



Annual Report 2013

Introduction: The main theme of 2013 was the early stages of the construction of the Atlantic Islands Centre, a story given in more detail below, together with the arrival of the Project Development Manager (PDM), Andrew Pinkerton, in post at the beginning of April.

Atlantic Islands Centre Project: the first task of the PDM was to guide the advertisement for tenders for the construction of the AIC. Following standard procedures, four construction companies were invited to submit full tenders, and following review by the PDM, QS and architect, the Board was presented with a recommendation to accept the lowest of the three valid tenders received. The final decision resulted in the award of the contract to MacLeod Construction Ltd, approved by the Board on 8 July 2013.

Work on site began in mid-August, with the initial task being to clean the overlying slate waste to enable the foundations to be laid on solid rock beneath. Unfortunately a slab of rock fell from the quarry side in late September, causing cessation of work on safety grounds until the problem had been properly assessed. The engineer called in a specialist geotechnical firm for this purpose, as a result of which a revised approach to foundations and layout was recommended. Local authority consent was obtained some weeks later, while Big Lottery provided an uplift in grant to cover the cost of the extra work. Work resumed in December with specialist contractors inserting fourteen 6 metre long 'minipiles' on the quarry side of the site to underpin the foundations and stabilise the quarry edge, enabling the main contractors to resume work in early January 2014.

In addition, it has been identified that the water main and telephone cables serving Cullipool have to be moved from under the site and to the other side of the adjacent track. The effect of these additional site works is to extend the contract period by up to three months meaning the Centre will now open in the latter half of summer 2014.

Funding for the fit-out of the AIC has been increased with grant awards by the Hugh Fraser Foundation and the Robertson Trust. Engagement of a firm of specialists to complete the fit-out of the exhibition and events spaces in the Centre is being finalised.

The timescale for use of the Bòrd na Gàidhlig grant of £15,000 for Gaelic signage and interpretation in the Centre has been extended. The bridging loan facility with Social Investment Scotland to cover the gap between the payment of invoices to the contractor and the repayment of claims to the Trust by the funders, has yet to be used, but will probably be needed from April 2014, though at a reduced level to that originally envisaged. Separate bank accounts are operated to handle the financial management of the construction, keeping such transactions out of the Trust main account.

Publications: copies of the Luing map, given free to visitors on the ferry, continue to be distributed, but a more professionally presented version is being planned for later in 2014. The walk leaflets and Luing History Group publications continue to sell slowly but steadily.

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Moorings Project: our full application to ABSA FLAG funding was successful, one of only nine successful bids, and the Trust will now proceed to obtain the necessary statutory approvals from Marine Scotland and Crown Estates. This development is being delivered in partnership with the Luing Moorings Association. When implemented, the project will provide a small number of summer moorings for visiting yachts at Cullipool whose crews may wish to use the AIC facilities.

Governance: review of the Memorandum and Articles by the Trust solicitors will continue once we are past the busy construction phase. It is nearly ten years since the original 'Mem & Arts' were written for the newly formed Trust, and it is now time to check that they are still a relevant set of statements. The Trust trading company has lain dormant since the Trust was formed, but will be activated in 2014 in advance of the Centre opening. The operations of the café/restaurant and retail will come under the trading company, for which a small board of directors will be required.

External relations: the Trust is an Associate Member of Museums Galleries Scotland, which now works directly with Scottish Government to oversee the whole area of museums and similar institutions in Scotland. A membership subscription is no longer required.

There have been no developments concerning potential small-scale slate extraction, but it remains an aspect that the Project Development Manager intends to take forward.

The Scottish Islands Federation, of which the Trust is a member, has become part of a major project across thirteen island groups, from the Greek islands to the Hebrides, with funding from Intelligent Energy Europe, to develop Island Sustainable Energy Action Plans to meet or exceed EU sustainability targets by 2020. Luing is one of eight Scottish islands that will participate in this scheme, which is being managed under contract by Community Energy Scotland. Active work on this project is likely to begin later in 2014, and will complement the work on carbon reduction on the island which part of our Climate Challenge Fund grant is provided for.

