



22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025

**Community Partnership Team  
Civic Square  
Floor 3  
Motherwell  
ML1 1AB**

**Dear Community Partnership Team,**

**Application for Review to North Lanarkshire Council in relation to North Lanarkshire Muslim Women & Family Alliance (NLMWA) under Section 86 (2) of THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015 in respect of land at Langloan Street, Coatbridge, ML5 1HH.**

**We acknowledge the Council's recognition of our longstanding community engagement, inclusive ethos, and commitment to social empowerment. This letter serves as a formal request for Review to North Lanarkshire Council by North Lanarkshire Muslim Women & Family Alliance regarding the Decision Notice delivered 1 May 2025, in relation to NLMWA's Asset Transfer Request (ATR) for land at Langloan Street, Coatbridge, ML5 1HH (formerly the Janet Hamilton Centre).**

This application for Review is made according to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 under Section 86 (1) (b) (i), *where an asset transfer request is made to a local authority by a community transfer body and the authority refuses the request.*

In the Decision notice dated 1 May, 2025, the Council cited concerns around:

- The financial viability of the proposal
- The lack of secured capital funding
- Site complexity
- The absence of a full feasibility study
- The high "overall value and future potential" of the site

### **1. Financial Viability & Capital Funding**

While the Council has expressed concern over the current absence of secured capital funding, we believe this must be contextualised within the real-world funding landscape for community-led regeneration projects. Specifically, we have explored major public funding streams, including the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF), to support place-based community



regeneration. We have expressed our interest and engaged in early discussions regarding our proposal. However, as is typical with large public funds, we have been unable to fully apply or secure such funding prior asset ownership, a condition that cannot be met until the asset transfer is approved.

Despite these structural barriers, our Business Plan outlines a clear and multi-strand financial strategy, including:

- A robust contingency plan, allowing for up to 5% reduction in core funding (*Submitted Document Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 4-6*).
- A diversified income generation model includes room rentals, café services, and community hire (*Submitted Document Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 4-6*).
- Community pledges via Zakat and other culturally specific funding streams (e.g. “Goodly Loans”), backed by actual community engagement. Ongoing exploration of innovative financing tools through SCVO and DTAS to support democratic and community-led financial models. Furthermore, we received a recent update regarding this matter that has now been added into the democratic finance team agenda (*Submitted Document Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 4-6*).

The points referenced above are already detailed in Part 4 of our submitted Business Plan section 4-6, which was included as part of our original Community Asset Transfer application. Our strategy is designed to mitigate funding risks while pursuing appropriate grants at the right stage of project development. The level of financial planning and flexibility presented in our submission demonstrates the realistic viability of our approach given the access and timing constraints we have faced.

## 2. Site Complexity

We recognise the Council’s concern regarding the overall site configuration; however, our asset transfer request is specifically for a clearly defined and manageable portion, approximately 2.75 acres, which:

- Reflects the land that was active community use with a history of over four decades of serving the local population (*Submitted Document Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout Proposal, Section 2: Maps and Area of Land Requested; and Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 2-3*).
- Includes existing infrastructure and direct road access, making it suitable for continued community activity without requiring major infrastructure redevelopment (*Submitted Document Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout Proposal, Section 2: Maps and Area of Land Requested; and Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 2-3*).
- Occupies a relatively flat and functional section of the site, unlike adjacent areas which are steep, uneven, or impractical for immediate use or development (*Submitted Document Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout Proposal, Section 2: Maps and Area of Land Requested; and Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 2-3*).

In terms of site management and legal risk, we have taken a proactive and considered approach:



- We have drafted a legal responsibilities agreement that clearly defines maintenance duties, access rights, and operational responsibilities between parties involved. This ensures that all users of the site have clarity and accountability, reducing potential legal or logistical challenges (*Submitted Document Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout Proposal; Section 3: Terms and Condition to Apply to Request; and Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 4*).
- The proposed agreement specifically outlines the shared use and maintenance of common areas, such as entrances or shared paths, facilitating smooth and cooperative day-to-day operation (*Submitted Document Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout Proposal; Section 3: Terms and Condition to Apply to Request; and Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 4*).

Importantly, our request allows the remaining 7+ acres to stay with the Council or be made available to other organisations in future. This demonstrates:

- Our measured and realistic understanding of site potential and limitations.
- A collaborative attitude that supports future development and other community initiatives.
- A commitment to cohesion and inclusivity, by not seeking exclusive control of the wider site, but instead enabling wider benefits and flexible planning for all stakeholders.

This approach reflects both the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015's spirit of cooperation and best practice in land stewardship, reducing site complexity through clarity, proportionality, and partnership.

#### **4. Feasibility Study – Proportionality and Evidence Provided**

While we acknowledge the Council's concern regarding the absence of a full feasibility study, we respectfully submit that our Business Plan presents a robust partial feasibility across several critical dimensions:

- **Market Analysis:** detailed assessment of demand and service gaps in the area, showing clear alignment with local community needs (*Submitted Document Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 2-5*).
- **Development Phases:** a realistic, phased growth model matched to resource capability and community benefit, with flexibility for future scaling (*Submitted Document Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 2-5*).
- **Architect and Valuer Engagement:** we worked with professionals to provide a layout vision, indicative costings, and two independent land valuations tailored to our 2.75-acre request (*Submitted Document Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout; and Section 2: Valuation Report*).
- **Financial Forecasts & Social Impact Metrics:** our plan outlines how the project will be sustainable and impactful, based on comparable models elsewhere (*Submitted Document Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 2-5*).



