees with significant or some experience
- The stronger areas are managing staff and customer care. For example, 7 members of the group have significant experience in managing staff.
- The weakest area is managing volunteers, but there are still two steering group members with significant experience in this area.
- Four comments were received noting experience with people. A couple comments mentioned project and line manager roles which involved managing staff and implementing HR and recruitment policies.

Context



- In general, the steering group's experience relating to context ranges from some to none.
- Experience in the creative industries is an area of more experience in the group as 1 member has significant experience and 4 members have some knowledge and experience.
- Areas with less experience and knowledge among the group are legislation and support for community empowerment/ownership and legal expertise as 4 members do not have any knowledge in both areas.
- Three comments were received noting previous experience of working in local government in England, engaging with COSS, HIE, TSI and council in Argyll and Bute and experience in local drama production.

Finance



- This level of skills and experience in relation to finance is mixed across the steering group. At least 2 members of the group demonstrate some experience across all areas.
- The group demonstrate a strong skillset in relation to financial planning and budgeting as the majority of the group (90%) either have significant or some experience in this area. Another strong area is use of point-of-sale and ticketing systems as half of the steering group have significant experience of this.
- Applying for grant funding and managing and monitoring grant funding are weaker areas for the group as 80% have limited to no experience across both areas.
- 2 comments were received and mentioned experience of being a trustee for Helensburgh Community Hub and interpreting accounts, and experience of using point-of-sale ticketing from owning a café.

External Communications and Engagement



- This category is mixed across the group, with some trustees demonstrating high levels of skills across all areas, and others with less experience.
- Event planning and data protection are stronger areas for the group as the majority either have significant or some experience.
- Managing a website is a weaker area for the group as half of the steering group members have no experience of this. Not all members will need skills in this area and it is important to note that 1 member has significant experience of managing a website and 2 members have some experience.
- One comment was received which mentioned experience of project management and implementing GDPR compliant solutions.

Other skills and experience:

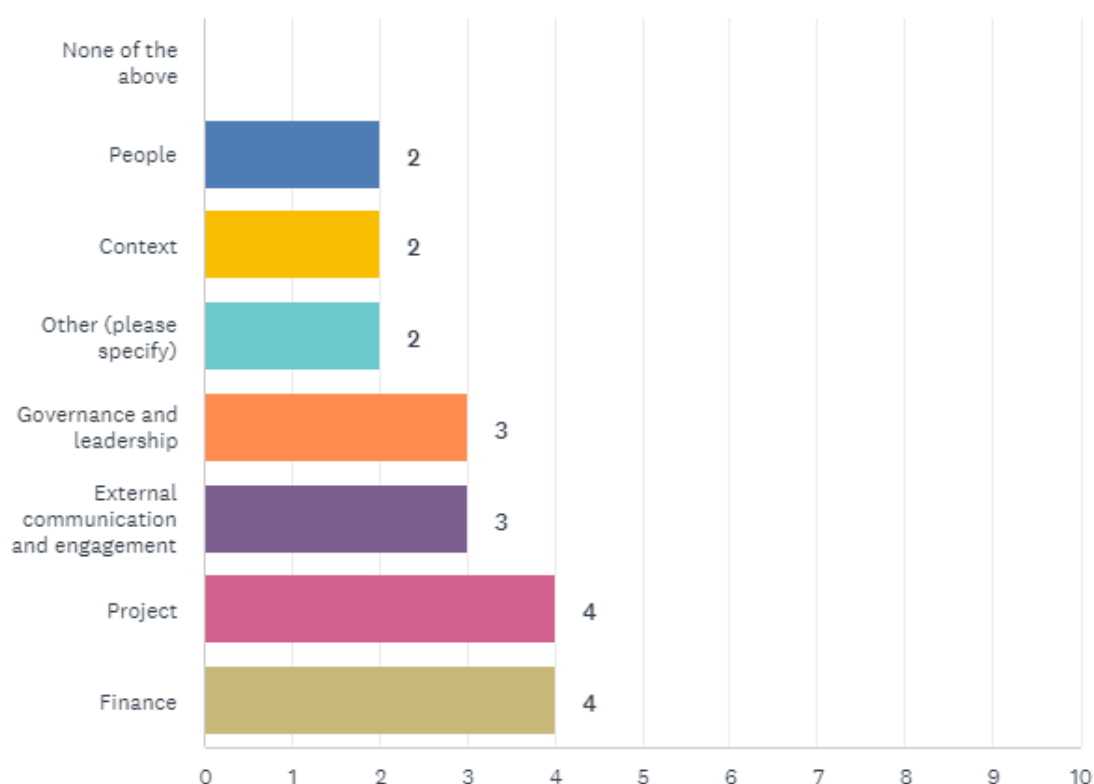
8 responses were received and have been summarised below:

