

URGENT

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

By email: All South Ayrshire Councillors

14th December 2022

Dear Councillor,

Please Reject the Report on Ayr Station Hotel Tomorrow!

At tomorrow's Council meeting, officers are trying to "bounce" you into adopting their preferred option of partially demolishing Ayr Station Hotel at a cost of £6.6 million.

- **This recommendation is illegal**
- **It is unnecessary. The cheaper course of action is to stabilise the building and then remove the scaffolding- but you aren't being offered this option**
- **It is out of date**

Please refer the report back for the further – major – reconsideration it clearly needs.

ILLEGAL

What the report doesn't tell you is that **NO** demolition of a historic building can be undertaken under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 unless it complies with the historic building legislation (section 35[4]): which it can't.

This means the owner could legally ignore the proposed notices and any demolition work by the Council would be a criminal offence.

That's because any demolition has to be *urgently necessary in the interests of safety or health, or the preservation of the building* – and then **only** if it's not practicable to repair or support the building. Clearly, this is practicable as it's what is currently being done!¹

We wrote to Council officers yesterday requesting an immediate response – but received none. Demolishing a stabilised historic building just to save money is not legal. If the Council really wants to do this, it has to apply for listed building consent.

UNNECESSARY

For a fraction of the cost of demolition, the hotel could be stabilised for the medium term while better permanent solutions are developed, saving the monthly cost of the encapsulation.

¹ This is section 8 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997

The scaffolding frame already has access stairs, ladders and platforms to enable simple and inexpensive repair works such as clearing gutters, de-vegetating the façade, replacing slipped tiles and patch repairs to leadwork where necessary. These works could all be done under existing emergency powers. The scaffolding could then be removed.

Clearly this option should merit the closest possible investigation by officers and Cllrs ahead of a decision on demolition.

But it looks as though they never asked Mott McDonald to consider this option.

OUT OF DATE

The Report is based on a “visual inspection of the building in 2018-2019” by Mott McDonald, which has only since carried out a visual inspection they describe as “cursory²” with no intrusive surveys or access internally made during these inspections.

The Council is obliged to make decisions based on up-to-date information on the real condition of the hotel building – particularly as the encapsulation may have helped the building to dry out. But it can't.

In August 2022, Council officers refused to allow top historic building structural engineer Ed Morton access to the hotel. SAVE had commissioned Mr Morton to assess the building's structural condition. Despite this he concluded that there was no evidence to suggest this building is in danger of collapsing.

We want Mr Morton invited back to complete a comprehensive assessment of the building, inside and out, providing the Council with the up-to-date evidence base needed to make a legally sound decision on the station hotel's structural safety. Our offer to fund this assessment at no cost to the Council still stands.

SAVE's ALTERNATIVE VISION

In May 2002 SAVE Britain's Heritage published a report setting out a series of alternative uses for Ayr Station Hotel, drawn up by leading Scottish architects and costed by Quantity Surveyors. Our proposals also set out a fundable and sustainable two stage model to repair and transform this listed building into a commercial proposition.

Our report can be accessed online [HERE](#).

The Station Hotel is one of Ayr's most historic listed buildings which has stood as a landmark for the town for almost 150 years. This is your opportunity as Councillors to take positive action to ensure possible avenues are investigated to re-use the building and make Ayr Station Hotel an economically viable focus of civic pride once again.

We therefore ask you to defer any decision on the demolition of Ayr Station Hotel based on the information currently available, and to refer the situation back to officers for the better consideration this listed building requires.

Yours sincerely,



Henrietta Billings, MRTPI
Director, SAVE Britain's Heritage

² See p.9 para 1.5.2 of Mott MacDonald *Station Hotel Ayr Safety Works under Section 29 of the Building (Scotland)* report appended to Agenda Item 16

To: Councillor Kenneth Bell - Kenneth.Bell@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Craig Mackay - craig.mackay@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Bob Pollock - bob.pollock@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Philip Saxton - philip.saxton@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Ian Cochrane - ian.cochrane@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Hugh Hunter - hugh.hunter@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Martin Kilbride - Martin.Kilbride@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Cameron Ramsay - Cameron.Ramsay@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Laura Brennan-Whitefield - laura.brennan-whitefield@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Mark Dixon - Mark.Dixon@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Ian Cavana - ian.cavana@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Ian Davis - ian.davis@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Chris Cullen - chris.cullen@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Mary Kilpatrick - mary.kilpatrick@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Brian McGinley - brian.mcginley@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Bob Shields - Bob.Shields@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Martin Dowey - martin.dowey@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Lee Lyons - lee.lyons@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor George Weir - George.Weir@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Stephen Ferry - Stephen.Ferry@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Julie Dettbarn - julie.dettbarn@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Duncan Townson - Duncan.Townson@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Iain Campbell - iain.campbell@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Brian Connolly - brian.connolly@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor William Grant - william.grant@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Alec Clark - Alec.Clark@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Gavin Scott - Gavin.Scott@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Councillor Peter Henderson - peter.henderson@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Cc: **Mike Newall**, Depute Chief Executive and Director of Housing, Operations and Development:
mike.newall@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Craig Iles, Service Lead – Planning and Building Standards:
craig.iles@south-ayrshire.gov.uk