

NOTE OF MEETING BETWEEN LEADHILLS COMMUNITY COMPANY LTD (LCC) AND LEADHILLS TRUST (LT)

1pm on 9th May 2018 at Hopetoun Arms Hotel, Leadhills

Present: LCC - Pat Wilders (PW), Sue Pinkus (SP), Rab Campbell (RC); LT - Lord Hopetoun (LH), Donald Noble (DN)

1. PW welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained the background to the LCC – at the public meeting in 2012, it was explained to the community that land reform gave the opportunity to buy assets. Leadhills community was surrounded by Leadhills Estate, and the purpose of LCC was to acquire suitable assets and generate an income from them for the community. It had identified certain assets which it was interested in purchasing.
2. Vacant gap sites
 - 2.1. LCC is interested in purchasing gap sites within the village envelope and building affordable housing for rent. The challenges of the Conservation Area were recognised, however it was felt that gap sites owned by a community company might offer an easier planning prospect.
 - 2.2. LH said that LT regularly sold small areas of land and buildings within the village. It had previously assisted the community council in trying to identify the owners of derelict buildings. Whilst it did not own derelict houses in the village, it might own suitable gap and other housing sites. It would try to identify any such sites with the intention of a willing sale to LCC.
3. The Fire Station
 - 3.1. LCC wished to purchase the fire station to provide hall and tourism facilities as a “shop front” for the village. It envisaged creating space for crafts, an information centre, space for events or community services such as CAB. It aimed to create economic activity in the village to re-invigorate the community. The existing village hall was not an appropriate space, was too expensive to rent and was under threat of closure by South Lanarkshire Council (SLC).
 - 3.2. It had approached Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) regarding using the building, but had not been able to do so. LH noted that the LT had likewise approached SFRS for the open day and had not been able to use the building.
 - 3.3. It was understood by LCC that the fire station building required underpinning and other works. LCC would be able to access grant funding to undertake such works which the LT might not be able to do. Generally capital funding support was accessible but not revenue funding, and it was suggested that grant bodies preferred ownership of the asset, therefore renting the building from the estate might not be possible.
 - 3.4. It was noted that SFRS has a lease. The volunteer service was currently mothballed, with an uncertain future. SFRS sublet or permitted the gala day group and Leadhills Village Association to use parts of the building.
 - 3.5. DN queried whether it might be possible to work together on such a project. PW noted that Historic Scotland grant requirements stipulated ownership, and the LCC preference was a purchase. LH said that he would discuss this with fellow trustees.
4. Public toilets
 - 4.1. There was discussion regarding these. The importance of public toilets for visitors was recognised by all. LCC anticipated pursuing an asset transfer from SLC, then potentially demolishing the current building and purchasing a new unit.

4.2. Although the estate did not have any direct involvement in the site of the public toilets, LH offered any support LT could offer in terms of contact, skills or indeed financial support, which had been previously offered but not taken up at the time.

5. Wider land area

5.1. PW tabled a plan with a wider area identified in orange. This area included the Glenfranka reservoir and the ski slope, although RC noted that the ski slope might be planning to move over the Buccleuch march. If successful, LCC intended to pursue farming and tourism opportunities. The area had been chosen as it was believed not to impact on the grouse moor. Some tree planting might be carried out around Glenfranka Reservoir. There was no intention to “re-wild”, but rather to generate an income for the community. Investigations had already been made into hydro power or pump storage at Glenfranka Reservoir. The area identified excluded the area around the village as the ownership issues were extremely complex in this area.

5.2. LH noted that the area included a significant and integral part of the grouse moor, and an important part of the sheep farming operations at Glenochar.

5.3. LH confirmed that the proposed orange area would impact seriously on the economics and livelihoods of Leadhills Estate and would be resisted very strongly.

5.4. LH did, however, note that he was sure that LT would be interested to work with the community on suitable joint activities such as renewable energy proposals. He was involved at Achiltibuie in a hydro scheme as landowner and part-owner alongside the community, and he explained it had proved successful for the community.

6. Other matters

6.1. Windfarm

PW noted that the principal concerns regarding the windfarm proposals were in respect of SLC control of the benefits fund, and the risk of a future extension of the scheme following successful planning consent. LT agreed to pass on these concerns to Innogy, for them to respond to and hopefully address.

6.2. Shooting – it was pointed out that driven grouse shooting at Leadhills had suffered from a poor reputation when run by previous shooting tenants. It was recognised that the approach now was different, although there were those who wished to continue to cast Leadhills Estate in a bad light. LH explained that the intention was to operate the moor at a level which is sustainable both in environmental and financial terms, and which will be at a lower level to previous tenants.

6.3. DN noted that LT was looking at the provision of small work units at the former SP substation site at Elvanfoot. This was felt to be a positive asset and close enough to serve the residents of Leadhills.

6.4. Plans were being developed for a music festival in Leadhills. The lack of parking in general for visitors was noted. LH confirmed that LT had previously worked with the community on provision of more car parking and would be very happy to do so again.

7. Actions

7.1. LT to identify potential affordable housing gap sites which it might sell to LCC on a willing seller basis.

7.2. LT to consider proposals for sale of fire station building to LCC.