- Good at administration, planning, co-ordination of work and community engagement.
- Good communication skills – strives to make people feel listened to and included.
- 3 of the comments mentioned good connections in the community through their involvement with the Tower project. Examples included third sector organisations,

local churches and drama groups and developing connections with partners who could assist in various parts of the project.

- Equipment knowledge, IT and theatre management.
- Knowledge of local community, project and risk management experience from previous public sector career.
- Senior role in design, building and daily running of the Centre, from cinema and satellite systems to live performances and media training course delivery. Also responsible for all audio visual, digital and print deliveries and an experience audio engineer.

Interest in developing skills:

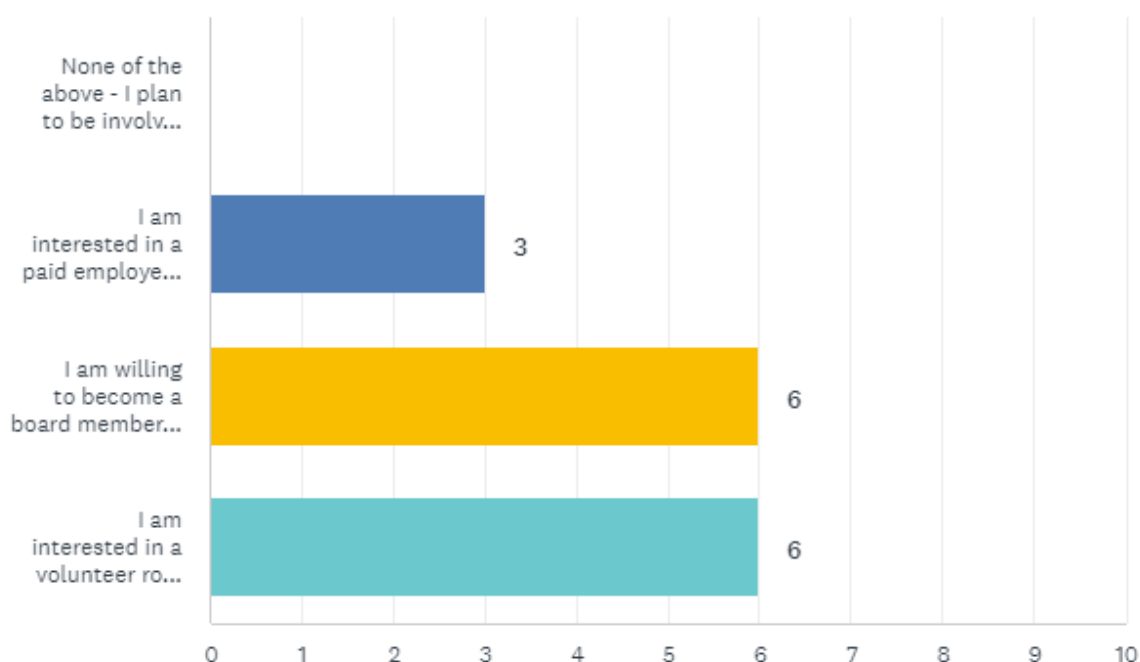


- There was some interest in developing skills from the steering group, particularly in relation to finance and the project as 4 members showed an interest in both areas.
- Other skills that some steering group members would like to develop were related to governance and leadership and external communication and engagement.
- Developing skills and experience related to people and context of the project generated less interest among the steering group as only 2 members said they

would like to develop these skills further. It is important to note that the group already have a strong skillset regarding people.

