

## **Chair's report, Arisaig Community Trust AGM.** **February 13th 2019**

Welcome to you all. There have been many developments recently including a seaweed farming proposal, the possibility of taking on the station buildings and the option to buy some areas of land in the village. I will elaborate later! Part of the responsibilities of a Community Trust is to seek opportunities to improve and sustain the area. However, those Trusts who are the most successful have paid staff. We do not at the moment. We basically need more help if our village is to flourish.

At our last AGM in November 15th 2017 - 4 new directors (Peter Fleming, Judy Budge, Jane Foster and Paul Sheard) and a new minute secretary (Tiina Heinonen) joined the Board. Asset management was divided up initially between the new directors with support from the more experienced directors so that we could be as effective as possible from the outset.

Handover from the last Board took some weeks. Thanks to all those who made this go as smoothly as possible. In particular all those on the current Board who have more than risen to the challenge of a steep learning curve! In January last year, we had training from the Development Trust Association Service (DTAS) about our roles and responsibilities .

### **Communications**

We seek to be as open and inclusive as possible. In February last year, the ACT and LSIC websites went live. Increasing numbers (620 and rising) are engaging with the Trust's Facebook page, as well as that of the Eco project. (More info later)

Last May, we complied with the new law concerning Data Protection. If you have not already given us your decision on contacting you, please give your option on the sign in sheet as well as your email address if appropriate.

The Board meeting minutes are still displayed on the noticeboard at the Old Library.

We submitted frequent articles to West Word, had a stall at the Arisaig Highland Games which was well supported and had discussions with Mallaig Pool about promoting active travel and cycling.

The housing survey, last June, had a good response rate. Some issues were raised about the need for adaptations and insulation in some properties. This will be followed up.

We also had a public consultation about the exterior of the LSIC extension.

Last July, we changed our logo so that all ACT assets are easily identifiable. You will see a simplified version of James Porteus Wood's design from the LSIC at the playing field and toilets.

### **Employee responsibilities**

We have been working hard to ensure our employees have contracts, job descriptions and the support they need to do their jobs. We currently employ the LSIC manager, two job share cleaners and an Eco Manager. We continue to seek ways to employ more people. There is a vacancy for a job share cleaner at the moment.

We welcome volunteers and hope to set up steering groups to help manage some of the Trust's projects. We have been fortunate to have had more voluntary help in the last year and you will see the improvements at the playing field, toilets and station. LSIC have more volunteers too.

### **Land Sea and Islands Centre**

This is the main source of income for the Trust. Increased visitor numbers all year round mean that the Centre needs expansion. Planning permission was renewed last year. We know that there is a demand (especially in the winter months) for somewhere to have a hot drink and snack.

We have been renewing our efforts to fundraise for an extension to the main building, having renewed the planning permission and consulted the community about the exterior design. We have begun raising funds through Easyfundraising and are looking at what other funding may be available. This is a time consuming but essential part of the Board's remit. In August, after many months of discussions and planning, the World War 1 service record book was on display in a specially adapted cabinet. The individuals in that book are featured in a new exhibition till Easter.

Events varied and included talks on Malcolm McAlpine at Polish and Birlinn of Clanranald, workshops during the Arisaig Americana festival and a visit by the Slovak Ambassador.

The Centre is featured in the Lonely Planet guide and in the water refill app.

In the meantime, the directors worked hard to secure funding for the workshop/storage building, improved car parking and electric car charging points. The Open day is on February 23rd and more events will be planned once all equipment is in place. There is great potential for the village to gain support/ information from other groups within Lochaber, including the Men's Shed, Nimble Fingers, the Shirly Project

and others. We have had two mobility scooters donated and we already have two e-bikes.

### **Community Land**

A housing survey was completed last summer and we have declared our interest in an area of land on the station road with planning permission for six houses. Funding has just been granted for a feasibility study. We are hoping to buy a couple of areas of land from the MacMillan estate - the shorefront opposite Spar and Cafe Rhu with a view to improved car parking, refuse receptacles, bus stop shelter, picture frame in the landscape and more planting. We will be consulting with the community in the near future. The other areas are still under negotiation so we cannot officially comment at the moment.

