

Inaugural meeting of Dunadd Community Enterprise.

23rd October 2018, 7.30, Living Stones Centre, Kilmartin

Present: 1 guest, 1 associate member, 1 junior member, 57 members. A list of the members who attended the meeting is available on request.

Apologies: Ella and Stephen Wilson, Louise Oppenheimer.

Welcome

David Bracken, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming.

Chairman's report – given by David Bracken.

Following the community meeting in October 2017 Allan McLean, Chris Carr, Di Roberts, Steve Carter, Sue MacLean, Vivien Little, and myself formed the steering group where we set about the following tasks:-

- chose a name
- wrote the company articles
- became a member of Development Trust Assoc of Scotland
- registered at Companies House as a limited company
- looked at the windfarm community plan and decided on some small win projects –
- started with book swap
- started a membership campaign

We had some thoughts on larger projects especially ones that would initiate an income, these were

- hydro power facility
- community allotment/market garden scheme

We started to introduce the company to local organisation, groups, and possible partners.

Not been an easy ride there are difficulties: -

No pump priming funding for organisations nowadays. Argyll and Bute Council trialled a new way of issuing community funding which worked against us.

Other bodies we have applied to have stated that the local authority should pump prime organisations like ours, it's still an issue we need to resolve.

Dunadd Community Council have been very supportive paying for leaflets and hall hire where they can.

Book swap has run in Kilmichael, Ford and Kilmartin since June and will take a rest over the winter period and reopen February.

There have been 112 attendances (not including volunteers) and over 150 volunteer hours. Through book swap, website, leafleting and general conversations we presently have – 128 members

We talked about Kilmartin toilets closure and possibly taking over these, however the Council has decided not to close any public toilets.

We were interested in looking at purchasing the Living Stones Centre, but could not get the owners to talk to us – we now know land has covenant stating it cannot be used as a shop or hotel/or inn, and building also has a covenant stating it can only be used as a religious building.

As a follow-on from contacting local partners we were contacted by the museum, who are interested in purchasing part of the Glebe field for a car park.

They told us that Church of Scotland want to sell church and Glebe together and the museum has no interest in the church.

As you can see, we were not put together to purchase the church as stated in the recent Argyll Advertiser article

After the company was introduced to the Church of Scotland, by the museum, we opened discussions and have expressed an interest, but stated we are a new organisation who needs some time to move this forward.

The Church of Scotland (Edinburgh) are not concerned who they sell the church to they just want to sell it! But are willing to wait for Dunadd Community Enterprise to get our act together – we need to show significant movement towards the purchase within the next 12 months if we are interested.

So as a company we are exploring our options

Community Council Plan (2014) says: -

- important to retain shop and post office - use it or lose it; community buy-out as last resort
- importance of church – greater use for evening performances?
- Dunadd Visitor Centre

A' Chruach Windfarm Plan (2016) stated: -

- establish Theatre/arts centre
- acquire land assets & woodlands
- feasibility study for re-establish Kilmartin Shop and post office
- refurbish village halls
- feasibility study for central community facility
- establish central community facility
- regeneration and refurbishment of village centres
- develop community owned child minding & after school care
- develop vocational learning & work experience schemes based around child care
- Establish study centres and youth education facilities

However, there are issues in purchasing a church.

The church is owned by Church of Scotland, the graveyard is owned by either Argyll and Bute Council or Scottish Antiquities society and Historic Environment Scotland have an interest.

There is currently no water supply and there is no sewerage.

The building is a grade B listed and is situated in a conservation area (since 1978).

Access to do work would have to be looked at regarding the war memorial.

Apart from this it is an active grave yard and local people have already expressed concern that they want the graves of their grandparents, parent, siblings, friends, and other relatives to be respected.

Residents were consulted again in 2016 at the meeting that setup the Dunadd Community Enterprise steering group and are presently being consulted through Dunadd Community Enterprise website and publicity.

Residents have said they would like:

- shop & Post office
- community space
- music & drama space
- rehearsal space
- arts and craft exhibition space
- heritage centre
- meeting space
- activity space
- tea & coffee drop-in
- view point (tower)
- ice skating ring
- accommodation for tourists
- enterprise opportunities
- childminding and after school activities

From all the comments I have received via the processes we have set up, nobody has said that we should not look at community ownership of the church, however one person has personally told me, in a discussion in the hotel, we should not purchase the church, it should just be left to be!

Please take the time when we break at the end of the meeting for tea and coffee to add to the lists and express your support or not for the ownership of the church.

We have found a funding stream that will help us explore the viability of owning the church—however they have had a number of applications to purchase churches and have only ever approved one, but they have approved one.

Scottish Land Fund can fund the purchase of the church, we need to show

- Community need – two community plans
- Community support -
 - Financial viability – not going to bankrupt us

Feasibility study is the main thing. Let's take a shop as an example: -

You cannot make a going concern from a shop if we all just purchase a newspaper and an occasional pint of milk. However, if the Celtic crosses stay in the building, that attracts a lot of people a day, expanding the footfall – is this enough to make a viable shop?

What state is the building in and how much work needs to be carried out to make it a quality building for the community?

And how much will it cost to run?

