

PE1721/D

National Trust for Scotland submission (EKOS report on Geilston Gardens) of 4 November 2019



Geilston House and Garden Economic and Options Appraisal

Final Report for



7th June 2019

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Economic and Social Development

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents an economic and options analysis of Geilston House and Gardens, Cardross. The purpose of the study is to consider a range of potential future options for Geilston, and through analysis, review and consultation, identify whether there is a sustainable investment proposition for the site, meeting the following objectives:

- a sustainable future for Geilston House and Garden;
- restoration of Geilston House to good order, for a use to be determined;
- Geilston Garden to remain open to the public;
- the organic growth and regeneration of the Geilston Estate; and
- an increase of the appeal and relevance of Geilston to the wider community.

Background

Since 1997, Geilston Garden has been operated by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) and from the following year onwards, opened to the public between April and October. It attracts between 9,000 and 12,000 visitors a year, but currently operates at a deficit (around -£115,000 in 2018/19), which is met by NTS through their general funds. NTS state that this arrangement is not sustainable in the long term.

B-listed Geilston House has now been unoccupied for over 20 years and, despite some remedial works, is deteriorating and requires large scale investment to return it to good order. In 2017, the NTS Board considered the future of the site and ultimately made a decision in favour of disposal. In response, the Friends of Geilston group was formed, which has been working to promote and preserve the gardens.

Options Appraisal

In taking forward this study, we have considered a wide range of potential new uses for Geilston, with a focus on revenue-generating uses that will support a sustainable future for the site.

The key conclusion of the options appraisal is that a compatible mix of new uses will need to be taken forward in order to meet the study objectives – no single use will guarantee the future of Geilston. However, the available evidence indicates a good case for taking a number of ideas forward, shown in green:

Multi-use activity space	Toilet facilities	Cafe	Food & drink cabin	Private housing	Holiday lets
Family activities & guided walks	Destination wedding venue	Extended/enhanced play area	Micro renewables scheme	Outdoor nursery	Closure of garden and sale of site
	Boutique campervan area	Rentable business space	Enabling development	Cruise ship tours	

Operating Model

Who owns and manages the asset is one of the key issues to be resolved ahead of developing a plan for regenerating the house and garden – with scenarios summarised as:

- full ownership by NTS, with fundraising/ promotional/ activities support from FOG (the status quo);
- new community trust own asset but NTS manage; and
- full ownership and management by new community trust – NTS support transition.

Next Steps

Section 5 in the full report outlines a series of next steps for Geilston, these can be summarised as:

- there are ways in which the deficit can be reduced or possibly eliminated through adopting a range of revenue-generating new uses and supporting the overall study objectives;
- Geilston House remains the primary challenge for the site, including the issue of whether to restore, or try to find a buyer who will take it on with or without the walled garden; and

- an emerging way forward suggests complementary roles for NTS, a Community Trust and FOG, where a development officer would be taken on to pursue the projects identified during the options appraisal and funding would be sought to support implementation.

1. Introduction

This report has been prepared for the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) and presents an economic and options analysis of Geilston House and Gardens. The purpose of the study is to consider a range of potential future options for Geilston, and through analysis, review and consultation, identify whether there is a sustainable investment proposition for the site.

The study was undertaken by EKOS between January and May 2019, with input from quantitative surveyors Brown and Wallace. It was overseen by NTS and representatives of the Friends of Geilston group (FOG), formed in 2017 to promote and advocate for Geilston Gardens, House, and Estate, for the benefit of the local community and beyond.

We are grateful for the assistance provided by NTS and FOG in undertaking the study and the depth of the knowledge and understanding of Geilston that they were able to share with us.

1.1 Study Objectives

The overall aim of the study was to consider options that would allow for a sustainable future for Geilston House and Gardens. An early task was to identify detailed study objectives which would provide a framework for the development and appraisal of options.

As agreed with NTS and FOG, the study objectives were defined as testing options that would enable:

- a sustainable future for Geilston House and Garden;
- restoration of Geilston House to good order, for a use to be determined;
- Geilston Garden to remain open to the public;
- the organic growth and regeneration of the Geilston Estate; and
- an increase of the appeal and relevance of Geilston to the wider community.

1.2 Background

Geilston Estate comprises 14 hectares in the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland. Located on the western periphery of Cardross, around 2.5 miles east of Helensburgh, the site takes in:

- Geilston House (Cat B. listed) – a small laird’s house with elements dating from the 17th to 20th centuries, unoccupied for more than 20 years and requiring extensive remedial work;
- the Steading (Cat C. listed) – former stable block, currently housing gardeners’ offices and volunteer storage/ kitchen facilities;
- cottage (Cat. C listed) – under let on a shorthold tenancy for residential occupancy;
- doocot (Cat. B listed) – used for storage;
- a small hut for admissions and vending of snacks to visitors (added in 2010);
- walled garden, potting shed and glasshouse (included under the House’s Cat B. listing);
- kitchen garden and orchard;
- small playground (added in 2017);
- woodland and footpaths around the estate;
- mill pond and remains of Kilmahew Mills; and
- the West Field and East Field – under lease to a local farmer for agricultural use.



The estate is illustrated in **Figure 1.1**, over.

Figure 1.1: Extent of NTS Ownership of Geilston (Pink border)



Map showing the approximate extent of the National Trust for Scotland's ownership of the Geilston estate. © Crown copyright and database rights (2016) OS 100023880. Scale: 1:2000 at A3. Aerial image taken 1 May 2011.

Source: Geilston House & Garden Conservation Statement, 2018

A Conservation Statement produced for NTS in March 2018¹ identified the heritage value of Geilston House and Gardens, and provided an assessment of the estate's significance. This built on detailed research undertaken by Glasgow University Architectural Research Division in 1998. The Conservation Statement attributed a level of significance to the house and garden against 16 cultural, social and economic values. Overall, the house and garden were found to be of 'some' (i.e. regionally important) aesthetic, scenic/ panoramic, architectural/ technological and educational value. The remaining indicators were of either 'limited' (i.e. locally important) or unknown value (insufficient information or no evident significance).

Geilston House itself dates back to at least the mid-17th century and has been adapted to meet its various owners' requirements since, with additions to the house being made until the early 20th century.

¹ Geilston House & Garden Conservation Statement, Haynes, N. for National Trust for Scotland, March 2018

In 1989, the then owner of Geilston – Elizabeth Hendry, resident at the property since 1910 – bequeathed the estate and a financial sum to NTS². Her companion continued to live in the property until her death in 1997. The following year, NTS opened the gardens to the public and this has remained the case since, opening between April and October but staffed and tended to on a year-round basis.

While other buildings on the estate have found new uses – with the stables repurposed as NTS offices and storage space and the cottage leased to tenants – the house was mothballed and its contents placed into storage, at an ongoing annual revenue cost met from general funds.



Geilston Interiors, January 2019

Comprehensive reroofing and leadwork was undertaken in 2005, and further emergency remedial work was undertaken following a condition survey³ in 2010, with grant funding received from Historic Environment Scotland. The house is wind and watertight, but its overall condition has continued to deteriorate. While some rooms in the building are in close to usable condition (used recently for summer art classes), others are in considerably worse condition and dry rot has set in in parts of the house.

The garden continues to flourish, with ongoing improvements being made over the last decade, including full restoration of the glasshouse in 2010, a small children's playground, a shelter within the woods, and the addition of a shed at the entrance for admissions with coffee vending machine.

At the same time, a major organisational review of NTS in 2010 identified that urgent changes were required to ensure a sustainable future for the organisation, including an operational restructure and stabilisation of finances⁴. Consultation with NTS members at this time found a large majority in support of this reform. Change within

² This was recorded independently in the NTS Accounts until early 2017

³ Austin Smith:Lord, 2010

⁴ Fit For Purpose: Report of the Strategic Review of the National Trust for Scotland, Reid, G., 2010

NTS has been an ongoing process, with the latest five year strategy launched in 2018.

In 2016, the NTS Board of Trustees was asked to consider the future of Geilston and, the following summer, approved the closure and/ or disposal of the property. The rationale for this decision relates to NTS' need to reduce an overall deficit along with a desire to rationalise the estate to focus conservation efforts on a smaller number of key properties.

Once the NTS position was outlined to local residents, a Friends of Geilston (FOG) group was established, both to support the gardens through promotional activity and fundraising, and to campaign for the preservation of – and public access to – Geilston Garden. FOG has just over 300 paying members and has produced a range of documents related to the past, present and future of Geilston, which were made available for the purposes of this study.

A process of engagement between NTS, FOG and other stakeholders has led to this economic assessment being commissioned, to identify and assess possible ways forward that meet the study objectives, as outlined in **Section 1.1**. The analysis presented in this report presents EKOS' independent view on the future options for Geilston. We have, however, benefitted from a collaborative approach to the study with NTS/ FOG and the substantial knowledge and input that have been provided.

2. The Current Position

Before the analysis was taken further, it was important to establish:

- the baseline context within which any future project would be delivered;
- the ownership and current financial position of Geilston;
- its standing with visitors, local residents, volunteers and other stakeholders;
- the condition of Geilston House and an updated estimate of the cost to bring it back to good order;
- statutory and planning designations; and
- other issues that may impact on future decisions regarding the house and garden.

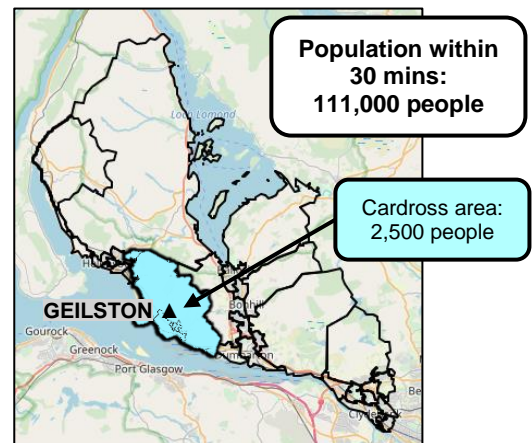
This then feeds through into an assessment of Geilston's economic potential and viable options for its future, as presented in **Section 3**.

2.1 Baseline Context for Geilston

Population

Cardross and the surrounding countryside area has a population of around 2,500. Like many areas of Scotland, the population is ageing, with a 20% increase in those aged 65+ over the last six years.

Research indicates that the typical visitor to heritage/ botanic gardens in the UK is within an older age group and belongs to a higher occupational group.⁵ The demographics of the area around Geilston, with a sizeable active retired population, combined with relative affluence, are therefore a good fit with what Geilston offers. Nonetheless, the socio-economic make up of the area within close reach of Geilston is highly varied, with significant areas of deprivation in the Vale of Leven, Dumbarton, and parts of Helensburgh – which needs to be taken



⁵ Profiling the European Garden Heritage Tourist: Literature Review, Survey & Garden Expert Results, Bauer-Krosbacker, C. & Payer, H., 2012, [accessed online](#)

into account when considering how Geilston can increase its appeal and relevance to the wider community.

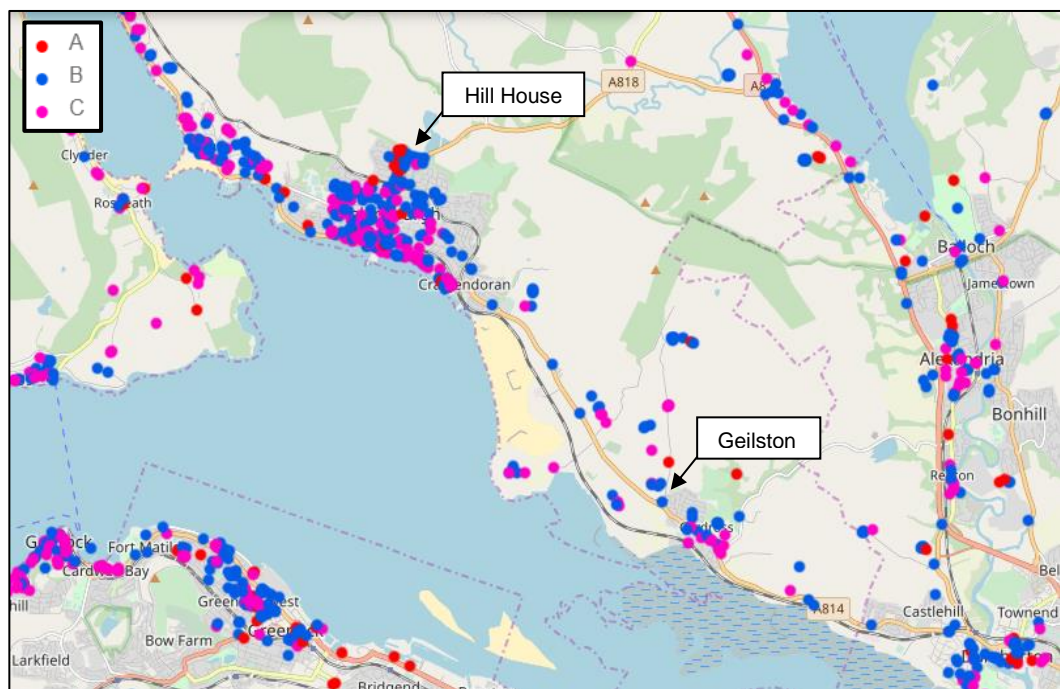
Within a thirty minute drive-time, bounded by Garelochhead, Luss and Clydebank, the population is 111,000. Within one hour the population is 1.8 million.

Cardross railway station, located 0.8 miles from Geilston Garden, has around 143,000 entries and exits per year, averaging 390 per day. The nearest official traffic count point for the A814, the main road adjacent to Geilston, shows it is passed by 8,600 vehicles per day.

Heritage

There is a large number of listed heritage properties in the area around Geilston, with a particularly high concentration in Helensburgh.

Figure 2.1: Listed Buildings



Source: HES

This includes Hill House, pictured, which was designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh in the early 20th century and is one of the best known properties in the NTS portfolio. It has been owned by the Trust since 1982, and is currently undergoing a major ten year conversation project, the first



stage of which has been to construct an external 'box' to shield the building from the elements, at a cost of £4.5m.

This box will allow the house to 'dry out' over three years before restoration work commences. The project has formed NTS' largest ever appeal to date and will remain a priority for fundraising efforts for the foreseeable future. Where external funding is being sought, Geilston could find itself effectively competing with a property with a stronger recognition and 'star power'. However, Hill House also represents an opportunity for Geilston to draw in visitors – we understand many NTS members do combined visits. With interest in Hill House expected to grow as the restoration progresses, Geilston could be marketed as part of a day out in the area. In addition, Geilston Hall in Cardross dates from 1890 and was designed by Honeyman and Keppie architects, for whom Mackintosh worked at the time.

There are a number of heritage properties within the Helensburgh, Cardross and Dumbarton area that are vacant and have fallen into a state of disrepair – see full list at **Appendix B**. Of those listed on the Buildings at Risk Register, three have been or are in the process of being restored, all



for use as private housing. This includes B listed Darleith House, located two miles north of Geilston, which after lying derelict for several decades was part-restored by a private owner in the 2000s, with the remainder consolidated as a ruin and retained as an empty shell (pictured). The restored house was marketed for sale in 2017⁶, at offers over £850k, before selling at just below this (£845k) in early 2018.⁷

Invergare House in Rhu, a B-listed baronial mansion house dating from 1855, was sold in May 2018 for £170k, well below the asking price of £350k and its previous sale value of £810k in 2003⁸. After undertaking internal and external upgrades, the new owner has recently started marketing the house for let between £765 - £1,384 per night. This is a



⁶ 'From ruins to a family mansion', The Times, 5/5/2017, [accessed online](#)

⁷ Darleith House, ESPC, [accessed online](#)

⁸ Invergare House sale history, Rightmove, [accessed online](#)

single let with seven bedrooms and seven bathrooms⁹, sleeping up to 20 and aimed at the wedding and event party market.

A-listed Morar House in Helensburgh, adjacent to Hill House, had fallen into a state of disrepair before being purchased in 2012 by a conservation architect, Lorn Macneal, at auction for £322k¹⁰. After developing proposals for conversion to flats – and gaining consents despite local opposition – it

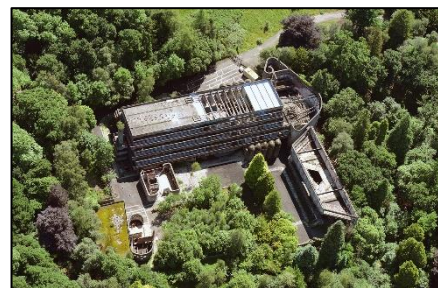


was sold to County Durham based developer All Saints Living in 2016. Twelve apartments have been created across the original house and an extension, with a fixed price of around £370k each. Planning has also been granted for three large detached houses in the grounds, also now on the market for £480k each.

