

Meeting	Consultation Group Meeting 1
Meeting Date/Time	14 December 2023. 19:00-21:00
Meeting Chair	Bex Syrett
Meeting Attendees	Bex Syrett (Chaired) Casha Jones, Barbara Jones Patricia Gibbons, Nikki Jones, Elaine Reynolds, Martin Peck Willow Sterrick, Charlotte Hollins, Mike Davies Daisy Kirtley, Alan Finline, Lisa, John Giles, Mike Davies Linda, Robert Morris, Julia and Henry Huntstone, Barbara Rainford Lesley Wills joined at the end of the meeting
Apologies	Ruth Martin, Chris Forde, Stephen Darling
Meeting Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction – Purpose of this group 2. Name for Community Benefit Society 3. Status of Community Benefit Society – Charitable or Non-charitable 4. Rules 5. Update on finance situation 6. Asset of Community Value 7. Community Ownership Fund
Meeting Recording	Recording Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/mwgHguPBGZMZSKB1pKzWbEdP3AZ6XkcNp2Q67LUaYorbx83nnQfuf43ooaid4zr1.d3jbak0mXjhJPe5q Recording Password: S5zz*@6S

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item	Minutes	Actions & Action Owner/ Decisions
Introduction – Purpose of this group Why do participants want to be part of a steering group for Community Benefit Society?	Casha Jones opened with expectations and purpose for the meeting. It was explained that this meeting is part of the consultation process, rather than a formal Steering Group. It was shared by Charlotte Hollins that it is up to the group when the formal Steering Group is setup. Casha Jones shared the proposed agenda for the meeting and there were no additional items raised for AOB at the beginning of the meeting. All participants were asked the question: <i>Why do participants want to be part of a steering group for Community Benefit Society?</i>	

	<p>All attendees shared their individual purposes for being at the meeting today or why they wanted to support this initiative. Individual introductions can be found Zoom link enclosed in these minutes.</p> <p>Permission was given by all participants to record the meeting via Zoom.</p>	
Name for Community Benefit Society	<p>Casha Jones and Bex Syrett explained that a name (that is separate from the current Babbinswood Farm business name) needs to be created and be agreed by the group. This will allow for the Community Benefit Society to be created.</p> <p>The initial name proposed to the group was: Babbinswood Community Organic Farm</p> <p>Attendees in the meeting gave the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Alliance' put forward by a member of the group, further feedback was given that the community a not currently in an 'Alliance' with other organisations so this was not put forward in the final choice of name. - 'Ltd' or 'Limited' will be at the end of the name. - 'Society' doesn't need to be in the name as you are setting up a Community Benefit Society, so legally you will be known as a society. 	<p>Actions: Casha Jones and Bex Syrett to register the community benefit society under the name: 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm'</p> <p>Decision: Final decision made by the group unanimously that 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' will be name used to legally register this new Community Benefit Society.</p>
Status of Community Benefit Society – Charitable or Non-charitable	<p>The group were given information on the options of setting up a Community Benefit Society. First is under 'Charitable Status' or secondly 'Non-charitable status'.</p> <p>Charlotte Hollins explained that 'Charitable' can bring many financial benefits to the Community Benefit Society. As a 'Charitable' organization you could receive gift aid and can apply for grants. For the main funders this may not be required for addition funding. A 'Charitable' organisation will be exempt of Stamp Duty and paying Corporate Tax. However VAT will still need to be paid. To gain 'Charitable' status' the 'Objects' of the Community Benefit Society need to be defined and will need to be considered charitable. Organisations that tend</p>	<p>Decision: Final decision made by the group unanimously that 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' should be registered as a Charitable organisation.</p> <p>Action: Request for all future</p>

