



1 Million Acre – Strategic Group Meeting

14:00 – 16:30, Tuesday 17 October 2017

Saughton House, Room B-2

MINUTES

Present: Janet Crook (Chair, Scottish Government)
Dave Thomson (Scottish Government)
Shona Glenn (Scottish Land Commission)
Gavin Mowat (Scottish Land and Estates)
Neil Ritch (Big Lottery)
Lindsay Chalmers (Community Land Scotland)
Linda Gillespie (Community Ownership Support Services)
Rebecca Carr (Forestry Enterprise Scotland)
Sandra Holmes (Highlands and Islands Enterprise)

Apologies: Posy MacRae (Scottish Land Commission)

1. Attendees were welcomed to the sixth 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:

AP3: Common web links had been provided and were in place

AP6: RC confirmed that FES had received copies of all roadmaps.

DT noted that a further roadmap would be developed in due course for Part 3A.

Some members of the group requested more copies of roadmaps –

AP1 - JC to email all members of the Group seeking 'orders'.

Case Studies

JC would be taking forward development of a portfolio of case studies, which would start with more established groups and build to include as many (successful) community ownership projects as possible. At a later stage projects involving leased or managed assets could be included. The portfolio could be linked to the database being assembled

by RESAS (Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services) – discussed further under (9) below.

The intention would then be to select a limited number of these case studies (based on representatives of different types of projects/illustrating different ‘roads taken’ to ownership, and in different parts of the country) to bring together into a brochure that could accompany leaflets/roadmaps for distribution at events etc.

Noted that case studies and/or information on location/types of projects was already available from a number of sources:

Community Woodlands Association

FES – mapping of NFLS schemes

DTAS/COSS, HIE and BIG - all hold relevant material – in the form of maps/case studies/links to the websites of the various community ownership organisations.

SLE – have case studies of successful negotiated transfers

4. Activities since last meeting

BL (Neil):

- BL is looking at their various funding streams and reviewing alignment of demand for support with supply of resources, particularly wrt development funding.
- Have supported the extension of the Community Shares Scotland schemes
- Have published research on delivering services from buildings (see blog @ Big Lottery Fund)
- They were not short of applicants for their funds!
- Noted recent increase in demand for support for green space/environmental projects in small towns

HIE (Sandra)

- Internal review as to how we resource our community development activities underway.
- This centres on a more flexible approach to allocating staff time and financial resources; we currently route most support through ‘account management’ and ‘community account management’
- Strengthening Communities Conference held and considered to be an all round success. Noted that two presentations from Frank Rennie and Cormack Russell were particularly worth a look see HIE’s website here: <http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-conference/presentations.html>
- They had carried out research into housing needs across the region and identified a number of key issues. Outside the urban centres in the Highland area, communities tend to be leading housing developments. See <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional->

[information/economic-reports-and-research/archive/stimulating-housing-development-in-the-highlands-and-islands.html](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/information/economic-reports-and-research/archive/stimulating-housing-development-in-the-highlands-and-islands.html)

- Casework – NW Mull Community Woodlands has been referred to them for support for a bid to the Land Fund for the acquisition of the Isle of Ulva.
- HIE anticipate receiving an Asset Transfer request re Cairngorm Mountain.

SLE (Gavin)

- Currently promoting opportunities for asset transfer via a negotiated process, including case studies – published in [Helping It Happen](#).
- Have had presence at a number of local agricultural/country shows and similar events
- Will be holding a series of training events for their members following by release by SG of [Guidance on Engaging Communities in Decisions Relating to Land](#)
- Producing guidance, and a draft toolkit, for landlords, advising on the practicalities of engagement with local communities
- Gavin requested feedback on the draft from members of the group

AP2: ALL to feed back to GM re toolkit (when available)

CLS (Linsay)

