

PITTENWEEM TOLBOOTH



Future Options Appraisal

v.2

April 2025

This report was prepared by Arc Architects Ltd. on behalf of East Neuk of Fife Preservation Society (ENFPS) and Friends of Pittenweem Kirk (FOPK).

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Fig .1: Aerial view of location (GoogleEarth).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Pittenweem is a traditional fishing village located on the southeast coast of Fife, which in recent years has established a reputation for visual arts. The village contains several significant historic buildings and sites, with the Kirk and contiguous Tolbooth located in a prominent central location. The Church Hall is less historically significant and located less centrally, but more easily accessed.

This report was initially commissioned by East Neuk of Fife Preservation Society in partnership with the Friends of Pittenweem Kirk (FOPK) to assess the condition and potential future uses for community benefit of the Pittenweem Church building, which is designated for sale by the Church of Scotland. The current objective of the FOPK as stated in the constitution is:

“That the Parish Church building at Pittenweem is retained or transformed then operated for public benefit through community asset ownership and management.”

There is a separate, but closely related, appointment of Community Enterprise, to assess business viability. These appointments were subsequently extended to include the contiguous Tolbooth, a related historic tower in the care of Fife Council, which was identified as offering opportunities for compatible community activity.

1.2 THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to enable the Friends of Pittenweem Kirk and their stakeholders to consider options for the future of these buildings and make informed decisions, and grant applications, based on a sound understanding of their viability.

The report presents each building in separate chapters, assessing their condition, opportunities and constraints. The recommendations are based on a joint assessment, informed by the market analysis, benefits mapping and financial viability undertaken by Community Enterprise documented in a separate report, but carried out in a collaborative process with the client group, Arc and other stakeholders.

This report summarises the physical condition of the buildings, based on an overview survey by Tom Morton, RIAS accredited Conservation Architect at Advanced Level, Emma Donnelly and Daniel Gibson, Architects, in January and February 2025 during good weather conditions, with access to all internal areas. Externally the buildings were examined from ground level and from the parapet of the Tolbooth. The inspection was visual and non-invasive, with a hammer test used for boss render. The assessment was also informed by the company’s recent experience in designing the repair of the Tolbooth steeple for Fife Council. The surveys identified a variety of repairs that are recommended to bring the buildings back into good order, though with varying degrees of priority.

The report also assesses the potential for the building to be adapted to new uses, in terms of regulatory compliance for Planning and Building Standards, with key issues

being accessibility, fire safety, toilet provision and energy efficiency. Spatial design, sensitivity of historic fabric, practicality and cost efficiency were also considerations. After an assessment of a long list of potential use options identified by the Business Planners, a preferred use was assessed in more detail, including indicative plans and costs based on an outline scope of work to alter and improve the building estimated by Quantity Surveyors experiences in this field.

The report is an overview assessment of the viability of options for the future use of these three historic buildings. In conjunction with the associated Business Viability Report by Community Enterprise, they come to a clear conclusion and recommendation about the best approach by the community client group, sufficient to progress the project to a more detailed stage of development.



Fig. 26: Undated historic view, Canmore SC1318355

2 THE TOLBOOTH TOWER

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 Location

The Tolbooth tower sits at the end of the High Street by Kirkgate in the centre of Pittenweem and abuts the kirk to the east and south. The decayed historic sandstone Mercat Cross stands immediately to its west facing the High Street.

Address: Pittenweem Tolbooth, Kirkgate, Pittenweem, Fife, Scotland, KY10 2LF.

National Grid Reference: NO 54912 2601

2.1.2 Heritage Status

The building is Grade A listed. HB number: LB39868. This listing is shared with the contiguous parish church, discussed in the previous chapter.

Listed description '*1588 4-storey tower with vaulted basement (originally the tolbooth) and stair turret, ashlar bell-chamber with balustraded parapet and stone spire added c 1630. 1633 Putensen bell.*

(<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB39868>).

The building is located within the Pittenweem Conservation Area, designated in 1985, noting '*Important characteristic features of this townscape setting include the main High Street which the church sits at the head of has a market town character and separately the harbour has the picturesque aesthetic of a fishing village.*'

2.1.3 Ownership

The Tolbooth is owned by Fife Council, who have invited use by the community, which could be formalised though transfer of ownership is not considered.

