

Planning Officer
Renfrewshire Council Planning Department
Renfrewshire House
Cotton Street
Paisley PA1 1WB

Our Ref: CB/LM LGA Electronic Copy
29 November 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

Re Linsay Mitchell, Undercraig Farm, Langbank Planning Application

I first met Linsay Mitchell in April this year when she contacted me with regards carrying out an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) for Undercraig. An Integrated Land Management Plan is a Government Funded scheme that allows farmers to:

“Take advantage of government funding to create a sustainable and profitable future for your farm or croft”. An Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) is your pathway to a sustainable and profitable future. Setting out your vision for your farm or croft, it provides a clear, achievable, step by step action plan that will take you there”.

(www.fas.scot/integrated-land-management-plans-ilmeps/)

When I met Linsay at Undercraig, in addition to her request to carry out an Integrated Land Management Plan to look at other options/enterprises that could be incorporated into her business plan; she also wanted to commission a Business Efficiency report to ensure that she was maximising the overall efficiency of her existing business from a technical, financial and an environmental perspective. She also requested that a carbon audit and mitigation report be prepared to establish the business’s carbon footprint and wanted to seek advice as to how to mitigate emissions going forward.

Throughout the ILMP process Linsay had a clear commitment to establishing Undercraig as a practical sustainable ecologically focused working farm that could provide a living for herself, to the extent my conclusion stated:

‘Despite the difficulties over the past two years caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, Linsay has created a unique and very successful business. By diversifying into alpaca trekking enterprise, the business has returned far greater profits than would have been possible from traditional livestock enterprises. The business would not be viable if it was reliant on the income from simply farming alpacas for their fibre production’. June 2022

As a farm and rural business adviser, I am often contacted by young farmers and new entrants who simply want to know what start-up grants they can access, and quickly lose interest in a career in farming when they discover that, in the current climate, there aren't any. In contrast, Linsay has worked hard to establish her business without Government support and her business has flourished when many businesses failed due to the covid pandemic lockdowns. Not only that, her business is attracting visitors and tourists from far and wide, and will thereby, be helping Renfrewshire to meet one of its key economic themes in the 2021 Local Development Plan (LDP) of developing '*Renfrewshire as a visitor destination with plans in place to increase visitor numbers by 4% each year*'.

Linsay has designed the 'open space' offered at Undercraig farm so that it aligns with the LDP Policy No 6 - Open Space '*to meet the access and recreational needs of people of different ages and physical abilities contributing to health and wellbeing across Renfrewshire*'. The facilities offered at Undercraig farm are inclusive and not only offer local visitors and tourists the opportunity to spend time outdoors, but meeting the alpacas up close and personal, provides a genuine boost to mental health that no other farm animal or farm enterprise can provide.

As part of the Integrated Land Management process, following the recent purchase of a woodland adjacent to the farm, Linsay also took up the opportunity to meet with an SAC Forestry Advisor, Sergei Kozitski to not only expand her knowledge of woodland management but also to provide her with the knowledge to educate visitors, nursery and school children and tourists to Scotland on its contribution to tackling the challenges of climate change.

Over the 34 years that I have worked as a Farm and Rural Business Consultant for SAC working throughout Scotland, I have been asked on a regular basis to draw up business plans for farmers and crofters seeking to build a house on their land. While many do not meet the planning criteria of sustainability and the ability to provide full-time employment for one person on the farm; Linsay's business model does. Due to the success of her business, this year, she has also been able to meet another of the Renfrewshire Local Development plan aims of providing '*employment opportunities for local residents*' as she has provided work for local people, both young and old, who had otherwise struggled to find work in the area, which is to be commended.

If you require clarification of any of the aspects covered in this letter or require any further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Christine Beaton

Senior Rural Business Management & Economics Consultant

Correspondence Address & Contact Details

SAC Consulting
2 Technopole Centre
Bush Estate
Penicuik
Midlothian
EH26 0PJ

Tel: 07809203813

Email: christine.beaton@sac.co.uk

www.sruc.ac.uk

Supporting sustainable growth

SAC Consulting is part of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

This and other documents can be made available in other formats such as large print and/or community languages on request. If you would like a translated copy, please contact the author with the details of the format/language required.

SRUC is a charitable company limited by guarantee, Scottish Charity Number: SC003712. Registered in Scotland, Company Number: SC01033046. Registered Office: Peter Wilson Building, King's Buildings, West Mains Road, Edinburgh EH9 3JG. SAC Commercial Limited. An SRUC Company. Registered in Scotland, Company Number SC148684. Registered Office: Peter Wilson Building, King's Buildings, West Mains Road, Edinburgh, EH9 3JG.