

LANGHOLM MOOR CONSULTATION

Response from Newcastleton & District Community Trust, Newcastleton & District Community Council and Newcastleton Business Forum

June 27th, 2019

1. What are your views on the proposed sale?

It is fair to say that many of us were shocked to hear this when it was announced. Why?

Because it was announced as the Langholm Moor - Copshaw folk naturally thought it was *just* the Langholm Moor. To us the moor stops at Whitegate when it becomes the Holm Hill. Seeing the map of the site earmarked for sale which includes 'our' land (excepting the sections we know as cowhill, which is common ground) was surprising. For generations, since we were formed in 1793 villagers have tried without success to increase their land holding to make better livelihoods for themselves. From the late 1890s when the 99-year leases expired representations were made to Parliament on the village's behalf to protect our rights, this was largely ignored and repeatedly refused, so we stopped asking.

The Holm Hill is part of our makeup, it is where our forefathers took their livestock to graze and roam daily. It is where our fathers and forebearers cut the peat for fires. It is something we look at every day, it has been a part of us since we built our village for Buccleuch back in 1793 on old farms called Copshaw Holm and Copshaw Park. Prior to this our existence was dotted all over the roaming hills; the 'moor' and surrounding hillsides were a smattering of crofting and smallholdings which provided a living to the homesteaders who farmed the land. Buccleuch, in common with other gentry landowners of the time wanted to create a large farm for the estate and offered the crofters the chance to build their homes and receive parcels of land on which to farm if they moved off the hills - they had little choice as he controlled rents. When they could not be paid, homesteads were destroyed. Seeing this the people had little choice but accept change and the village of Newcastleton was created, its name acknowledging the smaller old village at Castleton further north.

Since that time the village has been stifled. Our forefathers asked for more land to keep families together and prosper and it was refused. In 1793, when Newcastleton was formed 1109 people were recorded as living in its environs, by 1901 this had dropped to 815 and today, we number 762.

With no more land on which to croft many left. Today, although population numbers are steadier, indeed there is population growth forecast over the next 25 years, we still see little opportunity:

We cannot develop and seek investment to grow our community due to flood constraints

We can only create micro businesses to sustain ourselves with what we have; our environment and existing skill sets.

The opportunity to create wealth for our community still exists, we want the questions our forefathers asked in 1895, when the 99-year leases expired, to be answered.

We want to discuss owning the Holm Hill and beyond.

2. Do you or your community group have any aspirations regarding the use or ownership of the land.

For the reasons outlined above we aspire to owning the land, not necessarily all of it but the land our side of the SSSI/SPA. The Holm Hill as we know it. We see real value in the whole site but respect that Langholm and others also may wish to capitalise on this opportunity.

Newcastleton's only current growth sector is tourism. We have a community development strategy to grow and enhance our tourism assets and create more jobs. Local jobs for local people.

We need new housing.

We need new land to attract new investment.

We need to keep our young farmers - the few farms still operating would have the chance to expand becoming more viable in uncertain times.

We do not need more trees on our doorstep, we gain absolutely nothing from trees. Not one penny do we benefit, we lose. Our fragile road network is damaged and often closed due to the tonnage using it. We recognise planting is a commercial opportunity, and this is fine if it is managed with due consideration to the people who continue to rely on the land for a living - from the upland farmers to small tourism businesses all relying on the land and wider environment.

This place has sustained 762 people for over 225 years.

We agree with others; the site offers prime opportunity to be developed based on sustainable values:

Ecotourism, rewilding, uplands farming, planting and renewables as well as further tourism products like walking, cycling and mountain biking, bridleways and (controlled!) wild camping. We have already established the demand for much of this in a community consultation and feasibility study carried out last year.

We did not expect this land to become available so soon and now need the TIME and the opportunity to investigate, undertake assessments/feasibility studies and seek expert opinion as to how this property can meet our needs to provide us a sustainable future, one that allows our community to grow naturally.

Until those assessments are completed, we ask that the 'moor' is not marketed for sale.

The people of Newcastleton are *owed* this chance by the Estate to determine once and for all their future. We asked for this way back in 1893.

We want the opportunity, through wider land ownership, to determine our own destiny. To use the moor to create local wealth for wider benefit, please give us this chance before it is too late.

We request Buccleuch adopt the protocol for Negotiated Sales, the agreed process adopted between Community Land Scotland and Scottish Land & Estates which can be followed as NDCT are both members of the respective organisations. Thank you.

NDCC, NDCT, NBF

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