

ABERFELDY COMMUNITY COUNCIL MONESS SURVEY

Aberfeldy Community Council have been gathering views on the recent purchase of the Moness Resort by the Discovery Land Company (DLC), the owners of Taymouth Castle.

At Moness, DLC say they will retain some of the 106 X timeshare cottages for their own full-time staff, make some available for local non- DLC use and manage the remainder plus the hotel itself as an ongoing tourist/ visitor accommodation business.

Survey leaflets were distributed to all homes in Aberfeldy and Dull & Weem, and all businesses with premises in Aberfeldy also received a survey leaflet, and the opportunity taken to speak to them about the purchase if that was possible.

The survey opened in mid November, with completed survey forms being returned to boxes in the Breadalbane Bakery, The Locus Centre and Artisan. In addition, some leaflets and a box were left in Grizzly Beards in the Square. Boxes were gathered in on Tues 12th December, opened and counted on Wed 13th by community council members, with Cllr John Duff acting as an independent witness.

Numbers

Responses were received from 138 residents, and 19 businesses. This represents about 12 percent of households and about 30 percent of business in the town.

The community council have done a survey like this four times in the past (twice for the Birks hydro scheme in 2009/10, once for the 2013 local development plan, and once for PKC plans for improvements in the town, also in 2013). These surveys each returned c 250-300 responses, about one third of the 900 letterboxes in Aberfeldy at the time.

The return rate for residents this time was therefore just over a third of responses for those other issues.

We can speculate that the sale of Moness does not create the same interest within the town as these other issues.

With the local businesses, it is notable that a number with whom discussions were had did not subsequently return a form. These included businesses both supportive of and concerned by the sale.

For businesses, the 19 X responses can be summarized as follows:

Not enough information to make decision	Very concerned about sale	On balance, concerned about sale	Neither supportive or concerned	On balance, supportive of sale	Very supportive of sale
1	6	3	0	3	6

One business felt they did not have enough information to make a decision. The remainder were split 50 : 50 between being concerned and supportive.

Of those who were concerned about the sale, all but two were dependent on visitors.

Of those businesses not predominantly reliant on visitors, all but one were supportive of the sale, and this view was taken by 4 X businesses who might be expected to be reliant on visitors as well.

It is notable that 70 percent of businesses did not express an opinion.

For residents, which appear to include a small proportion of regular visitors to the area or those with second homes, the 138 X responses can be summarized as follows:

Not enough information to make decision	Very concerned about sale	On balance, concerned about sale	Neither supportive or concerned	On balance, supportive of sale	Very supportive of sale
29	35	16	7	35	16

A significant number of people did not feel that they had sufficient information to comment, and a small number were neither concerned nor supportive.

For the remainder, and as with the business replies, exactly 50 percent were either concerned or supportive, but the feeling was stronger among those who were concerned.

Approx 88 percent of people did not reply.

The 12 percent return rate would be regarded as quite good in many surveys of this type, but as suggested before, this is low for Aberfeldy.

Feedback

Most responses included significant feedback and reasoning for their responses, with some attaching letters further outlining their views.

The main reasons repeating across replies were as follows:

Supportive

- 1 The sale would bring opportunities for accommodation and employment to the area
- 2 The sale should allow for more investment in the resort, with a lot of people, mentioning how tired and rundown the resort had become, with low occupancy
- 3 There would be more people living in the town, using shops and services throughout the year, especially outwith the visitor season.
- 4 There should be training opportunities for young people
- 5 Several people around the top of the town saw the sale as an opportunity to deal with the problem trees that were blocking TV signals.

Concerned

- 1 The most repeated comment was that things would probably be fine if DLC did what they said they would do, but would they?
- 2 There was concern that the sale would lead to a reduction in visitor numbers.
- 3 There would be increased pressure on infra- structure and services.
- 4 There would be an increase in the school roll. (This was deemed to be a bad thing, however, the school is well below capacity at present).
- 5 There could be increased anti- social problems in the town, depending on the type of employees staying at Moness

- 6 There was specific concern expressed about the Medical Centre, a number of residents being fearful about current capacity
- 7 Concern that this would further increase house prices
- 8 Potentially increased noise/ traffic,

Aberfeldy Community Council view

- 1 We acknowledge that those replying to the survey were split 50:50 between those who were supportive, and those who were concerned about the Moness sale
- 2 There was a widespread view both from the boxes and from anecdotal discussion with those looking after the boxes that if DLC did what they said they wanted to do with Moness, that there would be little problem. Most people expressing such a view had said they were concerned. So, there is an important question of trust.
- 3 The fairly low response rate overall suggests to us that the sale of Moness is not a major concern for the vast majority of residents, and we would refer to 4 X previous surveys as evidence of this. This mirrors the very low turnout at community council meetings from people interested in this issue.
- 4 Any change of use to residential housing at Moness will require a planning application, setting out the number of timeshare cottages to be converted. At that point, it will be easier for people to give a view on what is proposed, and Aberfeldy CC will look to reflect opinion at that point.

Aberfeldy CC
15th December 2023.