- In the middle of a rolling programme of events – had one in Arran in September and will be at an even in the Borders next week
- Planning event for intermediaries in the New Year, and an event for land agents/managers at the end of November
- CLS had secured an interview with David Johnstone of Annandale Estates about his experience of a negotiated land transfer to the community – this will be pitched at magazines aimed at landowners
- Sutherland Estates' sale to the community has also had lots of publicity
- Currently organising events for community landowners, including series of webinars (eg recent one on hutting)
- Re-recruiting for intern post doing research re urban community ownership
- Involved in a number of cultural projects exploring the relationship between communities and the land

FES (Rebecca)

- 2 CATS asset transfer requests currently under formal consideration: one for 173 hectares in Ettrick near Selkirk, the other Minginish Community Hall Association (MCHA)'s request for 12 hectares including car park at the Fairy Pools/Cuillin, on Skye. MCHA's request plans to address the problem of pressure on the existing car park caused by high visitor numbers. It is a low value site with high benefits and MCHA have offered £2,500, a discount of 92% on the market valuation of £30,000. By comparison, Ettrick are seeking a discount of 10%, but as the site is valued £975,000, the value of the discount requested is £100,000.
- As required by the legislation, all the documents relating to the requests have been published FES's website at www.forestry.gov.uk/CATS for public comment - a few comments had been received.

- The decision on Etrick is due by Christmas, and on Fairy Pools by February, but hoping to let groups know before that
- When FES notifies communities that it intends to sell site, generally, the timescale from initial approach to submission of a request is at least one year.
- Via the Forestry Land Scotland Bill – FC is undergoing significant change eg becoming a new agency – ‘communities’ will be continue to be one of our key activities
- Group constitutions: noted that although the community definitions in the legislation are relatively loose, interpreting that and applying to community constitutions quickly becomes complex and legal. There is also a high risk of lack of consistency between the various authorities which cause problems if a community is deemed eligible by one authority and not another.

COSS/DTAS (Linda)

- Noted that asset transfers generally go more quickly when established community groups are involved and takes much longer with new groups
- Big Lottery Scotland and Scottish Government have funded a new 3 year contract for the Community Shares Scotland team
- Planned events: Single Point of Contact (SPOCs - Relevant Authorities Seminar) 14th November – “Making It Happen” – Stage 2 asset transfer and capturing the social value. The 3rd SPOCs event “Managing Risk in Asset Transfer” – early in 2108. The Planning Journey publication is being launched at the webinar - 25th October. This webinar is providing to be a very popular topic with Planning Aid Scotland also providing input. The webinar on communities taking on public toilets - 8th November.
- NHS has identified a need for policy development in relation to asset transfer and this responsibility will be taken on by the Scottish Public Health Network.
- COSS has been asked to present a workshop at Third Sector Interface National Conference 25th October + Historic Environment Scotland - Heritage Assets Conference 10th/ 11th November.
- Noted that at the recent DTAS Conference the COSS Workshop was 'standing room only' – significant interest from communities in taking on and the funding of infrastructure assets - toilets, car parks, harbours and libraries. Indications from local authorities that community centres likely to the next category of assets being rationalised. The community response likely to be significant.

SG (Dave)

- Review of a number of SG funding streams connected with supporting community activities and services was underway, possibly with a view to bringing related schemes under one umbrella (similar to the way BL works).
- SLF and Climate Challenge Fund would not be in scope for this at this time, though this will be revisited in 2018
- SG - Asset Transfer policy for SG owned assets was in the process of being drawn up. Noted that responsibility for deciding whether particular bodies applying for assets

to be transferred, were or were not compliant/eligible to receive the asset, would be a matter for the department or agency concerned.

- Noted that it can be a challenge for some organisations who may be simultaneously going through different routes to acquire various assets, to find the constitution best suited to the various circumstances
- Eg, in the longer term, groups contemplating using Part 5 and Part 3A may need to consider the suitability of their constitution at a very early stage
- Review of Scottish Land Fund also underway - unlikely to result in radical changes but will consider some of the issues highlighted earlier by Neil
- Part 3A – stressed that he would be looking for views on the secondary, not primary legislation. Potential to begin engagement exercise via meetings with stakeholders/groups of stakeholders, possibly beginning Nov/Dec, with a view to regs being laid in parliament around May next year. DT would welcome suggestions from the Million Acre Group for who to involve in the exercise.

