

# Community bid for Sick Kids continues

The community body which wants to retain the Royal Hospital for Sick Children for locals has now submitted a new bid, asking to be given first refusal to buy the Edinburgh hospital under urban 'community right to buy' laws.



The first bid by the Marchmont and Sciennes Development Trust (MSDT), the community body representing local residents, was held up after land ownership issues revealed that although it is being marketed as one site, it is owned by two separate legal entities.

At the time this was discovered in May a spokesman for MSDT said : "This complication is disappointing by not unexpected given it is a complex site and it is a bid that really tests the new legislation.

"We are now focused on definitively determining who owns which parts of the site and submitting the two applications that could ultimately see the community take control of the Sick Kids site when the NHS moves out.

"We have asked the health board and the foundation for help with this task as they hold the relevant title deeds , a move which will benefit all parties as it would speed up the process and get us all closer to a decision on whether MSDT should get first refusal on the site. This site remains a dream opportunity to bring this historic hospital under community control."

The community group says it has now submitted a revised application to The Scottish Government for the four-acre hospital, which is owned by NHS Lothian and its charitable

trust, the Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation.

Under the terms of the legislation, the Sick Kids sale process has now been paused and Scottish Ministers have 30 days to decide if MSDT should get first refusal on the site.

Affordable co-operative housing, healthcare and nursery facilities, space for social enterprises and a multi-purpose community hall are among the ideas for the Sick Kids already suggested by MSDT.



Nathan Bower-Bir, spokesman for MSDT, said: “We are delighted to get our revised application submitted and are confident the Scottish Government will see the merits of letting the community take control of the Sick Kids when the NHS moves out.

“The past few weeks have involved an intense effort from our unpaid volunteers to try and clear up complex land ownership issues, but we have been sustained by the growing support for the bid from across the community.

“Our application sets out the exciting opportunities that the Sick Kids presents for the local community through urban community right to buy laws.

“The only way to ensure a community-led development focused on issues directly relevant to the people living in Marchmont and Sciennes is for our applications to be approved.”

Commenting Miles Briggs, Lothian Conservative MSP, who has made representations to NHS Lothian and to The Scottish Government on this subject on behalf of constituents involved in the MSDT said: “ I am pleased that the MSDT have submitted their new bid and pay tribute to all involved who have worked so hard to prepare this bid over recent weeks.

“There is significant community support across Marchmont and

Sciennes for the community buyout of this important site and a desire to see it utilised in a way that will maximise benefits for all local residents. The Trust have developed a series of very positive and imaginative proposals that would add to the area's amenity and local services.

"The Scottish Government was able to support Portobello residents in their desire to purchase the Bellfield Church and I hope it will be able to do all it can to provide similar backing to the Marchmont and Sciennes community."

A source speaking on behalf of the owners said : "It is understood that a detailed response to the application made by the MSDT will be submitted on behalf of the owners of RHSC within the statutory timeframe."

The procedure is that if the community body is given a right to buy then they will have eight months to conduct a valuation, a community ballot and a community led feasibility study and business plan.

The NHS will be moving out into new purpose built premises at Little France next year, and sensing that the hospital would be sold on quickly to a commercial entity for development the MSDT was formed to bring the site into community ownership if at all possible.

The community led bid would include plans for new and existing local enterprises to deliver sustainable and carbon-efficient services as well as providing an environment for people whose health might otherwise prevent them from finding suitable employment. The idea is that such affordable spaces would foster entrepreneurial activity for co-working and for creative and artistic pursuits.

MSDT say that their overarching aim is 'to provide spaces for enterprise that lift up our community and its residents. With a business plan founded in affordable rents, and with surplus revenue unvested back into the community and local economy,

community ownership of this site offers us al a remarkable and indeed unique opportunity to encourage economic growth, entrepreneurship and creativity that is focused on local needs and directed by community members themselves.'