



St Ronan's Wells Business Plan

2026/27-2030/31

Final Version

St Ronan's Wells Five Year Business Plan

**2026-2031
Final Version
July 2026**

Table of Contents

Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. About St Ronan's Wells Support Group.....	4
3. The Asset: St Ronan's Wells	10
4. Heritage, Place and Community Significance	13
5. The Case for Community Ownership	17
6. Evidence of Need and Demand	20
7. Vision, Outcomes and Public Benefit	28
8. Proposed Uses and Operating Model	29
9. Market Appraisal and Operating Context	35
10. Financial Plan and Forecasts	51
11. Capital Development and Funding Strategy	56
12. Governance, Management and Organisational Capacity	62
13. Implementation Plan	67
14. Marketing and Communications	73
15. Risk Register and Exit Strategy.....	77
16. Monitoring, Evaluation and Community Accountability	82

Appendix 1 – Budget & Forecast (Median)

Appendix 2 – Budget & Forecast (Worst Case)

Appendix 3 – Budget & Forecast (Best Case)

Letters of Support (See accompanying Community Engagement Pack)

Trustee Biographies (See accompanying Community Engagement Pack)

Photographs (See accompanying Community Engagement Pack)

I. Executive Summary

St Ronan's Wells Support Group SCIO has prepared this five-year Business Plan to support the proposed community ownership, repair, repurposing and long-term management of St Ronan's Wells, Innerleithen.

This is primarily a community ownership business plan. It sets out how St Ronan's Wells can be transferred into local charitable stewardship and managed as a sustainable community asset: protecting a significant historic place, supporting volunteering and wellbeing, providing affordable space for local activity, maintaining the gardens, and generating the earned income needed to meet future responsibilities.

St Ronan's Wells is one of Innerleithen's most distinctive historic assets. It is a former spa site, visitor centre, garden and community landmark, with deep associations with Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, St Ronan's Border Games, Traquair, the former mineral water industry and the wider cultural landscape of the Tweed Valley. The building and gardens are part of the story of how Innerleithen developed as a place of health, gathering, visitors, ceremony and local pride.

The need for action is immediate. Scottish Borders Council has closed St Ronan's Wells Visitor Centre and has agreed that disposal of the site should progress through community asset transfer or other means. The gardens remain open and continue to be cared for by volunteers. Without community ownership and a viable operating model, there is a real risk that this important local asset will be lost to public use, or that its heritage, gardens and civic role will be diminished.

St Ronan's Wells Support Group SCIO was registered as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 28 April 2026. Its charitable purposes are closely aligned with the proposed future use of the site, including heritage, education, arts, culture, recreation, volunteering, community participation, environmental improvement and public benefit. The formal Asset Transfer Request was submitted on 30 April 2026. A professional valuation undertaken by DM Hall has established a current market value of £210,000, following joint instruction by Scottish Borders Council and the Support Group.

The proposed future model is based on four interlinked uses:

Use	Purpose
Heritage interpretation	To preserve and share the story of the spring, spa, lost water, Scott, Hogg, Traquair, St Ronan's Border Games and the bottling works.
Community hall and activity space	To provide an affordable, distinctive and flexible space for local groups, talks, workshops, meetings, small events and community use.
Gardens, wellbeing and outdoor learning	To maintain the gardens as a place for volunteering, biodiversity, quiet recreation, social connection, outdoor activity and community wellbeing.
Heritage short-stay accommodation	To generate earned income that can help maintain the building, sustain the gardens and keep community use affordable.

The accommodation is not the purpose of the project. It is one of the mechanisms through which wider public benefit can be sustained.

The five-year route to sustainability will be phased. The first phase will focus on securing the asset, strengthening governance, completing essential surveys, confirming the costed development plan and securing acquisition and development funding. The second phase will address urgent repairs, statutory compliance, insurance, access, safety and operating procedures. The third phase will test

public use through the gardens, hall, interpretation, events and volunteer systems. The fourth phase will launch the principal earned-income model, including the accommodation, once compliance, fit-out and management arrangements are confirmed. By year five, the ambition is for St Ronan's Wells to be operating as a stable community-owned heritage, wellbeing and cultural asset, supported by earned income, donations, volunteering, fundraising and grant support.

The proposal is credible, but it must now be assessed in detail. The Support Group is currently working with an indicative capital requirement of around £680,000, although this is likely to increase once professional surveys, design work, statutory requirements and cost planning are complete. This Business Plan therefore separates acquisition costs from capital repair, adaptation, fit-out, working capital and early operating costs.

At this stage, the strongest elements of the proposal are the heritage significance of the asset, the existing garden volunteer base, the formation of a dedicated SCIO, the clear community ownership rationale, the distinctive mixed-use model, and the strong strategic fit with responsible tourism, community-led heritage, wellbeing, local enterprise and the wider Tweed Valley visitor economy. The primary areas requiring further evidence are the final capital cost plan, current and projected running costs, trustee and volunteer capacity, detailed governance arrangements, confirmed community demand, hall hire assumptions, accommodation management and cleaning costs, short-term let compliance, and the final funding strategy.

The purpose of this Business Plan is to give Scottish Borders Council, Scottish Land Fund, the Architectural Heritage Fund and other future stakeholders confidence that St Ronan's Wells can be not only saved, but managed well: governed by a local charitable body, rooted in community need, financially tested, and capable of delivering lasting social, cultural, environmental and economic benefit.

St Ronan's Wells is a small site, but its meaning is much larger than its footprint. Community ownership offers Innerleithen the chance to protect a place that has shaped the town's identity for two centuries, while giving it a renewed and practical role in the life of the community.

2. About St Ronan's Wells Support Group

2.1 Who we are

St Ronan's Wells Support Group SCIO is a community-led Scottish charity established to secure the future of St Ronan's Wells, Innerleithen, as a place of heritage, wellbeing, learning, culture and local benefit. The group emerged in response to the uncertain future of the Wells and gardens following Scottish Borders Council's review of its property holdings and the proposed disposal of the site. It brings together local residents with a shared commitment to protecting St Ronan's Wells as a community asset and ensuring that its future is shaped by the people of Innerleithen.

The organisation became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 28 April 2026. This gives the group the legal and charitable structure required to pursue community ownership, raise funds, enter into agreements, manage risk, hold or lease property, and operate the site for public benefit. The Support Group has been developed with support from Innerleithen Community Trust and draws on the knowledge, commitment and practical experience of local residents involved in the campaign, the gardens, heritage research and early development work.

2.2 Charitable purposes

The charitable purposes of St Ronan's Wells Support Group are closely aligned with the proposed future use of the site. They include the advancement of heritage, education, arts, culture, recreation, citizenship, volunteering, environmental improvement and public benefit.

The charity's objects include acquiring the building and gardens at St Ronan's Wells through asset transfer from Scottish Borders Council; renovating and repurposing the historic building; providing learning opportunities through exhibitions, events and interpretation; maintaining the hall and associated spaces for arts, cultural and recreational activity; encouraging volunteering and community participation; and improving the gardens and natural environment for public enjoyment and biodiversity.

These purposes provide a solid foundation for a balanced community ownership model. The future of the Wells does not need to depend on a narrow visitor attraction model, nor on a purely commercial accommodation offer. The charity can instead develop a mixed programme in which heritage, community use, volunteering, gardens, wellbeing, learning and modest income generation support one another.

2.3 Local roots and community purpose

The Support Group has grown from a long-standing local commitment to St Ronan's Wells, its gardens and its place in the life of Innerleithen. This is one of the project's greatest strengths. The proposal has not been developed as a heritage project alone, but as a community ownership response to the risk that an important local resource could be lost from public use.

The group's primary purpose is to secure St Ronan's Wells and bring it into community ownership or long-term community control for the benefit of the wider community. The aim is to ensure that decisions about the future of the building, gardens and associated activity are shaped locally, with the asset used to support community participation, volunteering, wellbeing, learning, social connection, cultural activity and local resilience.

The historic character of the Wells is central to its identity, but the purpose of ownership is wider than saving a historic building. Community ownership would allow the site to become useful again: a place where local people can gather, volunteer, learn, take part in activities, care for the gardens, share skills, welcome visitors and generate income that is reinvested in public benefit.

Over the next five years, the Support Group will seek to secure the Wells and gardens in community ownership or long-term community control; maintain and improve public access to the gardens; reopen the hall for community, cultural, creative and wellbeing activity; develop volunteering and participation; provide opportunities for learning and interpretation; test modest income-generating uses including short-stay heritage accommodation; and build the governance, volunteer and financial systems needed to manage the asset responsibly.

This approach reflects the Support Group's wider community development purpose. St Ronan's Wells is valued because of its history, but its future depends on becoming an active, useful and sustainable community asset: locally controlled, publicly beneficial, and able to support the social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing of Innerleithen and the surrounding community.

2.4 Governance

St Ronan's Wells Support Group is regulated by OSCR and has the legal form of a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This structure is well suited to the proposed asset transfer because it combines charitable status, limited liability, trustee accountability and the ability to own or lease property.

There are currently five charity trustees: supported by a wider group of local residents involved in the campaign, garden activity, research and development work.

As the project moves from campaign and feasibility into acquisition, capital development and operation, the governance model will need to grow with the responsibilities of ownership. The Support Group will need clear trustee roles, appropriate financial controls, risk management, conflict of interest procedures, volunteer systems, safeguarding where relevant, building management arrangements, procurement processes, and regular reporting to members and funders.

This is particularly important because the charity is newly formed. Its strength lies in local commitment and community legitimacy; the next stage must demonstrate that this is matched by the systems, skills and controls needed to manage a listed building, public gardens, community space and income-generating accommodation.

2.5 Volunteers and local support

Voluntary commitment is already central to the future of St Ronan's Wells. The gardens have continued to be cared for by local volunteers (currently around 16 in number), demonstrating that the site is valued in practical ways, not only in principle. Under community ownership, this commitment can be developed into a wider volunteer programme supporting gardening, events, interpretation, maintenance, visitor welcome, fundraising, creative activity and community use. This will help keep the Wells active, locally rooted and accountable.

At the same time, it is important to be realistic about what volunteers can and cannot be expected to carry. Managing a listed building, public garden, hall, interpretation offer and short-stay accommodation will require defined roles, induction, training, supervision, health and safety procedures, and a clear distinction between voluntary activity and tasks requiring paid, freelance or professional support.

2.6 Progress to date

The Support Group has already made considerable progress in a short period of time. The project has moved from local concern about the future of St Ronan's Wells into a structured community ownership proposal, supported by a charitable vehicle, public communications, professional advice, community engagement, early funding, technical work and a formal Asset Transfer Request.

This progress is important because it shows that the proposal is not simply aspirational. The Support Group has begun to put in place the practical foundations needed for community ownership: governance, evidence, local mandate, professional support, funding discussions and a developing plan for future use.

Area of progress	What has been achieved	Why it matters
Community response established	A local Support Group has been formed in response to the proposed closure and disposal of St Ronan's Wells.	Shows that the project has emerged from local concern and community initiative, not from an external proposal.
Local leadership developed	The Support Group has been developed by local residents and is supported by Innerleithen Community Trust.	Provides local legitimacy and links the project to wider community development in Innerleithen.
SCIO registered	St Ronan's Wells Support Group SCIO has been registered as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, charity number SC055221.	Provides the legal and charitable structure required to pursue community ownership, raise funds, enter into agreements and manage the asset for public benefit.

Area of progress	What has been achieved	Why it matters
Charitable purposes confirmed	The SCIO's purposes cover heritage, education, arts, culture, recreation, volunteering, citizenship, community development and environmental improvement.	Confirms that the proposed future uses are aligned with the charity's objects and wider public benefit.
Constitution prepared and published	The constitution has been prepared and made publicly available.	Provides the governance framework for membership, trustees, decision-making, financial controls and community accountability.
Formal Asset Transfer Request submitted	The Support Group submitted a formal Asset Transfer Request to Scottish Borders Council on 30 April 2026.	Moves the project from campaign stage into the formal statutory process for community ownership.
Asset transfer documents made public	Scottish Borders Council has published the St Ronan's Wells asset transfer documents, including the Asset Transfer Request form, constitution, vision document, potential funders document and purchase offer calculation.	Demonstrates transparency and allows the proposal to be reviewed by the Council, funders, local people and other stakeholders.
Initial purchase offer prepared	The Asset Transfer Request includes an initial purchase offer of £50,000, subject to the wider public benefit case and final agreement with Scottish Borders Council.	Provides a starting point for negotiation and separates acquisition from capital repair, adaptation and operating costs.
Valuation completed	DM Hall completed a professional valuation of the building and grounds at £210,000, jointly instructed by Scottish Borders Council and the Support Group.	Gives a recognised valuation benchmark for the asset transfer process and future funding discussions.
Architectural Heritage Fund support secured	The project has secured support from the Architectural Heritage Fund, including grant support towards professional work.	Shows external confidence in the project and provides funding for early development work that would otherwise be difficult for a new community body to carry.
Professional work initiated	AHF-supported work includes architects' fees to RIBA Stage 2, quantity surveyor input, professional support for the Business Plan and a roof survey.	Begins to build the technical evidence needed to understand repair costs, feasibility, phasing and capital funding requirements.
Condition and technical work progressed	Technical work has been initiated to assess the building, repair needs, roof condition, capital works, accommodation potential and future compliance requirements.	Helps move the project from vision to deliverable plan and will inform final cost planning, consents and funder applications.
Vision developed	A community vision has been prepared around four linked spaces: Community Event Space, Heritage Short Stay Experience, cultural/storytelling interpretation, and Community Health, Wellbeing and Outdoor Learning Space.	Provides a clear framework for future use and shows how community benefit, income generation, heritage, gardens and wellbeing can support one another.

Area of progress	What has been achieved	Why it matters
Scottish Land Fund engagement started	The Support Group has begun work on a Scottish Land Fund application and has had early engagement with the Scottish Land Fund and the Community Ownership Support Service.	Shows that the project is engaging with the principal funder for community ownership and responding to funder expectations around viability, sustainability and community benefit.
Site visit held	A site visit took place in early June 2026 with Scottish Land Fund and Community Ownership Support Service representatives.	Provides an opportunity for funders and advisers to understand the asset, the proposal, the risks and the community context directly.
Business Plan prepared	A five-year Business Plan has been drafted, setting out the asset, need, community purpose, market context, operating model, governance, financial forecasts, capital strategy, implementation plan, risk register and evaluation approach.	Provides the strategic and practical case needed for asset transfer, funder assessment and trustee decision-making.
Financial forecasts prepared	Three financial forecast scenarios have been prepared: median, worst case and best case. These test income sensitivity across the first five years.	Demonstrates that the Support Group is testing viability realistically and understands the financial risks of ownership.
Community support gathered	The Support Group has gathered more than 200 signatures of support through sign-up sheets in local shops and cafés.	Provides practical evidence of local support beyond the trustee group.
Membership applications received	By mid-June 2026, 224 applications for membership had been received.	Shows strong interest in formal community participation and strengthens the local mandate for ownership.
Public communications established	The Support Group has established a website, social media presence and regular public updates.	Helps maintain transparency, build trust, communicate progress and keep the wider community engaged.
Social media following developed	Public asset transfer material records more than 730 Facebook followers at the time of submission.	Provides further evidence of local and wider interest in the future of the Wells.
Local business support demonstrated	A prize hamper to support public engagement received contributions from more than 12 local shops and businesses.	Shows that local businesses have engaged positively with the campaign and that the project is not isolated from the town's wider economy.
Innerleithen Community Council engagement	Members of the Support Group met Innerleithen Community Council on 27 April 2026 to outline the plans, with further presentation planned.	Demonstrates engagement with local democratic and civic structures.
Garden volunteer activity sustained	The gardens have continued to be maintained by volunteers, with around 16 regular volunteers meeting on Thursdays and	Shows that the asset already has a culture of practical community stewardship and delivers public

Area of progress	What has been achieved	Why it matters
	wider support through plant sales and fundraising.	benefit even while the building is closed.
Long-term garden care evidenced	The Asset Transfer Request states that the garden has been well maintained by volunteers for over 20 years.	Demonstrates continuity of care and strengthens the case that community ownership builds on existing local stewardship.
Traquair archive link developed	The Support Group has been working with Traquair House to share correspondence from the 7th and 8th Earls concerning the design and development of the Wells.	Strengthens the heritage, interpretation and partnership potential of the project.
Support agency relationships developed	The project has engaged with support from organisations and individuals including the Architectural Heritage Fund, Community Ownership Support Service, Borders Community Action, South of Scotland Enterprise, The Heritage Network and Innerleithen Community Trust.	Shows that the Support Group is not working in isolation and is drawing on appropriate external advice.
Funding routes identified	A potential funders document has been prepared and published as part of the asset transfer documentation.	Demonstrates that the Support Group has begun to map the funding landscape and understands that acquisition, repair, interpretation, gardens and operation may require different sources of support.

This progress demonstrates both local commitment and growing external confidence. It also shows that the Support Group has understood the scale of the task. Community ownership of St Ronan's Wells will require more than enthusiasm: it will require governance, funding, technical advice, cost planning, volunteer support, community accountability, risk management and long-term financial discipline.

The task now is to build on this momentum by completing the next stage of evidence and planning. This includes finalising the Business Plan, strengthening the financial forecasts, confirming capital costs, continuing community engagement, securing funding, developing trustee and volunteer systems, and demonstrating to Scottish Borders Council, the Scottish Land Fund and other future funders that St Ronan's Wells can be managed as a viable, useful and sustainable community asset.

2.7 Current development priorities

The immediate priority is to move from community campaign to deliverable ownership plan. This means progressing the asset transfer process with Scottish Borders Council; confirming the acquisition basis, valuation and timetable; completing or reviewing professional surveys, condition information, architect plans and cost estimates; testing the proposed mixed-use operating model; gathering stronger evidence of community need and demand; and developing 1, 3 and 5-year financial forecasts, including prudent, central and optimistic scenarios.

The Support Group will also need to identify the governance, staffing, volunteer and professional support required to operate the site safely and sustainably and prepare a phased delivery plan that distinguishes between acquisition, urgent works, refurbishment, opening, income generation and long-term maintenance.

The Support Group has already demonstrated passion, urgency and local commitment. The next stage is to show funders and Scottish Borders Council that St Ronan's Wells can be managed well: not only loved but used; not only repaired but sustained.

3. The Asset: St Ronan's Wells

3.1 Overview of the asset

St Ronan's Wells occupies a distinctive elevated site on Wells Brae, above Innerleithen, within the wider Tweed Valley landscape. The proposed asset comprises the former spa pavilion, pump room, former bottling plant, ancillary buildings, boundary walls, well, gardens and associated grounds. It is a compact but highly significant place: part historic building, part garden, part former visitor centre, part community landmark.

The building is Category B listed as "Wells Brae, St Ronan's Well, former pump room, bottling plant, ancillary buildings and boundary walls." Historic Environment Scotland identifies the site as an early nineteenth-century spa, with the first pavilion built in 1826 to a design by William Playfair for the 7th Earl of Traquair, reconstructed in 1896 with later additions including the former bottling plant. The site is now a public asset in transition. Scottish Borders Council has closed St Ronan's Wells Visitor Centre and has agreed that disposal should progress through community asset transfer or other means. While the Visitor Centre itself is closed, the gardens and wider grounds remain accessible and continue to be cared for by volunteers.

The purpose of this Business Plan is to show how St Ronan's Wells can move from threatened public asset to sustainable community ownership: protected, repaired, actively used, and managed for long-term social, cultural, environmental and economic benefit.

3.2 Ownership and asset transfer context

St Ronan's Wells is currently owned by Scottish Borders Council, following earlier local authority ownership through Innerleithen Town Council, Tweeddale District Council and subsequent local government reorganisation. St Ronan's Wells Support Group submitted a formal Asset Transfer Request on 30 April 2026.

Scottish Borders Council and local councillors have been constructive and supportive of the process to date, recognising the strength of local concern for the future of the building and gardens and engaging with the Support Group as the community ownership proposal has developed. Local councillors have also shown support for the principle of securing a positive future for St Ronan's Wells as a community asset. This support is important, but the proposal must still be tested through the formal asset transfer process and assessed against community benefit, viability, governance, financial sustainability and the long-term responsibilities of ownership.

The asset transfer process provides the route through which the building and gardens could be brought into local charitable stewardship rather than treated simply as a surplus property. For the transfer to succeed, the Support Group will need to demonstrate that the proposal is rooted in community benefit and supported by a credible plan for governance, finance, repair, access, use and long-term management.

The financial planning for the project will need to distinguish clearly between acquisition, capital repair and adaptation, fit-out for community and income-generating uses, and the working capital required during the first years of operation. This will allow Scottish Borders Council, funders and the Support Group to assess the proposal transparently and ensure that any transfer is based on both local aspiration and a realistic plan for delivery.

3.3 Listing, building and physical character

The listed building record describes St Ronan's Wells as a single-storey, five-bay, symmetrical, pedimented open loggia pavilion, with flanking recessed bowed bays, long plain wings, a small rear wing, and a later single-storey and attic former bottling plant attached to the rear south-east corner.

The listing also identifies distinctive architectural features including timber colonettes, timber boarding, painted render, sandstone margins, the Royal Crest to the pediment, a flagstone floor, slate roof, decorative clay ridge tiles, cast-iron rainwater goods, boundary walls, gates and gate piers.

The project must therefore be approached as both a community ownership proposal and a conservation project. The heritage value of the building is one of the reasons for transfer, but it also creates specific responsibilities. Future works will need to respect the character of the listed structure, protect surviving fabric, and ensure that any adaptation for new use is proportionate, carefully designed and properly costed.

3.4 Gardens and grounds

The gardens are one of the strongest existing public benefits of the site. They have remained open while the Visitor Centre has been closed, and they already have an active volunteer culture around them. Around 16 regular volunteers are involved in caring for the gardens, usually meeting on Thursdays.

The gardens should be understood as a core part of the asset, not as a secondary landscape feature. They support volunteering, biodiversity, wellbeing, informal recreation, seasonal activity and public enjoyment. They also already generate modest income through plant sales, currently around £1,000 per annum. This demonstrates that the gardens have both social value and practical potential within the future operating model.

This existing activity is important. It shows that local people are already using, caring for and supporting the site, and that community ownership would build on an established pattern of stewardship rather than starting from nothing. Plant sales are not expected to be a major income stream, but they provide a useful contribution to garden costs, encourage local participation and create a regular point of connection between volunteers, residents and visitors.

Under community ownership, the gardens would continue to be maintained and developed as an accessible public space, with potential for outdoor learning, community gardening, biodiversity improvement, creative activity, small-scale events, plant sales, wellbeing activity and quiet enjoyment.

3.5 Former visitor centre use

St Ronan's Wells has previously operated as a visitor centre interpreting the history of the Wells, Innerleithen, the spa, mineral water, local folklore, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg and St Ronan's Border Games. This former use establishes the site's public-facing heritage role and provides a foundation for future interpretation.

Although the Visitor Centre is currently closed, the building and grounds have not lost their civic meaning. St Ronan's Wells continues to have an important role during Games Week, when the site is used as part of Innerleithen's annual celebration of St Ronan, the Cleikum Ceremonies and the wider traditions of St Ronan's Border Games. This continuing annual use demonstrates that the Wells remains connected to the living cultural life of the town, not only to its historic past. The Cleikum Ceremonies and St Ronan's Border Games are central to Innerleithen's identity. They bring together local history, community pride, ceremony, sport, memory and shared celebration.

The relationship between the Wells and Games Week is therefore highly significant. It shows that the site remains a place of gathering, tradition and local meaning, and that community ownership could strengthen this role by providing a more secure, accessible and active setting for future civic, cultural and community use.

The closure of the Visitor Centre demonstrates the need for a broader and more resilient approach: one that combines interpretation with community use, garden activity, volunteering, wellbeing, small events, Games Week activity and earned income. Interpretation will remain central, but it will need to form part of a wider community ownership model rather than stand alone as the site's sole purpose. The aim is to ensure that St Ronan's Wells is not only a place where Innerleithen's history is explained, but a place where its living traditions, community activity and future public benefit can continue to grow.

3.6 Current condition, repair and compliance issues

The building offers a practical foundation for the proposed community ownership model. Its existing configuration already separates the former living accommodation from the hall, allowing two complementary uses to be developed: income-generating heritage accommodation and affordable community space.

Although the former Visitor Centre is closed, the site is not inactive. The gardens remain open and continue to be cared for by volunteers, generating around £1,000 per annum through plant sales. The building and grounds also continue to have meantime civic use during Games Week, when St Ronan's Wells forms part of Innerleithen's annual celebration of St Ronan, the Cleikum Ceremonies and St Ronan's Border Games. This interim use is important because it demonstrates that the asset still has a role in the life of the town, even before wider refurbishment and reopening. The hall appears capable of being brought back into more regular use with targeted improvements to kitchen, toilet and support facilities. The residential element will require a more substantial programme of refurbishment but has the potential to provide an important earned-income stream to help maintain the building, sustain the gardens and support community access.

The next stage of professional work will confirm the scope and cost of repairs, compliance and adaptation, including fire safety, access, services, building standards and listed building considerations. For planning purposes, the Support Group is currently working with a capital acquisition and development budget of £682,040, subject to confirmation through survey, design, QS cost planning, VAT advice, consents and funder eligibility checks.

