

BRIDGEND INSPIRING GROWTH – TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

(Charity number SC042769)

This year has been a great year of transition and achievement for BIG. A huge amount has happened thanks to an enormous amount of very dedicated, passionate, expert and collaborative volunteer work.

Land Ownership

After many years of campaigning and fund raising, in November 2016 BIG finally took ownership of the land at Bridgend Farmhouse, working with City of Edinburgh Council on an asset transfer for £1.

Following a successful Big Lottery Growing community assets grant of £1million in 2015, we subsequently raised an additional £130k in the past year, along with £100k worth of savings on the original project costs, which ensured we reached our final target to deliver the Bridgend Centre for Learning, Eating and Exercise.

Renovation Work

This meant that work has finally able to begin, in January 2017, on restoring the old Bridgend Farmhouse on the western edge of Craigmillar Castle Park in Edinburgh, and building an additional four community workshops on site.

We will open it as a locally owned community centre in early 2018, and are looking to plan a big opening party around Burns Night next year. The community workshops may be ready earlier, and will involve a volunteer training programme to clad, paint, decorate and kits these spaces out for community use and hire.

During the build we have been running open public Hard-Hat tours, which have meant members are able to see the progress and learn about the developments happening on site. We have so far had two of these, both well attended, with visits from local residents, volunteers, board members, councillors, MP's and funders.

Our contractors Cornhill Building Services began work on the farmhouse at the beginning of February and our part-time project manager, Graham Harper, and our Design Team, led by architect Malcolm Fraser, are keeping closely in touch with the practical details.

Community Education Programmes

Meanwhile our community education and social programmes, led by Hilary Morrison, have continued, both on the site and in the surrounding communities, with ever increasing success.

We have continued to run our community cafe and cookery training programme in Craigmillar for the past year, and will continue this on going forward. This has resulted in participants gaining a range of qualifications, and some going on to employment or further training or volunteering as a result. Many people built better relationships and community was strengthened as a result.

Last Autumn we ran another series of Forest Skills sessions in Craigmillar Castle Park, which proved once again very popular, and something we intend to develop more and more in the future.

We held a very popular and well attended pilot Natural Cosmetics Group in Valleypark community centre with their girls youth group. Challenging the idea of animal testing on products, and expensive chemical based cosmetics, the girls made lots of their own cosmetic products to share with family and friends from herbs that you can grow here in Scotland. This was so popular we secured funding to run it again, this time as a family project, working with communities across the Liberton/Gilmerton Neighbourhood Partnership area.

Skillspath is a project that works with adults with learning disabilities who are developing their practical skills and contributing to local community and physical development. They run a Thursday morning session every week, where a group of volunteers come to work on site. They've made a big difference to the development of the front garden and land, and also hosted a well attended Bee Well Event, creating a series of planters full of wildlife to create a bee friendly environment at Bridgend as you enter through the walls.

We've also worked on a very positive partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council to deliver a range of adult education courses locally at Liberton High school, and in Craigmillar Castle Park. These courses include; Wood-working; Garden Sculpture; Foraging; Bird-song and I.D; Recycled woodwork; Bird-Box making; and more.

Wednesday and Sunday Drop-In sessions

Our regular Sunday Drop-in sessions, run by part-time facilitators, Hilary Morrison, Mark Carr and Darla Eno, have been well attended – attracting an average of 6 volunteers each time and up to 80 people over the year. The volunteers have been clearing out the farmhouse, working in the garden and enjoying Sunday lunch together. A new Wednesday Drop-in has been added this year, thanks to a grant from One City Trust and volunteers have built an amazing shelter for use while the restoration is going on, all from donations and reclaimed materials.

Thanks to funding from the People's Health Trust these sessions will be continuing on for at least another two years, accompanied by a monthly members forum, a seasonal community meal, an annual celebration, and a quarterly newsletter.

We recently held a Land Consultation day in May 2017, involving various questionnaires, walks, talks, and discussions. The results of this will help to set priorities for work and development on the garden and surrounding land and barns on site in the coming months. We hope to re-visit this and run another one once all the renovation work is complete.

