

OUTLINE BUSINESS PLAN

Proposal for the acquisition and management

of

Cleish Parish Church

by

Cleish Village Trust (SCIO)

for the community.



www.cleishvillagetrust.org

DRAFT- VER. 060625

Executive Summary

This document outlines the proposed future use of Cleish Church following its potential acquisition by the Cleish Village Trust (the Trust). To make the purchase possible, the Trust must raise the necessary capital funds. The vision and plans described here are intended to inform and inspire potential donors and supporters.



The future use of the church building draws inspiration from the Association of Festival Churches encouraging declining churches to focus on *Three-Cs*: community, culture and commercialisation. Similarly, this proposals focuses around three core pillars:

1. Culture, Heritage, and History

The church will serve as a space for cultural and community events, including concerts and occasional services. These activities may be supported by an informal 'Friends of Cleish Kirk' group – volunteers and supporters with a particular interest in the building's heritage or with connections to the current congregation of Cleish Parish Church.

2. Sustainable Income Generation - "Village Experience Weddings"

To cover ongoing costs and support the broader aims of the Trust, the church will be available as an intimate and affordable venue for weddings, baptisms, and other celebrations – both secular and religious. These activities will be coordinated in collaboration with Cleish Village Hall, by a Trust sub-group or social enterprise, enabling the two venues to offer a complementary service.

While income generation is essential for sustainability, it is not the primary purpose of the church's use.

3. Venue Hire and Community Use

The church will also serve as a general-purpose venue or overflow facility for Cleish Village Hall activities, with a simple agreement between the Hall Association and the Trust enabling flexible shared use. This will support wider community needs and extend the reach of existing local facilities.

These three strands naturally overlap – for example, community events may generate income, and commercial hires may benefit the community – but together they offer a balanced and sustainable plan. This approach honours the church's historical, spiritual, and architectural significance, while ensuring it remains open and useful for the community, preserved for future generations.

Cleish Village Trust will retain overall responsibility for the upkeep, maintenance and good governance of the building, while day-to-day operations will be carried out as outlined above. This division of activity reflects the practical realities of maintaining the church and accommodates the diverse interests and passions within the community.

• INTRODUCTION

At the heart of our hamlet, St Mary's Chapel, Kirkton of Cleish has been a constant presence since 1208. The current building, completed in 1832, is the third known on the site. Its preservation is central to the heritage, character, spiritual history and amenity of the Cleish conservation area.

Cleish Parish Church is scheduled to close and be sold by the Church of Scotland. In response, there is strong local support for bringing the building into community ownership—preserving it as a place for occasional worship and expanding its use to serve wider community needs. Commercial activities will help generate the income required to maintain the church, while also supporting the broader aims of the Cleish Village Trust, in line with its constitution.

We fully recognise the scale of the task ahead. However, we believe there is both the will and the capability within the community to secure, manage and maintain the church for the future, ensuring it remains a living part of our shared history and a space that serves generations to come.

This document is intended to inform the local community, potential donors, and supporters about the proposal to purchase Cleish Parish Church and to outline plans for its ongoing stewardship. It serves as a ‘live’ document—reflecting the ongoing work of the Trust and incorporating feedback, including insights gathered at the public meeting held at Cleish Parish Church in March 2025. We warmly welcome further comments, suggestions, and support.

An agreement is being finalised between the Cleish Village Trust and the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland (“CoS”) to secure an off-market, community-led purchase of the church building. To proceed, the Trust must raise funds equivalent to the church’s agreed valuation (£90,000) by 1 November 2025, plus any associated expenses and initial running costs. If this target is not met, the church will be placed on the open market.

Those interested in supporting the preservation and future use of this important community asset are encouraged to consider making a donation or pledge to the Trust.

- **BACKGROUND**

At the end of 2024, the church was closed by CoS for regular worship, following a decision to form a single united parish for Kinross-shire. This is part of a wider CoS plan which will see the closure and sale of many other church buildings across Scotland.

In response a group of local residents came together to form the Cleish Village Trust, a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). The Trust's journey began in August 2023, initially established as the Cleish Village Initiative Ltd - which is a legal prerequisite towards gaining SCIO status. Over the past 18 months, the Trustees and supporters have worked extensively behind the scenes to lay the groundwork for the project. The Trust's overarching aim of benefiting both the local community and the

wider public. Its remit includes the acquisition, preservation, and sustainable use of land and property to support:

- community development
- environmental protection
- education
- recreation and the arts

The Trust's constitution defines the 'community' as those living within the KY13 0LR postcode area. In accordance with its constitution, the Trust must have five elected trustees from within this area, with the option to appoint up to three co-opted trustees from outside the postcode. Anyone residing in KY13 0LR is eligible to become a voting Member of the Trust. Those living outside the area may join as non-voting Associate Members, up to a maximum of one-third of the total membership. While the Trust is locally anchored, its remit is to serve the wider public, ensuring that the benefits of its work extend beyond the immediate postcode area.

