



*The Old Courthouse*  
**5 Bolgam Street Campbeltown**  
**Options Appraisal**  
**Final Report**  
**March 2010**



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## Executive Summary

This report represents the findings of an Options Appraisal undertaken by Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust working with a team of consultants comprising:

Gray Marshall Associates	Architects
Gordon McLeod	Quantity Surveyor
AOC Archaeology Ltd	Level 1 survey
Slainté Ltd	Business Advice, Planning & Strategy
The District Valuer's Office Glasgow	Valuations advice

This Options Appraisal was undertaken between October 2009 and March 2010 with the aim of exploring potential options for the repair and re-use of the Old Courthouse, Bolgam Street, Campbeltown which is a category B listed complex of buildings. Funding support was provided for this appraisal by the Campbeltown Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and the Architectural Heritage Fund with the remainder of the cost being met by Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust.

The Old Courthouse is a complex of buildings dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and converted in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century for a brief period of use by the Burgh as the Courthouse and Police Offices, hence its common name. But the building is also known to some as the Civil Defence Hall and to others as the Miners' Welfare Institute. Such is the long association between this building and the community in Campbeltown, that it is to a great extent taken for granted. The building was sold by the Campbeltown Common Good Fund in 1992 into two separate ownerships. A small part was linked with a café at 10 Longrow South and is still in that use while the bulk of the building has lain empty and increasingly derelict since that time. Today, the complex is in a parlous condition and this may be the last practical opportunity to save it.

Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust first became involved in the Old Courthouse at 5 Bolgam Street in 2006 when invited to inspect the building by the then Argyll & Bute Council Conservation Officer. Since then the Trust has worked with Argyll & Bute Council to produce a number of reports on the condition and likely development of this complex of buildings in the centre of Campbeltown and on an initial appraisal of likely repair and re-use options.

This appraisal has followed the pattern established by the Architectural Heritage Fund but has also provided a platform to undertake a detailed study of the history and development of the Old Courthouse and a Level 1 survey has been carried out by AOC Archaeology. Their subsequent report and a copy of the historical research contained in this report will be lodged with the NMRS. The appraisal has considered the conservation needs of this complex of buildings and has assessed the condition of the building and the cost of repairing it and returning it to a usable condition. Consideration was also to be given to the importance both in practical and economic terms of reuniting the two parts of the complex into one ownership.

The team has considered a wide range of potential uses for the building and through a process of focussed consultation these were narrowed down to a short list of four options which were considered in more detail. These were:

1. use as a third sector hub
2. use as a creative centre for visual and performing arts
3. use by a single third sector organisation
4. use by a single commercial organisation

Beyond this simple list, a range of options for inclusion or otherwise of linked properties in Longrow South were considered and detailed consideration was given to delivery mechanisms.

The appraisal has illustrated that this will be a costly project to deliver and that finding a full funding package for the capital works is by no means certain.

Each of the four options considered in detail in this appraisal has merit but questions about the viability of the third sector hub and the risks associated with the management of the creative hub may preclude them from further study. Both the single user options however, could provide the building with a sustainable future. Of these, the lower risk option for SBPT (and probably for the building) is the single commercial user but securing the capital funding required for this option may prove extremely difficult. The single third sector use meanwhile, has the potential to bring together a number of organisations providing support services for vulnerable young people to provide a one stop shop for those services and create jobs and training opportunities in a youth café.

Throughout the Options Appraisal the issues of ownership of the Old Courthouse and funding for the capital works have been major concerns. The current ownership of the main part of the complex is uncertain and it is clear that without resolution of this issue, any project to repair and re-use the complex is stalled. The Old Courthouse was part of a recently successful Community Planning Partnership that has secured funding for three projects in Campbeltown. This means that £230,000 of European Regional Development Fund grant is ring fenced for this project should it comply with the requirements of that scheme. But, although the Old Courthouse is prioritised by two area grant schemes running in tandem in Campbeltown at present under the Campbeltown Town Centre Regeneration Project, the building has been placed on a reserve list and as such is not eligible for major funding under the Town Centre Regeneration Project schemes. Discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland, the major partners with Argyll & Bute Council in the Town Centre Regeneration Project, suggest that they would accept free standing grant applications for the Old Courthouse. But it is considered that the project is less likely to secure funding in this way compared with a direct application to the area scheme. The need to make freestanding applications will certainly increase the time scale of the project and make funding the development period extremely difficult. Campbeltown is an expensive place for SBPT to work and experience shows that projects like this can take a considerable amount of time to work up sufficiently to support a Heritage Grant Stage 1 application.

Overall, this Options Appraisal has produced some success but has not produced certainty that a project could be developed to save this important building. It has highlighted the potential for an exciting project that would see the building repaired and put into a multi-purpose use by a commercial organisation, a use that could have significant benefits in regenerating this part of Campbeltown town centre, unfortunately the funding and ownership issues threaten to derail this project

The recommendations of the report are not dissimilar in many ways to those made in the initial appraisal produced by SBPT and funded by Argyll & Bute Council in December 2008. Revisiting the report produced then shows that much has been achieved in confirming the significance of 5 Bolgam Street, in exploring potential uses and identifying potential users and in illustrating the linkages and contribution that this project could make to other initiatives in action in Campbeltown and more widely across Argyll & Bute.

Of critical importance now is that Argyll & Bute Council takes a positive stance on this building either to say that they will take all necessary action to support its repair and re-use or that they do not intend to take that action. In the latter case, they will need to adopt a strategy to deal with the rapid deterioration of much of the complex. Meanwhile, SBPT will continue at least in the short term to lobby the Council to take positive action and to work with them and other potential end users to see whether there is a way to move the project forward.