

# Bridgend Inspiring Growth (BIG)

*Learning, working and growing together to develop a flourishing community and place*



## Chair's Report, June 17<sup>th</sup> 2018

### **Bridgend Farmhouse Renovation and Opening Party**

This year we reached a major milestone on our long and winding road. The seed sown, and dream we had, back in 2010, to renovate Bridgend Farmhouse into a community-owned and run centre, has finally been achieved!

Nearly a thousand people attended at least part of the opening day, 24<sup>th</sup> March, and enjoyed home cooked food, live music, arts and crafts, story-telling, films, owl displays, willow-weaving, and lots more, and then, in the evening, light projections, open mic, three stages of music, speeches, a grand ceilidh in the marquee. Members of the Darling and Binnie families, who lived and worked on the farm in its heyday, were there to cut the ribbon, along with Bridgend cottage residents from past and present. Even the weather was good! It was an incredibly special day, and a party that was worthy of the many years work that led up to it. A huge thanks to all the volunteers and performers that made it happen.

Our late 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, on the Old Dalkeith Road in south Edinburgh has been completely restored, keeping many of its original features – the chimney stacks, the sash-cord windows, the curved stair-case – but adding a training kitchen, toilets and showers and a lift for disabled access. A row of four workshops has been built in the garden for wood and metal work, bicycle repair, arts and crafts and outdoor education. The front community garden has been in development too, with a new outdoor stage built by volunteers, and native shrubs in bloom, and in the back kitchen garden the land is being re-worked to grow fruit, veg, a mini-orchard, and a developed organic composting area.

There are many people to thank for this; our contractors Cornhill Building Services, our project manager Graham Harper, our architects Halliday, Fraser, Munro and the many sub-contractors who worked on the project. We must not forget our own volunteers who helped with the cladding, painting and fitting-out of the workshops and the main building., supported by our community development worker, Hilary Morrison.

It would not have been possible without the support of our major funders: the Big Lottery, the Robertson Trust, Historic Environment Scotland, and our various other funders throughout the year too, mentioned below.

The Centre, now open, is already truly flourishing and growing every day. We've hosted many courses, from Permaculture, to Bee-keeping, have many new regular groups, like Singing and Pilates, and are welcoming in new local organisations for meetings, or use of the office hot-desking facilities. People regularly come in for a cuppa, and plans for developing and opening the cafe are well underway.

## **Community Education Projects**

While all this building work was going on, our community education programmes continued, either on site or elsewhere. Our community development worker, Hilary Morrison, ran cooking courses and volunteer drop-in days on Sundays. Our community development assistant, Mark Carr, ran our Wednesday drop-in day when volunteers built our garden hut and stage. We hosted events for the RSPB, the Power of Food, and City Council adult education classes such as foraging, woodwork, bird I.D, mosaic making, stone-wall restoration and more. These projects were supported by grants from Edinburgh City Council, One City Trust, Travis Perkins Managed Services, SCVO, and Action Earth.

## **'Place, Work, Folk' Community History project**

Thanks to a major grant of just under £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund we were able to start a very important community history project in September 2017 called 'Place, Work, Folk', which will last until January 2019. Our community history project officer, Carol Stobie, has built a large group of dedicated volunteers who have been gathering memories of Bridgend Farm, and life in the area. They've helped document many stories, attend conferences, run events, talks, exhibitions, linked directly with the previous Farmers and neighbours, and are currently working on a video and set of sound recordings too, as well as a publication, documenting it all. We also hope to establish a Bridgend Farm museum area in our new centre in the future.

## **Community Events**

We've continued to hold an array of Open Days, celebrations and events to bring together and build our communities. Through the renovation work we ran three hard-hat guided tours where many members of the public were able to attend to see the work in progress and learn about the techniques and stages involved.

Other events included; an open day for Open Doors weekend in September; an entertaining family Halloween event on site (during the build) in October; a big Christmas Meal for many families in Craigmillar organised and run by the 'Come dine wi' me' cooking group in December; a Christmas Bridgend Neighbours Gathering in December; Our very special Opening Party in March; a music and food event as part of Tradfest in May; and our annual Power of Food Festival and Summer Party today.

## **New Staff**

In the past year we have made the big step of becoming an employer. This creates many opportunities going forward for more job-creation. In September, Carol, started with us as community history project officer. Then, in January, paid for by our Big Lottery grant, we appointed Donna McArdle as our full-time development manager, and Ros Angus as our admin and finance officer, again full-time. Hilary Morrison was appointed as our part-time community development officer and Mark Carr is a core sessional free-lancer who assists with that work through running the Wednesday volunteer sessions, and occasionally other free-lancers are appointed to run one-off workshops.

## **Governance**

We held our AGM last year on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The board of trustees has met monthly throughout the year and three working groups have held regular meetings on finance,

activities and buildings. Each group is chaired by a member of the Board for direct communication between all. We have also established a forum for volunteers and supporters to help generate ideas and guide the project as it goes forward, and to run a seasonal celebration. The board and staff held a very useful “Development day” at the Grassmarket Community Project on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, which resulted in established our new mission statement, aims, objectives, governance and values (all are available on our website and in the Farmhouse).

**Current Board members are:**

- Anna Danby (Secretary)
- Claire Stevens
- Jen Davis
- John Knox (Treasurer)
- Lynne Colombo
- Niel Hansen
- Tania Stuart
- Will Golding (Chair)

**Bridgend Bothy Build**

Partnering with SEDA Build, this is a very exciting and innovative project happening this year, after a long two-year delay due to many unforeseen circumstances. Volunteers have recently helped to clear the old piggery/byre area and dig the trenches for the foundations. Soon work will begin on this volunteer-led build of a traditional Bothy (mountain hut) with all ecologically sustainable materials (straw-bale, timber, green-roof, etc). Look out for more details soon on how to get involved.

