WOODHEAD & WINDYHILLS COMMUNITY TRUST LTD

Business Plan

Asset Transfer Request – Woodhead Community Centre Car Park

Applicant Organisation	Woodhead & Windyhills Community Trust Ltd
Contact	[redacted], Treasurer
Address	[redacted]
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Telephone	[redacted]
Company Number	SC223120
Charity Number	SC032520
Date of Application	6 April 2026
Relevant Authority	Aberdeenshire Council
Type of Request	Lease (25 years) under Part 5, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

1. Executive Summary

Woodhead & Windyhills Community Trust Ltd (WWCT) is a long-established community-owned charitable organisation that has successfully managed and protected 104 acres of woodland and the nationally significant Windyhills Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for over 25 years. The Trust is seeking a 25-year community lease from Aberdeenshire Council for part of the Woodhead Community Centre car park under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

The asset transfer will secure the future of a critical piece of community infrastructure that provides the principal access point to Woodhead Woodlands, the Windyhills SSSI, the community playpark, local recycling facilities and a range of educational, recreational and environmental activities. Without the continued availability of this car park, visitors would have limited and potentially unsafe parking options on the adjacent B9005 road, reducing access to one of Aberdeenshire's most valued local natural assets.

The Trust's proposal is centred on protecting and enhancing public access rather than changing the current use of the site. The car park will remain freely accessible to all users.

WWCT has demonstrated a strong track record of responsible governance, environmental stewardship and successful project delivery. The Trust has secured external funding, managed conservation obligations associated with the SSSI, restored access following storm damage, and worked collaboratively with organisations including NatureScot, the University of Aberdeen and the Natural History Museum. These partnerships underline both the scientific importance of the site and the Trust's capability to manage community assets effectively.

The project is financially sustainable. The proposed lease cost of £1 per annum represents a modest commitment that can be readily absorbed within the Trust's operating budget. Financial forecasts show that, following one-off establishment costs in Year 1, the Trust will generate annual surpluses and contribute positively to the Trust's long-term reserves. The Trust also has a proven history of fundraising, securing grants and maintaining financial resilience.

The proposed transfer will deliver clear and measurable benefits, including continued public access to woodland and SSSI resources, protection of community infrastructure, support for recreation and wellbeing, enhanced environmental education opportunities, and the preservation of an important local asset for future generations. The proposal is strongly supported by community members, partner organisations and stakeholders who recognise the importance of safeguarding access to this unique natural heritage resource.

By granting this lease, Aberdeenshire Council will enable a well-established community organisation to secure the long-term future of an asset that supports community wellbeing, environmental stewardship, education and tourism while ensuring that the Woodhead Woodlands and Windyhills SSSI remain accessible, protected and valued for many years to come.

2. Organisation and Management

2.1 About the Organisation

Woodhead and Windyhills Community Trust Ltd is a company limited by guarantee (Company SC223120) and a registered Scottish charity (Charity SC032520). It was established over 25 years ago to purchase 104 acres of woodland from Tarmac, supported by a successful application to the Scottish Land Fund.

The Trust is a voluntary community body representing the interests of the local community in and around Woodhead of Fyvie, Turriff. Its primary purpose is to own, manage, and preserve the woodlands and SSSI site for the benefit of the community and the public.

2.2 Governance and Management Structure

The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees elected from the membership. The majority of trustees are local residents who personally use and benefit from the woods, play park, and recycling facilities. This ensures close community oversight and rapid response to any issues with the assets. Local trustees will carry out regular visual monitoring of the leased car park area, including its surface, drainage, signage and agreed boundaries (the outbuilding is not included in this application). Any defects, hazards or encroachment issues will be recorded and reported to the Board so that the Trust can arrange appropriate action.

Key roles within the Trust include:

- Treasurer – [redacted] (primary contact for this application)
- Trust Chair
- Board of Trustees – comprising 6 local residents with relevant skills in land management, finance, environmental compliance and project management. The Board will oversee inspections, maintenance, repairs, insurance and compliance with the terms of the lease.
- Professional advisers – engaged as required for accountancy, environmental, safety, and legal matters

2.3 Track Record

The Trust has a strong track record of responsible asset management and project delivery, including:

- Successfully applying to the Scottish Land Fund to purchase the woodland from Tarmac
- Ongoing management of NatureScot Operations Requiring Consent obligations under SSSI legislation
- Securing external funding and managing the Leader programme (2009/10)
- Managing the reopening of woodland sections in 2022 and 2024 following significant storm damage
- Facilitating consent from NatureScot for quartzite gravel samples to be removed to the Natural History Museum in London

3. Project Background

The Woodhead Community Centre car park is the primary and, in practice, the only realistic parking facility for the Woodlands — the main off-road walking and recreational area in Woodhead. The car park currently serves:

- Visitors to the Woodhead Woodlands and Windyhills SSSI
- Users of the community play park
- Users of the community recycling facilities
- Participants in educational and guided visits, including those organised by Aberdeen University, NatureScot, and community groups
- Attendees at community events such as the Trust's annual Plant Sale & Coffee Morning

Without the car park, visitors would be required to park on the 30mph B9005 main road, which carries significant heavy vehicle traffic, or on the limited roadside space in front of residential properties. The car park is therefore a critical piece of infrastructure that underpins safe and convenient access for the whole community.