Another example of a successfully restored heritage property in the area is Strathleven House, Renton, which was repurposed as serviced office accommodation by the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust. The restoration process took around eight years, being completed in 2001¹¹. Strathleven House has 21 offices and conference rooms for up to 40 people. Rents are offered at between £20-£30 per square foot (inclusive of rates) and reflects the offer – good quality, serviced accommodation with free WiFi and reception services.



A more challenging example – but given its proximity to Geilston it is important to highlight – is the A-listed St Peter's Seminary. Under the ownership of the Archdiocese of Glasgow, the building now lies as a ruin and despite substantial efforts, regeneration proposals



have struggled to get off the ground. Until 2018, plans were being progressed to develop the building as an arts and cultural venue. A report is currently being prepared by Historic Environment Scotland on options for the site's future – the

⁹ Invergare House, Homeaway, [accessed online](#)

¹⁰ 'Derelict Morar House to be turned into flats', The Times, 26/9/2016, [accessed online](#)

¹¹ Groves-Raines Architects, [accessed online](#)

outcomes of this will be important to consider for Geilston, particularly if the site is to seek public/ charitable support for restoration and redevelopment.

Tourism

Tourism in Scotland is enjoying a period of sustained growth. This is the result of a number of factors, including favourable exchange rates encouraging foreign visitors. A record 3.2m overseas visitors came to Scotland in 2017, with particularly strong growth in European tourists¹².

Scotland's major visitor attractions have also recently reported an increase in the total number of recorded visits for the fifth year in a row¹³. NTS and Historic Environment Scotland sites form a key component of this visitor offer, and both organisations have seen strong membership growth over the last decade (NTS +23%, HES +114%)¹⁴.

Each year, VisitScotland identifies trends and drivers within the tourism sector, helping to inform future developments and ensure Scotland continues to remain both attractive and competitive. Their current forecast has a strong focus on creating authentic and unique experiences for visitors, with key themes including wellbeing, provenance and sustainability¹⁵.

Research also shows 47% of first time visitors to Scotland and 33% of all visitors cite 'history and culture' as a key factor when choosing Scotland as a destination – the figure is even higher for European (51%) and long haul (52%) visitors¹⁶.

Increasing numbers of visitors are coming by campervan, with data from ferry routes suggesting a near ten-fold increase in campervans on Scotland's roads over the last decade.

Locally, the number of cruise ships calling at Greenock continues to grow, with 120,000+ visitors each year and plans for a new cruise berth and terminal facility with gallery/ museum. Cruise visitors are often looking for authentic experiences within a short timeframe. Glenarn Garden in Rhu, a private garden that opens daily from March to September (and is owned by active members of FOG), currently hosts a number of these visits, which could potentially happen at Geilston. At Glenarn, the

¹² Record Year for Overseas Visitors, Scottish Government, 20/7/2018, [accessed online](#)

¹³ Scottish attractions record increase in numbers for the fifth year in a row, Visit Scotland, 5/3/19 [accessed online](#)

¹⁴ Scotland's Historic Environment Audit 2018, HES, [accessed online](#)

¹⁵ Insight Department: Trends 2019, Visit Scotland, [accessed online](#)

¹⁶ Scotland Visitor Survey 2015 & 2016, VisitScotland

visiting party are given a tour of the gardens and then invited inside for tea/coffee and a chance to talk with the owners (the operating model at Glenarn is, however, very different to Geilston, being run by an owner-occupier).

2.2 Ownership and Financial Standing

Geilston House and Garden is held by NTS as an alienable property, which means that the will left by Miss Hendry does not legally restrict NTS from selling the asset or transferring it to a new owner (although this would likely be controversial locally, see **Section 2.3**).

Geilston Garden opens to the public between 1st April and 31st October. Over the last five seasons it has attracted between 9,000 and 12,000 visitors during this time each year.

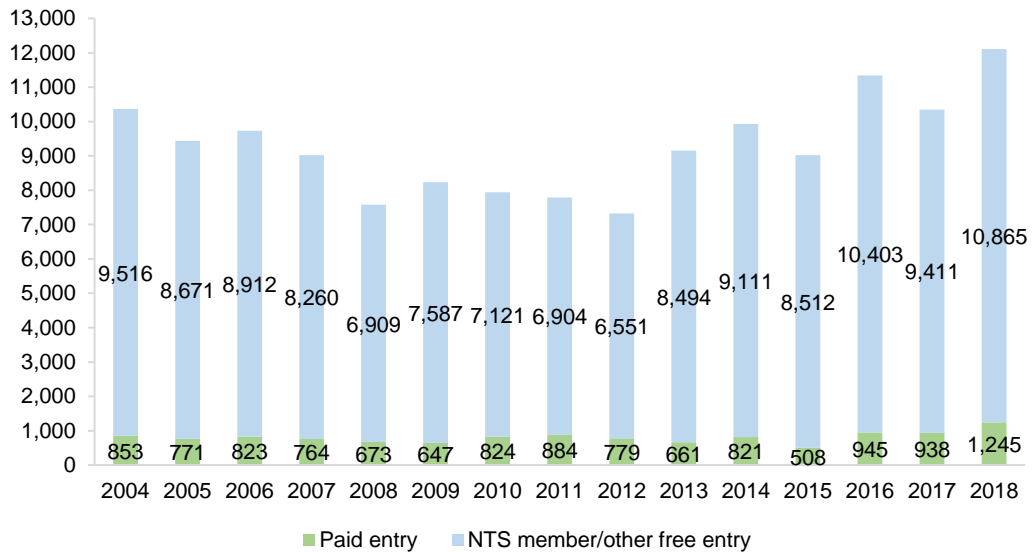
The number of visits to Geilston has been on the increase in recent years after a dip in the late 2000s – see **Figure 2.2**. Notably, the number of paying visitors was much higher in 2018 than any previous year, increasing 33% from 2017 (15% annual increase in total visits). This may, partially, have been a reaction to the NTS board decision and resulting publicity, as well as the promotional work, events and activities undertaken by Friends of Geilston, formed in mid-2017. Growth in paying and NTS visits may also be driven, at least in part, by the demographic make-up of the local area i.e. increasing numbers of healthy retired people seeking destinations and activities. As the gate at Geilston is not staffed at all times (therefore relying on an honesty box), it is also assumed that the data does not represent every visit to the garden, and increased staffing from 2018 may partially explain the increase.

Looking at nearby attractions, Hill House received 28,518 visits in 2017, Dumbarton Castle 27,033, and Benmore Botanic Garden, 50,410, showing what can be achieved within the area.¹⁷

NTS gardens within the region have visitor numbers broadly in line with Geilston – Crarae Garden receives around 10,600 and Arduaine 12,500 (both 2018/19). Greenbank Garden has around 23,000, although is much closer to major population centres.

¹⁷ Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, <http://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=423>

Figure 2.2: Geilston Garden Visits, 2004 to 2018



Source: NTS

As the graph shows, the majority of visitors are admitted free through their membership of NTS or another eligible organisation (around 90% of the total). The entrance fee is otherwise charged at £7.50 for an adult, £5.50 concession and £18.50 for a two-adult family (2019 prices).

There is therefore no direct gate income from nine out of every ten visits to Geilston. Opportunities for generating further spend onsite are currently limited to the drinks vending machine located within the small admissions shed, and sales of fruit and vegetables which are grown at Geilston. This, combined with donations, amounted to £7,650 in 2018, a substantial sum and indicative of the garden’s reputation for quality produce – many of those who come to the gate to purchase fruit and vegetables do not visit the garden and are therefore not included in visitor figures.



The income and expenditure for Geilston House and Garden is shown in **Table 2.1**. NTS allocate a ‘sign up bonus’ from new membership subscriptions to the location where they have joined. An adult subscription currently costs £58, of which £39 is added to the balance sheet of the location where they were signed up. This provides another important income stream for Geilston – in fact, income from 87 sign

ups in 2018 exceeded the admissions from standard paying visitors. It has been highlighted that Geilston does not have card payment facilities which might restrict the ability to sign up new members. NTS has acknowledged this situation and advise that they are actively seeking a solution that would work for both NTS and Geilston.

Table 2.1: Geilston Garden Income and Expenditure 2018/19

2018/19	
Income	
Membership (credit for new members recruited onsite)	£3,326
Admissions (paying visitors)	£5,534
Property income and donations (donations & sale of produce)	£7,650
Rents (lease of cottage)	£9,550
Total income	£26,060
Expenditure	
Wages and salaries	£65,428
Marketing	£200
Utilities	£5,951
Maintenance and equipment (includes furniture storage)	£42,160
Travel and subsistence	£2,114
Insurance	£7,951
Other overheads	£17,125
Total expenditure	£140,929
TOTAL DEFICIT/SURPLUS	-£114,869

Source: NTS

The 'maintenance and equipment' expenditure included £18.7k on conservation, much of which goes towards the storage of furniture from Geilston House in a warehouse.

Finances over recent years are shown in **Table 2.2**. The figures provided by NTS show that Geilston operates at a substantial annual deficit. Its major costs relate to wages and salaries, which are required for the upkeep of the gardens.

Table 2.2: Geilston Garden Income and Expenditure Trend

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Income	£31,425	£27,585	£26,083	£26,060	£31,037
Expenditure	£112,225	£112,207	£135,700	£140,929	£155,565
Capital	£1,200	£12	£4,990	£0	£0
Surplus/Deficit	-£80,800	-£84,622	-£109,618	-£114,869	-£124,528

Source: NTS. *Projection

The deficit is currently met by NTS through their general funds. However, NTS state that this arrangement is not sustainable in the long term, which coupled with the deteriorating condition of Geilston House and need for large scale investment to return it to good order, led to the decision to dispose of the asset being made by the NTS Board in 2017.

2.3 Geilston's Standing in the Community

Geilston Garden is highly valued within the Cardross and Helensburgh area. FOG members cite the memory of Miss Hendry and her companion Miss Bell, who both contributed to local projects and were held in high regard, as an important factor in this. Furthermore, the site is seen as having unreleased



potential, with its accessibility, ready access from large population centres, the demonstrable success of nearby attractions (Ardardan Estate, a busy and growing farm shop and café, is 0.5 miles away) and local spend that could support a more commercial operation¹⁸.

¹⁸ Friends of Geilston, 'How to Save Geilston?' (October 2017) & 'How to Grow Geilston Garden' (February 2018)

A sizeable pool of volunteers work in the gardens throughout the year, assisting the paid NTS staff. Understandably, this group of around 30 volunteers feel a particular affinity with Geilston. The roster of volunteers is currently oversubscribed with a waiting list in operation.



Volunteering provides a range of benefits to Geilston – including support for the paid staff, financial benefits through the cultivation and sale of fruit and vegetables, reputational benefits, health and wellbeing benefits for volunteers, and environmental benefits for the garden. The compact but varied nature of the garden is one of its key draws for volunteers, with a formal walled garden, woodland areas, and fruit and vegetable plots providing a variety of tasks.

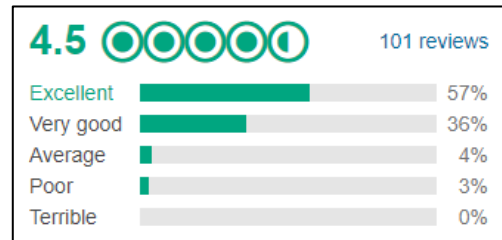
A programme of events is held each season, organised by NTS. In recent years, FOG volunteers have also organised nature walks, alongside an annual photography competition. The 2019 itinerary of events is shown in **Table 2.3**.

Table 2.3: Geilston Events

Event	Date	Cost
FOG – Spring Photo Walk	Monday 15 April	£6 (on top of admission)
Cadburys Easter Egg Hunt at Geilston Garden	Easter Weekend (4 days)	£2 per child / Normal admission rates
Nature's Larder: Foraging	Saturday 27 April	£50
FOG – Discover Birds of Geilston	Wednesday 8 May	£5 (on top of admission)
FOG – Moths, Bugs & Butterflies	Wednesday 15 May	£5 (on top of admission)
Pastels en Plein Air: Artist Workshop	Saturday 18 May	£35
The Walking Theatre Company Presents: Macbeth the Red	Saturday 1 June	£16 (adults) £11 (children)
Plant it, grow it, eat it! Self-led planting activity	Saturday 5 July to Sunday 6 July	£3 per child / Normal admission rates
Herb Walk & Herbal Workshop with Herbal Scotland	Saturday 20 July	£35
Morning Mindfulness for Young Ones	Saturday 10 August	£5 per child
Introduction to Mindfulness	Saturday 10 August	£10
A Witchy Walk with The Walking Theatre Company	Saturday 26 October	£13 (adults) £10 (children)

Source: NTS/FOG

Between October 2012 and April 2019, Geilston Garden received 101 reviews on Tripadvisor, the leading visitor review website. Of these, 57% rated it excellent, 36% very good, 4% average and 3% poor. Among the small number rating it



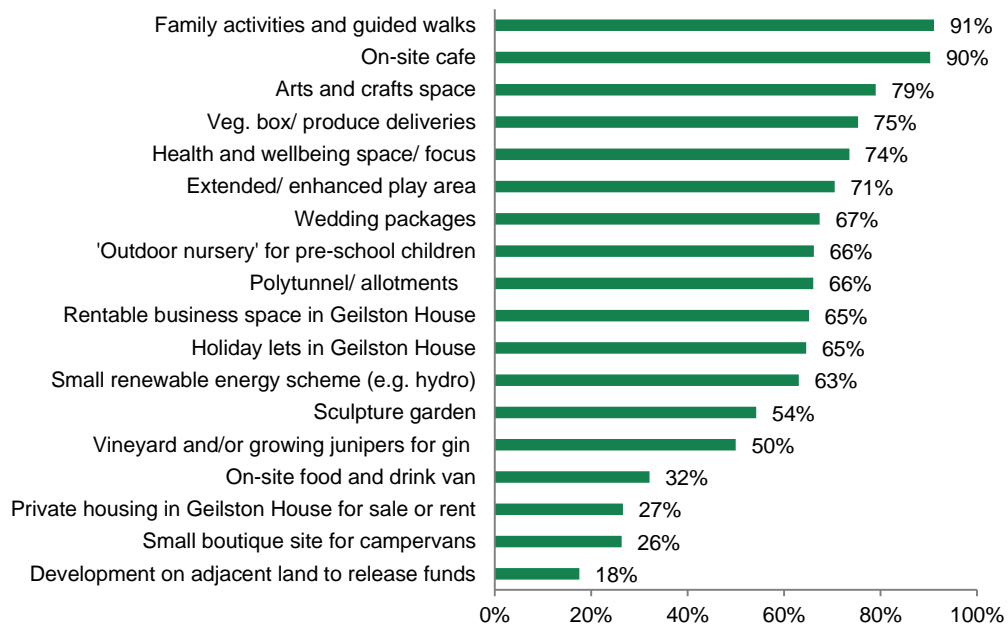
average or poor (nine people), key reasons cited included its relatively small size and the short time it took to explore the full extent of the garden set against the entry fee, and the lack of facilities, such as a tearoom.

A short online survey was developed by EKOS and promoted by FOG to its members, supporters and the wider community in February 2019. This sought to gauge how receptive respondents would be to potential new uses/ activities that could form part of a sustainable solution for the house and garden. The survey received 228 responses, with a full write up included in **Appendix A**.

Key points summarised from the survey are:

- 82% of respondents live within 30 minutes' drive of Geilston, 63% of respondents are NTS members, and 67% are members of the FOG group;
- of 18 suggested new uses/ activities at Geilston, 13 received positive support from more than half of respondents – see **Figure 2.3**. There was particularly strong support for family activities and guided walks (91%) something which already happens at the garden, and a café (90%) which is a feature of many similar properties. However, far fewer respondents were in support of a food and drink van (32%), although this may be due to negative/ low quality perceptions of mobile catering;

Figure 2.3: Respondents Supportive/ Very Supportive of New Uses & Activities



N=228. Source: EKOS Survey

- respondents were largely unsupportive of Geilston House being converted to private housing (27% in favour), despite the existing use of the existing cottage for this purpose (on a rental basis). However, almost two thirds were in support of holiday lets or business space (65% in each instance). There were strong views on an 'enabling development' on adjacent land, with 46% strongly opposed and 18% in favour – this may be due to concerns around the type and/ or scale of any development;
- of those surveyed who are NTS members, more than two thirds (70%) said that Geilston was an essential or important consideration when taking out or renewing their membership; and
- 29% of respondents who are NTS members said that free access to Geilston would be a major factor when deciding whether to renew their NTS membership in the future i.e. they would be unlikely to renew if Geilston was not included. A further 38% said that Geilston would be an important factor in their decision.