This Business Plan treats the building as viable but not yet fully evaluated. The available evidence indicates strong potential, but the final capital budget, phasing and opening plan must be based on professional advice. Attention will need to be paid to roof condition, water ingress, fire safety, access, toilet and kitchen provision, electrical systems, heating, drainage, insurance requirements, short-term let compliance, listed building consent and building standards.

Any meantime use of the building should remain limited, carefully managed and subject to appropriate insurance, risk assessment, access arrangements and health and safety controls. This will allow the Support Group to maintain community momentum and civic connection while ensuring that wider public use only expands once the building is safe, compliant and ready to support regular activity.

3.7 Valuation and acquisition position

A professional valuation undertaken by DM Hall has established a current market value of £210,000 for St Ronan's Wells, following joint instruction by Scottish Borders Council and St Ronan's Wells Support Group.

The valuation provides a necessary benchmark for the asset transfer process, but the proposal must also be assessed against the wider community benefit that local ownership would deliver. Community transfer would secure public value that cannot be measured by market value alone: protection of a listed historic asset, continued public access to the gardens, affordable community and cultural space, volunteering, wellbeing, interpretation and a mixed-use model capable of generating income for long-term care.

For financial planning purposes, this Business Plan separates the acquisition cost from the capital costs of repair, adaptation, fit-out and early-stage operation. This will allow the project to be assessed under different scenarios, including transfer at market value and transfer at a reduced value justified by the social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits of community ownership.

3.8 Access, setting and practical constraints

St Ronan's Wells is set above Innerleithen, reached by an uphill walk from the town centre. The site benefits from parking, disabled parking, a bike rack, access from the Galashiels–Edinburgh bus route through Innerleithen, picnic areas, and provision for dogs on leads in the grounds.

The elevated setting is a strength. It gives the Wells its sense of separation, prospect and retreat, and creates opportunities for visitors to enjoy views across Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley. It also creates practical considerations. The uphill approach, parking, disabled access, pedestrian routes, cycling access, lighting, signage, surfaces, thresholds and internal access all need to be assessed so that the future operating model is realistic and inclusive.

3.9 Asset potential

St Ronan's Wells has the potential to become a sustainable community-owned asset because its physical spaces, history and setting support several complementary uses.

The hall can provide affordable community, cultural and event space. The former living quarters can be refurbished as short-stay heritage accommodation, generating income to help maintain the building and support community use. The gardens can continue to support volunteering, wellbeing, biodiversity and public enjoyment. The pavilion, well and former bottling plant can provide the core of a renewed interpretation offer. Together, these uses create the foundation for a balanced charitable business model in which heritage, community benefit and earned income support one another.

The wider setting connects the site to Innerleithen's visitor economy, walking and cycling routes, St Ronan's Border Games, Traquair, Robert Smail's Printing Works, the Tweed Valley and the town's changing identity. This gives the Wells the potential to operate not as a single-purpose visitor attraction, nor as a purely commercial holiday accommodation venture, but as a layered community asset where heritage, gardens, wellbeing, learning, volunteering and modest enterprise reinforce one another.

4. Heritage, Place and Community Significance

4.1 Why St Ronan's Wells matters

St Ronan's Wells is one of the defining places in the story of Innerleithen. Its significance lies not only in the survival of the listed building, but in the way the site brings together the town's spa heritage, literary associations, visitor economy, public gardens, civic traditions and community memory.

The Wells helped shape Innerleithen's development from a small settlement into a recognised nineteenth-century spa town. The mineral spring drew visitors; the pavilion gave architectural form to the town's growing reputation; Sir Walter Scott's *St Ronan's Well* carried the name into wider literary culture; and James Hogg's founding of St Ronan's Border Games connected the spa season to a tradition of public gathering that continues to animate the town today.

Historic Environment Scotland recognises that St Ronan's Well played an important part in the development of Innerleithen from a small hamlet to a larger town. This gives the site a significance that extends beyond its architecture. The Wells are part of the civic formation of Innerleithen: a place through which health, landscape, literature, leisure and local identity became intertwined. The loss of St Ronan's Wells from public use would therefore mean more than the closure of a former visitor centre. It would weaken the town's connection with one of the places that helped make Innerleithen distinctive.

4.2 The spring, the spa and the making of Innerleithen

The story of St Ronan's Wells begins with water. Before the pavilion, the visitor centre, the gardens or the bottling plant, there was the spring itself: the Doo Well, a sulphurous source rising from marshy ground, its surrounding beech trees long associated with the flocks of wood pigeons that gave the well its local name.

By the late eighteenth century, the waters were already attracting attention. The Countess of Traquair noted a visit to the spa in 1783, and in May 1787 Robert Burns recorded that he had visited "Inverleithen, a famous Spaw". By 1796, the mineral water was sufficiently well known to be discussed in the First Statistical Account of Scotland, where cures attributed to the water were recorded.

During the early nineteenth century, the Wells began to assume a more formal and public role in the life of the town. In 1824, the Earl of Traquair commissioned a survey of the mineral spring, with recommendations that the different waters should be channelled and stored in tanks. Two years later, William Playfair's elegant veranda was built to provide shelter and comfort for visitors taking the waters. By 1830, Innerleithen was being described as a thriving summer resort.

The spa was both a practical resource and a symbol of the town's growing confidence. It drew visitors, encouraged investment, supported local enterprise and gave Innerleithen a public reputation connected to health, landscape and genteel leisure. In modern terms, the Wells were an early act of place-making: a small but powerful asset through which the town attracted people, shaped its identity and found a place in the wider story of nineteenth-century travel and spa culture.

4.3 Scott, Hogg and the literary imagination of the town

The literary significance of St Ronan's Wells is one of the reasons the site still resonates beyond Innerleithen. Sir Walter Scott published *St Ronan's Well* in 1823, helping to fix the name and idea of the Wells in the public imagination.

The following decade also saw the development of one of Innerleithen's most important living traditions. James Hogg founded St Ronan's Border Games, "the Ettrick Shepherd", in 1827 to entertain local people and the many visitors who came to Innerleithen to take the waters. The Games and Cleikum Ceremonies continue to be celebrated annually in July.

This matters because the Wells are not a closed historical episode. Their story continues in local ritual, performance, sport, community pride and annual celebration. The connection between Scott, Hogg, the spa and the Games give Innerleithen a cultural inheritance that is unusually rich for a town

of its size. Community ownership would allow that inheritance to be interpreted, renewed and connected to contemporary civic life.

4.4 Traquair, Playfair and the designed spa landscape

The development of St Ronan's Wells in the 1820s was shaped by more than local enthusiasm for the mineral spring. It reflected estate patronage, architectural ambition and a clear understanding that the Wells could strengthen Innerleithen's reputation as a place of health, leisure and genteel resort.

The 7th Earl of Traquair played a leading role in this transformation. In 1824, he commissioned a survey of the mineral spring, including recommendations for channelling and storing the different waters. Two years later, William Playfair's veranda was built to provide a more elegant and comfortable setting for visitors taking the waters. This intervention gave architectural form to the spa and marked a new stage in the public presentation of the site.

The surviving Traquair archive material adds considerable depth to this story. References to the Earl's plans for the Wells, together with original drawings associated with the site, provide a rare opportunity to connect the building now at risk with the documented ambitions that shaped its early development. These records also strengthen the interpretive potential of the project, allowing the future St Ronan's Wells to tell a richer story about estate improvement, architecture, landscape, health tourism and the growth of Innerleithen.

This connection with Traquair could become an important strand of future activity. It offers scope for exhibitions, talks, school sessions, digital interpretation, publications, artist commissions and partnership working with Traquair House. It also reinforces the case that St Ronan's Wells is not only locally cherished, but historically documented, architecturally significant and capable of supporting deeper public engagement.

4.5 The bottling plant and the commercial life of the Wells

By the later nineteenth century, St Ronan's Wells had moved beyond its earlier identity as a spa and place of genteel resort. It had also become a site of enterprise. The mineral water was no longer simply something to be taken at the spring; it was something that could be bottled, branded, distributed and sold.

William Pearce & Sons, Aerated Water Manufacturers, began production at the Wells in 1877. A further attempt to revive and commercialise the site followed in 1895, when the St Ronan's Wells and Mineral Water Company obtained a 99-year lease. The new pavilion opened in September 1896, with waiting rooms, retiring rooms, baths and a bottling plant, reflecting the ambition to restore the Wells as both a visitor destination and a commercial mineral water business. The business was later sold to Harry Rawson of Joppa in 1906, and the Royal Warrant coat of arms was added to the pediment in 1913.

This commercial chapter broadens the meaning of the site. St Ronan's Wells should not be understood only through the romance of Scott, Hogg, spa visitors and literary association. It also speaks of entrepreneurship, manufacturing, public taste, health marketing, local employment and the changing economy of bottled water.

The former bottling plant is therefore central to the story of the asset. It offers future interpretive potential around water, health, industry, branding and local enterprise, while also providing a bridge between the historic use of the Wells and the Support Group's ambition to develop a sustainable income-generating model today.

4.6 The gardens as living heritage

The gardens are part of the continuing life of the Wells. In 1954, the Allan family were installed as caretakers and conducted repairs and improvements to the building and gardens, with the grounds open to visitors. In 2007, the gardens were redesigned and replanted through a BBC *Beechgrove Garden* project. In 2015, Jan Cameron created a community garden in the grounds with support from volunteers and Innerleithen Community Trust. After the Visitor Centre failed to reopen following the Covid-19 pandemic, the garden grounds continued to be maintained by volunteers.

This continuity of care matters. It shows that the Wells have not only been protected by institutions; they have also been sustained by local people. The gardens are a practical demonstration of community stewardship already in action. They support social connection, physical activity, seasonal work, plant knowledge, environmental care and civic pride.

In the future, the gardens can help bridge the historic and contemporary meanings of the site. A place once associated with health-giving waters can now support wellbeing through volunteering, nature, quiet use, outdoor learning and shared care of a public green space.

4.7 The lost water and future interpretation potential

Water is the origin of St Ronan's Wells, but it is also one of the site's most intriguing unresolved stories. The mineral spring gave the place its purpose, its reputation and its name. Historic accounts refer to sulphurous and saline waters, tanks, channels, pipes, bottling, bathing and treatment. In 1824, the Earl of Traquair commissioned a survey of the spring, with recommendations that the different waters should be channelled and stored. The later development of the bottling plant shows how central the water remained to the site's identity and economy.

Today, spring water no longer flows at St Ronan's Wells. This absence is important, but it does not diminish the significance of the place. On the contrary, it opens up one of the most engaging questions the future project can explore: where did the water come from, where did it go, how was it captured and used, and why did generations of visitors place such faith in its restorative power?

The story of the lost water offers a compelling way to connect heritage, science, landscape and community memory. It could support archival research, hydrological investigation, archaeological enquiry, oral history, school projects, creative interpretation and digital storytelling. It also allows the Wells to speak to changing ideas of health, belief, tourism, commerce and environmental change. In this sense, the absence of flowing water is part of the story. Future interpretation can invite local people, visitors, schools and researchers to explore the mystery of the water and, through that mystery, rediscover the origins of the site itself.

4.8 Summary of significance

St Ronan's Wells matters because it is more than a surviving historic building. It is a place where Innerleithen's development, literary identity, spa history, civic tradition, public gardens and local memory meet.

Its future should therefore be understood as both conservation and renewal. The task is not to preserve the building as a static relic, nor to convert it into a purely commercial use, but to restore its role as a living asset: useful, loved, financially managed and accountable to the community it serves.

5. The Case for Community Ownership

5.1 A public asset at a turning point

St Ronan's Wells is not an ordinary surplus property. It is a listed historic building, a public garden, a former visitor centre, a place of local memory and one of the sites through which Innerleithen tells its own story. Its value lies in the relationship between the building, the gardens, the town and the people who use, remember and care for it.

Scottish Borders Council's decision to close the Visitor Centre and progress disposal has created a moment of real risk. Without a community-led proposal, the site could lose its public function, fall into prolonged underuse, or be adapted in ways that weaken its relationship with the town. The building may survive in some form, but the wider civic meaning of the Wells could be diminished. Community ownership offers a different route. It would keep St Ronan's Wells in local charitable stewardship, ensuring that future use is shaped by public benefit, local accountability and long-term care rather than by short-term property value alone.

The purpose of transfer is therefore to save the building and secure a future in which St Ronan's Wells remains open, active, useful and accountable to the community it serves.

5.2 Protecting public access and community benefit

The closure of the Visitor Centre has already reduced public access to the full meaning of the site. The gardens remain open and cared for, but the building is no longer operating as a place of interpretation, gathering or visitor welcome. If this continues, the risk is not only physical deterioration. The greater danger is that the Wells gradually cease to function as a shared civic asset.

The proposed community ownership model protects several forms of public benefit at once. The gardens would continue to provide an accessible green space for quiet use, volunteering, biodiversity, informal recreation and wellbeing. The hall would be reopened as an affordable space for local groups, talks, workshops, creative activity, small events and community meetings.

Interpretation would preserve and share the story of the Wells, the lost water, the spa, Scott, Hogg, Traquair, the Border Games and the bottling plant. The accommodation would generate income to help pay for maintenance and keep community use affordable.

The strength of the model lies in this combination. Income generation is not separated from public benefit; it helps sustain it. Heritage becomes part of a wider community asset. The gardens are not just attractive grounds; they are an active space for volunteering, wellbeing and environmental care. This is the core of the asset transfer case: St Ronan's Wells can remain a place of public value while also developing the income needed to look after itself.

5.3 Why the Support Group is the right vehicle

St Ronan's Wells Support Group SCIO has been created for the specific purpose of securing the future of the Wells and gardens. Its charitable purposes are directly aligned with the proposed future use of the asset, including heritage, education, arts, culture, recreation, volunteering, community participation and environmental improvement.

The SCIO structure gives the group a formal legal and charitable framework through which to acquire or lease the asset, raise funds, enter into agreements, manage risk, own or hold property, and report to OSCR. It also provides an appropriate basis for trustee responsibility, public accountability and community involvement.

Just as importantly, the Support Group has grown from local commitment rather than external intervention. Its members and volunteers understand the site, its history, its gardens and its place in the life of Innerleithen. The group has already demonstrated practical momentum by forming the SCIO, developing the outline proposal, engaging with advisers and funders, contributing to valuation and feasibility work, and submitting the formal Asset Transfer Request.

The next stage is to match that local legitimacy with the systems required for ownership: clear governance, sound financial management, a realistic operating plan, volunteer support, professional advice, risk management and transparent reporting to members, funders and the wider community.

5.4 Stewardship, maintenance and financial responsibility

Ownership of St Ronan's Wells would bring responsibility as well as opportunity. The Support Group would become steward of a listed historic asset, public gardens and a site of strong local significance. That responsibility must be approached with care, realism and discipline.

The asset will require planned repair, regular maintenance, insurance, statutory compliance, listed building consent where required, fire safety, access planning, utilities management, risk assessment, bookings, cleaning, garden care, volunteer coordination and financial reporting. Some of this work can be supported by volunteers, but other elements will require professional, paid or specialist input. The proposed mixed-use model is designed to support this stewardship. Short-stay accommodation, hall hire, events, donations, fundraising and grants would together help create the income base needed to look after the building and gardens. A planned maintenance approach will be essential, including annual inspections, a repairs reserve and clear responsibility for routine care.

Community ownership should therefore be understood as a long-term commitment, not a one-off rescue. The success of the project will depend on the Support Group's ability to turn local affection into durable management.

5.5 Local control and accountability

One of the strongest arguments for community ownership is that decisions about the future of St Ronan's Wells would be made locally, within a charitable framework and in response to community need.

The site has always had a public dimension. It has been a spa, a place of gathering, a visitor attraction, a garden and a setting for local memory. Its future should therefore be shaped by people who understand its role in the town and are committed to keeping it useful, accessible and meaningful. Local control does not mean informal management. The Support Group will need to demonstrate clear accountability through membership arrangements, trustee reporting, open communication, consultation with users, sound financial records and transparent decision-making. This will be particularly important because the building is likely to include both public/community use and income-generating accommodation.

The balance between local use and visitor use, heritage and enterprise, volunteer energy and professional responsibility, affordability and financial sustainability will need to be actively managed. Done well, this balance will be one of the project's greatest strengths.

5.6 Wider social, environmental and economic benefit

The proposed transfer would deliver benefits beyond the boundaries of the site. Socially, it would create a place for gathering, volunteering, learning, creative activity and wellbeing. It would support people to take part in the care of a shared local asset and help maintain a sense of pride, belonging and continuity in the town.

Environmentally, it would protect and enhance the gardens as a public green space, with scope for biodiversity, organic gardening, outdoor learning, nature-based activity and quiet enjoyment. The future repair and adaptation of the building also offer an opportunity to improve energy performance and manage the asset more responsibly.

Economically, the Wells can contribute to Innerleithen's visitor economy in a way that complements the town's growing outdoor tourism profile. Heritage interpretation, events, creative activity, light refreshments, accommodation and links with local attractions could encourage visitors to stay longer, spend locally and understand Innerleithen as more than a base for outdoor recreation.

Income generated on site would be reinvested in the asset and in the public benefit it provides. This combination of social, environmental and economic value is central to the case for transfer. St Ronan's Wells can become a small but important example of community ownership strengthening place, identity and local resilience.

5.7 Why the ownership model matters

The Support Group recognises that income generation will be necessary. Accommodation, possible light refreshments, hall hire, events and other enterprise activity are all part of creating a financially sustainable future. The distinction between this proposal and a purely commercial future lies in purpose.

Under charitable community ownership, enterprise would serve public benefit. Surpluses would be reinvested in the building, gardens, interpretation, maintenance and community access. Pricing, programming and future development would be guided by charitable aims and community accountability.

A purely commercial disposal could not guarantee this. It might secure a use for the building but not necessarily protect the gardens as a community space, maintain affordable access, preserve interpretation, support volunteering or keep the Wells connected to local civic life. The question is not whether the site should generate income; it must. The question is what that income is for, who controls it, and whether it is used to sustain the public value of the asset.

5.8 Community ownership as the next chapter

The history of St Ronan's Wells has always involved adaptation. It has moved from spring to spa, from pavilion to bottling plant, from visitor attraction to volunteer-tended garden. Community ownership would continue that pattern of adaptation, but with a clear public purpose.

The Support Group's proposal is rooted in the belief that the Wells can be useful again: as a place to gather, learn, volunteer, create, visit, stay, remember and enjoy. It is also rooted in the recognition that affection alone will not secure the future of the asset. The building and gardens need a responsible owner, a viable operating model, a costed repair plan, community support and long-term stewardship.

Community ownership offers the route through which these elements can come together. It would protect St Ronan's Wells as part of Innerleithen's inheritance, while giving it a renewed practical role in the life of the town.

6. Evidence of Need and Demand

6.1 Overview

The case for community ownership of St Ronan's Wells must be based on more than affection for a much-loved historic place. The proposal needs to demonstrate that the building and gardens are needed, that the proposed uses are wanted, and that there is sufficient demand to support a viable operating model.

The existing evidence is promising. The formation of St Ronan's Wells Support Group, the continuation of volunteer care for the gardens, the submission of the Asset Transfer Request, and early engagement with advisers and funders all point to a community that does not want the Wells to be lost.

This local commitment is reinforced by a wider strategic context. National and regional policy increasingly supports community-led heritage, responsible tourism, access to culture, wellbeing, green space, volunteering, place-based regeneration and local ownership of valued assets. St Ronan's Wells sits strongly within that context. It offers the opportunity to protect a listed heritage asset, sustain a public garden, support local use, interpret Innerleithen's story, and generate earned income for long-term public benefit.

The next stage is to strengthen the direct evidence of demand. Scottish Borders Council, Scottish Land Fund and future funders will need to see who will use the asset, how often, for what purpose, what they would be willing to pay where charges apply, and how the project will deliver wider public benefit.

6.2 Community concern and local mandate

St Ronan's Wells has a strong place in local memory and identity. The public response to the uncertain future of the building and gardens has already led to the formation of a dedicated SCIO, the continuation of local volunteer activity, and the preparation of a formal community asset transfer proposal. This provides an important starting point: the project has emerged from local concern and community initiative, not from an external regeneration agenda.

The Support Group has begun to gather evidence of community support through a range of methods, including public communications, membership applications, in-person sign-up activity, volunteer involvement, engagement with local civic structures, discussions with support agencies, and wider public interest through social media and local networks. This engagement demonstrates that the future of St Ronan's Wells matters to people in practical as well as symbolic ways.

Engagement method	Who has been engaged	Numbers / evidence to date	What this shows
Formation of St Ronan's Wells Support Group SCIO	Local residents from the defined community of Innerleithen, Traquair and The Glen	SCIO registered in April 2026, with five founding charity trustees	Demonstrates that local people have taken formal responsibility for developing a community ownership proposal.
Membership applications	Residents and supporters interested in formal involvement in the organisation	224 membership applications received by mid-June 2026	Shows a strong level of interest in being connected to the future governance and direction of the project.

In-person community sign-up activity	Local residents and shoppers in Innerleithen, including people who may not engage online	A recent sign-up session at the local Co-op generated 300 signatures / expressions of support	Provides strong face-to-face evidence of local support gathered within the community itself.
Garden volunteering	Local residents, garden users and people seeking social connection, activity, wellbeing and practical involvement	Around 16 regular garden volunteers are involved, usually meeting on Thursdays	Demonstrates that support for the Wells is already practical, active and sustained.
Garden plant sales and fundraising	Local residents, visitors and garden supporters	Plant sales generate around £1,000 per annum	Shows that the gardens already generate modest income and that local people are willing to support the site financially as well as through volunteering.
Social media and online communications	Local residents, former residents, visitors, wider supporters and people following the progress of the campaign	More than 730 Facebook followers recorded at the time of the Asset Transfer Request	Shows wider public interest and provides an accessible route for updates, questions and ongoing engagement.
Website and public information	Residents, potential members, supporters, funders, agencies and stakeholders	Public information has been made available through the Support Group's website and online channels	Supports transparency and allows people to understand the proposal, follow progress and become involved.
Innerleithen Community Council engagement	Local civic representatives and community stakeholders	Members of the Support Group met Innerleithen Community Council on 27 April 2026 to outline the proposal, with further engagement planned	Demonstrates that the project is engaging with local democratic and civic structures.
Local business engagement	Local shops, cafés and businesses in Innerleithen	More than 12 local businesses contributed to a prize hamper supporting public engagement	Indicates goodwill from the local business community and provides a basis for more structured business consultation.
Scottish Borders Council and local councillor engagement	Asset owner, officers and local elected members	Scottish Borders Council has engaged constructively with the process to date, and local councillors have shown support for securing a positive future for the Wells	Shows that the proposal is being developed within the formal asset transfer context and with awareness from local representatives.
Support agency and funder engagement	Scottish Land Fund, Community Ownership Support Service,	Early engagement and advice has informed the Business Plan, funding	Shows that the Support Group is drawing on external advice and

	Architectural Heritage Fund, Borders Community Action, South of Scotland Enterprise, The Heritage Network and others	strategy and development priorities	responding to funder expectations around community benefit, viability and sustainability.
Heritage and partner engagement	Traquair House and local heritage interests	Early work has explored archive material and the historic relationship between Traquair and St Ronan's Wells	Strengthens the future interpretation offer and demonstrates that the project is building wider partnerships.
Wider public interest	Residents, garden users, Games Week participants, visitors, former residents and supporters of Innerleithen's heritage	Evidence includes public support, online engagement, garden activity, local sign-up activity and continuing civic use during Games Week	Shows that the Wells is valued as a living community asset, not only as a historic building.

The engagement to date shows clear community concern and a growing local mandate. It has involved residents, garden volunteers, members, local businesses, community representatives, public agencies, funders, support organisations and heritage partners. The evidence is particularly strong in relation to local support, garden volunteering, the desire to keep the Wells in public use, and the need to prevent the building and gardens from being lost as a community resource.

The engagement has also influenced the shape of the proposal. The project is no longer framed simply as the reopening of a former visitor centre or the repair of a historic building. It has developed into a wider community ownership model, combining public gardens, volunteering, wellbeing, affordable community space, interpretation, Games Week and civic use, textile and creative activity, Cuppa n Chat, visitor donations, plant sales and short-stay accommodation as an income-generating element. This reflects the community's interest in seeing the Wells used, cared for and sustained, rather than preserved as a static heritage asset.

The Support Group recognises that further consultation is still needed as the proposal moves from Business Plan to delivery. The next stage will gather more detailed evidence about who will use the building and gardens, how often, for what purpose, what facilities they need, what people would be willing to pay for hall hire, workshops, events or other activities, and how the project can avoid duplication or displacement of existing local provision.

Further engagement will include:

- a community survey across Innerleithen, Traquair and The Glen;
- targeted discussions with local groups, older people's groups, schools, young people, volunteers and potential hall users;
- direct engagement with local businesses, cafés, accommodation providers, tourism businesses and creative practitioners;
- conversations with existing local venues to confirm how St Ronan's Wells can complement rather than compete with them;
- public drop-in sessions or open days using plans, drawings or visual materials to invite feedback;
- clear recording of comments, concerns, suggested uses, willingness to pay and offers of support.

This next stage will be important to demonstrate not only that the community supports the idea of saving St Ronan's Wells, but that the final operating model has been shaped by meaningful

engagement. The Support Group will therefore continue to use consultation to refine the proposal, test demand, address concerns, identify partners, recruit volunteers and trustees, and ensure that the benefits of community ownership extend across the wider defined community.

