



Annual Report 2016

The Atlantic Islands Centre. This has been the first full year of operation of the Atlantic Islands Centre, a year of finding out how much hard work is involved, how many traps for the unwary, and the difficulties of getting the levels of staffing to match the medium-term needs! We have used the readings on the footfall counter with some caution, allowing not just for any person both entering and leaving, but also for staff and volunteers as well, so the reading at the year-end was divided by 4, but even that indicated visitor numbers between 12000 and 15000 – quite a remarkable tally. We intend to obtain a better counter soon to give us more reliable readings.

The Isle of Luing Trading Company is responsible for running the Centre on behalf of the Trust. During the year resignations and ill-health eventually reduced the board to three active members. The remaining directors have all worked extremely hard in these voluntary roles. The Intra-Group and Services Agreements have now been reviewed, finalised and formally adopted.

The Trust is very conscious of the enormous contribution made to the success of the AIC operation by the band of more than 30 dedicated volunteers, including the Luing Bakers, a team of fifteen who have continued to provide the daily delivery of home baking that has been a major part of the success of the café.

The success of the AIC was again recognised by winning the Scottish Civic Trust My Place Award, the Glasgow Herald Society Community Project of the Year Award, and finally the Argyll & Bute Third Sector Interface Community Project of the Year Award. Three major awards in one year has been a remarkable achievement.

Employment: Laura McIntyre resigned as Centre Development Manager in June 2016. The Trust board then reviewed the staffing structure in the light of the remaining support funding available and appointed two part-time posts, book-keeper (Lasta King) and events co-ordinator and marketing (Birgit Whitmore). The Trading Company has continued to employ several local people in that operation, and also a new chef in time for the summer season.

Publications: the Luing map for visitors has continued to be handed out on the ferry and at the AIC. The first print run of the walk leaflets sold out and a second print run was ordered.

Moorings Project: there has been an increase in the use of the moorings in 2016, but a better advertising campaign has been put in place for 2017, so we hope for much increased use.

Training: early in the year we were awarded funding by the Volunteer Action Fund to employ a Training Officer and support the delivery of training through the year. In early summer, Jonathan Robertson was appointed for a 9 month contract, and he has made a very valuable contribution to staff and volunteer training, including board training. The Luing Bakers were able to set up a robust system for ongoing provision of cakes and biscuits with the purchase of kits of equipment for each baker. The venue staff successfully underwent World Host training, and further training for other nationally recognised standards is planned.

Events: the award of a grant by Creative Scotland, the Scottish Government funded body for the promotion of the Arts in Scotland, in April 2016 led to the planning and marketing of a varied programme of events for music,

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theatre, visual arts, literature and crafts. The programme of more than 24 events brought a wide range of quality events to the Centre, as well as volunteer-run events, and is seen as a major contributor to financial success in the future.

External relations: the Scottish Islands Federation (SIF), of which the Trust is a member, operates mainly as a lobbying organisation to the Scottish Government, local councils and similar bodies on behalf of Scottish Island communities as a whole, rather than providing support to individual islands. SIF completed the inter-island SMILEGov Energy Audit Project. Funding from the Scottish Government enabled SIF to employ a project officer part-time, and she paid a visit to Luing during the year.

The Trust was again represented at the Development Trusts Association – Scotland (DTAS). The 2016 conference returned to Cumbernauld last September. The Centre participates in the electricity supply bulk electrical energy purchasing contract, giving substantial savings on electricity costs.

The Lorn Islands Partnership (LIP) has become a significant feature of our support network. The Scottish Government, through its Strengthening Communities Programme, funded LIP from early summer to employ a Project Officer and consultants to deliver a programme of training and development across the four islands. Our first Project Officer, Sandy Mohamet, left us in August, and Gill Law, up to this point acting as a consultant, became our self-employed Project Officer. Replacing her in the consultancy role has been Jane Churchill, already working with Kerrera and now adding Luing to her brief. Gill has mainly worked with Easdale and Lismore, but was also appointed as HR adviser to the board in the autumn. Between them, they have raised funding on behalf of LIP and individual islands amounting to nearly £200,000 already, with more bids in the pipeline. A most impressive achievement for which all four islands are most grateful. The partnership looks set to provide an important mechanism of ongoing support to all four island Trusts.

