

Coll Community Sub-group meeting Wednesday 5th November 2014

10 November 2014 13:24

Present: Arlene Casey, George McConnachie, Carol Henry, Randy Anderson, Nic Smith, Darren Jamieson, Laura Jamieson, Paula Jamieson

Apologies: Julian Senior, Steve Dickison, Anna Henderson

1. Landowners attendance at Sub-committee meetings was discussed and the following agreed:

After discussion it has been decided that the attendance of landowners at sub-committee meetings is not appropriate. The presence of land owners at meetings inhibits a free and open discussion within the group members. The discussion, any recommendations or decisions made by the subcommittee needs to be free from any influence or suggestion of influence or bias towards specific landowners. Landowners will be entering into business transactions with Development Coll and as such they should direct any queries or requests for information to Development Coll with George being the point of contact.

2. Nic Smith suggested she should be excusing herself from meetings at this point due to her connections with one of the landowners. After discussion the group felt it was useful to have Nic present as there was no conflict of interest at this point with no decisions or discussions taking place about suitability of land. At the time where this happens Nic will remove herself from the group.

3. The main discussion was on recent discussions on funding with A&B Council and the impact this has on the project

- 2 units are in the 2015-2018 Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) for development on Coll, there could be potential for increase but this would need to be supported by a further housing needs survey
- A&B Council are no longer partnering with communities direct but prefer that a community be in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord(RSL). Why: stringent conditions around delivering affordable housing has led to difficulties in communities delivering as has their ability to resource such projects, important that projects delivered in SHIP timescales and the private finance required to shore up the A&B grants has proved difficult to obtain in these timelines for communities
- Scottish Land Fund have a strong preference for communities to be in partnership with a RSL for the same reasons and any application would likely be looked on more favourably if a partnership exists
- After discussion the group agreed that the preferred option is to partner with a RSL as this more or less, with the caveat of land being funded by SLF, guaranteed Coll additional affordable housing. It was discussed whilst it is not impossible for D.C to try to raise funding through grants and loans to build the houses themselves this would be a big risk and very time consuming and as such all agreed not a viable option particularly with so much funding available through the SHIP. Hence the agreed recommendation to DC is to progress in partnership with an RSL
- The projects next step is to choose a RSL partner and as such we should negotiate to have the RSL carry out the options appraisals and feasibility studies of the land on offer. ACHA have already expressed an interest and have private finance available to shore up the A&B grants for two houses. West Highland Housing Association and Fyne homes have been written to, to gauge interest. Once the group understand if there is

more than one partner to talk to or if ACHA is the only available choice we will make a decision with how to proceed. Arlene also agreed to ascertain an informal opinion via housing contacts on the legalities around a RSL needing to own the land to gain access to HAG grant or whether it was something DC could lease. This will give us an indication of how much we can negotiate with any partner.

- If we are to get support from A&B or any partnering RSL to build more than two houses then we must carry out further work in terms of Coll housing needs. This will also be needed to support our SLF application. The first steps has been agreed and will be to run a community event in early December to inform about the housing project but to encourage people to come and discuss their housing needs. Iona McPhail will be available from ACHA to talk to people in confidence about their housing needs. As ACHA & A&B Council have offered to support us the group agreed they were happy for Arlene to work on a plan with ACHA and A&B council for Coll housing needs for the group to discuss at the next meeting.
- George/Arlene updated that all landlords have been written to and asked for a copy of the land map, title deeds and any burdens on the land and shared the current land maps that he had of the land available for purchase.
- George updated on success on talking to Scottish Water via contacting local MP's and MSP's he now had a contact at Scottish Water who was going to contact him about our needs and whether they could be supported.
- George gave an update on the Helmsdale visit giving a brief talk through what was learned and a scanned email of the Helmsdale talk will be sent to all group members and left at An Cridhe. Also shared was the pictures of the houses built in Helmsdale.