2.4 Condition of Geilston House

As part of the study commission, NTS requested an outline cost update for repair and conversion of Geilston House, based on the 2010 condition survey undertaken by Morham and Brotchie Partnership. EKOS sub-contracted this work to specialist construction consultants Brown and Wallace who undertook the following tasks:

- review Morham & Brotchie Partnership's report dated 3 November 2010;
- visit Geilston House and carry out a visual appraisal and meet with representatives of NTS and FOG;
- appraise the impact of construction inflation via the Tender Price Index published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS); and
- retain the cost structure of VAT as presented within Morham and Brotchie Partnership's report which was applied at a rate of 20% to repairs and 0% to the potential conversion works.

The cost report has been submitted under separate cover to NTS¹⁹; a summary of the updated costs are shown in **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4: Geilston House Repair and Conversion Costs

Cost element	2010 Cost	2019 Cost
Repairs – construction works, design fees, contingency & VAT	£536,000	£849,000
Potential conversion works – as above but excluding VAT	£1,826,000	£2,923,000
Total	£2,362,000	£3,772,000

Source: Brown and Wallace, 2019

It is important that these two cost elements are considered separately. Following discussion of the cost report with NTS and FOG, there is a reasonable level of confidence about the cost to repair Geilston House to a wind and watertight condition that would allow future use of the building (c. £850k). The second cost is based on a previous design proposal to convert the property to four holiday apartments – the cost (c. £2.9m) is therefore highly dependent on the specifics of the design and use, and could be substantially different with an alternative use of the property.

¹⁹ The report has been prepared for the exclusive use of EKOS and NTS and should not be divulged or reproduced without the written permission of Brown + Wallace

It is also important to note that the analysis is based on 2010 costs and the Brown and Wallace report highlights a number of pertinent points, specifically three issues that need to be considered:

- the updated costs do not take account of changes to building regulations and updated standards for conversion over the past eight years;
- the updated costs were based on a visual inspection and take no account of further deterioration in the building since 2010; and
- costs do not include upgrade of services infrastructure and supplies – given the age and location of the building this could have a substantial impact.

The work was instructed as to provide an overview and, given the issues noted, there is significant scope for costs to be higher or lower than estimated. Brown and Wallace therefore recommend that in order to fully appraise the current state of the building, detailed condition and structural surveys are undertaken.

2.5 Designations

Heritage

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) list the following designations for the property:

- Geilston House, Walled Garden and Glasshouse – Cat. B listed (buildings of regional or more than local importance; or major examples of some particular period, style or building type, which may have been altered); and
- Steading and Doocot – Cat. C listed (buildings of local importance; lesser examples of any period, style or building type, as originally constructed or moderately altered; and simple, traditional buildings that group well with other listed buildings).

In 2018, NTS applied for Geilston Garden to be included in the HES Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, which lists gardens deemed to be of national importance, although this was unsuccessful.

Two ‘carronade’ canons located at Geilston are believed to have a connection to the Battle of Corunna (1809) – it is known that the owner of Geilston at this time was an officer who fought in the Peninsular War of this period.

Environmental

There are no environmental designations within the estate itself. Geilston Burn, to the south of the A814 is designated as an SSSI.

Tourism

Geilston Garden has a four star rating from VisitScotland, a Green Tourism Gold award, and is a partner garden of the Royal Horticultural Society. It is also a member of the Glorious Gardens of Argyll and Bute group.



Planning

The Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan, adopted March 2015, zones Geilston as an “Area for Action” i.e. a priority for future regeneration activity. Specifically, it notes that the purpose of this designation is to look at the options for safeguarding the historic property and consideration of options for redevelopment and enhancement, recognising that a development brief would be required.

Figure 2.4: Local Development Plan (2015)



Source: Argyll & Bute Council LDP

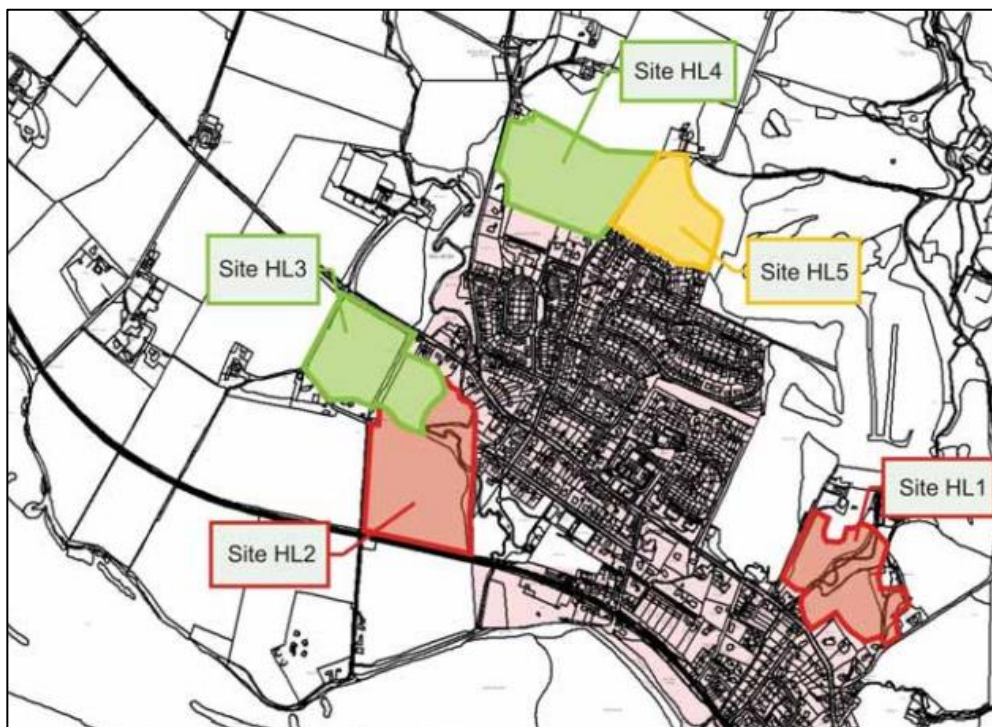
A representative from Argyll and Bute Council has advised that any future development on the site would need to be considered within the context of its location within the greenbelt, where development is not typically encouraged, as well as its listed building designations. On this basis, they advise that any “enabling development” would need to be of the minimum scale required and handled

sensitively. An enabling development would be designed to release funds that would help offset the cost of redeveloping Geilston House, similar to what has recently been permitted with Morar House in Helensburgh (albeit in an urban environment).

Geilston does not feature in the Main Issues Report (2017) for LDP2, which is due to be published over the next year. Recommendations are, however, made for other greenbelt areas around Cardross, shown in **Figure 2.5**. Of these, two (HL1 and HL2, shaded in red) are not recommended for inclusion in the LDP as housing land, citing their identification as sensitive greenbelt. Of the remainder, HL3 and HL4 are recommended for inclusion in the local housing allocation 2013-2023, and HL5 in the housing allocation for 2023-33.

Avant Homes are currently seeking permission to build 140 homes on site HL4, directly behind Cardross Primary School and across the burn from Geilston. The case is currently with the Scottish Government planning reporter.

Figure 2.5: Cardross Map, Main Issues Report for LDP2 (2017)



Source: Argyll & Bute Council MIR

The West and East Fields, which form part of the Geilston Estate, are identified as areas of greenbelt performing a “positive greenbelt landscape function” in the Argyll

and Bute Council Green Belt Landscape Study (2010), and of moderate to high landscape value²⁰.

In terms of the sensitivity of the greenbelt to the west of Cardross, the report states:

“Overall the area is moderately susceptible to development due to the rolling topography, with the lower slopes and raised beach areas being most susceptible. This susceptibility is due to the open character of the landscape, its greater visibility, and function as the gateway to Cardross.”

2.6 Summary of Issues

In bringing together the analysis, a number of issues can be identified that are key to any consideration of the future of Geilston House and Garden:

- there is a sizeable operating deficit for Geilston each year (which includes the cost of storing the furniture) – continuing to meet this from NTS general funds is not sustainable;
- the condition of Geilston House necessitates action – simply allowing the current situation to continue could result in the building entering a dangerous state over the medium term, impacting on the ability of the garden to open;
- the garden is the major draw for visitors to Geilston, which is unsurprising given that the garden is marketed as an attraction and the house has never been open to the public;
- in contrast with much of the NTS estate, the property is held alienably i.e. the will left by Miss Hendry does not legally restrict NTS from disposal of Geilston House or garden;
- NTS access to sources of public and other grant capital funding to restore Geilston House are limited e.g. the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Aligned with this there is considerable competition amongst other NTS assets for investment, including from attractions with substantially higher visitor numbers and more/ higher listings; and
- whilst only being established recently (2017), the FOG group has quickly built a position within NTS and the local community as an important stakeholder body for Geilston – despite this, and largely due to its young

²⁰ Argyll and Bute Council Green Belt Landscape Study, Ironside Farrar (2010), p46

status and the level of risk involved, the committee have advised that FOG is not in a position to take over ownership of Geilston. There is no obvious alternative organisation that could fulfil this role, but there is scope to identify a broad partnership structure for the future that brings input from a range of public/ private/ community/ social enterprise bodies.

3. Developing Options

3.1 Options Appraisal Process

An options appraisal was undertaken to identify the most viable, cost effective and deliverable options for Geilston House and Garden. This included:

- initial discussion with NTS and FOG to identify the parameters for the options appraisal and ascertain any uses that should be ruled out – an open approach was taken and nothing was excluded at this stage;
- a review of how similar buildings have been reused, as well as analysis of the existing services and facilities within the Cardross area to identify gaps and avoid duplication;
- early consultations with key stakeholders and interested parties to identify preferences and priorities (see **Appendix D** for a list of those consulted); and
- an assessment of different uses, and their potential to help meet the operating deficit at the site and meet borrowing costs for redevelopment of Geilston House.

Through consultation and review, a long-list of individual uses was identified as potentials for Geilston House and Gardens, each appraised against 12 criteria:

- physical fit within the building/ grounds – how well does the proposed use/ activity fit within Geilston House and Garden?;
- increase in appeal and relevance of Geilston to the wider community – would the use/ activity encourage more visits from the local area?;
- financial viability (revenue operation) weighted double – would the use/ activity generate sufficient income to cover its costs?
- potential to attract external capital funding (grants, donations) – does the use/ activity meet the priorities of funders, and is it likely to secure grants or donations?;
- supports regeneration of Geilston – contribution to the overall preservation and growth of Geilston;

- stakeholder support (local/ regional/ national) – how likely are different stakeholders to support the project?;
- likely demand – is there demand from visitors, the community or specific users for the new use?;
- accessible to the public – would the new facility be open to the public?;
- time (years) before income generated – how long would it take to get the new use/ activity running and generating income?;
- fit with NTS' charitable objectives – does the use/ activity fit with NTS charitable objectives?;
- level of risk for NTS (inverse) – how much financial and reputational risk is associated with the use/ activity?; and
- potential for displacement of activity/ spend (inverse) – would the use/activit

An options scoring matrix was prepared to analyse each of the 12 criteria. This was done on a scoring basis which each scored between one (low) and ten (high), with the exception of level of risk and potential for displacement which were subject to inverse scoring (i.e. one high and ten low).

The maximum that each use could achieve was a score of 130. Three thresholds were assigned to determine whether an option should be taken to the next stage for more detailed analysis:

- not recommended – a score of less than 74;
- consider – a score of between 75 and 99; and
- proceed – a score of 100 or above.

Four uses reached a score of 100 or above, three scored below 64, and the remaining eight scored between 75 and 99 (for consideration). This matrix was presented and discussed at an options workshop with NTS and FOG on Wednesday 27 March 2019, which resulted in minor adjustments.

The final matrix is presented in **Table 3.1**, over the next two pages.

Table 3.1: Options Appraisal Matrix

Criteria:
consider if 75
or over

*Weighted - double

	Physical fit within the building/ grounds	Increase in appeal & relevance of Geilston to the wider community	Financial viability*	Potential to attract external capital funding	Supports regeneration of Geilston as visitor destination	Stakeholder support (local/ regional/ national)	Likely demand for use in restored space	Accessible to the public	Time (Yrs) before income generated	Fit with NTS charitable objectives	Level of risk for NTS (Inverse)	Potential for displacement of activity/ spend (Inverse)	Total Score (Max. 130 pts)	Outcome/ Recommendation (Reject/ Consider/ Proceed)
Multi-use activity space	7	10	5	10	8	10	7	8	6	10	3	4	93	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: Popular option supporting existing uses of Geilston with potential for adopting new activities. Uses that support community development/health/wellbeing outcomes are more likely to secure grant funding.</i>														
Toilet facilities	10	5	5	5	7	10	10	10	5	10	10	10	102	Proceed
<i>Rationale for proceeding: New toilet facilities have been identified as a priority. It would support the overall redevelopment of the estate and be an good enabler of some other uses.</i>														
Café	8	9	5	7	9	10	7	8	6	9	5	6	94	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: Very popular option but with some risk and costs attached for NTS. Likely to take some time before generating positive income flow.</i>														
Food & drink outlet (cabin)	9	8	6	5	7	7	6	8	8	8	8	6	92	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: Lower risk than café as portable outlet can be moved elsewhere if unsuccessful. While less popular than a café, would improve overall offer/appeal of Geilston</i>														
Private housing in Geilston House for sale or rent	10	2	6	6	4	5	7	2	7	6	6	8	75	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: Retains original use of house and likely to secure consents but has poor fit with public access to the rest of the garden, particularly the walled garden.</i>														
Holiday lets in Geilston House	10	4	5	8	7	9	7	3	4	6	5	7	80	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: good fit with the buildings(s), other uses of the gardens and likely to be some demand, providing ongoing revenue income.</i>														
Family activities and guided walks	10	10	8	9	9	10	9	8	10	10	8	8	117	Proceed
<i>Rationale for proceeding: This would encourage more visits, have little associated risk and is well supported by stakeholders.</i>														
Extended/ enhanced play area	10	10	8	10	10	10	9	10	9	10	8	8	120	Proceed
<i>Rationale for proceeding: Likely to be able to secure small amounts of project funding for outdoor play equipment, which would encourage some additional visits.</i>														
Micro renewables scheme (hydro)	8	5	10	8	5	6	5	7	3	8	6	10	91	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: similar schemes have been successfully delivered elsewhere in region. Would make little impact on wider garden but bring in some additional revenue each year.</i>														
Outdoor nursery	10	10	10	5	8	10	8	7	9	10	7	10	114	Proceed
<i>Rationale for proceeding: Location is well suited and likely to be local demand, with no similar provision in the area. Private operator would need to be found but beyond that, minimal operational implications for NTS, with guaranteed income. Potential for after-school care.</i>														

	Physical fit within the building/ grounds	Increase in appeal & relevance of Geilston to the wider community	Financial viability*	Potential to attract external capital funding	Supports regeneration of Geilston as visitor destination	Stakeholder support (local/ regional/ national)	Likely demand for use in restored space	Accessible to the public	Time (Yrs) before income generated	Fit with NTS charitable objectives	Level of risk for NTS (Inverse)	Potential for displacement of activity/ spend (Inverse)	Total Score (Max. 130 pts)	Outcome/ Recommendation (Reject/ Consider/ Proceed)
Destination wedding venue	9	5	5	4	3	5	3	2	5	10	4	6	66	Reject
<i>Rationale for rejecting: Highly competitive market, meaning number each year would be fairly low. Would impinge on ability of garden to open on wedding days, particularly allowing time for marquee assembly. Potential for hosting ceremonies, or as part of multi-use facility.</i>														
Closure of garden and sale of site	10	0	10	10	1	1	2	1	8	6	6	10	75	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: One-off sale income for NTS and no longer liable for Geilston House. However, reputational harm to NTS and loss of garden are main downsides.</i>														
Boutique campervan area	9	6	9	6	6	3	8	6	8	5	3	7	85	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: If using part of the car park, little intrusion on the rest of the site and potential to generate income. Some risk associated with unsupervised overnight stays.</i>														
Enabling development to meet conservation deficit	10	1	10	10	5	2	9	1	3	4	6	8	79	Consider
<i>Rationale for considering: part of the fields in NTS ownership could be used without obscuring view from Geilston House and would release some funding to support restoration. Likely to be contentious within local area.</i>														
Rentable business space	6	5	6	7	5	5	3	1	4	5	5	5	63	Reject
<i>Rationale for rejecting: Rejected as little evidence of demand, plus poor fit with public opening of the garden or residential use. Some potential to secure funding.</i>														
Cruise ship tours	10	6	9	7	10	8	9	6	9	8	8	4	103	Proceed
<i>Rationale for proceeding: Minimal extra costs/risks for NTS - could be piloted to start with. Real opportunity to take advantage of growth in cruise sector and drive new visitors to Geilston.</i>														

3.2 Longlist of Options

This section has more information on the different uses and activities identified, including the opportunity to develop each, the potential to generate income, their fit with other uses and deliverability. For reasons of brevity, we have focused on key revenue generating uses and grouped enhanced outdoor garden activity together within one section.

