



NEWCASTLETON & DISTRICT COMMUNITY TRUST

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

8th August 2022 at Buccleuch House, Newcastleton, in person and online

Present:

Steve Hartley	NDCT Chair
Barbara Elborn	NDCT Secretary/Treasurer
Greg Cuthbert	NDCT Board
Margaret Elliott	NDCT Board
Bert Leishman	NDCT Board
Barry Patterson	NDCT Board
Scott Wilson	NDCT Board

In Attendance:

Peter Wilson (Speaker)	Mass Timber Academy
Heather Batsch (Minute taker)	The Bridge

Members/supporters 16

Chairman Steve Hartley welcomed everyone to the meeting, whether in person or virtually, and explained the protocols for management of this hybrid meeting.

He introduced Guest Speaker, Peter Wilson; some years ago, the Trust had undertaken a study with Rural Housing Scotland to analyse housing needs and the contact with Peter and Factory to the Forest was made as a result.

Speaker: Peter Wilson, Mass Timber Academy

“Building back Rural, why communities need Factory to the Forest”

Peter shared a comprehensive presentation and explained that taking the factory to the forest (F2F) has been developed over 25 years; he has been involved in training architects and others in these principles.

- all types of housing can be built with timber – the aim of this process is to produce affordable housing.
- two houses at Ulva Ferry on Mull use cross laminated timber, but the panels for these homes came from Northern Spain.
- be a principle to use local forests owned by the community to produce wood locally
- Rural communities need to find new ways to create jobs and grow their population.
- Newcastleton now owns a huge area of land, which could help to address issues of fuel poverty, housing needs and sustainable economic development.
- Timber frame housing needs to be simpler and local:
 - Renewable material, Carbon sequestration, Local manufacture
- A massive number of people live in rural communities, we need to keep them there and bring the factory and the jobs to them.
- What is needed is efficient design and sustainable use of materials.

- using F2F methods there are stepped stages of manufacturing to undertake; cut, saw, kiln dry, plane then produce mass timber panels for use.
- Design for local manufacture and assembly, and for future disassembly and re-use.
- Re-use of materials leads to sustainable forestry, reinvestment in new planting and community wealth creation. This can arrest demographic decline.

The model of Factory to the Forest connects forestry and processing and manufacturing and design & build.

Peter then discussed making the cross laminated panels:

- usually they are glued, but they can also be nailed, or dowels can be used.
- Various types of timber (spruce/larch/fir etc) have been reviewed to see which would meet EU standards. Construction Scotland's Innovation Centre has identified that small size panels can be handled by people – no crane is required.
- Small harvesting machinery can deliver the timber to a sawmill in a container; the 'kiln' is also in a container, run by solar panels. Slow working avoids panels twisting; pneumatic pressure is used to fire in special nails.

The presentation showed a series of example buildings made from timber panels manufactured on site. Entire houses can be designed from the outset and constructed in phases around the core, as and when funds permit – Newcastleton could consider. In conclusion Peter highlighted the following:

- forest value is raised through local manufacture
- communities are upskilled to build their own homes and community facilities
- small capital investment in a factory facility
- factory available as and when needed
- buildings can be designed to reflect local culture.

Q&A followed the presentation.

Q1: imported wood doesn't have as many knots as it's grown in a colder climate. A: Making smaller panels means you can work around that. Peter noted that 'polymeric' timber was used years ago.

Q2: How much timber is needed to keep the 'factory' going? A: This method of construction uses more timber to produce solid panels and avoid layers of multiple materials. It's a renewable resource.

Q3: Barbara Elborn asked about carbon sequestration. A: Photosynthesis locks carbon into trees - by using this wood locally (and not burning or transporting it) keeps the carbon locked into local buildings without wasting energy on transportation. The way we build 'normally' is incredibly wasteful eg concrete.

Peter Wilson noted that what we can do with wood now has unlocked great opportunities, making use of technical change. It's not true that our timber is unsuitable for construction.

Q4: if we want to build 12 houses, how long would it take to train up the workforce? A: Peter is working with Historic Environment Scotland to use the pane system to makes 'boxes' that can be constructed inside heritage buildings (of stone) to make a more comfortable environment to live in. A range of different skills is needed for all the various elements. These need to be developed into career paths. There is a need to impact on planning departments and make them aware of the new technology.

