

1 Million Acre – Strategic Group Meeting

1130-1530, Tuesday 16th August 2016

St Andrews House, Conference Room D

MINUTES

Present:

- * Dave Thomson (Chair, SG)
- * Linsay Chalmers (CLS)
- * Linda Gillespie (DTAS)
- * Malcolm Wield (FCS)
- * Ailsa Raeburn (HIE)
- * Donald Inch (SLE)
- * Sandra Holmes (HIE)
- * Jasmine Chorley (HIE – Observer)

Apologies:

- Sarah Skerratt (SRUC)
- Neil Ritch (Big Lottery)
- Stephen Sadler (SG)

1. Attendees were welcomed to the third 1m acre strategic group meeting. Jasmine Chorley was attending as an observer. Jasmine was coming to the end of a work experience period with HIE before returning to Toronto and this was a good opportunity to give her an idea of some of the wider issues in land reform.
2. **Minutes of last meeting**
There was one small amendments to the minutes of the last meeting (17/4/16), where it should have been LC that was to organise the MSP briefing, rather than LG.
3. **Action Points from the last meeting**

Community Land Ownership Literature

AP: It was agreed to develop a short leaflet as a single first point of information for a range of general audiences. The information on the leaflet should be brief and contain key messages. Branding will be SG.

ACTION: AR circulated a first draft for comments.

AP: The group agreed to identify common links to sources of information so that each organisation is referring people to the same links/ information in other organisations.

ACTION: The group discussed the information on their respective websites and agreed to circulate web stats to identify the interest and uptake on specific issues or material.

(**AP:** It was agreed that LG, LC and AR would liaise to identify gaps in supporting information on their sites.)

AP: It was also agreed to develop a briefing note for MSPs/MPs/ Elected members.

ACTION: LC noted that Peter Peacock and Lorne Macleod were speaking with the Chairs of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee and the Rural Economy Committee on the 23rd August. The briefing note would be developed once the outcome of those meeting was known. (**AP:** LC to provide draft briefing note)

AP: A set of FAQ's is to be developed for the strategic group to use as a source of reference. This needs to also include a definition of community. NR to circulate Big Lottery FAQ list.

ACTION: Big Lottery are reviewing their FAQ's following the launch of the new fund, so NR will forward these on once that review has been completed. (**AP:** NR to circulate Big Lottery FAQ list.)

Raising awareness of community land ownership

The group discussed the draft comes strategy and 6 month action plan with the following comments/ observations:

- * The Improvement Service is a good service for getting messages across to public bodies and elected members. Might be useful to organise an event in partnership with the IS.
- * Potentially some missing audiences in terms of groups looking to do activities that could be delivered using CLO but that hadn't considered using CLO as a delivery option.
- * need to brief new MSPs once in place. Option to hold an event with new MSPs and Committees. Should be a speed briefing style event around September time.

AP: LC to speak to RACCE and LG Clerks re possibility of jointly hosted event for MSPs in September

ACTION: As noted earlier, there are meetings with the committee chairs next week, so this will be taken further following those meetings.

AP: ALL to send info to LC on upcoming events over next 6 months to populate comms action plan

ACTION: Various events were noted and further work on the comms plan would be done over the next month or two.

AP: ALL to collectively organise 'seeing is believing' trips for journalists. DT to speak with SG Comms. Particularly need to target urban areas

ACTION: SG Comms are keen on the idea of the visits and would help to facilitate these if required. The group discussed what should be the focus of these visits, and it was agreed that it would make sense to base them around themes (e.g. urban, protocol, community ownership etc. (**AP:** AR to identify suitable visits and all to suggest themes).

It was also felt that there should be a focus on local press as well as national press.

Developing road map of support

It was agreed that a set of coordinated and complementary road maps should be developed to cover asset transfer, community right to buy legislation and willing buyer/willing seller scenarios. These should follow on naturally from the general information leaflet by providing more guided detail for groups on how to proceed

AP: COSS will update asset transfer road map to reflect CEB requirements. HIE, CLS and COSS will develop additional road maps for remaining scenarios.

