

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL OFFICIALLY HANDS OVER ICONIC LANDMARK TO LOCAL ARTS CHARITY



The future of one of Kilmarnock's most iconic buildings was officially secured on Wednesday the 20th of February 2019 as East Ayrshire Council handed over the keys of Kilmarnock Academy to local charity, Centrestage Communities. The exchange comes as arrangements are formally concluded for what is considered to be the largest Community Asset Transfer in Scotland to date.

Centrestage currently operates from seven sites across Ayrshire, but this transfer of ownership will see the development of the 'Centrestage Village' within the B listed former Kilmarnock Academy building – a move which will enable Centrestage to deliver all of its core activities from a single location, allowing growth across all projects and offering significantly increased opportunities to work with and support new and existing local and regional organisations and partners.

Councillor Elena Whitham, Depute Leader of East Ayrshire Council said: "This is a proud day for both East Ayrshire Council and Centrestage as we celebrate our combined efforts and hard work to make this transfer happen.



"At a time when so many community facilities in other areas are under threat, it's great to know that, thanks to our Community Asset Transfer scheme, not only have we been able to preserve one of the most iconic buildings in our town, we will also be supporting a hugely successful local charity in its expansion plans, as well as contributing to the enhancement of Kilmarnock's Cultural Quarter.

"Centrestage has a proven track record of working with communities and individuals to nurture and promote social enterprise and entrepreneurship. This move will allow them to create new employment and volunteering opportunities as well as contributing to town centre regeneration, and our local economy as a whole."

"Empowering and enabling local community groups to assume responsibility for local assets is only one of a number of initiatives we have to encourage local groups and organisations to take the lead in helping to reshape their own communities. To date, we have successfully completed 50 community asset transfers. Other initiatives such as participatory budgeting and community led action plans also ensure that local people continue to have opportunities to become more actively involved in the shaping the future of East Ayrshire."

A program of works is currently underway to ensure the 1898 original building and more recent structures are easily accessible for visitors to enjoy all that the Centrestage Village will provide visitors from across Ayrshire and beyond.

Fiona McKenzie, CEO of Centrestage said "To be able to retain the Kilmarnock Academy site as an educational facility from which the whole community, regardless of age, background or experience, will be able to benefit is a true privilege and challenge and is not a decision that we have taken lightly. We are totally committed to ensuring Centrestage Village becomes a destination for the whole community to be able to come together, to celebrate and respect its history, whilst creating new stories for the future."

In 2018, the Kilmarnock Academy Legacy Project was awarded £2m from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF), which supports projects in disadvantaged and rural communities.

Communities Secretary Aileen Campbell said:

"I'm delighted that the transfer of this important building has now been concluded. We've been able to support East Ayrshire Council and Centrestage with £2 million from our Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, to allow the redevelopment of this iconic landmark.

Community-owned buildings can be powerful catalysts for change. The redevelopment of Kilmarnock Academy as a new home for the charity Centrestage will help expand the



work they already do to improve people's lives. I look forward to seeing the Centrestage Village take shape and seeing the positive impact it will have on local people."

This funding will contribute to the development of the Centrestage Village, including the creation of the arts, educational, community and creative spaces across the former Kilmarnock Academy site.

ENDS

High res photography available on request

Included in the image L-R are:

- Angela Graham, East Ayrshire Council, Transformational Programme Lead
- Cllr Elena Whitham
- Cllr Douglas Reid
- Fiona McKenzie, Centrestage CEO
- Eleanor McLaren, Centrestage Chair
- Paul Mathieson, Centrestage COO

For further information related to this PR, contact Frank Gormanley.

frank.gormanley@centrestagemt.org.uk T:07702345691

Centrestage is a Scottish Charity Limited by Guarantee: Charity No: SC039611