

eilean eisdéal

Newsletter No 39

The three months since the last newsletter have flown past, with several significant events for Eilean Eisdéal and the island, not least of these was another successful World Stone Skimming Championship.

MUSEUM

A committee has been set up to carry the museum development forwards once the purchase has been completed. Iain McDougall has agreed to chair this group, with the assistance of Margaret Lyall and Hugh Fraser. Mary and Petre Withall. Lynn Noble and Voirrey Grier will also be involved and consulted.

HARBOUR USERS GROUP

The harbour users group are hoping to arrange a 'harbour clean-up day' possibly around the Christmas/New Year period. If you can help please contact a member of the group – Tony Hill, Mike Cafferty, Julian Penney and Jan Fraser (the ferrymen have an open invitation to all meetings) HUG recognises that there are problems with dinghy parking and the pontoon - heavy chains are being organised so that running moorings can be laid to the south harbour wall for small boats. This will have to wait for tides which allow area to dry out. The system will be tested for some dinghies to ensure that it works efficiently.

Harbour users will be contacted directly by HUG in due course as decisions will need to be taken and passed to Eilean Eisdéal as a 'plan of campaign.'

To clarify the remit of this group, its objectives are to maintain or improve facilities and operation of the harbour, and to provide a focus for users who are prepared to undertake limited work to improve the harbour for all users. Also to advise Eilean Eisdéal of any operational difficulties. It should also be pointed out all recommendations from HUG will have to be agreed with the harbour owners, Eilean Eisdéal on behalf of the community.

YOUNG LEADERS CLEAN UP

A sunny Tuesday morning in the middle of August saw the arrival of Ashley, Cameron, April, Joe, Frank, Shelley, Kirsty and Sarah to the island. They were taking part in a Young Leaders Programme led by Bob and Michael on board a wooden Norwegian sailing boat. The youngsters had all faced challenges at home and had been given this opportunity to take part by Embercombe (www.embercombe.co.uk) working in conjunction with Young Devon. Part of the programme involved environmental issues and EE was approached to see whether the youngsters could do anything on a small scale for the island. They all set off armed with black bags to do a litter sweep/beach comb of the perimeter of Eisdéal, and collected a wide variety of flotsam and jetsam. After a lunch-stop on the backshore some of the group was shown round the museum and others chose to enjoy the quiet lying in the

sun. There had been some quizzical comments as to why a bucket of stones had been collected during the lunch-stop. All was revealed when the youngsters had a stoneskimming session at the museum quarry, for some of them it was a new experience to skim a stone!! The Hall was the last stop for refreshments, before they were picked up by dinghy from Ellenabeich after a visit to the first shop in 4 days. The youngsters were amazed by Easdale but all said they preferred their urban existence.

THE WORLD STONE SKIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sunday 23rd September saw the 2007 World Stoneskimming Championships take place on the island, the 11th consecutive and 12th overall contest since its inception in 1997 by the inimitable Bertie Baker.

Now a well-kept appointment in the diary of many from all over the country, if not the world of course, the competition attracted 229 entrants this year with 11 different countries being represented. There was a truly international turnout as usual, comprising competitors from 11 different countries as well as Easdale Islanders themselves. There were entrants from as far afield as South Africa, USA, Australia, Denmark and Canada as well as closer to home; Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, Germany and Holland.

The day before the event, 'Set Up Saturday' as it has become affectionately known, saw the customary frantic hive of activity around the quarry; marking off edges, putting up warning signs, hanging banners, rowing out the lane of bouys and preparing the paths. The weather was kind to all who helped out and the threatened bad weather held off, at least for setting up!

One Pre-Skim dance and far too much red wine later, the next day dawned like the unwelcome early visitor that it was! Still, there was work to be done if we were to be ready to kick-off at 12noon. Judges were rounded up, stewards were issued 'loud' waistcoats, guards were appointed over buckets of laboriously gathered skimming stones, doctors were given ***their*** orders and one results-shelter was carried down to quarry. Excellent, just in time for the expected 5 past 12 start and there hadn't been a drop of rain yet, I think we were all too busy to have noticed it anyway.

