

REPORT TO: CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 5 MARCH 2026

REPORT ON: YEAR-ROUND OPERATION OF BROUGHTY FERRY CASTLE, MUSEUM AND GROUNDS

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND CULTURE DUNDEE

REPORT NO: 72-2026

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details further outcomes of engagement by officers of Dundee City Council and Leisure and Culture Dundee (LACD) with Historic Environment Scotland (HES), local organisations, and other interested parties, over the long-term funding and management of the Broughty Ferry Castle, Museum and Grounds. The report makes recommendations on the future operation of Broughty Castle, Museum and Grounds for a three-year period.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees to:
- (a) continue the current lease arrangement between Dundee City Council and Historic Environment Scotland as set out in para 9.1;
 - (b) continue to support the operation of the Castle, Museum and Grounds by Leisure and Culture Dundee with an operating model of year-round opening hours as set out in para 8.1 for a further three-year period;
 - (c) remit the Director of Leisure and Culture to continue to engage with national and local partners on options to deliver a future sustainable model for Broughty Ferry Castle.
 - (d) note that Leisure and Culture Dundee are continuing to seek funding from external bodies to contribute towards the running costs.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Executive Director of Corporate Services has confirmed that the agreement of these recommendations will result in costs of up to £95,000 per annum until financial year 2028/29. These would require to be added to the LACD management fee within the Chief Executive Services Revenue Budget 2026/27.

Dundee City Council will continue to fund the maintenance costs associated with the Castle. These are currently £30,000 per annum and provision is already assumed within Operational Properties Division of City Development Revenue Budget 2026-27.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A report detailing the outcome of engagement by officers of Dundee City Council and Leisure and Culture Dundee with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and other interested parties was previously considered by members at City Governance Committee on 27 February 2025 (Report 85-2025, Article II refers).
- 4.2 The report made recommendations on the future operation of the Castle, Museum and Grounds for a one-year period to allow further engagement with local and national partners.
- 4.3 The decision of the Committee was to provide additional one-off funding for Leisure and Culture Dundee to support the continued opening of this attraction on a reduced hours basis as outlined

in report 85-2025 pending further engagement on the delivery of a future sustainable operating model.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

5.1 Partnership Activities

5.1.1 Broughty Ferry Traders and Leisure and Culture Dundee have undertaken a variety of actions to raise funds, increase awareness of the Castle, and increase footfall. These are detailed below:

- New market in the grounds of the Castle (July, August, and October 2025) with more booked in for 2026.
- New map of Broughty Ferry which highlights the Castle (June 2025)
- A re-enactment weekend (August 2025)
- Taking part in 'window spotting' (July 2025)
- Free family drop-in sessions in the summer (July / August 2025)
- Permission granted for a sauna for the grounds of Broughty Ferry Castle (July 2025)
Sauna operational from November 2025
- Dolphin watching timetable (June 2025)
- New binoculars at the Castle which people can borrow (May 2025)
- New signage and new cashless donation boxes, as well as training for Visitor Assistants in asking for donations. (July 2025)
- New donation points across Broughty Ferry via a QR code. (June 2025)
- Huge deckchairs as a tourism attraction (May 2025)
- Celebration of Orchar's 200th anniversary (September 2025)
- Promotion as a wedding venue, with two weddings being held in 2025/26

5.2 Broughty Ferry Traders

5.2.1 LACD has continued to liaise closely with Broughty Ferry Traders, who have been incredibly proactive and have supported a range of activities as well as soliciting donations. They have set up an independent 'Friends of Broughty Ferry Castle' group which will enable further fundraising and potential access to funds which are not available to larger organisations.

5.3 Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

5.3.1 Engagement between LACD and HES officers has continued, with HES responding positively to initiatives which are using the building and the grounds in creative ways. As outlined in Report 85-2025, the organisation remains committed to working with LACD and DCC to continue discussions around a longer-term sustainable business model. However, at present HES has no planned actions which would provide a like for like operation in place of that currently provided by LACD.

5.5 Marketing Activities

5.5.1 LACD has significantly increased marketing initiatives over the past year to raise the profile of the Castle. A key part of this strategy has been the use of digital platforms, including targeted social media campaigns on Facebook and Instagram which have highlighted the Castle's rich history, scenic views, and family-friendly exhibitions. These posts often coincide with school holidays and key events, helping to attract both local residents and tourists.

5.5.2 A short-term partnership with a digital marketing agency, Radiator Digital, has resulted in a strong increase in visits to the Broughty Castle webpage. The refreshed design created a more engaging, visitor-friendly experience, supported by increased social media activity and targeted advertising that drove more relevant traffic. Web visits almost tripled year-on-year, from 3,217 between March and October 2024 to 9,270 during the same period in 2025, showing the effectiveness of the updated design and promotional activity.

The landing page and analytics setup was audited and optimised, strengthening messaging, visuals and photography within the existing site framework. Quicklinks were redesigned as visual elements, event highlights and historical context were added, and a refreshed gallery and prominent 'Donate Today' button improved engagement.

- 5.5.3 New lighting is being installed by Dundee City Council in spring 2026 which will bring with it marketing and tourism opportunities.

6.0 INCOME GENERATION

6.1 Funding Applications

- 6.1.1 Due to the current position of one-year funding, funding options from national partners such as National Heritage Lottery or Museum and Gallery Scotland are limited, as funders look for a longer period of sustained funding before considering investment. A three-year funding model would increase the likelihood of successful funding applications.
- 6.1.2 Applications have been made to several local trusts and foundations, and outcomes from these are awaited.
- 6.1.3 Should funding applications be successful, this will reduce the contribution required from Dundee City Council.

6.2 Donations

- 6.2.1 A new cashless donation point is in place and funding has been sourced from a local trust to purchase a second one. Donations between April and October 2025 totalled £4,693, including cash from visitors, QR code donations through the webpage, and contactless donations. This represents an increase of 102% on 2024/25, with donation per visitor rising from £0.06 to £0.16.

6.3 Shop Income

- 6.3.1 Given the reduction in opening hours to summer operation, year-end income for the previous year is not directly comparable. However, when comparing with the same period in 2024/25, shop sales increased by 14.3% to £6,792.

6.4 Event Income

- 6.4.1 Across the range of activities held within the Castle and Grounds £1,760 has been generated, not including the income from the sauna. A further programme of activities has been provisionally arranged for 2026, which should generate a further £7,140.

7.0 VISITOR FIGURES

- 7.1 In the 2025/26 summer season, the Castle had 28,748 visitors. This reflects positively in comparison with visitor numbers of 28,900 in the same period of 2024/25 given the reduction in opening hours from seven days a week to five.

8.0 OPENING HOURS

- 8.1 During the 2025 season new opening hours were trialled at the Castle, opening Wednesday to Saturday from the final day of the spring term (April 2025) to the last weekend before schools returned at the end of the October holidays (October 2025). There were mixed views as some visitors were disappointed to find the castle closed on a Monday and Tuesday. It is proposed that there is a return to year-round opening hours so that the Castle is accessible during the winter months.

9.0 LEASE

- 9.1 Dundee City Council holds a lease with Historic Environment Scotland. There is a remain open clause in the lease and a six month notice period. This lease would remain in place with DCC retaining LACD to run the visitor attraction for three years.

10.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate Senior Manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

11.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 11.1 The Council Leadership Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 None.

GREGORY COLGAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

26 FEBRUARY 2026

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