In summary, the options that are considered in detail over the following pages are:

Multi-use activity space	Toilet facilities	Cafe	Food & drink van/ cabin
Private housing	Holiday lets	Family activities & guided walks	Destination wedding venue
Extended/ enhanced play area	Micro renewables scheme	Outdoor nursery	Closure of garden and sale of site
Boutique campervan area	Rentable business space	Cruise ship tours	Enabling development

Outdoor Nursery

Outdoor Nursery	
What is it?	A nursery operating from a base within Geilston Garden, on a model used elsewhere where children spend the vast majority of their time doing outdoor activities.
The opportunity	<p>Nursery hours funded by the Scottish Government will increase for all 3 and 4 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds, from 600 hours to 1,140 hours by 2020. Alongside this, there is a growing demand for, and policy focus on, outdoor childcare and 'forest nurseries' – embodied by Scotland's Outdoor Play & Learning Coalition Position Statement, of which NTS is a signatory.</p> <p>There are around 900 pre-school children aged 0-4 within a 30 minute catchment in Argyll and Bute, and a further 4,800 in West Dunbartonshire (2017).</p>
Income potential	NTS lease a field at Greenbank Garden, near Clarkston to the south of Glasgow, to a private operator for use as an outdoor nursery, with rental of around £1,400 per month. There are no other nurseries of this type in the area and there is likely to be demand within a reasonable catchment – Geilston is well positioned between Helensburgh and Glasgow, and close to Dumbarton.
Fit with other uses	<p>The facilities required are intentionally minimal – some outdoor nurseries make use of a yurt, shelter or shed during extreme weather, and have compost toilets. Detailed guidance has been prepared by the Scottish Government on all aspects of outdoor childcare.</p> <p>Active building works on the house might, however, be incompatible with having a nursery on site (but this could likely be mitigated).</p>
Deliverability	There are successful examples of outdoor nurseries operating across Scotland, including in smaller settlements – Stramash operate four outdoor nurseries in the north and west Highlands. Generally, parents are able to use part of their council funded hours for the outdoor nursery – with most children visiting, for instance, for one session a week, it would complement existing nursery provision and, particularly in the context of the huge increase in nursery hours and growing local population, help meet a growing demand for provision.
Fit with objectives	<p>Geilston Garden would be well positioned to host an outdoor nursery, which would likely be able to support 10-15 children per session. It would bring important and sustainable activity to the site, increasing its relevance to the wider community of Cardross and Helensburgh.</p> <p>This use would not generate sufficient revenue in and of itself to secure the future of Geilston, but could form part of a package of new uses that generate additional revenue income.</p>

Holiday Accommodation

Holiday Accommodation	
What is it?	Conversion of Geilston House to self-catered accommodation, available for weekly or weekend lets. Geilston House could either be offered as one large property, with 8+ bedrooms, or sub-divided to form four smaller units.
The opportunity	Geilston is in an attractive setting in an accessible location, and is a proven location from which to run a successful visitor-oriented business (Ardardan). Tourism is at record levels in Scotland. Geilston is close to major population centres, with public transport links and scenic views overlooking the Clyde Estuary with ready access to Glasgow city centre and rural Argyll.
Income potential	<p>Pricing would be heavily influenced by the time of year, with demand strongest around the peak summer months and key occasions (e.g. Hogmanay), with likely minimum stay of three nights. A sample of pricing for self-catered heritage properties in Appendix B.</p> <p>A two bedroom unit within Geilston House is estimated to secure around £75 per night in off season and £120 in peak season. Four units of this size, at 50% occupancy throughout the year, could bring in a combined estimated gross annual income of £66,000.</p> <p>A lease of the full house, with no subdivision, could be offered at around £250 a night in off season and £450 in peak months. Operating at a cautious 40% occupancy throughout the year, this could bring in an estimated gross annual income of £46,000. Once operating costs are taken into account, this would provide a revenue income stream for the ongoing maintenance of Geilston House but is unlikely to generate sufficient funds to repay any capital borrowing to cover the cost of the restoration works.</p>
Fit with other uses	<p>There would not be the same expectation of privacy within holiday accommodation as a privately owned house, with those booking aware of the house's location within a garden that is open to visitors during the day. There would therefore be little conflict between uses.</p> <p>Good quality accommodation could also be offered out for private weddings, corporate training days and other events – with opportunities for local businesses including catering, cleaning, maintenance, etc.</p>
Deliverability	<p>Self-catering would form the most straightforward arrangement for visitor accommodation. NTS currently offer a wide range of holiday properties across Scotland, many of them contained within estates otherwise open to the public each day (Culzean and Mar Lodge Estate). The organisation therefore has an established delivery model, with a marketing and booking structure in place, and would be well placed to judge the viability of in this instance.</p> <p>Management could, however, be contracted out to a holiday let management company, who would cover marketing, bookings, cleaning, laundry etc. Agencies offering this in the Glasgow area include Spothost (13.5% + VAT of net earnings), Yourbnbhost (15%) & Passthekeys (14-25% + VAT).</p>
Fit with objectives	<p>Self-catered accommodation would generate revenue that could partially offset other costs associated with the garden. Through restoration of the house, it would increase the garden's appeal to visitors.</p> <p>This use would generate substantial income that could go a long way toward offsetting the revenue deficit, but it will be difficult for NTS to secure capital grant funding, and the cost of borrowing (repayment payments) would largely take up the revenue income.</p>

Micro Renewables

Micro Renewables	
What is it?	Micro renewables was among the ideas which emerged during the consultation process, in the form of a small hydro-electric scheme at Geilston burn, making use of the former mill pond.
The opportunity	<p>The Scottish Government has set a target for 50% of Scotland's overall energy consumption to be generated from renewable sources by 2030, with almost complete decarbonisation by 2050. Local and small-scale renewables are a priority area for development, with an ambitious target to install and complete 1 gigawatt (1m kilowatts) worth of community and locally owned projects by 2020, with a further additional 1 gigawatt targeted for 2030.</p> <p>Geilston Garden has a former millpond that, once cleared, could potentially be used for such a scheme, in tandem with the burn.</p>
Income potential	<p>After an initial capital outlay, this would provide a guaranteed revenue stream. It is likely that grant funding and/or loans could be secured at the pre-planning stage to investigate the feasibility of this project.</p> <p>A 120kW community hydro project in Arrochar, on land leased for a peppercorn rent from Luss Estates, launched in 2018. The Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) provided a grant of £10,000 and a loan of £145,000 to progress the early stages of the project. The capital costs of £660,000 were raised through a community share offer in mid-2017, with repayment over 20 years. The CARES funding is open to national charities, local authorities, rural SMEs, and community groups, with an option to convert the loan to a grant if the project proves infeasible.</p> <p>It has been estimated that the Arrochar scheme will generate around £50,000 a year. However, the UK Government's feed-in tariff scheme will close in April 2019 and it is not yet clear what will replace it.</p> <p>Local Energy Scotland advise that per kW, micro hydro is among the more expensive end of renewables to install, but if done correctly, can provide a guaranteed income. They reiterate the uncertain picture with regards to subsidy (a new scheme, the Smart Export Guarantee, is currently out for consultation) and advise micro hydro is unlikely to be viable if defaulting to selling at market rate.</p>
Fit with other uses	The required buildings are unobtrusive, requiring a relatively small shed, and pipes buried underground. The project would fit well with NTS' low carbon and conservation objectives, offer scope for community involvement, and fit with a growing national interest in renewables and community energy.
Deliverability	<p>The National Trust have been involved with a pilot hydro scheme in Gwynedd, North Wales. The same supplier who buys the electricity provided by the 100kW hydro scheme then offers cheap electricity to local households through a community purchase agreement.</p> <p>There are many recent examples of operational micro hydro schemes across Argyll and the Highlands on the website of engineering specialists Adrian Laycock, typically around 100kW. If well built, the design life of such a scheme is around 40 years.</p>
Fit with objectives	<p>Selling electricity to the grid would provide a consistent income that could be ring-fenced to support the wider running of the gardens. It would also have the potential to increase the relevance and profile of Geilston.</p> <p>A hydro power scheme would be an interesting and innovative feature on the site that could be of interest to visitors and locals. Funding/borrowing could likely be secured to investigate and install the scheme and the income generated would be sufficient to pay this back. The surplus from this would help reduce the operating deficit at Geilston but would not itself be of a scale large enough to support borrowing for the restoration of Geilston House.</p>

Multi-use space for arts, wellbeing etc

Multi-use space for arts, wellbeing etc	
What is it?	Conversion of an existing building – the steading or part of Geilston House – into a multi-use space for recreational/ educational/ cultural/ social use.
The opportunity	<p>Geilston has an existing programme of events each season (see Section 2.3) but lacks adequate indoor and wet weather space. Limited use has been made of one room within Geilston House over recent years in the event of rain during art classes but the space is not of a quality provided by other indoor classes. The programme of events at Geilston could be increased from one-off classes to weekly events if suitable space was available, and hired out for use by the community, clubs, private events (including funerals, given proximity to Cardross Crematorium), etc. Examples include yoga and pilates classes, art clubs, children’s events, etc.</p> <p>There would be potential to tie in with the local and regional voluntary sector, with Geilston a short distance from a large catchment population (particularly in West Dunbartonshire).</p> <p>There would be a need to take care that wasn’t simply displacing activity that is currently delivered at other venues – with negative revenue effect elsewhere.</p>
Income potential	<p>After capital costs, the multi-use space would likely be revenue neutral. If a very commercial model was adopted, strongly pushing its use for weddings and private events, it would have potential to generate a surplus.</p> <p>The existing programme of events at Geilston is outdoor focused, with pricing reflecting the type and nature of each event.</p>
Fit with other uses	The space would need to be flexible and be suitable for a mix of different uses. Would need to have storage and possibly audio-visual equipment.
Deliverability	This could involve conversion of the stable block, with the gardeners/ volunteers facilities relocating elsewhere e.g. shipping containers on the other side of the car park, or use of part of Geilston House.
Fit with objectives	Provision of an indoor space would allow the existing programme of events and uses of Geilston to be enhanced and grow. It would provide some opportunities for income generation – but risk displacing activity currently delivered elsewhere (e.g. Geilston Hall, although it is very community focused)

Café or food and drink van

Café or food and drink van	
What is it?	<p>Expanding the food and drink offer at Geilston through a café or mobile catering unit.</p> <p>Survey responses strongly favoured a café while largely rejecting the food and drink van idea. Nonetheless, the reality of each could be similar i.e. a servery with a small covered seating area, of a quality that befits its surroundings and expectations of clientele.</p>
The opportunity	<p>An enhanced food and drink offer would be a popular addition to the garden and is something that visitors strongly associate with NTS gardens and properties.</p> <p>There is a proven example of a successful café/retail business operating in the area, Ardardan Estate (who put a marquee up in between March to October to provide additional seating and cope with demand). However, there would be a need to take care that a café at Geilston is not simply displacing activity that is currently delivered at other venues – with negative revenue effect elsewhere.</p>
Income potential	<p>The existing coffee machine takes in around £1,000 per year, with additional income from fruit and vegetable sales.</p> <p>A report by the Hotel Management Company, commissioned by NTS in 2018 to consider the viability of developing the food and drink offer at Geilston, strongly recommended against investing in this area. The report estimates that average spend of £8.00 gross at 600 to 900 covers per month would cover its operational costs. If average spend was £5.00 gross at this level of custom, there would be a revenue deficit.</p>
Fit with other uses	<p>The café would complement the garden as it currently exists, and most other potential public uses of the estate.</p>
Deliverability	<p>A report by the Hotel Management Company, commissioned by NTS in 2018 to consider the viability of developing the food and drink offer at Geilston, strongly recommended against investing in this area. Their calculations were based on around 40-45% of visitors making a purchase on each visit. An increase in visitor numbers, if supported by this and other new activity, would therefore make this proposition more viable.</p> <p>If this was to be pursued, it was recommended to have a movable unit that could be deployed by NTS elsewhere when Geilston is closed.</p> <p>Although favouring development of a 'destination café', FOG acknowledge that a mobile unit is perhaps the most realistic option for improving food and drink at Geilston at this time.</p>
Fit with objectives	<p>Provision of an improved food and drink offering would appeal to visitors and locals and is the type of facility they expect to see at NTS gardens. With current visitor numbers, the potential to generate revenue is limited, meaning footfall would need to increase to make investment in this area viable.</p>

Rentable Business Space

Rentable Business Space	
What is it?	Refurbished space within Geilston House and/ or other onsite buildings (the stables, the cottage) for rent by businesses. This could take the form of small light industrial units for artisan crafts (with potential for selling to visitors), or standard office space, or a combination thereof.
The opportunity	The site has a good level of parking, is fairly close to public transport links (First service 1B, Helensburgh to Glasgow & Cardross rail, 0.8 miles away), and is in an attractive location. There are some successful examples of office space within restored historic buildings, notably Strathleven House in West Dunbartonshire, operated by the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust.
Income potential	Strathleven House is slightly larger, offering 21 offices over four floors and mid-sized conference rooms (up to 40 people). Rents are offered at between £20-£30 per square foot. This rate is inclusive and reflects the offer – good quality, serviced accommodation with free WiFi and reception services. Without this, a rate of around £10 psf would be more realistic. Over two floors, Geilston House has a gross internal floor area of around 8,600 sq ft (800 sqm). With 70% occupancy and allowing for shared circulation space, kitchens, toilets and a meeting room, this would bring in gross rent of £35,000 a year. If £20 psf could be secured on the same basis, it would bring in £70,000 a year.
Fit with other uses	This would depend on who the occupier was. Business space would not necessarily be a good fit with a public visitor attraction, but tenants would be aware of its other uses when taking on a lease.
Deliverability	Once tenants have been secured, requires less active marketing and administration than, for instance, holiday lets. Offices would not have the same expectation of their own outdoor space as private housing. However, the demand from occupiers is the key restraining factor on the delivery – while there are some successful examples of this type of project being done elsewhere, securing tenants would be difficult.
Fit with objectives	Once occupied, income from tenants would provide a steady income that would support the ongoing maintenance of Geilston House and reduce the deficit of the wider site.

Private Housing for Sale or Rent

Private Housing for Sale or Rent	
What is it?	Refurbishment of Geilston House as housing – its original use. This could either take the form of one large house or four smaller units. This could either be undertaken by NTS for lease (as with the existing arrangements for the cottage) or for sale to a private owner developer.
The opportunity	Geilston House is in an attractive location within a popular area and within easy commuting distance of a major urban conurbation. However, the cost of bringing the listed property back to good order would likely exceed the potential sale value of the house, raising the issue of whether other land would need to be opened up for ‘enabling development’ to offset the restoration costs and make the project viable for an investor.
Income potential	Sale of Geilston House, and any adjacent land up to the full garden, would bring in a one-off sum for NTS. In 2017, Savills placed the value of the house, cottage, stables, vegetable garden and woodlands (excluding the drive and fields) in current condition at £150,000 – £200,000. This value reflects the poor condition of Geilston House (on its own, the house would have little to no value) Rental of the cottage brings in around £8,000 a year at present. Four units within Geilston House would, on this basis, generate income of around £32,000 per annum. If the whole site was developed as housing, one or two further units could be created in the stable building.
Fit with other uses	Private housing on site would not necessarily be a good fit for a visitor attraction. If leased, public access to the gardens during seven months of the year could be made a condition of the lease and prospective tenants would be aware of this (as with the cottage at present), helping to mitigate this issue. However, private sale of the house would make this more difficult – buyers would likely have a higher expectation of private outdoor space. In addition, the layout of the garden, with the walled garden adjoined to the house, makes separation difficult.
Deliverability	Once tenants have been secured, this would require less active marketing and administration than, for instance, holiday lets. The costs to restore the house will likely exceed its value. This would therefore raise the prospect of an ‘enabling development’ being required to partially offset the restoration deficit if, for instance, the whole site was sold to a private developer.
Fit with objectives	Private housing could restrict public access to part or whole of the garden. It would be difficult to pursue this option while maintaining NTS ownership and operation of Geilston Garden. Providing housing for rent within Geilston House would provide a guaranteed income stream. However, the high costs involved in doing so, set against annual rental income, would mean the return on investment would not be repaid for decades.

