

Largo Communities Together

[LCT is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Charity No. SC048447]

Report on Largo Communities Together community consultations
conducted between 14th September 2018 and 20th January 2019

Main contact: LHR/SW/NC

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Largo Communities Together

Largo Community Library and Hub | 7 Lundin Square | Lundin Links | Leven | Fife | KY8 6BH |

Email: info@largocommunitiestogether.org.uk

Web: www.largocommunitiestogether.org.uk

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Section 1 – The Consultation Process and Summary of Findings

1.1 Executive Summary

Largo Communities Together conducted a consultation exercise in 2018 which showed strong community interest in the concepts put forward for a major community initiative: to consider a circa 40 acre area of land in the Largo Area for community management, including some historic buildings and paths connecting parts of the community.

The community made it very clear that there is strong support for: -

- opening up old paths
- creating community gardens and allotments
- establishing a centre for community activity
- exploiting the built environment and the history attached to the Largo area and specifically Largo House and its grounds.

Inclusivity and social wellbeing were emphasized by participants in the consultation which covered all age groups. The scale of the project was recognized by many, and an incremental approach was encouraged. Examples of success in other similar projects elsewhere gave people hope and a very positive attitude to the project and opportunities to volunteer or be involved in some way as it develops.

1.2 Main Report

1.2.1 Outline of consultation process

After a leaflet drop to the whole community at the end of August 2018, the first extensive communication from LCT, a series of 'have your say' sessions were held in village halls and similar venues. LCT invited people to look at some simple outlines of what could be possible if LCT took control of the management of a part of Largo Estate. People were then invited to write comments on post-it notes and then place them on the information boards provided. An information board was set up for each of the proposed LCT subgroups. LCT committee members were on hand to discuss ideas. We did not attempt to influence people so that they could make suggestions freely

Photographs recording what the boards looked like are available in Appendix 1

This overview first provides an interpretation of the complete data set of all responses and then goes on to look at the comments on the specific subgroup areas of interest. The complete set of comments (of which there are 195) has not been edited or had any revisions made where, for example, a comment might be considered to be on the wrong board. It is as close as possible to raw data and is valuable for just this reason. Most people looked at the consultation boards in the order in which the summary is also set out; it is therefore not surprising that the heritage subgroup attracted more comments than any of the others, but many are 'umbrella' comments which could apply to all subgroup categories.

The consultation was conducted at locations spread through our community and attracted visitors from all parts of our demographic spread, both in terms of age and gender, and included members of our community who have spent all their lives here and those who have recently moved. The involvement and contributions of young people for example of school age were particularly encouraging. Sixteen responses were from children and there were doubtless more from young people in general.

1.3 Top level report

These are the views of our community

A relatively small number of themes were repeatedly noted from the consultation.

Paths: The community is very supportive of ideas which open up the old network of paths and carriageways through Largo Estate and establish additional walks in the old garden areas. Thirty-four of the comments written are about paths, cycle tracks, nature walks and so on, a number advocate work on paths as the first objective for LCT. The background to comments about paths includes linking with current paths for example in Kiel's Den and with management schemes such as the Woodland Trust and Fife Council's rights of way and core paths. The idea that this area could permit an 'early win' for LCT is expressed along with the sentiment that it would be easy to find volunteers to work on establishing such paths.

History: There is strong interest in local history across three main areas of

- the built environment: the historical involvement of Largo House and its associated buildings, e.g. Wood's Tower, the doocot, and the farm steading,
- b) the Polish wartime occupancy of Largo House, their involvement in the second world war, and the associated diaspora into Fife communities
- c) the local social history of the area, including agriculture, fishing, coalmining, commercial activities in shops, bars, hotels; local trades and crafts, and domestic service. The way in which historical information could be disseminated, for example information boards on walks and buildings, history walks and tours, tourist information, a history centre is expressed in numerous comments.

Allotments and horticulture: Around 31 comments were made about the potential for food production, allotments, beehives, grazing and so on in a number of contexts, ranging from helping with the need for cheap or free food in some parts of the community for example through foodbanks, to the social and wellbeing benefits of gardening and the understanding of food production. Some explored the benefits of organically grown food, but the clearest signal is that allotments would be well supported. Another point is the wish to bring the benefit of gardens to everyone, with complete accessibility being very high in priority, and a strong understanding of the wellbeing and mental health benefits of accessible gardens.

The scope of the overall project. The scope of the project laid out by LCT for the consultation is extensive, and this is recognized in a number of comments, asking about for example business planning, finance, community involvement, possible holiday rental accommodation, commercial ventures on the proposed site, all showing an understanding that there will have to be a sustainable plan. Several comments were posted with ideas of energy generation from wind and water, partly from an ecologic point of view but also considering revenue generation. This recognition of scale and the need to have a plan is definite positive feedback, along with the comments about taking one step at a time.

