

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY STEERING GROUP**

**MEETING HELD in the GOOSE GREEN HALL, GOOSE GREEN  
3.30 STANLEY TIME  
ON THURSDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> OF MAY 2012**

### **Attendees**

- Hon. Mike Summers (MS) MLA, RDS Portfolio holder (Chairperson)
- Hon. Ian Hansen (IH) MLA, RDS Portfolio holder
- Keith Padgett (KP) Chief Executive, FIG
- Marc Boucher (MB) GM, FIDC
- Andrew Pollard (AP) SAA DoA
- Nuala Knight (NK) RDS PC
- Mike Evans (ME) West Falkland Representative
- Ted Jones (MJ) East Falkland Representative

The following individuals attended the meeting for the agenda item relating to Falkland Land Holdings.

- Keith Alazia (KA) Manager, Goose Green Farm
- Steven Dickson (SD) Assistant Manager, North Arm Farm
- Alan Eagle (AE) Manager, Fitzroy Farm

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Jamie Fotheringham.

### **2. Review of notes from last meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

There were no comments.

### **3. Matters Arising and actions carried forward**

#### **Actions from matters arising**

- **NK** A closing date is to be applied to the DoA and non-farming/domestic water survey. Suggested closing date 17<sup>th</sup> of June.
- **AP** The results of the survey will be collated and processed into a report in time for dissemination at farmers Week.
- **NK** to liaise with DJ and request that he pull actions relating to health and education from last minutes.
- **NK** A catch up meeting is to be arranged with David Jenkins and Tom Hill to review actions falling from the meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May
- **NK** Lifelong learning project being led by TH is to be added to the action plan
- **ALL RDSSG members** - Timescales are required for ALL actions, members are asked to review actions, attach timescales to their own actions and pass to Kerry McRae.

The proposed "Camp immigration system" was discussed. MS asked whether there would be advantages and benefits if Camp were awarded a special dispensation/exemption from ExCo with regards to the immigration system.

KA said that he didn't necessarily support Camp being exempt from the law, given that the immigration system was in place for very good reasons. He did however think that the renewal of work permits for existing post holders should be easier and that employers should have the opportunity to note "renewal of work permits" on adverts for the post.

**ACTION:** This should be considered in the "immigration review" being undertaken by JF.

Water was briefly discussed as a "matter arising". It was agreed that the results of the water survey would provide information such as the nature of the problem, on which informed decisions could then be made.

AE added that dams could be usefully considered. AE had built some dams which were working effectively.

**ACTION:** AP to review dams as an option for addressing access to water in agriculture.

#### **4. Role and remit of the Steering Group**

MS stated that the RDS Steering Group was charged by ExCo to deliver the "Action Plan". He added that it made sense for the funding to be released to FIDC for channelling to the RDS Group.

MB asked whether the Steering Group could and should have delegated authority from FIDB to spend the funds. A discussion followed which touched upon the various options including FIDB approving the budget and/or ExCo approving the budget and the action plan.

KP noted that he felt that the RDS Action plan was crucial. If the Action Plan is properly costed and is well planned then ExCo would be unlikely not to release the funds.

It was suggested that the RDS Action Plan be put to ExCo in August along with a paper outlining the delegated authority approvals required for it to be delivered with greatest efficiency and effect.

MB suggested that a special FIDB meeting be held to discuss the RDS Action Plan and associated budget prior to the August ExCo meeting.

#### **5. North Camp Community Hall**

MS summarised the reason for including the hall project on the agenda i.e. to give the project an opportunity to be progressed. A community group had been specifically set up for the purposes of progressing the project. The Group had lost momentum and there was uncertainty whether there was still local support for the project. The RDS Steering Group is keen to ascertain the level of community interest in the project. If sufficient support is apparent then the RDS will help progress the project to a point where funding for a building could be applied for. Any funding would be conditional on a) the community group being democratic and b) a good level of community support being demonstrated.

KP noted that there is no funding in the current budget for such a project.

