

Ellon Baptist Church Ythan Centre
Community Asset Transfer Application
Business Plan
May 2018

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Ellon Baptist Church Background Information

Ellon Baptist Church was founded in 1984 as a church plant from Bridge of Don Baptist Church and was constituted on 5th April 1987 with 30 members but many more regular adherents. We hold charitable status and comply with all OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) requirements. The church has always been congregational in its style of governance which means that decisions are taken by the church members themselves at quarterly business meetings, as stated in our constitution (see appendix 1).

The church was initially grant-aided from the Baptist Union of Scotland of which we are a member (The Baptist Union of Scotland is an organisation of independent Baptist Churches which is a Registered Scottish Charity - Number SC004960) but has been completely self-sufficient since 1995 (see our past 3 years financial records in Appendix B). Our first full-time minister was employed in 1994 and apart from short periods of vacancy the church has continued to employ a full-time minister since that time.

The church has always been keen to listen to and serve the local community of Ellon and further afield and our varied ministries to the community can be found detailed in Section 4 of the CAT application form. The one major difficulty we have always faced is that of finding suitable accommodation for each activity, hence this application. We hope that, assuming a successful CAT application, we will be able to facilitate many more activities of benefit to the local community.

Organisation & Management

The Church's organisation and management is as detailed in our Constitution (see Appendix A). As with any other charitable body, all of our church meetings and activities are open to all members of the general public to attend with no exceptions, although only members can participate in any vote being taken.

Please see Appendix D for current church policies relating to :-

The Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults

Health & Safety – (As a charitable organisation with no accommodation of our own at present, we currently use the Health and Safety checklist for the venues we use (attached in Appendix D). If successful in this application we would plan to adopt the Health and Safety Policy from the Baptist Insurance Company who we currently hold Public Liability Insurance with. (<https://www.baptist-insurance.co.uk/Images/PDF%20-%20BIC%20Church%20Guidance%20Note%20-%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Policy.pdf>)

The Ythan Centre

The Ythan Centre is a building located in the centre of Ellon (Station Road) which is owned by Aberdeenshire Council, it has historically been used to good effect benefit of the people of Ellon through its availability to rent space for various local groups in particular youth activities, groups for vulnerable people such as those with learning difficulties and the elderly, and the local foodbank have all made use of this building in the past. Following a review of Council Properties in the area the Ythan Centre closed its doors in 2016 and has sadly lain empty and unused since this point. We as a church community have a need for accommodation for our many community activities and would love to enable this building to be used to its full potential to benefit the people of Ellon.

The Proposal

Ellon Baptist Church are keen to be successful in the Community Asset Transfer and we have been informed from Aberdeenshire Council that the building would currently be available on the basis of a two year lease. With our building plans currently "in planning" this would be a perfect solution to our on-going accommodation needs as a church.

We are keen to acquire the Ythan Centre first and foremost in order to establish a single base in Ellon town centre from which the church can continue to reach out to all the local community. At present we have weekly rentals for 4 different halls in Ellon as well as other extra rentals throughout the year and this means that much time is taken up transporting equipment and setting up and dismantling equipment before and after each use. We would love to have the opportunity to use our time more profitably through working from a single base that we would have at our disposal to serve our community.

The Current Services & Activities of Ellon Baptist Church

At present Ellon Baptist Church seeks to serve the people of Ellon and beyond through a holistic approach which currently includes:

