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Kevin Stewart MSP



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Mr Bill Nicol
Director, The Hometown Foundation
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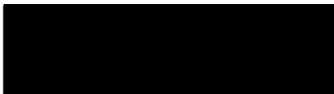
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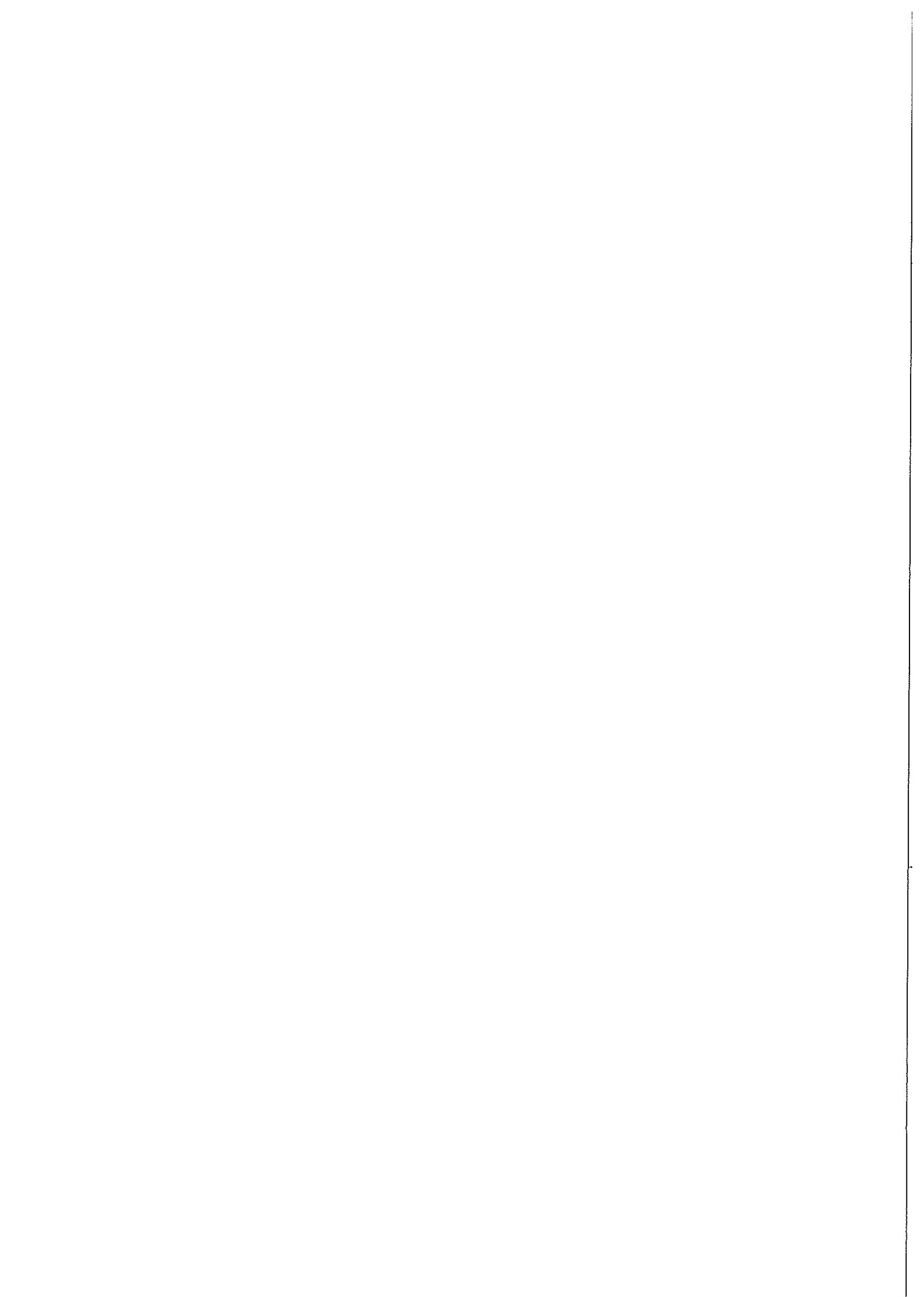
Thank you for your letter of 18 October 2016 to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution, requesting a meeting to discuss the work of the Hometown Foundation and the Owenstown project. I am responding on behalf of the Planning Minister given his portfolio interest in the matter.

