



8 WEEKS TO SAVE THE PARS



● **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?:** Owner Gavin Masterton has spelled out an eight-week plan to put the Pars on a sounder financial footing, although defeat in Saturday's Scottish Cup fifth round tie at home to Hamilton hasn't helped. Match report, page 77. Photo: Craig Brown

UNDER-FIRE Pars owner Gavin Masterton is aiming to save the club inside eight weeks.

The majority shareholder told a packed meeting of fans at the Vine Centre on Thursday that his recovery plans are in place.

Masterton is banking on saving the ailing Pars by raising between £300,000 and £500,000 from an imminent share issue.

He added that a property deal at Pitreavie would free up cash, the club was on the verge of its "largest sponsorship deal" and there were parties willing to underwrite the share offer.

Two "potential investors" have also been courted.

But Masterton said the club had to cut its annual costs by £600,000, which could mean a much younger, and cheaper, team on the pitch.

He said, "Going forward it's essential, no matter who owns the club, that we reduce the cost base.

● **By Ally McRoberts**

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"It costs £200,000 a month and if you look at the gates we've had recently, 2500 last week and months where we've had no home games whatsoever, it's economically impossible to continue to run the club with a cost base of £2.4million per annum.

"It's totally impossible."

Masterton continued, "We've set a target of reducing it by £600,000 over the next few months.

"The key priority is to change the whole way we do business but it's like turning an oil tanker.

"Everything is under review. We've identified £450,000 of savings from a whole variety of sources.

"We've got an eight-week programme where we try to turn it round, get it repositioned and correct the cash

flow, protect the first team budget as best we can and achieve promotion as soon as we can."

Masterton, who was invited to speak at the Pars Alive meeting, said he was "absolutely certain cost reductions can be achieved within eight weeks".

He said the new board structure would also be in place within eight weeks.

The Pars owner repeated that he won't walk away for nothing after ploughing in £8million and would reduce his own 94 per cent shareholding to 50 per cent.

He said that around £3million would be repaid over time through 30 per cent of extraordinary income, such as cup finals and transfer fees, while he hoped the £1million owed to past directors would be paid back over four years.

Masterton said, "For every pound raised by way of new monies from the share issue, I will write off an equal amount of the Charlestown Holdings

loan. If we raise £300,000 I will write off £300,000 of the Charlestown loan.

"Then I would gradually work my shareholding down on a pro rata basis, gradually working my shareholding down from 75 per cent to 50 per cent."

He continued, "The property we own at Pitreavie was on a 50-year lease but it will move to the charity, the Pars Trust. That will release quite a lot of money, we're in the last lap of the legal process, and should be completed within the next week.

"It will allow us to pay my favourite creditor, HMRC, every last penny we owe them."

And he added, "We're moving towards the largest sponsorship deal the club has ever had.

"I can't disclose the name – and they stood back over the last few weeks due to the uncertainty and confusion about the club in the media – but this sponsorship will have a major impact on the club's future."