### **Public Toilets**

Thanks to many new volunteers, these have been improved;- interior painting in the ladies and gents, more shelving for storage, new fence and undergrowth cleared. Exterior painting is planned for the better weather. We are determined to keep this valuable facility open despite a reduced Highland comfort scheme budget and reduced public donations. It is a great asset to the village and could not be kept open without all the hard work of volunteers.

We also had the leaking velux window in the disabled access facility replaced.

Further improvements through the Eco Project include more planting once tree roots have been removed and tidying up the recycling area.

### **Playing field**

A team of volunteers maintain this on a regular grass cutting rota, checking the play equipment, painting the shed and new grass composting bins and improving the path. We have two new picnic tables made by Fort William Men's Shed.

Maintenance of the pitch is an ongoing challenge with twice yearly aerating and fertilising. There are problems with the surface this has caused maintenance issues. The ride on mower also needs a lot of repairs. Volunteers have offered to do this.

Last summer, there was fruit on the trees planted by the last Eco managers!

### **Station adoption**

We continue to use the room managed by the West Highland Community Rail Partnership and manage the planters on the platforms. Those of

you who are rail passengers will have noticed the new planter seats. This work will be completed with next year's budget.

We have made enquiries about managing all of the station buildings but with them being currently owned by different companies, this may be a longer term project! The signal box is available for lease but maintenance costs seem to be prohibitive at the moment.

### **Eco project**

Last May we employed Alison O'Rourke for a 23 month post. Part of her remit is to increase local food production, composting and recycling. She helped apply for funding for the new super fast electric car chargers.

You will have noticed the improvements next to the public toilets - there will be more to come!

Well attended events include clothes swaps, willow workshops, foraging, beeswax food wrapping workshops, litter picks. Our new apple press was put to good use last summer!!

### **Events**

We are seeking to work with other community groups and already support the Community Council on their bonfire and fireworks night. The World War 1 project was a joint venture between ADCC and ACT.

The senior citizens' Christmas lunch was at Arisaig House, courtesy of the Glenart Fund and Gower Trust money.

Arisaig Highland Games committee kindly let us have a stall and we hope to repeat this again in July.

We provided refreshments at the Astley Hall Christmas Fayres which made a modest sum.

Last June we held the Community picnic on the playing field which was well attended. This year it will be the same weekend as the Arisaig Americana festival on held on May 25th.

The Seaweed farming meeting was set up after ACT had lobbied against the Marine Biopolymers plans to dredge kelp in our waters. Many individuals attended Scottish Seaweeds meeting on January 30th. The Board will discuss this further at our meeting following this AGM.

### **Future plans**

On May 11th, Mallaig Pool hold their marathon/ half marathon event in Arisaig and registration, etc will be based on the playing field. It is hoped that this will be as eco-friendly as possible. Disruption will be kept to a minimum but many participants and their supporters are

expected. There are opportunities for the village to benefit from this. If you wish more details, speak to Fiona Baker or one of the Board.

Shirley Buchanan, community partnership officer, based in Inverness, has offered to come to speak to the community about her role in community-led adult social care. If you interested, look at the “Care at home Boleskine style” You Tube video.

In other Trusts, volunteer steering groups help to manage assets and develop others. We are looking at ways of sharing best practice from other areas.

Funding applications take up a lot of time. We are looking into whether community shares is an option for future projects (leaflets available).

Isla McCulloch from Community Shares Scotland has offered to attend one of our Board meetings.

Crowd funding is another option and we would be willing to pay an experienced individual to take on this role.

There may be funding for a Project Officer’s salary.

There is a limit on what the 7 Directors on the Board can do. We can also have 3 Co-Opted directors on the Board. These are people who live outside the area, are not members but could bring specific skills to benefit the community. If you know of anyone who may be interested, please let us know.

Any feedback or questions?