



**COLLIESTON & SLAINS COMMUNITY TRUST  
PUBLIC MEETING RE ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION  
19 JANUARY 2007**

Purpose of meeting: to present the judging panel's rationale for selecting two out of the five designs submitted in the architectural competition.

Present: Charles Rattray (Architectural Adviser), CASCT members: Steve Rainey, Jack Page, Alan White, Vicky McNiff, Shirley Beattie, Susan Somner

Approximately 65 members of the community of Collieston and Slains

Apologies: Fiona Chaplain, Elizabeth Hay, Peter Somner.

Meeting was opened by Vicky McNiff in the absence of Steve Rainey who was delayed and Peter Somner who was unable to attend due to illness. Vicky explained why the meeting was being held – mainly to allow Charles Rattray to explain the rationale behind the architectural judges' decision choose designs B and E from the five submissions for the competition.

**Agenda:**

- 1. Introduction - 15 mins**
- 2. Overview of the competition results by Charles Rattray – 45 mins**
- 3. Question and answer session**
- 4. Refreshments**

1. Introduction – Vicky McNiff

- It is unlikely that the current hall will be allowed to continue to operate in its current form in the future as it does not conform to building regulations
- There is currently no Council funding for the refurbishment of halls – this was confirmed by Keith Newton (Formartine Area Manager) yesterday
- Once the hall is handed over to the community it has to be self-sustaining i.e. it needs to generate an income that is at least equal to the cost of running and maintaining it. In its current form it has been generating approximately £200 per year for the last 3 years.
- As already agreed, we aim to provide a hall that meets the overall needs of the village:
  - Safe and in compliance with modern standards
  - Low maintenance and energy efficient (electricity bill is currently £1000 per year)
  - A proper separate playgroup area
  - Community gathering space for 150-200 people
  - Community control
  - Café
  - Social hall – events

The village voted by a significant majority to replace the existing hall, and the architectural competition is being undertaken to select its design.

What have been the key points for the competition?

- Consultation with the village to ascertain just what the new hall should provide – Architectural Brief
- Established the competition in line with recognised professional standard and approach
- Guided by Charles Rattray – formally of RGU Scott Sutherland School of Architecture
- Invited a broad spectrum of nationally recognised architectural practises to participate

- Shortlist selected by CASCT under the guidance of Charles
- A year of fund raising to generate a fighting fund. Currently we have a balance of £18,000 on account and the following planned expenditures
  - Completion of the competition £2000
  - Allocation for support of the Pier £2000
  - Purchase of the Rivie £5000
  - Legal fees for the purchase of the Rivie – estimate £3000
 This will leave £6000 for other activities
- Public Exhibition of the 5 designs submitted, which was well attended and provided wide ranging feedback
- A panel of nationally recognised architects and three representatives from the village judged the designs in full knowledge of ALL the feedback from the village
- Two designs were selected by this process by the judging panel – neither was the village favourite
- The Big Lottery does not fund repairs to piers – however assuming that our social enterprise is a success, we would hope to be able to make regular donations towards its ongoing maintenance – this does not mean that CASCT proposes to accept responsibility for the pier.
- The Big Lottery can also provide some funds to help the preparation of the business plan and submission of the full application for funding

### **Charles Rattray's report on the five designs.**

Vicki then handed over to Charles Rattray to outline the discussions undertaken by the judging panel during the process of assessing each of the five designs. A report summarising these discussions will be available in the shop and on the website.

**Design A** - 3 pitched roofed buildings built on the highest and most prominent position on the site. There would be increased costs involved in the provision of services due to the distance from the road. Accommodation blocks were separate from the main building with separate access. Issues were raised regarding the size of the pitched roofs and the design itself which resulted in a large empty void of wasted space.

**Design B** - Sits in a hollow with its back to the village. A more abstract design taking the sky and sea as its focus. Provides an internal courtyard with views of the sky and the building itself and an external courtyard looking towards Cransdale. Significant costs would be incurred in removing the earth to create the hollow. The car parking was for 18 rather than for 30 cars. The access area could be congested. The existing hall is retained for residential accommodation.

**Design C** - Made of one material. A clever use of space providing views towards the village. The roadside aspect is imposing and appears closed off, not a warm, welcoming building. Visitors could never be sure if the building was open to them. Accommodation is within the building.

**Design D** - Castle-inspired with rooms in thick walls wrapped around a central hall. The playgroup area is underneath the main building with its own access, creating a plinth to support the main building. Accommodation access is by way of a long walkway to the second level while the main entrance to the building is rather insignificantly below this. The situation means a long walk across the exposed site.

**Design E** - Situated by the road and closest to the main village. Has a terrace looking over the village and another at the rear facing west for playgroup. There would be minimal disruption to the site as the building nestles into it rather than being built on top of it. The access steps from the village were poorly placed but could be easily changed. Made good use of the space within. Accommodation is within the building.

