



Lismore Community Trust - Affordable Housing Update

10th September 2024

Lismore Community Trust is continuing to progress the development of 2 semi-detached 3 bedroom homes on the site at the end of Newfield Terrace, Achnacroish Lismore.

Planning

The site received planning permission approval on 14th November 2023 which was a major step forward. Nine main conditions were attached to the approval many of which are standard. Two of the conditions do give rise to some challenges namely condition 6 which refers to the private water supply where an 'appraisal of the wholesomeness and sufficiency' of the water supply must be carried out. It is well recognised that there are limitations of the existing supply which is managed by the Achnacroish Water Group. However, the AWG are planning to upgrade some of the network and following a survey of connected residents and discussion within the group it has been agreed in principle that the proposed new houses can be connected to this supply. In return the Trust will support the upgrade of the supply for the benefit of all properties connected. The costs and details associated have yet to be finalised. It is hoped that whilst this would be the main water supply for the properties. An additional supply from a new borehole would act as a backup which would become available as part of the planned programme by Aggregate Industries to enhance existing supplies with new boreholes on Lismore.

Condition 7 of the approval notice refers to the resurfacing of the access road along Newfield Terrace. There is a considerable cost associated with this work therefore this condition is being challenged as the road to the end of Newfield Terrace is currently adopted by the council. Initial discussions with the Council have been positive and it is hoped that this condition will be rescinded as it is unreasonably onerous for the small development intended against the costs that would be incurred.

Additional Infrastructure

The electrical supply network is nearby and a budgetary quote has been received. Further assessment is required to satisfy the needs of the sustainable drainage system (SuDS) but this is not considered to be an issue. With the recent installation of fibre optic cables broadband services will be readily available to the new properties. Currently the access road cuts through the site to Newfield and consideration is being given to moving the road back towards the hill. This would allow better utilisation of the whole site and potentially allow the site layout to be reviewed with a view to minimising build costs.

Funding

The key priority is now to secure funding to allow for development on site. Currently the National Lottery, via the Scottish Land Fund (SLF), has provided stage 1 funding of £22,421 of which £17,670.60 has been spent on design and surveys. The balance is expected to be spent on ground assessments to allow detailed costings to be established for the complete build. Stage 2 funding from SLF will be applied for to allow purchase of the site. An agreement in principle has been made with the sellers to purchase the site at market value and is shortly to be formalised. Final purchase of the site will be made only once funding has been secured and after final consultation with the community.

The main funding for the build will come from Rural Islands and Housing Fund (RIHF). It is anticipated that this funding will cover up to 80% of the build cost with additional funding coming from Argyll & Bute Housing, Scottish & Southern Energy communities funds, and a commercial lender by way of a mortgage. The cost of any mortgage would need to be offset against the rental income achieved against the homes.

Once a final budget has been prepared and funding has been secured, the community will be consulted before any commercial loans are taken out and to ensure continued support for the project. The RIHF will also provide financial support for the work required to finalise building costs ahead of agreeing to provide main build funding. This will allow us to fully cost the build and demonstrate viability of the project. Currently Julia Fayngruen is working for the Trust on the applications for funding.

Construction/Site Layout

Modular Connect (The Wee House Company) has been previously identified as the preferred supplier for a turnkey solution and having successfully built two properties on the island are fully conversant with the requirements of building on the island.

With the road in its current position, the siting of the houses is limited and as the site falls away considerably to the front substantial foundation works are potentially required. Should the road be realigned the additional space will allow for the houses to be set back and possibly eliminating some costs although this will likely require further planning approval should it be adopted.

Allocation of Homes Policy

The process for the allocation of the completed homes has yet to be agreed on although the LCT has prepared a draft policy. However, the community will be further consulted with regards to this and advice taken from other communities on their allocation processes adopted such as the Mull & Iona Trust, Morven Development Company, Westray Development Trust etc.

Timeline

The current forecast for completion of the properties is the end of 2025.

For further information please contact Andrew Livingstone PMlismorect@yahoo.com