



Councillors Information



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1.0 Introduction

This document is intended to provide background information for use by local councillors of North Ayrshire, in relation to the support sought by Magnum Ice Dance and figure Skating Club (MIDFSC). As well as MIDFSC members and North Ayrshire residents acting as individuals, who wish to understand and question the reasons for decisions made by our local council.

MIDFSC are seeking support and assistance from local councillors in relation to the closure of the Magnum and the intended relocation of existing ice facilities to Auchenharvie, following it's refurbishment, and the proposed reduction in ice time available to MIDFSC.

The Club's main questions which require support are as follows:

1. Why has the council chosen to ignore the recommended solutions of the Genesis Report, as commissioned by North Ayrshire Leisure, which likely costs tens of thousands of pounds to produce?
2. Why is Auchenharvie being closed on 17th August 2009, when the refurbishment work will not commence until February 2010 at the earliest, but more realistically May 2010?
3. Why withdraw ice from a skating club that has offered to provide a financially viable and stable structure to the existing users at Auchenharvie?
4. Why has the practice of selling "patch ice" at Auchenharvie been allowed to continue for so long, when it has resulted in annual operating losses at Auchenharvie.
5. Why are North Ayrshire Leisure (NAL) proposing to allocate nearly half of the existing available ice sessions to Auchenharvie Skating Club to the detriment of the Magnum Club?



2.0 Genesis Report

Genesis Strategic Management Consultants were commissioned to provide a “Strategic Review for North Ayrshire Leisure”. The final report was published in July 2007.

The review considers carefully the range of options available to NALL and NAC and recommends that best value for the longer term needs of the area would be achieved by:

- **Building a new leisure centre in Irvine** that allows the rationalisation of facilities to meet the expectations of the modern leisure market, local demands of the Irvine area and identified regional functions for Ayrshire.
- **Locating the new centre on the Recreation Park site** subject to the necessary land assembly being achieved.
- **Focusing the ice sports development in Irvine** with the closure of the ice rink at Auchendarvie and the development of the space on that site for a range of new and expanded activities.

The report states that *Ice sports at Auchendarvie have **not** shown the growth evident at the Magnum:*

- Income to the Magnum Ice rink has risen from £100k in 2001 to £240k in 2007 – 140% increase
- Income to Auchendarvie has slightly increased from £80k in 2001 to £95k in 2007 – 18% increase
- Although Auchendarvie has seen a slight increase in the last 3 years, ice visitor numbers have not shown the same proportion of increases as at the Magnum.
- Ice rink numbers to the Magnum have more than trebled since 2001, 20,000 in 2001 risen to 95,000 in 2007
- Ice rink numbers to Auchendarvie have fallen since 2001, 52,000 in 2001 down to 30,000 in 2007

The graphs contained at Appendix 1, extracted from the Genesis report, demonstrate that it would not be financially viable to site a new or refurbished rink at Auchendarvie as demand is clearly demonstrated in the immediate Irvine area.

Expert opinion has stated that, from a construction point of view, an experienced rink construction company would not recommend the construction of a new ice pad on top of an existing ice pad. The technical difficulties brought on by years of perma-frost increase the costs exponentially.



3.0 North Ayrshire Leisure Decision

Quotes from North Ayrshire Leisure:

KA Leisure has been established to provide access to recreational and leisure facilities for the community of North Ayrshire and our vision is to:

Provide opportunities for the local community and individuals to be more active more often through access to facilities and delivering programmes for sport, entertainment, recreation, social activities and more.

Our Vision is "More Than Just Sport"

NA Leisure has informed MIDFSC of their board decision that the Auchenharvie ice-rink is closing at this time purely due to financial reasons. Per the minutes from KA Leisure meeting held in March ...*The board agreed to close the ice rink at Auchenharvie Leisure Centre at the end of May to enable the proposed redevelopment of the ice rink to progress, and, restrict marketing expenditure, subject to financial performance. And a revised Amendment to the Business Plan 2009 be submitted to North Ayrshire Council.*

We fully understand the cost basis of this decision on the basis of the existing ice-time payment settlement method – each ice user is charged £2.80 at the door (known as “patch ice”) and the financial viability is wholly dependent on the number of users in any given session.

To the best of our knowledge, Auchenharvie have no financial record of paying for full cost ice.

The practice of selling patch ice has gone on for a number of years at Auchenharvie ice rink, despite the fact that is it unlikely to generate the required income to cover the costs of running the facility.

The financial model used at the Magnum Centre has been successfully applied for a number of years – where ice is paid for by the hour and is, therefore, not dependent on the number of users during a session. It is our belief that this model is simpler to administer and is priced at a level to ensure costs are covered, whilst providing membership at an affordable rate to the skaters.