6.3 Demand for community and cultural space

Innerleithen already has an active community and cultural life, supported by several local venues. The Memorial Hall provides an important setting for larger events, performances, community services, meetings and gatherings. St Ronan's Primary School also provides community centre provision, while nearby village halls at Traquair and The Glen support local activity at different scales.

The proposed hall at St Ronan's Wells would not duplicate these facilities. Its value lies in offering a different kind of space: smaller, more intimate, connected to the gardens, and rooted in the heritage and landscape of the Wells. It would be well suited to talks, workshops, heritage activity, wellbeing sessions, creative practice, small meetings, garden-based events, community gatherings and possibly small weddings or receptions.

This distinction is important. Scottish Borders Council's wider review of sport, leisure and cultural facilities has recognised the need to maximise the use, sustainability and income generation of community facilities, while also progressing disposal of St Ronan's Wells through community asset transfer or other means. In that context, the Wells offers an opportunity to add a modest but distinctive community space to Innerleithen's existing provision: one that supports local activity while also contributing to the site's interpretation, volunteer programme and earned-income model.

The hall should therefore be developed as a complementary local facility, not a competitor to existing venues. Its role would be to widen the range of community spaces available in Innerleithen, particularly for smaller-scale, heritage, creative, wellbeing and garden-related activity, while generating modest income to help sustain the building and gardens.

The current evidence base now needs to be strengthened through direct expressions of interest from potential users, including frequency of use, preferred facilities, affordability, willingness to pay and any gaps in existing local provision.

6.4 Demand for garden, wellbeing and outdoor activity

The gardens at St Ronan's Wells already demonstrate demand through use, care and voluntary action. Although the Visitor Centre is closed, the gardens remain open throughout the year, with volunteers usually on site on Thursdays and plants available to purchase. This continuing activity shows that the site is not dormant. It is already functioning as a living green space, sustained by local people and valued independently of the building.

The garden has been managed by volunteers, with income generated principally through plant sales and community fundraising. Around 16 regular volunteers have been involved, meeting on Thursdays and bringing a range of motivations and circumstances: retirement, social connection, health, activity, confidence-building and, for some, a route back towards work after illness or unemployment. This gives the garden clear social and wellbeing value as well as environmental value.

There is also wider evidence that this kind of activity is needed and valued. NatureScot's 2023/24 People and Nature Survey found that enjoying nature or wildlife outdoors in local areas was a regular activity in Scotland, with an annual average of 65% participation. Scottish Government reporting on biodiversity links investment in green space, nature and landscapes with improved health and quality of life, while Scottish Borders Council's 2025 Council Plan records increased management of public green spaces for nature.

The gardens therefore provide one of the clearest existing forms of public benefit at St Ronan's Wells. They support volunteering, social connection, physical activity, biodiversity, seasonal learning, plant knowledge, informal recreation and quiet enjoyment. They also allow the project to deliver community benefit before, during and after any capital works to the building.

Under community ownership, the gardens can become a stronger part of the future operating model: a place for volunteering, outdoor learning, nature-based wellbeing, small events, creative activity and environmental improvement. This would build on a culture of care that already exists, while giving the gardens a more secure future within the wider stewardship of the Wells.

6.5 Demand for heritage interpretation and learning

The closure of the former Visitor Centre has created a gap in how the story of St Ronan's Wells is shared. The site offers a distinctive local story through which people can explore water, health, landscape, literature, civic tradition, industry, gardens and community memory.

Its associations with the mineral spring, Innerleithen's spa development, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, Traquair, St Ronan's Border Games, the bottling plant, the gardens and the lost water create a rich basis for interpretation that can serve residents, schools, visitors and community groups. This is supported by the wider heritage and cultural policy context. Scotland's historic environment strategy, *Our Past, Our Future*, recognises the historic environment as a national asset that enriches communities, helps tell Scotland's story, supports local places to thrive and can enhance wellbeing. It also places emphasis on communities having opportunities to participate in decisions about the historic environment.

The regional context is also supportive. The draft Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy for the Scottish Borders 2025–2028 describes the Borders as a region shaped by rich cultural heritage, local identity, ancient traditions and a landscape that inspires creativity. It places emphasis on improving access to culture, encouraging participation, supporting collaboration and empowering communities to invest in the sustainable future of their places.

St Ronan's Wells can contribute to this agenda at a scale appropriate to the site. It is unlikely to operate as a large museum or formal learning centre, but it can provide intimate, place-based interpretation and informal learning rooted in the building, gardens and wider landscape. This could include talks, guided visits, school sessions, temporary displays, archive-based activity, oral history, garden learning, artist-led interpretation, digital storytelling and links with wider Tweed Valley heritage.

The learning potential is particularly strong because the Wells brings together several subjects in one place. Local history can be explored through the development of Innerleithen as a spa town; literature through Scott and Hogg; science through the mineral water and lost spring; geography and environment through the gardens and Tweed Valley setting; enterprise through the bottling plant; and citizenship through community ownership and local stewardship.

The strongest demand evidence will come from direct conversations with schools, heritage groups, artists, researchers, community organisations and potential partners.

6.6 Demand linked to St Ronan's Border Games and local traditions

The connection between St Ronan's Wells and St Ronan's Border Games is one of the strongest links between the historic site and Innerleithen's living traditions. The Games were instituted in 1827 and are recognised as Scotland's oldest organised sports meeting. They now form part of a wider annual festival for Innerleithen, with the Cleikum Ceremonies central to the celebration of the town's association with St Ronan.

The relationship between the Wells and the Games is not incidental. James Hogg (the Ettrick Shepherd) founded the Games to provide enjoyment for local people and entertain the many visitors who came to Innerleithen to take the waters. This gives St Ronan's Wells a direct connection to one of the town's most important annual expressions of identity, memory and civic pride.

The Games also sit within the wider family of Borders festivals and Common Ridings. Across the South of Scotland, these events celebrate local boundaries, histories, standards, ride-outs, returning exiles and community belonging. They are among the region's most distinctive cultural traditions, bringing towns together through ceremony, pageantry and inherited local roles. St Ronan's Border Games has its own character, rooted in sport, the Cleikum Ceremonies, the story of St Ronan and the spa identity of Innerleithen, but it belongs to this wider Borders culture of civic celebration.

This connection creates clear programming potential for the Wells. The site could support talks, exhibitions, garden activity, school sessions, oral history, artist commissions and interpretation linked to Games Week, the Cleikum Ceremonies, James Hogg, Sir Walter Scott, the Standard Bearer, local songs, processions and the continuing traditions of the town.

St Ronan's Wells should therefore be understood not only as a historic site to be visited, but as part of Innerleithen's annual rhythm of gathering, ceremony and shared memory. Community ownership would allow the Wells to strengthen that role, providing a place where the history of the Games and Cleikum traditions can be interpreted, celebrated and passed on to new generations.

6.7 Demand from visitors and the wider Tweed Valley context

St Ronan's Wells is not dependent solely on local use. It sits within a wider Tweed Valley visitor economy shaped by mountain biking, walking, cycling, heritage, gardens, literature, festivals and the River Tweed.

VisitScotland's 2023 Scottish Borders Visitor Survey found that overnight visitors to the Scottish Borders stayed an average of 3.1 nights in the area, with 74% touring around Scotland and staying in two or more places. The same survey found that scenery and landscape, history and culture, and outdoor activities were among the leading reasons visitors chose Scotland. This aligns well with the potential offer at St Ronan's Wells: a small, distinctive site combining heritage, gardens, views, walking and cycling connections, literary associations and community stewardship.

Destination Tweed gives this context further relevance. Its River Tweed Trail will create a long-distance walking and cycling route following the river from Moffat to Berwick-upon-Tweed, connecting communities, businesses and attractions along the route. The Wells has a natural place within this emerging landscape because its story is rooted in water, health, movement, memory and place.

The Wells also sits within reach of major heritage anchors including Traquair, Abbotsford, Robert Smail's Printing Works, Trimontium Museum, Peebles and the Chambers Institution, while the ancient landscape of Pirn Hill Fort is visible from Innerleithen. This wider context strengthens the case for the Wells as part of a connected Tweed Valley offer rather than a stand-alone attraction.

This visitor demand should be treated proportionately. St Ronan's Wells is not a large visitor attraction, and its future should not depend on high-volume footfall. Its opportunity lies in attracting the right kind of engagement: local residents, heritage visitors, walkers, cyclists, garden visitors, school groups, festival audiences, literary interests and people looking for a quieter, place-rooted experience within the Tweed Valley.

6.8 Demand for income-generating uses

The proposed operating model includes income-generating uses because community ownership will bring real costs: insurance, utilities, repairs, maintenance, compliance, cleaning, administration, staff or contractor time, and future reinvestment. Income generation is therefore necessary, but it must remain clearly linked to public benefit. The aim is not to commercialise St Ronan's Wells, but to create a mixed and resilient model that allows the building and gardens to be cared for, opened, used and enjoyed over the long term.

The strongest potential earned-income stream is the proposed Heritage Short Stay Experience. This would not be the purpose of the project, but a mechanism to help sustain the building, gardens and community use. The visitor evidence supports assessing this model. VisitScotland's 2023 Scottish Borders Visitor Survey found that 53% of Scottish Borders visitors stayed in non-serviced accommodation, including 20% in self-catering or commercial non-serviced rentals. The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy also identifies accommodation as a key issue for the visitor economy, stressing the importance of having the right accommodation, in the right place and at the right price point.

There is also a specific emerging opportunity linked to Destination Tweed and the River Tweed Trail. The South of Scotland Destination Alliance has recently been auditing non-serviced single-night accommodation provision along the proposed route, to understand whether there are gaps in supply. This is relevant to St Ronan's Wells because long-distance walkers and cyclists often need flexible accommodation as they move from place to place. The Wells could offer a distinctive heritage stay that is rooted in Innerleithen's history, close to the landscape and attractive to visitors interested in walking, cycling, gardens, heritage and the wider Tweed Valley. The financial forecast should remain based on occupied nights rather than assuming that one-night or two-night booking patterns automatically increase income, but flexibility in the accommodation model could strengthen its appeal.

The hall and community space may also generate modest income through community hire, workshops, talks, small events, private use, meetings and seasonal activity. Demand should be forecast cautiously until direct expressions of interest and realistic hire assumptions have been gathered. However, the hall is important because it supports both income and public benefit. It can provide a base for community gatherings, heritage events, wellbeing activity, textile workshops, Cuppa n Chat sessions, school or group visits, and events linked to St Ronan's Border Games and the wider life of Innerleithen.

Visitor donations are another important part of the model. General access to the gardens and basic interpretation should remain welcoming and affordable, but clear donation messaging, QR/contactless giving, Gift Aid where eligible, and visible explanation of the costs of caring for the Wells can help convert visitor interest into practical support. This income should be treated prudently, but it is important because it reinforces the principle that those who enjoy the site can help protect it.

The operating model also includes modest income from Cuppa n Chat / light refreshments and textile or creative workshops. These should be understood primarily as mission-led activities rather than commercial ventures. Cuppa n Chat can support social connection, visitor welcome, garden activity, volunteer participation and community wellbeing. Textile workshops can connect the Wells with Innerleithen's textile heritage, repair and reuse, intergenerational learning, contemporary craft and creative wellbeing. Both can generate modest income, but their wider value lies in increasing use, participation and public benefit.

There is also potential for modest income from talks, guided visits, ticketed heritage events, community markets, plant sales, small retail, publications and local craft. These activities should be

developed gradually and tested through pilots, seasonal events and low-risk arrangements. They are unlikely to carry the financial model on their own, but together they can help diversify income, attract different audiences and make the Wells more active throughout the year.

A Friends or Supporter Giving Scheme will also be important. This should be framed as voluntary supporter giving rather than paid membership, as formal membership of SRWSG is free. Regular donations from local residents, former residents, visitors, garden users and wider friends of Innerleithen could provide flexible unrestricted support for maintenance, gardens, interpretation, volunteer activity and affordable community access.

More ambitious commercial activity, such as a staffed café, permanent creative workspace, studio rental or larger-scale enterprise use, should remain a future development option at this stage and such interventions often struggle to produce high levels of income. These ideas have market logic and may strengthen the visitor experience or generate low level additional income in time, but they should not be treated as essential to the financial forecast until demand, cost, compliance and management arrangements have been tested.

The demand evidence therefore supports a mixed income model: strongest around heritage accommodation, supported by hall hire, visitor donations, supporter giving, annual fundraising, events, workshops, markets, plant sales, small retail and carefully scaled refreshment activity. This approach gives St Ronan's Wells a more resilient financial base while keeping income generation firmly connected to its charitable purpose and public benefit.

6.9 Local business and economic benefit

Community ownership of St Ronan's Wells can make a modest but meaningful contribution to Innerleithen's local economy. Its role will not be to transform the town on its own, but to add value to an already distinctive place: encouraging visitors to stay longer, supporting local spend, creating opportunities for small suppliers and practitioners, and broadening Innerleithen's identity beyond outdoor recreation alone.

The wider strategic context is supportive. The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy aims to grow the regional visitor economy to £1.76 billion by 2034 and support a further 6,000 jobs, while ensuring that tourism delivers community prosperity, protects culture and landscape, and benefits the people who live in the places visitors come to enjoy. Its 2024–27 Action Plan places particular emphasis on higher-spending visitors who stay longer, quality visitor experiences, stronger local collaboration and community-led tourism.

Innerleithen is also entering a period of significant visitor economy investment. The Mountain Bike Innovation Centre is expected to strengthen the town's position as a centre for cycling innovation, skills and enterprise. Major cycling events have already demonstrated the economic value of the Tweed Valley's outdoor reputation.

St Ronan's Wells can complement this growth by offering a quieter, heritage-led and community-owned experience within the same visitor landscape. By reopening the building, supporting small events, providing distinctive accommodation, offering interpretation and linking with wider attractions, the Wells can encourage visitors to pause in Innerleithen, spend locally and understand the town as a place of culture, gardens, literature, spa history and civic tradition as well as mountain biking.

The strongest economic case is therefore one of local resilience. The Wells can help diversify the visitor experience, support community-led enterprise, reinforce the town's sense of place and ensure that income generated through visitors is reinvested in a public asset.

6.10 Summary of current evidence position

The evidence gathered to date points to a credible and timely case for community ownership of St Ronan's Wells. The project is rooted in local concern, supported by an active volunteer culture, strengthened by the formation of a dedicated SCIO, and aligned with wider strategies for responsible tourism, community-led heritage, wellbeing, local enterprise and the sustainable development of the Tweed Valley visitor economy.

The clearest evidence currently relates to the gardens, volunteer commitment, local concern and the heritage significance of the site. There is also a credible rationale for hall use, learning activity, accommodation, events and modest enterprise, supported by both local context and wider strategic evidence.

The evidence also points to the importance of keeping the proposal proportionate. St Ronan's Wells is not a large visitor attraction, and its future should not depend on unrealistic levels of footfall or commercial activity. Its strength lies in being small, distinctive and deeply rooted in place: a heritage building and garden that can serve local people, welcome visitors, support volunteering, generate modest income and contribute to the wider identity of Innerleithen.

The proposed model is credible because it reflects that scale. Hall use, garden activity, interpretation, accommodation, refreshments, creative use and events can each play a part, provided they are developed carefully and evaluated against local demand. Together, they offer a balanced route to public benefit and financial sustainability: not a single-purpose attraction, but a living community asset with several mutually reinforcing uses.

7. Vision, Outcomes and Public Benefit

7.1 Vision

The five-year vision is for St Ronan's Wells to become a sustainable, community-owned heritage, wellbeing and cultural asset for Innerleithen: a place where the historic building and gardens are protected, local people can gather and take part, visitors can understand the story of the Wells, and earned income is used to support long-term stewardship.

This vision is deliberately modest in scale but broad in benefit. St Ronan's Wells is not seeking to become a major visitor attraction. Its strength lies in being distinctive, intimate and rooted in place: a building and garden that can serve the community, enrich the visitor experience, support volunteering and help Innerleithen tell a fuller story about itself.

7.2 Five-year outcomes

Over the period of this Business Plan, the Support Group will work towards the following outcomes.

- Heritage protected and interpreted - St Ronan's Wells will be secured in community stewardship, with the listed building repaired, maintained and brought back into active use. The story of the spring, spa, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, Traquair, St Ronan's Border Games, the bottling plant, the gardens and the lost water will be interpreted for residents, schools, visitors and community groups.
- Community access strengthened - The hall and gardens will provide affordable and accessible space for local activity, including talks, workshops, meetings, small events, creative use, learning and community gatherings. Public access will remain central to the purpose of the site.

- Gardens sustained as a wellbeing and environmental asset - The gardens will continue to be cared for and developed as a place for volunteering, biodiversity, informal recreation, outdoor learning and quiet enjoyment. They will remain one of the most visible and immediate forms of public benefit delivered by the project.
- Volunteering and participation increased - Local people will have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the life of the Wells through gardening, events, interpretation, maintenance, fundraising, visitor welcome, creative activity and governance. Volunteer roles will be supported by clear systems, induction, training and realistic expectations.
- Learning and cultural activity developed - The Wells will support informal and structured learning linked to local history, literature, water, health, landscape, gardens, enterprise and community stewardship. Partnerships with schools, heritage groups, artists, St Ronan's Border Games, Traquair, Destination Tweed and other local organisations will be explored and developed where there is clear demand.
- A sustainable mixed-income model established - Short-stay heritage accommodation, hall hire, events, donations, grants, fundraising, plant sales and possible light refreshment or creative workspace activity will be assessed as part of a balanced financial model. Surpluses will be reinvested in the building, gardens, interpretation and community access.
- Local economic benefit supported - The Wells will contribute modestly to Innerleithen's visitor economy by encouraging people to stay longer, spend locally and understand the town as a place of heritage, gardens, literature, civic tradition and landscape as well as outdoor recreation. The project will seek to work constructively with local businesses, suppliers, artists and tourism partners.
- Governance and stewardship strengthened - The Support Group will develop the systems needed to manage the asset responsibly, including financial controls, risk management, maintenance planning, volunteer support, community accountability, reporting to funders and regular review of the operating model.

7.3 Public benefit

The public benefit of the project lies in the combination of these outcomes. Community ownership will protect a listed historic asset, keep the gardens accessible, create affordable space for local use, support volunteering and wellbeing, strengthen interpretation and learning, and generate income for long-term care.

The project is strongest when these elements are understood together. Heritage gives the Wells meaning; community use gives it purpose; the gardens give it life; and earned income gives it a route to sustainability.

8. Proposed Uses and Operating Model

8.1 Overview of the operating model

The proposed operating model for St Ronan's Wells is based on a simple principle: the site should deliver clear public benefit while generating sufficient income to meet the responsibilities of ownership. The Wells cannot be sustained by heritage value alone. Nor should it become a primarily commercial asset in which public access, gardens, interpretation and community use are secondary. The future model therefore brings together four core uses: heritage interpretation, community hall use, gardens and wellbeing activity, and short-stay heritage accommodation. Each has a different purpose, but together they create a more resilient whole.

Core use	Role within the model
Heritage interpretation	Gives the site meaning and shares the story of the Wells.
Community hall and activity space	Brings the building back into local use.

Core use	Role within the model
Gardens, wellbeing and outdoor learning	Maintains public access, volunteering, biodiversity and visible community benefit.
Heritage short-stay accommodation	Provides the strongest route towards earned income and long-term stewardship.

The aim is not to maximise commercial activity, but to create a balanced charitable model in which income generation supports public access, maintenance, volunteering and community benefit.

8.2 Heritage interpretation and exhibition

Heritage interpretation will remain central to the purpose of St Ronan's Wells. The site's story is unusually rich for a small building: the Doo Well and mineral spring; Innerleithen's growth as a spa town; Sir Walter Scott and *St Ronan's Well*; James Hogg and St Ronan's Border Games; Traquair and William Playfair; the bottling plant; the gardens; and the mystery of the lost water.

The future interpretation offer should be modest, flexible and rooted in place. St Ronan's Wells is unlikely to operate as a conventional museum with full-time staffing, controlled collections and formal opening hours throughout the year. Its strength is more likely to lie in a layered model: permanent interpretation, occasional exhibitions, guided visits, talks, digital content, archive material, artist-led responses, school activity and events linked to the gardens, the Games and the wider Tweed Valley.

The interpretation should also be designed to work with the building rather than against it. The pavilion, well, former bottling plant, gardens and views are themselves part of the experience. Future display should not overfill the space or recreate a static visitor centre model that has already proved difficult to sustain. A lighter, more adaptable approach would allow the site to respond to different audiences, seasons and partnerships.

Possible themes include the spring, spa and lost water; Scott, Hogg and the literary identity of Innerleithen; Traquair, Playfair and the designed spa landscape; St Ronan's Border Games and local civic tradition; the commercial life of the bottling plant; gardens, health, wellbeing and public space; and the Tweed Valley landscape, Pirn Hill Fort and wider heritage connections.

Interpretation should support both local pride and visitor understanding. For residents, it should help keep the story of the Wells visible and alive. For visitors, it should offer a clear invitation to understand Innerleithen as more than an outdoor recreation destination: a town shaped by water, health, literature, landscape and civic ritual.

8.3 Community Hall and activity space

The hall is central to the community use of the building. It provides the opportunity to bring St Ronan's Wells back into everyday local life as a place for talks, workshops, small meetings, creative activity, wellbeing sessions, heritage events, garden-linked activity and modest private hire. The hall should be positioned as a complementary local space rather than a competitor to existing venues. Its likely strength lies in its scale, atmosphere and setting. It can offer a quieter, more intimate environment connected to the gardens and views, suitable for uses that do not require a large auditorium or formal community hall.

Potential uses include local history talks, workshops, community meetings, small group activity, wellbeing or nature-based sessions, school and family learning, garden talks, plant sales, seasonal open days, artist or maker workshops, small receptions and weddings, and events linked to St Ronan's Border Games, Destination Tweed or local festivals.

The hall will need to be affordable for community use, but it must also contribute to running costs. The pricing model should therefore distinguish between charitable/community use, standard local hire, commercial hire and possible private hire. This would allow the Support Group to protect access while recognising that utilities, cleaning, insurance, maintenance and administration have real costs.

In practical terms, the hall offer will depend on improvements to kitchen, toilet, access, heating, lighting, storage and booking arrangements. Its viability will also depend on clear management: who holds keys, who takes bookings, who opens and closes, who checks the space after use, and who ensures that health and safety requirements are met.

8.4 Gardens, wellbeing and outdoor learning

The gardens are one of the most important parts of the future operating model because they already deliver public benefit. They remain open, visible and cared for, and they allow the project to maintain a public presence even before the building is fully repaired and reopened.

Under community ownership, the gardens would continue as a place for volunteering, biodiversity, quiet enjoyment, plant knowledge, outdoor learning, small events and wellbeing. They would also provide a natural link between the site's historic identity and its contemporary purpose. A place once associated with health-giving waters can now support wellbeing through nature, social connection, gentle activity and shared care of a public green space.

The garden programme should remain proportionate and volunteer-led, but it will need structure. This should include agreed responsibilities, tool and equipment storage, risk assessment, insurance, volunteer induction, seasonal planning, plant sales, event management and maintenance priorities. The garden should be integrated into the wider site offer rather than managed as a separate activity. Potential garden uses include weekly volunteer gardening sessions, plant sales, seasonal open days, biodiversity and habitat improvement, outdoor learning with schools and families, quiet wellbeing activity, small creative or literary events, garden tours and talks, and links with hall events and interpretation.

The gardens also support the visitor experience. They encourage people to spend longer on site, provide a setting for views across Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley, and create a gentle point of entry for people who may not initially come for the heritage interpretation.

8.5 Heritage short-stay accommodation

The proposed short-stay accommodation is an income-generating element within a charitable operating model. It is not the purpose of the project. Its role is to help sustain the wider public benefit of St Ronan's Wells by generating surplus income for maintenance, gardens, interpretation and affordable community use.

The existing building configuration appears to lend itself to this model, with former living accommodation separated from the hall and public/community areas. Subject to design, consent and compliance, this part of the building could be refurbished as a distinctive heritage stay rooted in the story and setting of the Wells.

The accommodation should be positioned carefully. It should not feel like a detached commercial holiday let attached to a community project. It should be part of the identity of the site: a place-based stay connected to Innerleithen's spa heritage, the gardens, the Tweed Valley, walking and cycling routes, literary associations and nearby heritage destinations.

The financial model should be prudent. Income will depend on the final layout, sleeping capacity, nightly rate, seasonal occupancy, one-night or two-night booking policy, cleaning and laundry costs, management arrangements, booking platform fees, utilities, insurance, licensing, maintenance and reinvestment. The purpose of the accommodation should be explicit in all communications: guests are helping to sustain a community-owned heritage asset.

Operationally, the accommodation will require a clear separation between guest use and community/public use. This will include access, privacy, fire safety, cleaning, waste management, check-in arrangements, emergency contact, parking, noise, safeguarding and insurance. The Support Group will also need to decide whether the accommodation is self-managed, managed by a local co-host or managed professionally.