	<p>not to go down the 'Charitable' route are Community Pubs and Shops are they sometimes have non-charitable activities. If in the future 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' wanted to setup a pub then this could be setup as a separate entity to 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' Community Benefit Society. It was also shared that as a charity you can have an <i>Asset Lock</i>. Which means that if the organization is dissolved then the society can agree that the community assets can only be given to other charitable organisations that fit the vision of the community. Asset locks and it has to go to another charity.</p> <p>For reference Fordhall Community Land Initiative are a charity and having 'charitable' status has brought many benefits.</p> <p>Charlotte Hollins shared with the group that to gain charitable status an application needs to be submitted to the <i>Charities Commission</i>. 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' Community Benefit Societies 'Objects' will go through a peer reviewed process when the organization is constituted.</p> <p>Questions from the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is Education a charitable activity? Response: Yes ● Dividends can be paid to members if charitable status is given. It was confirmed by Charlotte Hollins that this is possible. ● What is the advantage of not being 'charitable'. Response: It gives the organisation more freedom to run non charitable activities. ● Can members only take their share value out? Response: Share cannot be linked to the value of the assets, only the value of the share. Dividends could be paid on a share value if the setup was agreed in that way. 	<p>documents to be sent out as PDF's to the community group, to allow everyone to review documents (due to different computer programme formats).</p> <p>Action: Bex Syrett will work with the smaller group of people nominated in the room to create the 'Objects' and that the group would plan to do this on Sunday 17th December 2023. Please can those volunteering to draft the 'Objects' send suggestions directly to Bex Syrett directly rather than CCing the whole group.</p> <p>Decisions: Everyone in the meeting was happy to be CC'd rather than 'Bcc'd) in the mailing list for future communications.</p>
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	<p>Barbara Jones explained ‘Objects’ and that these were the stated benefits of the charity that needed to be chosen by the group:</p> <p>For example the ‘Objects’ of <i>‘Babbinswood Community Organic Farm’</i> could be to further organic farming and to educate people to why we are so passionate. Connecting people back to the land.</p> <p>The group brainstormed words that they would like to see in the proposed ‘Objects’:</p> <p>Organic, education, at least do no harm, sustainability, health, animal welfare, health and wellbeing, mental health (farm, community, planet, people), biodiversity, nutrition, farming for the future, inclusivity, preserving and caring forward heritage. Innovation, children, opportunities for all generations, holistic, wider community, recreation, education, training, connected to the land, land trusteeship, growing, soil health, community engagement, land stewardship, improving the lives of the inhabitants of the Shropshire area and the borders, responding to climate and biodiversity.</p> <p>There was a comment from the group that Lady Eve Balfour (i.e. the foundation of organic farming) shared this vision: <i>‘The health of soil plants animals and people is one and indivisible.’</i></p> <p>Charlotte Hollins shared the Fordhall Community Land Initiatives Objects:</p> <p><i>To advance education and provide facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare for the inhabitants of Market Drayton and the wider community, in organic farming methods, conservation, biodiversity, health, access, country life, heritage, wildlife and related subjects with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants. (b) To ensure farmland is managed sustainably for community benefit with the appropriate management for access, and to research sustainable farming through community land trusteeship, public involvement and other methods.</i></p>	<p>Actions: Minutes of this meeting to be completed by Nikki Jones by 16th December 2023.</p>
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	The group were asked to volunteer to help draft the final 'Objects'.	
Rules	<p>Barbara Jones introduced the concept of 'Rules' required for the Community Benefit Society. It was shared that 'Rules' would need to be chosen and defined by the group to allow for the Community Benefit Society to be registered. Barbara explained that the rules were quite lengthy.</p> <p>A question to the group: 'Should 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' include the 'Cooperative principles? as they are currently receiving funding from COOP UK to help setup the Community Benefit Society.</p> <p>Charlotte Hollins confirmed that the group are not required to incorporate these rules to gain further funding but they are a guide that may want to be used for reference. If the group wish to be classed as a 'Cooperative Movement' (i.e. use 'cooperative' in the name or future communications) in the future then COOP's UK would required you to be signed up to COOP's UK and have their COOP rules included in the 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' rules. Charlotte Hollins confirmed that although this is requested there are no legal ramifications for not including COOP's UK recommended rules.</p> <p>Charlotte Hollins shared that the benefits of adding the COOPs UK rules is to safeguard the values of your Community Benefit Society for the future and give a helpful template. Fordhall Farm do not currently incorporate COOP's UK's rules.</p> <p>Questions from the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can the rules be changed in the future? Response: Charlotte Hollins shared that the rules can be changed at any point but that this change will need to be agreed by the Community Benefit Society members in a process states in the rules. 	<p>Decision: Due to the lengthy nature of the rules wording, the group confirmed that they would like Barbara Jones and Casha Jones to draft their recommended rules for 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' and then group would comment on the draft of the rules.</p> <p>The draft rules will be circulated via email to be read and comments on by Wednesday 20th December 2023.</p>
Update on finance situation	Barbara updated the group on the current situation as follows:	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mortgage Broker has managed to great three potential funders interested who support these types of initiatives. Unity Bank is one that could be a potential supporter. ● Financial Projections for the Farm business is good but the challenge has been meeting funders 'affordability criteria'. ● Options that are being proposed as 5-year interest only loan which would pay the 1.4m into a longer term long, making borrowing more affordable for the farm business. ● Current Mortgage Broker knows the current bridging loan funder and is exploring another extension to the bridging loan to help 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' get up and running. ● Crowdfunding update: The total has now reached over £19,000 and longer term and shorter-term loads have been offered to get us through the next three months. 	
<p>Asset of Community Value</p>	<p>Bex Syrett is working to get Babbinswood Farm registered as an Asset of Community Value to Shropshire County Council. By having this in place, it would potentially slow down any potential forced sales from a funder. This gives the community the opportunity to try and protect the land and buildings.</p> <p>Bex Syrett shared a nomination form for people to sign. 21 names are required to register, and quotes will help the council application.</p> <p>Casha Jones confirmed what would be registered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Courtyard minus the Veterinary practice. Buildings and then enough land to the approximate same of 95 acres. <p>A map of the farm was shared with the group to illustrate the area being discussed, but that this is still up for consultation with the group.</p> <p>Question from the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Will the Asset of Community Value need to be resubmitted when the Community Benefit 	<p>Action: Please contact Bex Syrett to add your name to the nomination form or provide quotes to be shared with the council.</p>

	Society is created? Response: Bex Syrett confirmed that this should not be needed as the creation of the Community Benefit Society is referenced in the application.	
Community Ownership Fund	<p>Casha Jones shared information about a £250,000 Government Grant that the application window is open and closes on the 31st of January 2024. This application is very in-depth (requiring business plans and usage history, projections) but information already gathered in the current farm business plan could be used to support a 'Babbinswood Community Organic Farm' Community Benefit Society application.</p> <p>Casha Jones will be putting forward an expression of interest. New funding windows will open in the future up until 2025.</p>	
Meeting Close	Casha Jones and Bex Syrett closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their support and time during the meeting.	