The Trust has a long-standing formal agreement which provides public access to the SSSI site via a path from the car park to the southern edge of Woodhead Woods. The pathway was installed and is maintained by the Trust.

Prior to COVID-19, the Trust actively used the Community Centre for meetings, fundraising events, and community engagement activities, and arranged access to the Centre's toilet facilities for visitors to the SSSI, including visits by Aberdeen University.

This application arises from the need to formalise and protect the Trust’s long-term use of the car park, thereby safeguarding safe and convenient public access to these nationally important natural assets for future generations.

4. Proposal

4.1 What is Being Requested

The Trust is requesting a 25-year lease under section 79(2)(b)(i) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for:

- Part of the Woodhead Community Centre car park as delineated in the site plan attached – the outbuilding is not included in this application

The proposed annual rent is £1 per year. The Trust requests that any future owner of the Community Centre building be afforded direct access to the remaining car park area without needing to pass through the Trust's leased area.

4.2 Proposed Use of the Asset

The Trust has no plans to redevelop or change the use of the car park area at this stage. The intended use of the car park is to continue serving as the primary access and parking facility for the Woodlands, the SSSI, the play park, and the recycling facilities, remaining freely open to all members of the public.

4.3 Long-Term Vision

While the immediate priority is to secure and maintain public access to the Woodhead Woodlands and Windyhills SSSI, the Trust has a longer-term vision to enhance the educational and community value of the asset over the lease period.

Subject to the availability of funding and community demand, the Trust will explore opportunities to:

- Enhance educational resources relating to the Windyhills SSSI and the geological significance of the site.
- Support guided walks, educational visits and community events.
- Work with partner organisations, including NatureScot, the University of Aberdeen and the Natural History Museum, to improve visitor engagement and environmental learning opportunities.
- Maintain and improve access infrastructure to ensure the site remains welcoming, safe and accessible for future generations.

The Trust's long-term objective is to safeguard and enhance public access to this unique natural heritage asset while supporting recreation, education, community wellbeing and environmental stewardship. Future investment will focus on maintaining and improving access infrastructure, signage and interpretation materials, subject to community need and available funding.

5. Community Needs

The Woodhead Woodlands and Windyhills SSSI are used by a wide range of people from across Aberdeenshire and beyond:

- Families with young children using the woodland paths and play park
- Dog walkers, runners, and horse riders using the woodland trails
- Scout groups and other youth organisations
- Birdwatchers and naturalists visiting the SSSI
- Academic researchers and students from Aberdeen University (Appendix C) and other institutions
- Staff and researchers from national bodies including NatureScot and the Natural History Museum

The car park is an essential enabler of safe, convenient access for all of these groups. Without it, there is no safe off-road parking alternative within walking distance of the site. The educational boards within the woods and car park further support informal environmental learning for all visitors.

The recent decision by NatureScot to approve removal of quartzite gravel samples from the Windyhills SSSI for installation in a geological timeline at the Natural History Museum in London confirms the site's national and international significance. Sustained public access, underpinned by the car park, is essential to allow the community and visitors to engage with and appreciate this heritage.

There is wide community support for this application, as evidenced by comments in the attendance registers from the Trust's annual Plant Sale & Coffee Morning (Appendix B) and letters of support from Aberdeen University (Appendix C), Rothienorman and Monquhitter Community Council (Appendix D) NatureScot, the Natural History Museum, and local walking groups.

6. Project Resources

6.1 Organisational Capacity

The Trust has the skills, experience, and governance structures necessary to manage this asset effectively:

- Over 25 years of experience managing woodland, SSSI, and community assets
- Demonstrated ability to manage NatureScot Operations requiring Consent obligations
- Successful track record of securing and managing external grant funding
- Membership with the necessary skills for routine asset management, including monitoring the condition of the car park, including its surface, drainage and signage
- Access to professional advisers in accountancy, environmental, legal, and safety matters

6.2 Financial Resources

The Trust is financially self-sustaining through a combination of fundraising activities, charitable donations, and grant funding. It has maintained a reserve policy to cover running costs and unexpected expenditure. The proposed annual rent of £1 is within the Trust's routine operating budget.