Auchenharvie ice rink was originally planned to close at end of May 2009, however this has been extended to 17th August 2009, following a request by Auchenharvie Figure Skating Club, which would allow the rink to be available over the school holidays.

The cost of refurbishment of Auchenharvie ice rink is estimated at £4 million, per the last minutes of the Magnum Steering Group. There are other, more cost effective options available to NALL that could and should be considered – see 4.0 Alternative Options.



It was NAL's intention that there could be one figure skating club in North Ayrshire, rather than 2. Auchendarvie IDFSC has rejected the proposals put forward by MIDFSC and as such, NAL are now faced with distributing ice time in one facility between 2 figure skating clubs. However, this has resulted in nearly half of MIDFSC's existing ice sessions, which have been in place for more than 7 years, being given to AIDFSC, with MIDFSC being allocated 2 early morning sessions that did not previously exist.

We do not understand how the re-location of the ice facility to a location that is not easily accessible by most of North Ayrshire meets NAL's vision quoted at the beginning of this section.



4.0 Alternative Options

Cardiff Ice Rink

Cardiff ice rink was completed on an estimated budget of £2.5 million around 2 years ago. It houses a 60m x 30m ice pad, full hockey boards, Perspex protective barrier, 2,000 high level seats, 4 or 5 changing rooms and public convenience facilities including a cafe.

Although all reports state it is a temporary facility, it is only temporary as they intend to build a much larger 4,000 seats arena in the planned sports village but had to provide a “stop gap” as the existing rink site was sold for retail development. We have spoken with the rink builders and they have confirmed that this is a long-term viable rink at low cost. Today’s cost would be approx £3million on a green field site.

The alternative described above, presents a viable alternative to the refurbishment of Auchenhavrie ice rink. In the light of the Genesis report recommendations, we do not understand why it would not be possible to either locate an ice rink like this on unused property within Irvine or, indeed, convert an existing empty building within the Irvine conurbation area, which may cost less. Based on the Genesis Report information, with the existing ice rink use in Irvine, this poses a commercially viable option.

Wilson's Sporting Goods Factory

An example of a conversion could be the use of the Wilson's Sporting goods factory in Irvine, beside the Tesco Retail Park or similar property.

Assuming the internal layout of the warehouse is suitable (i.e. location of supporting pillars), we have received an expert estimate to convert this property to that similar in Cardiff for approx £1 million. This would include 60m x 30m ice pad, hockey boards, etc, car park upgrade and outside paint refresh. We wonder if there is any possibility of Tesco providing support for this option.

This may also provide some benefits to the local retailers close to this site, again, something that was referred to in the Genesis Report.

