

HIFAR caught in a catch 22 situation

Sir,
Roger Popplewell stated in his letter of October 20 that 'HIFAR has not presented a detailed proposal for appraisal by Communities Scotland, and there is nothing on the table to be endorsed'.

The article to which he refers was not brought to The Banner by HIFAR (Housing Initiative For Arran Residents) but came from the reporting of a regular community council meeting at which HIFAR was not represented, and is largely based upon the entirely correct interpretation of two people who attended another meeting earlier that day – details below.

Mr Popplewell's comments are a little disingenuous, as he knows that any 'detailed proposal' must necessarily be backed up by a feasibility study, requiring the services of architects and quantity surveyors and necessitating the writing of a project plan.

Feasibility studies cost money and until we achieve charitable status it is well nigh impossible

to access funding.

For several months HIFAR and Forestry Commission Scotland have been working together to identify sited suitable for development according to the aims of both HIFAR and of the National Forest Land Scheme guidelines. Four such sites were regarded as suitable for immediate consideration.

Aware that any sale by the NLFS to any housing body must have the endorsement of Communities Scotland, HIFAR brought this proposal, together with maps of the designated areas, to a meeting with Isle of Arran Homes and a representative of Communities Scotland. During what we believed to be a constructive meeting several ways forward were suggested, including setting up a protocol with IOAH, Communities Scotland and the Forestry Commission. A further meeting was convened at the Forestry Commission Brodick office, attended by members of HIFAR, Isle of Arran Homes/Trust Housing, Communities Scotland, Arran Community Council and Arran's representative within North Ayrshire Council, Margie Currie.

It is the outcome of this meeting that we regard as a

setback, because we were left in no doubt that Communities Scotland regarded us as time-wasters, our suggestions as unworkable and our view that affordable did not have to mean high-density, high-infrastructure as plain silly. Despite months of placatory words and suggestions of 'a working protocol', our potential partner made no move to support us.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this meeting was that the Craigforth report recommendations have already been accepted by Communities Scotland and that all new affordable housing on Arran will be small, cramped and in places that many people will not want to live.

HIFAR has other ideas, ones that we believe worthy of serious consideration. Unfortunately at the moment those that we need to persuade won't give us the opportunity.

In a nutshell, Communities Scotland won't help without a 'detailed proposal'.

HIFAR can't provide a detailed proposal without the help of Communities Scotland. Catch 22!

**Ailsa McNicol,
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HIFAR.**