The Trust covers its running costs primarily through organised fundraising events and charitable giving. A link to Just Giving is promoted through the Trust's website to allow ongoing public donations. Larger capital projects are funded through grants, for which the Trust has a strong track record of success.

7. Partnerships

The Trust has established productive partnerships with a range of organisations that support the objectives of this asset transfer request:

NatureScot	Regulatory body for the Windyhills SSSI. The Trust works with NatureScot on Operations Requiring Consent and has obtained consent for removal of geological samples to the Natural History Museum.
Natural History Museum	Has worked with the Trust and NatureScot to obtain and install Windyhills quartzite gravel samples in a geological timeline at the Museum.
Aberdeen University	Conducts research visits to the SSSI site, previously using Community Centre toilet facilities arranged by the Trust. Has provided a letter of support for this application.
School Croft Owners	Long-term agreement providing public access across their land from the car park to the southern edge of the Woodlands.
Local Walking Groups	Regular users of the car park and woodland paths.
Aberdeenshire Council	The relevant authority for this asset transfer request. The Trust seeks to work constructively with the Council to formalise a long-term community lease arrangement.

8. Asset

8.1 Description of the Asset

The asset being requested comprises of part of the car park associated with the Woodhead Community Centre, Woodhead of Fyvie, Turriff. The boundaries of the specific area requested are defined by the site plan submitted with this application. For clarity, the outbuilding is not included in this application.

8.2 Current Use and Condition

The car park currently serves as the primary parking facility for all users of the Woodlands, the play park, the recycling facilities, and the SSSI site. It is open to the public at no charge. Educational interpretation boards are located within the car park area.

A baseline inspection of the car park will be undertaken at lease commencement to record the condition of the surface, drainage, signage and agreed boundaries (the outbuilding is not included in this application) and to inform the maintenance programme.

8.3 Restrictions on Use

The Trust is not aware of any planning, environmental or other restrictions affecting the continued use of the car park as described in this application. The SSSI designation applies to the Trust's woodland rather than to the car park itself.

9. Risk Assessment

Risk	Likelihood / Impact	Rating	Mitigation
Loss of access to car park if no formal agreement is in place	Low likelihood / High impact	Medium	This application addresses the risk directly by securing a 25year lease
Car park surface deterioration	Medium likelihood / Medium impact	Medium	Trustees will monitor the car park regularly. Under the full repairing and insuring lease, the Trust will arrange and fund maintenance and repairs. An annual maintenance provision will be reviewed against inspection findings, with larger works planned and separately funded where necessary.
Future sale of Community Centre building restricting car park access	Low likelihood / High impact	Medium	Lease condition included requiring any future purchaser to have direct access to the remaining car park area without passing through the Trust's leased area
Reduction in Trust membership or capacity	Low likelihood / Medium impact	Low	Trust has demonstrated resilience over 25+ years with changing membership. Professional advisers are engaged for specialist matters
Insufficient funding for ongoing maintenance	Low likelihood / Low impact	Low	The Trust will include an annual maintenance provision in its budget, review it against inspection findings and use reserves, fundraising or grant applications for larger capital works.

10. Project Plan

Action	Timeframe	Responsible
Submit Asset Transfer Request to Aberdeenshire Council	April 2026	Treasurer / Board
Aberdeenshire Council validation and acknowledgement	Within 2 weeks of submission	Aberdeenshire Council
Council assessment and community consultation period	Months 1–6 post-submission	Aberdeenshire Council
Council decision on ATR	Within 6 months (statutory)	Aberdeenshire Council
Negotiate and conclude lease agreement with legal advisers	Months 6–9 post-decision	Trust / Legal Adviser
Monitor use of the car park, including the interface with any potential purchaser of the Community Centre.	Year 1	Board of Trustees
Review lease performance and community benefit	Annually from Year 1	Board of Trustees

11. Management Plan

11.1 Day-to-Day Management

The car park will be managed by the Trust's Board of Trustees, with day-to-day monitoring carried out by local trustees who are regular users of the site. The majority of trustees are Woodhead residents and are well placed to identify any issues promptly.

11.2 Maintenance

The car park will be maintained in a safe and usable condition throughout the lease period. The Trust will:

- Carry out regular visual inspections of the car park surface, drainage, and signage
- Arrange and fund repairs when required.
- Maintain the interpretation boards and any other public information materials within the car park area

11.3 Health and Safety

The Trust engages professional advisers for health and safety matters and will maintain appropriate public liability insurance for the leased area. Any hazards identified in the car park will be addressed promptly.

