

Assynt Development Trust

Minutes of the meeting of the Glebe Land development Steering Group

Tuesday 2nd March 2021 4:00pm via Zoom

Present: Willie Jack, Nigel Goldie, Brendan O’Hanrahan, Elaine McAskill, Colin Masterson, Claire Belshaw, Jamie McIntyre, Kirsty Crichton, Morven Taylor, Adam Pellant, Ronnie Macrae

Apologies: Elaine McAskill, Colin Masterson

Introduction – WJ advised that Rachael O’Neill from Clashnessie had agreed to be part of the Steering Group

Minutes of the last meeting – these were approved by the meeting as an accurate record of proceedings; Brendan O’Hanrahan asked if he could be shown by the initials BOH rather than BH

Footpaths/ tracks

BOH advised that an ‘Improving Public Access’ application is complicated to complete and there is no additional funding for the preparation of a project. It was understood that the Glencanisp Nature Trail had been an IPA project put together by Andy Summers and Chris Goodman. It was thought that CALL may have some funding for a Glebe feasibility study. WJ to find out. Chris Goodman is to be invited to walk over the site to help identify possible routes of footpaths. JM said that if the driver for footpaths on the glebe is the IPA funding programme we should not be too concerned about dates and deadlines for this programme as he feels there is much happening politically around the demand for active transport. If we act too quickly and too soon to grab a funding pot that may change over time this may not be the best approach and he is confident that there will be funding for link paths. EOH agrees with this although he feels that funds are not always available when you need them. RM feels that money should be found for a feasibility study. WJ to meet with Chris Goodman to discuss initial thoughts and possible ideas for footpaths, not a full design. CB said possible proposals for a Lochinver deer fence will include a public consultation in the next few weeks and she wondered whether it would be possible to link the deer fence consultation with one for footpaths? BOH feels that many of the footpaths on the west side of the Glebe would be unlikely to conflict with houses wherever they are sited.

Site investigations.

RM feels that it is important to have another walk over the Glebe site; rather than just look at the original proposed sites (from the Local Options Appraisal) it would be beneficial to find funding so we can go to tender for an engineer and a contractor with a digger to go on site for two or three days, the remit would be to find a buildable development on the Glebe site.

Community Consultation

CB feels that the steering group should consult on ideas for the Glebe with the community and she feels that a top-down approach should be avoided and should instead be inclusive. She said that we need to ask people what they want. With regard to footpaths we should wait until the position of the houses is known. Consultation could be via outside notice boards; email; direct mail and Assynt News. CB feels that we must take the community with us and be transparent. WJ advised that all relevant documents and minutes of meetings are posted on the ADT website.

RM feels that scoping work is required which can then form initial ideas and possibilities, but they should not present people with a fait accompli. At present we do not know how many houses there will be or where. NG said he thought that the steering group should build on the community consultation from August last year. He suggested that this be posted onto ADT’s website so that we can make use of the information presented in the community consultation survey.

Wider strategy for Assynt and Lochinver.

WJ discussed the idea of a strategy as it may help to inform the allocations policy. BOH mentioned the community empowerment act and guidance from the Scottish Govt . The community planning partnerships which were introduced are very top down. In contrast Local Place plans being quite new have limited guidance but we could choose to go down this route. BOH mentioned Strathpeffer as a case study. They have looked at these issues and in two to three years have very limited results. He suggested that it's very important not to gum-up the Glebe process.

RM said that a community strategy should be along the lines of how do you see Lochinver in 5, 10, 25 years. For example – a thriving primary school? retaining the elderly in the community? How will the Glebe development help to support these objectives? JM mentioned a community place plan that he helped to develop in Strontian. A community bottom-up approach, resulting in the plan being adopted by Highland Council, was triggered by a development and was the first step in a bigger picture which didn't hold the community back from considering other issues. However, you must build houses first while the funding is there. JM asked the question "why create woodland crofts"? He explained that understanding which group of people are attracted to this idea will explain or direct the approach to be adopted. For example; local people may seek rental crofts, but possibly those from outside Assynt may have more capital, and they may be more interested in owner-occupied crofts

NG feels that with less than 40% of residents of Assynt live in Lochinver there are many different communities, and these communities have similar tensions to those found in more heavily populated areas. He feels it is important to ask who are the key constituents and who will be impacted by this development?

RM said it is important to look at various different options now as these will help to inform the final choice and mix of the development. CB asked what funding is there for other facilities, eg a community room or library? RM replied that a mixed-use development can result in complimentary funding becoming available and CHT can facilitate finding the funding. He advised not to raise expectations and do not present a fait accompli.

Action plan

WJ to make contact with Chris Goodman with regard to footpaths

Approach CALL seeking funding for footpath feasibility work and initial design ideas

News and information about the Glebe project to be posted on the ADT website

Copies of August 2020 Community Consultation to be forwarded to steering group members

CHT to consider further site investigations

Date and time of next meeting: Tuesday 30th March 4:00pm