

Key Findings of Langholm Moor Feasibility Study & Business Plan

Following an in-depth feasibility study looking at different options the Langholm Initiative has come to an agreement with Buccleuch Estates that it wishes to purchase an area of 10,439 acres comprising:

- 9,062 acres of hill/moorland
- 678 acres of permanent pasture and rough grazing
- 646 acres of woodland
- 9 houses and 3 steadings covering 34 acres

(This is what is meant by “the estate” in the remainder of the document)

The Langholm Initiative intends to fund the cost of acquisition (including taxes and legal fees) through an application to the Scottish Land Fund, a large scale crowd funder and private donations. LI’s plans for the estate involve a number of key components.

Conservation, Public Access and Agricultural Management

- Large parts of the land are a Site of Special Scientific Interest for the geology, plants, birds and habitats that are found there. They are also a Special Area of Conservation for Hen Harriers, an iconic local species.
- LI will create a nature reserve and seek National Nature Reserve (NNR) status for it. This will improve the environment and boost local tourism.
- Continued light grazing will be good for the land, with a greater emphasis on cattle possible in the future. Future government support for agriculture post Brexit is currently unclear so longer term decisions will be made by 2022.
- Driven grouse shooting is no longer economic on the land.
- Ownership will enable the local community to: create a Hen Harrier observatory, develop an all-abilities riverside path; improve way-marking and interpretation of the landscape; create learning opportunities in the landscape.

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Key Action	Timescale: Indicative Start Date
Develop a land management plan with local and external stakeholder involvement.	2020 - 2021
Work with NNR partnership to achieve NNR status	2022
Audit carbon capture and storage opportunities	2021
Establish local volunteer groups for specific activities e.g. species monitoring, sitka clearance and ditch blocking.	2021
Ditch blocking to rewet blanket bog	2022
Continue development of Wild Eskdale project	2021
Create 2km all abilities trail by Tarras Water	2024
Improved waymarking and interpretation of existing routes	
Create Hen Harrier Observatory	2024

Forestry

- Existing woodlands have been well managed and are a mix of broadleaves and productive conifer. These will provide a modest but steady income stream in future years.
- Natural regeneration can be encouraged by the Tarras Water and new native woodland planting in the area known as the Haunches/Cronksbank. Plans will be developed in consultation with the local community.

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- The woodlands will provide opportunities for teaching rural and forest skills courses to schools, apprentices and older people.

Key Action	Timescale: Indicative Start Date
Prepare management and harvesting plan for existing woodlands (includes planning for woodland creation)	2020
Maintain access & infrastructure	2020
Detailed design for Woodland Creation (including surveys)	2021
Plant 50% Native Woodland Area	2023
Plant remaining 50% Native Woodland Area	2024

Housing

- There are 9 houses, ranging from recently refurbished to derelict. Existing occupied houses will continue to be let to tenants.
- One property may be sold to provide funds to upgrade others to modern energy efficiency standards.
- Plots could be made available at reasonable prices (with residency burdens attached) to local people wishing to build their own houses.
- The community could build its own housing with help from the Dumfries and Galloway Small Communities Housing Trust.

*A residency burden can ensure that the purchaser lives in the home. This stops property being sold as second or holiday homes and protects housing for local people.

Key Actions	Timescale: Indicative Start Date
Continue to lease properties to existing tenants	2020

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Commission study into costs of upgrading existing properties to meet future letting requirements	2020
Potentially sell 1 property for revenue	2021
Update all remaining residential properties meet future energy efficiency legislation	2021
Commission study into redevelopment of Broomholmshiels steading to include new housing options	2021
Develop 2-4 affordable houses	2024

Business Development

- A Dumfries & Galloway Council study identified a severe lack of modern business space in Eskdale. 15 existing or potential businesses have expressed an interest to the Langholm Initiative for office, studio, and workshop or storage space.
- Broomholmshiels farm house could be converted to office space.
- Community ownership will enable LI to redevelop steadings for business units for let.
- A small community-owned campsite can be developed.
- There is potential for small scale renewable energy projects which require more research (see renewables summary).

Key Actions	Timescale: Indicative Start Date
Apply for Change of Use for business purposes for Broomholmshiels farmhouse	2020
Commission study into redevelopment of Broomholmshiels steading to include business options	2021
Research options for glamping pod site	2020-2021

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Establish glamping site.	2022
Develop 100m ² of business space	2024
Commission study into redevelopment of Lodgegill as a field centre	2023-2028 (long term project)

Financial Position

- The land to be purchased will generate a surplus if the purchase goes ahead without significant borrowings
- The diverse range of assets and development opportunities will provide the estate with a diverse range of income streams in the future. Existing income comes from agriculture, sporting, wayleaves, housing rentals and forestry
- Financial modelling shows that over 20yrs the business could invest in new woodland, housing, business space and tourism projects and produce a surplus in excess of £300,000.

Community Ownership of the Land Benefiting Local People

- The Common Moss will be secured for future generations.
- There will be new opportunities for local organisations to connect with the land.
- Local volunteers having a direct impact on the land.
- Health and wellbeing associated with outdoor activities.
- Potential work experience and training for young people (rural skills).
- Direct and indirect employment through development work.
- Undertaking positive climate action.