

## Feasibility Study Executive Summary



### Introduction

Stranraer and Loch Ryan not only have a long history of marine commerce but they also provide a stunning and safe location for watersports. It is surprising therefore that there are relatively few active watersports clubs on the Loch.

Recognising the potential for marine activity on the Loch; in 2016 a group of like-minded individuals set up Stranraer Water Sports Association to promote water sports within the Loch Ryan area and create a central point of contact for all water sport enthusiasts within the area. Things have never looked back and in 2018 the Stranraer Coastal Rowing Club was formed and Loch Ryan Sailing Club moved its centre of operations into Stranraer. In 2019 Stranraer was host to Skiffie Worlds attracting **over 2,700 participants** and supporters, in the region of **30,000 visitors** and a royal visit. The MKA economics report suggests the economic impact of participant, supporters and visitor spend as a result of Skiffie Worlds 2019 was in the region of **£4.0m** Such was the success of the event that SWSA have been able to increase their ambitions with support from Dumfries and Galloway Council, RYA Scotland, **sportscotland** and the community

The market for watersports is changing (as noted in the British Marine and RYA “Futures” national study) leading national and regional bodies to re-think how to meet new demand, tackle the ageing demographic, understand changing appetites for training & participation and how to bring watersports into the heart of for communities for improved health, well-being, education and training. Key to bringing in more users is reducing barriers to entry, lowering the cost to participation and making watersports as much about fun as competition. New approaches to “getting wet” are drawing in grass roots learners along with experienced watersports enthusiasts. Sport activity hubs such as Pinkston Watersports and The Spartans Community Football Academy have highlighted the potential for not just getting more youths and adults playing sport but also the huge community benefits that stem from making sport easy and appealing.

SWSA have recognised that a Watersports Hub in Stranraer could be a game-changer for the area. In early 2020 SWSA appointed the team of John Renshaw Architects and Blue Sea Consulting to produce a feasibility study for a Watersports Hub at Stranraer (essentially a Training, Education, Activity & Regatta Events Centre)

## Stranraer Water Sports Association

Since its inception SWSA has created a focus for all water sport enthusiasts within the area. This has led to the creation of working partnerships with a number of other organisations and they have all benefited from the economies of scale developed by SWSA.

As a charitable organisation SWSA are focused on the benefits that water sports can bring to individuals and the community at large, both in social and economic terms. The study has allowed SWSA a fuller understanding of the requirements, impacts and implications of such a centre and the trustees are now investigating how best to fund and deliver the project.

### The Feasibility Study

For SWSA the feasibility study is the first significant step in the process of developing a plan of action and business plan to deliver a project and designing and constructing a building to suit. It offers the opportunity to take a wide view on a potential development, appraising a variety of factors including (but not exclusively) the scope of a project, the facilities required to deliver an effective project, the best location, the initial potential business model, the likely financial model and the broad funding requirements. The study process has provided an insight into the viability of the project and the feasibility study will be used as a discussion, design and development tool. Ensuring that the correct groups engage in the study means that it can be used to encourage informed discussions and feedback, which can be included in the full business case and design evolution.

The outcomes for the SWSA Feasibility Study (including an extensive on-line survey with 300 hundred returns) show there is tremendous support for the outline project from a number of stakeholders and the community and that there is scope to deliver a project to get a wide range of people onto the water.

The Proposal is to move forward with a building, an improved “Active Beach” and watersports area that makes watersports appealing, enjoyable for all levels whilst also providing opportunities for developing life skills, learning and sporting prowess. The building will include a relaxed and informal beach café and learning area, more formal training and meetings rooms and a club area, all supported by top quality changing and drying facilities. The facility is aimed to be a great local venue whilst being fully capable of delivering national and international regattas and events. A full business case will develop the proposals in more detail and take the project to a planning application



## **Immediate Benefits**

The centre will encourage public interaction and promote water sports to a wider demographic of the community. A relaxed atmosphere and approachable set of employees (leaders) will ensure that passers-by will be tempted to enquire about the new facility and opportunities to get involved.

Having a centre around which existing clubs can focus will allow them to develop, expand and mature. The mixing of various sports in one hub will benefit the local water sports community through shared knowledge, experience and equipment. There should be a real sense of activity and “buzz” around the place with people enjoying a large list of water-based activities including sailing, cruising, coastal rowing, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, open water swimming, diving, angling, windsurfing and others yet to be fully investigated.

SWSA will initiate instructor training and will trial courses and activities before the centre is complete to foster local interest in the project, employment and tuition opportunities. They intend to encourage the next generation to take ownership and pride in Loch Ryan and Scotland’s waters from the very first steps of the project. New jobs will be created both on the water and in the centre and tourism will increase as a result of the centre’s activities.

## **Long Term Benefits**

The proposed watersports hub will provide a far-reaching attraction for the town and could act as a catalyst for a further expansion of tourism and activity based developments.

Stranraer has some significant social and economic deprivation issues and the proposals meet eight of eleven key ambitions of the Scottish National Performance Framework proving that, although it won’t solve the issues, it will have significant influence and value in social and economic terms.

The intention is to engage with schools and colleges to enhance education programmes and provide opportunities for socially disadvantaged individuals - the social and technical skills that can be learnt through water sports can have life changing benefits.

The centre will provide the chance for people to engage in something that they perhaps previously thought was not available to them, allowing them to develop their personal and social skills as well as improving their physical and mental health. Volunteering will be encouraged to support the hubs activities and provide a platform for individuals to grow confidence and knowledge as well as engaging in the wider population. Facilities, courses and advantageous packages for those with physical, social or mental challenges will be provided to ensure equal opportunities and create a stronger and more balanced community.

Above all the centre provides the means for the local community to engage in a wide range of activities for fun, to learn or hone a competitive edge on the fantastic loch that they have on their doorstep.



The projected amounts for the on shore works and the centre itself at £2.4 million, £700,000 for the shore side and off-shore improvements as well as £270,00 for vessels and equipment. Full details of the cost estimates can be found in the feasibility report.

## Summary

The study clearly demonstrates that the development of a centre for training, education and regatta events would make a positive contribution to the Stranraer Waterfront and bring significant social and economic benefits to the whole town and its community. It will play a major role in supporting and expanding tourism and creating new training, skills and education opportunities.

The full feasibility report is available if you would like more information and details.

## Get Involved

The Trustees and stakeholders will use the feasibility study to develop their next steps and research funding opportunities, after which an extensive community consultation will be conducted ahead of a planning application. We have some good concepts and ideas which we are investigating and taking forwards, but it is not all set in stone, we are still in a phase of listening and evolving, so don't assume that all the ideas are final. We want to hear your comments to make the proposals better.

If you would like to learn more, offer your thoughts on the proposals or would even consider becoming a part of the SWSA then we would love to hear from you.

Wendi Cuffe, the project manager at SWSA, is keen to talk to all interested people and can be contacted by:

E-mail: [wendicuffe@btinternet.com](mailto:wendicuffe@btinternet.com)

Telephone: 07809 363 289

## Questionnaire

SWSA is now developing a full business case and working towards a planning application. We are in discussions with some funding bodies and the business case will allow us to approach funders with more detail and confidence. We have gained funding for the early stages of our "Get Wet" experiences and training and will be launching this in the summer.

Please help us build clearer picture of the local and business community's interest and ambitions for our project by filling in the questionnaire in the link below.

<https://forms.gle/9GMB4KUx9cdSmjePA>