Development on Adjacent Land

Development on Adjacent Land	
What is it?	Development on part of the land surrounding Geilston Garden – i.e. the East or West Field – to provide funds to support the restoration of Geilston House and overcome the conservation deficit with converting it to a new use (regardless of what that new use is).
The opportunity	There is proven demand for new housing – there are nearby applications from major developers in the planning pipeline and proposals in the new LDP to allocate new sites on the edge of Cardross for housing.
Income potential	The sale of land currently part of the NTS holding for housing development could potentially release a large one-off sum of money. Planning is only likely to be granted if this funding is then ring-fenced for conservation works on Geilston House. Alongside funding from elsewhere, this could be used to restore Geilston House and allow it to be put back into productive use, but would need to be based on a clear plan in place for how it can remain financially stable and open into the future.
Fit with other uses	While this would not intrude on the boundaries of the garden itself, it would need to be handled sensitively to avoid detracting from the character and heritage value of Geilston House and Garden. If located to the west of the kitchen garden, and accessed from the car park, new houses would be some distance from Geilston House and not detract from the views from the house and garden over the Clyde.
Deliverability	The two fields which form part of the NTS holding are allocated as greenbelt. Argyll and Bute Council have stated that any 'enabling development' would need to be of the minimum scale necessary to secure the future of Geilston House. In addition, housing development would likely prove contentious within the local community; a careful programme of consultation would be required, and it would be important to ensure that the proposals are sensitive to their surroundings. That the greenbelt is considered " <i>moderately susceptible</i> " to development by Argyll and Bute Council means that future development on the land is not entirely off the table. If all of Geilston is disposed of, an enabling development may be how the new owner seeks to recoup their investment in the house (see example of Morar House in Helensburgh)
Fit with objectives	New housing outside of the garden will not be a popular option. It is, however, a source of capital funding that NTS could potentially access to offset the conservation deficit on Geilston House, helping to meet the objectives of this study. A series of hurdles would need to be crossed to pursue this option, and it would not provide a long term source of revenue income. Therefore, a clear plan would need to be in place to ensure Geilston has a sustainable future and if the local community was to be won round, clear guarantees would need to be in place in this respect.

Enhanced Garden Activity: Play Area, Guided Walks, Sculptures

Enhanced Garden Activity: Play Area, Guided Walks, Sculptures, Interpretation	
What is it?	This would involve offering more of the type of activity and improvements that have been undertaken in Geilston Garden over the last decade, such as extending the children's play area, adding sculptures, offering more in-garden activities such as guided walks, historical interpretation of the house and garden and its previous owners and occupants, etc.
The opportunity	Geilston receives around 12,000 visitors a year and there may be an opportunity to grow this through continuing to make small improvements to the garden and increasing the frequency of organised activities. This helps maintain a sense of vitality in the garden as a visitor attraction and supports repeat visits from those in the local area. The effort would, however, need to be on generating one-off visits that would generate income from the entry ticket price.
Income potential	There is limited income potential from this type of activity. Investment in new play equipment could end up being a substantial sum and is unlikely to bring in a significant number of new visitors through the gate. The ability to attract significant increase in paying visitors would have to be set against the range of existing attractions that are available within the catchment area at either no, or much lower, entry fee.
Fit with other uses	This would fit well with other public uses of Geilston Garden.
Deliverability	Small amounts of funding could be secured to enable these developments to take place – there are a number of grant funding sources that could be approached. Over recent years, Members' Centres and Friends' Groups have supported different projects at Geilston. There are constraints on the site in the lack of usable indoor space (and a need for new toilets) that would make some activities weather-dependent.
Fit with objectives	Continuous improvements to the garden are important for maintaining the vitality of the garden as a visitor attraction and increasing its profile and relevance in the community. A range of activities and novel features that appeal to visitors of all ages are therefore important (e.g. it has been suggested that something could be made of the site's links to aviation pioneer Percy Pilcher). There is little historical interpretation at Geilston at present and there is a strong case for installing new signage and displays that will enhance visitor experience and understanding. These activities on their own are unlikely to secure a financial future for the garden, but would contribute to wider conservation aims and could form part of any viable solution.

Weddings

Weddings	
What is it?	Hire of Geilston Garden for weddings.
The opportunity	<p>Around 30,000 weddings are registered in Scotland annually, a number which has remained fairly stable over the last 20 years.</p> <p>More than half of UK weddings are estimated to take place on Saturdays and the vast majority (90%) between Thursday and Sunday. Furthermore, in 2017, two-thirds of weddings in Scotland were registered between April and September. This places wedding venues under heavy demand on a relatively small proportion of days i.e. weekends during the summer months. The Scottish Wedding Census states that weddings in Scotland come in at an average of £31,000.</p> <p>Geilston would be well positioned to host weddings, with its walled garden an ideal spot for wedding photos. A marquee could be erected to offer more space. There would be opportunities for local small businesses, such as caterers.</p> <p>NTS' Greenbank Garden can host weddings of up to 200 with a marquee – this is comparable to what Geilston could host.</p> <p>An alternative sub-option would be to host the wedding ceremony only (at a much reduced fee) with the reception being held elsewhere off-site.</p>
Income potential	<p>Greenbank Garden hosts between two and four weddings with a marquee each year. If Geilston could host this with a hire fee of around £1,000 for marquee and use of toilets, this income stream would contribute to the overall viability of the site.</p> <p>Other NTS venues do charge considerably more (e.g. Pollok House, £3,900) – but Greenbank appears to be a valid comparison in terms of stature, location and number hosted per year.</p>
Fit with other uses	<p>Full hire of the garden may require closure to the public for a limited time e.g. one day. This would depend on the scale of the wedding and if any temporary structures had been erected that may need to be put up in advance and disassembled the following day. This may impact on feedback from visitors.</p> <p>Offering wedding packages would work well if a multi-use space was developed at Geilston that could host wedding dances. Self-catering accommodation could be used for guests. This approach would be preferable to adopting a sole focus on use as a wedding venue (and more realistic).</p>
Deliverability	<p>Weddings are an important source of income for NTS and the organisation has a strong track record of operating in this market. People therefore look to the NTS for suitable venues, providing relatively easy access into the (highly competitive) market.</p> <p>Geilston does not presently have the infrastructure in place to support weddings, but when/ if the house and other buildings are restored and new toilet/ kitchen facilities are provided, it would be well positioned to host them.</p>
Fit with objectives	<p>While weddings may temporarily restrict access to all/ part of the garden, it would be on very few days each year and plenty of notice could be provided. It has the potential to generate a good level of income but will also compete with other established venues in the local area</p>

Cruise Ship Tours

Cruise Ship Tours	
What is it?	Targeted marketing of the cruise ships market, in collaboration with business operators in this sector. Offering a boutique guided tour and tea/ coffee/ cake package to groups.
The opportunity	<p>The number of cruise ships calling at Greenock has grown substantially over recent years, with 150,000 visitors over 75 ships expected in 2019, of whom 90% will come ashore. Plans are being advanced for a new cruise terminal, with forecast growth to 100 ships and 200,000 passengers by 2027.</p> <p>Cruise visitors are often looking for a range of authentic experiences within a short timeframe, and Geilston – located 45 minutes’ drive from Greenock – is well positioned to take advantage of this. It would work particularly well to tie in with a visit to Hill House and Helensburgh.</p>
Income potential	If an arrangement can be made with 50% of cruise ships calling at Greenock, and then a coach party of 30 visitors (less than 2% of the onshore visitors from the ship) from each of these ships visits Geilston, and the ‘magical walled garden experience’ is charged to the cruise operator at £17.50 per head, this would bring in gross revenue of £26,000 per year (based on the forecast of 100 total cruise calls to Greenock).
Fit with other uses	The cruise season at Greenock (largely April to October) fits perfectly with Geilston’s opening season and many of the visits would be on quieter weekdays. Visitor numbers could be readily managed and arrangements would be made well in advance, allowing staff to prepare for the visit.
Deliverability	<p>This project would be dependent on cooperation from cruise operators. However, Glenarn Garden in Rhu has an arrangement at present with some cruise operators, and its owners have indicated that this works well. This operates at a fairly small scale – the intention with Geilston would be to ramp this up, working with the cruise terminal and ship operators.</p> <p>Visitors would have certain expectations – the opportunity to talk with people knowledgeable about the garden and tea/coffee/cake. Ideally, this would be delivered in house to maximise benefits, but in the interim an arrangement could be made with Ardardan to host visitors.</p>
Fit with objectives	Tours for visiting cruise ships is a good fit with what the garden currently offers and overall objectives of the study. It would drive new visitors to Geilston and presents a major income opportunity. Presents minimal risk for NTS and could be piloted to see if it works.

Boutique Campervan Area

Boutique Campervan Area	
What is it?	Offering part of the carpark as an area for campervans.
The opportunity	<p>The available evidence indicates that the number of campervans on Scotland's roads has vastly increased over the last few years, driven by a number of factors, including growth in 'experience tourism', cheaper ferry fares to the islands, and the popularity of the NC500 route. Companies offering campervan rental and 'conversion' of standard vans are reporting strong growth, and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park are currently consulting with campervan owners on their view of facilities in the area and their needs.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to provide a small campervan area (e.g. 5 spaces) with appropriate facilities (stand pipe, chemical waste disposal, power points) that could provide a steady income through the summer months. Geilston is an ideal stopping point for those travelling to/from the north west of Scotland. Its location away from the main road is an additional selling point.</p>
Income potential	<p>Analysis of sites listed on the Camper Contact website shows that while there are many free sites used by campervans across Scotland, they are usually car parks and lay-bys that do not offer dedicated facilities. Among sites which offer facilities (electricity, waste disposal, toilets), charges are typically £20-25 per night.</p> <p>Space for five campervans, running from April to September with 50% occupancy and at £20 per night, would generate gross revenue of £9,150.</p>
Fit with other uses	Although an unpopular option in the survey of FOG members (likely due to perceptions of what a campervan site would look like), having an area of the car park dedicated to campervans would make little intrusion beyond the car park and therefore have no negative effect on other uses of the garden. The intention would be for campervan parking to be for those staying for one night.
Deliverability	The facilities required would be fairly basic, with toilets delivered as part of the wider project. Access would be required out of hours to the toilet block. The project would need to be handled sensitively – Geilston is not becoming a "caravan park" but rather a stopover for campervans. There would also be some admin costs involved – someone would need to oversee the spaces.
Fit with objectives	The income derived from this use would support the wider regeneration of Geilston. It would introduce new activity and increase its appeal to the growing campervan market.

3.3 Long List Summary Results

Based on the appraisal criteria presented over the previous pages, two use options have been rejected at this stage (see red text boxes) with all others identified for further detailed consideration (see green text boxes).

Multi-use activity space	Toilet facilities	Cafe	Food & drink cabin
Private housing	Holiday lets	Family activities & guided walks	Destination wedding venue
Extended/enhanced play area	Micro renewables scheme	Outdoor nursery	Closure of garden and sale of site
Boutique campervan area	Rentable business space	Enabling development	Cruise ship tours

While converting Geilston to be a 'destination wedding venue' has been rejected, there is still a good case for Geilston being used for weddings, particularly for ceremonies and photographs in the garden, and this has been factored in to the financial projections.

Regardless of which option is taken forward, more historical interpretation of Geilston Garden would also be a good addition to the garden. We have not included 'museum' as an option, but static displays/signage could be installed around other uses e.g. on walls within a multi-use space or around a food and drink area.

3.4 Options Scenarios

This study has been undertaken to test the economic viability of different uses that meet the overall study objectives. On this basis, we have assessed 16 different uses and activities against the 12 criteria detailed in Section 3.1.


However, the solution for Geilston is highly dependent on who is delivering it, as well as what form it takes. We have established four scenarios and looked at the question of 'who' as well as 'what' in more detail.

Table 3.1: Option Scenarios Summary


Option	What	Who	Uses
A: Sale of full site and buildings	NTS dispose of the full site, as per the Board decision in 2017	A new owner: a private buyer or community body	Housing and potentially enabling development. Tourism focused development – boutique hotel, eco-lodges, destination restaurant If under community ownership, likely to pursue a mix of uses as per Scenario C
B1: Sale of house/ walled garden and retention of part of estate for community use	NTS dispose of the listed buildings but part of the site is transferred to a community body	Private buyer and community body	Community outdoor space with potential for projects e.g. outdoor nursery, micro hydro, play facilities, walks, etc House and walled garden redeveloped by private owner e.g. hotel, luxury self-catering, private house
B2: Sale of house and retention of walled garden/ most of estate	NTS dispose of the house and small area of grounds but rest of site is retained	Private buyer, NTS and local community	Housing. A compatible mix of uses from the options appraisal is taken forward on remainder of site e.g. café/ cabin, outdoor nursery, enhancing garden etc.
C1: Retention of site and full restoration of house with grant/ loan funding	NTS retain ownership of the site and restore Geilston House with grant/ loan funding and a business plan to generate income to reduce the operating deficit	NTS and the local community	A compatible mix of uses from the options appraisal is taken forward e.g. self-catering, café/ cabin, outdoor nursery, micro-renewables, enhancing garden, etc
C2: Retention of site and partial restoration of house with grant/ loan funding	Staged approach: NTS retain ownership of the site and partially restore Geilston House with grant/ loan funding and a business plan to generate income to reduce the operating deficit	NTS and the local community	A compatible mix of uses from the options appraisal is taken forward as per Scenario C1
D: Enabling development to support restoration of house, plus grant/ loan funding	Part of the NTS land holding is sold for housing development to meet the conservation deficit – business plan to generate income to reduce the operating deficit	NTS and the local community with private developer	A compatible mix of uses from options appraisal is taken forward, with housing development (subject to consents) on part of the West Field

The following pages appraise each scenario in more detail.


Scenario A: Sale of full site and buildings

Description	Geilston is closed and put up for sale. It is therefore assumed that NTS would no longer have a say in the running of the site – a private buyer would be needed to develop housing and might seek enabling development. Potential to develop a tourism offer (although return on investment is not strong, therefore issue of viability). Alternatively a community body could seek to purchase with a view to retaining/ enhancing the gardens and securing grant funding to restore Geilston House.	
SWOT	<u>Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NTS no longer liable for loss-making attraction • NTS can focus on projects of higher priority, supporting charitable objectives • House restored with private funds (or grant aid in case of community purchase) 	<u>Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear demand from private buyers – house is a serious liability • Missed opportunity to link in with NTS Hill House refurbishment project • Missed opportunity to take advantage of growing tourism in Scotland and capture benefits for local area (incl. cruise ships) • Loss of publicly accessible outdoor environment
	<u>Opportunities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community would have statutory right to buy and good likelihood of securing public funding for purchase • Require private buyer to develop a plan for restoring Geilston House, preserving heritage asset 	<u>Threats</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational damage for NTS and erosion of trust in organisation at local level • Lack of interest from buyers • Lack of return on investment for restoration (without grant funding) • House continues to lie dormant despite sale • Closure of gardens
Capital implications	No capital spend for NTS. Guideline £3.8m cost for restoration and subdivision of Geilston House.	
Revenue implications	Limited spend on seeing sale through to conclusion One-off boost for NTS finances from the sale – dependent on which assets are disposed Potential loss of NTS memberships/ support at local level	
Outcome	This is the <u>default scenario</u> reflecting the decision taken by the NTS Board in 2017. It is likely to prove highly contentious and the long term outcome of this decision, beyond the closure of the garden, is hard to predict. Ultimately, if no other scenarios prove viable or there is not the impetus to take them forward, the site should be disposed with appropriate conditions for the buyer – this is effectively the option of last resort so must remain on the table.	
	<h2>Consider, 6/10</h2>	

Scenario B1: Sale of house/ walled garden and retention of part of estate for community use

Description	Part of site transfers to a community body, with the house/ walled garden sold to another party. NTS may seek to retain ownership of fields. Similar to Scenario A with a 'trade off' of retaining access to part of the estate, with scope to retain growing space and develop projects, such as the outdoor nursery and micro hydro scheme.	
SWOT	<u>Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main liability (the house) disposed of • House restored with private funds • Opportunity to develop projects on community land, such as outdoor nursery, micro hydro, growing space 	<u>Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question viability as a visitor attraction? • Implies closure of walled garden to public (except on special occasions e.g. Doors Open Day) • Missed opportunity to link in with NTS Hill House refurbishment project • Missed opportunity to take advantage of growing tourism in Scotland and capture benefits for local area (incl. cruise ships)
	<u>Opportunities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing legacy from grounds in form of community space • Potential remains for some projects e.g. outdoor nursery, micro renewables 	<u>Threats</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest in community ownership and operation of the growing garden • No appetite from private buyers for house • Buyer does not maintain walled garden to current standard • Closure of gardens
Capital implications	No capital spend for NTS. Guideline £3.8m for renewal and subdivision of Geilston House.	
Revenue implications	Limited spend on seeing sale through to conclusion One-off boost for NTS finances from the sale – lower than Scenario A Potential loss of NTS memberships/ support at local level	
Outcome	This is a variation of the default scenario, reflecting the decision taken by the NTS Board in 2017, but with part of the estate transferred to a community body. Funding could be sought (Scottish Land Fund) if suitable interest.	
	Consider, 7/10	


