

Penicuik Community Development Trust

Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting Thursday March 9, 2006 in Penicuik Town Hall

1 Apologies and membership:

Rachel Gardner has resigned because of ill-health and other commitments but remains supportive. Apologies received from Sheila Findlay-Martin, Mose Hutchison, Brian Miller, Beth Scarr.

In attendance: Bob MacDonald (Chair), Margaret Coull, Anne Dalrymple, Sheila Findlay, Julian Hall, Roger Hipkin, Ulla Hipkin, Bob Jarmson, Jane Kelly, Roger Kelly, Jack McGowan, Sonia Stewart, Ian Watson.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting:

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Roger Kelly and seconded by Ian Watson

3 Matters arising

§4.1 Interim Service agreement

A letter had been sent to Mr Galbraith relating to our ideas about new letting procedures, promotion and advertising of the Town Hall asking for a meeting with him “at his earliest convenience”. After email and verbal discussions following the meeting, it was decided not to give details of our proposals, hoping that his curiosity would encourage him to arrange a meeting. He replied that he would not introduce any arrangement for the Town Hall that was different from any other Council facilities and declined to meet us “at this stage” (but without indicating when a meeting would be appropriate.)

§4.2 Asset Review

Following advice from Wendy Reid (DTA), a letter had been sent to Midlothian Chief Executive stating out interest in all community facilities in Penicuik, naming the two leisure centres, the Community Learning Centre in Jackson Street School and Pentland House, as well as Penicuik Town Hall. It also asked when the consultation phase of the Asset Review would begin. Mr Muir had passed our letter onto Mr Allan, who was in charge of the Asset Review, who was to contact us when he came back from leave. After a month, no reply has been received.

§4.3 Response to the Wren application failure

A letter drafted by Jack McGowan about the failure of the WREN application was sent to Mr Galbraith. It noted the grandiose terms of the Council’s mission statements and contrasted them with their rejecting community involvement in the WREN application. It reminded Mr Galbraith of earlier correspondence that had drawn his attention to the dangers of the Council having only its members and employees being present at the meeting with the WREN panel. This created the perception that the community was not supportive and provided no witnesses that that the Council acted with the necessary commitment. We have gained some corroboration of our belief that the application had been lost because of the Council’s action.

A terse reply was received, noting the dissatisfaction of “you and your group” with his actions. Importantly it contains, for the first time, the clause “appropriate consultation with all interested parties will take place.”

The Chair referred to the 2003 Land Act which gave the public statutory rights to be consulted (?over the disposal of public property).

During discussion, some members thought it likely that the Midlothian Council would try to take decisions and agree contracts about community facilities and then present the public with a *fait accompli* regarding the community facilities. It was essential to get our proposals heard and considered as part of the Review rather than as a reaction to an already agreed plan.

It was felt that the Trust should now be pro-active in putting its proposals into the public domain, circulating them to people attending the Saturday Open House, to Friends and publicising them to other organisations and the newspapers. This will inform the debate at the Annual General Meeting. The aura of secrecy about the Asset Review was no longer acceptable.

4 Annual General Meeting

Date. The timing was agreed – exactly one year after the inaugural meeting:

Thursday 27th April, 7.30pm to 10 pm.

Publicity

28 days' notice is required. Publicity must be on the web, in The Advertiser, The Penicuik News and Evening News by 30 March. A preliminary notice reporting the AGM during the third week in April was in last month's Town Crier but the next Town Crier will be after the 28 days limit. A copy of the Annual Report has to sent to the 150 Friends.

It was agreed that there should be a newsletter mail drop announcing the AGM, at least to all on our attendance lists, possibly to all Penicuik households. Volunteers are needed to help in the delivery. Further hand bills should be left in the Town Hall, at the Post Office, and in shops and restaurants.

In the publicity, the public should be encouraged to suggest issues in advance and propose members to the Steering Committee.

Nominations to the Steering Committee

Members must be elected at the meeting – 'endorsement' is not acceptable. It was agreed that the numbers on the committee should not be limited. The Newsletter should ask for nominations. So far as possible, the secretary should be notified of nominations in advance so that names can be included in pre-publicity. However, nominations would also be accepted from the floor at the meeting.