Unfortunately, due to diary pressures, Mr Stewart is unable to meet with you. However, he would like to extend your invitation to officials from Scottish Government's Planning and Architecture Division. Please contact the Chief Planner either by e-mail at Chief.Planner@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone on 0131 244 7528 to arrange a mutually convenient date and time.

Yours sincerely



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PRIVATE SECRETARY

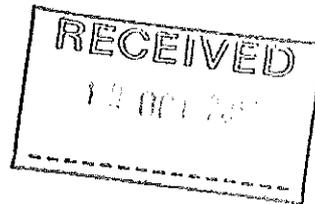


18 October 2016

PEU

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Derek McKay
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution
T4.07
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP



Dear Mr McKay

The Hometown Foundation and Owenstown

I am writing to you in your capacity as Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Construction to seek a meeting to discuss the work of the Hometown Foundation and, in particular, our Owenstown project.

We feel that this initiative continues to present a progressive approach to sustainable living and working and, as such, could prove to be an attractive proposition for the Scottish Government to engage with us and support us in its delivery. The initiative could make a positive contribution to the Scottish budget, through the reduction of public sector debt and the introduction of more efficient governance, many aspects that reside in your own domain of responsibility.

By way of background, I head up a Scottish Charity called the Hometown Foundation. The first physical project that we aimed to implement was Owenstown, named after the pioneering Robert Owen - <http://www.owenstown.org>. This set out to create a new sustainable, self-sufficient community, wholly owned by its inhabitants. My trustees bought the site - some 2,000 acres (757.5 ha) acres - and spent a considerable amount of time and money developing a blueprint for the proposed co-operative settlement. Unfortunately, the planning system was not in favour of the proposal, as it was not in the local development plan. Following its refusal, we took the application to appeal. However, without the necessary political support for the proposal within the Scottish Government at the time, this was also unsuccessful.

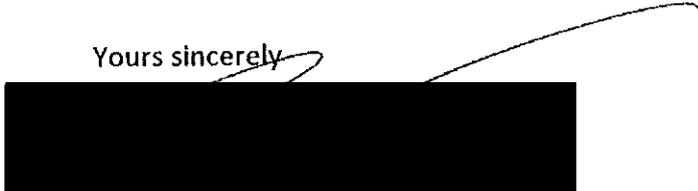
We still strongly believe that this initiative can be societal-changing; one that would allow residents to think differently about what is truly important to current day life. The pilot is based on a *value capture model*, with proceeds gifted to inhabitants - we had more than 2,500 expressions of interest at the time. It is essentially about suppressing costs associated with the factors of production, allowing inhabitants to live in a low cost way and letting them take more relevant decisions on the matters important to them, within the context of a co-operative community. It is worth noting that three London Burghs, Cambridge Borough Council and the Irish Government have all showed an interest in the initiative. However, we wish to implement this initiative in Scotland, ideally on the site that we own, since we have the ability to gift it to future inhabitants.

As my trustees remain fully committed to the Owenstown concept, they wish to revisit the project and determine if there is an appetite to progress with this innovative initiative. The proposals are fully developed, costed and the land remains available. The initiative can be delivered at no cost to the public purse and, at the same time, be considered as a unique pilot for cost effective living and working, which could be replicated across other areas of Scotland.

I would welcome an early discussion with you to determine where we can support the Scottish Government's agenda through the implementation of our concepts.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Bill Nicol

Director
Hometown Foundation