AP3 – ALL to feed back to DT re consultation

5. Community Ownership Promotional/“Open Doors” event:

There was a discussion about the aims and objectives for this event, the format, groups involved, and timing etc. Agreed:

- JC to speak to Angus Hardie at the Scottish Community Alliance – to gather information on potential sources of support for this kind of event (financial, communications, linkage with existing plans to promote volunteering, etc.)
- It would need to be beneficial for the ‘hosting’ groups, as well as for potential/new groups, and as a promotional initiative for community ownership generally, and for SG policy
- There could be scope to link it in to the database and Case Study portfolio

AP4 – JC to research further and bring forward outline options to the next meeting of the Group/or via email

6. Scottish Land Commission (Shona)

Shona Glenn introduced to the Group, noted she was working on research the land side, a colleague dealt with agriculture. She drew attention to the recently published SLC Strategic Plan: <http://landcommission.gov.scot/strategic-plan/>

The SLC’s strategic objectives are:

Accountability

Productivity

Diversity

Their work programme has 4 themes: housing, land use, agriculture and ownership.

Under the land ownership theme, they would be looking at:

- Reviewing the CRTB mechanism – would be underway in 2018
- Concentrations of land ownership, and what should be done about it
- Charitable Land ownership – guidance on best practice
- Land for housing and development

Shona agreed to circulate the complete work programme to members of the group and the Group agreed that each member should identify a policy contact for her within their organisations.

AP 5: JC/SG/ALL

7. Abandoned, Neglected or Detrimental Land

DT noted that to pursue acquisition via the Abandoned and Neglected provisions:

- Groups would have to demonstrate that they had first tried to buy the asset. There was no firm timescale just now, but it was felt that within the previous year was realistic. If using the detrimental elements, they would also have to show that they had tried to deal with the issue through the various mechanisms open to them (council issuing notice etc.).
- They should, if at all possible register an interest BEFORE the land is placed on the market
- Negotiated sales would be preferable, with the legislation in the background to help groups get their 'foot in the door'

8. Update from NR on meeting re post-acquisition funding:

- Meeting intended to initiate a series of conversations, rather than reach immediate conclusions
- SCDC had produced a report on the financial situation of current community asset owners which noted the challenges they faced, particularly those who were delivering services from community hubs and relying on earned income from council contracts
- Post-acquisition development funding, particularly for more complex projects, was becoming more and more difficult to identify
- Increasingly, communities were interested in leasing or managing, rather than owning, assets.
- SH noted that the shortage of development funding was increasingly impacting on SLF decisions on acquisition funding

9. SG Research on progress towards 1 Million Acre Target – update:

- Dr Marianna Markantoni from SRUC came on a part time 6 month secondment into RESAS to work on the Million acres project. Through that time she produced a database of community owned land parcels, by identifying and contacting a very large number of organisations who may hold data on community land ownership. She identified which organisations did hold that data and accessed it to put that database together, and produce a method identifying

who should be contacted in future to produce annual reporting towards the 1 million acres target.

- That database has now been transferred to the rural statistics team (Neil Henderson), who are in the process of quality assuring, and in preparing the first official statistics release on land in community ownership. The Official Statistics publication 'Estimate of Community Owned Land in Scotland, 2017' will be published on Friday 8th December, and will include breakdowns of community owned land by:
 - Local authority and Scottish parliamentary constituency
 - Year of purchase/transfer
 - Number of community groups
 - Total amount of land transferred.
- The publication will also set out how SG plans on improving those statistics in the coming years, including a data collection from the community groups themselves to try and get maps and so be able to produce a geo-coded open data publication on community owned land by 2020.

10. **AOCB – None.**

11. **The Chair thanked all for their contributions**

12. Date of next meeting – tbc, probably January??