Phone signal: the Vodafone Sure Signal came on stream during the year with three sites: at the Centre, Toberonochy Hall and South Cuan ferry shed.

Broadband: the Scottish Government-funded Community Broadband Scotland project, Giga-Plus, was planned to come to Luing. Unfortunate issues with planning permissions for masts on Luing led to the community withdrawing from the project. It remains to be seen how the community will be served with superfast broadband.

Sub-group activities

Luing History Group has continued to produce a frequent change of displays in the Centre gallery on all manner of topics. Visitors with ancestral connections to Luing arrived in substantial numbers over the summer, with a steady stream of email enquiries as well.

Luing First Responders: the group provides 'First Person on the Scene' support to people on Luing who are awaiting paramedics from the Scottish Ambulance (by vehicle or helicopter). On a small island with no resident medical staff and a vehicle ferry only between 0730 and 1800 six days a week, this volunteer standby service is essential outside these hours. An ambulance from Oban can reach Luing in about 40 minutes, calling out the ferry if necessary. Luing Responder volunteers provide basic life support, monitor vital signs, use defibrillators, administer oxygen and use manual suction equipment until the paramedics arrive. Regular training sessions to maintain skills are held once a month. Two responders are on call every night and all day Sunday (when there is no car ferry). The main function of our group is to be on call to provide rapid response when there is a medical 999 call from the Isle of Luing outside car ferry operating hours.

The funds have again been boosted this year with generous donations from residents, from events such as ceilidhs, and book and 'telephone list' sales in the shop. Going forward, the Responders are considering the purchase of additional equipment, so a dedicated fundraising event may well be considered in the near future.

Luig Playing Field: the committee continues to be responsible for the maintenance of the playing field. However the play park remains closed, as the problem of insurance costs has not yet been solved, and the committee is unwilling to take the risk of operating it uninsured in these litigious times.

Financial: with the completion of construction of the Atlantic Islands Centre in the spring, capital grant funding from Big Lottery ceased. The remaining revenue funding covers a range of costs until early 2018, but the late completion meant that the time remaining is too short to develop financial sustainability. Big Lottery acknowledged this in August, providing a further revenue grant of £95,000. Big Lottery and other funders have come to see that achieving financial sustainability for community projects is no different from doing so for any new business, typically five years of operation. Our intention is to achieve a gradual reduction in grant dependency for the Centre over such a period.

The principle for operating the AIC is that the Trading Company (TC) is given occupancy of most of the building and made responsible for operating costs. The details for this are set out in the Intra-Group and Services Agreements in 2016. In line with common practice for a new venture, the TC is given the first year of operation rent-free, the second year at a reduced 'peppercorn' rent, and finally full rent for the space occupied in the third year. As a charity, the Trust is not allowed to give money to the TC to fund its operations, but it can, and has, provided a loan at a commercial rate of interest of 2% above bank base rate as required to smooth the cash flow. The Trust provided a second such short-term loan at the end of 2016 to be repaid within a year.

The funds of the Trust itself, kept separately in the Main account, have shown substantial income in 2016, as a result of the Events programme. There remains no charge for entry to the AIC, but visitors are invited to make a donation at the end of their visit, and this has provided a significant source of income that is eligible for Small Donations Gift Aid. The resulting resources been used to help refresh the Luig History Exhibition in the gallery as well as enabling small improvement in the Centre itself.

The Trust Projects account is now used to track income and expenditure of the various restricted funding streams, with the exception of the extra Big Lottery funding noted above, which is held in the Big lottery account. There are at the moment six restricted funding streams, including the Strengthening Communities Programme which is being serviced by the Trust on behalf of LIP.

The Trust Board: Following the 2016 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. Annie Tunnicliffe continues to provide invaluable help as Business Adviser, while we welcomed Gill Law as Human Resources advisor. There were no changes to the officers. However it is clear that there must be changes to refresh the board as soon as new blood can be found, as the present team have now served for ten years.

Finally the Trust Board wishes to record once again heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers who continue to do so much to make project such a success.

The directors of the Isle of Luig Community Trust

March 2017