



Ayr Curling Club

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Dear curler,

It is with an extremely heavy heart that I have to advise you that the ice rink will close on 30th September this year.

As you know, we are faced with an unprecedented hike in our energy costs. In the current year we have spent £153,000 on energy. From 1st October the best deal we were able to secure will see that rise by 110%. The reality of this is that the average daily cost for electricity will increase on 1st October from £419 to £880 – a rise of £461 each and every day of the year. On a normal year we aim to just break even and therefore, this increase in our biggest operating cost means that we would have to generate more than £150,000 in additional income just to cover our energy costs never mind wage increases and inflationary increases on all the other expenses of running an ice rink. It simply cannot be done and so, with our expenditure going to exceed our income by c£75,000 in the current financial year and double that every year thereafter, we have no alternative other than to cease trading and to seek Members Voluntary Liquidation.

Believe me, we have tried every way we can think of to overcome this problem.

We have considered solar panels, wind turbines and CHP(Combined Heat & Power). None work for us for varying reasons. We have considered how we might cut our energy costs by reducing the hours of operation and cutting back on the dehumidifier. The potential savings are not significant and it is also better financially to stay open over the summer.

Frankly, the only way in which we would be able to get the energy costs down to a manageable level is with a new build ice rink and we have been pursuing that avenue with the Council for over a year. Initially they led us to believe that a new ice rink for Ayr was a realistic possibility and we were able to provide them with comparative costings (Curl Aberdeen at £6.1m insurance reinstatement valuation) and the Glasgow Ice Centre feasibility study, but their words turned out to be hollow.

Unfortunately, it is also a fact of life that curling numbers are in decline, both nationally and at Ayr. Our curlers are ageing and the ice requests are on a downward trend with the coming season down 195 sheets on last year, some 12%.

Will energy prices come down ? The advice from our broker has been spot on so far. We were / are paying 13p / Kwh. We were advised to sign up at 29p in March for October as increases were coming in April and that proved correct with current rates being quoted at around 33p. For commercial, as opposed to domestic, further increases are anticipated before rates start to fall later in 2023 and in to 2024 but it is likely that energy companies will follow the example of the fuel companies being quick to increase and slow to reduce.

You would have to be a supreme optimist to envisage rates coming back down to the current 13p level.

Unfortunately, there is no solution. Warm words from MSPs, MPs, Scottish Curling, the Scottish Ice Rinks Association, SportScotland and South Ayrshire Councillors do not convert into the hard cash required to meet the deficit every year from here on and this has resulted in the Board having no alternative other than to cease trading. There is no one more committed to curling, figure skating and ice hockey and the retention of Ayr Ice Rink than the current directors and, undoubtedly, we would have continued as before but for the consequences of Mr. Putin's war in Ukraine.

Thank you all for your support over the last 50 years and more. I am just so sorry that it has come to this.

Liz Goldie (Chairman)