Statement in Support of theSpace Dunbar
At the ELC Planning Committee 3rd November 2026

By Adrian Girling, theSpace Scotland CIC

I only have 5 minutes. On the public record a few thank yous. To our planning officer and her colleagues for working constructively with us. To all those who helped to fund this planning process. To everyone at theSpace. To young people who power what we do and give us the confidence that this is not only doable but essential and vital. To Ewan from EMA, Tina from LUC and your teams - we wouldn't be here today without you. To those who have supported this process, engaged with us, challenged us, gave us ideas and submitted supportive comments during this planning process.

Regardless of today's outcome we are proud of ourselves as a small community organisation for preparing, submitting and taking this application through to committee.

theSpace Dunbar will be multi-generational, powered by youth for the whole community, powered by Dunbar for the whole region. We have been building up to this for nearly 20 years. From a music space and skateparks at Phantassie to theSpace North Berwick, we have been gradually expanding our vision and our ambition.

We recognise the constraints of our site. There are 4 main reasons given for refusal and I will give brief reasons why these can be addressed and overcome with more in depth reasoning provided within our full planning submission.

1. Site choice. There are no alternative sites available either practically, or in planning policy terms to deliver a multi-use community facility like theSpace Dunbar. We consider that in absence of any reasonable alternatives, our site should be considered acceptable consistent with the policy aims of Policy DC1.

2. Site value. In reality the constraints on site mean it is farmed to a lower quality standard than Prime Agricultural Land would be. We have committed to a significant number of enhanced landscape and ecology mitigation and improvement measures.

3. Transport. Our Transport Statement concludes that travel generating impacts won't be overly detrimental. There are substantial undertakings which we are willing to commit to that will ensure the site is safely accessible by foot, bike, board and the SpaceShuttle bus. A travel plan will also be provided, and would be secured through condition, as required by Policy T1.

4. Drainage and Sewage. We recognise there would be significant additional work required post-consent and we consider these a necessary part of the site works needed to deliver theSpace Dunbar and will undertake these works post-consent in discussion with ELC to demonstrate a viable and suitable alternative to ensure compliance with local and national policy and guidance.

We don't disregard or downplay these issues but we do think that solutions can and should be found. Let's be both bold and pragmatic. Where there is a will there is a way. All of these issues have viable technical solutions that will unlock the huge social and economic benefits that theSpace Dunbar would bring to our creative, diverse and wonderful communities and our talented, ambitious and passionate youth.

Even with planning permission there is no guarantee theSpace Dunbar will happen. We would still have to secure the site, raise the huge capital required, build it, open it and operate it. Best case scenario, we are years from welcoming folk through the door. But without planning permission we will never be able to try. Here we are.

Almost 20 years of social action
5 years working on theSpace Dunbar - so far
Almost a thousand people engaged in the process
560 written responses to our three main surveys
170 written responses to our 4 PAC events
With 2 days at Dunbar Grammar School
Hundreds more engaged at multiple events
214 individual donations to our crowdfunding campaign for the planning fees
200 public submissions of support for this planning application

1 chance for the councillors in this room to say yes to theSpace Dunbar

Thank you committee.