



11th December 2014

Dear Councillor,

Dumfries and Galloway Archives Centre

We are writing today to ask that you should support the provision of a new Archives Centre for Dumfries and Galloway when it comes before Full Council on 18th December 2014. This has been a long awaited initiative and it is vital that this opportunity is grasped to bring the Archives service into an up-to-date and usable state. This can be achieved only by giving it a new facility which is fully fit for purpose and one of which Dumfries and Galloway can be proud.

You may ask why a Centre is needed in this time of budget constraints, what is it for and who needs and uses it? If you judge solely by the evidence of use in the last few years you might well be justified in thinking that Archives should remain a low priority for the Council. Low numbers used the previous Archives Centre because it was not fit for purpose and neither is the current temporary home in the Ewart Library. A new fit-for-purpose Centre would attract new users and new uses because they would become possible. Remember how we didn't know what we would do with our computers and mobile phones before we had them, and how we wondered if we really needed them.

We at the AHSS know the vital importance of these archives and also of being able to access them easily and in a pleasant and workmanlike environment. We consider that the principal values of a local archives service are the same as those expressed on the National Archives Service website.

'The NAS plays an important role in Scotland's economic and cultural life. The property market in Scotland is dependent on the services provided by the NAS to legal searchers, while its historical records are much used in lifelong learning and are a major attraction for genealogists, which helps promote tourism. In addition to advising Scottish Ministers on records and information policy, the NAS advises Scottish public authorities about the creation and management of their records, it advises public and private owners about their historical records and it provides a reference service to the public on all aspects of the national archives.'



This view is endorsed by the Scottish Government who put it in local terms.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY:

Guidance for scottish local authorities march 2003

6.3.24 Local records constitute one of the most valuable cultural resources of a local authority. They promote local and community identity, have an important role in education, and assist social inclusion. They also help develop tourism - particularly in the growing niche market of genealogy - and they provide a unique source of local information and knowledge.

From the point of view of the AHSS, of course, it is the architectural records which are of special interest, as well as the local history and genealogy. It is this background information which enables us, as well as your own Planning Department, to understand how to maintain, and to create, the 'sense of place' which is considered so vital in keeping our towns and villages alive as places where people wish to continue to live and work; and to maintain them as places that others wish to visit and spend time and money in. The importance of 'sense of place' is recognised by the Council in the recently approved Local Development Plan, and by the Dumfries Conservation Area Character Appraisal. It is considered to be a very relevant factor in the construction of community well-being with all the benefits that that can bring.

The D & G Archives have a particularly rich collection of architectural records and we are anxious that these should become more easily available than they are today. They are currently kept in extremely poor conditions with no proper facilities to visit, use, copy, scan, conserve, repair, or even to unfold them properly. The Council are currently not fulfilling their obligations to look after these irreplaceable documents.

A new Archives Centre will be of great benefit to all users and will tap a huge potential for increased use; as well as encouraging gifts and loans of further archives to make the collection yet richer. The AHSS would welcome this, because it would make our current planning work easier; and would open up great research possibilities for our country-wide membership. It does, however, remain important to respect the integrity and significance of existing archives collections in other publicly owned facilities such as museums. The new Archives Centre would provide a proper home for all important archives without a current publicly available one.

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As well as this though you can expect a benefit to all areas of education, and especially those subjects studied at the Colleges and the Dumfries Universities. There will be a huge benefit for all students of local and family history and genealogy, both from home and abroad; and this is a rapidly expanding interest and market. And finally Dumfries and Galloway Council will benefit from knowing that they have fulfilled their statutory obligation to preserve and make available the archives in their care in a manner to be proud of.

Thank you for reading this and we ask that you vote in favour of the new Archives Centre for Dumfries and Galloway at Full Council on the 18th.

Yours sincerely,

Andy McNab; Chair Dumfries and Galloway Group

Emma Griffiths; National Chair

President: Simon Green MA FSA FSA Scot

Chairman: Emma Griffiths BA MsC PGCE (Primary)
Honorary Treasurer: James F.H. Macbeth MRIC

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