

Chairman's Report 2014/15
(presented at the AGM of Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust, 21
November 2015)

Welcome on behalf of the Board of Directors, to the 11th AGM of the Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust (ATCDT), which was set up in 2003, primarily to seek funding for a new village hall. We are delighted, some 15 years later, to see this hall now successfully serving our community and providing a heart for many of our organisations and interests.

Over the years, we have seen the Trust undergo changes in personnel and direction, as should happen in all dynamic organisations, and this past year has seen a few more changes on the Board and its working groups: the 3 Villages Hall and our social enterprise community café, with a number of Directors stepping down from the Board because of other interests, commitments and responsibilities. We are extremely grateful for the valuable contributions made by all Directors and Volunteers over the years, without which we wouldn't be here today in this wonderful village hall, which is the envy of many other communities.

This year saw some stalwarts—Andrew Downs, Dawn Gourlay, Colin Williams, and Fiona Butcher—stand down from the board and its sub-groups, and we'd like to recognise the great work and effort they put in to serving our community interests. We are equally appreciative of the new Directors who have come forward to make up our complement—Maria Pollard; Lewis Kennedy; Bettie Clark and Mark Sutcliffe—who have brought their fresh ideas and energy to the table. The community is lucky to have such strengths, and to have people who are willing to offer their time, expertise and commitment to help maintain, strengthen and develop local interests.

However, with the range of Trust aims and objectives expanding over the years as Councils and other organisations cut back on services, we have plenty of projects and actions to keep everyone involved and fully committed, if the community aspirations are to be maintained and developed. In that light, we would always welcome new Members and Directors to help with ongoing actions and the various challenges that lie ahead. This includes someone willing to chair our charitable organisation; I have been privileged to hold the post of Chairman for over 15 years, but it is now time for me to vacate that post in favour of some 'new blood'!

During my time in office I and the community have been very well-served by a number of extremely hard working and devoted Directors and executive positions, without whom we would have achieved little. Below is a brief outline of what I recall as our most significant milestones.

From my now vague recollections :

- 2001 - 2 Community Development Association - Finlay Craig, Martin Caldwell, Billy Petrie - Sites and consultations with Community Council, Argyll & Bute Council Officers and others
- 2002 - 3 National Park & STAR – Colin Roxborough & Alan Tuffs - Comm Dev Trust - Feasibility Study & early plans
- 2003 1st CAP along with National Park - Caron Tobin, Lesley Campbell & Scottish Enterprise (SE -Dumbarton) - Mary Burns – Masterplan consultations and reports
- 2004 Pit Stop Cafe purchase
- 2005 - 8 Various building and business plans with Scottish Enterprise and engagement with Community Links Scotlands - Stephen Singer, et al.
Toilets demolished and pier car park site landscaped
Marine access and pier plans - many discussions with Council and NP – Bruce Marshall of A&BC
Funding applications eventually successful with Council sale of Outdoor Centre
Big Lottery award - Andy Normansel
Engaging architects for design & construction plans - Ronnie Neil,
- 2008 (Cont'd) Planning permission granted for Hall
Discussion with Arrochar Hotel & Council over land agreement and parking - Frixos

2009	Building work starts - MacLeod Builders Calor Village of the Year – Campus Manager employed
2010	Hall opens for business
2011	SRDP match funding for marine access fails due to SPT withdrawal of support
2012	Phase 2 Feasibility Study
2013	Hidden Heritage Project & Hydro Project Feasibility Study
2014	Arrofrica YOUTH Project
2015	Planning permission for Hydro
2015 - on	WHAT NEXT? ?

The Trust and its interests are currently in good health, thanks to the efforts of the present Board and its working groups.

The **Hall Management group** were able to declare another successful year of operation and sustainable activity, with sufficient budget balance to allow the Trust to establish a building maintenance fund with an opening balance of £20k, leaving sufficient working capital for ongoing hall operational purposes and general circumstances.

The Trust Directors would wish to join me in expressing our gratitude to all the staff and the many, many volunteers and groups, who have worked so hard to build up this position of sustainability, with continued support from the Council, National Park and a number of other organisations over the last few years, after the Big Lottery Start-up Funding was exhausted and we were left to operate independently.