- Other areas for development mentioned were legal and statutory obligations and knowledge of the live performance output of the Centre and it's place within the professional touring circuits.

Interest in future roles



- 3 members of the steering group said that they would be interested in a paid employee role if available.
- 6 members said that they are willing to become a board member of the company.
- 6 members said that they are interested in a volunteer role (e.g. ticket desk, events team).
- Of the comments left, a couple referred to volunteering. One person expressed that they would like to continue volunteering at the Tower and would also benefit from more guidance. Another person mentioned how new skill sets and people may be needed to develop the Tower, if the facility is successfully acquired. Areas of interest for future roles include management of an inhouse theatre group and creative and technical aspects of managing an arts and entertainment centre.

Appendix 3: Case studies

	Oban Phoenix (closed)	Birks Aberfeldy (operating)	Friends of the Broadway, Prestwick (pre-launch)
Legal structure	A charity registered in Scotland (SC042407). Private Limited Company by guarantee without share capital use of 'Limited' exemption (SC397947).	The Birks Cinema Trust is a Private Limited Company by guarantee without share capital use of 'Limited' exemption (SC360709) and is a registered Scottish Charity (SC041030). Its trading arm, The Birks Cinema Limited, is a Private Limited Company (SC428528).	A charity registered in Scotland (SC048992). Private Limited Company by guarantee without share capital use of 'Limited' exemption
Members and subscribers	<p>Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinary members (including Subscribers) – residents in the local area. • Associate members – living out with the area. • Junior members – 12-17 years old. <p>Ordinary members have one vote at General Meetings which can be exercised in person or by proxy. Associate members and Junior members cannot vote.</p> <p>Quorum at General Meetings - 10 ordinary members or 10% of ordinary members.</p>	<p>£2.50 per month or £30 per year to become a trust member. State that there is no upper limit and so you can pay a higher yearly membership fee if you wish.</p> <p>Can gift aid membership.</p> <p>£5,967 total in membership fees (2023 accounts)</p> <p>Membership gives you voting rights, advance notice to events and invites to program preview evenings.</p> <p>Become a Trust Member The Birks Cinema - Aberfeldy</p>	<p>Pop-up cinema roadshows being held at local venues e.g. Prestwick Academy to raise funds.</p> <p>Membership Friends Of The Broadway Prestwick</p> <p>Cost of Full Membership and Associate Membership both £10 per year.</p> <p>Member perks: monthly newsletter The Broadway Bugle, discounted event tickets, members-only bonus exhibits on the official website, and more.</p> <p>Only Full Members have voting rights at AGM's.</p> <p>In their 2023 accounts they reported an excess of 200 members. They state that</p>

	Oban Phoenix (closed)	Birks Aberfeldy (operating)	Friends of the Broadway, Prestwick (pre-launch)
	<p>Members paid an annual subscription. Subscription cost may vary by membership type.</p> <p>Membership included perks like ticket discounts (e.g. paying standard ticket price for the sofas seats) and offering free admission to adults for the Saturday kids club.</p>		<p>their website has been great at increasing their membership through the sign-up landing page.</p>
Programming	<p>Mix - blockbuster, art-house, classics, live-streamed theatre.</p> <p>Alison is going to send me the name of the more recent ticketing system used. An issue with this was that the concession sales were not uploaded onto the system even though this could be done.</p> <p>VISI was used for ticketing. Programme information would usually be uploaded 3 weeks in advance. When showing National Theatre performances, they would know 3 months in advance, so this was good for marketing.</p>	<p>Mixed, new-releases, arty and pre-recorded live theatre.</p> <p>Live streaming sports for special events e.g. six nations.</p> <p>Also a varied arts programme.</p> <p>Have a loyalty card scheme and do local residents ticket discount. Loyalty Card / Resident Discounts The Birks Cinema - Aberfeldy</p>	<p>Use Indy as their cinema programming partner.</p> <p>Mostly classic films at their pop-up venues but some new releases.</p>

