

Item: 6

Community Development Fund Sub-committee: 24 October 2022.

Application Number 0/5/8/22.

Gable End Theatre Company Limited.

Enhancements to Existing Energy System.

**Report by Corporate Director for Enterprise and Sustainable
Regeneration.**

1. Purpose of Report

To consider an application from Gable End Theatre Company Limited for assistance towards enhancements to the existing energy system at the Gable End Theatre.

2. Recommendations

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That Gable End Theatre Company Limited has applied for assistance from the Community Development Fund towards enhancements to the existing energy system at the Gable End Theatre, at a total estimated eligible cost of £21,738.

2.2.

That Gable End Theatre Company Limited is contributing £5,869 of its resources towards the project.

2.3.

That Gable End Theatre Company Limited has applied for match funding, amounting to £5,000, from the Island of Hoy Development Trust, towards the project.

2.4.

That messages of support have been received from the undernoted community groups and individuals:

- Gable End Film Society.
- Gable End Theatre Society.
- Hoy Sound Choir.
- Two Hoy residents.

It is recommended:

2.5.

That a grant amounting to 50% of total eligible costs, up to a maximum sum of £10,869, to be met from the Community Development Fund, be offered to Gable End Theatre Company Limited towards enhancements to the existing energy system at the Gable End Theatre.

2.6.

That powers be delegated to the Corporate Director for Enterprise and Sustainable Regeneration, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Governance, to conclude an Agreement, on the Council's standard terms and conditions, with Gable End Theatre Company Limited in respect of the funding, detailed at paragraph 2.5 above.

3. Background

3.1.

Gable End Theatre Company Limited (GETC) is a registered charity (number SC035562). The main objective of GETC is to provide good quality entertainment for the communities within the Island of Hoy. The theatre seats 75 people and the GETC currently has a board membership totalling 11 islanders.

3.2.

The group was established in 2000, when work started on transforming the semi-derelict old school buildings at North Walls into a community theatre. The stage and auditorium were completed in 2001 with many of the fittings salvaged from the former Phoenix Cinema in Kirkwall. The next phase of development involved the construction of the foyer, followed by upgrading to the sound and lighting equipment.

3.3.

With the onset of COVID-19, like most other venues, the Gable End Theatre closed its doors for a significant period of time and suffered considerable reduction of income. Despite the GETC owning the building and being a volunteer led organisation, there were certain overheads that continued to require payment. This included a high level of heating, to ensure the integrity of the building as well as maintaining the sound and lighting equipment.

3.4.

During lockdown, the GETC started to explore options to reduce energy costs and consider more efficient forms of heating for the building. This exercise has become more important with the anticipated increase in energy costs from October 2022 onwards. This, coupled with the GETC's ambition to help reduce Orkney's carbon footprint, has led to the decision to progress with this project as a priority for the group.

4. Project Proposal

4.1.

The overall project aim is to enhance the existing energy system at the Gable End Theatre. This will involve removal of the existing heating system and replace it with a modern, more efficient system. Doing so will allow the maximisation of the available electricity from the GETC's existing wind generator, allowing the heating system to become carbon neutral.

4.2.

The enhancement proposal includes the following:

- Removal of existing air to water heating system.
- Installation of air-to-air heating system.
- Utilise existing wind generator by using battery storage and statutory connections to feed the new heat pump installations.

4.3.

The project does not involve any changes to, or impact on, the works completed and part funded by the Community Development Fund in 2011, namely new sound and lighting equipment and general enhancement of the stage and dressing rooms.

4.4.

The project costs and proposed funding arrangements are outlined in the table below (inclusive of VAT as GETC is not VAT registered):

Project Details.	Cost.
Equipment costs.	£14,525.
Installation costs.	£7,213.
Total.	£21,738.
Project Financing.	Amount.
Community Development Fund (50%).	£10,869.
Island of Hoy Development Trust (23%).	£5,000.
Gable End Theatre Company Ltd (27%).*	£5,869.
Total.	£21,738.

* Confirmed.

4.5.

The GETC has agreed to match fund the project at a rate of 27%. The Island of Hoy Development Trust match funding has been applied for and a decision is anticipated on this application soon.

4.6.

GETC has been continuing to explore other potential match funding, as new sources of funding supporting community energy projects continue to be released from national bodies. At present, none of these funds have been applied for but GETC are continuing to explore options with the funders. GETC is keen to progress this project quickly, however, if GETC apply for funding in the future and are successful, any additional funding will lead to a reduction in the offer of grant made by the Community Development Fund.

4.7.

The project works will help the GETC Trust to achieve two of its core objectives, making the facility more energy efficient through achieving carbon neutrality, as well as ensuring its running costs are kept as low as possible, helping sustain the facility for the island for many years to come.