Apart from Sonia Stuart and Ulla Hipkin, who did not necessarily want to remain on the committee, all others present were willing to be re-elected onto the committee.

It was agreed that the present arrangement of having office bearers elected by the incoming steering committee should remain, and all office bearers agreed to resign and seek re-election if they wished.

AGM business and the Annual Report

It was agreed that

(i) If there were invited speakers – suggestions included Wendy Reid or Archie Pacey from the Gorebridge Development Trust – they should come after Trust business.

(ii) Midlothian councillors and a representative of the Community Council or other organisations such as the Community Education group should receive individual invitations to attend, be able to answer questions through the chair but not make formal presentations. User groups and the churches should also receive a specific invitation to attend.

(iii) In addition to a brief Annual Report Summary, there would be short reports covering the different activities of the Trust – Town Hall Management and Refurbishment, Entertainment Events, Oral History, Saturday Open House, Tourism, etc., thereby showing a wide range of faces. Anyone who wants a special issue to be included should contact the Secretary.

Audited accounts

Anne Dalrymple and Roger Hipkin have maintained a spreadsheet program with detailed book keeping. Margaret and Sheila will ask Ron Sheridan (Historical Society and a professional accountant) if he will audit our accounts.

5 Tourism

Ian had prepared a paper setting up a Tourist Information Centre in Penicuik. This would be aimed at three groups of people: those from Penicuik and Roslin; those from Midlothian and Peeblesshire, and those from further a field.

Service: could include offering advice to visitors on

- (i) attractions, facilities, events and amenities;
- (ii) transport;
- (iii) accommodation;
- (iv) local suppliers of goods and services

Literature and ‘shop’: publicise and distribute timetables, brochures and free-sheets; sell guidebooks, maps, local history/cultural books, postcards and gifts.

Bed & Breakfast booking could be offered with a 10-15% commission/deposit.

Ticket Agency: sell travel passes, City cards etc.

The paper identified the resources needed and reported that much of the necessary literature had already been collected. So far only two members of the public had responded to the request to help man the Centre.

Roger Hipkin stated that, for many reasons, the Trust needed to seek grant aid towards employing a full-time administrative officer, one of whose tasks could include helping to organise the Tourist Information Centre. Ian drew attention to the Leader Plus funding. He also suggested the Midlothian Council Tourism body, with funding for rural communities to develop services for tourists.

Trials displaying literature could operate during Saturday Open House, possibly with café staff giving advice. The more continuous availability of the Town Hall should be investigated. Roger Kelly suggested that the ticket booth at the entrance to the Town Hall would make a good information centre which could be open (rented) even if the Town Hall was otherwise closed. The information road signs i could then be put up.

The Steering Committee supported the idea of establishing a Tourist Information Centre. Noting the need to continue to develop the practicalities of the proposal, it was decided to form a sub-group on Tourism of Ian Watson, Margaret Coull, Bob Jarmson, Roger Kelly and Ulla Hipkin.

Ian offered places on a Look at Midlothian day tour organised by Pride and Passion starting in the Mining Museum. Bob Jarmson expressed an interest for this event.

6 Oral history

Sheila Findlay reported that there are two new volunteers: Catherine Pow, Historical Society, will do transcription work, and Bob MacDonald is keen to interview and has a knowledge of sound equipment. If “Awards for All” grant application is successful, they will need more volunteers. Skills required: administration, researching, interviewing/recording, processing recorded material for archiving and future use,

transcribing, maintaining a searchable data base of themes and topics arising in interviews. The searchable data base doesn't yet exist and to gather the data for it Sheila will have to listen to all the recordings again. She is pleased with the quality and authenticity of information that is building up and confident that it will grow into a robust source of material that will be of value both to the community and others.

An "Awards for All" grant application of £4445 has been applied for to cover equipment and other expenditure. For all the work involved, Sheila thanked her contacts, Bob and his contacts, Duncan Thomas, Margaret Coull, Ron Sheridan and Sheila Wilson, who had agreed to be an independent referee for the application.

7 Managing volunteers and paid staff

Bob MacDonald had included a plea for volunteers to help with the work of the Trust in the recent Town Crier and had produced a skills audit questionnaire as a follow-up. This would also be offered to visitors on Saturdays. It is essential to be able to respond constructively to offers of help. Roger Hipkin again mentioned the need to apply for a grant to employ an administrator/organiser to make the Saturday Openings sustainable.

