

Chair report 7th June 2021

Welcome to our first (and hopefully last!) online AGM. The last year has been a challenging one for ACT, and as many anticipated, funding streams dried up, we learned some new vocabulary - lockdown, shielding, furlough and had many learning curves!

We found some new funders who helped keep us afloat - special thanks to Rosemary and Olivia Bridge and Gary Reavell in particular, for time spent applying and reporting back on the required detail to funders. The Heritage Emergency fund, Adapt and Thrive, Business Support Fund and the furlough scheme were invaluable in ensuring that we could pay our staff their full salary.

We value our staff and had realised that some of the contracts we were using were not fit for purpose. We have utilised the services of Croner, a professional HR company to ensure that we are compliant with working times regulations and the latest employment advice. On top of this we have policies for our large volunteer “army” to ensure that everyone is valued in the same way. We are ultimately aiming to apply for the Volunteer Friendly Award., but due to Covid, this has not been possible so far. We continue to look for better ways to keep everyone up to date with Trust activities.

STAFF and VOLUNTEERS.

In the last year we have had to say goodbye to our cleaners Pauline Cunningham and Claire Wortley as they moved to pastures new. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank them both for their hard work in making the public toilets the valued asset we have today. We are currently looking for a replacement for Claire.

Alison Stewart resigned in January this year and will be a big miss at the Land Sea and Islands Centre. She and Gordon gave so much of themselves to making the Centre the success it is today. Thanks to all our volunteers who are looking forward to returning when the Centre reopens on May 21st. Our new manager, Rachel Crawley, is already

known to many of the volunteers and is a welcome addition to the team. We are sure she will be very successful in her new role.

Our Housing Project Officer Pamela King has the unenviable task of delivering on affordable housing on Station road. There have been many hurdles along the way; some due to Covid but other delays from legal issues and last minute issues with land ownership. However, we have managed to buy the shorefront land, playing field, orchard and wee play park. These areas will be mentioned in more detail later.

Our Eco Manager Alison O'Rourke was unable to meet the objectives of the current project because of Covid but the Climate Challenge Fund have been very supportive.

Some of these were green transport, textile recycling and upcycling but she has also worked with local adults and children in video film making and a photography competition. She has purchased two more e-bikes and her project covers the cost of the EV chargers at the moment. She has set up a group "Arisaig Eco Friends" who will help secure the long term legacy of the Eco Project.

Our secretary Zoe Pritchard keeps us all right and has been a huge support in making sure we are all becoming better organised and have the organisational detail we need for a firm foundation. She has set up Easyfundraising and Recycle for Charity (for used inkjet cartridges) on our website and we also have a donate button.

Our volunteer Board is very dedicated but sometimes other priorities arise and we have had to say good bye to Gary Reavell and Peter Fleming in the last year. We are very glad to have Kieran and Jess Logan join us recently and look forward to working with them.

LSIC

Our main source of income had to close last year and needed measures put in place to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and the public. All this had to be paid for by grant funding - often available within a limited time period. Sourcing supplies/builders etc when all were in short supply was another challenge!! You will see obvious changes

outside the building. Thanks to Ross Milligan for making our covered area, Steve Westwood for ensuring the gravel area is now wheelchair accessible and Ian MacQueen for restoring the porter's barrow. Rachel is working hard to reopen on May 21st with limited hours initially until she knows which volunteers are able to help out. Everyone is excited to get back, even though it will be strange at first! The EV chargers have been well used in between lockdowns. The Board will look at the merits of charging users either before the current Eco project ends or by next March.

Playing field and toilets

The playing field had to be shut for months last year. Maintenance was continued by a small group of volunteers using an adapted lawnmower which is now a scarifier!!

The shed, picnic tables were given lick of paint and new gate latches welded on - hopefully this will prevent the deer getting in as the gates shut more easily now. Pam MacDonald, Active schools co-ordinator has held some organised football and play sessions. We hope to have our usual rota of grass cutting volunteers back this summer. Thanks to all who look after this well used area.

The community orchard has had more fruit trees planted, deer fencing is now in place and a heavy duty trimmer purchased to control the reeds and bracken. There are also more apple trees in the playing field. The toilets needed a lot of work to make them safer to use for customers and staff. PPE, risk assessments, cleaning schedules and a contactless donation system. We have just had self opening door mechanisms installed. Thanks to David Smith for doing this.

Volunteers have painted inside and outside the building. Thanks very much to Gill and Arthur Whittaker, Kieran and Jess Logan for doing this!

Community Land

Pamela King has worked tirelessly to deliver on the purchase of the shorefront and playing field /orchard land. Steve Westwood has been leading on the community consultation and implementation of the

shorefront improvements. You will see the new planters opposite the glass recycling. He is liaising with ADCC regarding the area. There was much support for an Aire and business park just outside the village but unfortunately the land purchase was unsuccessful. The housing project almost ground to a halt during the Covid lockdown, with further delays from lawyers, and just before completion, some land was found to be owned by Transport Scotland. There is now further delay - hugely frustrating for all concerned. Pamela has secured funding from the Quaker Housing Trust, a loan from Ecology bank and the Rural Housing Fund to deliver on the housing project. Ken MacDonald's team is ready to start construction if the sale can be completed soon. The price of building materials has increased since Covid - yet another challenge. The Communities Housing Trust are an invaluable source of information and support to us.

Arisaig Station

We have agreed Heads of Terms with Scotrail about leasing the whole of the station building. The next step is to consult the community about the use of this space and seek funding for a Development Officer and capital funding. We are awaiting a response from our application to the Coastal communities fund. Volunteers are needed to maintain the planters - any takers?!

RENEWABLES

CARES conducted a survey on possible sources of renewable energy. The report is available on our website.

10 YEAR VISION

The last community consultation has now expired with most of the objectives met. We have been exploring ways of funding a new one and will keep you posted on developments.

In supporting the Scottish Tourism Action Group (STAG), we have been seeking ways of managing the increased tourist numbers whilst attracting funds for the community. Unfortunately the Aire project has so far been unsuccessful as we were unable to purchase affordable land. There is widespread support for such a venture so who knows what the future holds?

Whether a project succeeds or fails, there is a huge time commitment on behalf of Board directors and staff that proves their dedication in delivering what improvements the community support. I will be stepping down as Chair and will miss all of ACT. You are all very special people and I have been privileged to have worked alongside you for the last 8 years.