

Bridgend Farm House to be handed over to the community



Edinburgh Council have unanimously approved the hand-over of Bridgend Farm House to a local community group who are on track to receive a BIG Lottery grant to restore the building and open it as a community-run centre for learning, eating and exercise. It's being seen as a pioneering project in community ownership in Edinburgh, and amongst other examples happening across Scotland.

The farmhouse, on Old Dalkeith Road, stands at the gateway to Craigmillar Castle Park and next to the Bridgend allotments. A local charity has been formed, Bridgend Inspiring Growth (BIG), to create this centre for "learning, eating and exercise."

On April 29th councillors on the economy committee agreed to lease the farmhouse to BIG for 12 months to give it time to finalise a Growing Community Assets Stage 2 BIG Lottery bid – the charity is already through the first stage in the process with development funding. If the bid is successful, the council has agreed to sell the building to BIG.

Will Golding, chair of BIG, says: " This is fantastic news. We're very grateful for the Council's support. It's a breakthrough decision for community ownership in Edinburgh, and will enable ideas, plans and visions that have been developed over four years to be fully realised for people living and working in the communities surrounding Bridgend".

"It was incredible to see the support shown in the build up to the meeting and on the day itself. Well over 500 people signed a petition to show their support, with many passionate

comments, and around 30 people came along to watch the committee meeting itself happen, celebrating outside together afterwards”

The secretary of BIG Anna Danby says: “We plan to create a multifunctional space which includes a community kitchen and cafe, as well as facilities to deliver a range of training opportunities. These will be open to all but will seek to reach out particularly to those groups who are underprovided for in the area such as young people and those with a disability.

“The farm house will also provide a great base from which to encourage people to explore and use the surrounding park land – school groups, running, walking and cycling clubs, and environmental/conservation organisations could all benefit from such a resource.”

Earlier this year, BIG qualified for stage-one of the Lottery’s Growing Community Assets fund. This will allow it to engage professional help in preparing detailed architectural plans, gaining planning approval, completing a full business plan and carrying out further community consultation. This can now begin in the next couple of months, alongside its current community development work.

BIG have recently launched a community share issue which will enable members to co-operatively own and make decisions on the running of the farmhouse. If you are interested in being a co-owner in the farmhouse, or in getting more involved in the project as a volunteer, member of the committee, or with any other comments or suggestions then please get in contact via their website:

www.bridgendfarmhouse.org.uk or email : bridgendfarmhse@gmail.com

Malcolm Fraser, Leader of the Scottish Government Town Centre Review team said:- “The Bridgend Inspiring Growth group are an

exemplar of how a local community can marry energy, need and opportunity: active local people taking over an old Council property to use for outdoor training and education. I have been proud to support them in their efforts and look forward to their project moving forward.” .

Kenny MacAskill, SNP MSP Eastern Edinburgh said:-“Bridgend Inspiring Growths plans and initiative to develop Bridgend Farmhouse are fantastic, and essential for the local community. There is a need for this in the area, and with at least a further 1400 houses being built nearby in the next few years this need and demand will only grow. I fully support their plans. “

Ian Murray, Labour MP Edinburgh South said:-“The Bridgend Inspiring Growth Group have been working tremendously hard over a number of years to work with local people and seek funding to transform the old Council owned farmhouse. As with the local Dig-In vegetable co-operative, they are innovators and leaders in community ownership for community benefit. They get my wholehearted support for their project at the farmhouse and I hope everyone rallies around to make this inspirational project a reality.”

Alison Johnstone, Green MSP Lothian said:-“The Bridgend Inspiring Growth group has been doing absolutely brilliant work to fully engage local people to come up with an inspiring vision for the future use of the farmhouse and the wider area. I’m hugely impressed with what they have achieved so far and I hope they will continue to get the support they need to see their plans come to fruition.