

FEASIBILITY STUDY AND BUSINESS PLAN

FOR

THE FINDHORN VILLAGE CONSERVATION COMPANY



“Good place-making can provide communities with an important cultural context; a sense of pride and belonging; and a sense of local and national identity. It can provide environments which function well; link well with surrounding settlements and provide attractive areas in which to socialise, to move around and to do business” Scottish Government .

Executive Summary

1 The opportunity

- 1.1 Novar Estate approached the Findhorn Village Conservation Company in 2012 with an offer to sell us land in and around Findhorn Village. Land is a ‘bedrock’ physical asset at the core of any community. There is strong community backing for the principle of land ownership by the community.
- 1.2 A mapping exercise and this feasibility and business plan were commissioned in 2013 by TFCVCC Directors to assess the benefits (and challenges) that the community purchase of land could bring over the short term and longer term.

2 Who we are

- 2.1 TFCVCC is a community led and controlled company limited by guarantee with charitable status (SC044408). We were set up in 2010 and our membership is open to anyone on the electoral roll (about 500 people) living in the postcodes of Findhorn Village.
- 2.2 In January 2014 membership was about 29% of the village population. (Our membership includes 145 ordinary community members and 40 Associate members, including people not resident in the community and supportive organisations). We have ten company Directors, all living in Findhorn, who have full voting rights at Board meetings. The Directors have a broad set of skills and experience including accountancy, fund raising and architecture.
- 2.3 Our Articles of Association set out our social purpose, membership and governance arrangements. We are a non-profit distributing organisation dedicated to our purpose. Our purpose is *to advance environmental protection or improvement, including preservation, sustainable development and conservation of the natural environment; the maintenance, improvement or provision of environmental amenities for the Community; and/or the preservation of buildings or sites of architectural, historic or other importance to the Community*. Any surplus funds and assets must be re-invested in alignment with our purpose.

3 Our Vision

- 3.1 Our short term goal is to make a successful bid to the government for capital funds from the Scottish Land Fund to take land in and around Findhorn Village and the intertidal part of Findhorn Bay into long term community ownership.
- 3.2 Longer term through ownership, we would aim to increase the capacity of the Findhorn Village community and local groups to build knowledge and skills and encourage innovation and collective action in tackling local development and conservation issues and projects.

4 Why would the Scottish Land Fund support us?

- 4.1 The Scottish Land Fund want to fund projects that put communities in control of local land and land assets which are important to their economic, social and environmental development and deliver benefit for the whole community and make them more resilient. This report demonstrates the possibilities.

5 Why do we need to change?

- 5.1 Consultation in the community has identified four main challenges for people in Findhorn Village. We believe community ownership of land would provide an effective way of tackling them. They are:

- *An economy dependent on seasonal tourism/recreational activity with limited provision of suitable space for diversification and improvement.*

- *Declining environmental and cultural management of local amenity land and the intertidal area with limited resilience to climate change effects.*
- *Deteriorating village setting, traffic management, arrival and visitor experience.*
- *An older demographic and a housing stock that provides limited opportunities for young people and families to settle in the village.*

5.2 Novar wishes to sell their land around the village. If the community does not purchase the land, it is highly likely it will be further fragmented and sold privately to a range of buyers with uncertain plans and motivations.

6 Viability not liability

6.1 Consultation was carried out by TFFVCC from 2012 - 2014 and a wide range of development ideas from the community were collected. These ideas, helped to shape the feasibility study which examined their viability.

6.2 Community land ownership provides opportunities and is not a liability. Realising the development potential in Findhorn will depend on individuals or groups working on projects of interest to them with collaboration and engagement from TFFVCC as the landowner and a source of professional development support. For example we have been approached by a good number of people seeking premises in the village for small businesses.

6.3 Moray Council and HIE have expressed support for TFFVCC aspirations, and can provide valuable advice and guidance as well as potential support funding for particular initiatives like a Development Officer post.

6.4 The themes and priority developments that this feasibility study has investigated and which TFFVCC will consider in more depth in the early years of ownership include those in the table below.

Table 1: Development Summary

	Short term (1-3yrs)	Medium term (3- 5yrs)	Longer term (5yrs plus)
Theme 1 Economic	- Wayleave and lease renegotiations - Car parking fees - Motor home site - Concessions - Allotments	- Rental from foreshore access - Camping facilities - Garages - Business workspaces - Beach huts	- Renewable energy project - Joint commercial projects
Theme 2 Environ- mental	- Volunteer groups/work parties - Environmental survey work - By laws for the intertidal area - Interpretation	- Habitat/access projects - Education facility, wildlife watching	- Climate change projects - Ecosystem services
Theme 3 Amenity	- Village masterplan - Signage and interpretation	- Promenade improvements - Entry point	- Village maintenance regime - Coastal protection
Theme 4 Demographic	- Community events - Friends group - Heritage recording	- Play areas - Day care - Minor ailments surgery	- Housing

7 Finance

- 7.1 As of May 2014 we are awaiting a valuation of the Novar land.
- 7.2 Annual income and expenditure figures in Table 2 are provisional. Novar Estate has not supplied specific accounts. TFVCC target for our own funding towards priority developments in the first year has been set at £50,000, by our fundraiser. Project returns are estimated yield. Capital set up costs for projects will be incurred.
- 7.3 Other funds will come from a variety sources. For example, it is likely the new 2014-20 Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) will include measures that can be used to help fund active management of designated sites and under the same programme Moray LEADER is likely to support community led economic growth. Climate Challenge funding can be sourced for innovative projects to mitigate climate change effects.

Table 2: Projected Annual Income and Expenditure (indicative & based on estimates)

Annual Income	£	Annual Expenditure	£
Visitor access lease	1,300	Public liability - estimate	1,000
Community lease	150	Admin/Land Agent advice (Y2)	8,400
Commercial lease	600	Accountancy –estimate	1,000
Wayleave income	850		
Project 1 (Y1)	14,107		
Project 2 (Y2)	4,000		
Project 3 (Y3)	20,250		
TOTAL	41,257		10,400
Net income (Y3)	30,857		

8 Learning from others

- 8.1 Across Scotland land is being bought by communities who wish to remove the uncertainty inherent in private ownership. Recent survey work on community owned land shows over 200% increases in capital value and turnover.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 Land ownership by the community will unlock tangible assets like land, but it is the intangible skill and determination of people that will see opportunities and accomplish projects. For Findhorn Village we will need both.