2.1.4 Fabric History

The tolbooth was built in harled rubble with sandstone dressings and completed in 1588. The building comprises a four-stage tower facing down the High Street, with a ground floor vault opening to the street and upper floors accessed from a separate forestair.

A fifth storey, in ashlar stone, comprising a corbelled and balustraded parapet and a spire, was added in 1630. Access to the upper floors was by a circular stair turret erected at the northeast corner of the tower. A lost forestair is shown in Figs. 2 and 15. A bell, which was cast at Jurgen Putensen's foundry in Stockholm, was installed in the tolbooth in 1663. A new weathervane was added in 1739 and a clock, designed and manufactured by the famous Pittenweem clockmaker, John Smith, was installed in the fifth stage of the tolbooth in 1773.

The upper levels were subject to repairs by Fife Council in 2023-4, including masonry, clockfaces and spire. The clock is maintained by Fife Council.

Internally, the principal rooms were the barrel-vaulted prison cell on the ground floor of the tower and the council chamber on the first floor.



Fig. 27: Vault entrance.

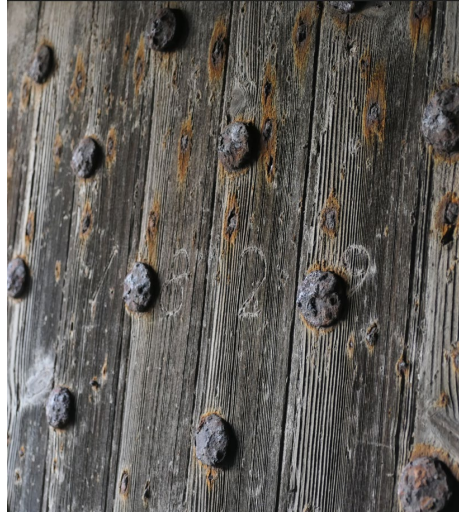


Fig. 28: Historic Graffiti, 1829.



Fig. 29: Vault interior.



Fig. 30: Historic bell.

The prison is notorious for the historic incarceration of women accused of witchcraft. In 1704, five local women were accused of taking part in the bewitching of a teenage boy, Patrick Morton, and were incarcerated and tortured in the tolbooth. One of the accused, Janet Cornfoot, confessed after being beaten by the local Presbyterian Minister, Patrick Cowper, then escaped and was promptly caught and crushed to death by a lynch mob.

After the tolbooth became unsuitable for use as a municipal building, a new town hall was erected in Session Street in 1940, and the tower subsequently became an integral part of the parish church. In July 2021, the Royal Burgh of Pittenweem and District Community Council, having secured ecclesiastical listed building consent as well as funding by Historic Environment Scotland, initiated a programme of restoration works on the tower. This primarily comprised repairs to the clock stage, parapet and spire.

2.2 CONDITION SURVEY

2.2.1 Structural Stability

The tower appears structurally sound. There are a number of cracked lintols on several floors suggesting historic settlement associated with soft ground conditions and periodic masonry alterations, including the additional weight of the fifth level and spire. A report by Narro Associates structural engineers in 2020 for Fife Council suggested that minor movement may still be ongoing.

2.2.2 Exterior Masonry

The masonry appears generally sound, though concealed behind inappropriate modern cement roughcast render. There are numerous weathered dressings that merit repair. The upper ashlar and steeple were all recently repaired by Fife Council and are in good condition.

Recommended repairs:

- Cut out and indent defective sandstone, allow nom. 1 m² of indents.
- Repoint dressings around windows in lime mortar, nom. 6m².
- Remove cement render and replace with lime harl nom. 150m².

2.2.3 Ground Floor Vault

The bottom of the tolbooth is a masonry barrel vault with holes through the apex for two bell ropes. The south wall has a window and doorway, with raised stone threshold. The room contains an electrical supply board and electronic controls for the clock. The room has a historic earth floor.