Steve Rainey arrived at this point giving apologies for his delayed arrival. He emphasised that the comments of the village had been collated and formed a major part of the assessment process. Apologies were made that these were not yet publicly available but would be available from the Post Office as soon as possible

## **Questions and Answers**

**Steve Rainey** asked how people were feeling at the moment.

“disappointed, architects had let CASCT down, project too big, confused, excited by opportunities, estate wanted rid of land due to problems”.

**Steve** then asked if one of these halls was better than no hall at all?

**Q:** Why, if the council are not doing anything about closing the existing hall?

**A:** 10 years ago the council looked at closing small village halls. At that time money was found to save many. The situation has arisen again that in order to save money small halls may have to close. Communities like Collieston and Slains are a godsend to the council because they have taken action to maintain a community hall themselves and while this is happening action to close facilities is on hold.

**Q:** Thanked CASCT for progress so far and acknowledged the difficulties of the task. Pointed out that although he had personal preferences, no design had a very high approval rating. Why choose the best of a poor bunch? Could we not start again? Why do we have to choose from this lot?

**Q:** Could we not look at plans for other halls, Longhaven for example?

**A:** The village gave a mandate to build a new hall with 147 votes for a new build and 95 in favour of retaining the existing facility.

**Q:** The mandate was for a new hall, not one of these 5.

**A:** The village gave permission for CASCT to hold architectural competition to find an architect to design our new building. The judging panel, taking account of feedback from the public exhibition, have chosen the designs of two architects. The next stage in the competition process is to choose one of these 2 architects whom we feel we can work with. The outcome of the meeting with the Big Lottery shows that our project is of the type likely to receive funding. A hall would not be built that was not suitable or sustainable.

**Q:** If it was a competition then why not go with what the village wanted?

**A:** Competitors entered knowing it was a bone-fide competition and that it would be judged by professionals and taking account of village opinion.

**Comment:** I like some of the designs but overall the village doesn't. Resistance is due to the fact that noone is particularly keen on any of the designs.

**Q:** Why was architect A thrown out when most of the village preferred that option? Why ask us if comments were not to be taken into account?

**A:** The judging panel were happy to put forward designs B and E. However, considering practicalities of building and maintaining design A (roof design), the judges were unable to endorse it. This was a unanimous decision,

**Q:** Why put that design forward then?

**A:** All 5 entries were put forward for consideration at this point. No pre-judgements were made. The judging panel of 3 pre-eminent architects and 3 local representatives were asked to consider all 5 designs along with the feedback from the exhibition and decide on 2 to go forward for further consideration. On the day the judging panel met, the panel was advised to include design A and one other and to exclude design C.

**Q:** Are these not conceptual designs that can be developed to suit what the village wants with sustainability built into the design?

**A:** Absolutely, they are conceptual only. Sustainability will come from rental of the residential units, the hall itself and the meeting room and from use of renewable energy. These details are included in the business plan.

**Comment :** It was pointed out the majority of user groups do not pay for the use of the hall, and would not be willing/able to do so in the future.

**A:** It was explained, that the hope would be that the sufficient income would be generated so that fees would be minimized. The whole point is that external users would subsidise local users.

**Q:** Has anyone seen the business plan?

**A:** The draft plan is available but is not in its final form as yet. CASCT and CADISPA hosted a workshop in March 2006 to review the main components of the business plan. Results are posted on our website.

**Comment:** We simply want a bigger hall.

**Comment:** The brief was correct, we need to move to the next stage, choosing the architect we can work with and developing the business plan.

**Q:** Why not just develop the existing building, make it bigger.

**From the floor:** We rejected that back in October 2004 for various good reasons .....

**Q:** Is the ground on the Rivie stable enough to support plan E.

**A:** We have looked at the liability of owning the land and have insurance to cover the liability of slippage and water damage. As a geologist it is highly likely that there is solid ground under the Rivie due to the presence of the rocky headland to the seaward side.

**Comment:** A local lady geologist disagrees with that assessment and suggests a survey be carried out first. Slains Estate are trying to get rid of liabilities.

**Q:** Was the judging done looking at architectural merit or as a hall for the village?

**A:** As a village hall first and foremost.

**Q:** Why can't we just have a building that looks like others in the village only bigger?

**A:** The original Tinto Architecture design tried to do this but the building looked totally out of proportion.

**Comment:** I can't understand why the schemes look like WW2 blockhouses.

**Comment:** The factor of Slains Estate feels there are issues with the boundaries.

**Q:** In the original survey we went with the majority to build a new hall but the scale is too enormous. To support the new hall how many people need to use it?

**A:** 2-3 rentals of meeting rooms / month, 1-2 rentals of the hall / month and ~60-70% occupancy of the residential units annually

**Q:** If we went for a smaller scale would we not be more likely to sustain the facility?

**A:** Not necessarily .. that is what the business plan is for. At this stage we have to have faith that the plan will be robust and viable. If it is not demonstrably so, we won't get funding and the hall won't be built.

