In order to buy the Court House, DACIC needs to know that it can raise the money for the purchase, as well as to finance any changes to the building to facilitate a new use, to make repairs and to run it sustainably.

The building has been valued at £115,000.

Scottish Court Service has given these figures:

* + Running costs £45k pa
  + Depreciation costs £24k pa
  + Maintenance backlog of £186k

At the Public Meeting on 27th August DACIC agreed to consider future use to include:

* Retain the Service Point, Tourist Information and Registrars Office
* Review uses of rest of the building to generate income
  + Office lets
  + Weddings & Lectures
  + Exhibition Space for Historylinks
  + UHI student accommodation

Action to date

* HIE appointed Consultant to carry out a Feasibility Study
  + Included Conservation Architect to carry out a Conditions Survey
* Architectural Heritage Support Trust Viability Study for bedroom conversion
  + miArchitects, Torrance Partnership, HGS Structural Engineers
* Consulted locally with SC Mackintosh, Dornoch Castle Hotel, Jail Dornoch, UHI, Royal Dornoch Golf Club, Historylinks, Business Gateway, Service Point, Planning, Building Control & Conservation Officer at Highland Council
* Obtained detailed information on building maintenance from Scottish Court Service
* Reviewed funding streams – Scottish Land Fund for acquisition and Heritage Enterprise Fund for building conversion to sustainable business.

Conclusions

* Office lets do not provide sufficient income to cover the maintenance burden
* Only 9 civil wedding a year are attended by 20+ people and only 3 by 40+
* Historylinks could provide a display but could not make a financial contribution
* The use of bedrooms by UHI in term time and as tourist accommodation in the summer generates enough to cover the maintenance burden but there are significant capital costs (£400k) in the conversion due to fire safety measures, and associated delay in implementation
* The conservation architect’s report identifies £770k to be spent on the building
* The time frame of Community Right to Buy means we have to decide **now** whether to buy.
* We do not have a sustainable business plan **now**, so we don’t believe we can proceed.

Next Steps

* Scottish Court Service will put the building on the open market
* Highland Council/Visit Scotland can remain as a tenant until/unless the building is sold
* If a buyer is not found the community may have a second chance to work up a proposal
* There may be other and better ideas, but within the timescale the DACIC board has not found a sustainable option.
* DACIC would welcome further ideas from the community and has vacancies on the board