

To: Forum for Empowering Communities

On: Thursday 7 December 2023

**Report by: John Wilby, Chairperson
Paisley West & Central Community Council**

TITLE: Proposed Heritage Trail Project

1 Summary

This report highlights the important complementary role of Paisley's Heritage Trail to Renfrewshire Council's Heritage Strategy. It identifies the extent of its reach, its contribution to partnered tourism, and highlights the need for major restoration works. It points to Council sources of capital funding for the necessary works.

Paisley West & Central Community Council seeks an early comprehensive programme of restoration and development. The full potential for this neglected, and significant part, of Paisley's heritage will be best achieved by an early co-ordinated commitment from relevant Renfrewshire Council officials and partner organisations.

2 Recommendations

That the Forum considers what support it can offer and how best to promote the agenda.

3 Background

Paisley's Heritage Trail extends from School Wynd to Oakshawhead and includes five linking access trails. It is home to several listed buildings, including Oakshaw Trinity Church, the Observatory, Gaelic Chapel, and the John Neilson Institute. Therefore, it is an important part of Paisley's Heritage Strategy, as witnessed by the hundreds of overseas visitors each year, many choosing an accompanied tour. The completion of the Museum and Observatory restoration and development projects will also heighten its historic importance and offers opportunities for a future partnership approach.

4 Restoration & Development

The past few years have seen a gradual deterioration in its condition. This ranges from un-painted, damaged, and missing historic street furniture to the absence of regular weed suppression and graffiti. An opportunity also exists to enhance the trail with improved signage, historically significant plaques along the route, and live historical enactments. Anti-social behaviour could be reduced by an additional strategically sited CCTV camera, and a locked gate at Oakshawhead, giving access only to the electricity sub-station.

5 Funding

The Community Council acknowledges this is a major project requiring significant capital expenditure. The greatest cost-benefit is likely to accrue from an early working partnership with Heritage Strategy managers and partner organisations. There may also be existing underspent Town Centre capital funding for this urgently required work. One other established source of revenue, yet to be exploited for ongoing maintenance, is the use by film companies seeking an historical location.

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