There are cracks in the lintols resulting from movement. Some of the stones show signs of salt crystallization on the surface and damage, possibly encouraged by the external cement render.

Recommended repairs:

- Minor pointing repairs.
- Stitch 2 cracked lintols with s.s. dowels and resin.

2.2.4 Upper Rooms

The series of small upper rooms all have timber floors on joists, partially lime plastered walls on the hard and internal partitions and boxings in pine. All in

reasonable condition, with only a little damp and reasonable ventilation. Lighting is inadequate. There are several cracked lintols in some of these rooms, requiring repair.

Recommended repairs:

- Minor pointing repairs.
- Stitch 2 cracked lintols with s.s. dowels and resin.

2.2.5 Staircase

The stone spiral staircase is tight and some of the treads are worn but is safe to access. It would benefit from minor repairs and better lighting.

2.2.6 Bells

There are two historic bronze bells that remain in operation. There are reported concerns about the stability of the bells, and this should be investigated by a specialist. The bells show signs of corrosion and would merit some conservation.

Recommended repairs:

- Clean off corrosion & wax 2 no. bells.
- Check stability, allow for & mechanism frame repairs.

2.2.7 Clock

There are three historic clock faces, which were thoroughly refurbished in the recent repairs. The clock mechanism is in working condition, maintained by Smiths of Derby under Fife Council contract.

2.2.8 Windows

The tolbooth has 5 small, fixed lights to the staircase and 7 larger timber windows of varying designs to the rooms. None of these are in good condition, and all require minor timber repairs, new putty, and decoration.

Recommended repairs:

- Refurbish 5 small, fixed lights.
- Refurbish 7 timber windows of varying designs.

2.2.9 Doors

The tolbooth has 3 simple external timber doors.

The door from the vault to the street is a historic boarded door with strap hinges, which is tired, but full of character including historic graffiti. The door to the spital stair is less interesting but remains in fair condition. The high-level door onto the parapet is also in fair condition. Locks and ironmongery are rudimentary.

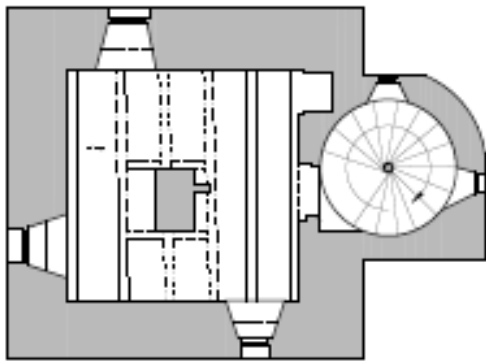
Recommended repairs:

- Minor repairs to 3 timber doors.

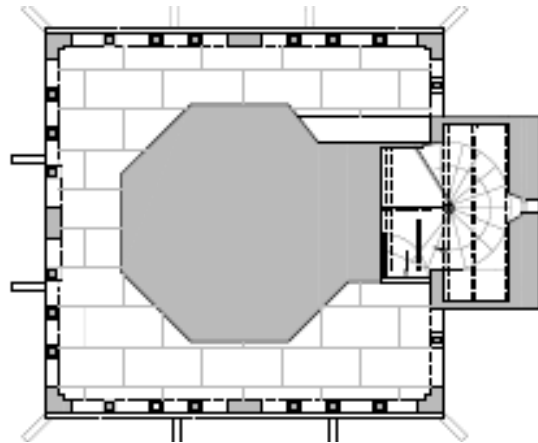
2.2.10 Services

There is a limited extent of electric light and power, served from the ground floor vault. There is no lightning protection, no fire detection, water services or heating.

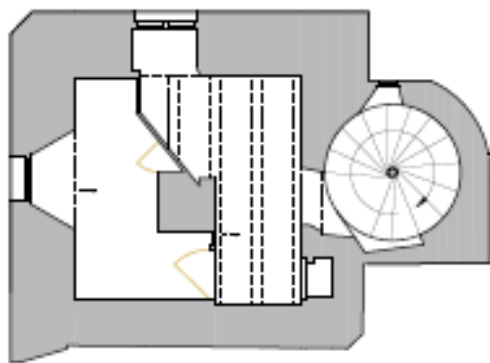
Fig. 31: Tolbooth, existing floor plans.