	Oban Phoenix (closed)	Birks Aberfeldy (operating)	Friends of the Broadway, Prestwick (pre-launch)
	<p>They were also able to track concession sales alongside ticket sales which was good for invoicing and for tracking profits.</p> <p>Gift-aid for ticket sales is something that wasn't done but could've been so that the charity could claim back VAT.</p>		
Income	<p>The provisional liquidation has been caused by a "marked decline in audience numbers and revenue stemming from the Covid pandemic, together with rising operating costs (e.g. salaries and energy) due to inflationary pressures".</p> <p>2023 accounts show total income of £279,154:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £25,042 in restricted grants from Glasgow Film Hub, Inspire Alba and Creative Scotland. No unrestricted grants. • £174,205 from cinema sales • £56,345 from food and drink sales • £22,042 from advertising sales • £1,296 from venue hire 	<p>Sales of 19,747 tickets to films and events generated £156,417.</p> <p>Café/ bar sales for the period were £189,123 (state that sales of all day breakfast have been a 'remarkable success')</p> <p>Income from services including advertising and room rental mainly brought in by TBCT community activities amounted to £31,374. application-pdf</p> <p>Trading losses for the year £37,826 – despite efforts e.g. opening 5 days instead of 7.</p> <p>Have a café/ bar which sells alcohol Food & Drink Menu The Birks Cinema - Aberfeldy</p>	<p>2023 accounts show total income of £26,810:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £7,757 from donations • £18,182 from grants • £571 from subscriptions <p>Total expenditure was £9,025 resulting in a net surplus of £17,785 for the year.</p>

	Oban Phoenix (closed)	Birks Aberfeldy (operating)	Friends of the Broadway, Prestwick (pre-launch)
	<p>Total expenditure was £329,192 resulting in a net deficit of £50,038 for the year.</p> <p>Two screening rooms, smaller room (capacity: 22) was hired out for private functions and parties.</p>	<p>Can sponsor a seat for either £500 or £1000. This means you get a plaque to attach to the seat and your name goes up on the sponsor board in the café.</p> <p>They promote legacy giving.</p> <p>Some ongoing revenue and programming funding from BBC Children in Need, The Gannochy Trust, The Scottish Government, etc.</p>	
Staffing	<p>8 staff were made redundant when the company was liquidated.</p> <p>2023 accounts show that there was an average of 10 FTE employees in the year.</p> <p>Had 1 general manager and 3 depute managers. The managers had rolling annualised hour contracts meaning that hours per working week could vary whenever the cinema was quiet or busy.</p> <p>There were staff members on zero-hour contracts which worked well as people on these contracts had often started out as volunteers and already had other jobs so they could pick up shifts when needed.</p>	<p>The Birks Cinema Limited 2023 accounts show that there was an average of 16 employees in the year, up from 9 in 2022.</p>	<p>No staff yet as not operating. There is a volunteer sign up page on the website.</p>

Appendix 4: Demographic profile

The following demographics report has been prepared for use by the Tower Digital Arts Centre Community Buyout Steering Group. The steering group define their community as those living within the Helensburgh Community Council boundary (see outline on map below). As Census data is not published for community council areas, we have gathered this data from the closest fitting data zone areas.