Scenario B2: Sale of house and retention of rest of the estate, including the walled garden, for public access

Description	Geilston House plus a small area of land to the front of the house are sold to a private buyer. Similar to Scenario B1, with scope to retain growing space and develop projects, such as the outdoor nursery and micro hydro scheme. However, under this scenario the walled garden is retained, allowing the site to continue as a paid entry visitor attraction.	
SWOT	<u>Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main liability (the house) disposed of • Walled garden remains open to public • Retains viability as visitor attraction • House restored with private funds 	<u>Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House without walled garden has limited (if any) sale value • House without walled garden less attractive to buyers
	<u>Opportunities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased income through new activities • Increased relevance of Geilston to the local community 	<u>Threats</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No appetite from private buyers for house, particularly with limited private outdoor space •
Capital implications	Costs arising from new projects/redevelopment of The Steading will incur capital costs. Guideline £3.8m for renewal and subdivision of Geilston House.	
Revenue implications	Small boost for NTS finances from the sale of Geilston House – lower than Scenario B1 Potential to generate additional income, but will also result in higher revenue costs associated with running site	
Outcome	Sale of the house <i>sans garden</i> is highly dependent on interest from buyers.	
	Consider, 8/10	

Scenario C1: Retention of asset and full restoration of house with grant/ loan funding

Description	A mix of fundraising, grants and loans are secured to fully restore Geilston House, with a viable business plan in place encompassing a compatible mix of uses from the options appraisal.	
SWOT	<u>Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public access maintained • House restored • Garden stays open • Stakeholder support 	<u>Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly dependent on competitive grant funding or internal use of NTS resources i.e. diverting funds from other planned projects • Need to increase ongoing revenue income – address deficit • Requires dedicated project officer – major project
	<u>Opportunities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed interest in house and garden • Growing tourism market/ spend in Scotland • Increased income through new activities • Increased relevance of Geilston to the local community 	<u>Threats</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong drive needed to have chance of project success – from NTS or another operator (i.e. community) • Project fails to secure sufficient grant funding • Project is not a priority for NTS and goes on backburner • Despite investment, revenue costs continue to exceed income to unsustainable levels
Capital implications	Guideline £3.8m cost for renewal and subdivision of Geilston House – needs to be further investigated before proceeding	
Revenue implications	Potential to generate additional income, but will also result in higher revenue costs associated with running site	
Outcome	This is the favoured option of Friends of Geilston. Securing the capital funding to renovate Geilston House is the first of several hurdles that would need to be cleared.	
	Reject, 3/10	X

Scenario C2: Retention of asset and partial restoration of house with grant/ loan funding

Description	A mix of fundraising, grants and loans are secured to partially restore Geilston House, with a viable business plan in place encompassing a compatible mix of uses from the options appraisal.	
SWOT	<u>Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public access maintained • House partially restored for re-use • Garden stays open • Stakeholder support 	<u>Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholly dependent on competitive grant funding or internal use of NTS resources i.e. diverting funds from other planned projects • Need to increase ongoing revenue income – address deficit • Requires dedicated project officer – major project
	<u>Opportunities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed interest in house and garden • Growing tourism market/ spend in Scotland • Increased income through new activities • Increased relevance of Geilston to the local community • Staged approach to demonstrate future viability 	<u>Threats</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong drive needed to have chance of project success – from NTS or another operator (i.e. community) • Project fails to secure sufficient grant funding • Project is not a priority for NTS and goes on backburner • Despite investment, revenue costs continue to exceed income to unsustainable levels
Capital implications	Guideline £850k for repair and proportion of £2.9m depending on extent of restoration and subdivision of Geilston House – needs to be further investigated before proceeding	
Revenue implications	Potential to generate additional income, but will also result in higher revenue costs associated with running site	
Outcome	This is a variation on the favoured option of Friends of Geilston and brings part of the house back into use. Securing the capital funding to renovate Geilston House is the first of several hurdles that would need to be cleared.	
	Consider, 6/10	

Scenario D: Enabling development to support full or partial restoration of house, plus grant/ loan funding


Description	Part of the land in NTS ownership is sold to a developer for housing (subject to consents), releasing funding to be ringfenced for restoration of Geilston House. However, by itself this is unlikely to meet the full conservation deficit, meaning grant funding is still likely to be required and a robust business plan in place for the use of the restored house.	
SWOT	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains public access to garden • Supports restoration of house • Maximises funding from existing assets while securing future of Geilston House • Land is more attractive to private buyers without liability of Geilston House 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income from enabling development will not by itself be enough to meet conservation deficit • Responsibility for restoring Geilston House remains with NTS, or a community body • Planning and strong community opposition likely to delay substantially
	<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial contribution to redevelopment from sale of adjacent land • Increased income through new activities in house and grounds • Renewed interest in house and gardens 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development gets caught up in planning process, delaying restoration project • New housing is unpopular and detracts from Geilston • No demand from buyers for housing land due to planning • Project fails to secure the additional development funding needed • Despite investment, revenue costs continue to exceed income to unsustainable levels
Capital implications	Guideline £3.8m for full renewal and subdivision of Geilston House, or less if partial Some funding released by sale of land for enabling development	
Revenue implications	One-off boost for finances from the sale of land –in the low to mid hundreds of thousands Potential loss of NTS memberships/ support at local level	
Outcome	No guarantees that an enabling development would secure consents, effectively reverting to Option C. Nonetheless, needs to remain on the table if restoration is to occur under NTS (or if whole site is sold, a private buyer may seek to take this route)	
	Consider, 5/10	

Table 3.2: Options Summary

Factors for consideration	Scenario A: Full disposal of asset	Scenario B1: Dispose of house + walled garden, retain grounds	Scenario B2: Dispose of house only	Scenario C1: Retain and full restoration	Scenario C2: Retain and partial restoration	Scenario D: Retain with enabling development
Level of benefits created for stakeholders	One-off benefit for NTS Limited for other stakeholders	Some benefits for all stakeholders	Potential win-win scenario, with high risk element (house) disposed of	High – creating benefits would be integral to project's success	High – creating benefits will be integral to project's success	High – creating benefits will be <u>essential</u> to project's success
Level of risk for NTS	Some risk (largely reputational)	Some risk (largely reputational)	Some risk	High financial risk; low reputational risk	Moderate to high risk	High risk
Timescale	Could feasibly take place 2020-21	2020-21	2020-21, 3-5 years to secure funding to be fully operational	c. 5 years to secure funding and be fully operational	c. 3-5 years to secure funding and be fully operational	c. 5 years to secure consents, funding and be fully operational
Most viable 'uses'	Private housing or self-catering	<u>House</u> : private housing or self-catering <u>Grounds</u> : produce, play, nursery, renewables, walks/ events	<u>House</u> : private housing or self-catering <u>Grounds</u> : visitor attraction, produce, play, nursery, renewables, walks/ events	<u>House</u> : self-catering; multi-use venue <u>Grounds</u> : as per B1 plus food cabin, campervans	<u>House</u> : self-catering OR multi-use venue <u>Grounds</u> : as per C1	As per Scenario C1/C2 plus enabling development of housing
Capital cost	None	£50,000+	£0.3m+	£3.8m+	£2.5m+	£3.8m+ (excl. enabling housing devt cost) Potential to reduce cost with developer input
Revenue cost	None	£25k/year when fully operational	£160k/year when fully operational	£197k/year when fully operational	£186k/year when fully operational	£197k/year when fully operational
Revenue income	One-off income from sale of asset	£275k over 10 years	£1.12m over 10 years	£1.69m over 10 years	£1.45m over 10 years	£1.69m over 10 years (+ one-off developer contribution £0.3m)
Outcome	Dependent on securing purchaser	Dependent on purchaser for house and community partner for grounds	Dependent on purchaser for house and arrangements for garden	Dependent on community partner and/ or NTS commitment	Dependent on community partner and/ or NTS commitment	Dependent on community partner and/ or NTS commitment, plus developer interest

4. Operating Model

This section assesses the financial viability of the options scenarios identified, as well as the possible management and operational arrangements for the garden, including the role of the National Trust for Scotland.

4.1 Income and Revenue Costs

Tables 4.1 and **4.2** present high level indicative income and cost projections for Geilston Garden under each scenario.

Without predetermining the ownership or management arrangements for Geilston (see **Section 4.2**), we have made the following assumptions for the purposes of developing a financial appraisal:

- capital costs, including the cost of borrowing, are not included – it is assumed improvements will be undertaken with grant funding and donations;
- under scenario B1, where the walled garden is disposed of, Geilston Garden is no longer a paid entry visitor attraction;
- under scenarios B2 through to D, Geilston Garden continues to operate on a similar basis to the existing set-up, with a paid system of entry that is free to NTS members, while visitors are encouraged to join NTS and, where they do, a proportion of the sign-up fee is allocated to Geilston;
- under options where Geilston Garden remains open, financial projections are made on the assumption of a programme of activity and increased promotion, building on the capital investment, that will increase visits and use of the gardens by visitors and local residents – we have factored in a 7% increase in visits a year for the first five years, levelling out after year 5. **Tables 4.1** and **4.2** show the position at Year 5, i.e. at optimum visitors/income – but it will take time to reach this level; and
- café revenue and cost figures are based on the average spend and Cost of Sale percentages used in the Food & Beverage Feasibility Study (Hotel Management Company, 2018) commissioned by NTS and similar uptake from visitors (45% of visitors making a purchase) but recalculated to account for increased footfall.

Table 4.1: Indicative Gross Income from Each Option (Annual, £000s)

Assumptions		A: Full disposal	B1: Dispose of house/ WG, retain grounds	B2: Dispose of house only	C1: Retain all & full restoration	C2: Retain all & part restoration	D: Retain with enabling development
Lease of cottage	Current level sustained	-	-	-	9	9	9
Self-catering	4 units @ 50% occupancy year-round (2 units with part restoration)	-	-	-	66	33	66
Multi-use space	£12.50/hour hire	-	4	4	3.5	3.5	3.5
Food and drink cabin	Based on 2018 feasibility study, with increased visitor numbers	-	-	36	36	36	36
Weddings & parties	£1,000 exclusive hire fee	-	-	5	12	8	8
Campervans	5 spaces, £20/night @ 50% occ., April-Sept	-	-	9	9	9	9
Cruise ship tours	50 visits (half of Greenock ships) of 30 visitors per visit at £17.50 per head	-	-	26	26	26	26
Art/ nature events	Current programme sustained/ increased	-	4	4	4	4	4
Produce & donations	Current level (around £8k) sustained/ increased	-	8	10	10	10	10
Gate income	Current level (£5.5k) sustained/ increased	-	-	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
New NTS memberships	Current level (£3.5k) sustained/ increased	-	-	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
Outdoor nursery	Rental income £1,100 pcm	-	13	13	13	13	13
Sub-total		-	£29,000	£119,000	£200,500	£163,500	£196,500*
+ Micro hydro scheme	Highly dependent on level of govt. subsidy	-	20	20	20	20	20
Total income		£0	£49,000	£139,000	£220,500	£183,500	£216,500*

*Plus Year One developer contribution (assumed £300k)

Ten year income projections for each option are shown in **Appendix C**.

Table 4.2: Indicative Running Costs for Each Option (Annual, £000s)

Assumptions		A: Full disposal	B1: Dispose of house/ WG, retain grounds	B2: Dispose of house only	C1: Retain all & full restoration	C2: Retain all & part restoration	D: Retain with enabling development
Gardening staff	Current level sustained	-	-	50	50	50	50
Accommodation web listing, bookings, cleaning etc.	Handled by external company taking 20% fee (inclusive)	-	-	-	14	7	14
Food and drink cabin	Based on 2018 feasibility study, incl. stock, payroll, operating costs (but not unit rental)	-	-	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5
Other NTS staff	High level of volunteer input to complement seasonal and year-round activities	-	-	20	20	20	20
Cruise ship hosting	Extra staff time, plus catering	-	-	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Insurance	Based on current cost (£8k)	-	2	6	9	9	9
Utilities	Based on current costs (£4-6k)	-	2	3	8	6	8
Maintenance/equipment	Currently £42k – saving as no longer liable for furniture storage costs	-	12	25	40	38	40
Travel and subsistence	In line with current cost (£2k)	-	1	2	2	2	2
Other overheads	Current (£17k) – includes event costs	-	8	18	18	18	18
Total costs		£0	£25,000	£160,000	£197,000	£186,000	£197,000
Total income	Excludes micro hydro scheme	-	£29,000	£119,000	£200,500	£163,500	£196,500
Surplus / Deficit	(too many unknowns)	£0	£4,000	-£41,000	£3,500	-£22,500	-£500

4.2 Ownership and Management

Who owns and manages the asset is one of the key issues to be resolved ahead of developing a plan for regenerating the house and garden. As discussed, the estate is in the hands of NTS, however the disposal decision taken by the board in 2017 has opened up the possibility of an alternative, i.e. community, organisation taking on the running and/or ownership of the site. Who this is, and what role NTS would play in it, requires further exploratory work.

This section sets out potential ownership and management options for the site, grouped under three scenarios, presented in more detail over the following pages:

- a) full ownership by NTS, with fundraising/ promotional/ activities support from FOG (this is the preference of FOG);
- b) new community trust own asset but NTS manage; and
- c) full ownership and management by new trust – NTS support transition.

a) Full ownership by NTS, with fundraising/ promotional/ activities support from FOG

This represents the current set-up, with NTS operating the garden – as they have since 1998 – and Friends of Geilston supporting it through promotional activity and events. However, as FOG was only established towards the end of the 2017 season, in reality this is a new arrangement for Geilston. Since then, Geilston has experienced visitor growth, with a record number of paid and NTS member visitors in 2018, at least in part attributable to the promotional work undertaken by FOG, which has a strong commitment to Geilston and a good working relationship with NTS.

As covered, there is scope for developing a range of projects that will enhance the garden activity and present new revenue streams, although under this scenario NTS would need to take the lead on these. FOG now run a series of events at Geilston over its opening season, and NTS/FOG volunteers play an important role in the functioning of the garden, including staffing the entrance and running tours, on top of gardening activities.

FOG is also well placed to fundraise for Geilston. The current uncertainty around the garden’s future means they have not launched into this, but have indicated that they would be keen to explore avenues for this once the situation is clearer.

Full ownership by NTS, with fundraising/promotional support from FOG	
<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on existing relationship between NTS/Geilston and FOG • Lower risk – garden will not go bankrupt provided it has NTS subsidy 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of certainty on viable investment proposition
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to continue growing visits to Geilston • Opportunity to develop revenue generating projects to improve financial position of garden 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garden continues to run at an unsustainable loss • FOG loses initial focus/ enthusiasm • NTS lack internal resource/ drive to take forward key projects at Geilston • NTS board revert to previous decision to dispose of Geilston

b) New community trust own asset but NTS manage

A new community trust would be separate from FOG, although there would be some crossover in terms of active membership. If such a body is to be created, demonstrating strong local support would be critical, as well as possessing the capacity and skills to run the garden. Help would be available – including from the [Development Trust Association Scotland](#) and [Community Land Scotland](#).

Under this scenario, an agreement would be made with NTS to manage the garden and there would be minimal visible change in operation to the outside world (beyond the range of enhancements taken forward). The new organisation would, however, be responsible for the overall direction of the garden and its finances. The recent experience of NTS is that a community trust would be viewed more favourably when it comes to securing grant funding from external sources than the Trust itself.

New community trust own asset, but NTS manage	
<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retains NTS gardening and heritage expertise and staffing Retains NTS involvement, including branding, marketing reach and reputation for quality – link to Hill House Those most passionate about Geilston can take ownership of project and drive it forward Trust can access grant funding for capital works without going through NTS NTS no longer meeting deficit out of own General Fund 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NTS members still get free entry – less revenue from gate Lack of certainty on viable investment proposition Remains dependent on volunteer input – long-term commitment required
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding and organisational support available for asset transfer/ buy-out NTS branding drives higher footfall Potential to develop revenue generating projects with surplus reinvested at Geilston 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garden does not raise enough revenue to finance management agreement with NTS Lack of interest/ participation in Trust in local community Trust model proves unviable and garden is forced to close – key threat NTS pull out of garden after initial set period – loss of garden expertise

c) Full ownership and management by new trust – NTS support transition

Under this scenario, a community trust would be established and take over the full ownership and running of Geilston Garden. The risk associated with this would depend on the extent of what is transferred – with the ownership of Geilston House presenting particular challenges.