8.6 Complementary activity: Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops and future creative uses

In addition to the four core uses, the Support Group has identified several complementary activities that could strengthen the visitor experience, deepen community benefit and generate modest additional income. These include a small-scale Cuppa n Chat / light refreshment offer, textile and creative workshops, and, over time, possible artist, maker or creative workspace activity.

The Cuppa n Chat offer is now treated as part of the emerging operating model, but only on a modest and proportionate basis. It is not intended to operate as a commercial café or to compete with existing cafés and hospitality businesses in Innerleithen. Its primary purpose would be social and community-focused: providing a warm, welcoming point of connection for garden users, volunteers, visitors, hall hirers, walkers and people who may be experiencing isolation. It could also encourage visitors to spend longer on site and make a small voluntary contribution towards the upkeep of the Wells.

The model should remain flexible. In the early years, this may mean volunteer-supported tea, coffee and light refreshments at set times, at events, during garden activity, or alongside talks and workshops. It may also include pop-up or partnership provision where this complements rather than duplicates existing local businesses. Any refreshment activity will need to be managed carefully, with appropriate food hygiene, volunteer training, cleaning, storage, insurance and compliance arrangements in place.

Textile and creative workshops are also now included within the operating model. These workshops provide a direct connection between the Wells, Innerleithen's textile heritage, the creative life of the Tweed Valley, and the Support Group's wider ambitions around learning, wellbeing and intergenerational skills. The programme could include textile heritage, repair and reuse, stitching, knitting, mending, craft skills, demonstrations, artist-led activity, community workshops and small-scale creative enterprise activity.

The textile workshop strand should be introduced gradually, with a mix of paid, low-cost, donation-based and grant-supported activity. Its purpose is not simply to generate income, but to create meaningful public benefit: preserving skills, sharing local knowledge, encouraging sustainable practice, supporting wellbeing, and giving people practical reasons to use and value the building.

A further future development option is the possible use of suitable space for occasional artist, maker or creative workspace activity. This should not be treated as a core income stream in the base financial forecast until demand, cost, access, compliance and management arrangements have been tested. If feasible, it could take the form of short residencies, open studio days, demonstrations, creative interpretation, temporary workspace, or partnership-led activity rather than a permanent studio commitment from the outset.

All of these activities should be developed in a way that reinforces the charitable purposes of SRWSG and the wider public benefit of the site. They should complement, not compete with, existing local provision. The priority should be to create a distinctive, welcoming and useful community asset: a place where heritage, gardens, wellbeing, textiles, creativity and social connection come together in a way that is rooted in Innerleithen and open to local people and visitors alike.

8.7 Operating principles

The future operating model should be guided by a small number of clear principles. Public benefit must remain central. Commercial activity should support the heritage, gardens and community use, not replace them. The model must be proportionate to the scale of the site. St Ronan's Wells is small and distinctive; it should not be burdened with expectations that require unrealistic footfall, staffing or volunteer capacity.

The building and gardens should be managed as a single asset. Interpretation, hall use, accommodation, garden activity and any future development options should reinforce one another rather than operate as disconnected activities.

Earned income should be reinvested in stewardship. Surpluses from accommodation, hire, events, donations, plant sales or any future refreshment or creative workspace activity should support maintenance, repairs, interpretation, gardens and community access.

Delivery should be phased. The Support Group should not attempt to open every use at once. A staged approach will allow the charity to evaluate demand, build capacity, manage risk and refine the financial model.

These principles will help ensure that St Ronan's Wells develops as a living community asset rather than a fragile heritage rescue project.

8.8 Treatment in the financial projections

The financial projections are based on the agreed core operating model for St Ronan's Wells: heritage interpretation, hall and community use, gardens, short-stay accommodation, visitor giving, supporter donations, modest events income and annual fundraising. The financial forecasts also include proportionate income and expenditure assumptions for Cuppa n Chat / light refreshment activity and textile workshops, as these are now part of the emerging operating model rather than speculative future options. They are included cautiously and at a modest scale, reflecting their primary purpose as community benefit activities rather than major commercial income streams.

The Cuppa n Chat assumptions are based on voluntary giving and light refreshment income linked to visitors, garden users, volunteers, events and community activity. The textile workshop assumptions are based on a gradual programme of paid, low-cost, donation-based and grant-supported activity connected to Innerleithen's textile heritage, intergenerational learning, wellbeing and creative skills. More ambitious commercial activity, such as a staffed café, permanent creative workspace, regular studio rental, larger-scale retail or expanded event programming, has not been treated as essential to the forecasts. These opportunities may be considered in future but should only be developed once there is clear evidence of demand, a costed operating model, appropriate compliance arrangements and trustee agreement to proceed.

This approach gives funders confidence that the financial model is realistic and prudent. The median forecast includes the activities most closely aligned with the current Vision and delivery plan, while the best-case scenario demonstrates the potential for stronger income if visitor numbers, accommodation use, supporter giving, grants, events, workshops and ancillary trading all perform

well. The worst-case scenario shows the financial risk if income develops more slowly than expected.

8.9 Phasing of use

The proposed uses are likely to come forward in stages. This phased approach will allow SRWSG to maintain community momentum, test demand, manage risk and avoid overcommitting before the building, governance and operating systems are ready.

The gardens and volunteer activity are already active and should continue throughout the transition period, providing continuity, public visibility and early community benefit. This activity will remain central to the project, supporting wellbeing, volunteering, environmental improvement, community pride and the public enjoyment of the site.

The hall and community space may be capable of reopening before the accommodation, subject to essential repairs, compliance, access, insurance, kitchen and toilet provision, cleaning arrangements and operating procedures. Early use could focus on pilot activities, small meetings, talks, garden events, community gatherings, Cuppa n Chat sessions, textile workshops and seasonal events. This would allow SRWSG to test demand, build confidence and begin generating modest income before the full operating model is in place.

Interpretation could also be introduced gradually. A first phase might include simple panels, guided visits, talks, digital material, QR-linked content and temporary displays, followed later by a fuller Spa Story interpretation offer once the building layout, ownership of material, capital budget and curatorial approach are confirmed. This phased model would allow the story of the Wells to be shared early, while avoiding premature investment in fixed displays before the final visitor journey is settled.

The Cuppa n Chat offer should begin modestly, most likely alongside garden activity, volunteer sessions, talks, workshops, community events and opening days. It should initially be treated as a light refreshment and social connection activity rather than a commercial café. Any expansion should depend on demand, volunteer capacity, food hygiene requirements, cleaning, storage, insurance and the need to complement rather than compete with existing cafés and hospitality businesses in Innerleithen.

Textile and creative workshops should also be phased in gradually. The first stage could include occasional textile heritage sessions, repair and reuse workshops, demonstrations, intergenerational skills activity, small group workshops and artist-led events. This would allow SRWSG to test demand, identify suitable tutors or partners, understand material costs, and develop a programme that is both financially realistic and rooted in Innerleithen's textile heritage.

The accommodation should follow only once the residential area has been fully refurbished, insured, furnished, costed and made compliant with all relevant safety, licensing and operational requirements. Because the Heritage Short Stay Experience is the main earned-income element in the operating model, it should not be launched until the management model, cleaning and laundry arrangements, guest support, pricing, marketing and visitor experience are dependable.

More ambitious development options, such as a staffed café, regular commercial catering, permanent creative workspace, studio rental or longer-term artist residency space, should remain future opportunities rather than core assumptions. These may be piloted through events, pop-ups, temporary workspace, short residencies, open studio days or partnership activity before any permanent commitment is made.

This phased approach will allow SRWSG to move from transfer and stabilisation into public use in a controlled and realistic way, while building evidence of demand, protecting the charitable purpose of the project and ensuring that each new use strengthens the wider public benefit of St Ronan's Wells.

8.10 Summary operating model

The proposed operating model is mixed, charitable and place-led. It does not depend on a sole source of income or a single form of use. Instead, it brings together heritage interpretation, community use, gardens, wellbeing, textile activity, visitor giving and short-stay accommodation in a way that reflects the character of St Ronan's Wells and the wider story of Innerleithen.

The public-facing heart of the project will be the hall, gardens, interpretation and community activity. These uses will ensure that the Wells remains open, visible, welcoming and rooted in public benefit. The hall and community space will support talks, workshops, meetings, gatherings, small events, textile activity and seasonal programming. The gardens will continue to provide a focus for volunteering, wellbeing, environmental improvement and informal public enjoyment. Interpretation will share the Spa Story and the wider cultural, social and landscape history of the site.

The principal earned-income element will be the Heritage Short Stay Experience. This will be supported by hall hire, events, visitor donations, Cuppa n Chat giving, textile and creative workshops, market and plant sales, small retail and publications, grants, supporter donations and wider fundraising. The model is therefore deliberately diversified. It recognises that no single income stream should be expected to carry the whole asset, but that together these activities can create a more resilient and realistic operating base.

Cuppa n Chat and textile workshops are now part of the emerging operating model, but they should remain proportionate and mission-led. The refreshment offer should be understood primarily as a social connection and welcome activity, not a commercial café. Textile and creative workshops should connect the Wells to Innerleithen's textile heritage, intergenerational skills, repair and reuse, wellbeing and contemporary creative practice. Both activities can generate modest income, but their wider value lies in bringing people into the building, deepening community use and strengthening the public benefit of the project.

The overall purpose of the operating model is long-term stewardship: keeping the building and gardens open, active, maintained and accountable to the community. This balance is essential. St Ronan's Wells will be strongest if it remains both useful and meaningful: a place where Innerleithen's history is shared, its community can gather, its gardens are cared for, visitors are welcomed, skills are passed on, and income is used to protect the asset for the future.

9. Market Appraisal and Operating Context

9.1 Strategic market context

St Ronan's Wells is being developed at a time when national, regional and local strategies place increasing emphasis on responsible tourism, community-led heritage, local distinctiveness, wellbeing, landscape, culture and sustainable economic benefit. This wider context is important. The Wells should not be understood as a small, isolated visitor attraction, but as a community-owned asset capable of contributing to a broader shift in how places such as Innerleithen welcome visitors, support residents and make better use of their heritage.

Scotland's national tourism strategy, *Scotland Outlook 2030*, places communities, people, visitors, businesses and the environment at the heart of tourism development, with priorities around thriving places, memorable experiences, diverse businesses and passionate people. VisitScotland's Strategic Framework 2025–2028 reinforces this direction, placing responsible tourism, climate action and

partnership at the centre of its work, while emphasising place development, experience development, market development and the need to maximise the value of every visit.

This aligns closely with the proposed future for St Ronan's Wells. The project is not based on high-volume tourism, but on a distinctive place-based experience that encourages visitors to slow down, understand Innerleithen more deeply, and contribute to the local economy. The strongest regional framework is the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy 2024–2034. Its vision is to make the South of Scotland a thriving, responsible, year-round destination, using the region's geography, culture, history and landscape to grow the visitor economy, attract visitors, create employment and power community prosperity. It sets an ambition to increase the visitor economy to £1.76 billion by 2034 and support a further 6,000 jobs.

This regional strategy is particularly relevant because it identifies many of the themes that sit at the heart of St Ronan's Wells: year-round visitor development, quality experiences, cycling, literary tourism, history and heritage, improved accommodation, better visitor information, community leadership, accessibility, responsible visitor management and protection of natural capital.

Destination Tweed provides a further strategic link. As a major river-revitalisation project, it is working to conserve, celebrate and share the nature, history and stories of the River Tweed, while delivering environmental, educational, social and economic benefits. The planned River Tweed Trail will provide an approximately 113-mile walking and cycling route, connecting communities, businesses and attractions along the river and using storytelling to bring the area's history, culture and nature to life. St Ronan's Wells fits naturally within this landscape: it is rooted in water, health, place, gardens and community memory, and can offer a distinctive Innerleithen chapter within the wider Tweed story.

The emerging cultural policy context in the Scottish Borders is also supportive. Scottish Borders Council's draft Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy set out an ambition to celebrate, protect and grow the culture, arts and heritage of the region, making culture more visible, accessible and meaningful for residents and visitors. It recognises the importance of local stories, traditions, historic buildings, creative industries, nature, tourism and community events.

Taken together, these strategies support the proposed direction for St Ronan's Wells. The project is strongest when positioned as a community-owned, place-rooted heritage and wellbeing asset: one that protects a listed building and gardens, supports volunteering and local use, interprets Innerleithen's story, complements outdoor recreation, links with the River Tweed and wider Borders heritage, and uses modest enterprise to sustain public benefit.

This strategic context does not remove the need for local market testing, but it gives the project a clear policy fit. St Ronan's Wells aligns with the direction of national and regional tourism policy not because it will attract large numbers of visitors, but because it offers the kind of authentic, responsible, community-led and connected experience that current strategies are seeking to encourage.

9.2 Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley visitor economy

St Ronan's Wells does not need to create visitor demand from scratch. It sits within an established and growing Tweed Valley visitor economy shaped by mountain biking, walking, cycling, landscape, heritage, civic festivals and the River Tweed. The opportunity is to position the Wells as a complementary asset within that landscape: a place that adds history, gardens, wellbeing and local identity to an area already known for outdoor activity.

Innerleithen has a strong reputation within Scotland's mountain biking offer. Forestry and Land Scotland describe Innerleithen as part of the 7stanes network and as a centre renowned for

technical downhill trails, with nearby Glentress providing one of the principal outdoor recreation destinations in the Tweed Valley.

The economic significance of cycling has been demonstrated through recent events and investment. Scottish Borders Council reported that the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships generated a direct economic impact of more than £6 million for the Scottish Borders, with Glentress hosting Mountain Bike Cross-country events as part of the Championships. The Mountain Bike Innovation Centre at Caerlee Mill in Innerleithen is projected to generate £86 million in Gross Value Added and more than 225 jobs in the South of Scotland over ten years.

This creates an important context for St Ronan's Wells. Innerleithen's future visitor economy will continue to be shaped strongly by cycling and outdoor recreation. The Wells can help ensure that this growth is balanced by a richer sense of place. It can give visitors a reason to understand the town beyond its trails: its spa heritage, literary associations, gardens, civic traditions, views and relationship with the wider Tweed Valley landscape.

Walking and cycling routes also strengthen the market context. Destination Tweed is developing the River Tweed Trail as a long-distance route following the River Tweed from Moffat to Berwick-upon-Tweed, with a strong emphasis on connecting communities, businesses, attractions, cultural heritage and the natural environment. St Ronan's Wells is rooted in precisely the themes that Destination Tweed brings together: water, landscape, local story, movement, ecology, culture and community.

The visitor profile for the Scottish Borders supports this mixed proposition. VisitScotland's 2023 Scottish Borders Visitor Survey found that overnight visitors stayed an average of 3.1 nights in the area, with 74% touring around Scotland and staying in two or more places. It also showed that scenery and landscape, history and culture, and outdoor activities were among the leading reasons visitors chose Scotland, while Scottish Borders visitors undertook activities including visits to historic houses, castles or forts, religious and historic sites, shopping, and viewing architecture and buildings.

This evidence suggests that St Ronan's Wells can appeal to visitors already drawn to the Borders by landscape, heritage and touring, as well as those visiting Innerleithen for outdoor recreation. Its offer will be modest, but distinctive: a historic spa site, garden and community asset that can be visited as part of a walk, cycle, town visit, heritage itinerary, event or short stay.

The visitor economy of the Tweed Valley is also shaped by cultural events, civic festivals and living traditions. Across the South of Scotland, Common Ridings and civic festivals are recognised as some of the region's most distinctive historic traditions, combining pageantry, riding, music, local ceremony and the return of former residents to their hometowns. St Ronan's Border Games sits within this wider Borders culture of civic celebration, while retaining its own identity linked to Innerleithen, James Hogg, the spa tradition and the Cleikum Ceremonies.

This positioning matters for local residents as much as for visitors. A successful visitor economy should not make a town feel less like itself. By keeping the Wells in community ownership, the project can help ensure that tourism growth remains rooted in local identity and public benefit. The Wells can become a small but meaningful bridge between residents and visitors: a place that supports local pride while welcoming people into the deeper story of Innerleithen.

9.3 Heritage and cultural tourism market

St Ronan's Wells sits within one of the richest cultural and heritage landscapes in the South of Scotland. Its future market should not be assessed only in terms of how many people might visit the Wells as a single destination. Its stronger opportunity lies in being part of a connected Tweed Valley

heritage offer: one that brings together literature, civic tradition, ancient settlement, Roman history, historic houses, gardens, festivals, walking routes and the story of water.

Traquair is the closest major heritage neighbour and a natural partner. Its events programme includes the Medieval Fayre, Shakespeare at Traquair and Beyond Borders International Festival, showing that there is already an audience for heritage settings used as places of performance, debate, living history, creativity and public gathering. The Traquair connection is also historical. The Earl of Traquair was central to the early nineteenth-century development of the Wells, and surviving archive material gives the site an interpretive link to estate improvement, architecture, spa culture and the growth of Innerleithen.

Abbotsford provides the major literary anchor for the wider Scott landscape. St Ronan's Wells should not attempt to present itself as a Scott destination on the scale of Abbotsford. Its value lies in offering a more intimate and local part of the Scott story: the way *St Ronan's Well* carried the name and idea of the Wells into wider literary culture and helped strengthen Innerleithen's identity as a spa town.

Innerleithen already has a heritage anchor in Robert Smail's Printing Works. The National Trust for Scotland attraction tells a powerful story of print, enterprise and working life. St Ronan's Wells can complement this by telling a different but connected story: water, health, visitors, gardens, leisure, literature and the making of the town as a place of resort.

To the east, Trimontium Museum in Melrose anchors the Roman and Iron Age story of the Tweed Valley. The relevance to St Ronan's Wells is strengthened by Innerleithen's own ancient landscape. Pirn Hill in Caberston Forest is one of many Iron Age settlements along the Tweed Valley, occupying a commanding hilltop position. From the Wells, this older landscape is not an abstract historical theme but part of the visible setting.

To the west, Peebles and the Chambers Institution are also highly relevant. The Chambers Institution is undergoing major refurbishment, with Peebles Library, Museum and Gallery closed from April 2026 until the end of 2027 for decant and works. Earlier vision material for the Chambers Institution identified the opportunity to highlight Tweeddale's collections of regional and national importance, including the possibility of a Museum of the Bronze Age and/or a Museum of Tweeddale's written word heritage.

This creates a compelling heritage corridor along the Tweed. Peebles can strengthen the Bronze Age and Tweeddale collections story; Innerleithen can interpret spa heritage, Scott, Hogg, gardens, civic tradition and the hillfort landscape; Melrose can anchor the Roman and Iron Age narrative through Trimontium. The River Tweed is the natural thread linking these places. St Ronan's Wells has the potential to become a small but meaningful midpoint in that corridor.

Living tradition is also central to the cultural tourism market. St Ronan's Border Games were instituted in 1827 and are recognised as Scotland's oldest organised sports meeting, now forming part of a week-long festival with the Cleikum Ceremonies at its heart. The Games connect the Wells not only to past heritage but to living civic culture. They create opportunities for interpretation, talks, small exhibitions, school activity, oral history, garden events and Games Week programming linked to James Hogg, Sir Walter Scott and the town's festival traditions.

The wider literary and cultural events market strengthens this case. Borders Book Festival in Melrose, Beyond Borders International Festival at Traquair, Shakespeare at Traquair and other cultural events show that the Tweed Valley and wider Borders already attract audiences for literature, ideas, performance, culture and heritage settings. St Ronan's Wells will not operate at that scale, but it can contribute to the same ecology through smaller talks, readings, archive sessions, garden events and Scott/Hogg-linked programming.

St Ronan's Wells also has a broader interpretive frame as part of Britain's spa heritage. Historic spa towns such as Bath, Buxton, Cheltenham, Malvern, Leamington Spa and Strathpeffer show how water, health, leisure, architecture, gardens and sociability shaped places over time. St Ronan's Wells should not overclaim comparison with these towns: its scale and history are different. But it belongs to the same broad cultural story. This gives the Wells a stronger interpretive identity and allows Innerleithen's local history to connect with a recognisable UK and European heritage theme.

The heritage and cultural tourism market in the Borders is also increasingly connected with nature, gardens, wildlife and responsible travel. Dawyck Botanic Garden, Kailzie, Abbotsford, Traquair, Monteviot, Floors Castle, Carolside and other gardens and designed landscapes show that the region already has a strong garden visitor market. Wider conservation activity, including golden eagle recovery, red squirrel conservation and native woodland restoration, adds to the region's profile as a place of landscape, ecology and environmental care.

St Ronan's Wells can sit naturally within this market, but at a modest and community-led scale. Its gardens, views, volunteer activity, lost water story and spa heritage allow it to connect heritage with wellbeing, landscape and environmental care. It should not be presented as a major nature tourism destination, but as a small, distinctive place where visitors can experience the softer side of the Tweed Valley: gardens, water, health, local history, quiet recreation and community stewardship.

The market opportunity is therefore not volume tourism but connected cultural value. The site can serve residents, visiting walkers and cyclists, heritage tourists, literary audiences, festivalgoers, schools, artists and those interested in gardens, wellbeing and local history. Its offer will be strongest when it works in partnership with Traquair, Robert Smail's Printing Works, St Ronan's Border Games, Destination Tweed, Abbotsford, Trimontium Museum, Peebles/Chambers Institution, local businesses and cultural networks.

9.4 Local community market

The local community market for St Ronan's Wells is modest in scale, but credible. Innerleithen has a population of around 3,225, with Walkerburn and Cardrona also forming part of the wider local catchment. Scottish Borders Council identifies Tweeddale as a locality of more than 21,000 people, with Innerleithen, Walkerburn, Cardrona, Traquair and smaller settlements forming part of that wider community landscape.

The future hall and activity space at St Ronan's Wells should therefore be understood as serving both Innerleithen and the wider Tweed Valley community. Its purpose would not be to compete with existing facilities, but to offer a different kind of space: smaller, more intimate, rooted in heritage, connected to gardens and views, and particularly suited to talks, workshops, wellbeing sessions, creative activity, garden events, small meetings, local interpretation and possibly small weddings.

Innerleithen already has important community venues. The Memorial Hall is the largest public auditorium in Tweeddale and has a main hall capacity of 316 people and a smaller Chambers room for around 30 people. Live Borders' 2025/26 price list places Innerleithen Memorial Hall in Band B, with non-commercial hire rates for hall use ranging from £16 to £28 per hour depending on type of use, and commercial rates ranging from £40 to £70 per hour.

This provides useful benchmarking. The Wells should not try to replicate the Memorial Hall's function as a large auditorium or general-purpose events venue. Its opportunity lies in its distinctiveness: a small atmospheric heritage setting, in a beautiful garden landscape, with views across Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley.

Other nearby provision reinforces this point. St Ronan's Primary School occasionally serves as a hub for adult and community education after hours; Traquair Village Hall hosts community events including yoga, meditation and dance; and The Glen Village Hall is available only to residents of The Glen estate. The local venue landscape is active but varied. St Ronan's Wells can add value by offering a different scale and atmosphere rather than another conventional hall.

The public transport context also strengthens the local market. Innerleithen sits on the X62 bus route between Galashiels and Edinburgh, via Walkerburn, Peebles and Penicuik. This connects the town to Galashiels Transport Interchange and the Borders Railway, as well as to Peebles and Edinburgh. While the uphill walk from the town centre to the Wells will need to be considered carefully, the wider transport context means the site is not dependent only on car-based users.

There is also evidence of an active community and voluntary culture in Innerleithen. Local organisations include St Ronan's Silver Band, Innerleithen/Tweeddale Pipe Band, Innerleithen Civic Association, St Ronan's Border Games Committee, Rotary, PROBUS, Tweed Valley Mountain Rescue, Tweed Valley Trails Association, Great Borders River Clean, the Edible Garden, St Ronan's Wells Gardens and the Tweeddale Red Squirrel Network. This demonstrates a strong local base of volunteering, civic activity, environmental interest, cultural participation and community organisation. The gardens at St Ronan's Wells provide the clearest direct evidence of local participation. They are managed by volunteers, with income generated through plant sales and community fundraising. Volunteers include people who are newly retired, seeking exercise and company, or returning towards work after illness or unemployment. This existing garden activity shows that the Wells already supports volunteering, wellbeing, social contact and local stewardship.

There is further evidence of demand for social, creative and wellbeing activity in and around Innerleithen. The Borders Activities Calendar for Older People includes local activity such as social centres, walking groups, singing, craft, tea dances, drop-ins and other wellbeing-related sessions in Innerleithen and nearby communities. This does not by itself prove demand for the Wells Hall, but it does show an active local market for small-scale social, creative, health and community activity.

Schools and intergenerational learning also form part of the potential local market. St Ronan's Primary School already has a community garden at the edge of its school grounds, with pupils supported to grow food, build confidence and promote healthy lifestyles. This suggests potential alignment with the Wells around gardening, local history, water, landscape, wellbeing and community stewardship, although any school use would need to be developed directly with the school.

The creative community provides another important strand. Destination Tweed's Open Studios programme in Innerleithen, Walkerburn and Traquair has involved artists opening studios, artists showing work in local businesses and group shows, workshops, and guided textile-themed walks. This supports the case for testing creative workshops, artist-led interpretation, temporary exhibitions, open studio activity or small residencies at the Wells, provided these remain proportionate to the site.

Innerleithen's civic and cultural calendar also points to potential local use. St Ronan's Border Games form part of a week-long festival with the Cleikum Ceremonies central to the town's celebration of St Ronan, with the Wells already a key venue during the week. Innerleithen Music Festival also uses local venues including the Vale Club, Union Club and others, showing that the town already supports a range of small-scale cultural activity.

