

Falkirk Council Community Services

Bo'ness Development Group Minutes of Meeting of 19th May 2008

Present: Douglas Duff - Head of Economic Development, Falkirk Council
Pete Reid – Manager, Strategic Projects, Falkirk Council
Colin Frame – Project Surveyor, Falkirk Council
Jacquie McArthur – Economic Development Officer, Falkirk Council
George Paterson – THI Project Officer, Falkirk Council
Kate Kane – Community Planning Officer, Falkirk Council
Councillor Adrian Mahoney – Falkirk Council
Councillor John Constable – Falkirk Council
Councillor Harry Constable – Falkirk Council
Mary Jane Armstrong – Town Centre Management Ltd
Hamish Calder – ING Real Estates Ltd
Peter McNay – ING Real Estates Ltd
Len Ainslie – Bo'ness Area Forum/Community Council
Madeleine Hunt – Bo'ness Community Council
Val Trotter – Bo'ness Means Business
Rob Willox – Bo'ness Means Business
Gail Fairholm – Bonnie Bo'ness
Giles Fairholm – Bonnie Bo'ness/Bo'ness Means Business
David Young – Bo'ness Residents Harbour Group
Lyn Cranwell – Bo'ness Residents Harbour Group
Tom Gardiner – Central Scotland Police
Alex King – Bonnie Bo'ness/Bo'ness Area Forum
John Mayes – Scottish Railway Preservation Society
Lynn Munro – Bo'ness Retail Association
Paul Shave – Upper Forth Boat Club
Malcolm Gilfillan – Bo'ness Community Council

1.0 INTRODUCTIONS

Douglas Duff welcomed everyone to the first meeting and requested introductions from all in attendance. He asked the Group if there were any objections to inclusion of the Bo'ness Residents Harbour Group in the meeting. Whilst there were initial objections in terms of their constitution and standing, it was agreed they could attend the meeting and for the matter to be reviewed at the next meeting.

The Group was asked if Alan Scott, Bo'ness Journal could attend the meeting. After discussion on this, it was agreed that representatives from the group would meet with Alan Scott after the meeting to give an update. The representatives were Councillors, Madeleine Hunt, Rob Willox, ING Real Estates and Falkirk Council.

2.0 TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE

Douglas Duff advised the group on the current position with regard to the revised approach to the phasing of the scheme and the Councils decision on 30 April to undertake further consultation with the Bo'ness community. He opened up the discussion to the group.

Pete Reid gave an outline of the presentation that was given to the Area Forum on 8 May detailing the need for rephrasing of the scheme to be considered by Council, their decision, and the need for further consultation.

Concerns were raised on the revised phasing resulting in commencement of works at the east end of the site, and revised means of funding the package of harbour works to make the scheme viable. Douglas Duff invited Peter McNay and Hamish Calder to provide further information on this.

The ING representatives stated that whilst they are committed to the delivery of the masterplan, current market conditions across Europe and subsequent infrastructure costs, it has become clear that the scheme is no longer viable. They went on to say that they have looked at options to improve the viability of the scheme including the rephrasing and delivery mechanisms.

Discussion took place on the proposed residential Blocks 15 and 16 with an option to undertake Block 14 once market factors are considered. David Young asked about the proposals to introduce 6 storey buildings into the scheme and Peter McNay said that this was a consideration not only to improve the value in the scheme but also to aesthetically improve the site, but stressed that this would be subject to planning approval.

Lyn Cranwell asked ING what tie-ins existed and Hamish Calder said none.

Peter Reid reminded the group that the Economic Development Review (2000) sought to address the economic decay and profile of Bo'ness town centre with various short, medium and long term strategies. These included such initiatives as public realm improvements and redevelopment of derelict buildings, currently being delivered through the Bo'ness Townscape Heritage Initiative. The review also sought to bring forward residential development opportunities on the foreshore and restoration of the harbour.

Lynn Munro challenged this view suggesting that the scheme provided no benefits to the existing town centre.

David Young said that ING had transferred the risk from themselves to the Council for the scheme. He went on to ask ING how they planned to sell 2 bed flats in a falling market.

Hamish Calder disagreed with this statement and stated that the risk element for ING was still high. He said that ING had reduced their profit margin on the first three phases of the development. Peter McNay said that Scotland's economy was more robust.

Alex King stated that his basic concern was that people's hopes had been raised over this development but that he welcomed profit being put into harbour restoration and that if ING did walk from the scheme that at least some improvements had been undertaken in the harbour and so supported the scheme.

Discussion took place on the running costs of a marina.

Val Trotter said that she did not want Bo'ness to miss the opportunity that was before it and therefore should proceed with the scheme.

Giles Fairholm indicated his disappointment on the changes to the original masterplan. He said that he believed most of the business community were in favour of the scheme progressing. He agreed that the construction industry was suffering from major decline at the moment due to market forces. He congratulated ING for taking on the scheme and said that he didn't believe any other developer would take the development on so the Council has to work with ING.

Madeleine Hunt asked why the Council had failed to bid for £1m available European funding. Douglas Duff explained that the funding could not be progressed due to the spend profile required by ERDF criteria, to be fully claimed end June 2008. Bo'ness is now no longer eligible for ERDF assistance in the new round of awards.

Len Ainslie said that he believed Bo'ness had a chance to move forward with this scheme and suggested that residential blocks at 15 and 16 would bring welcome footfall into the town. He asked who would take the blame if the opportunity was lost.

Cllr Mahoney commented that people in the town were clearly disappointed that the harbour would not be tackled first but welcomed the opportunity for people to have their say through the consultation process.

Lyn Cranwell said that the town did not want more houses without a harbour development and wants ING tied in.

Rob Willox said that whilst he was deeply disappointed that the harbour was not being tackled first, there needed to be an acceptance of the current market conditions. He felt that there was too much mis-information in the public domain and asked for clear and honest consultation with the community.

Val Trotter said that increased population in the town was good news for everyone and hopes the town will continue to work with TCM Ltd and tourism sectors.

Cllr Harry Constable raised his concerns at the new proposals and said that all that was guaranteed in the new scheme was additional housing.

Cllr John Constable intimated his extreme concerns of the proposed changes and said that he did not believe that the housing blocks proposed would bring any economic growth to the town. He said that it was right that the Bo'ness community had the right to decide on what should happen.

Consultation

Douglas asked Pete Reid to outline the consultation arrangements that would be undertaken.

Pete Reid distributed slides of a presentation outlining the consultation proposals following Bo'ness Development Group agreement.

- Website information and on-line survey
- Newsletter with voting slip
- Displays at key locations within the town
- Open Public Event
- Public Meetings

These arrangements were agreed by the group.

3.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 2nd July at 10.00am in Bo'ness Library.