There were some concerns about the onerous management responsibilities of community halls. KA said that he felt that whilst there are clear responsibilities that the North Camp community probably had the people and the skills to manage a new hall without any problem.

SD said that he felt finding a sufficient number of volunteers to run, stock and manage clubs/halls was key and was the source of most common problem.

On closing this agenda item, there some clear interest demonstrated by the public in continuing this project. Benefits such as better communication amongst the community, tourism opportunities, community cohesion and community spirit were all mentioned.

**ACTION:** NK and MJ to try to assess interest and re-establish the North Camp Community Hall Working Group if support is found.

## **6. How can FLH help deliver the RDS?**

As an introduction, MS described the situation on East Falkland in terms of the distribution of population- where there are very large FLH farms alongside much smaller family run farms.

MS added that the previous meeting in Fox Bay had focused on the provision of additional housing as a precursor to increasing the working population. In an East Falkland context there were probably two settlements which naturally lent themselves to development a) Goose Green, which was an existing large community and b) Fitzroy which had a much smaller population but had the advantage of being close to MPC.

MJ asked whether Fitzroy would be a good location for the “agriculture college” idea being mooted by the DoA and Mike Evans.

For the benefit of the public NK outlined the idea behind the agricultural college- the DoA currently had a problem finding host farms for apprentices; the “college” idea is based on providing a farm location/ agricultural college which provides young people an opportunity to gain a wide range of practical skills. The training centre has a much wider remit than agriculture and from their point of view they would like to see the college provide training in other areas such as mechanics, joinery, hairdressing etc. The DoA planned to run the idea past the RDS Steering Group once the idea had been worked up in more detail.

AP mentioned the interest the DoA had had in locating the “college” concept at Beckside. However, FIDC had indicated that this was unlikely to be a possibility unless the future tenant of Beckside was agreeable to a sub-lease to the DoA- which again was unlikely. The tenancy of Beckside is currently being advertised.

AP also noted the potential difficulties in apprentices living with the host farms.

SD said he'd undertaken an apprenticeship when he was younger and that he went to various farms which worked very successfully.

KA added that GG had employed apprentices in the past where the apprentices lived with GG employees. These employees were not remunerated for the costs of housing the apprentice. This situation was quite different from non FLH farms

were the farmers are the owners of the farm and therefore the beneficiary of the services/labour/skills of the apprentice. On FLH farms, the employees do not receive the benefits of the apprentice but do incur costs. This causes some problems.

Apprentices tend to be very young and therefore need some parental guidance and some degree of care. This also caused some problem for farmers deciding whether to accept an apprentice.

It was agreed that given the employment of an apprentice had a cost associated then it was reasonable to expect a return on this investment.

KA felt that a small flat in which to house an individual would be ideal.

KA said that he thought that before anything new was built at GG the existing power, water and sewage works would need to be sorted.

MS agreed saying that tis was indeed an essential first step to any development. He added that health and education facilities were also vital.

**ACTION:** Water is already being addressed. Power, health and education are included in the actions carried forward.

**At this point MS opened the floor to the public and invited questions and discussion.**

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A member of the public asked whether there would be any merit in making Camp entirely tax free. MS said that anything is a possibility but if we were serious we'd need to think carefully about how it was done. For instance it would not make sense to allow Stanley based companies to establish a nominal office in Camp in pursuit of tax avoidance. This would only lead to the erosion of the Falklands tax base which would be counter-productive.

**ACTION:** This is being assessed by Jamie Fotheringham in his work on the fiscal incentives being offered through Rural Enterprise Zones.

Other questions relating to this "tax haven" suggestion were about how a "Camp business" would be defined. Would Camp businesses which serve the Stanley population be eligible? Would commuters be eligible?

A discussion about the merits of the "GNVQ", the agricultural qualification gained by apprentices in the Falklands followed. There was some feeling that the qualification did not reflect the Falklands farming sector.

AP said that apprentices were obliged to complete a series of tasks before they could go to college to complete the other part of the apprenticeship. These tasks were prescriptive.

