

Dear all,

I have drafted a brief note below of our meeting highlighting key issues and action points arising, for your files:

Present: Henry Murdo, Margo Wheeler, Margo MacLennan, Andrew Grazier, John Inglis, Rob Soutar, Andy Walker, Colin Hossack, Malcolm Wield & Jamie McIntyre

- Research Study by Neil Sutherland Architects (NSA) agreed to be a valuable exercise: had highlighted many good ideas, analysed sites and empowered the community. Neil and his team were also excellent.
- However, it had been unhelpful in indicating costs which were very high which was an issue for the social housing agenda
- It had also not addressed key planning issues, which had been a source of frustration to North Ayrshire Council and others.
- NAC and Isle of Arran Homes had ruled out building 'standard' social housing on FCS sites; they felt they had better sites available to them, and also had no budget at present
- John Inglis felt that Isle of Arran Homes might still be interested in building houses on a forest site, whose rents would be set on a full-cost recovery basis
- Affordable housing, and woodland crofts, both remained as options that could be delivered by HIFAR
- There remained strong feelings about planning officials from HIFAR, though Arran CC were less pessimistic, and it was agreed that planning matters had to be approached in a constructive way
- It was agreed that the planning issues were not insurmountable everywhere, and Planning Aid for Scotland identified as a group who could provide support to the community on Arran in addressing these issues
- Ultimately planning approval would be required for any development of affordable houses or croft houses to progress, so dialogue would be needed
- Rob agreed to discuss the issues surrounding Glenloig as a possible site informally with planners
- Meeting agreed to identify and focus on a couple of priorities, and next steps to deliver these
- Key to delivery was to identify interested parties/beneficiaries, who would be motivated to help develop the proposals
- Concern was expressed however about the numbers of such people who had left Arran in recent years; and thus who would respond to an invitation to express interest
- Malcolm noted that HIFAR had built up experience, identified affordable housing as a key interest, and assessed all FCS ground on Arran
- This background meant that HIFAR were in a position to make an application to the NFLS, but needed to decide where this should be and for what purpose
- The NFLS is discretionary so some flexibility could be applied; however HIFAR already met many of the criteria required
- A proposal was now needed, along with supporting information; the NSA study could be included in this. Important that this objective should now be timebound.
- Neither outline nor detailed planning approval was needed for application to the NFLS, nor approval; substantive feedback from planners was adequate for that stage

Priorities:

- **A pilot affordable housing project at Glenloig involving self-build plots was agreed by HIFAR to be their first priority;**
- **Interest from Arran residents in woodland crofts would also be explored further, with a view to identifying an appropriate site in due course**
- The full cost-recovery rental model involving Isle of Arran Homes was agreed to be held in reserve for the present, to simplify next steps

Other discussion covered:

- Affordable housing mechanisms, including the Rural Housing Burden (a right of pre-emption) & equity shares
- Developments on Mull by the North West Mull Community Woodland Company, in particular their proposals for woodland crofts including housing
- Approaches to woodland purchase under the NFLS
- The benefit of employing a project officer at an appropriate point to help develop project proposals
- The benefit in getting an indicative value for the Glenloig site, for affordable housing

Woodland Crofts

- Jamie outlined experience from other projects to date, where a pragmatic and realistic approach to finance was needed by groups
- Confirmation that woodland crofts were a woodland management model, which had implications for what could be done on them, especially in terms of maintaining woodland cover
- Various options for sharing understanding of woodland crofts existed, and the woodland crofts officer role was supported until August 2011

Next steps/action points (AP):

Identify interested parties for self-build plots and woodland crofts, in principle (ie without yet identifying site(s) publicly)

- **AP Henry to draft advert for Arran Banner to invite expressions of interest, and circulate for comment prior to submission**
- **AP John to draft article for Arran Banner to support advert, and circulate for comment prior to submission**
- **AP Jamie to send links to webpages on woodland crofts for inclusion in advert (see below - in address footer)**
- **AP Rob to have informal discussion with NAC planners over issues regarding Glenloig site**
- **AP Rob to get an indicative value for the Glenloig site, for affordable housing**

If anyone has any additions or amendments, please get back to me.

Regards

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www.hie.co.uk/woodland-crofts.htm
www.forestry.gov.uk/woodlandcrofts