The Trust is officially approved by the Scottish Government as eligible to apply for a Community Right to Buy (CRTB) for land and property. Limiting formal membership to a clearly defined postcode area was an important requirement for CRTB approval, as the legislation favours communities with well-defined geographic boundaries.

However, it is acknowledged that many people who consider themselves part of the Cleish community live outside KY13 0LR. Although the imminent sale of the church building was the original catalyst for forming the Trust, its remit as noted above extends to any land or property within the designated area that could serve community purposes.

- **PROPOSAL FOR POSSIBLE USE**

The guiding principle is that the church should serve the community. The guiding philosophy is that the more it is used, the more people will feel invested in its preservation and future - whether through attending events, services, other organising activities, or supporting fundraising efforts.

There is a clear desire for the building to be used sensitively and respectfully, preserving its character. No major alterations are anticipated in the short to medium term. Recent surveys suggest the building is in good condition, although, like all historic structures, it will require ongoing maintenance and care.

As noted above, the future use of the church is based on three core pillars: (1) culture, heritage and history; (2) sustainable income generation; and (3) venue hire and community use. Striking the right balance between these pillars is essential. While generating income is necessary to cover running costs and ensure financial sustainability, it should not dominate to the extent that the church's heritage value or community involvement is diminished. All three elements must work in harmony to preserve the building's character, serve community needs, and secure its long-term future.

Pillar 1: Culture, Heritage and History

Cleish Church holds deep historical, architectural, and spiritual significance for the local community and beyond. Preserving and celebrating this heritage is a central part of the vision for its future use. The building can host cultural events such as concerts, talks, exhibitions, and occasional services, ensuring it remains a living part of the village's identity. A 'Friends of Cleish Kirk' group (see below) - made up of volunteers and supporters with personal or historical ties to the church - can play a key role in stewarding this aspect of the venue's purpose. By actively engaging with the church's past, this pillar keeps its legacy alive while fostering a sense of community pride and continuity.

Concerts and events

As part of its cultural and community role, Cleish Kirk will provide a unique and atmospheric venue for concerts, lectures, and other public events. Its acoustics, character, and setting make it particularly well suited for small-scale classical, folk, and choral performances, as well as for readings, talks, and heritage-themed exhibitions. These events will not only celebrate local culture and creativity, but also help draw visitors (and their donations) and build wider community engagement with the building. Programming can be supported by local volunteers and partners, and coordinated with the activities of the Village Hall to ensure a cohesive and complementary cultural offer across the village.

A Festival Church

Although regular worship at Cleish Church has now ceased, its future as a community-owned venue offers an opportunity to adopt the model of a festival church, as advocated by the Association of Festival Churches. Many supporters and potential donors of the Trust are likely to have a connection to the kirk through its history as an active parish church, and may wish to see that legacy continue in some form. This approach involves occasional but meaningful use of the building for services and spiritual gatherings tied to key moments in the calendar — such as Christmas, Easter, Remembrance, Patronal Feast Day and other significant local or ecumenical events. These services could be organised on an occasional basis, supported by volunteers and those with a connection to the church's religious heritage. This spiritual dimension can sit comfortably alongside the venue's role in hosting weddings, baptisms, and other life events as part of the income generation strategy. In doing so, the church remains open and rooted in its original purpose, while also contributing to its financial sustainability and become a more diverse and widely used space.

An added benefit of this flexible approach is that the building can retain its secular status, enabling it to host civil wedding ceremonies and access non-religious sources of funding. At the same time, by remaining in occasional spiritual use and maintaining its identity as a place of worship, it may still be considered an 'active church' for the purposes of funding from organisations that support ecclesiastical heritage, such as the Scottish Churches Trust. This dual identity strengthens the case for broader financial support while allowing the building to serve a diverse range of community and celebratory functions.

'Friends of Cleish Kirk'

To support the long-term success and stewardship of the church, one is to establish proposal to establish a *Friends of Cleish Kirk* group as a sub-group of the Cleish Village Trust. While the Trust would retain overall responsibility for ownership, governance, and financial oversight of the church (and potentially other village assets in future), the Friends group would provide a way for individuals with a personal or historical connection to Cleish Kirk — whether local or dispersed — to remain actively involved. Members could contribute through volunteering, attending events, and supporting occasional services or heritage/cultural activities. People may simply

choose to become a *Friend* in support or become actively engaged. A suggested minimum annual membership donation (fee) could also provide a revenue stream to the Trust, though membership could be open to all regardless of ability to pay. In addition to supporting the church's cultural and community life, the group could play a key role in outreach and fundraising during the initial campaign to secure the building for community use.