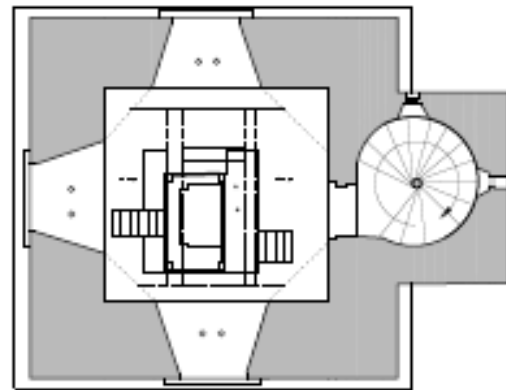
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



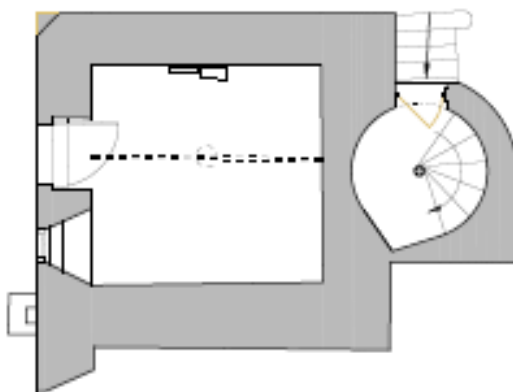
PARAPET WALKWAY PLAN



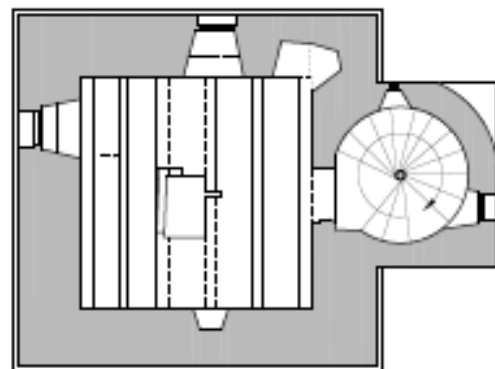
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN - CLOCK STAGE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



1 TOLBOOTH PLANS: EXISTING
SCALE 1:100 @ A4



2.2.11 Indicative Repairs Cost

The indicative cost of the repairs to bring the building into good condition has been calculated by the Quantity Surveyor. These indicative costs are set out in Table 4.

The proposed repairs are categorized using the British Standard 'BS 7913: 1998 the Guide to The Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings'. This system divides the proposed repair works into the following four categories -

Immediate (I): Work, which should be put in hand without delay for public safety or health and safety reasons, to prevent imminent damage or to arrest rapid deterioration. This can include further immediate investigative survey work.

Urgent (U): Work which should be put in hand within weeks, months, or within a year at the most. Failure to do so would be likely to result in significant further damage or deterioration and increased costs.

Necessary (N): Work which should be carried out before the next five-yearly inspection, for which there is time to plan, and which can be integrated with other work. This is work, which is due in order to keep the building in a state of good repair.

Desirable (D): Work, which is desirable, if not strictly necessary, but which may improve the functioning or performance of the building or enhance its architectural or aesthetic qualities. Alternatively, work which is not due, but likely to become due, before the next five-yearly inspection or which can sensibly be incorporated with other work.

In this case, almost all of the proposed repairs are classed as *Necessary*. In practice, this means, there is some flexibility to prioritise a scheme of repairs and tailor it with any improvement works, particularly in relation to opening the building to public access, in which case additional safety measures would be appropriate, especially at parapet level.