The evidence therefore points to a credible local community market, but a specific one. St Ronan's Wells should not be presented as a general-purpose hall or events venue. Its strongest local role is as a distinctive, small-scale, heritage and garden-linked space for activity that benefits from atmosphere, setting and story. This positioning is important for the financial model as well as the community case. The Wells is unlikely to generate substantial hall hire income through volume use

alone. Its value lies in a balanced mix of community access, modest hire income, garden activity, interpretation, volunteering and occasional events, supported by the wider earned-income role of the accommodation.

9.5 Accommodation market

Short-stay accommodation is a central element of the proposed operating model because it offers the clearest route to regular earned income. It should, however, be understood as a sustainability mechanism, not as the purpose of the project. Its role is to help fund the long-term care of the building and gardens, support affordable community use, and reduce dependence on grant funding. The visitor evidence supports testing this model. VisitScotland's 2023 Scottish Borders Visitor Survey found that overnight visitors to the Scottish Borders stayed an average of 3.1 nights in the area, with 74% touring around Scotland and staying in two or more places. The same survey found that 53% of Scottish Borders visitors stayed in non-serviced accommodation, including 20% in self-catering or commercial non-serviced rentals. It also showed that scenery and landscape, history and culture, and outdoor activities are among the leading reasons visitors choose Scotland.

This profile aligns well with the proposed offer at St Ronan's Wells. The accommodation would not be a generic holiday let. Its appeal would lie in its unique heritage setting: a stay within a listed former spa site, connected to the gardens, the story of the Wells, Innerleithen's literary associations, the Tweed Valley landscape, walking and cycling routes, and nearby heritage destinations. Properly presented, the accommodation could offer something distinctive in the local market: intimate, place-rooted, characterful and explicitly linked to the stewardship of a community-owned heritage asset.

The quality of the accommodation will be important. VisitScotland formally retired its Quality Assurance scheme, including star grading, on 31 March 2025. Despite this, it would be reasonable to develop the accommodation to a four-star equivalent standard, using comfort, cleanliness, design, guest welcome, local information, sustainability, safety and consistency as guiding principles.

The wider regional context also supports the need to understand and strengthen accommodation provision. The South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy identifies accommodation as a key issue for the visitor economy, stressing the importance of having the right accommodation, in the right place and at the right price point. It also recognises that encouraging more overnight stays can bring economic benefit to communities, and that smaller accommodation businesses may be particularly relevant for independent travellers.

Destination Tweed adds a specific future opportunity. The River Tweed Trail will provide an approximately 113-mile walking and cycling route, connecting communities, businesses and attractions along the river and encouraging users to explore local food, accommodation, attractions and activities. The South of Scotland Destination Alliance has also highlighted the importance of single-night non-serviced accommodation for long-distance walkers and cyclists, who often need to move to a different location each night. A flexible accommodation model at the Wells could therefore appeal to walkers, cyclists and short-break visitors, particularly from 2028 onwards as the River Tweed Trail develops.

Local comparator evidence suggests that a carefully positioned heritage stay could sit within a realistic pricing range. Current public listings show a one-bedroom self-catering apartment in Innerleithen advertised at £85–£120 per night, sleeping up to four guests, while a larger Innerleithen property is advertised at £395–£570 per night. St Ronan's Hotel is listed by CAMRA in 2026 at £90–£110 per night for two people sharing, including continental breakfast. These comparators do not determine the price for the Wells, but they support a cautious working range, particularly if the final accommodation is distinctive, well-presented and easy to book.

Occupancy assumptions should remain prudent. VisitScotland's 2023 accommodation occupancy data recorded four-star self-catering unit occupancy at 48.20% and five-star occupancy at 52.12%. It also recorded Scottish Borders self-catering occupancy at 30.56% in 2023, although this should be treated with caution because it is based on participating businesses and may not reflect distinctive, well-marketed properties. The same data shows clear seasonality, with self-catering unit occupancy over 50% from May to September and peaking at 58.4% in August.

This suggests that St Ronan's Wells should model accommodation income using a range of scenarios rather than a single optimistic forecast.

Scenario	Average nightly rate	Annual occupancy	Indicative gross annual income
Prudent	£160	35%	c. £21,000
Central	£160	45%	c. £32,160
Optimistic	£140	75%	c. £63,693

These figures are gross income only. They do not include deductions for booking platform fees, management, cleaning, laundry, utilities, broadband, insurance, maintenance, licensing, consumables or provision for future refurbishment. A higher annual occupancy range of 60–70% should be treated only as a mature-year upside sensitivity, potentially achievable if the accommodation is finished to a high standard, reviewed strongly, marketed effectively, linked to walking, cycling and heritage markets, and able to benefit from peak-season, festival and Destination Tweed demand.

Short-term let licensing and compliance will be central to viability. Scottish Borders Council confirms that applicants for short-term let licences must provide documents that may include an Energy Performance Certificate, gas safety certificate, private water supply sample results, planning permission evidence and existing host evidence. Mandatory conditions also include requirements relating to day-to-day management, safety, Energy Performance Certificates and gas safety. Scottish Government guidance confirms that planning permission may be required where a change of use to a short-term let is material, depending on the circumstances.

Management and changeover costs will also have a significant effect on net income. Public cost benchmarking suggests that holiday-let management fees often fall in the region of 15–25% of booking revenue, depending on the level of service. Cleaning and laundry costs can also be material, particularly for short stays. The more flexible the booking policy, the more important it will be to control changeover costs, because one-night stays can be attractive to walkers and cyclists but may produce lower net income if every stay requires full cleaning and laundry.

For financial planning, the accommodation should therefore be modelled with care. It has strong potential as the main earned-income element of the project, particularly if developed to a high-quality, four-star equivalent standard and marketed as a distinctive heritage stay. However, the forecast should be built from realistic assumptions around seasonality, management capacity, licensing, cleaning, maintenance and net return. The accommodation can help sustain St Ronan's Wells, but it should not be expected to carry the full cost of the building and gardens on its own.

9.6 Creative, refreshment and enterprise market

The revised operating model includes two modest creative and social-enterprise elements: Cuppa n Chat / light refreshments and textile or creative workshops. These are now treated as part of the emerging offer at St Ronan's Wells, but only at a scale that is proportionate to the building, charitable purpose and local context. More ambitious activity should remain a future development option until demand, cost, compliance and management arrangements have been tested.

The creative opportunity is supported by visible local activity. Destination Tweed's Open Studios programme in Innerleithen, Walkerburn and Traquair has involved artists opening studios to the public, work shown in local shop windows and group exhibitions, workshops, and guided textile-themed walks. The 2024 Open Studios programme also recorded 35 artists displaying work in and around Innerleithen, around 180 people participating in hands-on workshops and guided walks, and activity supported by a core team of local volunteers.

This suggests that there is a real creative network around Innerleithen, Walkerburn and Traquair, and a public appetite for open studios, workshops, walking-based cultural activity and art in local settings. For St Ronan's Wells, the strongest early opportunity is not likely to be a permanent studio tenancy. A more proportionate model would be a programme of textile and creative activity: workshops, demonstrations, repair and reuse sessions, intergenerational skills activity, small exhibitions, artist-led interpretation, open studio days, temporary residencies, or creative activity linked to the gardens, the lost water, spa heritage and the wider Tweed Valley landscape.

This is particularly relevant to Innerleithen's textile heritage. Textile workshops could connect the Wells with the town's industrial and social history, while also supporting contemporary interests in making, mending, sustainability, wellbeing and intergenerational learning. The programme could include stitching, knitting, textile repair, creative reuse, demonstrations, heritage talks, small group workshops and artist-led activity. This would create modest earned income, but its wider value would lie in bringing people into the building, preserving and sharing local skills, and making the Wells useful to both residents and visitors.

Destination Tweed's Connecting Threads programme strengthens this case. It connects creative practitioners with the River Tweed, its habitats, communities and culture, and has included residencies, workshops, concerts, exhibitions and river-related cultural activity. St Ronan's Wells could sit naturally within that creative ecology. Its themes of water, gardens, memory, health, literature, civic tradition, landscape and community stewardship are all capable of supporting contemporary creative responses.

The refreshment opportunity should also be treated positively, but carefully. The current operating model includes Cuppa n Chat / light refreshments as a modest community and visitor welcome activity. It is not intended to be a full café or to compete with existing cafés and hospitality businesses in Innerleithen. Its primary purpose would be to support social connection, welcome garden users and volunteers, provide hospitality for visitors and hall users, and encourage people to spend longer on site.

Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley already have an established café and hospitality offer, including businesses serving walkers, cyclists, trail runners and local residents. VisitScotland's Scottish Borders Visitor Survey also records food and drink as part of the regional visitor experience, with 22% of visitors taking part in food and/or drink experiences in the Scottish Borders. The opportunity for St Ronan's Wells is therefore not to duplicate this provision, but to provide a light-touch, site-specific offer that complements it.

In practical terms, Cuppa n Chat could begin as a volunteer-supported or event-based offer, linked to garden activity, talks, workshops, hall hires, open days and seasonal programming. It could include tea, coffee and light refreshments, with income generated through donations or modest charges where appropriate. Any refreshment activity will need suitable food hygiene, storage, cleaning, insurance, volunteer training and compliance arrangements.

The key test will be complementarity. A small refreshment offer could increase dwell time, improve welcome and make the site more usable, especially for garden activity, talks, open days, textile workshops and interpretation. However, it should strengthen rather than compete with town-

centre businesses. A well-designed model could encourage visitors to enjoy the Wells and then continue into Innerleithen for a fuller food and drink offer.

For financial planning, forecasts include only modest income and expenditure for Cuppa n Chat and textile workshops. These are treated as mission-led community activities, not major commercial income streams. More ambitious enterprise activity, including a staffed café, permanent creative workspace, regular studio rental or larger-scale retail, should be shown only as a future development or best-case opportunity until there is direct evidence of demand, a costed operating model and trustee agreement to proceed.

The current market evidence supports a cautious but positive approach. Textile and creative activity, light refreshments and small enterprise activity could help make St Ronan's Wells more active, welcoming and financially resilient. The priority should be to pilot these uses gradually, gather evidence, protect the charitable purpose of the site, and ensure that any enterprise activity reinforces rather than distracts from the wider public benefit of the Wells.

9.7 Displacement analysis: community use, heritage activity and accommodation

The Scottish Land Fund has asked that the Business Plan considers whether the proposed project could duplicate or displace existing local provision. This is important because St Ronan's Wells will not operate in isolation. It sits within a town and wider Tweed Valley area that already has community venues, cafés, visitor attractions, accommodation providers, creative activity, outdoor tourism businesses and local organisations.

The purpose of this analysis is to assess how the proposed uses at St Ronan's Wells relate to existing facilities and services; whether there is a risk of duplication or competition; and how the project can add value, fill gaps and strengthen rather than weaken the local offer.

Community venues and hall use

There is existing community and event space in and around Innerleithen. Innerleithen Memorial Hall provides a large-scale hall facility and smaller meeting space. Traquair Village Hall also provides local hall hire and community space. Other venues exist in neighbouring settlements and across the Scottish Borders through Live Borders and community-led hall provision.

The hall and community space at St Ronan's Wells is therefore not intended to replace or compete with these larger or more established venues. Its role is different. It will be a smaller, heritage and garden-linked space that supports activity directly connected to the site, including talks, workshops, community gatherings, textile activity, Cuppa n Chat, garden events, interpretation, volunteer sessions, small meetings and seasonal programming.

The risk of displacement is therefore considered low, provided the space is marketed and priced appropriately. The Wells should not seek to become the main general-purpose hall for Innerleithen. That role is already served by existing provision. Instead, it should offer a complementary setting for activity that benefits from the character of the building, the gardens, the heritage story and the landscape setting.

The project adds value by creating a different kind of community space: smaller, more intimate, place-based and linked to heritage, wellbeing, gardens and volunteering. It may be particularly suitable for activities that would not naturally sit within a large civic hall, such as heritage talks, small workshops, textile sessions, garden activities, community wellbeing activity and informal social gatherings.

Cuppa n Chat and light refreshments

Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley already have cafés, pubs, restaurants and hospitality businesses serving residents, walkers, cyclists, trail runners and visitors. St Ronan's Wells should therefore not seek to establish a full commercial café unless future evidence clearly supports that approach.

The proposed Cuppa n Chat / light refreshment offer is different. It is intended as a modest social connection and visitor welcome activity, not a commercial food and drink business. Its primary purpose is to make the Wells more usable and welcoming for garden volunteers, visitors, hall users, people attending talks or workshops, and those who may benefit from informal social contact.

The risk of displacement is low if the offer remains limited, event-linked, volunteer-supported and mission-led. It should complement existing cafés rather than compete with them. A suitable model would be tea, coffee and light refreshments at selected times, during open days, garden sessions, workshops, Cuppa n Chat sessions and small events.

The project can add value by encouraging people to spend longer at the Wells and then continue into Innerleithen for a fuller food and drink offer. Where possible, SRWSG should explore partnership or supply arrangements with local cafés or producers, so that refreshment activity supports the wider local economy.

Heritage interpretation and visitor attractions

The wider area already has important heritage and visitor attractions, including Robert Smail's Printing Works, Traquair House, Abbotsford, Dawyck Botanic Gardens, local textile heritage, the River Tweed, walking and cycling routes, and the wider cultural landscape of Innerleithen, Traquair and the Tweed Valley.

St Ronan's Wells will not duplicate these attractions. Its heritage focus is distinctive: the Spa Story, the lost water, the development of Innerleithen as a spa town, the relationship between health, landscape, literature, gardens, civic tradition and community memory, and the continuing significance of the site to local people.

The risk of displacement is low. A reopened St Ronan's Wells is more likely to increase the overall heritage offer of Innerleithen than draw visitors away from existing attractions. It can encourage longer dwell time, repeat visits, cross-promotion and linked itineraries with other heritage, walking, cycling and cultural sites.

The project adds value by restoring public access to a building and garden that are currently underused and at risk. It will also create opportunities for guided visits, interpretation, talks, school or group activity, digital material and community-led storytelling that are specific to the Wells and cannot be provided elsewhere.

Textile, creative and workshop activity

There is an existing creative network in Innerleithen, Walkerburn, Traquair and the wider Tweed Valley. Destination Tweed's Open Studios and Connecting Threads activity has shown that there is local appetite for workshops, artist-led activity, exhibitions, guided walks and creative responses to place.

The proposed textile and creative workshops at St Ronan's Wells are intended to complement this ecology, not compete with it. The strongest opportunity is not a permanent commercial studio or major creative workspace, but a modest programme of workshops, demonstrations, repair and

reuse activity, textile heritage sessions, intergenerational skills activity and creative interpretation linked to the Wells, the gardens and Innerleithen's textile story.

The risk of displacement is low if the programme is developed in partnership with local makers, artists, tutors and community groups. The Wells should provide a platform and setting for local creative activity rather than attempting to replace existing studio, workshop or gallery provision.

The project adds value by connecting creativity to a specific heritage asset and by creating new opportunities for learning, wellbeing, participation and skills-sharing. It can support local practitioners through paid workshops, commissions, sale-or-return retail, events and collaborative programming.

Heritage Short Stay accommodation

The Tweed Valley already has a range of visitor accommodation, including hotels, guest houses, self-catering properties, bike-friendly accommodation, lodges, pods and larger group accommodation. This reflects the strength of the local visitor economy, particularly around walking, cycling, mountain biking and short breaks.

The proposed Heritage Short Stay Experience at St Ronan's Wells should therefore be positioned carefully. It should not seek to undercut existing providers or operate as a volume accommodation business. It will be a single, distinctive self-catering heritage unit within a restored listed spa building, linked to the gardens, the Spa Story, Innerleithen's heritage, local textiles, walking, cycling and the wider Tweed Valley.

The risk of displacement is considered low to moderate. It is low in scale because only one unit is proposed. It is moderate only because accommodation is an existing commercial market, so the project must be careful about pricing, positioning and marketing. The best mitigation is to make the offer distinctive, fairly priced and complementary. The accommodation should attract visitors who are specifically interested in heritage, place, gardens, walking, cycling and a more characterful stay, rather than simply competing on price with existing providers.

The project adds value because income from the accommodation will be reinvested in the public benefit of St Ronan's Wells. It will support maintenance, gardens, community access, interpretation and volunteering. Guests will also spend money in local cafés, pubs, shops, attractions and services, helping the wider Innerleithen economy.

The accommodation could also strengthen the area's visitor offer by providing a small amount of additional flexible, self-catering accommodation close to walking and cycling routes and the developing Tweed Valley visitor economy. It should be promoted as part of the wider destination rather than in isolation.

Small retail, publications and local craft

The proposed retail offer is modest. It is expected to include small publications, postcards, heritage material, garden-related items, textile-themed products and local craft. It should not become a large retail operation or compete directly with town-centre shops.

The risk of displacement is low if SRWSG uses small stock levels, local makers, sale-or-return arrangements, commission-based sales and site-specific products. The retail offer should support the visitor experience and local creative economy rather than duplicate general retail provision. The project adds value by creating an outlet for heritage interpretation, local makers and products directly connected to the Wells, the gardens, textiles and the Tweed Valley.

Overall assessment

The proposed project is unlikely to cause significant displacement if it is delivered in the way described in this Business Plan. The main reason is that St Ronan's Wells is not being developed as a conventional commercial venue, café, attraction or accommodation business. It is being developed as a community-owned heritage asset with a mixed charitable operating model.

The areas with the greatest potential displacement risk are accommodation and refreshments, because both already exist locally. These risks can be managed by keeping the scale modest, avoiding undercutting, working with local businesses, making the offer distinctive, and ensuring that all income is clearly reinvested in public benefit.

The strongest areas of added value are:

- bringing an underused listed building and garden back into active public use;
- creating a heritage and garden-linked community space that differs from existing halls;
- supporting volunteering, wellbeing and social connection;
- interpreting the unique Spa Story and civic heritage of Innerleithen;
- providing a platform for textile heritage, creative workshops and intergenerational skills;
- encouraging visitors to spend more time in Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley;
- generating income that is reinvested in the building, gardens and community use;
- strengthening the wider local visitor economy through partnership and cross-promotion.

SRWGS should continue to monitor displacement risk as the project develops. This should include discussions with local venues, accommodation providers, cafés, heritage attractions, creative practitioners and community organisations. The operating model should be adjusted if evidence emerges that any activity is duplicating existing provision or causing avoidable competition. The guiding principle should be complementarity: St Ronan's Wells should add to the local offer, not displace it.

9.8 Competitors and collaborators

St Ronan's Wells will operate within a busy local and regional landscape of community venues, heritage attractions, outdoor routes, accommodation providers, cafés, schools, civic organisations and tourism networks. This should be seen as a strength. The future of the Wells does not depend on displacing existing provision, but on finding its own distinctive place within it.

The key distinction is scale and purpose. St Ronan's Wells should not compete with Innerleithen Memorial Hall as a large public auditorium, with Traquair or Abbotsford as major heritage destinations, with Glentworth as an outdoor recreation hub, with Macdonald Cardrona as a hotel and events venue, or with town-centre cafés as a food and drink destination. Its role is different: a small, community-owned, heritage-and-garden asset that can connect local use, visitor interest, civic tradition, walking, cycling, wellbeing, interpretation and modest enterprise.

The strongest approach is collaboration. Local venues provide comparators for pricing, booking systems and operating procedures, but they are not direct substitutes for the Wells. Heritage attractions including Traquair, Abbotsford, Robert Smail's Printing Works, the Great Tapestry of Scotland, Trimontium Museum and the Chambers Institution provide context, referral opportunities and potential programme links. Garden and landscape attractions including Dawyck, Kailzie, Traquair and Abbotsford show the strength of the regional garden visitor market, while the Wells can contribute a smaller, community-led garden experience rooted in health, water, volunteering and wellbeing.

Walking and cycling routes provide another important set of collaborators. The Tweed Valley Railway Path links Innerleithen and Peebles, passing through Cardrona and following the River

Tweed for much of the way. Glentress and Innerleithen are already established outdoor recreation destinations, and the Mountain Bike Innovation Centre will further strengthen Innerleithen's cycling profile. Destination Tweed will add a further layer through the River Tweed Trail. The Wells can offer a quieter, heritage-led stop within this active travel landscape.

Accommodation providers should also be understood as comparators and partners. Macdonald Cardrona Hotel, Traquair, Kailzie and local self-catering providers operate at different scales and serve distinct parts of the market. The Wells' offer would be small-scale, heritage-led, community-owned and explicitly linked to reinvestment in a public asset.

The same principle applies to cafés and local hospitality. Refreshments at St Ronan's Wells, will be light-touch and complementary. Its purpose would be to support people already using the site (garden volunteers, hall users, walkers, heritage visitors and event audiences) while encouraging wider use of town-centre cafés and hospitality businesses.

Local civic and community organisations will be central collaborators. St Ronan's Border Games, Innerleithen Civic Association, St Ronan's Primary School, garden volunteers, local history groups, artists, environmental organisations and older people's groups could all help shape use of the Wells. Tourism networks including Go Tweed Valley, Destination Tweed, Scotland Starts Here, VisitScotland, the South of Scotland Destination Alliance and local business networks provide potential routes for visibility, referral and partnership once the Wells has a clear visitor offer.

The conclusion is clear. St Ronan's Wells is not entering an empty market, and it should not attempt to duplicate existing provision. Its opportunity lies in careful positioning: a distinctive community-owned heritage and garden asset that adds texture to the Innerleithen and Tweed Valley offer. The strongest route to viability is collaboration: shared itineraries, referrals, joint programming, festival links, creative activity, walking and cycling routes, garden tourism, and local business partnerships.

9.9 Visitor numbers, access and donation assumptions

St Ronan's Wells will need a realistic day-visitor model that supports public benefit without placing unrealistic pressure on the site, the building or the volunteer base. The Wells is small, distinctive and set above the town; it should be welcoming and visible but not managed on the assumption that high-volume footfall is either likely or desirable.

The strongest access model at this stage is low barrier. The gardens and basic interpretation should remain free to access, with donations actively encouraged through clear messaging, contactless giving, QR codes and Gift Aid where eligible. This approach protects the community value of the site, avoids creating a formal admissions expectation that may be difficult to staff, and keeps the gardens open as a shared local asset.

Paid activity should be reserved for events where additional value is being provided, such as guided tours, talks, workshops, performances, specialist garden activity, creative sessions or ticketed heritage events. This gives the Support Group a way to generate income without making general access to the Wells feel transactional.

The potential audience for St Ronan's Wells can be understood in three layers: the immediate local community, the wider Scottish Borders catchment, and visitors from beyond the region, including Edinburgh. The 2022 Tweeddale East ward profile records Innerleithen as a settlement of 3,174 people, with Cardrona at 849 and Walkerburn at 714. It also records the wider Tweeddale East ward population at 10,900. Scottish Borders Council records the population of the Scottish Borders at 116,900 in the 2022 Census, while National Records of Scotland records the City of Edinburgh population at 530,680 in mid-2024.

Innerleithen's public transport connections widen that potential audience. The X62 route links Galashiels, Walkerburn, Innerleithen, Peebles, Penicuik and Edinburgh, connecting Innerleithen with Galashiels Transport Interchange and the Borders Railway, as well as with Edinburgh city centre. This does not mean that the Wells should expect large numbers of day visitors from Edinburgh, but it does mean that the site is not dependent solely on car-based access.

The wider visitor environment is also strong. VisitScotland reports three-year average domestic overnight tourism to the Scottish Borders of 265,000 visits and £71 million spend, alongside 29,000 international visits and £26 million spend, giving a combined overnight tourism market of around 294,000 visits and £97 million spend. VisitScotland's Scottish Borders Visitor Survey also shows the relevance of landscape, history, culture and touring behaviour to the Borders visitor market.

Comparator attractions help set the scale. The Great Tapestry of Scotland sold 24,000 tickets in its first year, while Robert Smal's Printing Works recorded 1,277 visits in ALVA's 2025 figures. Glentress, by contrast, attracts around 300,000 visitors annually, showing the scale of the outdoor recreation market in the Tweed Valley.

St Ronan's Wells should sit well below the Great Tapestry in terms of forecast paid attraction-style visits, but above a tightly managed guided-tour property if the gardens remain freely accessible and the site is promoted locally. The key is to capture a small, manageable proportion of existing local, heritage, walking, cycling and garden interest.

Indicative day-visitor scenarios

Scenario	Annual day visitors	Rationale
Low / prudent	4,000	Modest local use, garden visitors, occasional events, limited marketing, no strong route integration.
Medium / central	6,000	Stronger local engagement, regular garden and heritage activity, some visitors from Innerleithen, Peebles, Traquair and walking/cycling routes.
High / managed growth	8,000	Well-promoted community-owned site, stronger links with Destination Tweed, Games Week, garden events, Robert Smal's, Traquair, walking/cycling audiences and Edinburgh day visitors.

The high scenario should not be treated as a target to pursue at any cost. It represents around 20 visitors per day averaged across the year, although in practice visits would cluster around spring, summer, weekends, Games Week, garden events and holiday periods. The Wells should avoid being overwhelmed; visitor growth should be managed in line with the capacity of the building, gardens, access route, volunteers and neighbours.

