

## 1 Million Acre – Strategic Group Meeting

1130-1530, Thursday 20 April 2017

Saughton House, Room F-3

### MINUTES

**Present:**

Dave Thomson (Chair, SG)  
Lindsay Chalmers (CLS)  
Linda Gillespie (COSS)  
Rebecca Carr (FES)  
Sandra Holmes (HIE)

**Apologies:**

Gavin Mowat (SLE)  
Ailsa Raeburn (HIE)  
Neil Ritch (Big Lottery)

1. Attendees were welcomed to the fifth 1m acre strategic group meeting.
2. **Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

3. **Action Points from the last meeting**

#### **Community Land Ownership Literature**

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.

**AP1: All to provide final comments to LG**

**AP2: DT to provide paragraph for Community Land Team**

The leaflet has now been produced and has been distributed during various community ownership events.

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.

**AP3: AR to send a list of common web links to all**

SH agreed to send this link ASAP.

#### **Raising awareness of community land ownership**

Parliamentary event had been arranged for 11 January 2017. It was also agreed to develop a briefing note for MSPs/MPs/ Elected members

**AP4: LC to send copy to all**

The event was held as arranged (thanks to LC for organising) and all agreed that it had been a success. Parliament staff had commented that there was a high number of MSPs in attendance compared to other similar events.

**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

**AP5: All to provide comments on route maps and leaflet.**

**AP6: DT and LC to provide text for back page of leaflet.**

The roadmaps have now been printed and LG commented that they had already had to reprint some. RC asked for copies of each to be sent to FES. It was agreed that these were proving extremely useful for community groups and we look to due further print runs in the near future.

**AP: DT to send copies of roadmaps to RC**

**Case Studies**

It was felt that it would be useful to have some good examples of successful urban community collaborations with local authorities. Keeping it to the central belt would make it more accessible for journalists, and increase the likelihood of attendance. It would be helpful to link this visit to and Big Lottery comms around that time.

**AP7: All to provide examples to DT for discussion with SG comms.**

**AP8: DT to check with SG comms for template for information**

Whilst SG comms were supportive of the idea of a media visit, there was limited support that they could give. After some discussion it was agreed that this approach would no longer have the impact that was initially expected.

It was felt that building up a portfolio of case studies would have a bigger impact, could feed into Ministerial requests for visits (which could be used to promote the advantages of community ownership), and should be kept up to date and added to as more groups were successful. Start to include more “Five years on” type of cases, where more established groups are able to demonstrate the impact of ownership.

Following on from that, there was a suggestion that a “Community Ownership Week” might be good to promote ownership on an annual basis. It could be on the lines of the Open Doors events, and that community groups, landowners and (potentially) other organisations could agree to receive visits (pre-arranged) during that week, along with a series of linked events. Summer 2018 was felt to be a realistic target, especially if it could be linked to some sort of event or announcement.

**AP: DT to collate case studies from all members of the group**

#### **Parliamentary Event**

- a. Parliamentary event had been arranged for 11 January 2017

**AP9: All to provide any infograms or videos for event**

**AP10: All to suggest additional attendees.**

**AP11: DT to check with SG comms about further promotion of event**

See comments re AP4

#### **4. Activities since last meeting**

##### **COSS/DTAS**

- “To Have and to Hold” publication has been updated and is now broken down into several modules
- Publication of leaflet on community ownership of public toilets. More local authorities are closing these facilities resulting in more community taken on their running.
- Invitation received to a first point of contact event (15<sup>th</sup> June) in relation to asset transfer

##### **HIE**

- Currently finalising updated Scottish Land Fund guidance booklets
- Currently researching issues surrounding supply and demand of housing, which is becoming more of an issue/concern for community groups
- Beginning to get a range of enquiries on asset transfer and are looking into how to support community groups with their bids and funding.
- Seminar on the potential for peatland management as a community asset.
- Internal review of resources to meet changing demands

##### **CLS**

- Recently held a strategy session which identified a number of priorities
  - Identified a need to focus more on areas outwith the NW of Scotland due to the increase in interest and members from other parts of Scotland.
  - Ensure that focus remains on the land aspect of ownership rather than buildings. This would help to avoid a potential overlap with the work of DTAS.
  - Targeting the supply of land and creating material for landowners to highlight the benefits of encouraging community ownership.
- Recently met with new Land Commissioners to discuss various issues
- Arranging annual conference for end of May
- Recently held Inner Islands Conference on Mull (which highlighted a potential to facilitate regional groups of community bodies).

- Looking at landscape justice to ensure that *all* aspects of land use are taken into account (e.g. it's not just about preserving a scenic area, but ensuring that people/economy/local priorities are also taken into account)

## **FES**

- Recently launched Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) is beginning to take effect. Approximately 26 areas were put up in February, with about 2/3 of those generating interest from communities. It is expected that about ½ of those would come through asset transfer.
- They have appointed an independent evaluation panel for asset transfer requests and would be willing for other organisations to make use of that panel if appropriate
- Looking at lease terms and how best to suit these to asset transfer.

## **SG**

- Research underway to refresh progress towards the million acre target, with a view to developing a process that can be repeated annually.
- Beginning to develop asset transfer procedures for both transfer requests to the SG and for any appeals.
- Work continuing on looking at the opportunities created by developing an “umbrella” communities fund combining existing funds that are managed by the SG.
- Legislative process is continuing on various fronts. Community Right to Buy Abandoned, Neglected or Detrimental Land is expected to come into force towards the end of 2017, although other pressures may delay that further.

## **5. Any other Business**

There was a lengthy discussion around asset transfer. Although community ownership is not the only option available through this process, it is one of them, and therefore relevant for this group. It was agreed that RC/LG and SH would liaise as far as the process is concerned, to clarify differing understandings, especially in relation to an asset transfer request that is received once steps have already been taken to transfer that asset to another party.

There was also a request for confirmation that the community right to buy templates do not contradict anything in the various other options for community groups. SG impression was that these should be seen as covering all of the various options.

## **6. Date of next meeting.**

**AP:** DT to arrange for August/September.