

Bridgend Farmhouse – DIY in the community



Contributed by John Knox Treasurer of Bridgend Farmhouse Project

For the past three years, a small group of us volunteers have been working up a plan to take over a derelict farmhouse on the edge of Craigmillar Castle Park and turn it into a community centre specialising in the environment. We are now at the crucial stage of trying to persuade the council to transfer ownership of the building to us so that we can apply for grants to get the project under way.

The difficulty is that the council is under an obligation to get what it can for the building on the open market, so we are up against a number of private developers. We have to prove to the council that we can provide a community resource which far exceeds the value of this derelict building. And we have a plan – or more precisely, a feasibility study, a business plan, an architects report and a social return on investment report.

We also have widespread support from organisations ranging from local schools, providers of training programmes for disabled people, the local allotment owners, heritage and sport organisations. Plus the support of over 150 local residents in the estates immediately around the building – Craigmillar, The Inch, Moredun and Prestonfield.

We've already won a number of small grants to run projects such as a storytelling programme, a series of open days for planning, visits to similar projects to learn lessons, and funds to employ consultants to help write our business plan and architects report.

We think we have a viable plan to win grants to restore the building and set up a community kitchen and cafe, a training programme, and a community centre for exercise, sport and heritage.

All this comes at a time when the council is being obliged to out-source some of its services and when the Scottish Parliament is considering its Community Empowerment Bill. We are now calling on councillors in Edinburgh to be among the first to adopt a new and pioneering approach to community development.

For more details see our [website](#).