



## **Open Community Meeting**

**White Church, Comrie**

**Monday 02 November 2009, 7.30pm**

### **MINUTE OF MEETING**

CDT Directors: Cathy Tilbrook (Chair), Alan Caldwell, Ian Findlay, Eunice Cartwright, Fran Loots, David Robertson, Felicity Snowsill, Blair Urquhart.

CDT staff: Isla Valenti

In attendance: Doug Smart, Smart & Co. (estates services consultant dealing with Cultybraggan rentals)

#### **Welcome**

A very warm welcome was extended to the great turnout of over 70 villagers to this Open Community meeting dedicated to Cultybraggan.

Ian Findlay, volunteer CDT Board member, started the meeting off with an outline of what the meeting was going to cover, how best to make the most of the opportunity that is Cultybraggan. He also gave an explanation of the various papers on all tables for everyone to refer to during the evening.

Alan Caldwell, volunteer CDT Board member, spoke to the meeting of the dedication and hard work shown by the volunteer board members and CDT members on the Cultybraggan Working Group who are not paid for any of their participation in this group. This group has been meeting most Tuesday mornings for the last three years. Alan also gave thanks to the very kind group of distributors without whom this latest Cultybraggan Comrie Bulletin would not reach every household in Comrie – the Cultybraggan Working group and CDT Board very much appreciate the huge efforts of this team.

Alan gave a brief background on the history of the purchase and subsequent development of Cultybraggan so far for any new community members at the meeting emphasising that every member of the Comrie Community has the right to their say about Cultybraggan.

Doug Smart gave the meeting a presentation on the current situation on the number of refurbished nissen hut rentals that have been signed up and how many are nearing completion and how many have serious interest shown in them. Doug was given the brief to revisit all enquiries that had been received over the last few months from local people. He has, in conjunction with the Cultybraggan working group, produced a brochure that provides possible future tenants with all the information regarding the site. Doug has also advertised the rentals on line and in press releases to widen the catchment area of possible rental tenants. There are three tenants now in with a number of others nearing completion of signing.

Alan Caldwell gave the meeting an update on the financial aspect of Cultybraggan. The initial purchase price for Cultybraggan was £350K with the valuation of the cottage on the land set at £80K the latest valuation of the community asset is £630K. With borrowing currently at its highest including the initial purchase cost and the cost of infrastructure works the development is at the stage of requiring to generate income to cover running costs etc. The main areas that CDT require community responses on are:

- a designated area of nissen huts to be used as self storage units
- outline planning permission for two house plots to raise the value of the site as a fall back position
- a community owned leisure development on the hillside – self catering eco-pods to generate income for locals and heighten economy in the village by bringing more tourists to the village
- how to respond to any approaches for purchase of areas within the "commercial quadrant"
- ideas for the development of the Eco Hub quadrant

Alan assured the meeting that the current funders involved with Cultybraggan have all intimated that they are “in it for the long haul” and that Triodos Bank Credit panel have agreed in principle to refinance the current Tudor Trust loan used to purchase the camp two years ago. He asked the meeting several worst case scenario questions such as “what if it goes wrong”, “what areas would the community be willing to sell first to keep other areas of community benefit going” and “who decides if things go wrong”. He then assured the meeting that the 12 elected Board members work on behalf of the community therefore should Cultybraggan face any crisis a Comrie Bulletin would be issued outlining the situation and a vote could be taken on the outcome

Ian Findlay, spoke further to the meeting on the role of the CDT board members and how they are continually assessing the risk and managing the risk on all aspects of Cultybraggan. He invited the meeting to pose questions to the board, break into group discussions around the tables on the main response points and submit any further thoughts and suggestions.

Following the table discussions Ian Findlay facilitated and a number of tables put forward their thoughts to the meeting:

#### Self Catering Eco Pods on the hillside

- Great idea, will it be run by locals, will there be a committee to oversee the running of it and where will the money come from to build them?
- Need to check feasibility and demand before progressing.
- If this idea does go ahead a business plan will be compiled, it will be run as a local community enterprise and CDT are delighted that one of the current Cultybraggan funders, Social Investment Scotland, is interested in providing the capital to fund a development like this.
- Good idea, would be great to include mountain bike training to tie in with current mountain bike stuff at Comrie Croft.
- Love the idea but would like to know more on where the eco-pods will be sited for aesthetic viewpoint of area.

#### Commercial Quadrant

- No sell off of any areas – the Trust to keep control.

- Dead against selling off any parts.
- Not sure any area should be sold off – think it must be an important area and control should not be lost from the Trust – this would allow the ethos of the camp to continue and not be lost to others “doing their own thing”.
- Important that any uses in this area are appropriate for overall aims of Cultybraggan.
- Appreciate may reach a point that something needs to be sold off to raise money.
- Could longer term leases be explored?

### Self Storage

- Would the nissen huts be made into small units inside with keys given to the individuals renting the spaces ?

Yes, the nissen huts would be subdivided into caged areas etc.

- Excellent idea.
- Would not want to see a lot of the huts being made into self storage – how many ?

We do not think there would be an overwhelming demand for this so at this very initial stage we feel it would be one or two nissen huts being made into self storage units.

