

Chair report, March 9th 2020

We welcome everyone to our AGM. The Board of Directors have had another busy year.

There have been some changes on the Board since the last AGM in February 2019 - Jane Foster stepped down, as did Pamela King - to become our Housing Project Officer. Paul Sheard will now be stepping down and we thank him for all he has given to ACT.

We also thank Tiina Heinonen, our volunteer secretary for the last couple of years.

Staff

We appreciate all our staff - loo cleaners Pauline Cunningham and Kyle Woolfenden, who joined us when he replaced Annamarie Douglas. Donations have increased thanks to their hard work. We have employed a secretary, Zoe Pritchard, initially for a short period but hope to extend that.

Alison O'Rourke is our Eco manager, whose current post is funded by the Climate Challenge Fund until the end of March. We applied to them to continue her good work and I am delighted to share that we were successful in securing funding for the next two years!

There is a press embargo on this news but we are allowed to share with our members.

She has been instrumental in helping to secure funding for the EV chargers, arranging EV car and e-bike trial sessions as well as organising many events, including willow workshops, clothes and seeds swaps, sewing bee sessions, foraging experiences and apple day - using our (then new) apple press. You have probably seen her working at the many food growing sites around the village; at the LSIC, toilets and school. She also worked with the Mallaig pool at their running festival in reducing single use plastics. Recent craft making sessions have brought together Nimble Fingers and residents from the MacKintosh Centre. Photos of some goods produced are on the board. Look out for the seagulls inside the LSIC!

LSIC

Alison Stewart continues to manage the LSIC with a dedicated team of volunteers. This provides ACT's main income. The new iZettle machine which has enabled card payments has been a huge asset. The WW1 exhibition was the result of joint working between ACT and ADCC and special thanks go to Susan Carstairs and Alison Stewart for all their hard work.

Talks on SOE, the road to the isles photographic exhibition; hosting events like the garden trail in June, bonfire night refreshments and a visit from international tourism students, carbon literacy and CPR/defibrillator training are just some of the things that happen in the Centre. LSIC supported the fundraising efforts of Arisaig Primary by selling postcards, Christmas goods and running the village treasure hunt.

Bill's shed opened officially in February last year. Since then, the workshop area has been fitted with cupboards, shelving and a heater. The car park has also been marked out, all thanks to Peter Fleming. The new build was used during the Festival of Running and Arisaig Americana Festival and by some community groups. The tool library will be in use soon - watch out for details!

The EV chargers are used by visitors and locals alike. There were ongoing problems with the fast chargers and a new unit has recently been installed. We hope that there will be no future problems now!

Funding and sustainability

Much of our growth has resulted from successful funding applications, the main one being from the Scottish Land Fund which was the second highest award in Scotland. We are progressing with the purchase of the land and have selected a local builder after the recent tendering process. Pamela has been very busy and organised the licence to occupy the new community orchard land at the far end of the playing field. Alison O'Rourke did a great job involving the primary school children and some high school pupils in planting "their" trees.

We have been successful in getting through the expression of interest stage of the current Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to help pay for some of the shorefront improvements. Stage 2 is due for submission by mid July.

We had also applied to the Investing in Communities Fund last June for a Community Project Officer. There was a huge demand and although we have not so far been successful, we are on a reserve list! Still waiting! We have applied to the SSE sustainable fund for monies towards an extension to the LSIC. Monies are not easy to come by for this type of project and we may have to delay our plans if we are not successful. A decision is expected in the near future.

A trickle of funding comes in from the Easyfundraising app - if you have not signed up, please do so. It costs you nothing and can help to generate funds for us.

Over year ago, seaweed farming looked like a possibility for local employment and we still keep in touch with Scottish Seaweeds who have been developing their own business model.

We have explored community shares and crowdfunding for some projects and this is something we would consider in the future.

DTAS give support to all community trusts in Scotland and would work closely with us if needed. Using the community learning exchange fund, some of us visited Rum Community Trust to look at their housing project and how they are growing. We also went to visit Mull and Iona Community Trust which is a much bigger enterprise. They are in a different position to us with regards to access to land for a hydro scheme, charity shop, housing and huge office building. They inspired us to look at how we may become sustainable. Ideas are always welcome!

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes - in putting together an updated business plan, and currently putting together volunteer policies and database. We often have to chase up responses in order to meet funding deadlines. There are many practicalities in managing the village assets - ensuring the playing field and toilets are maintained and stocked up. I would like to thank all the volunteers who make this happen, including the tradesmen who have given their time free.

The commitment of this Board is amazing and I would like to thank my fellow directors for their hard work in achieving ACT's current success. It truly is a team effort! We celebrated ACT's 10th anniversary by holding a party in November. So many past Board members and other volunteers have also contributed to the success we

are seeing today. The party was a chance to celebrate what community can achieve. If you missed it, the next one will be a while yet! Speaking of volunteers, we are currently improving our policies and documentation. There is a new registration form on our website and we hope to have new volunteer packs in the near future. If you are interested, please fill in your details. Forms are available tonight too.

Tonight we welcome two new directors to the Board - Steve Westwood and Gary Reavell.

Arisaig station

Progress has been painfully slow in ACT securing the lease of all the station buildings. Heads of Terms were exchanged but now we may have another landlord - we will keep you posted. In the meantime, we still have the use of one room which we plan to use for the upcoming Eco Project. We have a new planter seat to match the one on the Mallaig bound platform.

Playing field and public toilets

A team of volunteers maintain the grass cutting rota, do odd jobs around the field and service equipment. Many thanks to them for all their valuable support.

The pitch needs a lot of work this year to improve the playing area. The contractors who did the initial work on the pitch did not do as good a job as they should have, resulting in many problems. At the time, they were the best in the field(!)The company went bust a couple of years ago so we have no recourse for action. We will need to spend more money this year on improving it as much as we can.

The toilets are looking much smarter now with the new fence and planting around the area. The exterior will need to be repainted this year and we hope to make other improvements. Donations have increased and that helps to fund the work. Thanks to all the volunteers who are involved with supporting this valuable village asset.

Events and funding

Last year's village bbq and picnic was a successful but soggy day. We had a stall at the Arisaig Games and there was much interest in the WW1 information and sales were made for LSIC.

Christmas Fair refreshments was a joint effort with Lady Lovat Parent Council and ACT offering food and mulled wine.

We are pro-active in working with other local groups including the Community Council, gardeners' club, Road to the Isles Facilities Group (RTIFG) and supporting events like Arisaig games, Mallaig pool and leisure running event, Arisaig Americana Festival.

We have held two public meetings on how increased tourist numbers impact on our village. These were prompted by the information on local Facebook groups. As you will know, we are in the process of buying the shorefront with a view to improving existing parking, seating, information boards and more. We will be consulting more widely soon and welcome any comments you have tonight and over the next few months. Some useful information from our networking at these meetings is available.

Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, RTIFG, Road to the Isles Marketing Group, Denis Rixson, Voluntary Action Lochaber attended as well as many members and local business owners. Some positive outcomes and contacts have been made. Progress is more likely if the wider community works together.

Communications

West Word, ACT and LSIC websites and Facebook pages are all updated regularly. Board meeting minutes are on the village noticeboard. Do members wish to have email updates too?

Thank you all for coming tonight and for your continued support. We welcome your questions.