Donation model

A donation-based model is more appropriate than a standard admission charge. Donation income should be treated as a useful supporting stream, not a major pillar of the business model. The Association of Independent Museums notes that donation-box income varies widely, with reported average donation income per visitor ranging from less than 1p to £2, and many organisations reporting 50p or less per visitor. More recent guidance includes a case study of a small museum raising an average of 75p per visitor through a mix of cash and contactless donation units.

St Ronan's Wells may be able to improve on a passive donation-box model if donation points are well placed, messaging is clear, contactless giving is available, and the purpose of donations is made

explicit: caring for the building, gardens and community use. A suggested donation of £3–£5 could be displayed, but the financial model should use average donation income per visitor rather than assuming that every visitor will donate.

Scenario	Annual day visitors	Average donation income per visitor	Gross donations	Indicative Gift Aid / GASDS uplift	Total potential donation income
Low / prudent	1,500	£0.50	£750	£94–£188	c. £850–£950
Medium / central	3,500	£1.00	£3,500	£438–£875	c. £3,950–£4,375
High / managed growth	7,500	£1.50	£11,250	£1,406–£2,813	c. £12,650–£14,063

These figures are indicative only. The Gift Aid and Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme uplift depends on eligibility, donor declarations, the mix of cash, contactless and online giving, and HMRC rules. Gift Aid allows charities to claim an extra 25p for every eligible £1 donated, while the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme may allow a 25% claim on eligible small cash and contactless card donations, subject to scheme rules and limits.

The donation model must also be structured carefully if any admission charge is introduced in future. Entry fees to view charity property do not normally qualify for Gift Aid because they are not gifts. For St Ronan's Wells, this reinforces the case for free access to the gardens and basic interpretation, with genuinely voluntary donations, rather than a formal admissions model.

Suggested forecast treatment

For the early financial projections, the prudent approach would be to phase donation income rather than assume immediate maturity.

Year	Visitor assumption	Gross donation assumption	Comment
Year 1	1,500	£750	Early reopening, limited promotion, garden and pilot activity.
Year 3	3,500	£3,500	More regular interpretation, events, partnerships and donation infrastructure.
Year 5	5,000–7,500	£5,000–£11,250	Managed growth, stronger route links, events, Games Week and heritage/garden promotion.

This phasing keeps the model realistic. The visitor donation line can become a useful contribution to running costs, but it should not be treated as the main financial engine of the project. Accommodation, hall hire, events, fundraising, plant sales, grants and donations will need to work together.

Counting and managing visitors

St Ronan's Wells will need simple systems for counting visitors and monitoring demand. These do not need to be complex, but they should allow the Support Group to understand patterns of use and report to funders with confidence.

Methods include manual clicker counts on volunteer days and events, booking records for talks and workshops, QR-code engagement data, contactless donation reports, website analytics, visitor comments, occasional sample-count days, and records of plant sales, events and guided visits. Visitor numbers should also be managed with care. The purpose of the Wells is not to maximise footfall, but to sustain a meaningful, welcoming and manageable community asset. The site's small scale, uphill access, garden character and proximity to neighbours mean that growth should be balanced with conservation, volunteer capacity, parking, access, visitor safety and the quiet character of the place.

10. Financial Plan and Forecasts

10.1 Overview

A five-year financial forecast has been prepared to support the Business Plan. The forecast is set out in a separate spreadsheet and includes three scenarios: a median forecast, a worst-case forecast and a best-case forecast. The purpose of the forecasts is to test whether St Ronan's Wells can move from community asset transfer and capital development into a sustainable mixed operating model.

The forecasts cover the full transition from acquisition and development through to early operation. Years 1 and 2 are primarily concerned with securing the asset, undertaking essential repairs and improvements, preparing the building and gardens for use, and establishing the systems needed for long-term operation. Years 3 to 5 model the early operating period, including heritage interpretation, community use, gardens, short-stay accommodation, visitor donations, supporter giving, hall hire, events, markets, workshops, retail and ongoing fundraising.

The financial plan is deliberately mixed. It does not assume that St Ronan's Wells can be sustained through a single income stream. Instead, the model combines capital and revenue grants, accommodation income, hall hire, visitor giving, supporter donations, community markets, plant sales, ticketed events, workshops, small retail and annual fundraising. This reflects the nature of the asset: a listed building, a garden, a community facility, a heritage site and a place with potential to generate income in ways that support public benefit.

The expenditure assumptions are held consistently across the three scenarios. This is important, because the fixed costs of owning and operating a listed community asset do not disappear if income is lower than expected. Insurance, utilities, compliance, maintenance, basic administration, garden costs, accommodation support, cleaning, interpretation, governance and staff or contractor time all need to be provided for. The scenario testing therefore focuses on income sensitivity rather than artificially reducing essential costs.

10.2 Summary of five-year forecasts

The median forecast shows total income of £1,013,730 against total expenditure of £1,000,615, producing a five-year cumulative surplus of £13,115. This is a modest but credible central case. It shows that the model can broadly balance, but only if SRWVG secures the planned mix of earned income, donations, supporter giving and annual fundraising.

The worst-case forecast shows total income of £886,063 against the same expenditure of £1,000,615, producing a cumulative deficit of £114,552. This scenario assumes that operating income develops more slowly than expected, particularly in relation to visitor donations, supporter giving, accommodation occupancy, hall hire, events and revenue grants. It is not a failure scenario, but it demonstrates the level of risk if the income model underperforms.

The best-case forecast shows total income of £1,215,633 against the same expenditure of £1,000,615, producing a cumulative surplus of £215,018. This scenario assumes stronger visitor numbers, higher accommodation occupancy, more successful supporter giving, higher hall and event use, stronger annual fundraising and better ancillary income. Any surplus generated under this scenario should be treated as a contribution to reserves, planned maintenance, future capital needs and financial resilience rather than as discretionary spending.

Scenario	Total income	Total expenditure	Five-year surplus / deficit
Worst case	£886,063	£1,000,615	-£114,552
Median case	£1,013,730	£1,000,615	+£13,115
Best case	£1,215,633	£1,000,615	+£215,018

10.3 Median forecast

The median forecast is the central planning assumption. It is based on the agreed operating model and reflects the income and expenditure expectations considered most realistic at this stage.

Year	Income	Expenditure	Surplus / deficit
Year 1	£298,000	£297,000	+£1,000
Year 2	£402,570	£401,070	+£1,500
Year 3	£98,160	£98,070	+£90
Year 4	£104,320	£103,325	+£995
Year 5	£110,680	£101,150	+£9,530
Total	£1,013,730	£1,000,615	+£13,115

The median forecast shows a broadly balanced position, but the early operating years are tight. Year 3 shows only a very small surplus and Year 4 remains close to break-even. This underlines the importance of active income generation, disciplined cost control, regular financial monitoring and building reserves as soon as possible.

The main income assumptions in the median forecast are:

- capital and development grants to support acquisition and capital works in Years 1 and 2;
- £25,000 per annum in revenue grants and donations from Year 3 onwards;
- visitor donations and Cuppa n Chat giving based on 6,000 day visitors in Year 3, rising to 7,000 by Year 5;
- a Supporter Giving Scheme beginning with 50 regular supporters in Year 3, rising to 80 by Year 5;
- Heritage Short Stay accommodation at £160 per night, with 55% occupancy in Year 3 and modest growth thereafter;
- hall hire income beginning at £10,000 in Year 3;
- income from community markets, plant sales, small retail, publications, local craft, talks, workshops and ticketed heritage events.

This is not a high-surplus model. It is a prudent central forecast that demonstrates viability through a diversified income base.

10.4 Worst-case forecast

The worst-case forecast keeps expenditure unchanged but reduces the main operating income assumptions. It assumes that the project proceeds, the asset is secured and the site opens, but that income develops more slowly than in the median case.

Year	Income	Expenditure	Surplus / deficit
Year 1	£298,000	£297,000	+£1,000
Year 2	£402,570	£401,070	+£1,500
Year 3	£51,585	£98,070	-£46,485
Year 4	£61,770	£103,325	-£41,555
Year 5	£72,138	£101,150	-£29,012
Total	£886,063	£1,000,615	-£114,552

In the worst case, capital and development funding is still assumed to cover the acquisition and development phase, because without that funding the project cannot proceed. The risk is concentrated in the operating years. The worst case assumes lower day visitor numbers, weaker visitor giving, slower conversion of supporters into regular donors, lower accommodation occupancy and rate, reduced hall use, a smaller events and workshop programme, lower retail income and weaker annual revenue fundraising.

The purpose of the worst-case scenario is to identify the scale of the operating risk. If this scenario began to materialise, trustees would need to respond by strengthening fundraising, increasing supporter recruitment, reviewing pricing, improving marketing, prioritising higher-margin activity, controlling discretionary programme costs, and ensuring that any non-essential activity is matched by restricted funding or earned income.

The worst-case forecast therefore demonstrates the need for a working reserve, strong financial monitoring and a clear risk management approach during the first years of operation.

10.5 Best-case forecast

The best-case forecast also keeps expenditure unchanged, but models stronger income performance. It assumes that St Ronan's Wells opens successfully, benefits from wider visitor economy growth in Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley, and establishes itself as a distinctive heritage, garden, community and accommodation asset.

Year	Income	Expenditure	Surplus / deficit
Year 1	£298,000	£297,000	+£1,000
Year 2	£402,570	£401,070	+£1,500
Year 3	£150,113	£98,070	+£52,043
Year 4	£172,260	£103,325	+£68,935
Year 5	£192,690	£101,150	+£91,540
Total	£1,215,633	£1,000,615	+£215,018

The best case assumes stronger revenue grants and donations, higher visitor numbers, stronger visitor giving, a more successful Supporter Giving Scheme, higher accommodation occupancy and achieved nightly rate, stronger hall use, more successful markets and plant sales, higher small retail income, and a more established programme of talks, workshops and ticketed heritage events.

This scenario should not be treated as the core operating assumption. Its value is that it demonstrates the potential upside if the income model performs well. In this scenario, surpluses should be used to build financial resilience, increase reserves, strengthen the maintenance and repairs provision, improve the site, and reduce long-term risk.

10.6 Expenditure assumptions

The five-year expenditure forecast totals £1,000,615. This includes salaries, fees and overheads; capital acquisition and development costs; and direct operating costs. The forecast includes the following principal cost areas:

- acquisition or transfer cost;
- external repairs and renovation;
- professional fees;
- hall refurbishment;
- accommodation refurbishment and fit-out;
- garden works;
- exhibition and interpretation works;
- textile workshop equipment and storage;
- Cuppa n Chat setup;
- signage, wayfinding, access, bike facilities and minor works;
- contingency and inflation;
- business planning and fundraising support;
- part-time management capacity from Year 3;
- utilities, insurance, accountancy, governance, compliance and administration;
- ongoing maintenance and repairs;
- hall and event space costs;
- accommodation cleaning, laundry, utilities, consumables and booking costs;
- interpretation refresh and digital support;
- textile workshop delivery costs;
- Cuppa n Chat costs;
- garden materials, tools, plants and compost.

The forecast includes an ongoing maintenance and repairs provision from Year 3 onwards. This is essential. Community ownership of a listed building must not rely on deferring maintenance. The forecast therefore includes £15,000 in Year 3, £15,750 in Year 4 and £16,500 in Year 5 for ongoing maintenance and repairs, alongside separate allowances for capital contingency and inflation during the development phase.

10.7 Income assumptions

The income model is deliberately diversified. The main income streams are:

Grants and donations - Capital and development grants are assumed to support acquisition and capital works in Years 1 and 2. From Year 3 onwards, annual grants and donations support community benefit activity, including heritage interpretation, volunteering, gardens, textile activity, Cuppa n Chat, wellbeing, youth engagement and affordable community access.

Day visitor donations - Visitor donations are based on free or low-cost public access supported by clear donation messaging, QR/contactless giving, Gift Aid where eligible, and communication about the cost of caring for the Wells. The median forecast assumes 6,000 day visitors in Year 3, rising to 7,000 in Year 5.

Friends and Supporter Scheme - The Supporter Giving Scheme is treated as regular voluntary giving rather than paid membership, as formal SRWSG membership is free. It provides flexible unrestricted income for maintenance, gardens, interpretation, volunteer activity and affordable access.

Heritage Short Stay Accommodation - The Heritage Short Stay Experience is the principal earned-income stream. The median forecast assumes one self-catering heritage accommodation unit, sleeping up to 4–6 people, at £160 per night and 55% occupancy in Year 3, with modest growth thereafter. Cleaning, laundry, utilities, booking costs, consumables and management support are shown separately in expenditure.

Hall Hires - Hall hire income is based on affordable use of the Community Event Space for local groups, talks, workshops, community gatherings, wellbeing activity, small events, seasonal programming and occasional private hire.

Community Markets and Plant Sales - This line reflects volunteer-led garden fundraising, plant sales, seasonal markets and community events. It recognises the existing garden activity and the potential to generate modest income while increasing public use.

Small retail, publications and local craft income - This line covers modest ancillary income from publications, postcards, heritage material, garden items, textile-themed products, local craft and low-risk sale-or-return arrangements.

Talks, workshops and ticketed heritage events - This line includes income from heritage talks, guided visits, Spa Story activity, textile workshops, creative sessions, garden and wellbeing workshops, Games Week activity and small cultural events.

10.8 Reserves, risk and financial management

The median forecast shows that the project can move towards a balanced operating model, but the first operating years are financially tight. SRWSG should therefore establish a reserves policy before taking on the asset and should aim to build unrestricted reserves as soon as income allows.

A working reserve will be particularly important because expenditure on insurance, compliance, utilities, maintenance and basic management will be relatively fixed, while income from visitors, accommodation, hall hire, events and fundraising may fluctuate. The worst-case forecast shows that if income develops more slowly than expected, the charity could face a cumulative deficit of over £100,000 across five years. This does not mean the project is unviable, but it does show that trustees must manage risk actively.

Key financial controls should include:

- monthly or quarterly management accounts;
- regular cashflow monitoring;
- clear distinction between restricted and unrestricted funds;
- annual review of accommodation performance;
- regular review of hall hire, visitor donations and supporter giving;
- monitoring of fundraising performance against target;
- annual review of maintenance and repairs provision;
- trustee approval for significant new commitments;
- a clear policy on when activities must be reduced, deferred or separately funded.

The best-case forecast shows that, if income performs strongly, SRWSG could build meaningful reserves and reduce long-term risk. Any surplus should be directed towards planned maintenance,

reserves, future capital needs, interpretation refresh, accessibility improvements and organisational resilience.

10.9 Financial conclusion - The financial forecasts show that St Ronan's Wells has a credible mixed-income model, but one that will require active management. The project should not be understood as self-sustaining through commercial income alone. Its viability depends on a balanced combination of earned income, visitor giving, supporter donations, grants, fundraising, volunteer contribution and careful cost control.

The median forecast demonstrates that the model can broadly balance across the first five years, with a cumulative surplus of £13,115. The worst-case forecast demonstrates the scale of risk if operating income develops more slowly than expected. The best-case forecast demonstrates the potential to build reserves and long-term resilience if visitor numbers, accommodation, supporter giving and fundraising perform strongly.

This is an appropriate financial model for a community-owned heritage asset. It is prudent, mixed and realistic. It recognises both the income-generating potential of St Ronan's Wells and the continuing responsibility of stewardship. The aim is not simply to make the asset pay for itself, but to create a sustainable charitable model in which income is used to keep the building and gardens open, active, maintained and accountable to the community.

11. Capital Development and Funding Strategy

11.1 Overview

The capital development strategy for St Ronan's Wells is based on a phased approach to acquisition, repair, adaptation and reopening. The purpose is to purchase the asset, make it safe, usable, accessible, financially viable and capable of long-term community stewardship. The capital programme has been developed from the emerging operating model, the condition information available to date, the proposed community asset transfer, and the five-year financial forecasts. The works are intended to support the core uses of the site: heritage interpretation, hall and community use, gardens, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops and the Heritage Short Stay Experience.

The current budget should be treated as a working capital development estimate rather than a final cost plan. It will need to be refined once further technical work is complete, including detailed design, QS cost planning, roof and timber investigations, asbestos information, VAT advice, statutory consent advice, accommodation licensing requirements and funder eligibility checks.

The current capital acquisition and development budget totals £682,040.

11.2 Capital cost summary

The current capital acquisition and development budget is summarised below.

Cost heading	Budget allowance
Property purchase / transfer	£50,000
External fabric repairs / renovations	£150,000
Professional fees	£75,000
External painting works	£10,000
Hall renovations / community space fit-out	£60,000
Accommodation renovations and fit-out	£150,000
Garden capital works	£10,000

Exhibition and interpretation works	£35,000
Textile workshop equipment and storage	£5,000
Community Cuppa n Chat setup	£3,000
Signage, wayfinding, access, bike facilities and minor works	£30,000
Contingency	£86,700
Inflationary allowance	£17,340
Total capital acquisition and development costs	£682,040

The budget is phased over the early years of the project, with the majority of acquisition, repair and refurbishment expenditure falling in Years 1 and 2. Some minor access, signage, Cuppa n Chat and contingency-related allowances are shown in Years 3 and 4, reflecting the likelihood that practical improvements will continue as the site moves from reopening into regular operation.

11.3 Acquisition

The acquisition allowance is currently shown at £50,000. This reflects the working assumption that the asset may transfer at a discounted community asset transfer value, rather than at full market valuation, in recognition of the wider public benefit that community ownership would deliver. The acquisition cost will need to be confirmed through the community asset transfer process with Scottish Borders Council. The final transfer basis, title conditions, access rights, boundaries, retained rights, repair liabilities and any restrictions or conditions attached to sale will all need to be reviewed before completion.

The sale plan identifies the building and land proposed for transfer, together with a separate retained area for pedestrian and vehicular access and egress. This will need careful legal and operational review to ensure that SRWVG has the rights and access arrangements needed to operate the building, gardens, accommodation, deliveries, maintenance and public access safely.

11.4 Urgent health, safety and stabilisation works

The first capital priority after transfer will be stabilisation. This will include urgent repairs, safety works, insurance requirements, compliance, access management and any immediate measures needed to prevent deterioration. The condition survey identifies a number of areas requiring further investigation or repair, including original slate roofs without felt underlay, loose slates, defective ridge tiles, rotten sarking in the house roof void, rainwater goods requiring overhaul, rotten fascia and external joinery, rotten window elements, render failure caused by impervious masonry paint, a collapsed kitchen ceiling, limited access to toilets, a need to review ventilation and a requirement for further asbestos and timber investigations.

The stabilisation phase should therefore focus on:

- roof and rainwater goods investigation and urgent repair;
- timber and rot investigation, particularly in the house roof void;
- asbestos information and, if required, refurbishment asbestos survey;
- safety, access and compliance checks;
- security and weatherproofing;
- insurance and fire safety requirements;
- utilities, water supply and electrical safety;
- basic works needed to allow safe volunteer and limited public access.

These works should be prioritised according to risk. The first test should be whether the building can be safely held, insured and maintained. Public use should only expand once essential safety and compliance requirements are met.

11.5 External fabric repairs and renovation

The budget includes £150,000 for external fabric repairs and renovations, plus a further £10,000 for external painting works. These allowances are intended to address the weatherproofing, repair and conservation needs of the building. Likely works may include roof repairs or re-slating, ridge repairs, sarking and timber repairs, leadwork, rainwater goods, gutters and downpipes, render repairs, joinery repairs, window repairs or replacement where necessary, external painting and associated conservation works.

The condition survey recommends further roof inspection by a qualified roofer, timber specialist investigation, review of roof void condition, and careful specification of traditional repair methods. Because St Ronan's Wells is a listed building, repair specifications should be conservation-led and should follow appropriate standards for historic fabric. Any changes to windows, roof details, external finishes or other listed elements may require listed building consent.

This element of the capital programme is likely to be of particular interest to Historic Environment Scotland and other heritage repair funders but grant eligibility will depend on the final scope of works, ownership or lease status, match funding, conservation standards, professional team and whether works are undertaken retrospectively or after grant approval.

11.6 Professional fees

The budget includes £75,000 for professional fees. This is a significant but necessary allowance, given the nature of the asset and the level of technical risk. Professional input is likely to include:

- conservation architect or building surveyor;
- quantity surveyor;
- structural advice where required;
- M&E and electrical advice;
- fire safety advice;
- access advice;
- planning and listed building consent support;
- building warrant support;
- tender documentation;
- contract administration;
- project management;
- specialist roof, timber, asbestos or damp advice where required.

Historic Environment Scotland has advised that, for repair grant purposes, professional fees are typically eligible up to a maximum percentage of eligible repair costs, and that a conservation-accredited professional adviser will be expected for repairs to a Category B listed building. The professional fee allowance should therefore be reviewed once the final repair scope and grant-eligible works are confirmed.

11.7 Hall and community space fit-out

The budget includes £60,000 for hall renovations and community space fit-out. This allowance is intended to bring the hall and associated community areas into safe and usable condition for local use, events, workshops, talks, Cuppa n Chat activity, textile workshops and community gatherings. Likely works may include internal repairs, finishes, heating, lighting, electrical checks or upgrades, access improvements, storage, kitchen or refreshment facilities, toilet improvements, fire safety measures, cleaning provision and fixtures or equipment needed to support community use.

The hall is central to the public benefit of the project. It will provide the main indoor community space and will support both charitable activity and modest income generation. Its refurbishment should therefore be phased so that limited use can be piloted as soon as it is safe and compliant, while more complete fit-out follows as funding allows.

11.8 Accommodation refurbishment and fit-out

The budget includes **£150,000** for accommodation renovation and fit-out. The Heritage Short Stay Experience is the principal earned-income element in the financial model, but it should only be launched once the accommodation is fully refurbished, compliant, insured, furnished, managed and ready for guests.

Works are likely to include internal repairs, redecoration, kitchen and bathroom works, electrical rewiring, heating, hot water, fire safety measures, furnishings, linens, guest equipment, access and operational setup. The condition survey notes that the former residential area has been empty for some time, that the house requires a full rewire and new switchgear, that the kitchen ceiling has collapsed, and that internal refurbishment and redecoration are required.

The accommodation will need to comply with all relevant short-term let, fire safety, insurance and operational requirements before opening. It should also be fitted out to a quality appropriate to the proposed nightly rate and the heritage positioning of the offer. The intention is to create a distinctive stay linked to the restored spa building, local textile identity, the gardens, Innerleithen, walking, cycling and the wider Tweed Valley.

11.9 Exhibition, interpretation and digital works

The budget includes £35,000 for exhibition and interpretation works. This allowance supports the development of the Spa Story and the wider interpretation of the building, gardens, water, health, literature, civic tradition, textiles and landscape.

The interpretation should be introduced in phases. Early activity may include guided visits, temporary displays, talks, simple panels, QR-linked content and digital material. A fuller interpretation offer can follow once the building layout, collections or interpretive material, curatorial approach and capital budget are confirmed.

The interpretation budget should support both public benefit and income generation. It will strengthen the visitor experience, support education and community engagement, encourage donations, provide content for events and talks, and help position St Ronan's Wells as a distinctive heritage asset within Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund may be a suitable funding route for interpretation, activity planning, community engagement and heritage outcomes, subject to the project meeting the four Investment Principles and the funder's grant requirements.

11.10 Gardens, access and external visitor infrastructure

The budget includes £10,000 for garden capital works and £30,000 for signage, wayfinding, access, bike facilities and minor works. The gardens are already one of the most active and visible parts of the site. Capital investment should therefore support continued volunteer activity, public access, safety, biodiversity, seating, paths, planting, garden interpretation, open days, plant sales and wellbeing use.

The access, signage and wayfinding budget reflects the need to make the Wells easier to find, understand and use. This may include on-site signage, visitor information, donation points, wayfinding

from the town, access improvements, noticeboards, bike parking, possible e-bike facilities, minor external works and small improvements identified during early operation.

This investment is particularly important because the project sits within a changing visitor context, with opportunities linked to walking, cycling, the River Tweed Trail, the Mountain Bike Innovation Centre, local heritage and the wider South of Scotland visitor economy.

11.11 Textile workshop equipment and Cuppa n Chat setup

The budget includes £5,000 for textile workshop equipment and storage, and £3,000 for Cuppa n Chat setup. The textile workshop allowance will support the practical equipment, storage and setup needed to establish small-scale textile and creative activity. This may include worktables, storage, sewing or textile equipment, materials, display equipment and practical workshop infrastructure. The purpose is to connect the Wells to Innerleithen's textile heritage, intergenerational learning, repair and reuse, wellbeing and contemporary creative practice.

The Cuppa n Chat setup allowance will support a modest light refreshment and social connection offer. It may include basic refreshment equipment, crockery, storage, cleaning supplies, food-safe surfaces, initial supplies and small adaptations needed for safe volunteer-supported activity. Neither element is intended to create a major commercial operation. Both are designed to increase community use, deepen public benefit and provide modest supporting income.

11.12 Contingency, inflation and VAT

The budget includes £86,700 for contingency and £17,340 for inflation. These allowances are essential at this stage because the project involves a listed building, incomplete intrusive investigation, further survey needs and a developing scope of works.

The contingency allowance reflects the risk of hidden defects, changes in repair scope, additional compliance requirements, construction uncertainty and funder or consent conditions. The inflation allowance reflects the potential movement in construction and professional costs between budget preparation, funding approval, procurement and delivery.

