

Jock Stein Sports Facility Community Asset Transfer



Formal Appeal by Blantyre Soccer Academy to South Lanarkshire Council

Blantyre Soccer Academy



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Blantyre Soccer Academy wishes to formally appeal with regard to decision on Application CAT/20/0004 in accordance with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 Section (3).

We wish to register the name and address of community transfer body as identified within (3) (a) as Blantyre Soccer Academy, The Hub, Birch Place Blantyre G72 9PL and register the location of the asset transfer application as identified within (3) (b) as the Jock Stein Sports Facility, 176 Hillhouse Road, Hamilton, ML3 9TU.

We wish South Lanarkshire council to review the decision not to permit the community asset transfer at the Jock Stein Sports Facility.

The currency of the Blantyre Soccer Academy is Love. We love the local community. That is why we are committed to the social, physical, environmental and cultural improvement of the local community through footballing activities and social enterprise initiatives.

The Academy is recognised throughout Scotland as an ambassador for South Lanarkshire and an exemplar for good practice and professionalism within football and the third sector.

Scottish Football Association has granted Platinum status and awarded the Academy with the prestigious 'Club of the Year'. The Academy has approximately six hundred members, substantial core of volunteers and a small staff.

The volunteers of Academy provide £816,000 worth of volunteering hours per annum.

The Academy is also dedicated to the improvement of the community and international charities through:

- Blantyre Bites Back
- Good Child Foundation
- Creation of Covid Dedication
- Keep Scotland Beautiful - National Competition
- Blantyre Bikes Better
- Partnership working with Local Businesses
- Hamilton Advertiser Christmas Appeal
- Creation of Community Garden

Sports Facilities

We have a particular interest in the provision and quality of sports facilities, not only as a sporting organisation: but as contributors to the funding of local government and residents who live, work, and play within South Lanarkshire.

Jock Stein Sports Facility

The Jock Stein Sports Facility was subject of inclusion within the Cross Party Working Group on SLLC which examined the potential for closure, community asset transfer or alternative use. The Internal Briefing Paper/Discussion Document paper on 1st April 2021, despite being a confidential report was widely circulated within South Lanarkshire Council.

The paper, eventually, identified the Jock Stein Sports Facility within the Amber category: 'retain, subject to outcomes from other service reviews and future considerations re ongoing sustainability and shared outcome delivery'.

It is our understanding that there has been significant political fallout within South Lanarkshire Council with regard to the thrust of the Cross Party Working Group recommendations which remain unresolved.

Blantyre Soccer Academy is a neutral organisation and has no part or interest with regard to the political representation or political processes with South Lanarkshire Council **but we do have a significant interest in the provision of sports facility within the local area.**

We were outraged that the Jock Stein Sports Facility could be considered, at any time, with potential closure within any committee report, whether that be a working party, sub-committee or full committee report.

The singular purpose of our community asset transfer was to ensure that the well-loved Jock Stein Sports Facility **could never be considered by closure by any future local authority organisation.**

The case for community ownership

We have an **overwhelming business case to support the community asset transfer** and are awaiting a positive determination to unleash £2.3m to invest in the facility.

We have constructed a constitution for the **Strategic Board**, with independent management of the facility, and a Community Use Agreement in order to safeguard the current users and to permit a marketing strategy to promote new usage.

Current Situation at Jock Stein Sports Facility

The current management under the auspices of South Lanarkshire Council and South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture is **unsustainable and unacceptable**.

Information provided by South Lanarkshire Council painted a picture of an unused and unloved facility – empty 62% of the time and losing £500,000 in the last three years (pre Covid financial years). The 3G pitch, which should be the showpiece of the facility, is in extremely poor condition.

So, we have the perfect storm – unused, losing money and poor facilities, with no plans to breathe life into the facility.

Community Asset Transfer

Blantyre Soccer Academy submitted a community asset transfer and the following dates were provided by South Lanarkshire Council:

Public Consultation Commencement	22 nd June 2021
Closing Date for Public Response	20 th July 2021

The legitimacy of the public consultation period was undermined by the fact that we did not receive important and crucial information with regard to the financial situation, usage figures etc until after the public consultation period had closed and could not respond to legitimate questions with regard to current costs of facility, income streams, usage figures and as a consequence could not produce a Business Plan.

We contacted South Lanarkshire Council on different occasions to request information and it was not until 7th September 2021 that we received purposeful information.

Secondly, the Academy was informed that the **Jock Stein Sports Facility had 6 members of staff**, which is totally incorrect. This misinformation has caused considerable difficulty with creating a Business Plan.

Furthermore, the reluctance of South Lanarkshire Council to comment on TUPE hampered any proposals by the Academy.