Q5: Steve Hartley noted the need to meet insulation targets – can this be done? A: 'IndiNature' in Jedburgh is making insulation materials, currently soft, but moving to more solid panels. It would be possible to work in partnership with them – using local means you can build more comfortable/larger affordable housing.

Steve Hartley thanked Peter for his presentation as evidenced by the number of questions generated. There was a short break before the formal part of the AGM.

1. Minutes of last Meeting

(Jan 2021) had been circulated and posted on the NDCT website. Acceptance of the Minutes was proposed by Scott Wilson, seconded by Greg Cuthbert, and agreed unanimously.

2. Chairman's Statement

Steve Hartley reminded everyone of the difficult times in early 2020

- The community suffered flood and as the rebuild was just getting under way, Covid hit and stopped everything in its tracks.
- Covid had a devastating effect on the Newcastleton community, communications were very fragile after the flood.
- NDCT planned the upgrade of Buccleuch House, but Covid caused delays with timelines, budgets, forward planning, etc.
- Covid meant everything was more expensive, which proved to be a challenge
- Once underway the building created unexpected issues to deal with; quickly found that there wasn't anything supporting the floor of the main room upstairs – joists had rotted away completely. The downstairs walls were built on very poor beck bottom concrete relying on ceiling plaster to stop them falling over.
- Project Manager employed a to look after the build and together with contractors, the project progressed until it became what you see today
- Effectively rebuilt from the inside out to create the warm public spaces that make up the ELO (Enterprise, Learning & Outreach Centre) and the 3 multi-bedrooms (14) upstairs, along with a communal living area in the Bunkhouse where guests can get together and share experiences.
- The laundry, initially included to support the bunkhouse accommodation but also now offered as a service to the wider community/businesses.
- Buccleuch House officially opened at the beginning of 2022 with a 'Soft Opening' so the team could find their feet and see what did, or didn't, work.
- The revamp incorporated technology to help keep operating costs to a minimum; Solar PV, charging batteries in the plant room; air-source heat pumps and the latest levels of insulation keeping inputs to a minimum.
- The Trust is still living through the first full year post opening so real-world running costs are still being logged, but to date it has reduced running costs recording days where the building has run at net zero generating as much electricity as it has used.

2021 saw the commencement of the Outreach Team – this was something that wasn't planned but was in response to a need in our community.

Steve mentioned how cut off people were with communication problems while living in terrible conditions, as well as the mental anguish caused by Covid, all on top of the day-to-day problems some people face. The Outreach Team were there to help, offering guidance and support or just a "listening ear". Now that Buccleuch House is operating, they have a base to work from.

Throughout everything NDCT has continued to manage the Community Fuel Station, thank you to Greg and welcome to the two Robbie's. The site is kept very clean & tidy and is a credit to the team and the wider community.

The Trust has also supported other community groups as follows

- The Community Council to assist installing and operating the CCTV Program.
- The Polysport to seek change of use and protect its income streams.
- Working with SBC to help deliver the new riverside bund.
- Investing in maintaining existing pathways while also improving some – including new handrails etc.
- Responding quickly to emergency situations, like Storm Arwen, to clear our land and the pathways so they remain open for access by the community.

Because NDCT owns much of the public access land in and around the village on behalf of the community, enabling work or projects to be done has proven to be so much simpler than before and has a benefit to all.

Looking forward:

- focus is on the changing needs of the community. Spiralling fuel costs, high inflation, food insecurity challenges that face us all and can't be ignored.
- Factory to the Forest demonstrates how new approaches can have positive impact on our future and how we deal with the issues in an ever-changing world.
- NDCT has seen how investing in the right areas and technology such a positive benefit can have; investing in the Community Fuel Pumps which have become invaluable; investing in the technologies within Buccleuch House that have seen the huge savings

Directors are now working on the **Holm Hill Master Plan and a Decarbonisation Strategy** roadmap for Newcastleton; the approach been met with positive feedback from public sector agencies and funders. It's a big vision, but if everyone works together, the community can achieve it and be ahead of the rest.

What next?

