



Meeting of DHET Grants Committee

Item 3.1

3 June 2026

Historic Building Repair Grants Application Assessment: H294 St Mary's Lochee Church Hall

Background

The church hall is a category C listed building designed 1934-35 by the Glasgow/London trained architect, William Wallace Friskin (1889-1966), based in Dundee from 1920, and responsible for many distinctive local school, church, cinema and housing projects as a partner in Allan & Friskin in the post WWI period. It has group value (noted in the HES list description) with the church (JA Hanson, 1865, category A listed) and primary school (also Friskin, 1923-27, category B listed), and forms part of the wider grouping of buildings of architectural and historic interest of various 19th and early-to-mid 20th century styles, forming the nucleus of the conservation area high street area buildings, adjacent to Camperdown Works.

Lochee has long been and continues to be a focus for DHET funding (along with the city centre and parts of Stobswell). It contains data zones ranked in the top 5% (most deprived) in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and is also a focus area for DCC. Our Burnside Street project in partnership with Hillcrest Homes is nearby, also the fire-damaged former parish church previously approved for funding.

In 2022 DHET approved funding for a conservation plan for the St Mary's RC Church complex, completed in 2024 (H281 £4600 grant) which led to the appointment of Benjamin Tindall (experienced Edinburgh-based conservation architect and practice) who progressed this to a multi-phase conservation-led repair project intended to repair church, hall and former presbytery for both congregation and local community. Phase 1, repairs to the category A listed church, was funded directly by HES and completed earlier this year.

Church Hall Repair Project – Preapplication Discussions / Delegation

The project team initiated meetings with DHET beginning in 2023 when advice on eligible repairs was provided and a Phase 2 project was worked up in parallel with the Phase 1 project progressing on site. Specific detailed guidance on grant eligible works was provided with reference to the applicant's outline specification. A premature application was submitted in August 2024 and discussed at grants committee meetings in September and December 2024.

The following DHET priority assessment was made:

DHET project prioritisation: A B A A A

1 Building Location: A (for Lochee High Street)

2 Building Historic Value: B (for B or C listing)

3 Building Use: A as underused and being upgraded for community use

4 Project type and impact: A (comprehensive)

5 Applicant status – A (as voluntary/community/charity applicant)

The scope of the 2024 project's grant eligible costs was estimated by the QS at £472k, with sums totalling £420k set against 9 other funders but with only one other funding application had been completed.

The ask was for a conditional approval by DHET in order to support other funding applications (NLHF). There had been lots of caveats and uncertainties in the information so far supplied (no detail, costings not clear, no breakdown, no information about status of other applications).

On 5 March 2025 a delegation of 8 representatives of the project team and community group made a presentation on the project to Trustees, ahead of submitting an intended full application. The submission included explanations about the condition of the building, the external repairs (some grant eligible some not) required to roofing, brickwork and rainwater goods; the internal upgrading necessary for community activities (accessibility, toilets and kitchen facilities required – all ineligible), and various community engagement activities proposed. Other funding applications were being progressed.

Indicative QS costings had been produced (as above) but the project had not yet been tendered. DHET Trustees advised the group that a costed application was required before the application could be considered and the applicant project team undertook to keep DHET informed of progress.

Trustees were very supportive of the project but were unwilling to commit funds until tender costs were available.

Revised Application

Grant eligible costs: £346,000
Match funding achieved: £83,000
Other match funding targeted: £120,000
Shortfall (DHET targeted): £143,000 (40%)

Subsequent to this the project team further fine-tuned the project specification and reduced the list of potential funders to those most applicable to the project. Meetings continued with DHET representatives in the director's absence, the project was put out to tender and a detailed formal application was received in May 2026. This included an application form and 30 supporting documents. The tenders were time limited and we were advised of an indicative start date of 1 September.

Grant eligible costs based on the lowest of three tenders had been reduced to £346k, of which £83k had been secured from other sources including the local community. Other applications for £120k were pending, and this indicated that the applicant was looking for DHET to provide the balance of £143k or 40% of grant eligible costs (as previously discussed).

The intent was that the detailed application would be examined and fine-tuned for decision by the grants committee, allocating funding available to DHET from 1 October 2026 (subject to HES approval of the DHET 2026-31 application).

However, HES advised at a meeting with DHET staff on 21 May that the underspend from the awards to H262 (£105,250) and withdrawn applications H292 (£26,030) and H295 (£42,879) could be reallocated to fund specifically this (or another) project, along with the balance of £21,900, provided that this was reallocated and committed before 30 September 2026. Total available for all projects to 30 September is therefore £196,059. HES indicated that DHET's grant intervention rate need not be restricted to 40%.

The applicant was contacted and asked for an update on their costings (as non-eligible works are needed for leverage and they had marginally exceeded the fees percentage

threshold), and an update on the match funding applications, recommending that a timely response from the other funders' responses could help them access this funding.

The applicant's response was that an indicative offer from DHET would firstly help them secure the lowest and preferred tender at its current value. This tender required acceptance by 31 May but an extension to 5 June is being sought. Secondly, the applicant is of the view that the other funding sources are waiting for DHET's response to the application and that they are likely to commit following a DHET decision.

Assessment

Ultimately it is for DHET Trustees to determine the application.

The project has been a long time in development, with much previous input from the DHET team and Trustees. It meets all DHET objectives in terms of area/location, importance of building, grant eligible works, applicant status and professional team.

The project is ready to start now, but requires the match funding commitment from other funders (noting that £83k is already committed). If the match funding isn't achieved, the applicant would need to either reduce the scope of the project, allocate non-restricted funding intended for other projects or postpone the project further.

HES's advice that DHET is not restricted to a 40% intervention rate has precedent. A 50% rate was approved for a number of more recent projects including 55 Burnside Street, Maryfield Tram Depot (various), 49 Trades Lane, Miln's Building roof reslating; and a 75% intervention for the applicant's conservation plan and that for the Tram Depot conservation plan (as well as earlier charity/community projects for the Quakers, Gilfillan, YMCA etc).

It is recommended that DHET offers the applicant an indicative offer to be open for a limited period of time (such as 4 weeks), to be confirmed or withdrawn by DHET after this deadline, dependent on the applicant demonstrating that they have sufficient funding to progress the project.

The intervention rate of 50% with funding to a maximum of £173,000 is suggested.

This intervention rate is has the support of the grants committee chair because of the importance of the hall to the wider community and the fact that it is from a church organisation.

The confirmation to be dependent on all application details as required having been submitted and to a constitutive deed for continuing maintenance and clawback and a conservation burden (if not already covered in the phase 1 contract applied by HES).