



**Response to representations received regarding RH Youth Organisation's CAT application for land behind Lockerbie Ice Rink**

Please find below responses to the representations made in respect of the RH Youth Organisation's application for the lease of land situated behind Lockerbie Ice Rink. The responses have been considered by members of the RH Youth Organisation's board and represent the members of the organisation as a whole.

The RH Youth Organisation is made up of a board and volunteers who all give up their time to work with and support the Organisation on a completely voluntary basis. Volunteers plan and run sessions for the local community's young people and also provide activity for the wider community. We have a strong Youth Committee who influence the direction of the RH Youth Organisation, ensuring the views and opinions of the children and young people are heard and valued.

Volunteers strive to implement and demonstrate the following aims during all their work with children, families and the wider community.

- To promote qualities such as fairness, respect, honesty, pride and hard work in Children and Young People through outdoor adventure and expressive arts (Theatre and Outdoor and Adventure Groups)
- To allow Children and Young People to learn skills to equip them for the world of work and to be independent learners and able to use their initiative.
- To allow Children and Young People to feel a sense of pride and achievement in all they do and to be an essential part of our local community by participating in local events and taking opportunities to help out.

Our overarching ethos is that everyone is welcomed and accepted, reflecting our organisations value of the importance of inclusivity and equality.

We have considered the representations in depth and have the following comments to make:

## **Representation 1**

The wording of this representation leads us to surmise that this is a personal rather than objective view and statement. The representation feels like a personal and acrimonious condemnation towards the RH Youth Organisation and its leaders rather than opposing the work and development that the organisation currently do and plan to do in the future.

We would like to counter the personal comments with factual evidence of how 'active' we are, not only in the community of Lockerbie but the wider community of Lochmaben and beyond. The work accomplished can be viewed on our Facebook presence from 2020 – current (RH Youth Organisation).

The organisation host a full calendar of events throughout the year for the local community; they are also involved in supporting other community groups either sitting on their committees or assisting with events such as first aid duties and helping with the local gala parade or supporting with the local Christmas tractor run and much more.

The RH Youth Organisation is made up of a board, volunteers, youth volunteers as well as the young people and children it serves - it is not run or led by any single individual. The RH Youth organisation provides opportunities for a wide number of adults and children and is an organisation which is built on the skills and diversification of all.

We would like to counter the comment about the benefit to other organisations - we have worked hard to ensure that our events have been inclusive to all within the town of Lockerbie and beyond. We ensure we use the local community to share learning, experiences, history and local awareness with our members and regularly participate in activity within the town. At all our larger community events, local groups are invited and have accepted our offer to share their own expertise, information and knowledge with our attendees.

Any community group can use the land and the organisation is proactive in inviting other groups to be involved in events organised. The organisation is also looking at increasing the community use on the land with the introduction of the food bank, breakfast club, accessible and inclusive playpark, nature walk and dog paddock.

With reference to the 'film crew', there were no vehicles parked on our leased areas, therefore this comment is hearsay and has no evidence base.

We counter the last statement as being a personal viewpoint and one which is unfounded by factual evidence.

## **Representation 2**

We would like to counter this statement as being circumstantial with no definitive evidence to support these claims.

We will however describe our conversations with local dog walkers as being of a positive nature and which offer support and interest in the work we are doing. Locals observe the activities being provided for the children and young people and comment on the excellent behaviour and courtesy given to the general public as they continue to use the land for recreational purposes.

After an internal investigation by the RH Youth Organisation's board, the findings are that the volunteers that are on the land either maintaining the area or working with the young people are all animal friendly and have never approached any dog walker asking them to leave the area, nor have any car drivers been approached.

It is understood by all members of the RH Youth Organisation that the Common Good land belongs to the Council.

## **Representation 3 and 4**

The RH Youth Organisation will address both of these representations together as the same wording and content has been made throughout both - the only difference being the order of paragraphs.

Outwith school hours and when the school is closed, the school car park is closed. We would not consider this a valid concern as if there is no-one at the school, additional parking would not be required.

