



Astley Ainslie Community Trust (AACT) - Frequently Asked Questions

What is AACT and who are you representing?

We are an unincorporated constituted association, carrying out a community consultation to produce a community vision for the Astley Ainslie grounds and buildings. This may ultimately result in community ownership of some or all of the Astley Ainslie site.

We are representing local people living in an area more or less covered by the 4 community council areas surrounding the Astley Ainslie site. They are: Marchmont & Sciennes Community Council (CC), Morningside CC, Merchiston CC and Grange and Prestonfield CC. Individuals and organisations outside this area can be associate members, supporters, and potential partners.

What is AACT's aim?

Our aim is to provide a forum for the local community to articulate their aspirations for Astley Ainslie and to pursue community ownership on the Astley Ainslie site for the common good.

What does AACT do?

- ⤴ We have produced a schematic map of the Astley Ainslie grounds.
- ⤴ We have conducted research into the history and environment of the site (see www.aact.scot)
- ⤴ We have run community walks and talks.
- ⤴ We have been, and are, talking to the City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian and the Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group (CEG).
- ⤴ We have received grant funding from the Scottish Government (Making Places Initiative) to run community engagement activities and to produce a community-led vision for the future of the site.
- ⤴ We plan to use Scottish legislation, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, to own land on the Astley Ainslie site for the benefit of the community.

What is the difference between AACT and CEG?

AACT and CEG are working together to coordinate the community consultation, with different areas of focus.

- The community engagement group (CEG) is working with NHS Lothian and the City of Edinburgh Council to develop a Place Brief for the site, providing guidelines for how the site can be developed.
- AACT would like to take advantage of the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 to own land on the Astley Ainslie site for the benefit of the community.
- We are working to have the community vision incorporated into the Place Brief.

Could the Astley Ainslie be sold to a housing developer?

Without community intervention, it is likely that the Astley Ainslie site would be sold to a housing developer, in the same way as the Sick Kids Hospital in Marchmont. However, if an Asset Transfer Request (ATR) is lodged by a community group with the NHS, they must deal with the Request in the first instance.

How big is the site?

The site, in Edinburgh South, is around 50 acres. The grounds include an archaeological site (the chapel and cemetery of St Roque), some of the buildings are listed, and the site has between 1 and 2,000 trees, many of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). There are public rights of way across the site.

Is it different to other community land purchases in Scotland?

Yes, in scale, value and urban location. The Astley Ainslie is a large urban property with lots of green space and a high commercial development value. This should not prevent the community aspiring to hold and manage land and buildings as a resource for public benefit. Before 1 February 1993 it was unheard of for communities to own and manage land in Scotland. Since that date, when the Assynt Crofters bought 21,000 acres of land, some 500,000 acres (half a million) have come into community ownership in Scotland. The Scottish Government has a target of 1 million acres in community ownership.

How can the NHS sell property that was gifted through a bequest?

The NHS has sold properties, which were gifted or supported through bequests - the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and the Deaconess Hospital being recent examples. Whether or not a hospital is really only bricks and mortar, or essentially a service that can continue elsewhere in the spirit of the original bequest is a wider discussion worth having in parallel to the activities focused on the Astley Ainslie site.

Isn't it worth an awful lot of money and well beyond community reach?

So far as we know, the site has not yet been evaluated by the NHS. However, the community will not be acting alone. We hope to work with private generosity, charitable foundations and trusts, social developers, housing associations, local businesses and healthcare providers.

What is the difference between the community profiting from a public asset and a private company doing the same?

Any money made from a community sale or development **MUST** be reinvested in the local community. Public benefits arising from community-led commercial activities are likely to be greater than would be the case with a private developer looking to maximise profit. Community ownership is likely to result in a more diverse range of infrastructure, activities and developments on the site than would be the case with a housing developer.

Does the Community have to pay full market price?

Not necessarily. At this stage we do not know what the NHS will require or accept. However, if the community can demonstrate financially quantifiable and readily measurable public benefits arising from community ownership then the NHS may consider a reduction in sale price.

If the NHS isn't going to leave until 2025, what's the rush?

The NHS will want to have a sale agreed before then. They want to start marketing the site soon. Any Asset Transfer Request (ATR) needs to be submitted before marketing commences, otherwise it is invalid. There is a lot of work still to do to pull a robust ATR together, which is why AACT is doing this work now.

What will happen to the money from the sale of the site?

We have been informed by NHS that proceeds from the sale of the Astley Ainslie Hospital will remain within the NHS Lothian capital budget. Capital investment at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital has been made in the initial, operational phase, and will continue for future phases, currently at the outline business case stage.



Astley Ainslie Community Trust information

Note on David and John Astley Ainslie

David Ainslie, died 1900, and John Astley Ainslie, died 1876

David Ainslie, who lived near Haddington, was a farmer, breeding Shorthorn cattle and Leicester sheep. In the 1860s he was a leading prizewinner in the agricultural shows, competing with wealthy landlords, like the Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Kinnaird. Ainslie died in 1900, a rich man with extensive shares in international railways. He left most of his money, 'for erecting endowing and maintaining an Hospital for the relief and behoof [benefit] of the convalescents in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh'. The Infirmary itself was a hospital 'open to all the distressed from whatever corner of the world they come, without restriction'

David's nephew, John Astley Ainslie 1849-1876, was the son of Cordelia Astley and John Ainslie of Huntington in East Lothian. His parents died when he was an infant, and his uncle David brought the boy up as his own son. John graduated MA from Oxford in 1873. Sadly, he died in 1876 at the Grand Hotel de l'Orient in Algiers. We do not know the cause of his death. David had no children of his own, and was much distressed by the boy's death, wanting to build him a splendid memorial. In proposing a convalescent hospital, he was aiming to save lives and encourage good health for future generations.

David Ainslie's bequest

Ainslie instructed his Trustees 'to purchase land to such an extent and in such locality in or near Edinburgh as they may consider fit for the site of "The Astley Ainslie Institution"' and, 'garden and policy and recreation ground for it...' He advised that his money be invested for some years to increase the capital, and the Institution was not initiated in South Edinburgh until the 1920s. By that time, his Trustees had achieved a capital of about £700,000 (more than £30 million in today's terms). When the National Health Service was initiated in 1948, the report on the Scottish funds says: 'One of the main problems which we had to consider was the settlement of the large funds, amounting to over £950,000 in terms of capital value vested in the Board of Management for the Astley Ainslie, Edenhall and Associated Hospitals. These funds are almost entirely the residue of a bequest by the late David Ainslie after outlays incurred in the erection of the Astley Ainslie Hospital.' The Commissioners undertook to respect 'conditions intended to preserve the memory of any person'. The Commissioners transferred a third of the capital to a development fund in the field of convalescence and rehabilitation. This was maintained as a separate fund until 2004, when it was transferred into the general funds of NHS Scotland.