



## Executive Summary

This report represents the findings of an Options Appraisal managed by Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust (SBPT) working with the Kilmory Home Farm Community Project, Argyll & Bute Council and a team of consultants comprising:

John Gilbert Architects,  
Elliot and Co Structural Engineers,  
Gordon McLeod Quantity Surveyor,  
Michael Davis Architectural Historian,  
The District Valuer's Office, Glasgow

The appraisal has been funded jointly by the Architectural Heritage Fund and Argyll & Bute Council and was undertaken between January and July 2008. Business advice to the Kilmory Home Farm Community Project was provided by Slainte Ltd Business Advisors and was funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Kilmory Home Farm is a B listed classic courtyard steading of around 1830. The site includes a range of subsidiary structures from a derelict piggery to an unusual horse training ring and is located adjacent to the Argyll & Bute Council headquarters, Kilmory Castle just outside Lochgilphead in Mid Argyll. A group including the Castle, the Home Farm and a walled garden are contained in a romantic landscaped garden believed to have been designed by William Hooker.

The Home Farm served the Kilmory Estate and while the Castle changed use from country house, to hostel, hotel and finally from 1974 Council offices, the farm remained in agricultural use until the mid 1990's when the final tenant died. The farm buildings had already fallen into some disrepair and since being vacated, the rate of decay has accelerated.

In 1948 the Forestry Commission Scotland purchased much of the less productive land around the farm and have managed this since as a woodland park. In recent times they have been working to improve public access to the woodland park and the forested areas beyond and are currently in negotiations with the Council to extend this role.

Once the Home Farm became empty, the Council developed a scheme to convert it to offices but the high cost of the scheme led to it being shelved, since when a number of community groups have come forward with ideas for the Home Farm site but none has been developed. In 2007, the Council began positive action to try and find a solution for the future of the site. A feasibility study was commissioned which determined that a community use would be ideal for the site. The Kilmory Home Farm Community Project was emerging as a group interested in taking on the Home Farm buildings at this time, but their ideas were at too early a stage for them to be seen as a realistic option.

The Kilmory Home Farm Community Project is an initiative to restore Kilmory Home Farm and regenerate the Kilmory Estate to create a Community Activity Venue and Centre for Sustainable Living. The Home Farm will be the hub of a wider project which the group hope will include setting up a community farm and making allotments available to local people. During the course of the Options Appraisal process, the group have become legally constituted and are developing their ideas further to include a mix of commercial and community uses and lettable space. The Project has wide support from local people and several commercial enterprises.

This appraisal has studied the history of the Home Farm and begun the process of putting it into its wider context. The team has considered the significance of the site as a heritage asset and its importance to local people. A preliminary assessment of the condition of the building has been undertaken and has shown it to be in an advanced state of dereliction but with repair and re-use still a practical option. Consideration has been given to planning constraints on the site and a public

consultation has been undertaken to gauge local views. An appraisal of the local area has determined the provision of services and facilities and has identified where opportunities might arise. Consultations with potential collaborators in a repair and re-use project have been undertaken and possible funding sources have been investigated.

The project will require a cocktail of funding from both large and small funders and both groups have been approached to give a preliminary view of the fit of the project to their aims. Funders who have given a positive response to this approach include:

- Historic Scotland
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Big Lottery
- LEADER
- Rural Priorities
- Highlands and Islands Community Energy Company
- Entrust

It should be noted that the Big Lottery are about to enter a review period and therefore it could only be assumed that while their specific programmes might change, their basic aims and aspirations would remain as they are today. Other funders whose aims appeared to match the project were approached but were unable to give a view without a formal application being submitted.

The appraisal considered 4 options including the Community Project in more detail:

1. demolition and site clearance
2. minimal repair and moth balling
3. residential conversion
4. use by the Kilmory Home Farm Community Project

At this time it seems safe to reject the option to demolish the buildings as there is a sufficiently positive outlook for options 2 and 4.

The residential option appears impractical because the capital receipts from the units produced could not match the cost of repair and there is little chance of obtaining funding to meet this conservation deficit.

The Community Project has produced a preliminary assessment of viability which indicates that their proposals will provide a small surplus. Alongside this, a positive funding model has been produced for this option as part of the appraisal process.

On the basis of this, the conclusions of the appraisal can be summarised as follows.

- Kilmory Home Farm is a site of sufficient heritage and social value to merit conservation.
- The Kilmory Home Farm Community Project has a realistic chance of delivering a secure, long term future for the site.
- The Project has potential to be a viable ongoing business which could also stimulate sufficient capital funding to undertake the repair and development work needed to bring the site back into use.

This use would represent good conservation of the site as it would require little alteration of the original configuration of the buildings and would preserve the maximum amount of historic fabric. The Project would provide wide public access to the site and facilities of value to the local community and visitors to the area.

While the Kilmory Home Farm Community Project offers a potentially viable and fundable solution to the problems of the Home Farm, it is recognised that there is still a lot of developmental work to be done. The Options Appraisal therefore makes the following recommendations:

- i. That the Council undertakes preliminary works to secure the building.
- ii. That the Council agrees to support a development phase for the project.
- iii. That SBPT, KHFCP and Argyll & Bute Council produce a programme for this phase including actions and milestones to extend to not more than 1 year from the date of adoption of the programme.
- iv. That the development phase has agreed outcomes which will take the project to the stage where funding and statutory approval applications can be lodged.
- v. That SBPT in particular seeks funding for the provision of a project officer to co-ordinate the development phase and the working of the various collaborating bodies.
- vi. That SBPT & KHFCP seek funding for this phase of work to ensure that the costs of the Building Preservation Trust are covered and that professional advice can be procured to assist the process.
- vii. That at the end of the development phase, a further report is put to the various collaborating bodies recommending their continued involvement in the project or abandonment of it.