



Lochaber Sports Association proposed new indoor training facility

Back in May, KCC received a request from Lochaber Sports Association (LSA) asking us if we could submit the planning application on LSA's behalf for the proposed indoor training facility at Camaghael. (Local Authorities waive 50% of the planning fee for applications submitted by community councils, and in this instance the Planning Department had themselves suggested to LSA that they ask the community council to submit the application).

KCC held a special meeting on 23rd July to review LSA's proposals, and subsequently agreed by majority vote to the request. LSA will thus save about £9,000 at no cost to KCC.

In order to ensure that as many people as possible were aware of these proposals and had the chance to make comments, we decided to inform the community about LSA's proposals via this supplement, rather than leave it to the very limited neighbour notification procedure that forms part of the planning process.

We will be asking LSA to consider all comments that KCC receives.

KCC are not involved in any way whatsoever in the design, funding, delivery or management of the project, and take no responsibility for the same.



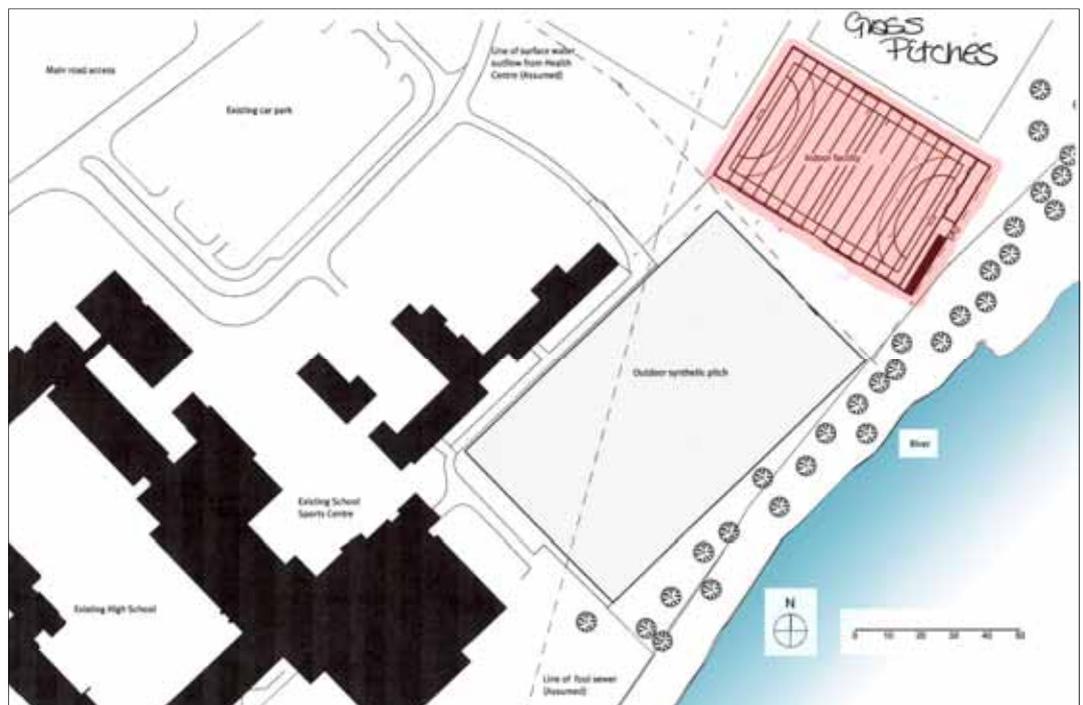
Various other potential sites had been considered for the facility (An Aird, Black Parks, Canal Parks, Claggan Park, and the Blar Mor) but it was the Lochaber High School site that emerged as the most suitable in a feasibility study two years ago.

To give an idea of the proposal in context, in the above illustration, based on a Google Earth view taken before the Health Centre was built, KCC have superimposed an approximation of the scale and position of:

- the plan of LSA's proposed structure (in white)
- and the plan of the Health Centre and its car park (in grey).

The Site Plan below was provided by LSA. For increased clarity, KCC have coloured in the river and the proposed building.

If you have any questions or comments on LSA's proposal, please let KCC know via email or via our suggestion boxes, (please include your name and address) before the end of September and we will raise them with LSA.



The following information has been provided by LSA for the newsletter. You can see more information on KCC's website www.kilmallie.org.uk

(follow the links on the right hand side of our home page) and also on LSA's own website www.lochabersportsassociation.org

We have asked LSA for additional info on landscaping and disabled access, how the building will look in context alongside the High School, its height in relation to ground level and the cladding colour. We hope to post this info on KCC's website.

Lochaber Sports Association is nearing the final stages of a marathon journey leading to the delivery of their long-held dream – a multi-sport indoor training facility.

LSA was launched in 2009 as Sportlochaber, linking the following year with the existing Lochaber Sports Council to become Lochaber Sports Association, representing over 30 sports clubs and with about 3000 affiliated members. The sole aim of the organisation is to promote sport and healthy activity throughout Lochaber, which is not only beneficial to the individual, but to the wider social and business community – a healthy body contributes to better mental health, greater self confidence and higher productivity.

Five years ago, in 2009, we put out a questionnaire to our affiliated clubs in order to find out what issues they might have with their existing facilities. With a 100% return, 100% of clubs considered Lochaber would benefit from a Multi-Sports Indoor Facility. This was the shot from the starting pistol, which was swiftly followed by an extensive clubs survey, collated and summarised by **sportscotland**. To the question: What is the main barrier to sports participation in Lochaber, over 50% responded that it was the weather and/or poor facilities.