What other enterprise projects can be in the building that can subsidise community groups and activities, and how do you get these to fit seamlessly together?

The Scottish Land Fund will take us through all of this in two stages.

Stage 1 – Technical assistance funding and will fund up to 95% of this to demonstrate some community support for your project; a clear explanation of the community need and details of the asset.

Stage 2 - Acquisition funding - capital and revenue costs associated with the acquisition of assets. Stage 2 acquisition grants can be between £10,000 and £1,000,000. It does not fund any of the costs of converting, restoring or developing the asset once you have bought it.

Does anyone have any questions or comments so far?

So, I ask you to take time at the end of the meeting to fill in the boards especially the support or no support for the purchase of the church and what you would like to see happen to it

Priorities for the next 12 months includes: -

- new Directors need to decide if they want to progress the ownership of the church building
- continue to develop the Dunadd area community plan
- explore ways to develop income for the community

There followed a question and answer session:

Q - Do you have any idea of the costs of bringing the building up to spec?

A – Not yet, feasibility study will give us a good idea, we have started talking to potential partners.

Q - Do you have any idea which church the SLF did fund?

A – No, we will pursue this after the next Directors meeting if the decision is to progress with a feasibility study.

Q - Would you be allowed to put water and sewage in?

A – The museum may assist when they are doing the building work on their redevelopment in 2020.

Q – Would we have to pay council tax?

A – We haven't gone into that level of detail yet.

Q – How much can you expect to get from the A'Chruach Windfarm?

A – We have currently applied for £20,000 for a development worker for one year. The annual allocation from the windfarm is £150,000, but there are other funds we can apply to so wouldn't be solely reliant on them.

Q – What are the closing dates on SLF applications?

A – It is a rolling programme.

Q – Is there a danger that you could afford to purchase it but not afford to run it?

A – The feasibility study will give us a good idea of the financial viability of the project, we would need to ensure that we didn't leave future generations with a financial liability.

Q – Should we even be considering taking on a building if we don't know what we would do if it doesn't make enough money to cover its costs?

A – The feasibility study should consider all scenarios and give an indication of potential risks and things that could mitigate risks.

This is an expensive building. The newly elected Directors will decide whether to progress the feasibility. There are 3 checks and balances 1) the community, 2) the Directors, 3) funding organisations

Jim Malcolm commented as Community Council Convenor that there is a desperate need for a community facility and the Community Enterprise can access funds that the Church of Scotland can't.

Q – Is the hall included in the purchase?

A – We have expressed an interest in the hall too. David Smart is interested in developing some youth education space. It is not known who owns the land.

Q – Are there any restriction on the use of the building?

A – We don't know if there are any covenants on its use yet. Concerns have been expressed about dances and alcohol and the potential disrespect of the graveyard.

Q – Will those who still have an active layer in the graveyard be contacted?

A – We don't know yet what would be required regarding the graveyard.

Q – It seems the capital purchase cost is not the issue, it's the running costs.

A – Dave shared one idea – can we install a mezzanine, and someone has suggested tourist accommodation, this could provide an income to help with running costs

Q – Could we consider a different approach as the church seems to have lots of problems – could we acquire the hall (which is a pretty ropey building) and the land and rebuild a hall on the land?

A – This is a possibility the feasibility study needs to be robust and realistic

Other comments included:

- there are lots of other examples across Scotland where it has been done successfully.
- As the building has problems, would that give you some leverage as it is unlikely that it would be sold quickly
- In Paisley a church was acquired, half community space, half youth space with a climbing wall

Financial report - given by Di Roberts

The report was an unaudited snapshot of the Enterprise's finances. Audited accounts are not required until next year.

Income £1,136.44 some promised though not yet received, committed expenditure £565.01, current surplus £571.43 though some of it ring fenced for Book swap.

There were no questions concerning the finances.

Amendments to Articles

David explained that the Scottish Land Fund had pointed out a couple of issues with our Articles that would likely preclude the Enterprise from accessing funding.

Article 28 currently grants the Directors the power to deny membership to any applicant. This does not demonstrate an open membership organisation.

The ordinary members present were asked to raise their hands if they were in favour of removing this clause. The vote was carried by a large majority.

Article 73 currently states “A person shall not be eligible for election/appointment as a Director unless he/she is a member of the company”. This may result in the Board not being made up of or being representative of the local community. The ordinary members present were asked to raise their hands if they were in favour of adding the word ‘ordinary’. “A person shall not be eligible for election/appointment as a Director unless he/she is an **ordinary** member of the company”. The vote was carried by a large majority. The Articles will be amended accordingly.

Election of Directors

The current interim directors are:

David Bracken
Stephen Carter
Christine Carr
Susan Maclean
Allan McLean
Diane Roberts
Vivien Little

Vivien and Susan wished to step down, the other interim directors wish to be considered for election to the Board.

Members were asked if there were any others who would be willing to be considered for election to the Board. Gary Linstead put himself forward.

A new Board was elected unopposed:

David Bracken
Stephen Carter
Christine Carr
Gary Linstead
Susan Maclean
Allan McLean
Diane Roberts

The meeting was closed and folks were encouraged to have a look at and comment on the ideas for use of the church building that had been suggested so far which were displayed about the room.