The voluntary Hall Management group and staff over the last few years are to be applauded for their efforts and excellent housekeeping practices that have led to this satisfactory position. We'd also like to thank all the user groups and their hard working leaders for making the best use of the facility to offer the community a great range of social and cultural activities, which we hope will continue and be extended in the future, to continue to provide quality of life experiences for all ages and interests.

If your particular interest or passion is not on offer, why not get together a like-minded group and start something new? We'd always welcome another club or activity being added to the weekly programme. Phone Stephen at the Hall on 01301 702669 most days or speak to a member of the Hall Management Group, whose info is displayed on the notice boards. You can check what else is happening in the Hall on the website: <http://www.threevillages.org.uk/>

The continued successful and sustainable operation of the Village Hall is a principal aim of the Trust, with increased consultation and involvement of the community through the Campus/Hall Management Group, who manage the facilities under agreed Terms of Reference. The Management Group comprises Trust Directors, Trust Members, residents and Hall-user representatives, who are tasked with the day-to-day management of the Hall facility, with the aim of making it cost effective and self-sustaining. Using a balanced mix of employed staff and volunteer support, the Hall strives to provide the community with a wide range of social, recreational and educational events, activities and opportunities. The sustainable management of the Hall relies on volunteers to help with a range of activities, and always welcome new offers of help!

This year also saw great efforts and dedication by volunteers and staff in relation to the Community Cafe and Pitstop takeaway. The business came out of the winter doldrums with a power of work needed to freshen up on the old building in readiness for a busy spring and summer. A marvellous makeover in the cafe with very limited resources, was matched by a thorough overhaul of operational management, from renegotiating contracts with suppliers and services, to revamping the menus with fresh and homemade meals and baking, and introducing a new coffee machine, whilst maintaining the popular takeaway facility. These changes were deemed necessary to match improvements elsewhere in Scottish catering and hospitality, with most cafes and fast-food outlets now providing a quality 'coffee culture'. We're delighted that the changes seem to be approved by most diners in the cafe.

At the end of the high season Cafe Directors reported a positive financial trading position to match the news that the Social Investment Scotland loan on the Pitstop building had been paid, and the building is now a fully paid-for community asset. Thanks must go to the past Directors, management, staff, volunteers and benefactors, who have made this possible over 12 years of Trust ownership and operation since acquiring the property in 2003.

The cafe business is currently ticking over thanks to Melanie Tonks and other volunteers who are supporting a reduced staffing complement during the reduced winter opening hours, with mid-week closure days give everyone some time off, allowing them to concentrate on increased weekend activity, weather permitting.

The Trust and community will be looking closely at how this aging property, equipment, and facilities can continue to operate until any future replacement can be progressed, especially in light of the limited provision for changing customer demands and requirements for disabled access.

Looking forward, the Trust along with, Community Council and other local community activists, assisted by the Community Partnership within the Loch Lomond National Park have produced a revised 5 year **Community Action Plan 2014 – 19** with joint responsibility for progressing the aims and aspirations determined through the public consultation and survey process.

Following involvement of community stakeholders and consultation on a **Phase Two Development** of the community campus site, a professional **Feasibility Study** was completed with support from the Big Lottery Fund – Growing Community Assets. This concluded that a **Visitor Attraction** facility, comprising an exhibition space for local heritage information and artefacts, along with much needed public toilets and improved cafeteria facilities could be financially viable. This would complement planning vision for a much-improved village civic centre, in line with community needs and priorities. The LL&TNPA, Community Partnership team and the Scottish Government's strategic planning Charrette have all supported this proposal as providing community benefit within the Trust's aims and objectives.

The Trust formed a **Going Forward Group** comprising three directors along with local business representatives and trust members with an interest in progressing the idea of a Visitor Attraction that would rejuvenate the lochside frontage and benefit local businesses by drawing more visitors into the area. This group is continuing discussions with interested parties.

The **Hidden Heritage Project** was a Trust-led initiative that concluded this year with a successful exhibition, conference and report publication. Lead members will now evaluate the conclusions and further opportunities. One legacy of the project was the creation of a Heritage Trail between Arrochar and Tarbet.