It is also important to note that there were significant constraints throughout the CAT process, despite this, our submission demonstrates meaningful pre-feasibility work, including:

- Topographical considerations
- Community consultations
- Spatial modelling for future use

This approach reflects a responsible and staged development process, as is customary for community-led regeneration. Despite the limited site accessibility and safety concerns, which prevented full-scale engagement of construction and technical experts on-site; and timeframe constraints and lack of access to Council data that would normally support a more detailed feasibility assessment. The information we have provided clearly demonstrates our commitment, capability, and strategic vision, and reflects the level of feasibility appropriate for a community organisation seeking a manageable portion of land for immediate and long-term community use.

### **3. Overemphasis on “Overall Value and Future Potential” of the Site**

The Council’s reliance on the speculative “future potential” and high commercial valuation of the entire site fundamentally misaligns with the intended social and community use proposed by NLMWA. This framing raises both legal and procedural concerns under the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015*, which requires local authorities to consider community benefit over market-driven speculation when assessing asset transfer requests.

We respectfully submit the following:

- Our independent community valuation of £100,000, conducted by two RICS-accredited valuers, is based on realistic comparable asset transfers and reflects the non-commercial, community-focused nature of our intended use (*Submitted Document Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout; and Section 2: Valuation Report*).
- The District Valuer’s £1 million assessment appears to be premised on commercial value, a use which does not apply to our request, nor reflects current planning status, feasibility, or community context.
- Our business plan explicitly proposes community-led regeneration, not profit-driven development. Applying a commercial valuation to a social project undermines the statutory intent of empowering community organisations to take ownership of local assets for public benefit.
- Moreover, the portion requested (2.75 acres) represents only a fraction of the total 9.82 acres site. Our willingness to leave over 7 acres available for future Council-led or partner development evidences our cooperative approach, ensuring that “future potential” can still be realised in a complementary and inclusive way (*Submitted Document Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout Proposal, Section 2: Maps and Area of Land Requested; and Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan Section 2-3*).
- In financial terms, the social value we generate exceeds the land’s market value: through improved well-being, youth inclusion, digital literacy, and volunteer empowerment, we conservatively estimate a Social Return on Investment (SROI) of over £565,000



annually, and these estimates likely understate the true value, as they exclude intangible community-wide benefits such as reduced antisocial behaviour, increased civic participation, and long-term resilience-building. This exceeds the financial valuation of the asset and underscores the long-term value of transferring this site for community-led use (*See attached Appendix SROI Methodology attached*).

NLMWA's journey toward securing a permanent community base spans over several years, marked by repeated delays, limited transparency, and procedural setbacks. Our Community Asset Transfer journey began in 2018, when we engaged with North Lanarkshire Council through meetings and correspondence with the then CAT officer, Rosalyn Griffith. In 2019, we submitted an initial questionnaire expressing interest in a CAT, but faced continued delays, especially relating to site information. The lack of a formal CAT policy at the time left us navigating an unclear and inconsistent process. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted progress, and in 2021, our request to conduct a community centre survey was refused.

In 2022, we re-engaged with the Council and were advised that our original preferred site (the Old Monkland Community Centre) was "fully utilised." It was only then, after years of correspondence and persistence, that the Janet Hamilton Centre & Coatbridge Outdoor Centre was suggested as a viable alternative for a CAT. From that point, we focused our efforts and developed the current proposal with full engagement and good faith.

This history reflects not only missed opportunities for our community, but also a wider issue of exclusion and inequality. For over 30 years, NLMWA has served underrepresented and minority communities in North Lanarkshire without access to a dedicated, permanent facility, something that is routinely afforded to other groups. This lack of equitable access has materially limited our ability to grow services, attract core funding, and establish a visible presence in the area. The rejection of our current CAT request risks extending a pattern of structural disadvantage that contradicts both the spirit of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Council's own equality and inclusion objectives.

To conclude, we urge the Council to apply balanced judgement, reconsiders the refusal and gives full weight to the statutory objectives, social benefit, and fairness principles under the Community Empowerment Act and not solely based on hypothetical future gains, but on measurable community outcomes and realistic valuation aligned with the purpose of the asset transfer. We remain committed to working collaboratively with the Council to achieve a balanced, community-first solution and would welcome further discussion.

We would like to note that several of the points referenced in this appeal are already detailed in the submitted documents, which was included as part of our original Community Asset Transfer application. For ease of reference and to ensure full transparency, we are also attaching the following documents with this email:

- Section 2: Area of Land Requested New Layout Proposal
- Section 2: Maps and Area of Land Requested
- Section 2: Valuation Report



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- Section 3: Terms & Condition to Apply to the Request
- Section 4: NLMWA Business Plan
- Appendix: Social Return on Investment (SROI) Methodology

Yours sincerely,

North Lanarkshire Muslim Women and Family Alliance (NLMWA)



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