

Isle of Luing Community Trust

Annual report 2010-11

Introduction: An eventful year reached a climax with the granting of planning permission for the Atlantic Islands Centre (AIC) project in early 2011, but much else happened and is reported below.

Land purchase: We still await final clarification of two minor issues from the Keeper of the Records.

Walk leaflets: The re-print of the walk leaflets, funded by a kind donation, was completed for Summer 2011, and they are now available for sale as a booklet at the shop.

Building Project: Plans were submitted to the Council in July 2010 for planning approval. There followed a six-month period during which many letters of support and objection were received by the Council. The ward Area Committee councillors, at their request, met Trust representatives and objectors to make themselves familiar with the project.

Some issues were raised that required further work by the architect and others, in particular the state of the engine house ruins. A further planning application was required to approve the taking down of the ruins and the re-use of the slate of sufficient quality in the building, which technically counted as demolition. A number of contradictory reports were produced and submitted in response to this second application.

In the end the applications were referred to a Discretionary Hearing of the Planning Committee, which took place in Cullipool Hall on 31 January 2011. Both sides presented their case in public to the councillors, who also inspected the site for themselves on a wet winter's day. At the end of the day the councillors considered all the arguments and voted unanimously to go against the Planning Officer's recommendation, and approved the planning applications.

The income and expenditure figures for the café/restaurant have been further developed with help and advice from the café at another Argyll Trust. These revised figures were sent to Bob Clark, curatorial advisor, at Auchindrain Museum and he has said that they show the Centre to be financially viable. Work has been concentrated on funding applications, with first stages not requiring the submission of a full Business Plan.

Funding applications have been dominated by the economic and financial problems of the country as a whole. We still have a grant offer from the European Regional Development Fund to cover 40% of building work and fixtures, a sum of £457,220; this is ring-fenced until we get matching funding. Feedback from further potential funders in the past six months has indicated that most funders are now overwhelmed with applications, and typically an individual funder may be able to approve no more than one in ten applications.

The directors were grateful to receive a substantial anonymous donation to defray expenses incurred in raising funds to progress the project. We sought external advice about engaging a suitable funding consultant, but it soon became clear that this was not suited to our circumstances, and the work has continued to be done 'in house'.

Directors visited Museums Galleries Scotland in Edinburgh, who were very supportive. As a result, the Trust has applied for Associate Membership of MGS, which will enhance our standing when applying for heritage grants, and in the future would enable us to apply for accredited museum status.

We have approached about ten grant-awarding Trusts, mostly for Stage 1 consideration. So far two have said we do not fit their criteria, and the results from others are still awaited.

Looking ahead: Luing Community Council (LCC) and the Trust have been approached by the West Highland Housing Association concerning the future of Seaview Cottage in Toberonochy, at present unoccupied and in need of considerable upgrading to be habitable again. At present no firm proposals have been made by either WHHA or LCC and the Trust.

Initial contacts have been made between Historic Scotland and the Trust concerning slate resources for roofing historic buildings in Scotland. Supplies of recycled slate from demolitions are becoming scarce, and at present Historic Scotland is using Welsh slate for this purpose. The requirement is likely to be small but ongoing, but as yet it is unclear whether resources of sufficient quality exist within the Trust's mineral rights.

We have been approached by a tidal energy company who are interested in harnessing tidal power in Cuan Sound and are awaiting developments regarding other community bodies.

Island Activities: £500 was provided to the Luing Amateur Dramatic Society towards a portable stage for its productions. Given the high costs of buying one from a supplier, the money was eventually used to build a wooden stage composed of a series of portable 'boxes'. This stage is now available to island groups for use at island events.

The Trust strongly supported the successful campaign to prevent the closure of Luing Primary School, and subsequently the enterprises to run a café and other activities in the school premises.

A new marquee for community use was purchased jointly between the Trust and LCC. To enable this, the Trust applied for and was awarded a small grant from Argyll and Bute Council's community awards scheme, with the balance of the cost coming from LCC funds.

More slate waste from the stockpile was used to reinforce the beach defences this year. However high seas shortly after this was done resulted in much of this slate being washed away, raising questions about how this limited stockpile should be used in future.

The Trust arranged a visit by a puppet show during the Easter holiday called 'That's Rubbish!', attended by an audience of over 30. The show was supported by financial contributions from the Luing Archers, Luing Social Committee, and Whitmore and Hamilton in Oban.

A successful weekend of activities run by the Trust in late July called Island Voices comprised the Bards of Luing poetry competition, an evening with two visiting poets and Luing musicians, and on the following day a Slate Sculpture competition and a storytelling event.

Sub-groups: the three sub-groups – Luing History Group, Luing Playing Field Committee and Luing First Responders – are all thriving. The History Group secured a small grant from the Year of Scotland's Islands to create 4 more posters for their annual exhibition in August 2011. Other groups are welcome to approach the Trust to achieve the benefits of being part of a charitable organisation.

Grow Your Own Project: the fruit trees on Trust land at the back of Cullipool suffered badly in the gale in May 2011, along with many other trees on Luing, so the anticipated first crop will not be this year.

External relations: The Trust will be represented again at the Development Trusts Association - Scotland 2011 conference to be held in Cumbernauld in September. Links with the Scottish Islands Federation continue.

Website: the Trust website is hosted by Differentia, who created the interpretive panels, and managed by Rosy Thomson. However we are now able to do the regular updating ourselves, though with so much else to be done, the directors apologise if the updating is not done as often as it should be.

The Trust Board: Following the 2010 AGM the directors are: Norrie Bissell, Nigel Dyckhoff, Alastair Fleming, Pete Hooper and John Robertson. During the year Eoghann MacLachlan was co-opted. There were no changes to the officers during the year.

From the Chairman:

I have to thank all those involved in the work of the Trust in what has been yet another busy year: fellow directors, for the work they do behind the scenes, and of course Members and Friends for continuing support.

John Robertson

7 August 2011