Maggie Battersby said that there was an ability built in to the qualification to mould it so that it better suited the farming sector and gave the apprentices a more useful qualification on completion. Maggie added that the qualification was now called QCF and repeated that there was an ability to select your own series of tasks to build your own "award" which better suited the needs of the sector and the experiences of the apprentice.

**ACTION:** AP to review the suitability/value of the agriculture apprenticeship in the Falkland context and assess whether there is a need to modify in the manner outlined by Maggie.

**ACTION:** The funding of the apprenticeship to be reviewed the DoA and the training centre. Currently the training centre pays 50% of the costs of the apprentice with the host farmer paying the remaining 50%. On historic agricultural apprenticeship schemes the Training Centre paid 100% of the costs. Perhaps the costs could reflect the experience of the individual e.g. the farmer pays 50% for a year 2 or 3 apprentice?

AP said that currently apprenticeships spend 75% of their time at the DoA.

MS asked whether meeting attendees felt that next year's 3 prospective agriculture apprentices could be absorbed into the farming sector. The general feeling was that those continuing their career in farming would find jobs.

KA suggested that the FIP scheme currently operated by the DoA could include a condition for recipients of FIP funding should be obliged to host apprentices. AP said he didn't think this would work given that training apprenticeships was a skill and host farmers should want to teach young people, not be forced.

Mandy McLeod noted that in her experience that the two main problems with placing apprenticeships in Fox Bay were a) finding accommodation and b) finding pastoral care.

MS asked if particular areas would cope if they were to be nominated as a "Rural Enterprise Zone". KA said that in GG, the settlement power and water systems would not support a larger population. AE said that the management of sewage and power in Fitzroy was difficult this year. He added that all houses in the settlement had been sold and there was no surplus housing available.

ME asked whether Fitzroy could be connected to MPA for power. Both AE and KP said that this had been mooted previously but that it probably wasn't a real option.

KA suggested that a new settlement at Burnside would work given the ready access to water at that location.

KP suggested that an exercise to assess the capabilities of settlements would need to be undertaken before any location could feasibly be identified as being suited to development.

**ACTION:** NK to ensure that an assessment of settlement utilities is a pre-requisite of any development.

AE noted that when the houses in Fitzroy were sold, there was not a terrific demand. This suggests that the demand for housing/or a life in Camp is low.

MS stated that the RDS really wanted more housing AND more jobs in Camp. He added that the RDS was focused on contributing to existing businesses.

EA responded by saying that he felt the MPA road was the biggest impediment to business development on the East which attracted a murmur of agreement.

SD said that from his point of view, North Arm has plenty of water, power is being addressed (a wind turbine development is imminent), and they have plenty of housing available. What North Arm requires is people and new businesses. He suggested that North Arm would be a good location for a tourism business. SD noted that there was lots of wildlife apart from penguins. He said that he would do everything he could to encourage new businesses to North Arm.

MS asked MB is this was something the TDS is looking at? MB said that N Arm might be a possible location for a new Tourism Lodge and that he would contact SD outside the meeting to progress this?

**ACTION:** MB to discuss tourism lodges with SD

KA said that he, like SD, would support anyone wanting to set up a new business in GG as long as the services could cope.

A member of the public noted that the operation of a generator is very expensive. SD suggested that if new Camp residents were to establish themselves in the REZ's then they wouldn't have to maintain their own generators so this problem would be avoided.

A further member of the public noted that house building in Camp is very expensive. It was generally felt that these two costs are prohibitive.

It was noted that the DoA's labour Scheme was only accessible by farm businesses and not any other kind of business in Camp. There was a suggestion that an equivalent "labour scheme" could be established to assist with the extra cost of house building in Camp.

Andrez Short returned to the issue of Immigration and suggested that a relaxing of the rules for seasonal labour would be a big help. This was seasonal and short term labour and could easily be defined.

**ACTION:** Jamie Fotheringham to include these thoughts in the immigration proposals

Terence McPhee asked how a "new person" would be employed all year round? Even in a settlement like San Carlos where there are a few farms there might not be sufficient "additional" work to keep an additional person in full time work. This comment mirrored some concerns about the "key worker scheme" being worked up by the RDS Steering Group.