Lochaber suffers from an average of 75 inches rain p.a., compared with Inverness that gets 29 – this takes a terrible toll on our grass pitches, which cannot sustain both training and matches, so that they are often postponed or cancelled. The high level of maintenance required under these challenging weather conditions is totally outwith the available council budget, so every few years hundreds of thousands of pounds are having to be spent on remedial works, and while these are going on the pitches are completely out of play. In addition, our winter nights are invariably long, cold and wet so that there is very little incentive to train for several months of the year. The solution seemed obvious- a multi-sport indoor training facility in “club-neutral” territory, where sport and healthy activity could take place all year round, whatever the weather conditions. (Page 9 of the PPP)

After a great deal of research, visiting other facilities around the country, we came across Hamilton Palace, a 60m. x 40m. indoor 3rd artificial turf pitch, covered with a translucent canvas roof stretched over a steel rib structure. This seemed to tick all the boxes, but we had to find out exactly what the community wanted, and where and how they would use it; so in 2012 we commissioned an independent Feasibility Study funded by LEADER, the Highland Council and the community. This involved questionnaires to the clubs, research with schools and community groups, consultation with governing bodies, Highland Council and our councillors

and a public consultation day. The conclusion was that we should aim for a multi-sport indoor training facility, with a surface suitable for rugby, shinty and football, to be sited on the old tennis courts adjacent to Lochaber High School. This would allow the school to use it during the school day and the clubs and community in the evenings, at weekends and during the holidays.

The next stage, in 2013, was to commission a Business Plan to ensure the project would be sustainable; this was funded by the Wards Discretionary Fund, Foundation Scotland and the Community. The Final Report was presented to Highland Council last autumn, and they agreed “in principle” to managing the facility on a daily basis and to a capital contribution of £600k – in return for the school’s and Active Schools Co-ordinators’ free use during the school term daytime.

In March this year, we put in our Stage One Application to sportscotland, who have also agreed “in principle” to their maximum capital contribution of £500k. The total cost of the project is currently estimated at £1.23m. plus VAT, against which we have now raised £1.11m. (inc. £10k from Score Environment). After months of gruelling correspondence with HMRC, we had to accept that they would not allow the project to be exempt of VAT, however we are not giving up on this, and are currently in negotiation with both High Life Highland and Highland Council to develop a business model that will reduce the burden. So, we are now at the stage of submitting our detailed planning permission, following a favourable pre-app response. Due to the size of the building’s footprint, the planning fees are almost £18,000, so we are extremely grateful to Kilmallie Community Council, who have agreed to submit the application on our behalf, thereby reducing the fees by 50%. Although KCC will be the applicant, LSA will be totally liable for the project and ensuring its success, and will be dealing with all matters relating to the application. We have now raised the necessary funds through an appeal to the clubs, community and local businesses, who all responded with great generosity (a full list of sponsors is available to view on our website) and so we hope the application will be submitted in September.

If all goes well with the planning process, during which we will be getting firm quotes for the building work, all we have to do is find the last bit of funding, then at last we will be able to deliver this exciting project, for the health and well-being of Lochaber!

If anyone has any comments or queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Jane Blanchard, Lochaber Sports Association
jane@lochabersportsassociation.org



Explanatory note from KCC: From the designer’s drawing on the right, provided by LSA, the external dimensions of the building appear to be:

- 66.35 metres long
- 50.4 metres wide
- approx 5.5 metres high at eaves (approx the same eaves height as a typical 2 storey house)
- approx 14 metres high at ridge

LSA have told us they propose:

- a white roof membrane
- profiled steel sheet for the external walls, colour not yet decided.

LSA's indicative view of the proposed interior



Photos provided by LSA of similar facilities at (above) Hamilton and (below) at Back on the Isle of Lewis. And below that, a further Site Plan that LSA have provided.



LSA have told us that following consultation with the clubs, in which they outlined the pricing structure which will be set by High Life Highland, the feedback has been very positive. They say the indoor training facility will be hired out at the same cost as the outdoor facility, i.e. 2 hours with changing - £65.90, and 2 hours without changing – £52.70 with a 50% reduction if all are under 18, over 60 or full-time student. If only half of the pitch is used (eg for cricket nets practice), the charge will be halved. The school and Active Schools Co-ordinators will get free use of the facility during school term hours.

Message from Dave Thompson MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch

“The ambitious multi-sport indoor training centre project being pursued by Lochaber Sports Association, of which I am a patron, is truly inspirational and I take my hat off to all involved who have put in a power of work on the project. I have been working away too and met at the end of June with the Cabinet Secretary for Sport to press the case for funding. The bulk of the funding is now in place and it is great that Kilmallie Community Council has agreed to put in the planning application which will save a bit of money. Over £1,100,000 is committed in principle by the Scottish Government - through SportScotland - and Highland Council but the main stumbling block is still the last £250,000 or so which the London VAT man claims as his own. We are all reluctant to raise another £250,000 just to give it to the VAT man so great efforts are being made to avoid this. The best option would be for the Highland Council to procure the project and they are currently giving this further consideration. Let’s hope they can come up with a way of doing it so that the project can, at last, go ahead. I will certainly keep on doing all I can to help and look forward to the official opening one day soon!”

Best wishes.
Dave