8 Finance (including agenda item 9, Heritage Exhibition Material)

General. The net income now stands at £3200.29, of which £1355 is the "Future Builder's" grant, £735 donated by Friends, £520.06 was raised from the Grace's Ceilidh and Stuart's Gig, and the remaining £600.63 is the profit from Saturday refreshments and donations. We have paid £2310 in letting fees for the Town Hall.

A copy of the spreadsheet recording all expenditure and income was tabled.

"Future Builder's" Grant. The application allocated specific sums for staff skills training, for preparing exhibition display material in preparation for a heritage centre and to support half the cost of letting fees for the Saturday community drop-in centre.

So far £210 has been spent on the Public Hygiene Course in order to accredit café staff and a second course will be needed for those not able to go in the first one. It was noted that Hygiene training may be available locally without cost.

£160 of the "Future Builders" Grant has been spent on the 10 display boards and hangers, and £43 on producing A3 colour laminated exhibition material. The secretary noted that a cheap and flexible method of producing professional quality colour displays was being given a trial for the exhibition coming up on March 11th. The large amount of display material produced over the past year would be gradually transferred to this more permanent medium. This would create an archive of exhibition material available for a future heritage centre and for exhibitions circulating around schools, libraries and other outlets.

The budgeted estimate for the cost of Saturday opening has been spent according to the original projection but all could have been covered by the sale of refreshments and donations.

Roger Kelly reported that there is another stage of the "Future Builder's" grant. We could go for a slightly bigger grant.

Projected budget for next year. As part of the "Awards for All" grant (see 9) a projection for the 2006-7 financial year was prepared. Assuming no grant income and revenue generation the same as 2005-6, the income would be £5517. Allowing a 10% increase for inflation and the same usage as the current year, letting fees would be £1125. The cost of stationary, publicity and catering, again inflated at 10%, would be £1433. An honorarium paid every week at minimum wage for café staff amounts to £1125. This makes a projected expenditure of £5205 and a projected surplus of £312. We anticipate carrying forward a balance of about £4000. This analysis shows that the

Trust's finances are healthy and we would be able to continue our present activities next year without a significant threat of financial loss.

10 Any other business

10.1 A postcard for Penicuik

The sub-committee has met twice and there is a form available for entrants to the photography competition/exhibition. Handing in is by Saturday 1 April and the exhibition/judging on 8 April. Information had been given to The Beeslack Camera Club, the Midlothian Camera Club (e-mail), Town Crier, and some individuals. The postcard should be ready before the Hunter and Lass celebrations. Of the four printers contacted, the Postcard Company offered the cheapest and best quality card, approx £115 for 1000, to be sold in shops, hotels and the town hall.

10.2 Walks - Bob Jarmson is going to produce a leaflet/book about walks in the Penicuik area.

10.3 Auchencorth Wind Farm – The Trust does not have an official position: individuals should feel free to express personal opinions making clear that they do not speak on behalf of the Trust.

10.4 Christine Graham, MSP, is interested in the Town Hall and trust activities and wants to visit on a Saturday.

10.5 Gala Day/Hunter and Lass is the last Saturday in May. We have a tent and should maintain a presence in the park. Margaret mentioned that there is old regalia in the attic of the Town Hall.

10.6 Archaeological digs will take place locally in September, and one will be in Penicuik. Ian will let us know.

10.7 Social event: the Committee agreed to the Chairman's proposal to hold a social event before the AGM.

10.8 Spring clean in Penicuik would be supported by PCDT. Bob Jarmson asked for volunteers for end of April/May.

10.9 Registration as a Food Business. The Environmental Health Inspector contacted Roger Hipkin and the Saturday café activities have to be accredited as a food business. She will send information forms for registering and then visit the premises. Home-baking may only be permitted from home kitchen that have been inspected and approved. Noting our efforts in hygiene training, we shall continue as before in the meantime.

10.10 Introduction to Human Resources course on 30 March (closing date 16th).

10.11 Charitable status

We are still awaiting reply from the Commissioner and the secretary will send a letter.

11 Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday 19 April at 7.30 pm – 10 pm in the Town Hall.

Ulla Hipkin (19:03:06)