Sports Facility worthy of the Local Community

Blantyre Soccer Academy has produced an economic and social model which will assist in the regeneration of the local Hillhouse community. A local councillor advised us **‘that he has taken his eyes off the ball’** with regard to the neglect of the Jock Stein Sports Facility but we believe that the rot is much deeper than this analysis – **huge losses to council tax payers, no investment and a run-down facility**.

There is no plan, no investment, no wherewithal to solve the crisis at the Jock Stein Sports Facility. This combined with the unwillingness of South Lanarkshire Council to release valuable information has ensured a **Refusal**.

We believe that our legitimate attempt to improve the facilities for the whole community was undermined during this process.

We have a professional organisation and committed to the local community, the only thing which stands between £2.3m investment, community ownership and a new partnership with other voluntary providers is the decision-making process of South Lanarkshire Council.

Conclusion

There is a stark choice between current position of huge losses to council tax payers, no investment and a run-down facility and the future of investment, community ownership and a major contribution to the well being of the whole community. The community deserves a different life, a better life than the current offer. We have the resources and the plan. We will continue to work with local government, sporting authorities and local communities to improve the quality of life of South Lanarkshire.

Documents provided by Blantyre Soccer Academy

Blantyre Soccer Academy has submitted the following documents as requested within (3) (d) which are in possession of South Lanarkshire Council

- Blantyre Soccer Academy Community Asset Transfer Appeal
- Jock Stein Sports Facility Community Asset Transfer - Business Plan 2021 entitled ‘The past we inherit, the future we build’
- Jock Stein Facility Development Plan 2021
- Constitution of Jock Stein Sports Facility Strategic Board
- Community Use Agreement Jock Stein Sports Facility

Timeline of Application

1 April 2021 SLC Briefing Paper Entitled – ‘Proposed Process for Identified Facilities’

This report identified Jock Stein Centre:

- 4.1 within ‘amber category – i.e. - **retain, subject to** outcomes from other service reviews and **future considerations re ongoing sustainability** and shared outcome delivery’
- 6.4 other public sector partners may also have operational interest in some locations, for example, there is potential interest from the University of the West of Scotland in sports related accommodation in and around Hamilton/East Kilbride. The Jock Stein Centre, which was identified as amber in the leisure review report could be a consideration, and if the centre was to be transferred, the **football pitches could potentially still be bookable for let to the community.**

Ongoing – 8 June 2021 Internal discussion within Blantyre Soccer Academy to secure investment and the long/short term future of Jock Stein Sports Facility

8 June 2021 Acknowledgement by South Lanarkshire Council of asset transfer request by Blantyre Soccer Academy

15 June 2021 Validation date of asset transfer request

15 June 2021 E/mail sender BSA to SLC

‘We also require technical/financial/social information such as the running costs, utility consumption, list of asset users and Jock Stein Sports Facility usage figures in order to provide a fuller description of our financial and community model.’

21 June 2021 E/mail sender Joanne Forbes SLC to BSA

‘In the meantime I have made arrangements to collect the information on the property costs and uses as requested’

21 June 2021 E/mail sender Joanne Forbes SLC to BSA

‘As discussed earlier today I have sought the property related costs for the Jock Stein facility’

22 June 2021 Public Consultation Commences

5 July 2021 E/mail sender BSA to SLC

‘I have attached the following correspondence from 15th June 2021 with the following request:

"We also require technical/financial/social information such as the running costs, utility consumption, list of asset users and Jock Stein Sports Facility usage figures in order to provide a fuller description of our financial and community model"

We are currently creating a financial model and the delay of information is causing concern and could possibly delay the ability of the Academy to be in a position to provide our sporting and community model.’

6 July 2021 E/mail sender Joanne Forbes SLC to BSA

‘I have contacted the Leisure Trust for the answers to your most recent questions about the operations of the facility and hope to get this to you this week.’

9 July 2021 E/mail sender Joanne Forbes SLC to BSA

‘I refer to your request for more detailed information on the existing operations at Jock Stein Sports centre and would confirm the following’

20 July 2021 Closing Date for public responses

7 September 2021 E/mail sender David Booth SLLC to BSA

‘Please find below operating costs for the Jock Stein Centre for the three full years prior to the COVID--19 outbreak.’

15 December 2021 E/mail Sent on behalf of Alistair McKinnon SLC to BSA

‘There are no plans at this moment to replace the Jock Stein 3G pitch or upgrade the grass pitches and sports barn. The Council, in partnership with South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Ltd, regularly assess the condition of the Jock Stein football pitches, and associated facilities, and prioritise repairs as required.’