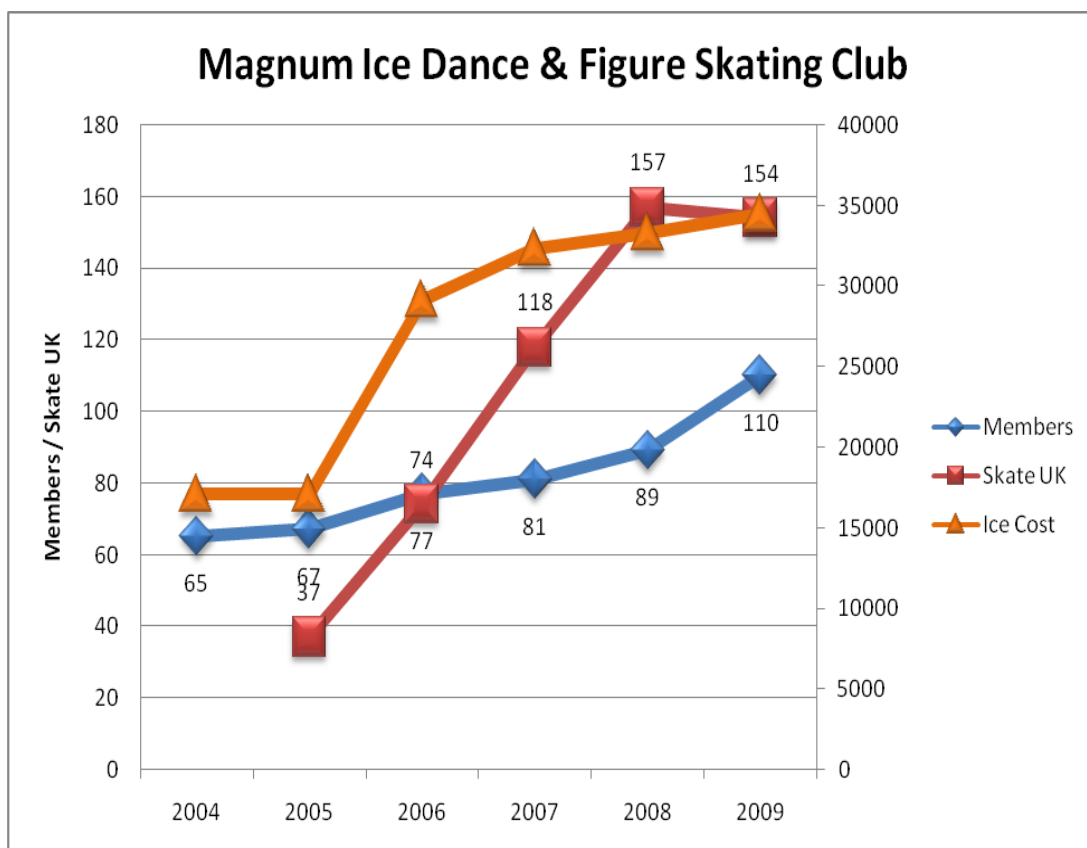


5.0 Facts and Figures

5.1 Magnum Ice Dance & Figure Skating Club

Magnum Ice Dance & Figure Skating Club (MIDFSC) has made use of the Magnum Ice Rink for the last 33 years on a weekly basis.

MIDFSC at present have 110 figure skating members and 170 Skate UK members (learn to skate from age 3 upwards) and has successfully grown over the last 5 years - see graph below.



MIDFSC pays for ice on a monthly basis and in the last two years, at NA Leisure’s request to assist with cash flow, has paid for ice one full month in advance. On current ice time usage, this equates to circa £36,000 per annum. Moreover, if MIDFSC were allocated the extra available ice this would rise to £58,000 per annum.

MIDFSC has operated using a successful model for the last 7 years, which has not only proven our financial viability but also, and more importantly, encouraged more young people to take up the sport of ice skating.



This clearly supports the effort to reduce obesity in young children and, indeed, NAL's vision to *'Provide opportunities for the local community and individuals to be more active, more often through access to facilities and delivering programmes for sport, entertainments, recreation, social activities and more'* [North Ayrshire Leisure Website].

MIDFSC Skate UK programme is the National Ice Skating Association (NISA) flagship skating development programme, which, not only teaches basic skating skills but, acts as a feeder for Ice Hockey, Figure Skating, Speed Skating and general skating. This obviously can only be beneficial to the sport and the financial viability of the rink.

On an annual basis in March, MIDFSC host a very successful National NISA accredited Open competition over two full days. Competitors take part from all over the UK and this year we had a record 244 entries from age 6 years to age 20+ years. For the last 3 years, we have been selected to run, in conjunction with our Open competitions, the qualifier for the NISA Cup Scottish Team. Individuals are selected to represent Scotland in the NISA Cup Competition.

As a result of our rink not being 60m x 30m, we cannot be considered to host the actual NISA Cup Competition (four nations of skating), which would obviously attract more business to the facility and local community.

The referee is the technical director of NISA and an international and Olympic judge, the judges are all NISA recognised. The competition generates revenue for the rink and other areas of the Magnum, since all facilities are under one-roof and competitor's brothers, sisters, mums and dads all make use of these.

MIDFSC run regular club competitions, which help to prepare the children for Open competitions and the like. More importantly, these competitions help to develop the children's confidence and self-esteem – picture the 4, 5 or 6 year old child on an empty ice rink skating to their choice of music in front of judges, other participants, parents, etc. There are often approx 200 to 300 spectators.

MIDFSC performed a Christmas show in 2008, for the first time in 12 years due to the growth of the club. This was a huge success and source of great enjoyment to the children taking part. All parents subsequently purchased a DVD of the show, produced by a local licensed professional.



MIDFSC recently hosted a full day seminar for the benefit of skaters, coaches and parents. All of whom were involved in a full programme of activities including 3 on ice sessions with 3 Level 4 coaches, International Referee lectures tailored to all age groups and a UKSCA accredited strength & conditioning coach presentation. As well, Safety on Ice talks from our Health & Safety Coach and Dance & Choreography from Dimitrios Paparakis, our dance instructor for the club. This was fully supported by the Big Lottery Grant scheme.

Due to our success, MIDFSC were in the process of reviewing our ice timetable, with a view to increase ice-time. This would have allowed our club to expand and encourage more children to take up the sport as well as develop our senior skaters and any recognised young talent to represent Scotland and Great Britain in the future.



Appendix 1 – Genesis Graphs