Table 4: PITTENWEEM TOLBOOTH ESTIMATED REPAIRS COST				
<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Urgent</i>	<i>Necessary</i>	<i>Desirable</i>
2.3.1	Exterior Masonry			
	Cut out and indent defective sandstone, allow nom. 1m ² of indents.		4,000	
	Repoint dressings around windows in lime mortar, nom. 6m ²		900	
	Remove cement render and replace with lime harl nom. 150m ²		45,000	
2.3.2	Ground Floor Vault			
	Minor pointing repairs.		1,500	
	Stitch 2 cracked lintols with s.s. dowels and resin.		300	
2.3.3	Upper Rooms			
	Minor pointing repairs.		1,500	
	Stitch 2 cracked lintols with s.s. dowels and resin.		300	
2.3.5	Bells			
	Clean corrosion & wax bells		1,200	
	Minor frame & mechanism repairs		1,000	
2.3.7	Windows			
	Refurbish 5 small, fixed lights		1,000	
	Refurbish 7 timber windows		4,900	
2.3.8	Minor repairs to 3 doors		900	
2.3.9	Lightning Protection		10,000	
	Scaffold		5000	
	Sub Totals		77,500	
	Prelims @ 13%		10,075	
	Contingencies @ 10%		8,758	
	Professional Fees & Expenses @ 18%		17,340	
	NET TOTAL		113,672	
	VAT @ 20%		22,734	
	GROSS TOTAL		136,407	

2.3 OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

In this section we assess the factors that will influence the Tolbooth's future use.

2.3.1 Current Use

The Tolbooth current has very limited active use. It hosts the town clock, its bell (mechanical) and the church bell (manual), which are operated from the ground floor vault.

There is no public access to the other rooms or the parapet, which offers a fine landscape view of the town and surrounding coastline.

The structure's historic character and physical arrangements create strong constraints but also some opportunities for future use.

2.3.2 Potential Uses

The small physical size of the Tolbooth's rooms limits their use, as does the spiral stair access.

There is potential to reinstate a probable previous door at first floor connecting to the church gallery, but that in itself is inaccessible and a separate fire compartment.

There is potential to utilize the upper rooms for storage, though vulnerable to damp, or for displays, not of limited access.

There is potential to provide guided access to the upper rooms and parapet for public appreciation of the building and town's heritage. Similar arrangements are in place in other historic church towers, such as the Dreel Halls in Anstruther and Kirkcaldy Old Kirk. This would require some minor improvements, including some discrete additional edge protection to the parapet, and interpretation.

There is potential to utilise the ground floor vault, which opens directly onto the historic public town centre. This could provide an occasional pop-up space for a variety of activities, such as a display or engagement space during the Pittenweem Arts Festival. This would require a new floating timber floor, and improvements to power and light, which could be achieved without impact on the historic fabric.

2.4 DESIGN PROPOSALS

2.4.1 Propose Use & Scope of Works

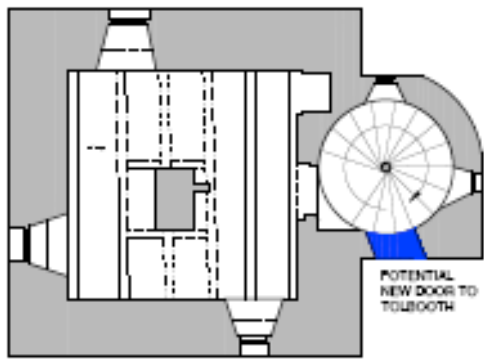
It is proposed that the ground floor vault be upgraded to provide space for occasional community activities. This would be a stand-alone, unheated space full of historic character and with direct public access from the High Street.

A new timber floor would be laid on top of the existing historic earth floor, allowing distribution of power and light from the current supplies. The door and window would be retained but improved. It would be appropriate to install an exhibition on the local witch heritage in this space.

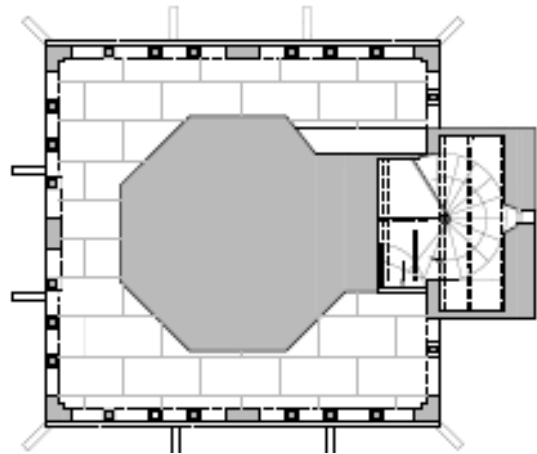
The upper floors and parapet would be open to occasional public access by guided tours. The upper rooms would have minor improvements and light interpretation.

