

D-Day for Bridgend Farm project



Volunteers at Bridgend Farmhouse hoping the Council will say “Yes”.

On Thursday (24th September) Edinburgh councillors will decide the future of Bridgend Farmhouse. A local charity and its supporters are hoping the council will support their bid to own and renovate the derelict farmhouse on Old Dalkeith Road so that they can win a lottery grant to restore the building and open it as a community centre for “learning, eating and exercise”.

The historic farmhouse stands on the edge of Craigmillar Castle Park. The idea is to create a “gateway” to the park as well as build a series of training workshops and open a community kitchen and café.

The community group behind the plans, Bridgend Inspiring Growth (BIG), has already been running a programme of activities, events and classes for the last two years, both at the farmhouse and in the surrounding communities. These have included; cookery courses; forest workshops for children; traditional stone-wall restoration, a DIY project with Crisis the homelessness charity; heritage work; art and craft classes with social work; local school educational sessions; exhibitions; and a weekly Sunday drop-in session for volunteers. They’ve been starting work on the restoration of the farmhouse and taking part in skills-based workshops. Edinburgh council has already funded many of these projects but it has one more decision to take.

Next month the Big Lottery will decide on BIG’s application for a £1m grant but it can only do so if the council continues

to show support by 'transferring the asset at little or no cost' (Big Lottery funding requirements). BIG is hoping councillors on the Finance and Resources committee on Thursday will agree to sell the farmhouse to BIG at little or no cost to help bring in the £1million grant.

"We know the council are facing incredibly difficult decisions over cuts and public service finances at the moment," said BIG chair Will Golding. " However we are calling on the council to be brave on this decision and help bring in this investment in social services to the communities surrounding Bridgend.

" We hope this will benefit everyone, at a time when key services are having to be cut. This project is worth far more than the value of the building. It's about giving local communities the power to create their own services and be in control of their own resources. The financial benefit of providing long-term services and facilities with a sustainable social enterprise model has been calculated to far outweigh the financial benefit of a one-off commercial sale of the land.

"We have been in discussions with various partners and together we would be offering educational and training opportunities for unemployed young people, adults with learning disabilities, and working with homelessness agencies in the city.

"The farmhouse would also be a base for outdoor learning for people of all ages," said Golding. "And it will enable older adults to access the outdoors and form walking clubs or wildlife or heritage groups. There will also be affordable access for community groups to workshop space, tools, art and craft materials, and bikes for use in the park.

"It will add a whole new dimension to life in the areas of Craigmillar, Inch and Gilmerton."

For more information go to: www.bridgendfarmhouse.org.uk or

'Bridgend Farmhouse' on Facebook.