- Sunday services that are open to all in the community where we cater for every age group with a crèche and lively “Sunday Squad” group.
- Two separate Parent and Toddler Groups, again open to all in the community, which are well attended by many including childminders and grandparents, as well as parents.
- Youth Groups two evenings a week which are open to all Academy aged young people in the community.
- Pastoral and Practical Care e.g. providing such things as meals/childcare/help with transport etc. during crisis life events such as birth, illness, bereavement etc.
- Various Social Events which are open to all ages e.g. ceilidhs, barn dances, family fun days etc.
- Support for local children and families through the Social Work Department as and when requested e.g. baby baskets and Christmas toys and hampers for vulnerable families which we have provided for a number of years now.
- Operation Christmas Child (shoebox appeal) which we have supported for many years, packing over 200 boxes the last couple of years.
- Supporting Overseas Work e.g. Tearfund (a member of the Disaster Emergency Committee in times of crisis); also people working in Ecuador, Kosovo, Uganda & Indonesia and the sponsorship of two children through our Toddler and Sunday Squad groups.
- Free Annual week-long Holiday Clubs for Primary & Secondary pupils which have run for the past 5 consecutive years with growing numbers year on year, again open to all in the locality.
- Foodbank – Ellon Baptist Church initiated and co-ordinate the local Ellon Trussell Trust Foodbank, organising food deliveries in Aberdeenshire with support of many volunteers from the locality.

Benefits to the Local Community resulting from the success of this Application

- Having been an active part of Ellon community for the last 30 years, we are a Church that is very aware of the diverse needs in our local community and this convinces us that there is good reason for Ellon Baptist Church to have premises in the town centre.
- We would be open to liaise with other community groups who may require use of the premises. For example we have been in touch with Mair Jones who previously ran a group for vulnerable young people from the Ythan Centre and would be keen to investigate how we could facilitate that if we were granted sole use of the building.
- Having our own building will mean that our members would be free to serve the local community more effectively, without concern for room bookings and transportation of large equipment, and would be able to be more flexible to provide services quickly when required.
- With adequate facilities we would aim to run various courses to benefit the community e.g. the CAP Money Management Programme and debt advice (recommended by Martin Lewis), Parenting and Drug Awareness courses etc. etc.
- Some Local Authorities in Scotland offer premises rent free to Foodbanks in support of the community service they provide. A building of our own would enable us to run the Foodbank more efficiently, as at the moment we are struggling with inadequate temporary accommodation.
- Other opportunities that we may explore in the future include; breakfast/after school clubs, support for the elderly and those with additional needs and a drop in café etc. etc.
- In summary, if we had our own premises we would seek to use them daily, (during the day and evening), to benefit the whole community in as many ways as we could.

Finances & Risk Analysis

As a charity whose sole income is based on the giving and generosity of its members we would be keen to acquire this Community Asset Transfer of a two year lease for the least amount of rent possible. With the building having lain empty for such a long time we are aware that there may be substantial start-up costs in order to get the building ready for use including such things as decorative work, garden maintenance, possible kitchen white goods replacement and renovation, furniture needs e.g. seating etc. With that in mind we would appreciate the opportunity that was offered to us of a site visit to allow us to gauge the current state of the building.

Assuming our CAT Application is successful, we have the skills and willingness of folk within the church to maintain the fabric of the building. Through occupying it we hope to enhance the Ythan Centre's appearance from the street and arrest further deterioration, all of which is of value to the council and the people of Ellon in the short and long term.

We recognise that the Council needs assurances regarding our ability as a church to fulfil the requirements of a sole tenant of such a building. As a faith based community our income comes from the giving of our membership, with this in mind the proposal of acquiring this asset has been brought before the whole church and has their overwhelming support and approval of all the members who fully understand the responsibilities that come with such an acquisition.

The records of our church finances for the past three years are attached and it is worth noting that as a church we have employed a full-time pastor since the year 1994 with the exception only of two periods of vacancy. It is also worth noting that we currently spend around £7,000 each year in rent, plus the cost of storing, transporting and replacing equipment due to the constant setting up and dismantling.

As has been stated Ellon Baptist Church are a long-standing community of people who are committed to serving their community to the best of their ability, any financial or practical costs that arise from acquiring this asset lease will be met through this united vision and commitment.

Conclusion

Ellon Baptist Church would be keen to acquire use of the Ythan Centre at the earliest possible opportunity. Assuming this was granted we would waste no time in ensuring the building was open and usable as soon as possible. Contact has already been made with those who would wish to make use of the building for various vulnerable groups and we would hope to facilitate that usage if at all possible. We hope that our service to the community over the last 30+ years will be viewed as evidence to support this application.