A new organisation would be well placed to secure funding to, for instance, employ a project development officer, with up to £50,000 available from the Architectural Heritage Fund for this and related activities. This could help to take forward the different ideas put forward in this document. Nonetheless, maintaining the current level of expenditure on the garden would be challenging – as a single attraction it does not break even, and this report has struggled to find ways in which it could.

Full ownership and management by new trust – NTS support transition	
<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher likelihood of securing external grant funding • Those most passionate about Geilston can take ownership of project and drive it forward • NTS no longer meeting deficit out of own General Fund • NTS members no longer have free access – increases revenue from gate 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk – no track record of running heritage assets or gardens • Responsible for all own marketing – no longer benefit from inclusion in national NTS publications • Less benefit from proximity to high profile Hill House restoration • Financial viability remains challenging – keeping staffing at same level would be difficult • Heavily dependent on volunteer input – long-term commitment required
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and organisational support available for asset transfer/ buy-out • NTS could have a seat on board of new Trust and provide transition support • Potential to develop membership model for frequent visitors • Maximises potential for revenue generating projects – not constrained by NTS charitable objectives/ decision making 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest/ participation in Trust in local community • Trust model proves unviable and garden is forced to close – key threat • Footfall declines – no longer benefitting from central NTS marketing/ status

4.3 Funding Review

Funding Landscape

A recent report, commissioned by Arts and Business Scotland and published in August 2018, provides a useful overview of where the heritage sector in Scotland currently stands in terms of fundraising and resources²¹. Overall, the report finds:

- that public and grant funding in the sector is increasing squeezed, and that many arts and cultural sector organisations are attempting to rebalance their reliance this by moving towards private sources of income;
- a fall in sales for the National Lottery is reducing the level of grant giving by both its Community and Heritage Funds, concluding that “future HLF distribution is likely to focus more on assisting smaller organisations and local projects rather than the large national institutions”; and
- there is an opportunity for the heritage sector to secure a greater proportion of funds from earned income, particularly through making the best (i.e. more commercial) use of existing assets.

Potential Funding Sources for Geilston

We have reviewed the main sources of grant funding that could be accessed to support the regeneration of Geilston House and Garden, detailed in **Table 4.3**.

As well as these grant programmes, there are also private charitable trusts with a track record of backing heritage and conservation projects. One such organisation, the Dunard Fund, was a major supporter of the NVA St Peter’s Seminary project. The Dunard Fund supports the promotion and development of the arts in Scotland, including the “rehabilitation of endangered architectural masterpieces”. Trustees seek to engage with the projects they are funding, and awards average £140,000²².

There are also several charitable trusts operating in the Helensburgh and Cardross area, which distribute sums each year for local projects. This includes the two trusts established by Geilston’s last occupiers, the Miss E C Hendry Charitable Trust and Miss M E Bell Charitable Trust. Others include the Kenneth Barge Memorial Trust based in Rhu, and the John Dobbie Foundation based in Helensburgh. Argyll and

²¹ The State of Heritage Funding Now: Research Report, Consilium Research & Wavehill Ltd for Arts & Business Scotland, August 2018, [accessed online](#)

²² Dunard Fund page on Funding Scotland, [accessed online](#)

Bute Council also has a Supporting Communities Fund for allocation to community projects in Helensburgh and Lomond each year. In 2019/20, this amounted to £30,000 in total, distributed across 16 projects.

Geilston has also previously accessed funds for specific projects from NTS Members' Centres, which are geographically based and organise events and fundraising to support NTS sites.

Given the scale of the project, it is likely that a variety of approaches would be needed to raise the required funds, including local fundraising and appeals, sponsorship, applications to grant funders, and seeking a contribution from NTS' own funds.

Table 4.3: Sources of Grant Funding

Organisation	Fund	Amount	Comment	Likelihood of securing
Historic Environment Scotland	Historic Environment Repair Grant	£10k - £500k	Previously accessed for repairs of Geilston House in 2010	6/10 – not a long term solution and harder to justify if not part of wider package
National Lottery Community Fund	Awards for All	£300 - £10k	Suitable for project funding or contribution to cap ex, community focus	6/10 – but less so for NTS. Could be used to support projects with community focus
National Lottery Community Fund	Medium grants for community-led activity.	£10k - £150k	Suitable for project funding or contribution to cap ex, community focus	6/10 – but less for NTS. Could be used to support projects with community focus
Scottish Government	Scottish Land Fund	£10k - £1m	Community asset purchase only – not for regeneration works	8/10 – but only if community is purchasing the asset
Scottish Government	Regeneration Capital Grant Fund	Flexible (range of £150k to £2.2m in 2019)	Need to show community involvement and ability to deliver transformational change. Up to 100% of costs.	2/10 – highly competitive and would need strong buy-in from Argyll & Bute Council. Not heritage focused.
Architectural Heritage Fund	Heritage Impact Fund Loan	£25k - £500k	6% interest, repayable in 3 years	7/10 – but borrowing costs difficult to support
Pilgrim Trust	Open funding	Average £25k	Can fund project or capital costs.	7/10 – good fit with aims
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Open programme	£3k - £5m	Development up to 2 years, delivery up to 5 years. Own contribution of 5% up to £1m, 10% over £1m.	7/10 – this is most appropriate source of grant funding on offer for capital works
Architectural Heritage Fund / HES	Scottish Community Development Grant	Up to £50k	After establishing viable end use, can fund taking project towards start of on-site works	8/10 (not NTS) – could be used to support project officer or consultants
Architectural Heritage Fund	Project Viability Grant	Up to £7.5k	Must enable measurable progress towards the goal of acquiring asset and/or change of use	8/10 (not NTS) – could be used for developing a business plan
Arts & Business Scotland	Culture & Business Fund Scotland	Up to £40k	Matches sponsorship from business (in-kind or cash sponsorship) – can be over more than one sponsor/grant up to £40k limit	7/10 – identifying and getting on board business partner(s) would be the hardest part

National Lottery Heritage Fund

In terms of scale and fit with objectives, the National Lottery Heritage Fund (previously the Heritage Lottery Fund) is the most logical route for supporting the redevelopment of Geilston.

The Heritage Fund has recently launched a Strategic Funding Framework covering the period 2019-2024²³. Key changes in the new strategy include a particular focus on:

- landscapes and nature, and supporting environmental benefits;
- creating benefits for and bringing heritage closer to communities – *“it’s not enough to save something – you’ve got to make it live”*; and
- inclusion, with a requirement for projects to ensure “a wider range of people will be involved in heritage”.

There will also be a focus on helping grant recipients to become more financially sustainable. Overall, the new objectives look to have a good fit with the range of activities and uses being proposed at Geilston Garden, with a strong community focus and emphasis on preserving public access to greenspace. Providing opportunities for a diverse range of people to become involved with the project is now an essential criterion for grants – the employability service at West Dunbartonshire Council has indicated they would consider how they could support the project, albeit following the lead of Argyll and Bute Council.

The amount of funding distributed by the Heritage Fund has reduced in recent years, the result of declining lottery ticket sales – **Table 4.4**. However, it remains a major funder of heritage conservation projects in Scotland, with £28m of grants in 2017/18 over 152 projects (average award of £185k).

²³ The National Lottery Heritage Fund: Strategic Funding Framework 2019-24, [accessed online](#)

Table 4.4: National Lottery Heritage Fund Grants in Scotland

	£ awarded (nominal prices)	Number of projects funded
2013/14	£51.5m	264
2014/15	£39.3m	156
2015/16	£54m	133
2016/17	£30.3m	252
2017/18	£28.1m	152

Source: Scotland's Historic Environment Audit 2018

The Heritage Fund contributed £2.33m to the redevelopment of Hermitage Park in Helensburgh in 2017, though the now closed Parks for People programme. This was used for construction of a new pavilion and new multi-use sports facility, restoring historic features, upgrades to children's play areas, and guided walks and activities to encourage visitors, and overseen by a joint committee comprised of Argyll and Bute Council and the Friends of Hermitage Park group. The Heritage Fund also committed £3.8m towards NVA's St Peter's Seminary project, although most of this was not drawn down after the project stalled.

As the National Lottery supports projects across the UK, they are unlikely to provide grants to similar projects in the same area, so ensuring Geilston is distinct from Hermitage Park – and any future proposals for the St Peter's site – will remain an important consideration.

The Heritage Fund encourages partnerships between organisations when applying for funds, and advises that this is formalised with an agreement. Their guidance sets out that they would “usually expect the owner of the heritage to be the lead applicant” and that if this is not the case, the owner will be asked to sign up to the terms of grant²⁴.

²⁴ Application Guidance £250k - £5m, National Lottery Heritage Fund (2019), [accessed online](#)

5. Next Steps

A successful operating model for Geilston that delivers or partially delivers against all five study objectives is possible, but is highly dependent on various components being drawn together, each with their own degree of risk. It will require significant commitment from stakeholders in fundraising, delivery of different projects, and long term commitment to Geilston Garden.

Based on the available evidence and a realistic assessment of development options, **there are ways in which the deficit at Geilston can be significantly reduced and/or possibly eliminated**, in parallel with increasing the relevance of the garden to the local community and maintaining (some or complete) public access.

Nonetheless, this does not take into account the high level of capital investment required to deliver this solution, the 'opportunity cost' to NTS (i.e. could the resources be better utilised elsewhere?) or any borrowing costs (including the 'return on investment' for any NTS contribution). It does, however, demonstrate that the current level of deficit is not insurmountable, although we do not underestimate the challenge of overcoming it.

Geilston House remains the primary challenge for the site. If a route can be found whereby the house can be restored to good order by a private funder, while maintaining the integrity of the garden (Scenario B2), this would put the garden in a good position going forward. However, it is difficult to judge how likely this is and failure to find a buyer who is able to commit to restoration of the house would effectively bring NTS back to square one, with Scenario A (full sale) or B1 (sale of house and walled garden) as the most obvious next options. Even then, there would be no guarantee of a sale.

There are therefore a number of 'known unknowns' that make assessing the best way forward a challenge. The following next steps will help to present a clearer picture and can be undertaken relatively quickly:

- NTS need to internally discuss the findings of this study and secure buy-in from relevant parties, including the Board, on amending the disposal decision and assessing the alternative routes forward proposed here;
- Friends of Geilston need to present the findings and get buy in from their membership and supporters on a way forward that requires more formal

input in the future – see the **Addendum** below for the group's thoughts on a way forward;

- it would be sensible to explore options for establishing a trust/ alternative management models – we believe there is good scope for such a group to take on a development officer, likely on a fixed one year basis, to look at the feasibility of the various revenue-raising projects that have been put forward and consider funding options, working alongside but separate from NTS and FOG;
- a full condition survey and valuation of Geilston House is required regardless of what course of action is taken – disposal, transfer of ownership to a new organisation, or restoration – it would be advisable to take this forward now to support the decision making process on the garden's future;
- if Option B2 is to be seriously considered, there is a need to investigate an architectural solution to separating the house and walled garden and whether Geilston House could be put on the market as a standalone property – whether the house can be sold without the walled garden is dependent on the outcome of this. Using NTS or HES repair grant funds to get Geilston House into a more sellable condition may make sense if it allows this to proceed more easily; and
- a funding strategy for the site needs to be developed – the scale of what is required will depend on what works needs to be completed to secure the house/ conversion of the steading/ garden improvements. Any application to the Heritage Fund should be made on the basis of maximum clarity of NTS position i.e. investment will not happen on any other basis.

More immediately, access to a portable card machine at Geilston would be a sensible way of maximising gate revenue and attracting new NTS memberships.

Addendum: FOG Comment on Draft

Friends of Geilston – Feedback on Draft Report

The most important part of the EKOS report is the last section **The Next Steps**, (Section 5) looking at the way forward to an agreed resolution on the future of Geilston.

The report concludes that an operating model is possible that delivers, or partly delivers, on all the study objectives “*but it is highly dependent on various components being drawn together*”. At the heart of the report is the need to create a synthesis between the best development solutions for Geilston (Section 3) and the best management arrangements (Section 4). The consultants hesitate to make a definitive recommendation and instead point to the need for the stakeholders to draw together the various threads themselves. How this might be achieved is set out below.

The final section of the report reiterates that “***Geilston House remains the primary challenge for the site. If a route can be found whereby the house can be restored to good order by a private funder, while maintaining the integrity of the garden (Scenario B2) this would put the garden in a good position going forward***”. While the Friends of Geilston accept this position, it recognises that this scenario shows the largest operating deficit and also that, as the reports states, failure to secure a satisfactory sale agreement brings the NTS back to square one.

The great benefit of the EKOS study is that it provides information that can be used to look beyond the stated problems, to identify elements of options set out in the report that, when combined, offer:

- The best financial return
- The highest chance of funding
- The widest support from the NTS, its members, stakeholders and the community

This suggests a further option (B2/C1), marrying B2 (which scores highest on development outcomes) and C1 (that scores best on scenario options) in a partnership approach that sees one part of the house restored for holiday lets, funded by an appeal, NTS own funds and possibly by grant, with the other part (the “Bungalow”) restored by a Geilston Trust (or other named and suitably constituted body) funded by the HLF, Architectural Heritage Fund and others, along with the development of a range of activities and uses for the garden recommended in the report, carried out by the National Trust for Scotland supported by volunteers and the Friends of Geilston. This appears



to offer a solution that has the most potential and flexibility, shares responsibility and spreads risk. It also suggests an incremental approach with potential for expansion of roles and responsibilities or the adoption of fall back positions if necessary. Could this proposal be included in the report in Section 5 as an example of how the findings of the report might be taken forward?

As the final section of the report also states that, given the agreement of the NTS trustees and the Friends of Geilston, the next steps are to develop the overall management and financial model and to establish secure estimated costs for the restoration and conversion of Geilston House, for which consultants and funding will be required.

Friends of Geilston

23 May 2019

Appendix A: Friends of Geilston Survey

A short online survey was developed by EKOS and promoted by Friends of Geilston to its members, supporters and the wider community, in February 2019. This received 228 responses.

Respondent Profile

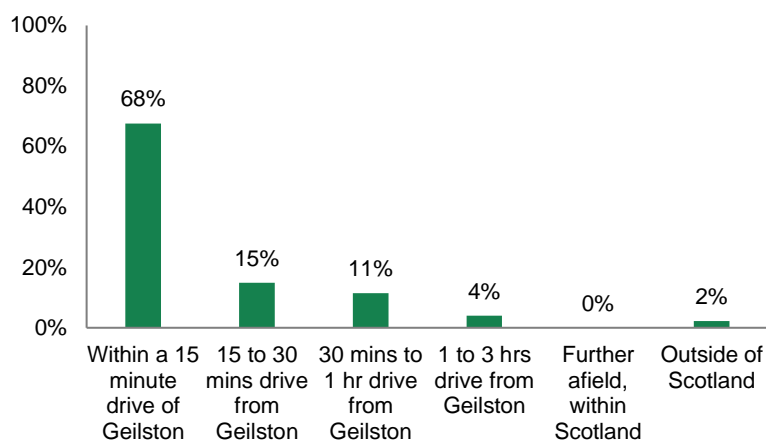
Most respondents were a member of Friends of Geilston (67%) or NTS (63%), with 18% stating they belong to neither organisation – **Table A.1**.

Table A.1: Membership Status

	Number	%
NTS and FOG member	110	48%
FOG only	43	19%
NTS only	33	14%
Neither	42	18%
Total	228	100%

The majority of respondents (82%) reported that they live within 30 minutes' drive of Geilston – **Figure A.1**.

Figure A.1: Location



N=228

Views on New Uses/ Activities at Geilston

Of 18 suggested new uses/activities at Geilston, 13 received positive support from more than half of respondents – see **Table A.2**, below. Those completing the survey were asked to take into account what is already offered within the local area and whether the use/ activity might have a negative impact elsewhere.

There was particularly strong support for family activities and guided walks (91%), something which already occurs at the garden, and a café (90%), a feature of many similar properties. However, far fewer respondents were in support of a food and drink van (32%), although this may be due to negative/ low quality perceptions of mobile catering.

When it comes to finding a new use for Geilston House, only 16% were opposed to holiday lets and 10% to business space, with 65% supportive of each. However, there was much stronger opposition to private housing, with 50% opposed and 27% supportive. An 'enabling development' to release funds from adjacent land also received strong views, with 59% opposed and 18% in favour.