VAT remains a significant issue requiring specialist advice. The current budget should not be treated as final until the VAT position is confirmed. Some works to listed buildings, charitable uses, grant-funded works or accommodation-related activity may have different VAT implications, and SRWSG should not assume that VAT will be recoverable or that relief will apply. If VAT is irrecoverable, the capital funding requirement may increase materially.

11.13 Working capital and transition costs

In addition to capital works, SRWSG will need working capital and transition funding. The five-year forecast includes non-construction costs during Years 1 and 2, including business planning, fundraising support, insurance, utilities, governance, administration, compliance and garden costs. These costs are necessary to move from asset transfer into stable ownership and should be recognised as part of the overall funding strategy.

The total Year 1 and Year 2 forecast expenditure is £698,070, comprising acquisition, development, professional costs, early overheads and transition activity. The median forecast assumes that grants and donations in Years 1 and 2 will cover these costs. This is essential, because earned income from accommodation, hall hire, visitor donations and events will not begin at scale until the site is operational.

Funders should therefore be asked to support not only purchase and repair, but also the transition costs that make safe community ownership possible.

11.14 Funding strategy

The funding strategy should combine several sources, with each matched to the most appropriate element of the project.

- **Scottish Land Fund** is the primary route for supporting community ownership and acquisition. The SLF application should emphasise community need, community support, public benefit, viability, governance, post-acquisition funding, match funding, conditions of sale and alignment with the 10 Steps to Community Ownership. The business plan and financial forecasts should show that the project is viable, sustainable and supported by a clear post-acquisition plan.
- **Historic Environment Scotland** may be an appropriate funder for eligible conservation repair works. The project has received a positive response to its Expression of Interest, with an invitation to proceed to application, although this is not a guarantee of funding. We are now working with Berwyn Murray at HES to submit a small grant (<100K) application for the renovation of the exterior of the building with a deadline of 31 August. HES will only pay 40% of costs and so we are proposing to ask the Heritage Lottery Fund for the remaining 60%. Lauren Arthur is our point of contact at NLHF and we have had a preliminary meeting with her.
- **The National Lottery Heritage Fund** may be suitable for interpretation, activity planning, heritage engagement, volunteering, learning, inclusion, environmental improvement and community outcomes. NLHF funding should be considered for elements that help people connect with the heritage of the Wells and participate in its future use. As mentioned above, we have had an initial meeting with Lauren Arthur around matching funding for our proposed HES Application.
- **National Lottery Community Fund** have offered us £20,000 to help fund new kitchens work that will support our community events offer.
- **South of Scotland Enterprise** may be relevant where the project supports place-based regeneration, tourism, enterprise, visitor economy development, skills, accommodation, local business benefit or community resilience. Further discussions will be needed before any formal funding request is made. We have met with Lisa Denholm at SoSE and are exploring applying to them for costs connected to the accommodation offer.
- **Architectural Heritage Fund** advice and support should continue to be used where appropriate, particularly in relation to business planning, project development, governance, repair strategy and heritage-led regeneration. AHF have already awarded funding to us.
- **Trusts, foundations, local fundraising and donations** will be needed to support match funding, unfunded elements, revenue development, interpretation, gardens, community activity, equipment, contingency and working capital. The Friends and Supporter Scheme, local fundraising, plant sales, community markets and visitor donations should also contribute to the wider funding mix.

11.15 Funding priorities by phase

The funding strategy should follow the project phasing.

Phase	Funding priority
Phase 1: Secure	Acquisition, legal work, professional advice, surveys, governance, business planning and funding applications.
Phase 2: Stabilise	Insurance, urgent repairs, health and safety, roof/timber/asbestos investigations, security, utilities and basic compliance.

Phase 3: Open and test	Hall pilot use, garden activity, simple interpretation, donation infrastructure, Cuppa n Chat setup, textile workshop equipment and volunteer systems.
Phase 4: Launch income model	Accommodation refurbishment and fit-out, hall improvements, interpretation, marketing, booking systems and operational readiness.
Phase 5: Consolidate	Maintenance reserve, interpretation refresh, garden improvements, access improvements, future repairs and organisational resilience.

This phased approach will allow SRWSG to match funding to need, avoid overcommitting, and demonstrate progress to funders and the community.

11.16 Capital funding conclusion

The capital development and funding strategy is realistic but still dependent on further technical work and successful fundraising. The current budget identifies a capital acquisition and development requirement of £682,040, with a wider Year 1 and Year 2 transition and development requirement of £698,070.

The project should proceed on the basis of phased commitment. Acquisition should not be completed until the transfer basis, title, access rights, immediate liabilities, funding route and governance arrangements are sufficiently clear. Major works should not begin until cost plans, consents, VAT treatment, funder eligibility and professional advice are confirmed.

The strategy is to use community ownership funding to secure the asset, heritage repair funding to address the listed building fabric, heritage and community funding to support interpretation and activity, and a mixed programme of grants, donations, supporter giving and earned income to move the Wells towards long-term sustainability.

This approach recognises both the opportunity and the responsibility of community ownership. The capital programme is not simply about repairing a building. It is about creating the conditions for St Ronan's Wells to become a safe, active, useful and financially resilient community heritage asset.

12. Governance, Management and Organisational Capacity

12.1 Overview

St Ronan's Wells Support Group has been established as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation to pursue the community asset transfer, restoration and long-term stewardship of St Ronan's Wells. Its governance structure has been designed specifically for community ownership. It provides a charitable, accountable and locally rooted framework through which the building, gardens and associated activity can be acquired, repaired, managed and operated for public benefit.

The organisation is still at an early stage in its development, and its governance and management arrangements will need to strengthen as the project moves from campaign and transfer into ownership and operation. However, the constitutional framework is appropriate for the scale and nature of the task. It establishes the charitable purposes, membership structure, trustee responsibilities, decision-making arrangements, financial duties and powers needed to take the project forward.

The priority during the next stage will be to ensure that the Support Group has the right mix of trustee skills, volunteer capacity, professional advice, financial controls and operational procedures to manage a listed building, community garden, public activity programme and income-generating accommodation offer.

12.2 Legal structure and charitable status

St Ronan's Wells Support Group has been established as a two-tier SCIO. This means that the organisation has both a membership and a Board of Charity Trustees. This structure is well suited to a community asset transfer project because it combines local accountability with trustee responsibility for governance, finance, risk and delivery.

The organisation has been formed to benefit the community of Innerleithen, Traquair and The Glen, defined through the EH44 postcode area. Its charitable purposes are directly aligned with the proposed project. These include the advancement of heritage through acquiring, renovating and repurposing St Ronan's Wells; the advancement of education through exhibitions, events and interpretive materials; the advancement of arts, culture and recreation through use of the hall and associated spaces; the advancement of citizenship and volunteering through community participation; and the advancement of environmental protection and improvement through the maintenance and improvement of the surrounding gardens and natural environment. This gives the project a clear charitable foundation.

12.3 Membership and community accountability

The constitution establishes a community membership model. Membership is open to people aged 16 or over who are members of the defined community, with provision for junior members aged 12 to 15. The constitution also allows people and groups from outside the community to become Associates, enabling wider supporters to remain connected to the project without diluting local community control. As of July 2026, SRWSG has 184 full members, 89 Associate members and 6 Junior Members. There are 279 members in total.

Membership is free of charge. This is important because it ensures that local accountability is not restricted by ability to pay. It also means that any Friends or Supporter Giving Scheme should be treated as a voluntary fundraising scheme rather than a paid membership scheme.

The organisation must maintain a minimum of 20 members. The Board is responsible for maintaining a register of members and ensuring that membership records are kept up to date. General Meetings provide the formal mechanism for member involvement, including the election of trustees, consideration of accounts and major constitutional decisions.

The membership structure gives SRWSG a clear route for community accountability. As the project develops, the Support Group should continue to grow and communicate with its membership, encourage participation from across the EH44 community, and ensure that major decisions remain transparent and grounded in public benefit.

12.4 Board of Charity Trustees

The affairs, property and funds of the organisation are directed and managed by the Board of Charity Trustees. The Board is responsible for setting the strategy and policy of the organisation, monitoring the financial position, directing and managing the organisation's property, controlling and supervising activities, and exercising the powers of the SCIO.

The constitution provides for a Board of not fewer than three and not more than six Charity Trustees. Trustees may be elected by the members and, where appropriate, co-opted to ensure a spread of skills and experience. This is particularly important for St Ronan's Wells, as the project will require a range of capabilities, including heritage, property, finance, fundraising, volunteer management, community engagement, health and safety, governance, tourism, accommodation, events and environmental stewardship.

As the project moves into the next phase, the Board should undertake a skills review and identify any gaps that need to be filled through recruitment, co-option, advisory support or sub-committees. Priority skills are likely to include finance, property/construction, heritage conservation, legal or asset transfer knowledge, fundraising, business planning, volunteer coordination, safeguarding, health and safety, marketing and visitor experience.

12.5 Trustee duties and conduct

The constitution sets out the general duties of Charity Trustees. Trustees must act in the interests of the organisation, ensure that the organisation acts in accordance with its purposes, act with appropriate care and diligence, manage conflicts of interest, and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

Trustees cannot be paid employees of the organisation, and no trustee may receive remuneration for carrying out trustee duties. Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed, and the constitution includes safeguards around payments, personal benefit and conflicts of interest. The constitution also provides for a trustee code of conduct, a register of trustees, termination of trustee office, and procedures for managing conflicts. These provisions will be particularly important once the organisation begins to enter into funding agreements, contracts, leases, employment or consultancy arrangements, accommodation activity, hall hire and partnerships.

The Board should ensure that all trustees receive induction, understand their legal duties, sign the trustee code of conduct, declare relevant interests, and participate in regular review of risk, finance and delivery.

12.6 Powers to own, manage and operate the asset

The constitution gives SRWSG the powers needed to deliver the proposed project. These include the power to acquire property, construct, convert, improve, develop, conserve, maintain, alter and manage buildings, operate or arrange for the management of property, let or hire property, raise funds, accept grants and donations, borrow money, set aside reserves, employ or contract staff, insure, enter into contracts, and establish or support related charitable or trading structures where appropriate.

These powers are important because the proposed operating model includes a range of activities: heritage interpretation, hall and community use, gardens, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops, events, visitor donations, supporter giving and short-stay accommodation. The constitution provides sufficient authority for SRWSG to pursue these activities, provided they remain aligned with the organisation's charitable purposes and are managed for public benefit.

If future trading activity becomes more substantial, for example through larger-scale retail, commercial catering, regular studio rental or more developed enterprise activity, the Board should take professional advice on whether a separate trading subsidiary or other structure is required. At this stage, the proposed activity remains modest and mission-led.

12.7 Financial governance and controls

The Board is responsible for the finances and accounts of the organisation. The constitution requires the Board to determine banking arrangements, ensure proper accounting records are kept, prepare annual accounts, and ensure that accounts are examined or audited as appropriate.

This financial governance will become increasingly important as the project moves into ownership and operation. SRWSG will need to manage restricted and unrestricted funds, capital grants, VAT and tax advice, payroll or contractor payments, invoices, insurance, utilities, accommodation income, donations, Gift Aid, hall hire, events, retail income and maintenance reserves.

The Board should establish clear financial procedures before acquisition. These should include:

- agreed banking arrangements and payment authorisation levels;
- separation of restricted and unrestricted funds;
- regular management accounts;
- cashflow monitoring;
- grant claims and reporting procedures;
- procurement procedures;
- reserves policy;
- Gift Aid and donation procedures;
- clear record-keeping for accommodation and hall income;
- annual budget review;
- oversight by a treasurer and, where needed, external bookkeeping or accountancy support.

The five-year financial forecasts demonstrate that the early operating years will require careful management. A small change in accommodation income, visitor donations, grants or supporter giving could materially affect the budget. Regular financial review will therefore be essential.

12.8 Operational management

In the early stages, the project will continue to rely on trustees, volunteers and professional advisers. As the project moves into operation, the Business Plan assumes the need for part-time management or coordination capacity. This will be important once the building is open more regularly and the operating model includes accommodation, hall hire, visitor activity, events, volunteers, gardens, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops, fundraising and reporting.

The proposed management role would not replace trustees' governance responsibilities. Instead, it would provide practical coordination for day-to-day activity. This could include bookings, site operations, volunteer coordination, basic administration, accommodation oversight, partner liaison, event coordination, marketing support, visitor systems, maintenance reporting and grant monitoring. Until the organisation is ready to employ or contract staff, the Board should use clear role descriptions for trustees, volunteers, consultants and any freelance support. This will help avoid confusion between governance, management and delivery.

12.9 Volunteers and community participation

Volunteering is central to the purpose and future operation of St Ronan's Wells. The gardens are already a visible focus for volunteer activity and will continue to provide an important route into participation, wellbeing, environmental improvement and community ownership.

The constitution explicitly supports volunteering, citizenship and community participation. As the project develops, volunteers may support garden activity, open days, events, visitor welcome, interpretation, plant sales, fundraising, community markets, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops, maintenance reporting and local promotion.

Volunteer involvement must be well supported. SRWSG should develop volunteer role descriptions, induction, basic training, safeguarding procedures where relevant, health and safety guidance, expenses arrangements, supervision and recognition. Volunteers should add value and community ownership, but they should not be expected to carry responsibilities that require professional, technical or statutory accountability.

12.10 Sub-committees and advisory support

The constitution allows the Board to establish sub-committees and delegate powers to them, provided they operate within a remit set by the Board and report back appropriately. This will be

useful as the project becomes more complex. Possible sub-committees or working groups could include:

- property and capital works;
- finance and fundraising;
- gardens and volunteering;
- heritage interpretation and activity;
- accommodation and visitor experience;
- events, hall use and community programming.

These groups could include trustees, volunteers and external advisers, but final accountability should remain with the Board. Where specialist decisions are required, such as conservation repair, VAT, employment, short-term let licensing, building warrant, fire safety or insurance, the Board should seek professional advice rather than relying solely on volunteer knowledge.

12.11 Policies and compliance

SRWSG will need a practical suite of policies and procedures before it takes on full operational responsibility for the site. Some policies may already be in development, but the following should be prioritised:

- financial controls;
- reserves policy;
- risk register;
- conflicts of interest;
- volunteer policy;
- safeguarding policy;
- health and safety policy;
- fire safety procedures;
- data protection;
- complaints procedure;
- equality, diversity and inclusion;
- environmental policy;
- maintenance and inspection procedures;
- hall hire terms and conditions;
- accommodation terms and procedures;
- fundraising and ethical fundraising policies.

These policies should be proportionate. They do not need to be bureaucratic, but they must be sufficient for a community organisation managing a public building, gardens, volunteers, events, visitors, accommodation and grant funding.

12.12 Capacity development priorities

The next stage of organisational development should focus on building the capacity needed for ownership. The key priorities are:

- completing trustee skills review and succession planning;
- increasing membership and community participation;
- confirming trustee and volunteer roles;
- establishing financial controls and reserves policy;
- developing a live risk register;
- confirming professional advisers;
- setting up property and maintenance procedures;
- developing volunteer systems;
- preparing for grant management and reporting;

- confirming operational arrangements for hall use, gardens, interpretation, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops and accommodation;
- ensuring trustees have access to training and external support.

This capacity-building work should be treated as part of the project, not as an administrative afterthought. The long-term success of St Ronan's Wells will depend as much on governance, systems and people as on capital works.

12.13 Governance conclusion

The constitutional framework gives St Ronan's Wells Support Group a sound basis for community ownership. It defines a clear community, sets out appropriate charitable purposes, provides for free local membership, establishes a Board of Charity Trustees, gives the organisation the powers needed to acquire and operate the asset, and includes provisions for financial management, trustee duties, conflicts of interest, meetings, records and accountability.

The organisation is still developing and will need to strengthen its capacity as the project progresses. This is normal for a new community asset transfer body. The key requirement is that SRWSG continues to build its governance, skills, policies, volunteer systems, financial controls and professional support in step with the increasing responsibility it will take on. With these systems in place, the Support Group should be capable of moving from campaign and transfer into safe, accountable and sustainable stewardship of St Ronan's Wells.

13. Implementation Plan

13.1 Overview

The development of St Ronan's Wells will need to be phased carefully. The Support Group is seeking to move from campaign and feasibility into ownership, repair, reopening and long-term operation. That transition cannot happen all at once. It will require a staged approach that protects the asset, manages risk, builds organisational capacity and allows each part of the operating model to be tested before full commitment. The implementation plan is structured around five phases.

Phase	Focus	Purpose
Phase 1	Secure	Complete the asset transfer process, confirm the funding route, strengthen governance and obtain cost certainty.
Phase 2	Stabilise	Make the asset safe, insured, compliant and manageable.
Phase 3	Open and test	Pilot public use, hall activity, interpretation, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops, events, donations and volunteer systems.
Phase 4	Launch income model	Bring the accommodation into operation, strengthen marketing and develop recurring income.
Phase 5	Consolidate	Build reserves, maintain the asset, evaluate impact and plan future development.

This phased approach reflects the scale and nature of the project. St Ronan's Wells is a listed building, a garden, a community asset, a heritage site and a potential income-generating place. Each of those roles brings opportunity, but also responsibility. The implementation plan is designed to ensure that the Support Group does not take on more activity than it can safely manage at any one time.

The plan also reflects the revised operating model. The gardens, hall, interpretation, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops and community activity will help create visible public benefit and regular use. The Heritage Short Stay Experience will provide the main earned-income opportunity. More ambitious enterprise options, such as a staffed café, permanent creative workspace or studio rental, should remain future development opportunities until they have been tested and shown to be practical, affordable and complementary to existing local provision.

13.2 Phase 1: Secure

Indicative timing: pre-transfer to completion of acquisition or lease

Core purpose: secure the asset and create the conditions for delivery.

The first phase is concerned with ownership, evidence and readiness. The priority is to complete the community asset transfer process with Scottish Borders Council and secure the funding, professional advice and governance arrangements required to proceed with confidence.

This phase should include confirmation of the proposed transfer terms, legal title or lease arrangements, valuation position, acquisition cost, Scottish Land Fund requirements, Architectural Heritage Fund advice, and any conditions set by Scottish Borders Council. It should also include completion or review of the key technical documents needed to understand the building and grounds: condition survey, cost plan, measured drawings, access information, compliance requirements, utilities, insurance implications and any immediate health and safety risks.

Alongside this technical work, the Support Group will need to strengthen its internal systems. A newly formed SCIO can lead the project, but it must also demonstrate that it has the governance, financial controls, volunteer arrangements and professional support needed to manage a listed asset.

Key actions	Lead responsibility	Dependency
Confirm asset transfer status, timetable and decision route	Trustees / Scottish Borders Council	Council process
Confirm acquisition cost or transfer price assumption	Trustees Key actions	Lead responsibility
Confirm asset transfer status, timetable and decision route	Trustees / funders / Council	Valuation and negotiation
Secure or progress acquisition funding	Trustees / funders / Fundraising Lead	Business Plan and funding applications
Review condition survey and cost advice	Trustees / professional team	Site access and funding
Confirm legal boundaries, rights, access and exclusions	Trustees / solicitor / Council	Title information
Strengthen governance, finance and risk management	Trustees	Trustee capacity
Prepare financial forecast and cashflow spreadsheet	Treasurer / consultant	Cost and income assumptions
Confirm immediate insurance and compliance requirements	Trustees / broker / advisers	Transfer terms and building condition

Phase 1 decision point: The Support Group should not proceed to full acquisition or operational commitment until the transfer basis, capital requirement, revenue assumptions, governance arrangements and immediate liabilities are sufficiently understood.

13.3 Phase 2: Stabilise

Indicative timing: immediately after transfer / first 6–12 months

Core purpose: make the asset safe, insured, compliant and manageable.

Once the asset is secured, the immediate priority will be stabilisation. This does not mean full refurbishment. It means ensuring that the building and gardens can be safely held, insured, maintained and used in limited ways while the wider development plan is progressed. This phase should focus on urgent repairs, statutory compliance, safety, access management, risk assessment, insurance, utilities, keyholding, basic maintenance and volunteer arrangements. The gardens are likely to remain the most visible public benefit during this stage, while building use may need to be limited until essential works are complete.

Stabilisation is also the phase in which the Support Group should establish the habits of ownership: planned inspections, maintenance records, incident reporting, volunteer rotas, booking procedures, financial reporting and clear decision-making.

Key actions	Lead responsibility	Dependency
Put building, public liability, trustee and volunteer insurance in place	Trustees / insurance broker	Transfer completion
Complete urgent health and safety checks	Trustees / professional advisers	Site access
Address immediate repair or security risks	Trustees / contractors / Fundraising Lead	Funding and survey findings
Confirm fire safety and compliance requirements	Trustees / fire adviser	Building use plans
Establish keyholding, access and emergency procedures	Trustees / volunteers	Transfer completion
Confirm utilities, meters, contracts and service checks	Trustees	Transfer completion
Continue garden volunteer activity safely	Garden lead / volunteers	Insurance and risk assessment
Set up volunteer induction and basic procedures	Trustees / volunteer lead	Governance systems
Establish maintenance log and inspection routine	Trustees / property lead	Transfer completion
Confirm what limited public access is possible	Trustees / advisers	Safety and insurance

Phase 2 decision point: The Support Group should only move into regular public use once the building, gardens, insurance, fire safety, access, volunteer systems and operating procedures are sufficiently robust.

13.4 Phase 3: Open and test

Indicative timing: months 6–24, subject to works and compliance

Core purpose: pilot community use, interpretation, social activity and early income.

The third phase is about careful reopening and testing. The aim should not be to launch every element of the model at once, but to introduce activity in a controlled way, learn from use, and refine the operating assumptions. This phase could include pilot hall use, guided visits, garden open days, small talks, heritage interpretation, plant sales, volunteer sessions, school or group visits, textile workshops, Cuppa n Chat activity, and events linked to St Ronan's Border Games or local heritage. It should also assess booking systems, pricing, cleaning, volunteer capacity, visitor donations, Gift Aid arrangements, food hygiene requirements, workshop costs, tutor arrangements and simple visitor counting methods.

This phase is especially important because it will turn assumptions into evidence. It will show which activities attract users, which generate income, which require more support, and which are not yet viable.

Cuppa n Chat should be piloted as a modest social connection and welcome activity, not as a full café. Textile workshops should also be tested gradually, through small-scale sessions linked to Innerleithen's textile heritage, repair and reuse, intergenerational skills, wellbeing and creative activity. Both strands should be monitored for demand, cost, volunteer workload, compliance and public benefit.

Key actions	Lead responsibility	Dependency
Pilot limited hall use	Trustees / bookings lead	Safety, insurance, toilets, access
Introduce simple interpretation offer	Heritage lead / volunteers	Availability of material
Run garden open days or seasonal activity	Garden lead / volunteers	Volunteer capacity
Pilot Cuppa n Chat / light refreshment activity	Trustees / volunteers	Food hygiene, insurance, cleaning and storage
Pilot textile and creative workshops	Trustees / volunteers / tutors / partners	Programme planning and suitable space
Evaluate donation points, QR codes and Gift Aid systems	Treasurer / fundraising lead	Donation infrastructure
Trial talks, tours or workshops	Trustees / volunteers / partners	Programme planning
Gather user feedback and visitor data	Trustees / volunteers	Activity delivery
Test hall hire rates and booking procedures	Bookings lead / treasurer	Agreed pricing
Develop partnerships with local groups and attractions	Trustees / partners	Capacity
Review volunteer roles and workload	Volunteer lead / trustees	Pilot activity
Refine financial assumptions based on actual use	Treasurer / consultant	Income and cost data

Phase 3 decision point: Before moving to fuller programme delivery, the Support Group should review pilot activity, income, costs, volunteer workload, visitor feedback, hall demand, Cuppa n Chat activity, workshop demand and operational risk.

13.5 Phase 4: Launch income model

Indicative timing: years 2–4, subject to capital works

Core purpose: bring the main earned-income elements into operation.

The fourth phase will focus on launching the accommodation and strengthening the wider income model. The Heritage Short Stay Experience is expected to be the most significant earned-income element of the project, but it should only open once refurbishment, licensing, management, cleaning, insurance, guest access and compliance arrangements are fully in place.

This phase should also include a more structured public programme, improved marketing, a supporter giving scheme, stronger donation systems, regular hall use, continued Cuppa n Chat activity, textile workshops, and clearer links with local tourism, heritage, community and creative partners. The aim is to move from pilot activity into a more stable annual operating pattern.

A staffed café, permanent creative workspace, studio rental or more commercial enterprise activity should remain development options during this phase unless feasibility has been demonstrated. These options may be piloted through pop-ups, events, artist-led activity, temporary workspace or partnership arrangements, but they should not be treated as essential to the median financial model.

Key actions	Lead responsibility	Dependency
Complete accommodation refurbishment and fit-out	Trustees / contractors	Capital funding and consents
Secure short-term let licence and compliance approvals	Trustees / licensing adviser	Accommodation specification
Confirm accommodation management model	Trustees	Cost and capacity assessment
Launch booking platform or direct booking system	Accommodation lead	Licensing and pricing
Put cleaning, laundry and guest procedures in place	Accommodation lead / contractor	Management model
Develop marketing plan for accommodation and site	Trustees / marketing support	Operating readiness
Launch supporter giving scheme	Fundraising lead	Gift Aid and CRM arrangements
Strengthen events and hall programme	Trustees / volunteers / partners	Pilot findings
Establish regular Cuppa n Chat and textile workshop pattern	Trustees / volunteers / partners	Pilot evidence and operating capacity
Review staffed café, studio or permanent creative workspace feasibility	Trustees	Evidence of demand and costs
Build annual income and expenditure reporting	Treasurer	Operating data

Phase 4 decision point: The Support Group should review accommodation performance after the first season of trading, including occupancy, nightly rate, guest feedback, cleaning costs, management time, net income and effect on wider site use. It should also review the performance of hall hire, visitor donations, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops, supporter giving and annual fundraising.