- The Trust has completed tendering to commission consultants to undertake a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping study of the village and the Holm Hill. The UK Community Renewal Fund has agreed to this new methodology, NDCT is in funds and can begin.
- Technology will show topography detail, can overlay shadow/sunlight etc to identify best places for solar not just on the hill but on every building in the community, incorporate flood studies, leaky dams, new forestation, etc.
- It will identify best places to put in new services to support development on the hill; integral to help extend the community boundary to include the new land – we have run out of development land in the community due to flood constraints.
- Practically it will be able to plot the best sites; for example, plug-ins EVs – many car owners cannot get access to run electric cars but converting lamp posts outside houses is an option, providing choices so that many more of us could consider electric cars which are cheaper to operate.
- The mapping will present a visual image of our infrastructure – data is used to build a picture of fabrics used in buildings, enabling us to identify age, home improvements, loft insulation, heating type etc. It can investigate every building in huge detail so we can build a picture of the scale of the challenge and then work out how we can fix it; by home, by group of neighbours, by street, by block if that is what the community desires.
- It will answer the questions that many of you ask yourself, is investment worth it? Since the energy crisis, the period of payback calculations for investing in decarbonising and improving our buildings fabric has gone out the window. Payback is quicker, but that's irrelevant if you cannot afford to do them in the first place.

- Individually these challenges are too expensive for us to do ourselves but collaboratively we can tackle them and find solutions that work for us.
- Contributions by many of you during Spring 2022 as part of **Copshaw Climate Challenge** will also be fed into the models, the master planning will find the best places for example, an orchard or a vegetable nursery so food production on a community scale can be considered.
- Many of the elements that everyone has worked on will all feed into this program so we will have a vision of what is possible and a plan of how we might get there.

The rest of 2022 is all about Energy, finding solutions, incorporating Climate Challenge suggestions, and creating that Master Plan for the community-owned land.

The Trust will be working with the Social Enterprise Academy and SoSE to pull all the elements together under the Rural Land Use Partnership project, but this element will focus on flooding and what we can do with landowners.

We all know that our rurality costs us, as it costs every service provider more to deliver to us than to others; if we don't do this ourselves and provide solutions to solve our challenges and make them opportunities for investment, then we will continue to pay a very high price for where we live.

The Newcastleton & District Community Trust is committed to trying to solve this, but needs your help to do it, how we do this will be shared in the next few weeks.

Comments:

Barbara Elborn then noted that the charts shown in the Chairman's presentation are examples of what can be captured digitally. The Digital Mapping Tool will be available via a new platform to help the community to plan; it will also be available to individuals to help them plan for their own homes, and by working together there will be benefits for all. The Trust hopes to have some answers to share with everyone before Christmas.

3. Finance Report

Barbara Elborn (Treasurer) then introduced Lorna Rankine from Deans Accountants, who went through the audited accounts for the financial year 2020-21.

The income for the year was £1,273,558 most of which was grants received for Buccleuch House and the Outreach project, with a surplus of £1,079,311 at the yearend to be spent in the following year. Unrestricted Reserves total £85,609.

The Trust acknowledged with sincere thanks the substantial funding received from several grant funders for different areas of work in support of its charitable aims, together with a number of donations from individuals and community groups.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Scott Wilson, seconded by Barry Patterson agreed unanimously.

4. Appointment of Auditor

The appointment of JRW Accountants as auditors for the next financial year was proposed by Steve Hartley, seconded by Greg Cuthbert, and agreed unanimously.

5. Election of Directors

In accordance with the constitution, two Directors were standing down by rotation: Scott Wilson and Bert Leishman indicated their willingness to be re-elected. A further nomination had been received for NDCT member Peter Irving.

A proposal from Greg Cuthbert, seconded by Barbara Elborn to elect Scott Wilson, Bert Leishman and Peter Irving to the Board was agreed unanimously. The Board of NDCT now consists of: Steve Hartley, Barbara Elborn, Greg Cuthbert, Margaret Elliott, Peter Irving, Bert Leishman, Barry Patterson, Scott Wilson. Posts will be nominated and agreed at next meeting.

Appointment of a Director to represent Young People: In his absence, the appointment of Robbie Turnbull was proposed by Barbara Elborn, seconded by Peter Irving, and approved.

Chairman Steve Hartley thanked everyone for their support tonight including Peter Wilson, Lorna Rankine, and Heather Batsch for taking Minutes and managing the election of Directors.

There were no further questions of actions.

Cllr Watson McAteer noted that Newcastleton was an exemplar for other communities and congratulated everyone on their hard work.

The meeting was closed at 8.30pm.

NOTE Post meeting Robbie Turnbull indicated that he couldn't undertake the post proposed. NDCT will continue to seek someone to fill this post.