This community use would be facilitated by, but is not contingent upon, community management of the adjacent kirk.

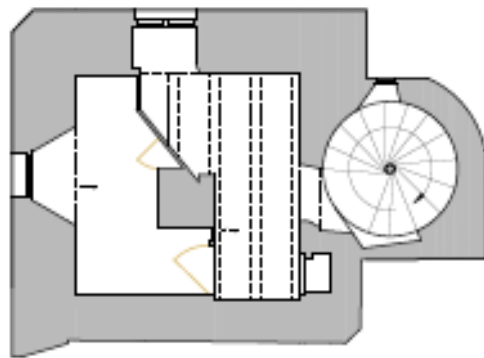
Fig. 32: Tolbooth, proposed floor plans.



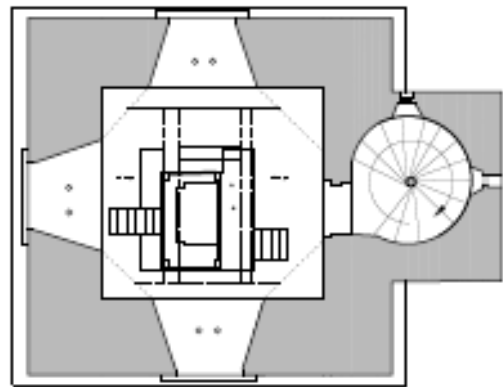
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



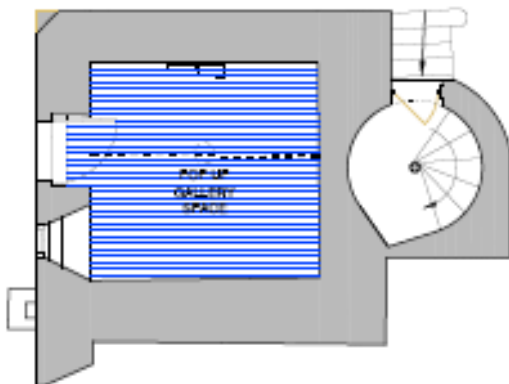
PARAPET WALKWAY PLAN



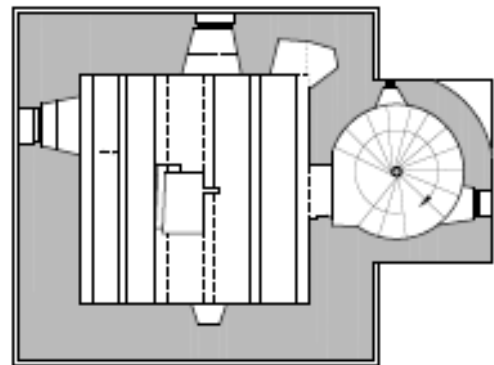
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN - CLOCK STAGE



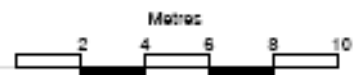
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



1 TOLBOOTH PLANS: PROPOSED
SCALE 1:100 @ A4



2.4.2 Indicative Capital Cost

The indicative cost of the alteration works to bring the building into this new use has been calculated by the Quantity Surveyor assuming that works would be undertaken in association with, and in addition to, some repairs work.

These indicative costs are set out in Table 5.

Table 5: PITTENWEEM TOLBOOTH ALTERATIONS INDICATIVE COST	
<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Ground Floor	
New t & g timber floor on joints, level to threshold, 12m2	5,000
Lighting and power	3,000
Heritage Display	6,000
Upper Floors	
New Lighting	5,000
Refurbish bell mechanism	3,000
Minor joinery and masonry repairs	3,000
Small interpretation display	5,000
Safety enhancement to parapet	
Sub Total	30,000
Prelims @ 13%	3900
Contingencies @ 10%	3390
Professional Fees & Expenses @ 18%	6712
NET TOTAL	44,002
VAT @ 20%	8,800
GROSS TOTAL	52,803