All our weekly sessions are run outwith school hours, therefore overspill car parking would not be affected, if required. Our activity days are held at weekends, again not affecting school events. When the RH Youth Organisation have events, they always make sure that parking arrangements are published in advance so there is no obstruction to the street, the fire station, Jodie's or the Vets and access is always open.

We have been unaware of any events being hosted by either the squash club (who own land adjacent to their building) or the ice rink, therefore this is not a viable issue. We have extremely good links and connections with both the above clubs and communication enables us to work alongside both organisations positively.

The flexibility of accommodation of events would remain – we would welcome activity which benefits the community.

The activity alluded to in the representation (fair and traveller community) have to our knowledge always required and used the hard standing areas of the ice rink property to

continue their business activity. Due to the nature of the activity, the land behind the ice rink would not be suitable for HG Vehicles as they would potentially damage the area.

We are unaware of any plans to provide further 'entertainment' for the town so find this comment difficult to respond to as there is no detail of plans, groups providing these opportunities or business interest.

Our charitable business plan reflects a community spirited long-term plan which aims to serve 'more than one section of the community'. We have created a vision which provides opportunities for inclusive and generational participation by the people of Lockerbie and the surrounding areas. Please see our business plan for further detail and information.

We consider the comments about hostility and challenge towards dog walkers, people in cars and out exercising to be hearsay, with no substantiated comment or evidence to back this up.

There has been a notice displayed within the window of the RH Youth Organisation portacabin detailing the risk factors and dangers of dog fouling and contamination of such to young children and this has been followed up with the children creating dog bag stations to support the health and hygiene of the whole area.

The RH Youth Organisation takes into consideration the current usage of the land by members of public using the land for recreational purposes and that will not be removed should the RH Youth Organisation be successful in their application.

The RH Youth Organisation use the area outwith the leased boundary as any other member of the public is allowed to as part of accessing common good land - as community members.

The RH Youth Organisation have applied for and been granted permission for the erection of a portacabin to be used as an activity centre and shipping container – to be used as storage. Requests for any additional items are discussed with the landlord eg the erection of a portable toilet for members use.

Access to the Common Good land is not restricted or 'shut off' to the public by the RH Youth Organisation.

We are unaware of any other group using the 'land nearby', therefore dispute this comment.

The 'CCTV' was a simulated decoy and used as a deterrent only – we do not have utilities within the portacabin and therefore do not have the ability to power CCTV.

The RH Youth Organisation have recently experienced an attempted break in - a police report was logged and police advised the organisation to further investigate the use of CCTV to protect their property and that we are permitted to do so.

Over the last 5 years, the RH Youth Organisation has been well supported by funders. 'structures', as mentioned in the representation have already been funded on a temporary lease basis and funders have also pledged future support as detailed in the RH Youth Organisation business plan.

Over the last 5 years of operation, the RH Youth organisation has held annual AGM meetings whereby the election of office bearers (chairperson and secretary) have rotated twice. We consider the use of the words 'bad practice and habits can be better weeded out' as being unprofessional and tenuous.

All our volunteers receive regular training and have PVG certification.

Comments regarding the accuracy of the names of funders or the content of the application is not in question and is felt to be an irrelevant representation (please refer to the correct name of the RH Youth organisation as detailed in the title of this document)

We would like to counter the comment about the consultation with the public – we have had numerous events, advertised on our Facebook page inviting members of the public to hear our plans, to view illustrations, listen to power point presentations and to give feedback. Consultation has also been held via survey monkey, questionnaires, event feedback, gathering opinion and views from other organisations and members of the public and can all be viewed in the engagement report within our business plan.

We dispute the final comment within this representation as our work is built upon all the areas highlighted; wide reaching, inclusive, open, neighbourly, legitimate and community minded and there is a wealth of physical evidence to support this. Please see Facebook posts, comments, website, business plan, newspapers, other Facebook community user groups and pages.

This concludes our comments in relation to the representations put forward.

Yours sincerely,

RH YOUTH ORGANISATION