Bridgend Bothy Self-Build

The exciting Bridgend Bothy Self-Build, run in partnership with SEDABuild, and led by Arleen Sinclair, is currently on hold due to safety issues of the old stone-walls surrounding the byre area it is to be built in. Restoration of the surrounding walls, using traditional lime stone mortar techniques is a priority, and we have held some more courses over the past year

teaching volunteers the skills, and working to restore and conserve the wall. Much more of this is necessary, and will be a focus for the next year.

Social History

Thanks for a grant of £48k from the Heritage Lottery Fund, we will be starting a year and a half long project called; 'Place, Work and Folk; A social history of Bridgend Farmhouse', in September 2017.

This will be a vital piece of work, ensuring the history and memories of the Farm in the past, and the lived memories, lives and stories connected with it, are collected, stored, shared and displayed in the renovated farmhouse. There will be a documentary, photo exhibition, recordings, practical skills workshops, animation and much more. We will also be working with Scottish Historic Buildings Trust to partner up as part of Patrick Geddes Summer school in the summer of 2018 as part of this project, and also with the University of Edinburgh Outdoor Education department.

Fundraising

Fundraising this year has been very successful and ensured we can deliver and project and continued to offer various activities throughout. In addition to the Big Lottery £1million for the Capital Build, we were also awarded a grant of £20,000 from the Robertson Trust and £40,000 from Historic Environment Scotland towards the renovation. We have also been awarded other smaller grants from Edinburgh City Council, One City Trust, Santander Foundation, SCVO Capacity and Resilience Fund, Community Food and Health Scotland, People's Health Trust, Foundation Scotland, Action Earth, and the Heritage Lottery Fund. An enormous thanks to the team of hard-working volunteers who've worked tirelessly to ensure we can raise the funds to deliver the aims and outcomes of the project.

Community Share Issue

We have continued to work closely with Community Share Scotland on the development of our share issue. There have been long and detailed discussions about the best setup, and how we can ensure democratic ownership, and clear democratic decision making structures that allow members to take part in the development of the project. We are exploring becoming a Charitable Community Benefit Society, and seeing whether this is the right vehicle to launch a share issue, where people can buy shares as owners of Bridgend Farmhouse, in early 2018. This will allow supporters to own the farmhouse, and help us raise more funds to pay for the build of the community workshops and other projects.

Recognition

This year we've had our story published in magazines, including the Community Food and Health Fare Choice magazine and Sconews. We were also invited to speak at a conference called 'Making Community Empowerment Work' by the Holyrood Magazine.

Communications

This year has seen the website greatly developed and updated, which shows fantastic progress on before and is now regularly up to date with what is happening, in a much more improved and professional way. Along with that we've improved our communications, moving to a monthly update, via Mailchimp, and are using facebook more regularly.

Governance

Our board of trustees has met every month and five sub-committees have been formed to deal with various aspects of our work (Building; Business; Food; Land; Share Issue). We are in the process of forming a Community Benefit Society as we look to move to a social enterprise model of running the centre.

We are also in the process of becoming an employer rather than relying on consultants, which will be a big step for the project, as we look to employ over five staff members within the next year.

Our board of trustees for 2016-2017 were elected at our AGM on 5th June 2016 and are as follows:

- Will Golding (chair)
- Anna Danby (secretary)
- John Knox (treasurer)
- Hazel Flett
- Claire Stevens
- Ruth Nay
- Tania Stuart
- Andrew Naismith
- Neil Hansen

Thanks

Finally, a word of thanks and respect to everyone who has been involved this year. As one of the first urban asset transfers in Scotland, and a project that involves so many different activities, elements, and essential fundraising, reporting, communicating, and developing , we have achieved an incredible amount thanks to the help of so many volunteers, working tirelessly to bring this dream into reality. It would in no way be possible without us, and without the care, support, community, and commitment everyone brings to the project. On top of that we have to mark the excellent professional work from all consultants who have gone over and above on all the work they do for us, and share that same passion that drives this forward.

So, it's important to mention to all who have helped this year, from digging and wedding in the garden, to digging and working their way through dense legal documents, and all in-between, a big BIG thanks!

Yours,
Will Golding