ACTION: LG provided a draft version of the updated roadmap. The group felt that the format was a good one and agreed that it be most useful in the context of a tool to facilitate discussions with and amongst community groups. The group also felt that we should look at developing multiple versions address Part 2, Part 3A and the Protocol for Negotiated Sales in particular. (**AP:** LG to circulate draft once approved by Management Committee)

4. **Activities since last meeting**

COSS/DTAS: Concentrating on the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act provisions, particularly around Asset Transfer.

FCS: Applications to NFLS have now closed. The replacement scheme, under the working title of Community Asset Transfer Scheme, is still under final development and enquiries are now being dealt with by district managers.

CLS: Funding has recently been received from the lottery to produce a series of short films highlighting the benefits of community ownership. These will feature groups from Wanlockhead, North-West Mull and Carloway. In addition to that they are updating their website to focus a little less on policy issues and more on material that groups can download and use.

SLE: There has been a continued promotion of the protocol on negotiated sales throughout the show period and there has been a noticeable increase in interest. They will also be attending a series of events focussing on rural housing, with the first being on Mull. In addition, a group of SLE members will visit Eigg to get a first-hand perspective on community ownership. There is also a continued promotion of the Helping It Happen campaign and DI asked if the group could pass on any examples of where a community and owner have worked well in partnership to achieve a positive outcome.

SG: Series of research papers were published at the end of July 9 (all of which can be found on the SG website). Interest in right to buy in an urban context continues to grow although most are at the very early stages in their thinking. Legislation will come through in stages for the Land Reform Act, with Part 1-4 being in place by April 2017. Part 5, which is the right to buy land to further sustainable development, is likely to come into force about a year or so after Part 3A (due in June 2017), but that timetable has yet to be decided. The changes to the Crofting Community Right to Buy should be in force in April 2017.

HIE: Continued work on Scottish Land Fund applications and a marked increase in applications to Stage 1 of the fund has been noted. There have only been a few Stage 2 applications and most of these are still based in the traditional HIE area. The next committee meeting will, in addition to evaluating applications, will also look at whether or not the remit of the fund might need to be amended to cater for the likely aspirations of groups seeking to use the Part 3A regulations. It was felt that waiting until the 2 year review

of the fund might be too late, but AR would report back on the committee's thoughts at the next meeting.

As issue was raised about wider funding and in particular the funding gap that is widening in relation to post acquisition funding until the asset has been developed to the point of sustainability. Various potential solutions were discussed including increased private funding, more joining up between funders, discussions with existing funders such as Triodos to understand how they assess applications for funding. There may also be a need for the SLF to manage to pipeline of acquisitions to fit with post-acquisition funding streams (**AP:** AR to report back from next SLF committee meeting).

5. Post-Election Million Acre Priority

DT clarified that the priority of achieving the million acre target has not changed. If anything, it has increased, particular with the focus that the new Cabinet Secretary gives to community ownership.

6. Consultant Workloads and Availability.

AR raised an increasing issue around the consultants used by community groups in preparing their SLF applications. HIE maintain a list of potential consultants that groups can choose from, without vetting, and it is becoming apparent that the same half a dozen or so keep being used, and that the workloads have increased significantly due to the interest generated in the new fund. There are also some issues with the suitability of some of the consultants on the list, but HIE felt that they were unable to vet the list. MW felt that there may be some way to do so and would check with colleagues on a similar exercise that they undertook recently (**AP:** MW to report back on process in another similar exercise). One possible solution to increasing the number of consultants on the list, was to hold some form of workshop for potential businesses. In the lead up to this HIE and COSS would circulate their list of consultants to the group for information. (**AP:** AR/LG to circulate consultants list to group)

7. East Lochaber & Laggan Community Trust

SH and DT provided a high level update on the current situation, but stressed that it was still very fluid with the final options very dependent on the owner's plans for the 120,000 acre estate. HIE and SG were keeping in close contact with the group and would update the group at the next meeting.

8. Any other Business

SH raised the question of where we are in relation to the million acre target. DT confirmed that current estimates are around 540,000, which included the Pairc Estate acquisition in December. DT also explained that there is some current research being set up which would look at how the acreage of land in community ownership can more readily be measured on an ongoing basis. In the more immediate terms, DT would send a copy of the data used to determine the baseline, to SH for information. (**AP:** DT to send data to SH)

9. Date of next meeting.

AP: DT to arrange for end November.