Table A.2: Support for New Uses/ Activities

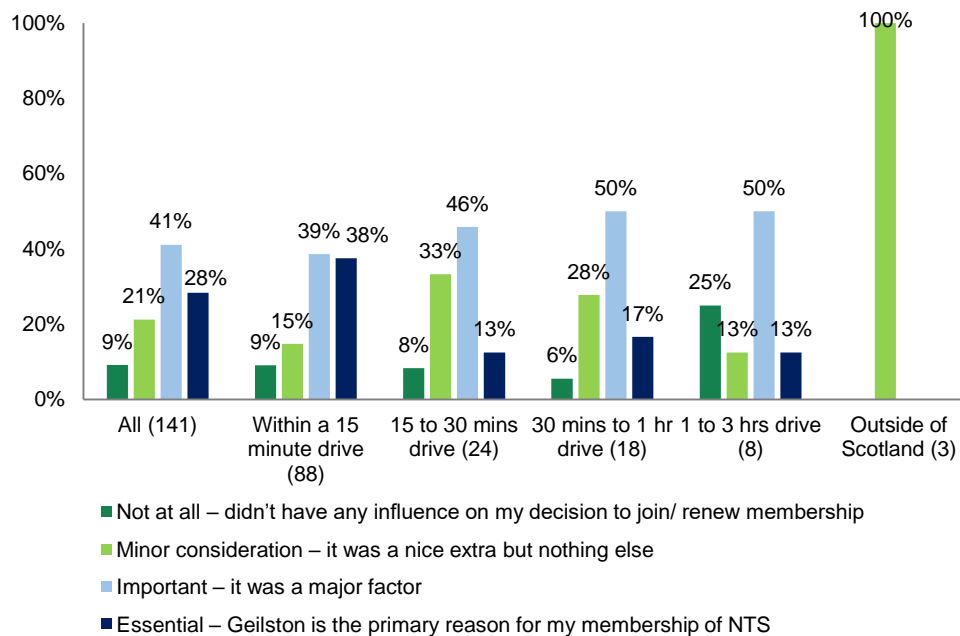
	1 (Strongly opposed)	2	3	4	5 (Very supportive)
Family activities and guided walks	1%	2%	6%	19%	72%
On-site cafe	0%	2%	8%	13%	77%
Arts and crafts space	0%	3%	18%	25%	54%
Veg. box/ produce deliveries	2%	4%	18%	26%	50%
Health and wellbeing space/ focus	0%	6%	20%	21%	52%
Extended/ enhanced play area	3%	6%	21%	22%	48%
Wedding packages	3%	10%	20%	28%	39%
Polytunnel/ allotments	5%	8%	21%	20%	46%
'Outdoor nursery' for pre-school children	5%	9%	20%	23%	44%
Holiday lets in Geilston House	9%	7%	20%	21%	44%
Rentable business space in GH	2%	8%	25%	26%	39%
Small renewable energy scheme (hydro)	6%	8%	23%	24%	39%
Sculpture garden	4%	11%	31%	23%	31%
Vineyard / growing junipers for gin	2%	13%	35%	21%	29%
On-site food and drink van	16%	21%	31%	15%	17%
Private housing in GH for sale or rent	32%	19%	23%	13%	14%
Small boutique site for campervans	27%	22%	25%	12%	15%

Dev't on adjacent land to release funds	46%	12%	24%	8%	10%
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Importance of Geilston to NTS members

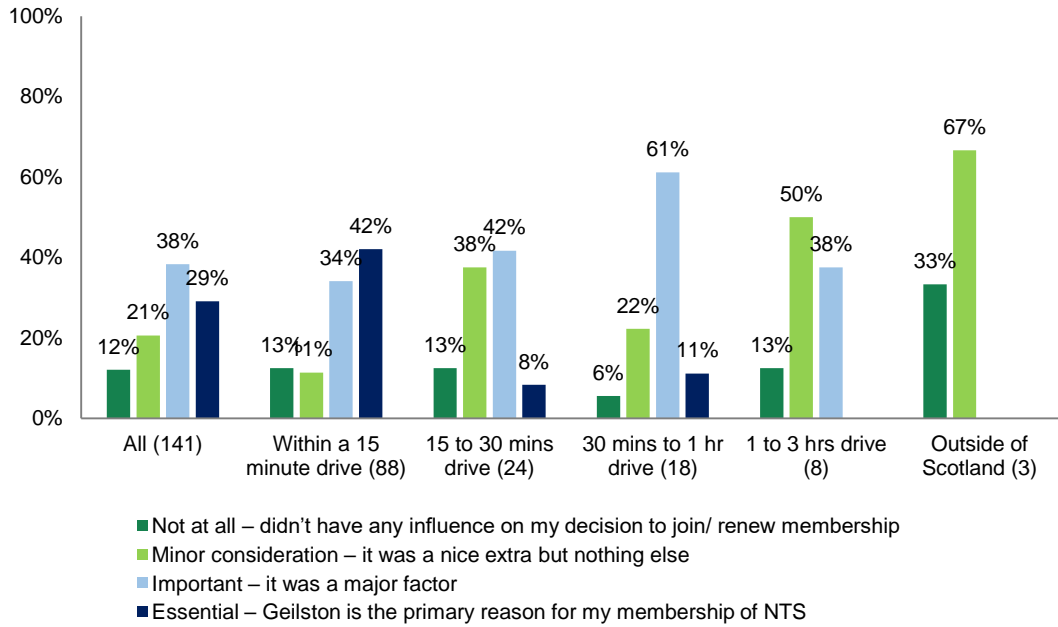
Survey respondents who are NTS members were asked two further questions on how important Geilston is to them. Of all respondents, 28% said that Geilston was the primary reason for their membership of NTS, and a further 41% stated it was a major factor. Unsurprisingly, it was a more important factor among those living closest to Geilston.

Figure A.2: Importance of Geilston to Existing NTS Membership



Survey respondents were also asked how important they think free access to Geilston Garden might be in the future when renewing their NTS membership. Overall, 29% said it is 'essential' and they may not renew their membership if Geilston is not an NTS asset, rising to 42% among those who live within 15 minutes of the garden.

Figure A.3: Importance of Geilston in Future NTS Membership



Appendix B: Tables and Supporting Data

Table B.1: Cardross Population (includes surrounding countryside)

Age	2011	2017	Change	%
0 to 15	450	415	-35	-8%
16 to 64	1,635	1537	-98	-6%
65+	515	618	+103	20%
Total	2,600	2,570	-30	-1%

Source: statistics.gov.scot

Table B.2: Holiday Lets – Comparator Pricing (Cost per night)

Property	Owner	Bedrooms	Sleeps	Lowest nightly rate	Highest nightly rate
Beechgrove Cottage, Pitmidden Garden	NTS	2	4	£72	£95
Claybokie, Mar Lodge Estate	NTS	5	10	£249	£606
The Coach House, Holmwood House	NTS	3	5	£52	£110
Invergare House, Rhu	Private	7	20	£765	£1,400
Saddell Lodge, Kintyre	Landmark Trust	2	4	£55	£189
The Pineapple, Falkirk	Landmark Trust	2	4	£118	£280
Old Place Of Monreith, Galloway	Landmark Trust	4	8	£148	£404
Ascog House, Isle of Bute	Landmark Trust	4	8	£210	£428
Saddell Castle, Kintyre	Landmark Trust	4	8	£237	£947

Source: online searches, February 2019

No Airbnb listings within Cardross

Table B.3: Nearby Heritage Properties at Risk

Building	Listing	Use	Current status
Shandon House & South Lodge, Shandon	B	Baronial house, later a school	House acquired by MOD in 1990 and South Lodge bought in 2014. Both still vacant and in very poor condition.
4-6 Rhu House, Rhu	B	Early 19 th century 2-storey resi building	Vacant, added to Buildings at Risk Register in 2009. In fair condition.
Rhu Corner Shop, Rhu	B	Former post office	Vacant, added to Buildings at Risk Register in 2009. In fair condition.
Ardenvohr House Stables, Greenhouses & Tower, Rhu	B	Ancillary buildings to Ardenvohr House	Ruinous state. In private ownership. Ardenvohr House itself is now a yacht club.
Cairndhu House, Helensburgh	B	Mansion, later a hotel and then a nursing home	Closed/vacant since 2010 and added to Buildings at Risk Register in 2012
Morar House, Helensburgh	A	Family villa, later used as a nursing home	RESTORED: Consents granted in 2016 - restoration and conversion to 7 flats with new build (5) underway at the site
Old Millig Toll, Helensburgh	B	Single storey, 3-bay cottage	RESTORED: Reported vacant in 2009 and added to Buildings at Risk Register. Restoration and extension now underway, for housing use.
Low Auchensail Farmhouse & Steading, Cardross	C	Farmhouse and steading	In poor condition since mid-1990s, used as a farm store
Darleith House, Darleith Road, Cardross	B	Early 16 th century country house (with additions). Later a seminary.	RESTORED: Vacant from mid-1960s. Redeveloped as large house in 2010s, with partial demolition and new extension and garage. On market for £850k+ in 2017 (now sold).
St Peter's Seminary, Cardross	A	Modernist seminary	Various plans for redevelopment have failed to come to fruition. Remains in ownership of Archdiocese of Glasgow.
Levenford House Lodge & Stables	B	Baronial lodge and stables	Main house used as offices and later converted to flats. Lodge and stables still in council ownership & in v. poor condition
Keil School, Dumbarton	B	Mansion house, operated as a school 1925-2000	Has suffered fires since becoming vacant. In very poor condition. Now surrounded by new housing development.
Notre Dame Convent Chapel, Dumbarton	Delisted (from B)	Former chapel	Adjacent convent housing cleared in 2000s with consent for new housing and conversion of chapel to 6 flats. Development did not proceed and now in critical condition. Delisted in 2016.

Source: Buildings at Risk Register

Appendix C: Financial Tables

Table C.1: Visitor Projections (reflected in gate fees, memberships and food and drink revenue, options B2 to D)

	Current level	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
New NTS Members	87	93	100	107	114	122	122	122	122	122	122
Paying Visitors	948	1,014	1,085	1,161	1,243	1,330	1,330	1,330	1,330	1,330	1,330
Non-paying Visitors	10,228	10,944	11,710	12,530	13,407	14,345	14,345	14,345	14,345	14,345	14,345
Total	11,263	12,051	12,895	13,798	14,763	15,797	15,797	15,797	15,797	15,797	15,797

Note: Increased visitors on the basis of range of new activities/ projects being developed under all options and promotion and events from FOG/NTS

Scenario B1: Dispose of house + walled garden, retain grounds for community use, gross income projections

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Multi-use space		2,000	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	25,500
Art/ nature events	3,000	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	38,500
Produce & donations	8,000	8,160	8,323	8,490	8,659	8,833	9,009	9,189	9,373	9,561	87,598
Outdoor nursery		13,200	13,332	13,465	13,600	13,736	13,873	14,012	14,152	14,294	123,665
Total	11,000	26,860	28,155	28,955	29,259	29,569	29,883	30,202	30,525	30,854	275,262

Scenario B2: Dispose of house only, gross income projections

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Multi-use space		2,000	2,000	2,000	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	23,500
Weddings		2,400	3,200	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800	39,200
Art/nature events	3,000	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	38,500
Produce & donations	8,000	8,160	8,323	8,490	8,659	8,833	9,009	9,189	9,373	9,561	87,598
Outdoor nursery		13,200	13,332	13,465	13,600	13,736	13,873	14,012	14,152	14,294	123,665
Campervans		5,000	6,000	8,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	73,000
Cruise tour package		21,263	22,313	23,625	24,938	26,250	26,250	26,250	26,250	26,250	223,388
Gate income	6,000	6,420	6,869	7,350	7,865	7,943	8,023	8,103	8,184	8,266	75,024
New memberships	3,500	3,745	4,007	4,288	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	43,068
Food & drink cabin		35,793	38,298	40,979	43,848	46,917	46,917	46,917	46,917	46,917	393,502
Total	20,500	101,480	108,342	116,997	123,797	129,067	129,460	129,859	130,264	130,675	1,120,443

Scenario C1: Retain and full restoration, gross income projections (£)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Multi-use space		3,000	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	34,500
Weddings		3,000	4,000	6,000	10,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	83,000
Art/nature events	3,000	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	38,500
Produce & donations	8,000	9,000	10,000	10,200	10,404	10,612	10,824	11,041	11,262	11,487	102,830
Outdoor nursery		13,200	13,200	13,332	13,465	13,600	13,736	13,873	14,012	14,152	122,571
Campervans		5,000	6,000	8,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	73,000
Cruise tour package		21,263	22,313	23,625	24,938	26,250	26,250	26,250	26,250	26,250	223,388
Gate income	6,000	6,000	6,000	8,000	8,560	8,646	8,732	8,819	8,908	8,997	78,661
New memberships	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,745	4,007	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	41,192
Four holiday units				26,280	52,560	59,130	65,700	65,700	67,014	68,354	404,738
Lease of cottage	9,000	9,090	9,181	9,273	9,365	9,459	9,554	9,649	9,746	9,843	94,160
Food & drink cabin		35,793	38,298	40,979	43,848	46,917	46,917	46,917	46,917	46,917	393,502
Total	29,500	112,345	119,992	157,434	194,147	208,202	215,301	215,838	217,696	219,588	1,690,041

Scenario C2: Retain and partial restoration, gross income projections (£)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Multi-use space		3,000	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	34,500
Weddings		3,000	4,000	6,000	10,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	83,000
Art/nature events	3,000	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	38,500
Produce & donations	8,000	9,000	10,000	10,200	10,404	10,612	10,824	11,041	11,262	11,487	102,830
Outdoor nursery		13,200	13,200	13,332	13,465	13,600	13,736	13,873	14,012	14,152	122,571
Campervans		5,000	6,000	8,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	73,000
Cruise tour package		21,263	22,313	23,625	24,938	26,250	26,250	26,250	26,250	26,250	223,388
Gate income	6,000	6,000	6,000	8,000	8,560	8,646	8,732	8,819	8,908	8,997	78,661
New memberships	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,745	4,007	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	41,192
Four holiday units				26,280	52,560	59,130	65,700	65,700	67,014	68,354	404,738
Lease of cottage	£9,000	£9,090	£9,181	£9,273	£9,365	£9,459	£9,554	£9,649	£9,746	£9,843	94,160
Food & drink cabin		£35,793	£38,298	£40,979	£43,848	£46,917	£46,917	£46,917	£46,917	£46,917	393,502
Total	29,500	112,345	119,992	143,294	163,867	174,637	178,451	178,988	180,189	181,411	1,462,672

Scenario D: Retain, full restoration with enabling development, gross income projections (£)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Developer contribution	300,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300,000
Multi-use space		3,000	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	34,500
Weddings		3,000	4,000	6,000	10,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	83,000
Art/nature events	3,000	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	38,500
Produce & donations	8,000	9,000	10,000	10,200	10,404	10,612	10,824	11,041	11,262	11,487	102,830
Outdoor nursery		13,200	13,200	13,332	13,465	13,600	13,736	13,873	14,012	14,152	122,571
Campervans		5,000	6,000	8,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	73,000
Cruise tour package		21,263	22,313	23,625	24,938	26,250	26,250	26,250	26,250	26,250	223,388
Gate income	6,000	6,000	6,000	8,000	8,560	8,646	8,732	8,819	8,908	8,997	78,661
New memberships	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,745	4,007	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	4,588	41,192
Four holiday units				26,280	52,560	59,130	65,700	65,700	67,014	68,354	404,738
Lease of cottage	9,000	9,090	9,181	9,273	9,365	9,459	9,554	9,649	9,746	9,843	94,160
Food & drink cabin		35,793	38,298	40,979	43,848	46,917	46,917	46,917	46,917	46,917	393,502
Total	329,500	112,345	119,992	157,434	194,147	208,202	215,301	215,838	217,696	219,588	1,990,041

Appendix D: Consultees

Friends of Geilston Committee

Friends of Geilston Working Group

Jackie Baillie, Dumbarton constituency MSP

Stephen Brooks, Working4U (Employability) Manager, West Dunbartonshire Council

Vivien Dance, Helensburgh Chamber of Commerce

Alison Farrell, Head Gardener, Geilston Garden, NTS

Rab Lees, Project Support Manager, Local Energy Scotland

Mark Lodge, Senior Planning and Strategies Officer, Argyll & Bute Council

Ali Macleod, Head of Fundraising, NTS

Audrey Martin, Transformation, Projects and Regeneration Manager, Argyll & Bute Council

Sara Packham, Ardardan Estate

Richard Williams, General Manager for Glasgow & West, NTS

Julie Young, Development Manager, Argyll & the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust