

**HELMSDALE & DISTRICT
DEVELOPMENT TRUST**



**COMMUNITY
NEWSLETTER
AUGUST 2015**

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We are delighted to report that only nine months after the first turf was cut by Rob Gibson MSP, the first four families were able to move into their new homes, just in time for Christmas. The four houses look very smart, and tenants already say that their new homes are extremely cosy and cost-efficient.



We were privileged to welcome the Scottish Government Housing Minister, Margaret Burgess MSP, to Helmsdale in April, when she



Finally, HDDT is thrilled to announce that this innovative housing project has just received the **Highland Third Sector Community Initiative Award**, which will be presented in a ceremony at Strathpeffer Pavilion on 25th August.

FILLING STATION



Since last reporting we have been undertaking the pre-development works, in preparation for the 2nd stage application being submitted.

This is a huge amount of work that is driven by process. This compulsory process evidences and explores the options available, from the design of all the new equipment that is needed, to bringing a design team together, ensuring that the 'public pound' is spent at the right time and in the right way, from having the Architects and Principle Designer prepare plans for submission to the planning department, to addressing any issues that Highland Council Petroleum Officers highlight, and incorporating these to the design.

The Petroleum Engineer's report on the existing tanks provided an insight into their life expectancy, and unfortunately, this cannot be guaranteed beyond more than 5 years. We also had some soil samples taken to ascertain the levels of hydrocarbons that may be present.

One of the requirements of the 2nd stage application is to bring the community consultation up to date, as the original is some 2 years old. You will no doubt have had this delivered through your letterboxes over the past couple of days. We cannot stress enough the importance of returning this to us, as this information will be used by the Big Lottery as the base evidence when addressing needs etc.

So please return these to the community centre, and place in the returns box just



Artist Impression





Renewable Energy

You may well be aware of a recent planning application submitted by Windflow

Hammer, a small and successful developer, to install 2 x 500kW turbines (2 blade variation) located on land within the Navidale Estate, (near the radio mast).

We are acutely aware of the emotive issues associated with turbines, and must point out that there are many pros and cons. However, our view is that if the project is consented, then rather than allowing the developer to have all the gains, it is sensible to explore the option of community gain from this, through a 'shared ownership' model.

In simple terms, this would provide the community with up to a 100% share and a source of income from the energy generated, through the Feed in Tariff (FiT).

This income would be used to help deliver the Community Business Development Plan, derived from your priorities. As the public purse shrinks in relation to grant funding, we as a community need to become more sustainable, and this is an option, and we repeat, an option that should be further explored.

We have been provided with the necessary financial models to investigate further, and ascertain whether the project is viable and capable of



Helmsdale Kitchen Garden

A great deal of work has been undertaken by the Kitchen Garden Group over the past 6 months, including accessing funds to secure the land, equipment needed, the business plan, demonstrating and

evidencing the need.

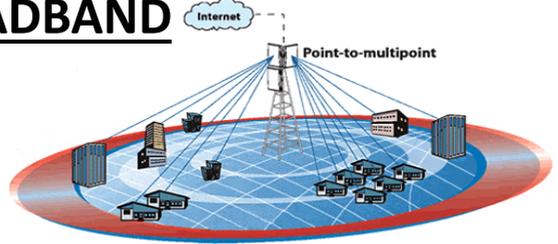
The project invites all those people in the community to take part and get involved in growing some of their own food.

Don't worry if you think you cannot do this, as there will be expert help and advice on hand not only to get started as well as on an ongoing basis.

Want to pre-book a raised bed or two or rent space in the poly tunnel? Then please call Rona Ellis, number below.

We have been delayed by some procedural hurdles to navigate, but we are hopeful of starting in the very near future. When the project gets off the ground and getting stuck in with forks and spades, we will be publishing dates for the diary when training sessions will be taking place, and we will endeavour to cover not only day times but evening and weekends as well.

COMMUNITY BROADBAND



In the previous newsletter, we reported great news on the Community Broadband Initiative, sponsored by Community Broadband Scotland & HIE.

We have recently received the final consultant's report which outlines the probable design needed to put this in place, along with the associated CAPEX and revenue costs, and are still looking to reduce these.

In order to ensure that the project is attractive for funding purposes, these costs will require an element of community involvement in relation to the building of community owned mast sites. To secure this, we will be holding a further information session in Kinbrace Hall sometime during the coming weeks, to allow those that are in need of what we all take for granted, to explore further these options.

On a slightly different note, the B.T. installation of Next Generation Broadband (NGB) within the Strathnaver Street exchange, is programmed to start in September 2015. This will result in a marked increase in broadband speeds.

Within the report and costs, provision has been made for at least 2 people to be trained and qualified in proactive and reactive maintenance. This enhances the project with an aspect of sustainability, as well as adding skills value to the community.



Contact details

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