

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 19 SEPTEMBER 2001**

#### **BURNS HOUSE MUSEUM**

##### **Report by the Director of Community Services**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the current position relating to the management of the Burns House Museum, and to examine proposals for the future of the visitor attraction.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Burns House Museum is made up of three properties in Castle Street Mauchline which all have close connections to Robert Burns. In 1995/96 over £420,000 of public money was spent conserving the buildings and renovating the interiors. Early in 2001 it became clear that the Trust which owns the buildings were in debt and it was unlikely the museum would open for the season in April.
- 2.2 On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2001 the Emergency Powers Committee approved the implementation of temporary management arrangements at the Museum. On 21 May 2001 East Ayrshire Council took up a lease for the Burns House Museum, initially until 6<sup>th</sup> October 2001. The Council took over responsibility for all utilities, for security, insurance and operation of the visitor attraction. The building opened to the public on 2 June 2001.
- 2.3 Visitor figures for the museum continue to increase, with 103 visits in June, 176 in July and 240 in August. This is a positive indication of visitor interest considering no advance publicity was prepared and promotions have been limited.
- 2.4 The temporary management arrangements are due to terminate on 6<sup>th</sup> October, and an extension of this arrangement is required if the future of the Museum is to be secured.

### **3. BURNS HOUSE MUSEUM**

- 3.1 On 22 August Allan Wilson M.S.P. Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and the Arts, and Cathy Jamieson M.S.P. met with Councillor Jackson and Officials from the Council and Scottish Executive at the museum to discuss future plans for the attraction.

- 3.2 This meeting was very favourable and the minister expressed support for the museum, recognising the importance of the buildings to Scotland's cultural heritage and tourism potential. An indication was given that the Scottish Executive's Museums Strategic Change Fund may well be a route for three year revenue funding for the visitor attraction.
- 3.3 Discussions have now begun with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to examine whether they would be willing to provide funding for the purchase of the museum.
- 3.4 The Museum will close to the public at the end of September, however security, utilities and collection care will be required throughout the Winter, Council staff are able to provide this service and this continued involvement will give positive support to any grant applications submitted in the coming months.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 An amount of £10,000 has been identified from existing Community Services Budgets to fund the museum until 31 March 2002. Any further financial implications will be included in budget submissions for future years.

#### **5. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Not applicable

#### **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Not applicable

#### **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 This museum would provide East Ayrshire Council with a national link to the Scottish Executive's heritage and tourism priorities. It would also provide display space for the Council's extensive Burns Collections.

#### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to approve:-
- (i) Support in principle for proposals to purchase the Burns House Museum and operate it from within the local authority;
  - (ii) Officers involvement in submitting grant applications and exploring partnership options to support the future operation of the museum; and

- (iii) Extension of the Council's temporary responsibilities for the Museum until March 2002; and
- (iv) Otherwise note the contents of this report.

William Stafford  
Director of Community Services

WS/DC/JY  
28 August 2001

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**NIL**

Implementation Officer- [john.griffiths@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:john.griffiths@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

**AGENDA**