

10 May 2021

Dear Councillors,

**Re: Colonsay Community Development Company's response to our letter to you, the Colonsay Community Council of 27 March 2021**

Thank you for pressing the CCDC to respond to our letter to you. Rhona and Les Robinson have not yet had a response to their letter but we would like to address this initial communication from the CCDC that was emailed to us at the same time as a much wider audience. If you consider it appropriate, we would be happy for you to share this letter with the wider community.

The CCDC have now made it clear that they do still own the land at Port Mor but are unfortunately neither able nor willing to take responsibility for it. They consider the future development of the land to be settled (through verbal agreement) with West Highland Housing Authority and that any issue of decrofting will therefore be a matter for the housing authority. They do make the good point, however, that the community council did not comment on the most recent planning application last year. This is a regrettable oversight given the importance of this development locally. 85 comments were made on the original planning application in 2016 (arguably, this should have resulted in a public hearing) including a specific mention from the CCC about a number of individuals in the community who felt too intimidated to make their comments public at that time for fear of reprisal.

Once again, we would like to emphasise that we are personally in favour of the provision of more affordable housing in Colonsay but the right number and in the right location. We question the fact that the community needs these 5 houses in addition to the 6 planned in Scalasaig, plus 3 self build plots in addition to the existing council homes in Scalasaig. (Not forgetting the 3 Mowi houses and ultimately the remainder of the 21 outlined in the Masterplan for Scalasaig.) Quite apart from the unnecessary extra expense to the public purse, it is not appropriate, in an island without public transport, to build affordable homes in an exposed and remote location, far from any service or amenity. Lower Kilchattan is a crofting community and we strongly believe this traditional way of life should be preserved - indeed, that was an expressed wish of Donald McNeill who sold the land to the community in the first place. We would like to point out that crofts are in high demand and Colonsay has a waiting list for those as well as affordable homes.

We recognise that the CCDC are working extremely hard to deliver many projects on behalf of the community and indeed a number of their current board were not even resident in Colonsay when the McNeills were initially approached about selling part of their croft. Sadly, it appears that this development is now part of a somewhat hazy deal. Far from being transparent, the CCDC has actually kept the community in the dark. Their response is full of contradictions - they say they have taken a back seat role but will be making a future announcement about allocations for the houses. They tell us they are no longer involved yet there is an expectation

of unused WHHA land in Scalasaig that might be transferred to them... What are the details of this? What is the nominal sum that WHHA will pay for the land in Port Mor? Is it based on the land being sold as a croft or for commercial use?

For the first time, in their response, admission is made by the CCDC that a new roadway is being built in Port Mor "to meet the requirements that will be placed on croft homes"... this surely contradicts what was said by a Director of the CCDC at the most recent meeting of the Community Council. Rhona and Les confirmed in their letter (read aloud at that same meeting), that access for the crofters' own houses has never been and never would be a problem. So the question is, why does this confusion over access persist and are Argyll & Bute trying to force the issue of the road to suit another agenda?

There are a number of other points made in the CCDC response with which we take issue, not least the accusation that you as a community council are taking up arms with a few local objectors. This letter is signed by Donald McNeill's widow and two daughters who were persuaded by the CCDC to sell the land for crofts. All the signatories were raised in Colonsay and are immediate neighbours to the land in question. Rhona is a lifelong crofter. We too have had messages of support, both locally and from government agencies. We believe that our concerns about this development remain entirely valid and therefore request you to urgently approach Argyll & Bute Council with a request to revisit the entire issue.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Furze, Rhona Robinson, Flora Campbell, Euphemia Hansen and Margaret McNeill