- Could the self storage be done in the listed nissen huts ?

This would be investigated should this use go ahead.

### Outline planning permission for two house plots.

- This should proceed but with the Trust retaining the development to ensure commercial gain to the Trust.
- Feel happy for the Trust to proceed getting outline planning permission to raise the value of the area but would not be happy for the two houses to be developed.
- Good idea but if houses do ever get built will that not reduce the possibility of certain uses (biomass etc.) in the adjacent area of the camp as planners would protect amenity of houses.
- If permission were granted then perhaps this would set a precedent for P&KC for further housing in neighbouring fields.
- Perhaps CDT could build and rent out rather than sell thus retain control or shared ownership option with house buyer and the Trust.
- Good idea but wary of big houses being built – affordable housing for tradesmen working at camp might be appropriate.

### Eco Hub

- Good idea.
- Renewable energy providers could come and showcase at Cultybraggan installing at Cultybraggan at a cost to showcase to others. Howard Liddle who spoke at a previous CDT open meeting could perhaps be approached regarding the idea with this being linked to the eco-pods/housing.
- Could be visitor attraction and centre of research linked to sustainable development issues (maybe associated with university or college department).

### General

- Can we have a coffee shop, kids play area and off road access at the camp ?
- In the refurbished huts is there an opportunity to have lower rents for local people to make it easier for them to lease a hut – even low rent for year one and is the lease a repair lease ?

Rents have been set as low as possible to a very competitive rate looking at nearby like for like accommodation. The lease is an internal repair lease.

- Is there a potential for a hydro scheme?

Water courses on the community land will be investigated to see if there would be sufficient water for small-scale hydro scheme to supply the eco-pods.

- Is there potential for wind turbines ?

No, a study has previously been done on Comrie and it has been deemed not a suitable site as it is in a “wind hole”.

- What is a land swap and how would it work?

This is a suggestion from the community that perhaps swapping land in the heart of the village (such as existing builders’ yards) for some land at Cultybraggan and then building affordable housing on the village land rather than at Cultybraggan due to its location and disconnection from the village community.

- Have any businesses been approached regarding land swaps?

There have only been tentative discussions at the very beginning but nothing further.

- Shouldn’t the bunker be sold – surely the Trust don’t have the expertise to operate and maintain it ?

There is currently interest in the bunker from an external party to lease for data storage.

- Who are the backers for Cultybraggan ?

Tudor Trust, Gannochy, Perth & Kinross Council, Social Investment Scotland, Scottish Government Climate Challenge Fund and Tayside LEADER.

- Why is the Commercial quadrant to be used for high end businesses ?

Due to its proximity to the main entrance therefore this area is at a premium.

- Can there be an area created and facilities put in place for micro industry to afford space – hobby, part-time, hot desks etc.

The refurbished nissen huts, as they are, have attracted smaller businesses already however this is something that may be looked into in future if the demand is there.

- Partnership working with Comrie Croft in future for further accommodation/climbing wall/outdoors pursuits ?

- Are the funders imposing any restrictions on the development of Cultybraggan ?

Yes, Triodos bank have been asking the “what if” questions and may request the link to gaining planning permission consent for the two house plots however this has not been confirmed.

- Will the Triodos loan (refinance of current Tudor Trust loan) incur interest ?

Yes, if we are granted the loan we assume it will be 2% above base rate. We are now paying interest on the Tudor Trust loan, as the interest free period has now elapsed, at 3% above base rate.

- Has fixed price finance been looked into ?

Discussions with possible new loan with Triodos Bank are on this basis and the Social Investment Scotland loan is also on this basis.

- Village square is a good idea but no land swap should happen for this at Cultybraggan – better to do land swaps for affordable housing for locals.
- An arts project at the main entrance to Cultybraggan and a sculptural trail on the hill land.
- Some nissen huts could be used for educational uses of local charitable uses (charity hub).
- Golf driving range, adventure course and climbing wall would all be welcomed.

Ian Findlay thanked the meeting for their attendance and contribution. He summarised the thoughts of the meeting that the main priorities for actions were:

1. Obtain outline planning consent for 2 housing plots (even if not then developed)
2. Pursue the rental or possible sale of the bunker
3. Progress proposals for the eco-pods on the hill land

The entire community will be encouraged to submit their comments/suggestions before the deadline of Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November. The CDT office will advertise for people to submit comments and an e-bulletin will be sent to all CDT members. The comments will be collated, analysed and a further edition of the Comrie Bulletin will be issued with updates and outcomes.

Alan Caldwell called on everyone at the meeting to encourage as many people in the village to join the Trust as possible as this is an important factor for future funding and the target is to have 50% of the village as members. He also asked people to “spread the word” from what they have heard at this meeting and encourage people to read the Comrie Bulletin as in the absence of knowledge people can speculate and therefore pass on misinformed information.

Cathy Tilbrook, CDT Chair, thanked everyone for attending and the great participation from the meeting and gave thanks to Ian Findlay for chairing the meeting, and to Alan Caldwell, Doug Smart and all others concerned in the development of Cultybraggan.

The next Community Open Meeting will take place on Monday 07 December in the WRI Hall. The main theme of this event will follow shortly.

Close of meeting : 9.30pm

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