**Q:** Currently neither the playgroup or the Over 60's group pays, only the WI pays to use the hall. Is that enough to make it sustainable?

**A:** No definitely not. The Council runs the hall at a considerable loss. The plan is to have external users paying a higher rate for use of the facilities so that local users pay nothing or are heavily subsidised.

**Q:** What about all the extra traffic coming through the village?

**Comment:** There are viability issues. How many people will use the hall? People don't use the shop. Will they support the hall?

**A:** Collieston is a commuter village therefore travelling workers leave early in the morning before the shop opens and returning late at night after the shop has closed. Collieston used to have many more visitors than today and no harm came of it.

**Comment:** People coming to the hall will not affect the village. We already have many visitors. We must discuss the issue of the architects plans. None has delivered what we want and we shouldn't have to live with any mistakes made now.

**Q:** What would be the situation if we didn't like/use any of these designs?

**A:** The cost to start again and engage a new architect to draw up new plans could be £5-10K to get to the stage we are at just now with each of the 5 submissions, and there would still be no guarantee that we would like the design. In addition, we could jeopardise our chances of securing Big Lottery funding if we do not select one of the designs/architects chosen by the judges and show a united front as a village.

**Q:** If the feeling is we don't like these designs how far can we alter their vision – use the architect firm but add into the design?

**A:** That is a potential way forward, but we need to recognise that any architect would expect to retain something of their original concept in the final design. I suspect if pitched roofs were put on all of these drawings their approval rating would be considerably increased.

**Q:** If we ask the architects to change their vision how much will they shift?

**A:** These architects are realistic and should be up for vigorous consultation on changes.

**Q:** So we choose architects B or E but ask them to build design A?

**A:** That wouldn't be reasonable or fair to the architect of design A.

**Comment:** Architects B are building a gallery on Stromness Pier, a kind of sloping roofed shed so they are not specifically known for glass spaces in the ground - that was their response to this site. If changes are to be made to any plans an additional fee would be likely. For negotiation with the architects.

**Q:** What is the way forward now?

**A:** Next Friday the two architects of designs B and E are coming to talk about their concepts in relation to the site and brief. Listen to what they have to say and decide who we could work with. After two weeks thinking time a ballot will take place to choose between B and E. If on holiday, inform a CASCT member to arrange to get the necessary details on how to cast your vote.

**Q:** Has there had been a shift in the original opinion of the village?

A request was made for a show of hands in support of just extending the existing hall. Only a minority of those assembled supported this motion.

**Comment:** If both designs B and E kept the existing buildings, then both designs might be on a more even footing (emotionally).

**Q:** If the design was less grand would we be more likely to get funding.

**A:** No, size doesn't matter, sustainability is the issue. If our hall can raise more funds than needed to run it, then this additional money could be directed to other areas, the pier for instance.

**Q:** When can we look at a detailed business plan?

**A:** The bones of the business plan are in place. We now go to the Big Lottery with our outline proposal. Ten days later they let us know whether or not we are likely to get funding. At this point, if we are likely to be successful a project officer will be appointed to work with us over a maximum of six months to firm up our whole project plan and funding application. Make no mistake, Big Lottery funding applications are very onerous tasks.

**Comment from one of the village judges:** Confirmed that the comments of the village were taken on board in coming to a decision. There should be no surprises about the main village comments:

A - liked the pitched roofs

B – retained the old building

E – horrible steps

There was a lot of concern about flat roofs. Design E is on an incline. Architects advised that the design of A's roof would not work. The architects liked design C but the village did not therefore the

village judges ruled it out. The castle design of D was great but it was felt that playgroup was in the wrong place being on the exposed north-east side below the main building. The distance to walk to get to the building on wet and windy days was a serious disadvantage. The accommodation had no outward looking windows. Having the Rivie makes a difference in terms of the space available to develop.

**Q:** Could Steve clarify the purpose of the meeting next Friday?

**A:** Listen to the presentations and consider who we could best work with to develop a design that the village wanted.

**Q:** Voting procedure – what percentage of those eligible to vote will have to be returned in order to make the vote viable?

**A:** The percentage would probably be the same as for the previous ballot – not decided yet but something in the order of 50-60%

**Comment:** Need to assess the plasticity of the designs.

**Comment:** Listen to the architects.

**Q:** Do the architects need to know there is a strong groundswell of opinion to retain the existing building and that we expect them to listen to our concerns?

**A:** The two architects have all the comments and will have taken these into consideration.

**Comment:** They (the architects) must be made aware of the strength of feeling in the village.

**Comment:** The meeting with the architects next Friday will address many of our concerns. Let's listen to what they have to say.

There being no further questions, Steve thanked Charles for his time, asked people to attend next Friday with open minds and declared the meeting closed.