

ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Introduction

Under 2011 Localism Act, the Community Right to Bid is intended to prevent assets of community value (such as village shops, local pubs, green spaces) being disposed of without the local community being given the opportunity to keep these assets in use within communities. It is important to nominate land and buildings to be part of a register of “assets of community value”. If something on this register is offered for sale, you then have up to six months to prepare a bid. You can use the Community Right to Bid to “pause” the sale of building or land you care about, such as your local pub, shop, library or football field. It gives your community time to develop a bid to buy it.

Benefits

1. Acts as a marker that the building or land is important to the local community.
2. Adds a further level of protection, as the listed status of a pub, for example can be used by the principal authority as a material consideration in a relevant planning application, such as if a pub is threatened with the change of use to residential use.
3. Helps put off property developers who want to avoid a contentious planning application.
4. Triggers a moratorium on the sale for up to six months, giving the community valuable time to get together a sustainable bid, if the owner did decide to sell the building or land off.

How do you find out which community assets are valued?

Some, like the local shop and pub, are obvious but as public and private assets can be nominated as assets of community value, there be more hidden gems that the community wants to protect. Plunkett Foundation recommends that parish councils run open and participative processes which seek the views of as many members of the community as possible. This work to some extent may have been undertaken already through Community Led Plans.

For information, parish councils are not the only organisations able to register assets of community value, for example any unincorporated group of 21 people or more can nominate community assets (eg. regulars in the local pub).

How to go about listing

1. Go to SLDC website and look up the section on Assets of Community Value or Right to Bid.
2. Download a nomination form.
3. Fill in the form with as much detail as you can on why the building or land should be classified as a community asset. It requires careful thought and consideration. The group must show that the asset is directly linked to the social wellbeing or social interests of the community and has a cultural, sporting, educational or recreational benefit. There must be a realistic prospect of the continued or future use of the asset, and in particular the commercial viability of the proposal and the sustainability of that use.

4. Demonstrate that at least 21 people from the local community support the listing of the building or land if the application is from a local community group.
5. Check SLDC's website to see where the nomination form needs to be submitted.
6. The district council has to decide whether the nomination meets certain defined tests (see step 3 above) to be listed in the register.

Once an asset is included in the register, nothing further happens unless the owner of the asset decided to dispose of it.

What happens if a listed building or land is put up for sale?

Where the owner proposes to dispose of the asset then a defined process has to be followed which allows a community group or parish council the opportunity to bid for the asset within set timescales. First, the owner must let the district council know that he wishes to sell the listed building or land. At this point a six week interim moratorium period kicks in and SLDC will tell you. The parish council (or community group) has to decide within these six weeks if it wants to bid to buy the asset or not. If it decides it does then a full moratorium period of six months is triggered – time to raise finance, develop a business plan and to make a bid to buy the asset.

Useful resources and websites

1. SLDC – www.southlakeland.gov.uk/your-environment/your-community/community-rights

This takes you to all the community rights under the Localism Act. There is a section on the Community Right to Bid with a page on helpful information (eg. explaining what an asset of community value is and the process for nomination) and another page for the register itself.

2. Locality – <https://mycommunity.org.uk/take-action/land-and-building-assets/assets-of-community> There is a section in the website on assets of community value and the right to bid, with short documents on understanding the community right to bid and another on nominating an asset of community value.

Examples of assets listed in the register with SLDC

- town or village halls (Ulverston, Kirkby Lonsdale, Rusland, Torver)
- open land, village green or woods (Kirkby Lonsdale, Coniston, Ambleside, Grasmere, Natland, Rusland)
- library (Kirkby Lonsdale)
- fire station (Kirkby Lonsdale)
- toilets (Kirkby Lonsdale)
- tourist information centre (Windermere)
- pubs (Underbarrow, Kendal, Satterthwaite)
- shop (Burneside)