The Trust was represented at the Development Trusts Association – Scotland 2013 conference held in Cumbernauld in early September 2013. Membership of DTAS will become increasingly important as the opening of the Centre will mean the Trust becomes an operational development trust and social enterprise. We will also become a more active member of the Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network.

Relations with VisitScotland have been developed, and the Centre is already being promoted by the Argyll & the Isles Tourism Cooperative. The aim of the AIC to showcase Luing and the other Atlantic Islands is being pursued by establishing relations with other island community organisations. A small bursary provided through DTAS enabled a number of further island visits to be conducted in summer 2013 for this purpose.

Island Activities: the Trust organised an evening with folk singer Sarah McQuaid as part of her summer tour of Britain. A full house appreciated Sarah's visit, a singer with an international reputation whose concert we were very lucky to be able to secure. Further events, including a theatre show and Writing Day, are being planned in 2014.

The Trust was part of discussions in summer 2013 concerning the provision of on-island transport facilities after the withdrawal of the postbus service, scheduled for summer 2014. It became clear that no easy solution was available, but the Trust remains ready to help anyone trying to provide a private enterprise solution. Unfortunately funding for such transport is only available for replacement of old vehicles, not for start-up enterprises, and no help at all is available for running costs.

Broadband: in March 2013, a winning poem entry on behalf of the Trust by director Norrie Bissell for a competition for a year's free trial of a satellite-based broadband connection enabled the Trust to provide a high-speed broadband connection for the PDM for a year. As this is an expensive way of accessing the internet, it is unlikely to continue after the year has elapsed, and the connection may have to revert to copper wire type.

However the Trust was approached to help with the Scottish Government-funded Community Broadband Scotland project to provide a wireless high-speed broadband connection to Colonsay, with Luing being the base for a relay mast that could also provide high-speed broadband access to Luing and other nearby communities. Progress for the project appears to be slower than planned, but it is clear that fibre-optic broadband will not be coming our way in the foreseeable future, and that this is the best option we have.

Sub-groups: the three sub-groups – Luing History Group, Luing Playing Field Committee and Luing First Responders – are all thriving. The History Group annual exhibition in late July 2013, celebrating the 60th anniversary of the first vehicle ferry at Cuan, was the last one before the group has a permanent home in the Centre. The Group has built up a good level of resources and financial reserves to enable it to make an immediate impact in their new Gallery in the AIC.

Luing First Responders have had a particularly active year. In addition to their main activities providing first response cover every night and all day Sunday, and undergoing regular training. A replacement defibrillator was needed during the year which provoked a major fundraising effort that initially raised over £3000. However that was followed by a fundraising event by island residents on their behalf in the form of a round-island skiff row (not a race!). In turn this led to an island enterprise to build a new skiff by selling traditional one sixty-fourth shares in the new vessel.

Luing Playing Field Committee continues to maintain the playing field and children's playpark, in particular for the annual Sports Day for the school and the island. With members of the Parent Council and other residents, they mark out the track, arrange equipment and ensure refreshments are provided.

Other groups are welcome to approach the Trust to achieve the benefits of being part of a charitable organisation.

Websites: the Trust website, hosted by Differentia West Coast, continues, but a separate website for the AIC will be created in time for the opening.

The Trust Board: Following the 2013 AGM there was no change in the composition of the board of directors: Norrie Bissell, Nigel Dyckhoff, Alastair Fleming, Pete Hooper, Eoghann MacLachlan and John Robertson. In addition the Board appointed Annie Tunnicliffe as its business adviser on a voluntary basis, following the invaluable help Annie gave us during the grant applications as a consultant provided by the Big Lottery Fund. There were no changes to the officers during the year.

*The directors of the Isle of Luing Community Trust
March 2014*