11.4 Community Engagement

The Trust will continue to engage with the local community through its annual Plant Sale & Coffee Morning and other events. Trustees will report on the management of the leased car park at Annual General Meetings. Community members are invited to become members of the Trust and to stand for election to the Board.

12. Success Measures and Monitoring

The Trust is committed to ensuring that the asset transfer delivers lasting community benefit. Progress will be monitored by the Board of Trustees and reviewed annually. The Trust will seek to achieve the following outcomes:

Success Measure	Monitoring Method
Continued free public access to the car park and woodland	Annual review and community feedback
Safe and serviceable condition of the car park	Regular inspections and maintenance records
Continued support for visitors to the Windyhills SSSI and Woodhead Woodlands	Visitor observations and partner feedback
Maintenance of educational and interpretation materials	Annual inspection
Ongoing community engagement through events and Trust activities	Attendance records and event participation
Financial sustainability of the leased asset	Annual accounts and reserves monitoring

The Trust will report progress through its Annual General Meeting and annual review of activities. Monitoring will include inspection records, completed maintenance, annual budget review, community feedback and continued public access.

13. Project Costs

Cost Item	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Year 3 (£)
Annual rent to Aberdeenshire Council	1	1	1
Legal costs (lease negotiation)	500	0	0
Annual routine car-park maintenance provision — amount pending inspection or quotation.	200	200	200
Insurance (liability, additional premium)	50	50	50
Council conveyancing charge	500	0	0
Total Expenditure	**1,251**	**251**	**251**

Note: Legal and Council conveyancing charges are one-off Year 1 costs. Rent, insurance and routine car-park maintenance are ongoing annual costs. The Trust will maintain a budget provision for routine maintenance and minor repairs. The Trustees recognise that larger capital works, including resurfacing and drainage improvements, may be required during the 25-year lease period and will plan for these through reserves, fundraising and external grant funding where appropriate.

14. Financial Appraisal

14.1 Income and Expenditure – 3-Year Forecast

Item	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Year 3 (£)
INCOME			
Fundraising events (Plant Sale & Coffee Morning etc.)	1200	1200	1200
Charitable donations (Just Giving & direct)	200	200	200
Grant funding (woodland management / SSSI)	0	0	0
Total Income	**1400**	**1400**	**1400**
EXPENDITURE			
Lease-related costs (see Section 13)	1251	251	251
Existing woodland management costs	400	400	400
Professional advisers (accountancy, legal, environmental)	140	140	140
Insurance (total)	360	360	360
Miscellaneous / contingency	100	100	100
Total Expenditure	2251	1251	1251
Net Position	**(851)**	149	149
Unrestricted Reserves	9149	9298	9447

Key observations: The Year 1 deficit reflects one-off set-up costs (legal fees and conveyancing charge) From Year 2 onwards the Trust operates comfortably in surplus. The Trust's existing reserves are sufficient to absorb the Year 1 position. The Trust has a reserves policy and its track record demonstrates consistent ability to cover running costs through fundraising and donations.

15. Marketing and Communications

15.1 Raising Awareness

The Trust will communicate the outcome of this asset transfer request and its plans for the car park to the local community through:

- The Trust's website, which includes a link to Just Giving for charitable donations and is updated with news of Trust activities
- The annual Plant Sale & Coffee Morning, which brings together a wide cross-section of the local community
- Direct communication with partner organisations including NatureScot, Aberdeen University, the Natural History Museum, and local walking groups
- Signage within the car park and woodland area informing visitors about the Trust's management role

15.2 Visitor Information and Interpretation

The Trust maintains a number of educational and interpretation boards within the car park and woodland. These inform visitors about the woodland, the SSSI, and the geological significance of the Windyhills deposits.

15.3 Community Engagement

The Trust is a voluntary, membership-based organisation. All local residents are invited to become members and to participate in the governance of the Trust. Trustees report to the membership at Annual General Meetings and seek the community's views on significant decisions. The asset transfer request itself has been designed with broad community input and enjoys wide community support, as evidenced by the letters of support and attendance registers submitted with the application.

Declaration

We confirm that the information contained in this Business Plan is accurate to the best of our knowledge and belief, and that the Woodhead and Windyhills Community Trust Ltd has the capacity, commitment, and community support to fulfil the obligations set out in this plan.

Organisation	Woodhead & Windyhills Community Trust Ltd
Signatory	[redacted], Treasurer
Date	21 October 2026

Appendices

Appendix A – Site Plan

Appendix B – Community Event Attendance Registers

Appendix C – University of Aberdeen Letter of Support

Appendix D – Fyvie, Rothienorman and Monquhitter Community Council Letter of Support

Appendix E – TUYWG Letter of Support