Building on the popularity of the above Heritage Trail, Trust members are currently in discussion with LL&TNP over the production of a map detailing a range of local walks. Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs have agreed to fund an initial print run of a leaflet, to be designed as part of the NP's series of walking trial leaflets.

Following completion of an initial Feasibility Study into a potential **Hydro Power scheme** in association with Luss & Arden CDT, a successful CARES application has provided funding for a detailed professional study into the design and construction of a small scale community-benefit power-generation scheme in the hills above Arrochar.

This project has continued to progress and outline planning permission and the necessary consents from SEPA and other environmental interests have been granted, with activity presently concentrating on securing a grid-connection agreement with SSE and a pre-accredited feed-in tariff with Ofgem. Steps can then be made to securing financial backing for the formation of a power company and the subsequent construction of the proposed scheme. Additional support funding from the CARES scheme is currently being sought to fund this preparatory work.

The Trust remains in dialogue with the Big Lottery Fund, which has allocated a consultant to work with the Trust to conduct a **health check** into various aspects of Trust operations and responsibilities, with a view to identifying and addressing any areas that could be improved to help the Trust maintain its

capacity in relation to its assets and responsibilities. Unfortunately, this process has been delayed by the sudden bereavement of the consultant involved.

The Trust has identified a desire for their present management processes and procedures to be evaluated and reviewed in order to establish the most efficient and effective structures for their internal governance and the control of their business activities, to ensure the best use of volunteer effort, and to secure the positions of employed staff, as well ensuring the Trust's aspirations for long-term operational sustainability. Previous engagements with advisory bodies including Argyll Voluntary Action, Volunteer Development Scotland and Social Investment Business provided guidance and reassurance to all involved.

The Trust Directors look forward to the recommendations arising from the BIG Lottery review and are willing to take on board any advice and recommendations based on its findings and conclusions.

Meantime, the Trust has maintained engagement and communications with LL&TNP, Argyll & Bute Council, and various other statutory bodies, along with active participation in third-sector organisations such as the Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS), Scottish Voluntary Sector Organisation (SCVO), Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network (ABSEN), Scottish Community Alliance, Community Energy Scotland (CES), Argyll and the Isles Tourism Co-operative, Scottish Rural Parliament, Voluntary Sector support organisations and other Development Trusts locally and across the country.

As the outgoing Chairman, I close this report with an appeal for more new Directors to come forward to assist the Trust in promoting continued development and improvements in the quality of life for our lochside communities. The aims, ambitions and aspirations expressed by people for our community take a lot of time, effort, and hard work to implement. Bearing in mind that all Trust Directors are volunteers who work tirelessly to fulfil their roles and responsibilities to the best of their abilities, whilst juggling the many other aspects of work, family, and life, the more people involved, the lower the workload on any individual.

This AGM is an opportunity for the Trust to confirm that it is continuing on a track that is approved of by its members, and a chance to refresh and strengthen its board of Directors to enable this to happen. This may not necessarily happen during the meeting, and opportunities continue to be available over the following weeks and months for Directors to come on board in co-opted positions or at an EGM, where Director appointments can also be confirmed.

I will be standing down as a Director at this meeting, along with Melanie Tonks, as required by our Memoranda and Articles of Association, and will be vacating the Chair. However, should sufficient new Directors not come forward, we're both willing to stand again as Directors, if elected.

I would specifically like to thank some people who will hopefully be in attendance today:

Heather, Gill & Retta for years of hard work, support and encouragement, Mel for unbelievable effort and commitment, Lily and Ronnie MacDonald for years of community effort and endeavour, Ronnie Ross and the CC for being alongside throughout our Development Trust "journey", continuing the earlier milestone achievement theme, and many more (with apologies to anyone I've missed), including those who have recently joined the Trust Board of Directors – Colin, Maria, Bettie, Mark and Lewis, who have taken on some key roles and responsibilities for which I am extremely grateful.

As our Website strapline states : Three Villages – One Community – Join us !

Let's make it better, stronger and more sustainable for us all to benefit.

Duncan MacLachlan
21st November 2015