



O'DonnellBrown

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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PRESS RELEASE

NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR MILLPORT TOWN HALL ISLE OF CUMBRAE, SCOTLAND

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O'DonnellBrown's designs to revive Millport Town Hall on the Isle of Cumbrae into a community hub have been submitted for planning. The building, built in 1878 and vacant since 2012, had been the town's civic centre for many years, and its absence has been keenly felt. Located within a conservation area in Millport – a popular holiday destination for Glaswegians, particularly through the Victorian era – the building closed due to limited maintenance and care, following years of attempts to sustain it. Through careful refurbishment and considered extension, this community-led project aims to bring the building back into active community use, while also providing new economic and social benefits to the local area. The new multipurpose hub will incorporate a performance hall with improved facilities; a new basement level heritage and conservation centre and ground floor community hub; additional high-quality, accessible toilets; a sheltered community garden; and a spacious entrance foyer – all designed to be flexible, adapting to varied activities. Three new holiday-let apartments are proposed for the second floor.

The project to save and regenerate the building was initiated by Millport Town Hall Charity (formerly Friends of Millport Town Hall), which appointed the architects following a competitive tender. Initially formed to protect the iconic building, the charity's ambitions for the project also include generating sustainable funding streams – such as hosting events like weddings and conferences and operating a performance venue – that provide surplus funds for community benefit and create employment and provide skills training. Equally important, the renewed building is expected to foster community spirit through opportunities for participation and social connection, combating alienation and isolation on the small island of 1,400 residents, with over 150,000 tourists visiting annually.

Functioning as a social hub over the past 140 years, the town hall has served a variety of community-focused uses, including operating as a cinema until the end of the 20th century – hence the suspended ceiling in the main hall space and boarded-up windows. The lack of maintenance, which has plagued many buildings in the conservation area, has led to decay, which the proposed work will address, alongside structural solutions to repair the frame and walls.

O'DonnellBrown's design maximises the energy efficiency of the building, taking a fabric-first approach to create a high-performing envelope which will minimise operational energy and carbon emissions. A significant amount of the building's energy will be provided by roof-mounted photovoltaic panels to help offset the carbon footprint. The building is centrally located within Millport, reachable by sustainable transport; it's anticipated that most visitors will walk, cycle or take public transport from the ferry.



The architect's approach celebrates the building's existing attributes through careful alterations and additions rather than bold interventions, aspiring to provide a new gathering place the community can be proud of.

Key moves include:

- exposing covered-up roof trusses and resurrecting windows blocked since the mid-20th century;
- creating a new east elevation entrance with double-height atrium on Clifton Street – the first part of the building visitors encounter – that respects the original main town hall enclosure, which will remain unaltered;
- introducing a sensitively-designed sequence from the new gathering lobby on the lower ground floor to the principal hall space, up through a triple-height, top-lit space.

The town hall is typical of the vernacular, built from glaciated red sandstone with a slate roof. The materials proposed for the new east elevation (light grey brick, concrete, timber and metal) are all robust and complementary of the existing palette. They provide a contrast to avoid pastiche, ultimately seeking to unify the building without pretending it was always that way. The scheme aims to create rational, hard-working spaces for a variety of uses, while also allowing for intuitive movement around the building, with carefully crafted architectural moments.

Angie McCallum, Chair of Trustees, Millport Town Hall, said:

"O'DonnellBrown has produced a dynamic yet sympathetic solution, which provides flexible functionality and makes best use of ambient light. As a community charity we have been most impressed with the understanding shown for cost-led, yet innovative, design."

O'DonnellBrown said:

"We are delighted to be working with Millport Town Hall to breathe life back into the existing building, conserving resources, its historic value and memories of its past, which are so cherished by the people of Millport and Isle of Cumbrae."

Press enquiries:

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Download full press kit here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y97wc72r>

NOTES TO EDITORS

Address	5 Clifton Street, Millport, Isle of Cumbrae KA28 0AZ
Starting on site	Early 2021
Anticipated completion	Late 2021
Gross internal area	1,076m ²
Client	Millport Town Hall Charity
Architect	O'DonnellBrown
Structural engineer	Design Engineering Workshop
Services engineer	Harey Haddow
Quantity surveyor	Allied Surveyors
Visualisations	© O'DonnellBrown
Funding	North Ayrshire Council; supplemented with private funding



O'DonnellBrown is a multiple award-winning Glasgow-based architecture practice with experience across a range of specialisms, and a keen interest in what it takes to make a positive contribution to our built environment. With work across the UK – currently concentrated in London and Glasgow – O'DonnellBrown is committed to bringing about confident change in the places they know and love.

Built works include: The Greenhouse, the studio's unique workspace in Pollokshields, and a new annexe building and outdoor learning space at Seven Mills Primary School in Tower Hamlets, London. Current projects include The Foundry, a development of 206 homes on the site of a former foundry in Glasgow, and feasibility for a new park pavilion community space and café in Pollokshields.

Self-initiated projects include: a prototype modular timber outdoor classroom, The Community Classroom, which is currently being manufactured by Space Oasis; and The Sitooterie, a flexible modular structure developed in consultation with local businesses in Glasgow to facilitate outdoor dining/trading spaces in a Covid-19 climate.

O'DonnellBrown was a finalist in The Architectural Review Emerging Architecture Awards 2019 and will feature in The Architecture Foundation's *New Architects 4* (2021).

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