**ARISAIG COMMUNITY TRUST**

**LAND SEA AND ISLANDS CENTRE**

**6.30 pm**

**Directors met for preliminary discussions on the Post Office and notes from the meeting are detailed below.**

**Present**: Eve MacKenzie (Chair)

David Buick: Martine Wagenaar: Joyce Wilkinson:

Maggie Kane: Hugh Cameron: Heather Cameron:

Gordon Stewart:

Alison Stewart (LDO) Rosemary Bridge (Minutes)

Gordon Stewart informed the group that he felt there was no issue with his current position as a Royal Mail staff member and his position as a Director of ACT, within the context of ACT’s proposed Post Office bid. He wished, however to seek the views of fellow directors on the matter. Directors agreed that there was no issue. David Buick disagreed, suggesting that Gordon was privy to some information at an early stage in the process.

Chair pointed out that David himself has a conflict of interest because of the employment of close family members by C J Lang.

The deadline is now going to be difficult to meet but directors need to decide if the project is to be progressed. The general feeling was to continue processing the bid and take to the next level.

Discussion followed on the wording of the questionnaire and perceptions arising. All directors who had been present at the previous meeting had been given the opportunity to comment/alter, the document prior to distribution.

David Buick raised an objection regarding being missed off the circulation list for the draft questionnaire. LDO apologised for omission. David retracted some remarks made.

Gordon Stewart expressed the view that attempts by the directors to properly discuss the PO proposal had been disrupted and delayed by the actions of one Director in relation to a public meeting called in the hall in the name of ACT but not agreed or supported by the rest of the Directors.

LDO reported receiving regular mail shots outlining community projects in other areas and considered the ACT PO project to be modest in comparison to some. Significant support is generally available to communities.

**Other points raised by Directors were:**

Is there sufficient availability and expertise among directors?

Is the venture affordable in the long term?

On account of the number of positive questionnaire returns, ACT surely needs to progress the feasibility study further.

This is likely to be the final chance to take on the Post Office

The venture will generate local employment

There is potential overall benefit to the community

As LSIC continues to encourage tourism, the Post office would be an added dimension

The decision making process was detailed as:

Business plan to be in place for 9 September

Presentation/interview at a time decided by Post Office management

Disclosures completed for identified personnel

Post Office makes the final decision

Members of the public arrived:

Joanna MacEachen

Anne Baillie

Susan Carstairs

Penny Buick

Eleanor Barrie

Elizabeth Fleming

Andrew Fleming

Ann Lamont

Richard Lamont

Gerard MacDonald

Jane Foster

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**ARISIAG COMMUNITY TRUST BOARD MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY 21 AUGUST**

**LAND SEA AND ISLANDS CENTRE**

**7.30 pm**

**Present**: Eve MacKenzie (Chair)

David Buick: Martine Wagenaar: Joyce Wilkinson:

Maggie Kane: Hugh Cameron: Heather Cameron:

Gordon Stewart:

11 members of the community

Alison Stewart (LDO) Rosemary Bridge (Minutes)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - None

STORAGE OF JANITORIAL SUPPLIES - arrangements are in order

TOILETS DONATION BOXES – Hugh MacKay to be approached about putting these up.

LDO Report – attached (also distributed at meeting)

TREASURER’S REPORT -

Unrestricted fund - £2,171.00

Playing Field fund – £2,034.00

Public Toilets fund - £6,173.00

POST OFFICE

Detailed below are representations made by members of the community present and directors.

It was stated that not all members of the community had received a questionnaire, although the number of those missed out was not clarified. LDO explained that households had been systematically listed, and that some 318 forms had been distributed. She apologised for any omissions, but felt that there could have been very few.

Concern expressed by a director that perhaps people do not seem to know enough about the proposal and the process. Discussion then ensued on the practicalities of progressing the bid. LDO explained further and indicated that the venture would attract funding if seen as beneficial to the community.

Expression of concern that there was insufficient clarity about what the questionnaire actually meant. It was explained that the purpose of the questionnaire was to outline ACT’s idea for a community-owned PO, and to gauge community support or otherwise, for such a proposal. It was not ACT’s role to explain how C J Lang might run a PO service in their own business. Treasurer commented that the process had been undermined by recent negative actions and events thus meaning that meeting the deadline for submission would be difficult.

Chair explained the position of ACT and described the proposed bid as an income opportunity linked to previously agreed plans for extending the building, all considered in good faith for the sake of the community. Figures will now be studied and a decision made on whether moving forward is a viable option. A director asked why a group of people suddenly seemed to be strongly against the project despite such positive returns from the community.

Comment was made that public relations between ACT and community were unsatisfactory as not enough information was being disseminated. There was some confusion with suggestions of secrecy and withholding of information, particularly surrounding visits by Post Office personnel. A director explained that it had been difficult to set up a satisfactory line of communication with Post Office personnel in the early stages although this situation had now been improved. Post Office personnel were making visits to both the local shop and the LSIC as individual business plans were being prepared. These could not be public meetings.

Some felt that the questionnaire panicked people into thinking that the PO was to close. Much time at the meeting therefore was spent discussing the varying perceptions emerging from the wording of the questionnaire. The question was – did the community support the proposal to look at the possibility of a community run Post Office in Arisaig - or not. The figures indicated a positive response.

In support **137**  Do not support **25** No firm view **2**

Directors will now honour the support of the community, thoroughly investigating the proposition and working up a business plan.

A director questioned whether a PO is really needed in the village given that a number of its functions are now historical - in particular business banking. The response indicated that the Post Office Local is a new model so currently there is no real information on how it will work. Reference was made to other community ventures and how they succeed.

An observation was made that ACT has currently the makings of a very good board.

It was felt that ACT needed to communicate in a more proactive manner and secure tangible support from its members within the wider community if it is to undertake new projects and ventures. Directors agreed to meet within one week to consider figures and practicalities in relation to the Post Office and outcomes will be disseminated to the wider community.

Oban Times Article - headline (added by Oban editor, not by Fort William reporter) was misleading, but content of article reflected what had been said at the May meeting.

Concern raised about Post Office hours at the LSIC. These would not necessarily match those of a local shop but nevertheless would be longer than at present, allowing people the opportunity to use the facility after work.

What is the problem with a community run PO which creates employment in the village?

Charitable Trust trading arm might fit. LDO to research other models for PO as trading arm of parent charity.

OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion ensued on the possibility of the community taking on grass cutting and/or the local handyman post. The view was expressed that the Community Council and ACT should work together and on other matters where appropriate.

DIGITAL TV

It may be possible to secure a licence so that the village can access all Freeview Channels. Chair passed on information regarding this to the Community Council for their consideration.

It was brought to the attention of the meeting that there will be shortly be an interim election for the CC in order to increase the number of members on the Council.

Next meeting of Directors – Wednesday 28th August 2013 - 7 pm LSIC