

Cllr Martin Dowey, Leader
Mike Newall, Chief Executive Officer

South Ayrshire Council
County Buildings
Wellington Square
Ayr, KA7 1DR

By email to: martin.dowey@south-ayrshire.gov.uk &
mike.newall@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

11 January 2024

Dear Cllr Dowey and Mr Newall,

Future of Ayr Station and Hotel

In light of the ongoing demolition of the South Wing of the category B-listed Ayr Station Hotel, we the undersigned write to request that you publicly set out South Ayrshire Council's plans for the remaining North Wing and clock tower of the former Ayr Station Hotel complex.

We remain concerned at the apparent opaque process and decision-making surrounding the ongoing loss of the majority of the South Wing. Back in early November, after the latest fire, conservation accredited engineer Ed Morton advised the Chief Executive of an alternative method of propping up the south gable over Station Road. This would have addressed public safety concerns and avoided further major demolition of the remaining structure, while crucially allowing the re-opening of the road. We have not had confirmation that this advice was considered or explored, and the majority of the South Wing has now been demolished.

Thankfully, the adjacent tower and North Wing were not the focus of the fire in September. Pre-fire, these elements were not under protective scaffolding – unlike the South Wing – as this was not considered necessary by your officers. They remain free from scaffolding, and we assume, therefore, pose no health and safety risk to the public.

We believe there is a bright future for a restored and fully occupied tower and North Wing. Creating a fittingly grand and lively entrance to the town, alongside a new extension with accessible station facilities and the potential for a new integrated transport exchange at Burns Statue Square would be something the town could be proud of.

We would be willing to work with all relevant parties to help achieve this. In our view this would be best achieved by creating a broad stakeholder group, led by an independent chair, to develop the business case and who would report into your wider town centre strategy group/consultation.

However, as the demolition contractors advance, and since SAC has not declared its intention for the rest of the privately owned site, we seek clarification on where you will call a halt to the demolition and what your plans are going forward. Please share your current surveys of these buildings post-fire.

Please also set out your vision for the future use of the North Wing and tower of the former Station Hotel and assure us that Ayr's remaining historic buildings are safe in South Ayrshire Council's hands.

The retention and re-use of the tower and North Wing would send a positive message to the people of Ayr, and it would set the benchmark for the wider regeneration of the town.

Yours sincerely,

Henrietta Billings MRTPI
Director, SAVE Britain's Heritage

Matthew Mckeague
CEO, Architectural Heritage Fund

Jocelyn Cunliffe
Vice-chair of the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland

Niall Murphy
Director of the Glasgow City Heritage Trust

David Cook
Director of the Glasgow Building Preservation Trust

Esther Clark
Ayr Development Trust

H Bruce Collier
Chair of the Ayr Station Hotel Community Action Group

Kinlay Laidlaw
Chair of the Ayrshire Architectural Heritage Trust