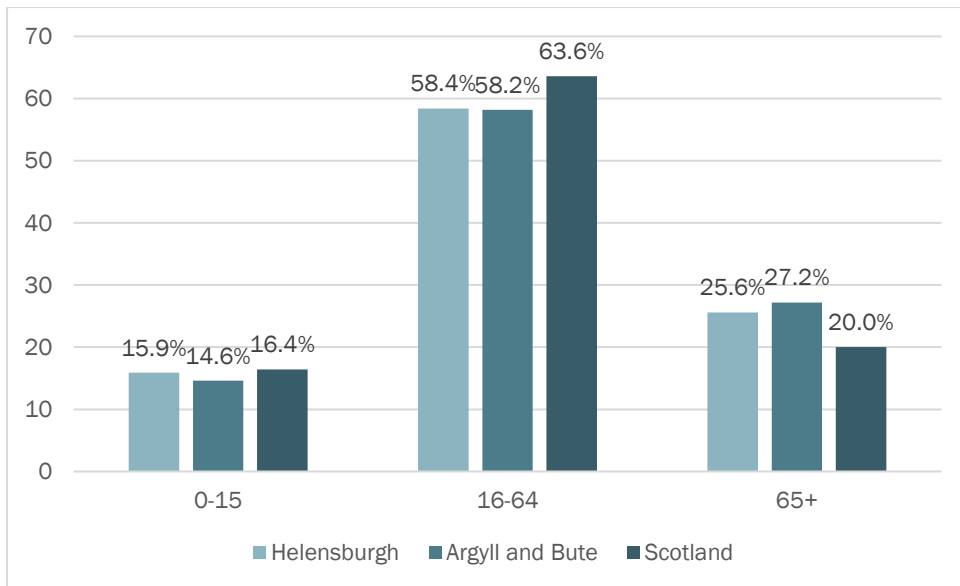
Unless otherwise noted, the data presented in this report is from the 2022 Census and relates to the following 22 data zones: S01007384, S01007385, S01007386, S01007387, S01007388, S01007389, S01007390, S01007391, S01007392, S01007393, S01007394, S01007395, S01007396, S01007397, S01007398, S01007399, S01007400, S01007401, S01007402, S01007403, S01007405 and S01007404.



Population and age.

According to the 2022 Census, there are 15,184 people living in the Helensburgh Community Council area. The population is 51.6% female and 48.3% male.

15.9% of those living in the local area are aged 0-15 years, which is lower than the Scotland average of 16.4%. 58.4% are of working age which is lower than the national figure (63.6%) and just above the local authority average (58.2%). Finally, 25.6% are aged over 65, which is higher than the average across Scotland (20%).



Population change

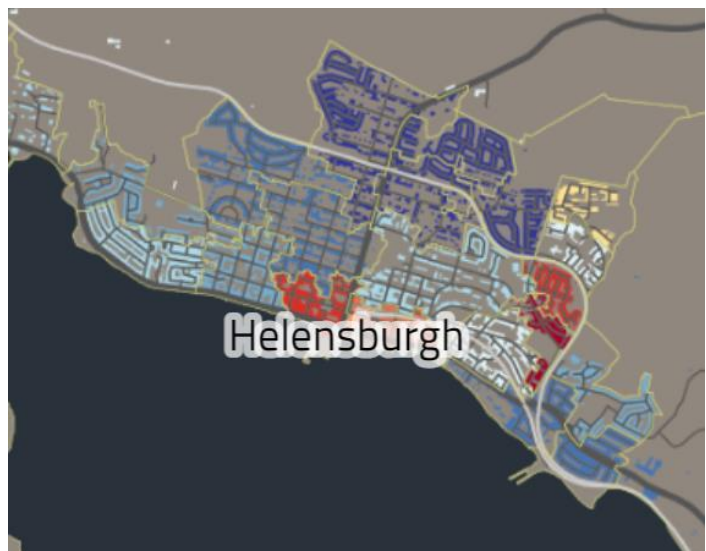
The population of Helensburgh has slightly increased in the past decade or so. At the 2011 Census, there were 14,992 living in the area and as of the 2022 Census, there were 15,184 people living in the area. Therefore, there has been a 1.3% increase in the local population since 2011.

SIMD

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) measures the level of deprivation across 6,976 data zones in Scotland.

The SIMD combines data across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, geographic access to services, housing and crime.

The map on the right shows datazones in Helensburgh. Areas classed as most deprived are in dark red, and those classed as least deprived are in dark blue.

