

David Jackson
CEO
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Council Headquarters, Cloonavin,
66 Portstewart Road,
Coleraine,
BT52 1EY,
Northern Ireland

Re: Community Asset Transfer of the former Garvagh High School, Garvagh

Thursday, 01 December 2016

Dear David

I'm writing to you concerning the potential interest of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in work being undertaken by Garvagh Enterprise Trust (GET) and supported by Development Trusts NI (DTNI), who are looking to acquire and develop the former Garvagh High School by way of a [Community Asset Transfer](#) (CAT).

DTNI is resourced by the Department for Communities (DfC) to provide support to Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise, Charity and Faith organisations (VCSE's) interested in acquiring surplus public assets being disposed of by means of a CAT. DTNI also provides support to VCSE's interested in seeking to lease and manage assets and deliver services on behalf of existing statutory services providers. DTNI is working with projects across Northern Ireland and in each location, we are actively pursuing the involvement of the local council authority and other relevant public sector stakeholders. For those VCSE organisations interested in asset led development and in CAT we are stressing the importance of having local authorities engaged in a 'sponsorship' capacity and note that business proposals should deliver a social and economic return and where relevant complement the council's strategic development priorities, its well-being focus and local area community plan.

From a development and a practical point of view it is necessary to have the support/sponsorship from local government given that;

- Local Authorities have vesting and compulsory purchase powers to acquire assets and can enact those powers on behalf of a VCSE organisation seeking to acquire a surplus public asset if requested and convinced of the merits of its business proposal.
- Local Authorities have facilitation and development responsibility for community planning and will want to reflect on how development proposals by local VCSE organisations address community need and fit with the objectives of the area community plan.
- Local Authorities have wider strategic social and economic development objectives which relate directly to the work of VCSE anchor organisations.

DTNI does not view the role of a sponsor to be one in which there is a commitment to provide finance, either revenue or capital. We understand the role of a 'sponsor' as one in which there is an agreed alignment of priorities between stakeholders. A 'sponsor' is a public body with vesting and compulsory purchase powers that has the capacity to act as the conduit by which a VCSE organisation can acquire

a surplus public asset should the case be made to do so. In respect of CAT and GET's interest in the former Garvagh High School, DTNI recognise:

1. Public bodies are subject the Stormont Regulation and Government Property Act (Northern Ireland) 1933 when determining the disposal of its estate.
2. Public bodies must go through normal disposal procedures if its assets are declared surplus.
3. Public bodies are committed to seek 'best value' when disposing of its assets.
4. Public bodies have commitments (under the NI Executive's [Community Asset Transfer](#) policy framework) to consider potential uses of the asset site by voluntary, community, social enterprise, charitable or faith organisations should formal disposal be entered into.
5. The Education Authority has not entered an agreement to dispose of the asset at 'less than best'.
6. The Education Authority will consider disposal at 'market value' subject to the presentation of an appropriate business plan, identified and agreed sources of funding and a successful economic appraisal of that plan if deemed necessary.
7. It is recommended practice to engage the support of Local Council as a public body with vesting powers or to acquire property compulsorily.

There are several pressing issues that we need to address in the short term if we are to continue to support GETs interest in acquiring the former Garvagh High School. Specifically, there is a need to complete the business plan, consider the wider social impact and reflect the lead role to be played by GET as the proposed recipient of the asset. There is also a need for the Council to confirm to the Education Authority that they are prepared to sponsor their interest.

We feel that with the Councils support the application has more credibility especially if we can demonstrate that the outline proposal is in line with the Council and other local public stakeholders Community Planning commitments and social and economic strategic priorities.

DTNI will be working to make a case that the most preferable option for the disposal of the site is at nil or less than best (notwithstanding point 3 above). We accept that an option to purchase at the agreed Land and Property Services valuation should be given equal consideration.

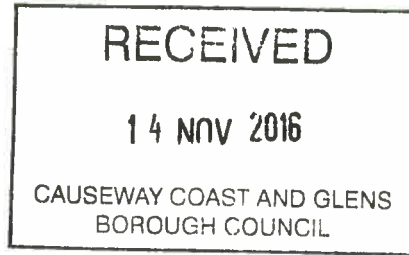
In taking this work forward we would like to get formal acknowledgment of our work with GET from the Council and work towards a formal approval and agreement through the Council chamber to 'sponsor' the group's interest.

In addition, we would like to explore whether we can avail of some professional development support from the Council's community and economic development units. Support given would be to ensure that the proposal being finalised aligns with the Council's wider strategic priorities and is best positioned to apply into investment streams from a wide range of sources as and when they become available. I hope this meets with approval and am available at your convenience to discuss further.

Yours Sincerely

Charlie Fisher

DSUS 85



Department for
Infrastructure

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Our reference: DfI/SUB/1329/2016

Date: 8th November 2016

David a chara,

SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME FOR GREENWAYS COMPETITION

Thank you for your Expression of Interest in the above competition, which is aimed at helping Councils to take forward proposals to improve and develop greenways within the framework of the Strategic Plan for Greenways.

My Department has now completed the assessment process at Stage 1 and I am very pleased to inform you that the Expression of Interest listed below has been selected to proceed to Stage 2 of the competition.

Ballymoney to Ballycastle Greenway

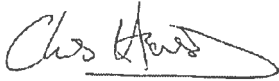
The Council will be eligible for a grant of up to £8,000 for the production of a feasibility study for this proposal. My Department will write to you separately with details about the grant and Stage 2 of the competition.

I wish you every success with your proposal.



I am launching the Strategic Plan for Greenways on Wednesday 9 November at 10.30am; the contents of the letter is embargoed until after the launch.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Hazzard", with a horizontal line underneath the name.

CHRIS HAZZARD MLA

Minister for Infrastructure

cc: Patricia O'Brien