Not a unique endeavour. Many people cited other community bodies and projects as great examples of what can be achieved. Amongst them were the Clear Project in Buckhaven, Dumfries House, Greener Kirkcaldy, Ravenscraig allotments, the Falkland Centre, Kaimes Argyll, Social Bite, Combat Stress, Caledonian Horticultural Society and Help for Heroes. The consultation yielded these examples, rather than them being cited by LCT, showing that the community believes in the feasibility of the project; a critical point in gaining support.

Inclusivity and wellbeing. The consultation was set up with specific opportunities for people to put forward ideas on youth engagement and participation and health and wellbeing but in fact responses on these themes pervaded the entire consultation. Over 25 responses were posted on topics OTHER than youth and health and wellbeing. There is a clear need for provision for youth, for example relating to children and teenagers and the need to offer them opportunities to be outdoors, and other aspects of inclusivity relating to autism, fibromyalgia, mental health, and mobility/access. On the specific board set out for ideas for engagement with young people, those attending posted over 40 comments including 16 from children. The health and wellbeing board attracted 23 comments, with mental health and mindfulness being repeated themes.

1.4 Report on the Sub-group topics

Sub-Group 1 – Heritage

The Heritage topic attracted 47 comments, many of which related more to other areas of the consultation for example comments on paths and horticulture were the subject of approximately 20 of the responses. However, four responses directly mentioned the need to recognize the Polish connection and one specifically mentioned the history surrounding Sir Andrew Wood, a

major figure in Scottish naval warfare. The importance of capturing and making accessible social history, including mining, farming, old craft skills, and fishing, was also mentioned in many responses. Ways of sharing the benefits of the walled gardens in Largo Estate, part of the built heritage, were the subject of many inventive contributions.

Sub-Group 2 – Horticulture

Many ideas were submitted of how horticulture could play a major part in the project, ranging from allotments, communal endeavours such as beekeeping (reflecting the historic niches in the gardens made for beehives), apple pressing and a community orchard and arboretum, through to sensory gardens focused on wellbeing and mental health. Several comments emphasized the importance of involving young people, accessibility and skills transfers. The relationship between gardening, organic growing and healthy eating was clearly pointed out, as was the potential for financial sustainability through allotment rents and sale of produce. Five contributions emphasized possibilities of re-wilding some areas and supporting biodiversity through leaving dead wood and felled wood from path clearing, as well as wildflower planting.

Sub-Group 3 –Sustainability and Shed Space

The ‘men’s shed’ concept was enthusiastically embraced by seven consultees, although quickly rendered non-gender specific, and named ‘*shedquarters*’ by one. The concept of a non-commercial, non-domestic space for sharing is obviously very attractive. Activities described include; craft work, tool sharing, skill development, such as coppicing, woodworking; arts and artists in residence were suggested as possibilities in the context of shed type space or accommodation. The clear relationship between such activities and mental wellbeing and inclusivity was pointed out in a number of responses.

Sub-Group 4 - Young people

The concept of outdoor learning, from nursery level onwards was strongly advocated along with liaison with local schools and the need for inclusivity. Extending this learning framework to include traditional skills training was also supported by a number of respondents. This included involvement of young people in gardening and food growing projects. Comments from children reflected current uses of the area for sledging, walking, play and exploration, where these activities may at present be unsafe and not necessarily permitted. Again, the possibility of opening old paths was raised by respondents who extolled the safety benefits of paths away from roads, particularly for children.

Sub-Group 5 - Health and Wellbeing

This sub-group attracted many extended comments mainly emphasising what could be done for mental health, ranging from reducing isolation, mindfulness and reducing stress, through to provision for specific groups such as ex-servicemen (four specific responses) and the disabled. The benefits of having a café as a centre for people to meet, as well as a source of funds, drew several comments, as did connection with other groups with similar objectives both in the

villages and further afield. Several noted the need for substantial funding and volunteer support in setting up such facilities and in running them.

Sub-Group 6 – ‘Buildings on the site’ or ‘The Built Environment’

This section drew comments about the restoration, re-building and re-purposing of the built environment in the target area. Several themes were the subject of a number of comments relating to maximising the tourist potential, recognising the architectural history and quality of the derelict buildings and at least preserving what can be saved and making good use of them. Potential uses included providing space for artists to work and exhibit, communal spaces such as a café, restoring the path infrastructure, a museum, use of old steading buildings for small businesses including small scale manufacturing, craft workshops and sales outlets, and also the possibilities of using buildings for accommodation, either for holiday makers or for longer term residence. Several respondents commented that sustainable energy projects might help make the overall project more viable. The potential size of the project was recognized as was the importance of integrating the project with other activities in the villages.

Sub-group 7 – The pier

This has a separate consultation process and report