Pillar 2: Sustainable Income Generation

The church offers a stunning and romantic setting, with its historic architecture, atmospheric interior, and attractive front garden ideal for small outdoor receptions and photography. It is also located near larger facilities, such as Cleish Village Hall and the glebe field, which can accommodate receptions or larger gatherings in coordination with the Trust as well as being a short distance from the M90.

While some enhancements could be made over time, the building already benefits from a range of high-quality amenities. These include a discreet heating system, a modern sound system, flexible lighting options, and a recently built meeting room that can serve as a private bridal preparation space. The church also boasts a two-manual concert-grade pipe organ and a C. Bechstein grand piano, further enhancing its appeal for music-rich ceremonies and celebrations.

The status of the church building would remain unchanged when sold. It is the policy of the Church of Scotland to not 'deconsecrate' churches on transfer. At any rate, the deconstruction process is merely a ceremonial one rather than legal. The church, if bought, could be used for religious, humanist and interfaith weddings and civil partnerships. However, if occasional church services are to continue, it is unlikely that it would be approved for use as a civil wedding venue. However due to their flexibility humanist weddings in Scotland are popular and presents a huge opportunity.

Operating the church as a venue

Weddings are expected to become a core source of income for the venue and could be developed into a sustainable revenue stream over time. In the initial phase, basic

marketing will be required to attract bookings, including outreach to local wedding planners, celebrants, photographers, florists, and other key suppliers in the wedding industry. This early marketing effort could focus on the local and regional market to test demand from couples seeking an intimate and affordable venue close to home. As the offer develops, there may be scope to grow this into a more structured enterprise — potentially with dedicated branding and booking systems — while always ensuring that commercial activity remains aligned with the broader mission and values of the Cleish Village Trust.

There is also the opportunity for the events under Pillar 1 to also bring in revenue, not only through donations, but also through ticketed events

Pillar 3 - Venue hire and community use

The Cleish Village Hall and field, owned by a separate charity (the Cleish Village Hall Association) will continue to play a vital role in village life. While there will inevitably be some overlap in use between the hall and the church, the aim is for the two facilities to remain complementary, not competitive.

Access to both venues will create new opportunities for the community. For example:

- The hall could serve as a reception space for weddings or funerals held in the church.
- The hall's kitchen and toilet facilities could support larger events in the church, such as concerts.
- Conversely, if an event in the hall is oversubscribed, it could be relocated or expanded into the church.

To support practical coordination and ease of access for users, day-to-day bookings of the church space to be managed by the Village Hall Committee. This would effectively make the church available as an extension of the existing village hall facilities. Such an arrangement would simplify administration, enable joined-up use of both venues, and ensure that the church remains active and accessible for a wide range of community events. A short Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between

the Trust and the Village Hall Association would help formalise this partnership, while preserving the distinct identity and purpose of each charity.

Overview of possible activity

Category	Description	Examples	Pillar
(i) Community Events	Free, open to the community, with the opportunity for donations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cleish Village Fete (e.g. with organ recital) - Art exhibitions - Informal talks - Church, ecumenical & interfaith services - Christmas carol services - Open doors church (with donation option) 	Pillar 1
(ii) Fundraising Events	Community-organised, usually ticketed to generate surplus income. Likely to attract audiences beyond Cleish. May involve professional performers/speakers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerts & recitals - Other fêtes & festivals - Lectures - Exhibitions - Workshops & retreats 	Pillar 2
(iii) Other Income Generation	Fee-based services provided by the venue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weddings / civil partnerships - Funerals - Miscellaneous church hire 	Pillar 2 and Pillar 3
(iv)	Tourist attraction - open door policy	Allow people to visit the building as a tourist attraction with option for donation.	Subject to security etc. Friends of Cleish Kirk.

Facilities in the Church

Cleish Church is already a beautiful and functional space, with many existing features that make it well suited to community use and events — including weddings, concerts, and services. While some upgrades could enhance the building's usability over time, it is important to emphasise that much can be achieved with the building as it currently stands. The aim is to make the most of what is already available, ensuring that the pursuit of perfection does not delay or complicate the broader vision. It has been well maintained, has a good heating system, and a modern audio-visual system. Additionally, the church was recently extended (2014) to include modern meeting, toilet and kitchen facilities.

