**Big Things on the Beach**

**Imagine Portobello – Ideas into Action**

**19 October 2015, St Mark’s Church, Portobello**

**NOTES**

*(The meeting was attended by 16 people and apologies received from 14 who wished to be kept informed).*

**1 Outcome: summary**

**Underlying diverse groups’ ambitions for cultural developments in Portobello is a common need for suitable premises. The next step will be to invite local groups to a presentation about Community Development Trusts with a view to creating a body that could acquire and manage assets on behalf of the wider community.**

**2 Introduction:**

Two main points emerged from the conversations on 30 May:

* the lack of accessible, affordable community space. Closure of existing venues. Portobello Community Council is currently asset mapping.
* Potential to build on what has been going on to attract significant artists to create work in public – Portobello as a venue for cultural activities which people will be attracted to come to from elsewhere, and the associated topic of economic development in the area.

The Promenade is key interest of BToB and other groups such as Row Porty, with wide interest in developments such as a Pier and iconic permanent public art work. There is also wide interest from community groups in existing and new spaces for the presentation of high quality art, be it performance, visual, film etc. The two areas of interest are interconnected.

Interest lies in 4 buildings with potential.

* Town Hall – Council owned
* Pipe Street Toilet Block and adjacent space – Council owned – future uncertain.
* Bellfield Church/halls – defunct Church of Scotland property – decision about future use/sale next year
* The George Bingo hall - former Cinema (on the market, privately owned).

**3 Update**

Following attendance by Cllr Richard Lewis, chair of Edinburgh City Council’s Leisure and Recreation Committee on 30 May, BToB was invited to a meeting with the Economic Development Department at which interest in the proposal Pier was expressed and we raised our issues. Invited to submit something within 3 months. Implications being that proposals with community support and economic base might attract support from the next phase of the Coastal Communities Fund.

Janet Archer, Chief Executive, Creative Scotland gave apologies for this meeting but expressed strong interest in continuing engagement.

Portobello Community Council is in the process of mapping community assets and an update should be available shortly.

**4 Moving Forward: Key Issues**

How to organize and take proposals forward?

How to deal strategically with:

* The need for inside spaces which requires local response;
* Porty Prom as a city wide and national asset - engaging with external agencies. (for example, a pier would be a national asset and needing investment from national agencies).

We have a range of organisations in the community.

There is a willingness to collaborate but capacity is stretched.

Question of mandate and time to take things forward

Need for a lead agency to take things forward – local groups operate within the confines of their constitutions and resources.

On a practical level, there is the need a mechanism to enable people to know about projects – opportunities to participate are sometimes missed because of lack of shared information.

Meetings are a formal way of holding a dialogue. Other less formal mechanisms also needed to engage wider community.

Porty Dads is an informal grouping with 30-40 people responding to the idea of community buy-out of the George as a community run film house. A collaborative approach with other community groups for shared use of the building could be an option to explore.

Similarly much interest has emerged in community ownership of Bellfield church/halls and the Pipe Street Toilet area.

**5 Organisational models: Community Development Trusts**

Need strategic approach to assessing organizational options.

Movement for local authorities to encourage formation of local development trusts – time has never been better in terms of policy context.

Individually groups cannot get to that point but a community could get good asset planning together.

We have many skilled professionals/resource people in the area but capacity of individuals is limited.

Need for professional team/professional advisory group e.g. as in Granton, drawing on skills within the community – working ‘in-house’ to develop brief and gather critical mass of funding to pay a staff lead.

Important to have balanced input to development of proposals – should not be completely led by agenda of a group of experts.

Learning from elsewhere - market our unique selling point as a town (e.g. West Kilbride High Street – Craft town).

Potential for interconnectedness with other ‘ Edinburgh’s Water Front’ towns – Granton – Crammond – to press for implementation of the ‘vision’ for the City and learning from each other.

Catalyst needed to stimulate action:

* we have imminent sale of community assets.
* Pier – has grass roots interest and interest from council – would need city-wide and national support

If we don’t act quickly building assets will disappear.

Scope of a Trust: should it be a Portobello Cultural Development Trust to acquire what cultural aspirations the community wants, or should it take in social and cultural assets?

The aims of a community development trust need to be similar if it is to work – not too wide.

What area should it cover e.g. would be the Development Trust area e.g. Greater Portobello? The Promenade and environs?

Need for wider understanding of what a local Development Trust is and how it can be useful. Need to find different ways of communicating hard to get information.

What other models are there – do we need the equivalent of a ‘Maison du Culture’ which encompasses everything cultural in every town in France (funded by the local authority).

Need to have clear identification of needs and to package these up to talk about proposals.

**6 Moving on:**

There is already a shared vision of what might happen around premises. If we pull together skills and interests to serve all our needs then this would provide a strong base for going forward together.

Given there are three lots of energies generated around opportunities for community ownership of 3 buildings, we need to ask community groups the question: do you want to participate in establishing an infrastructure to take this forward i.e. and to sustainably manage a building?

We have a short window of opportunity within which engage with the Council **on** a Coastal Communities bid.

We need a quick agreement in principle from groups but first need shared understanding of what a Development Trust – should invite Director of CD Trust, Ian Cook, to meeting to explain different models and how they operate – so we can look at what would be appropriate here.

BToB is happy to facilitate discussions but does not wish to take a lead role should the move towards the establishment of a Development Trust be agreed.

**7 ACTION**

Big Things on the Beach to invite representatives from community groups to a meeting within the next few weeks to consider common interests and the option of setting up a Development Trust for ownership of community assets.

**8 Date of next meeting** – to be arranged