13.6 Phase 5: Consolidate

Indicative timing: years 4–5 and beyond

Core purpose: move from rescue and launch into long-term stewardship.

The fifth phase is about consolidation. By this stage, St Ronan's Wells should have moved beyond rescue and early operation into a more settled pattern of use. The focus should be on maintaining the asset well, improving the quality of activity, building reserves, reviewing impact and planning future investment.

This phase should include an annual programme of garden activity, interpretation, hall use, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops, events and partnership work. It should also include regular financial review, maintenance planning, reserves building, volunteer support, governance review and evaluation of public benefit.

If more ambitious enterprise options, such as a staffed café, permanent creative workspace or studio rental, have proved viable through pilots, this phase may include a decision on whether any of them should become part of the regular operating model. If not, they should remain occasional or be discontinued without weakening the core business model.

Key actions	Lead responsibility	Dependency
Establish annual programme of activity	Trustees / programme lead	Operating capacity
Build maintenance and repairs reserve	Treasurer / trustees	Annual surplus
Review planned maintenance schedule	Property lead / professional adviser	Condition monitoring
Evaluate public benefit and user feedback	Trustees / volunteers	Visitor and activity data
Review accommodation, hall, donation, workshop and supporter income	Treasurer	Annual accounts
Refresh fundraising and grant strategy	Fundraising lead	Ongoing needs
Review governance and trustee succession	Trustees	Skills and capacity
Confirm long-term volunteer support model	Volunteer lead	Activity levels
Decide on future development options	Trustees	Pilot evidence
Update Business Plan after Year 5	Trustees / adviser	Evaluation findings

Phase 5 decision point: By the end of Year 5, the Support Group should have sufficient evidence to judge whether the operating model is financially sustainable, whether the public benefit outcomes are being met, and what further investment or adjustment is needed.

13.7 Indicative timetable

The timetable below is indicative and should be refined once the asset transfer decision, funding position, survey findings and capital phasing are confirmed.

Period	Focus	Key outputs
Pre-transfer / months 0–6	Secure	Asset transfer decision, acquisition/funding route, cost plan, governance strengthening, financial forecast.
Months 6–12	Stabilise	Insurance, urgent repairs, compliance, garden continuity, basic operating systems.
Year 2	Open and test	Pilot hall use, interpretation, garden events, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops, donations, visitor counting, partner activity.
Years 2–3	Capital/refurbishment	Accommodation works, hall improvements, access, kitchen/toilets, interpretation development.

Years 3–4	Launch income model	Accommodation launch, regular hall use, supporter scheme, Cuppa n Chat, textile workshops, marketing, events programme.
Years 4–5	Consolidate	Maintenance reserve, annual programme, evaluation, partnership development, future funding.

This timetable should be treated as a framework rather than a fixed schedule. The actual pace of delivery will depend on funding, consents, repair needs, contractor availability, volunteer capacity and trustee decisions.

13.8 Dependencies and sequencing

The implementation plan depends on several major factors. The most important are the asset transfer decision, acquisition cost, condition survey, capital funding, compliance requirements, accommodation licensing, governance capacity, volunteer support and cashflow.

The sequencing is therefore critical. The Support Group should avoid committing to full public opening, accommodation launch or permanent development options until the necessary safety, financial and management conditions are in place.

Dependency	Why it matters
Asset transfer approval	Without control of the asset, capital works and operation cannot proceed.
Confirmed acquisition cost	Determines funding requirement and cashflow.
Condition survey and cost plan	Determines repair priorities, phasing and affordability.
Insurance and compliance	Required before public use, volunteer activity, hall hire, workshops or refreshments can expand.
Governance capacity	Trustees must be able to manage ownership responsibilities.
Capital funding	Determines when repair, adaptation and accommodation works can proceed.
Accommodation licensing	Required before the main earned-income element can launch.
Volunteer capacity	Determines what activity can be delivered safely and consistently.
Operating cashflow	Determines whether the charity can manage timing gaps between costs and income.
Partnership support	Strengthens programme, marketing, referrals and public benefit.
Food hygiene and refreshment compliance	Required before Cuppa n Chat or light refreshment activity can become regular.
Workshop delivery capacity	Required before textile and creative workshops can become a reliable part of the programme.

14. Marketing and Communications

14.1 Overview

Marketing and communications for St Ronan's Wells will need to do more than promote visits. The communications approach must build local confidence, keep the community informed, reassure funders and stakeholders, support future income generation, and help the Wells find its place within the wider heritage, garden, wellbeing and visitor landscape of Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley.

The first audience must be the local community. St Ronan's Wells is being pursued as a community-owned asset, and its long-term success will depend on local trust, participation and practical support. Communications should therefore be open, regular and grounded in public benefit: explaining what is happening, why decisions are being made, how people can take part, what support is needed, and how the building and gardens will be used.

The tone should be confident but measured: ambitious about the future of the Wells, honest about the challenges, and clear that the purpose of the project is long-term community stewardship rather than short-term promotion.

The Supporter Group currently runs a Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/p/St-Ronans-Wells-Support-Group-61583116971276/> which contains useful updates on the project and has gained over 700 followers in a short time frame. The Group have also established a website - <https://wellssupportgroup.org/who-are-we/> which again contains lots of useful information. The website will need to develop further as the project moves from early campaign activity into asset transfer, restoration fundraising and delivery. The next stage should focus on making the site more action-oriented, current and funder-ready, with clearer information on the community ownership proposal, progress to date, the capital and revenue funding need, community support, volunteering, garden activity, Games Week and Cleikum links, business and partner engagement, and ways for people to help. Priority improvements will include adding a clear "Support the Campaign" route, creating a stronger project summary, making evidence of community support more visible, and ensuring that the website presents St Ronan's Wells not only as a heritage asset at risk, but as a future community-owned resource for local benefit, participation, wellbeing, learning, volunteering and sustainable use.

14.2 Core messages

The communications strategy should be built around five clear messages:

Message	Purpose
St Ronan's Wells is one of the defining places in the story of Innerleithen.	To explain why the site matters and why its future should be protected.
Community ownership offers the best route to public benefit.	To show that the project is about local stewardship, access, volunteering, wellbeing and reinvestment.
The future model is mixed and practical.	To explain how heritage interpretation, hall use, gardens and accommodation work together.
The Wells will complement, not compete with, existing provision.	To reassure local venues, attractions, cafés and businesses.
The project will be developed carefully and proportionately.	To show that demand, costs, risks and governance will be tested before commitments are made.

These messages should be used consistently across the website, social media, funder updates, press releases, public meetings, supporter communications and partner discussions.

14.3 Key audiences and communications approach

The Support Group will need to communicate with several audiences, each with different interests.

Audience	What they need to know	Channels
Local residents and neighbours	What is happening, how the site will be used, how they can take part, and how impacts will be managed.	Website, Facebook, local meetings, posters, local press, newsletters, direct conversations.
Volunteers and supporters	Opportunities to help, progress updates, garden activity, fundraising needs and practical next steps.	Email updates, WhatsApp/Facebook groups, volunteer briefings, website.
Funders and public agencies	Evidence of need, public benefit, governance, cost planning, risk management and financial sustainability.	Business Plan, Case for Support, reports, meetings, funder updates, formal applications.
Local businesses and tourism partners	How the Wells will complement existing provision and encourage visitors to spend locally.	Direct meetings, Go Tweed Valley, local business networks, partner listings.
Visitors and accommodation guests	What the Wells offers, how to access it, how donations support the site, and what else to do locally.	Website, booking platforms, photography, signage, Go Tweed Valley, Scotland Starts Here, Destination Tweed.
Schools and community groups	How the site could support learning, heritage, gardens, wellbeing and community activity.	Direct contact, pilot sessions, teacher/group discussions, local networks.
Heritage, literary and cultural audiences	The Scott, Hogg, Traquair, spa, bottling plant, gardens, Border Games and Tweed Valley connections.	Talks, events, partner channels, local press, digital interpretation.

This audience-led approach will help keep communications focused and avoid trying to make every message do everything.

14.4 Local community communications

Local communication should come first. The Support Group will need to maintain the confidence of residents, volunteers, nearby neighbours, local groups and businesses throughout asset transfer, fundraising, repair and reopening.

This should include regular updates on the asset transfer process, funding progress, surveys, repairs, garden activity, volunteer opportunities, consultation, events and decisions about future use. Communications should avoid creating unrealistic expectations about immediate reopening or full restoration before costs and timescales are confirmed.

The approach should be warm, practical and transparent. Local people should feel that the Wells are being held for them and are not only being marketed to visitors. The Support Group should make clear how residents can become involved through volunteering, consultation, membership, donations, events, garden activity, local history, fundraising and future use of the hall.

14.5 Visitor, tourism and accommodation communications

Visitor communications should position St Ronan's Wells as a distinctive, small-scale heritage and garden experience within the Tweed Valley. It should not be promoted as a major attraction or high-volume visitor destination. Its appeal lies in its intimacy, setting and story: a former spa site

above Innerleithen, with gardens, views, literary associations, civic tradition and links to the wider River Tweed landscape.

The visitor message should connect the Wells to existing patterns of travel and interest: walking, cycling, heritage, gardens, literary tourism, St Ronan's Border Games, Traquair, Robert Smail's Printing Works, Destination Tweed, Abbotsford, Trimontium Museum, Peebles and Melrose. The site should be promoted as part of a wider itinerary, not as a stand-alone day out requiring large numbers to be viable.

Marketing for the short-stay accommodation should be carefully connected to the wider public benefit message. The accommodation should be presented as a distinctive heritage stay whose income supports the care of St Ronan's Wells. The proposition should focus on quality, setting and purpose: staying in a listed former spa site, overlooking Innerleithen and the Tweed Valley, close to walking, cycling, gardens, Traquair, Peebles, Melrose, Glentworth and the wider Borders heritage landscape.

Accommodation marketing will need strong photography, clear booking information, transparent access guidance, realistic descriptions of the uphill location, and high standards of guest communication.

14.6 Heritage, gardens, wellbeing and learning

The heritage and garden messages should sit at the heart of communications. St Ronan's Wells connects with Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, Traquair, St Ronan's Border Games, the spa tradition, the lost water, the bottling plant and Innerleithen's development as a place of visitors and ceremony. These links should be made accessible without overclaiming. The Wells is not Abbotsford, Traquair or a large museum; its value lies in offering a local, atmospheric and highly connected story.

The gardens should be given equal prominence. They already provide one of the strongest and most visible forms of public benefit at the Wells. Garden communications should highlight volunteering, wellbeing, biodiversity, plant sales, seasonal change, outdoor learning, quiet enjoyment and the care of a shared public space.

Schools and community groups should be treated as partners as well as audiences. Rather than offering a fixed education programme too early, the Support Group should invite discussion about what would be useful, manageable and curriculum linked. This could include short visits, garden activity, local history sessions, storytelling, archive work, Games Week interpretation, creative workshops or environmental learning.

14.7 Channels and materials

The Support Group will need a small but coherent set of communications tools. These should be realistic for a volunteer-led charity and should not require constant professional management.

Core tools are likely to include:

- a clear and regularly updated website.
- Facebook and other appropriate social media channels.
- an email mailing list.
- simple printed leaflets or information sheets.
- posters for local noticeboards and businesses.
- press releases for key milestones.
- good quality photography.
- a short case for support.
- donation and Gift Aid messaging.
- visitor information for access, opening, donations and events.

- partner listings and referrals where appropriate.

As the project develops, the Support Group may also need brand guidance, signage, accommodation photography, booking platform content, funder update templates, volunteer recruitment material and launch communications.

14.8 Phased communications

Communications should follow the phased implementation plan. The project should not attempt a single major launch before the offer is ready. Instead, communication should build through stages.

Phase	Communications focus
Secure	Asset transfer updates, community mandate, fundraising case, stakeholder confidence.
Stabilise	Safety, repairs, garden continuity, volunteer involvement, realistic timescales.
Open and test	Pilot events, garden activity, interpretation trials, feedback and donation messaging.
Launch income model	Accommodation launch, hall bookings, supporter scheme, visitor promotion.
Consolidate	Annual programme, impact reporting, maintenance needs, partnership development.

This phased approach will help manage expectations, build trust and allow the Support Group to learn what messages work, which audiences respond, and which channels generate practical support.

14.9 Communications management

Communications will need clear responsibility. Even if most activity is volunteer led, one trustee or volunteer should be identified as communications lead, with support from others for website updates, social media, press contact, photography, event promotion, partner liaison and mailing list management.

The Support Group should also agree basic procedures for approving public statements, handling press enquiries, responding to comments, using photographs, managing personal data, acknowledging funders, and ensuring that information about access, safety, opening times and donations is accurate. As the project becomes more active, communications may require occasional freelance support, particularly for launch campaigns, accommodation marketing, photography, website improvements, press work or funder communications.

15. Risk Register and Exit Strategy

15.1 Overview

St Ronan's Wells is an ambitious but proportionate community ownership proposal. Its strength lies in the combination of heritage, gardens, community use, volunteering, interpretation and modest earned income. However, the project also carries real risks. These include asset transfer, capital cost, building condition, funding, governance, compliance, cashflow, volunteer capacity and public perception.

The purpose of this risk register is not to weaken the case for community ownership, but to show that the Support Group understands the responsibilities involved and is planning accordingly. Funders and Scottish Borders Council will need confidence that risks have been identified, mitigated and reviewed as the project moves from feasibility into acquisition, repair and operation.

The register below should be treated as a working document. It will need to be reviewed regularly by the trustees and updated as further information becomes available, particularly following the asset transfer decision, condition survey, cost plan, funding advice and financial forecasts.

15.2 Risk register

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	Lead responsibility
Asset transfer is not approved	Medium	High	Maintain constructive dialogue with Scottish Borders Council; ensure the Business Plan demonstrates community benefit, financial viability, governance capacity and alignment with asset transfer principles; prepare supporting evidence and letters of support.	Trustees / Chair
Acquisition price is unaffordable	Medium	High	Model acquisition separately from repair, fit-out and working capital; seek Scottish Land Fund advice; explore discounted transfer based on public benefit; test affordability before committing to purchase or lease.	Trustees / Treasurer
Capital costs exceed current estimates	High	High	Obtain condition survey, cost plan and professional advice; include contingency; phase works; avoid committing to full delivery before cost certainty; prioritise urgent and enabling works.	Trustees / Property lead
Building condition is worse than expected	Medium	High	Review or commission detailed condition survey; identify urgent safety and weatherproofing needs; phase works according to risk; ensure the capital budget reflects listed building responsibilities.	Trustees / Professional advisers
Key acquisition or capital funding is not secured	Medium	High	Engage early with Scottish Land Fund, AHF and other funders; align Business Plan with funder guidance; identify alternative sources; prepare a phased funding strategy; avoid relying on one funder for all costs.	Trustees / Fundraising lead
Insufficient evidence of community demand	Medium	High	Gather consultation evidence, expressions of interest, user commitments, school and partner	Trustees / Community engagement lead

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	Lead responsibility
			feedback, local business views and letters of support before finalising projections.	
Hall use is lower than forecast	Medium	Medium	Keep hire assumptions prudent; position the hall as complementary to existing venues; pilot activity before relying on regular income; adjust pricing and programme based on demand.	Bookings lead / Treasurer
Accommodation underperforms	Medium	High	Use prudent occupancy assumptions; develop to a high-quality, four-star equivalent standard; confirm management model; monitor occupancy, rates, guest feedback, costs and net surplus after the first season.	Accommodation lead / Treasurer
Accommodation element creates local concern	Medium	Medium	Communicate clearly that accommodation is a sustainability mechanism, not the purpose of the project; reinvest surpluses in the building, gardens and public benefit; report transparently on income and use.	Trustees / Communications lead
Short-term let, planning, listed building or building warrant requirements delay launch	Medium	High	Seek early professional advice; do not include accommodation income before the compliance timetable is realistic; phase launch only when permissions, licence, insurance and safety requirements are confirmed.	Trustees / Professional advisers
Fire safety, access or building standards issues restrict public use	Medium	High	Undertake fire risk assessment and compliance review; prioritise essential works; phase opening only once safe; seek professional advice before hall or accommodation use.	Property lead / Trustees
Volunteer fatigue or over-reliance on volunteers	Medium	High	Define roles clearly; provide induction and support; avoid expecting volunteers to carry professional responsibilities; review workload; budget for freelance or paid support where needed.	Volunteer lead / Trustees
Trustee capacity is insufficient for ownership	Medium	High	Complete skills audit; assign named roles; recruit additional trustees or advisers where gaps exist; use sub-groups; secure professional support for finance,	Chair / Trustees

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	Lead responsibility
			property, legal and compliance matters.	
Cashflow pressure during transition	Medium	High	Prepare cashflow forecast; maintain working capital; phase expenditure; avoid unfunded commitments; seek grants that include development and early operating costs.	Treasurer / Fundraising lead
Running costs are higher than expected	Medium	High	Obtain current running cost data from Scottish Borders Council or Live Borders; secure insurance and utilities estimates; model prudent expenditure; build reserves.	Treasurer / Property lead
Maintenance liability becomes unsustainable	Medium	High	Establish planned maintenance schedule; build repairs reserve; conduct annual inspections; avoid deferring essential works; seek grant support for major repairs where eligible.	Property lead / Trustees
Local businesses perceive competition	Low–Medium	Medium	Engage cafés, accommodation providers and local businesses early; position Wells activity as complementary; use local suppliers; signpost visitors into the town.	Communications lead / Trustees
Visitor numbers are lower than forecast	Medium	Medium	Use low, central and high scenarios; keep donations prudent; build income from mixed sources; strengthen partnerships with Go Tweed Valley, Destination Tweed, Robert Smail's, Traquair and local routes.	Marketing lead / Treasurer
Visitor numbers exceed manageable capacity	Low–Medium	Medium	Manage opening times, bookings, event capacity, parking, signage and volunteer cover; avoid high-volume promotion beyond site capacity.	Trustees / Site lead
Delays in consents, procurement or contractors	Medium	Medium–High	Build a realistic timetable; seek early professional advice; phase delivery; avoid announcing fixed opening dates before consents and contracts are confirmed.	Property lead
Loss of public confidence	Low–Medium	High	Communicate openly; provide regular updates; be honest about delays and costs; report progress and impact; maintain community accountability.	Chair / Communications lead

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	Lead responsibility
Failure to build reserves	Medium	High	Include reserves policy; set annual maintenance reserve target; reinvest accommodation surplus; review financial performance annually.	Treasurer / Trustees
Key individuals step back	Medium	Medium–High	Avoid over-dependence on one or two people; document systems; recruit wider volunteer and trustee support; plan succession.	Chair / Trustees

15.3 Key risk themes

The most significant risks fall into five broad areas:

1. **Asset and capital risk.** The project cannot proceed safely until the transfer basis, acquisition cost, building condition and capital funding requirement are understood. This is why acquisition, repair, fit-out and working capital must be modelled separately.
2. **Financial sustainability risk.** The Wells will need earned income, but the forecasts must remain prudent. Accommodation is likely to be the strongest income stream, but it must be evaluated against realistic occupancy, management, cleaning, compliance and maintenance costs. Visitor donations, hall hire and events should be useful supporting income, not overclaimed as major income drivers.
3. **Governance and capacity risk.** The Support Group has strong local commitment, but ownership will require formal systems, financial controls, compliance processes, volunteer management and trustee capacity. This is especially important because the SCIO is newly formed.
4. **Community confidence risk.** The accommodation element must be explained carefully so that local people understand it as a mechanism for sustaining public benefit, not as a commercialisation of the Wells.
5. **Delivery risk.** The project will depend on funding, consents, contractors, volunteer capacity and professional advice. A phased approach is therefore essential.

15.4 Risk management approach

The trustees should review the risk register at least quarterly during the asset transfer and development phase, and at every major decision point. Once the site is operational, the register should be reviewed at least twice a year, and more frequently during capital works or major change. Each risk should have a named lead, an agreed mitigation plan and a status update. High-impact risks should be reported to trustees formally, with decisions recorded in meeting minutes.

The risk register should also be linked to the financial forecast. Risks around occupancy, hall use, donations, running costs, repairs, utilities, insurance and volunteer capacity should be assessed through prudent, central and optimistic scenarios.

15.5 Minimum viable opening model

The Support Group should define a minimum viable opening model before taking on full operating commitments. This would identify the lowest-risk version of the project that still delivers public benefit.

A minimum viable opening model could include:

- continued public access to the gardens, subject to insurance and safety.
- volunteer gardening sessions.
- basic interpretation or guided visits.
- occasional talks or garden open days.
- donation points and plant sales.
- limited halls use only when compliance, access, fire safety, toilets and insurance are confirmed.

15.6 Exit and fallback strategy

An exit strategy is necessary because community ownership should only proceed if the asset can be managed responsibly. The Support Group's first preference is to secure, repair and operate St Ronan's Wells as a community-owned heritage, garden and wellbeing asset. However, the trustees must also be clear about fallback options if key conditions are not met.

If asset transfer is not approved, the Support Group could continue to advocate for public access, seek partnership arrangements with Scottish Borders Council or another owner, support garden volunteering where possible, and maintain the heritage and community case for the Wells. If acquisition funding is delayed, the Support Group could seek an interim agreement, licence, lease, management arrangement or phased transfer that allows garden activity and limited public benefit to continue while the full funding package is developed.

If capital costs prove unaffordable, the Support Group should consider a reduced or phased scheme focused first on safety, weatherproofing, gardens, basic interpretation and limited community use, with accommodation and wider refurbishment deferred until funding is secured.

If the accommodation element proves unviable, the Support Group would need to revise the revenue model, reduce operating costs, increase fundraising, seek additional grant support, develop alternative earned income, or reduce the scale of public activity to match available resources.

If the Support Group concludes that it cannot responsibly take on the asset, it should not proceed with transfer. In that situation, the trustees should work with Scottish Borders Council, funders and local partners to identify whether another community, charitable or partnership route could protect public benefit.

The exit strategy should be understood as responsible stewardship, not failure. It demonstrates that the Support Group will not expose the charity, volunteers or community to unmanaged financial or property risk.

16. Monitoring, Evaluation and Community Accountability

16.1 Overview

St Ronan's Wells Support Group will monitor the project in a simple and proportionate way. The aim will be to understand how the building and gardens are being used, whether the project is delivering public benefit, and whether the operating model is financially and practically sustainable. The Support Group is a small, volunteer-led charity, so monitoring must be useful rather than burdensome. It should be built into normal activity wherever possible, using booking records, volunteer records, donation figures, event attendance, accommodation data, maintenance notes and informal feedback from users, visitors and partners.

16.2 What will be measured

The Support Group will focus on a small number of core measures:

Area	What will be monitored
Community use	Hall bookings, type of users, community activities and local events.
Public access	Garden use, open days, talks, guided visits and interpretation activity.
Volunteering	Number of active volunteers, volunteer hours and types of roles undertaken.
Learning and heritage	School visits, community sessions, exhibitions, talks and heritage activities.
Gardens and wellbeing	Gardening sessions, plant sales, garden improvements and volunteer feedback.
Accommodation	Occupancy, income, costs, guest feedback and net surplus for the charity.
Donations and fundraising	Visitor donations, Gift Aid where eligible, supporter income, grants and local fundraising.
Asset care	Repairs completed, inspections, maintenance issues and progress against the maintenance plan.

These measures will help the trustees understand what is working, where demand is strongest, and where the operating model needs to be adjusted.

16.3 Feedback and learning

The Support Group will gather feedback in practical ways, including short surveys, comments from visitors and volunteers, event feedback, guest reviews, partner conversations and annual discussion with members or supporters.

This feedback will be particularly important in the early years, as the group tests hall use, garden activity, interpretation, events, accommodation and visitor donations. The purpose will not be to produce complex evaluation reports, but to learn from use and make better decisions.

16.4 Community accountability

As a community-owned asset, St Ronan's Wells should remain accountable to the people it serves. The Support Group will provide regular updates to members, volunteers, funders, partners and the wider community.

This could include website and social media updates, public meetings where appropriate, an annual update at the AGM, and a short annual community report summarising:

- what has been delivered.
- how many people have used or supported the Wells.
- what income has been raised and how it has been used.
- progress with repairs, maintenance and gardens.
- key challenges and priorities for the year ahead.

This will help maintain trust and show that income from accommodation, donations, events and fundraising is being reinvested in the care of the building, gardens and community use.

16.5 Review

The trustees will review progress at least annually against the Business Plan. This review will consider whether the hall, gardens, interpretation, accommodation, events and fundraising are performing as expected, and whether any changes are needed.

The Business Plan should therefore be treated as a working document. As evidence grows, the Support Group will be able to refine its assumptions, strengthen its financial model, and ensure that St Ronan's Wells remains useful, sustainable and accountable.