**Communications**

Once again we've made great strides in our communications work this year. The website is being ever updated and developed, thanks to voluntary effort from Kenny Nelson, and we have truly entered the world of social media, with new Twitter and Instagram accounts adding to our existing Facebook account. We've developed our mailing list and continue to distribute monthly newsletters to all members and supporters by email. We are also working on a printed quarterly newsletter to be distributed locally.

**Media and Recognition**

We have continued to represent BIG in various contexts, and also have been covered by various local and national media sources. We were mentioned as a positive example of community education in the SCVO Community Capacity and Resilience Report, and also in the Edinburgh Community Food and Health Magazine. We were covered by BBC Radio Scotland, Third Force News, the Sunday Herald and the Edinburgh reporter. We've attended national conferences on behalf of BIG including the Community Development Alliance Scotland and Scotland' s Learning Partnership. We've hosted and supported visits from other Development Trusts and communities looking to take over and develop land in an urban context in Scotland. We have also recently fed into research for the Land Commission.

### **The BIG Acorn Fund**

This year we've introduced an exciting new opportunity for volunteers and members. The BIG Acorn Fund is individual pots of up to £200 available for volunteers to try out new projects and activities at Bridgend Farmhouse. Successful applicants also receive support from staff and/or Board members to achieve their aims, and to help promote this to the wider community.

### **Community Share Issue, and Changing Structure**

Looking forward, we are converting from a SCIO, a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation to a CCBS, a Co-operative Community Benefit Society to enable us to issue shares and become a social enterprise, registered as a charity, with OSCR, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, and with the Financial Conduct Authority. We are also changing our name from Bridgend Inspiring Growth to Bridgend Farmhouse. We are aiming to raise £50,000 in our share issue campaign in the autumn which would ensure all funds needed to establish the organisation and kick off on the right foot will be in place.

### **Social Enterprise Activities**

Now we own our asset of Bridgend Farmhouse we are developing ways to generate income which will help to sustain our activities which are developed for community benefit and addressing inequalities. Utilising the unique facilities and through creating meaningful enterprising activities we hope to create a range of services, room-hire, and products, that will allow BIG and the Farmhouse to eventually self-fund its core running costs from the various income streams.

### **Exhibitions**

Now that Bridgend Farmhouse is open to the public we've started to host public exhibition to create a platform for artists work. So far we've had a brilliant 'Seasons of the Witch' exhibition from Faracy Grouse and others, fitting in with Beltane and May day, and recently a beautiful set of mosaic plates from BIG volunteer, Gill Curran, and soon a display of local art work as part of the Caravan Obscura in Craigmillar Castle Park woodlands.

### **What Next...?**

In the this year we hope to open our training kitchen and café, and to hire out our events/conference/training room and workshops. We have been given a major grant from the People's Health Trust to develop community development programmes, and continue our weekly volunteer drop-in sessions, and we continue to be funded by the Heritage Lottery for our community history project. We have also recently been given a grant by One City Trust and Travis Perkins Managed Services to setup our bike workshop and a grant from Edinburgh University for our up-cycling woodwork and rag-rug making sessions

### **Become a member of BIG.**

It is very easy to become a **member** and **supporter** of BIG. Anyone that lives within our area of benefit (map available online covering Bridgend, Craigmillar/Niddrie, Inch, Gilmerton and Moredun) can become a BIG member, or if you live outside those areas you can become an official supporter. It is free, you have to just complete a membership form and submit this to our secretary. You will get an invite to and vote at the AGM and can stand to be on the Board

if you want. You will also get invites for all the events. We will not bombard you with letters or emails, but will ensure you are kept up to date with what's happening, and have the opportunity to take part.

**We would like to extend an enormous thank all our volunteers, members, staff, sessional workers, contractors, partners, friends and family for all your continued support, time and help over the past year. It could not have happened without each and every one of you!**

We look forward to a successful next year moving forward with the next chapter in the history of Bridgend Farmhouse.

**Finally, a personal thanks...**

At the AGM this year I will be stepping down as Chair from BIG, after being in this position since we started the project in 2010. It's been one incredible journey. I'm totally honoured to have been able to be in this position for BIG, and to be part of the team that has brought the dream into reality. I've been inspired and amazed by the commitment and the strength of those who have supported each other, worked diligently day and night as volunteers, and who have consistently shown hope, positivity and insistent determinism to keep on and achieve this.

I believe it is the right time for me to step down. We are entering the next era for BIG and the Farmhouse. We are now up and running as a staffed community development organisation, with a functioning hub and running as a social enterprise. We do need to continue to reach out, and ensure we embed democratic structures so that local members and volunteers direct the decisions and development of the organisation and projects. It's a great time for someone new to come in and help Chair the organisation and drive it forward to become a sustainable centre and organisation and build new partnerships, projects, and enterprising ideas. I do intend to remain on the Board if voted back on, and will support the new Chair in their role over the next year, and will continue to be involved in supporting the development of Bridgend Farmhouse and the ever growing community that is working on it.

Bridgend Farmhouse has shaped many people's lives, and the it certainly has shaped mine. Seeing a community build, and work together around this collective purpose, to take over land, develop and build our home, and embed our activities with a diversity of people all chipping in however they can, has been incredible. Thanks for the chance to grow and learn and be part of that in the role of Chair, and for the support, encouragement, and belief all have given along the way.

Onwards we go... who knows what exciting developments lie ahead.

Will Golding

**Bridgend Inspiring Growth is a Scottish Registered Charity No SCO42769**

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