That said, some modest and sensitive modifications may be considered in future to support greater accessibility, comfort, and flexibility. These could include improvements to heating and lighting, additional storage, partial or full replacement of the pews with flexible seating, enhanced toilet facilities, or equipment to support multi-purpose use. Any proposed changes would be carefully assessed for cost, impact, and compatibility with the building's character and heritage - noting its status as a listed building and good acoustic quality. The focus will remain on practical, phased improvements that enable sustainable use, rather than expensive overhauls that risk delaying progress or straining limited resources.

FINANCING

The Trust needs to consider means for raising the funds to purchase the church and to ensure sufficient income for its running costs and maintenance.

Capital Purchase

The Trust needs to raise £90,000 (plus expenses estimated at £10,000) by 1 December 2025 to secure the purchase of the church from the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland. Initial investigations with some of the major public funding bodies such as the Scottish Land Fund, Perth & Kinross Council and National Church Trust suggests that grant funding for our purpose at the moment, may be very limited owing to the nature of our plans, and due to the competition for funds. Therefore, we will need to raise the bulk of the capital through private donations, traditional 'tin-rattle' fundraising and contributions from smaller grant-giving trusts.

Fixed running costs

The table below estimates the basic running costs of keeping the building wind and watertight, assuming no or minimal usage.

SOURCE	COST	NOTES
Business Rates	£0.00	80% relief should be available as SCIO. Further 20% from council hopefully, meaning 100% relief.
Electricity	£2,050	This is based on Church usage 2023/24 and therefore assumed the minimum/fixed.
Insurance	£2,400	Based on current usage. Could significantly change based on usage change.
Cleaning	£600	Assuming 3 hrs per month
WiFi	£200	Arrange wireless link to Hall to share cost?
Routine Maintenance	£2,000	Small annual routine maintenance tasks, organ, electric
TOTAL	£7,250	

NB These figures do not include major maintenance / repair / development costs. Fundraising for capital investments for this would be required.

Potential revenue streams

The table below show (probably best case) opportunities for revenue

SOURCE	POTENTIAL REVENUE	NOTES
Wedding hire	<p>Around £500 per wedding, noting the flexible option for different types of weddings and possible higher charge than a church. Discount for "Friends"?</p> <p>The hall for comparison rents out at £255 (for a full day+evening) so could complement the church.</p>	<p>The going rate for a church wedding hire ranges from £250-£600 plus expenses (church officer, organist, celebrant etc).</p> <p>Assumes 4 p/a minimum</p>

	The venue could be offered in conjunction with the village hall or marquee space in discussion with the landowner/tenant. ANNUAL: £2,500	
Funeral hire	£200 per event ANNUAL: £400	Comparable with other CoS rates. Assumes 2 p/a
'Friends' membership income.	£50 annual donation average ANNUAL: £5,000	Assumes 100 'Friends' p/a
Ticketed Concerts	£20/ticket. 50 pax per (£750) ANNUAL: £2,250	Assumes 3 events p/a
Village Fete	Revenue shared with Hall? ANNUAL: £1,500	To be agreed
Private hire (church)	£60 per hour (min. 3.5 hours)? ANNUAL: £5,040	Assumes 1 full day per month average.
Private hire (Young Room Vestry)	£15 per hour ANNUAL £450	Overspill if the hall is booked. Priority given to Hall.
Service collections / donations	ANNUAL: £900	Assumes 30 people each giving £5. 6 events p/a
Visitor collection box and other donations.	ANNUAL: £2000	If open to visitors daily or during holiday season.
TOTAL (Per Annum)	ANNUAL: £19,040	

POTENTIAL FIVE YEAR PROJECTIONS (LOW)

REVENUE SOURCE	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Year 3 (£)	Year 4 (£)	Year 5 (£)
Wedding hire	1000	1500	2000	2250	2500

Funeral hire	200	250	300	350	400
"Friends" membership income	1,000	2,500	3,500	4,000	5,000
Ticketed Concerts	750	1,000	1500	2,000	2,250
Village Fete	1,500	1,500	1500	1,550	1,500
Private hire (church)	1,000	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,040
Private hire (Young Room Vestry)	100	200	300	400	450
Service collections / donations	300	500	700	800	900
Visitor collection box and other donations	500	1000	1500	1750	2,000
TOTAL	6,350	10,450	14,300	17,050	20,040

EXIT STRATEGY

While the Trust is confident that this business is achievable, it is also sensible to have a plan if the project cannot be sustained for financial or other reasons. It is also important not to burden future generations with assets that cannot be maintained sustainably. CVT would continue to review the viability of the church ownership in collaboration with other assets and their owners (e.g. the Cleish Village Hall Association) and decide if there was a need for a fundamental change in direction, such as the rationalisation or repurposing of assets.