Hew Grierson said that he felt that there could easily be all year round work for an individual, it simply required sufficient planning by the employer.

SD said that he felt mobile coverage in Camp was essential.

MS said that one of the problems with the ISP was that it was based on an assumption that there was "spare" labour that isn't actually available.

MS asked AE why he felt that more people hadn't pursued agriculture as a subsidiary business. AE responded that it was a risky business- the weather could easily destroy capital equipment such as polytunnels and that it was laborious work.

Ken Greenland said that he and Bonita had run a small holding which proved very successful. In his opinion it was a business that could be lucrative and dependant mainly on age i.e. being young and fit enough and access to the required land.

Owen Summers added that the horticulture sector was volatile. If horticulture is your main income then it's high risk. Crop failure could wipe out an entire year's income.

Andrew Alazia asked why existing water sources couldn't be used e.g. mountain sources. He proposed one could run a pipe to a mountain, dam it, install a small hydro and run a small turbine (like those on small yachts) and pump it to the settlement.

MS said that demand for water is only ever going to increase therefore it really needs addressed in the short term.

Reference was made again to the results of the Water survey which, once collated, would provide information on which an informed decision could be made.

Malcolm Ashworth said that he felt that FLH farms should not have the responsibility for delivering any development plan that might be foisted upon them. The managers are farmers and should be left to manage the farm and settlements. He added that the management of any kind of REZ should be managed by someone new.

John Halford asked if there had been any discussion about solar power as a renewable energy alternative.

MS suggested that a renewable energy "summit" be held to which Stanley Services, Cable and Wireless, Tim Cotter, Glenn Ross, John Halford etc. be invited to, to discuss power generation in Camp.

**ACTION:** NK. Power and renewable energy to be added to the RDS agenda

MJ finished by saying that he had been on the RDS committee for 2 years previously during which time nothing very much had been achieved materially. He expressed delight at the turn out at the meeting and the level of discussion from the floor. He encouraged all those attending the meeting to get involved and to voice their opinions.

IH supported MJ's sentiment by saying that the RDS has now been formally approved and there is now a budget. These two developments were significant.

There was general agreement that a meeting in the North Camp sometime in September would be well received.

MS thanked all those in attendance and closed the meeting.

Thanks to Goose Green for the use of the Hall and to Glynis Newman for the buns and biscuits.

Nuala Knight  
11<sup>th</sup> June 2012

## Appendix 1: Actions carried forward from previous meetings

5<sup>th</sup> March 2012

- **Action:** JF to redraft REZ paper to reflect comments from the Steering Group.
- **Action:** JF to continue work on an “RDS Immigration system” which would facilitate foreign investment and increase immigration into Camp.
- **Action:** NK to draft a development plan for Fox Bay and Fitzroy outlining proposals for new water sources and new housing developments.

12<sup>th</sup> April 2012

- **Action:** WL to organise DoA session to address “water” issue during Farmers Week.
- **Action:** NK to issue a questionnaire to assess opinions on water provision in Camp.
- **Action:** NK to discuss this with retailers such as Lifestyles. NK to also contact Paul Barnes as he may have a contact for sourcing low cost alkathene pipe.
- **Action:** WL was tasked with speaking to Neil Judd and Peter Johnson to assess how problems are addressed in drier climates.
- **Action:** WL was also tasked with contacting Jim Gerrish to discuss water solutions for livestock and crops.
- **Action:** CP to find out how much water Falkland Gold and Minerals found whilst drilling.
- **Action:** CP to speak to Stephen Luxton to find out if there are reports in their archive which could be useful or relevant regarding levels and depths of water found whilst drilling.

7<sup>th</sup> of May 2012

- **Action:** NK to try to assess the needs of the community, in terms of health, education and training and relay that information back to DJ
- **Action:** NK to try to distil the requirements for adult training or “life-long learning” in Camp. NK is to consider the case for securing an additional two weeks of teaching at Fox Bay.