5. Project Appraisal

5.1.

The proposals put forward in the development plan, which accompanies this application, outlines the intention to carry out a series of enhancements to the existing energy system at the Gable End Theatre. These enhancements will enable the facility to continue to provide an important community offering for locals and visitors to enjoy.

5.2.

Messages of support have been received from the undernoted groups and individuals:

- Gable End Film Society.
- Gable End Theatre Society.
- Hoy Sound Choir.
- Two Hoy residents.

5.3.

The Community Development Fund and its predecessor, the Community Development Fund for the New Millennium, have supported a wide range of development projects involving heating enhancements to community facilities, including:

- Upgrading of Firth Community Centre.
- Upgrading of Deerness Hall.
- Upgrading of Graemsay Community Centre.
- Upgrading of Sandwick Hall.

5.4.

With regard to GETC's application, the following is an assessment and evaluation against each of the approved assessment and evaluation criteria:

5.4.1. Evidence of Need

- Since the Gable End Theatre was created in 2000, it has brought over 300 different performances to the facility for both the local community and visitors to enjoy. This has included musical acts as well as drama and musical performances. The facility has also acted as a cinema, showing over 400 films of a diverse range. Many island folk, as well as people from all over Orkney, have enjoyed the variety of entertainment on offer at this facility and continue to do so.

5.4.2. Achievability

- GETC is run by a committee of 11 people, who represent a wide demographic within the island population and possess a wide range of skills and experience to carry through the project. GETC has a strong track record delivering on capital projects as well as achieving community outcomes, having successfully delivered a part-funded Community Development Fund project previously.
- The technology to assist GETC achieve carbon neutrality, as well as the technical skills of installation and maintenance, is readily available locally. As such, this project is considered achievable by GETC.

5.4.3. Sustainability

- The project will help support the long-term sustainability of the Gable End Theatre. This is supported by a clear net zero approach with appropriate technology being adopted to help achieve sustainable energy for the facility. GETC has looked at all current equipment and sourced appropriate installations for the facility.

5.4.4. Serving the local public and having lasting benefits

- The fact that the GETC has existed for so long on an island of less than 400 people is testimony to the public support for this facility. During the first Covid free period in 2021 GETC tentatively put on two shows in the theatre. Both were sold out and one of them, which was also promoted in Stromness, drew more than 200 folk.
- This year, despite the lingering fears many people have, GETC has so far put on six separate performances drawing large audiences. The most recent of these drew a crowd of over 60 on the same evening that a local wedding party took place. As The Orcadian reported following one of these shows "The Gable End Theatre is back", to which it might have added "And here to stay".

5.4.5. Opportunities provided or upgraded

- The Gable End Theatre is a valuable asset to the island. This project will enable the facility to run more sustainably and efficiently, allowing GETC to continue to provide a variety of entertainment for the local community.

- This project has given GETC a chance to find specific funding to enhance the energy efficiency of the facility. There are opportunities to work with local drama clubs further, not just through continuing to provide a facility but also share best practice regarding energy efficiency measures which other groups could consider adopting in the future.

5.4.6. Enriching quality of life

- The project will ensure the facility continues to provide a variety of entertainment opportunities for all members of the community, regardless of age or social and economic backgrounds. Participating in performances, either as a member of the cast, background crew or a member of the audience, helps individuals' social cohesion and wellbeing.

5.4.7. Value for money

- GETC has ensured value for money by obtaining competitive quotes for the new energy efficiency equipment and installation. The project will ensure ongoing running costs are minimalised and supports GETC on its journey towards net zero.

5.4.8. Partnership funding

- There is the potential of securing funding amounting to £5,000 from the Island of Hoy Development Trust. This demonstrates strong potential support for the project from a key local anchor organisation. Exploration of additional match funding for community energy projects will also continue until the project commences.

6. Links to Council Plan

6.1.

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority theme of Thriving Communities.

6.2.

The proposals in this report relate directly to Priority 3.11 – We will review and develop the Empowering Communities Project to create a sustainable model which will enable and empower communities in the delivery of services and projects in their community, of the Council Delivery Plan.

7. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Community Wellbeing.

8. Financial Implications

8.1.

In July 2016, a further £1,000,000 was allocated to the Community Development Fund, with £100,000 ring-fenced for Community Councils.

8.2.

At present there is sufficient budget within the 2016 Community Development Fund tranche to consider this project.

9. Legal Aspects

9.1.

There are no legal constraints to the recommendations in this report being implemented and the relevant powers are contained in section 20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

9.2.

If grant assistance is to be provided by the Council, a legally-binding agreement will require to be entered into between the Council and the recipient setting out the terms on which the funding is being provided.

10. Contact Officers

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