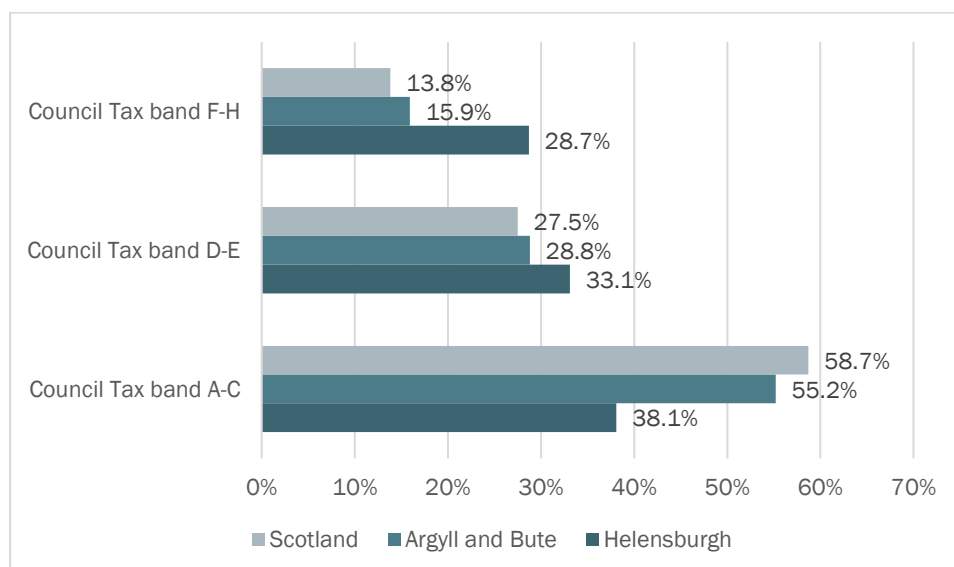


There are mixed levels of deprivation across the Helensburgh Community Council area.

For example, 3 of the Helensburgh datazones (S01007398, S01007398 and S01007395) are within the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. On the other hand, 9 datazones (S01007391, S01007392, S01007393, S01007386, S01007387, S01007388, S01007401, S01007402 and S01007405) in the Helensburgh Community Council area fall within the 20% least deprived areas in Scotland.

Housing

Council tax bands can be used as a measure for property value and levels of affordable housing with Band A representing the lowest property value.



According to the National Records of Scotland (NRS, 2023), there is a high proportion of dwellings in Helensburgh in the most expensive category. 28.7% of dwellings are Council Tax band F-H dwellings, compared to 15.9% in Argyll and Bute and 58.7% in Scotland.

38.1% of dwellings in Helensburgh are in Council Tax band A-C, compared to 13.8% nationally.

Local Jobs

Data on local jobs is provided by the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) at data zone level. According to BRES figures from 2022, the two largest industry groups for workforce jobs based in the Helensburgh area are:

- Health (20%)
- Accommodation and food services (17%)
- Retail (15%)

Universal Credit

Universal Credit has replaced six previous benefits (including housing benefit, child tax credit and working tax credit). Universal Credit can be received by people in work on low pay and those who are unemployed.

9.1% of people living in Helensburgh claim Universal Credit, which is below the averages of 11.2% in Argyll and Bute and 12.9% across Scotland (DWP, March 2022).

Older People

Pension Credit provides financial help for people aged 60 or over whose income is below a certain level (so is an indicator for pensioners living in poverty). 20.8% of pensioners in Helensburgh are considered to be living in poverty, as they claim Pension credit, which is lower when compared to 24% of pensioners across Argyll and Bute and higher when compared to 11.7% across Scotland as a whole.

Attendance Allowance is payable to people over the age of 65 who are so severely disabled, physically or mentally, that they need a great deal of help with personal care or supervision. 12% of people in Helensburgh claim Attendance Allowance, which is lower than in Argyll and Bute (13.5%) and Scotland (12.8%).