Despite the windy and chilly conditions, a large and enthusiastic crowd had gathered engendering a great atmosphere as the first throw drew close. After a warm welcome to the competition the under 10 young ladies, as is customary, got proceedings off to an interesting start with only one actually managing to have a valid throw. There was much limbering up by the adults as the two younger sections were dealt with in no time at all and then it was down to the serious contenders{the kids being far too sensible to take themselves too seriously!}.

This year due to the weather forecast and in order to finish in decent time, the adult's throws were reduced to 3 each, which is, after-all, all the kids' sections get, and resulted in a much appreciated close to proceedings before the rain started in earnest. First to throw of the Ladies entrants was Jackie Weatherstone representing Scotland. Two or three small and light {thankfully}

showers passed over us as we worked our way through the 49 adult ladies and 131 adult men entrants.

We were entertained throughout the competition by some unusual and amusing throws, even if some were a tad dangerous, not even managing to hit the water! Some of the people who threw defied their size and age and obviously possess that elusive special secret technique.

The presentations were made in the Hall afterwards with the overall champion, Dougie Isaacs representing Scotland, winning the competition for the second time. Dougie's name will again go onto the main cup which will remain on the island until next year.

This year a profit of £2,965.83 was raised from the event and the pre-skim dance the night before. The Isle of Seil Sports Club ran the barbeque on the day and raised around £600 for their new hall fund, this was augmented by a further donation from us of £450, donated with our best wishes in their new hall. The remainder of the profit went to Eilean Eisdeal.

Once again, the organisers would like to offer a huge Thank You to all the volunteers who helped make the day the success that it was.

ARTS PROGRAMME UPDATE

The second half of this year's Arts Programme continued in August with the BBC Young Folk Award winner Lauren MacColl. Her trio of fiddle, guitar and piano took us on a musical journey from rousing Highland strathspeys and reels, to emotive Gaelic airs. In a more private moment, Lauren revealed to a curious 10 year-old that the great advantage of playing fiddle over playing chanter or whistle, is that you can eat a sweet while doing it. Nuff said.

After a three year gap, Michael Marra returned to Easdale, this time to play music from his recent ep recorded in Tobermory, "Quintet". Coincidentally, there were five musicians on stage too. As special guest for only two performances on this tour was Seil's Blazin' Fiddler, Aidan O'Rourke – which wasn't really a coincidence as we needed a rouse to get his dad, Joe, to attend.

On a very wet, windy and cold September evening, Mull Theatre warmed us up with Brightwater, a production based on the life and writings of Gavin Maxwell. Jon Pope's play contrasted the idealised picture that the film Ring of Bright Water drew, with the reality of Maxwell's constant battle with the elements and the wildlife – including the otters. Together with his failed relationships, lack of money and the eventual destruction of his "absolute paradise", it made a fascinating tale.

All the silliness of the World Stone Skimming Championships was summed up at the last hoedown of the season with Edinburgh's Buckley's Chance featuring our own, (yes, I think we can call him 'our own'), Ian Stoddart and Malcom Ross, who has in the past played with Josef K, Orange Juice, Edwyn Collins, Aztec Camera, Barry Adamson etc etc. There were a few pairs of

cowboy boots in the audience, one or two stetsons, but disappointingly, no-one brought their horse to the gig.

Gracing the walls behind the East Coast Cowpoke was Ghalia Asaid's exhibition, 'Stream of Life'. Ghalia explained that 'Stream of Life' expressed two ideas: firstly, there is always light after darkness; secondly, light & happiness flow together side by side with the dark side of life.

STAG APPRAISAL

The interim report promised by Steer Davies Gleave in November has not yet been published. We have requested a copy at the same time as it is given to the Council.

AGM

The AGM will be held on Saturday 29th December. Papers will be posted out in early December as usual. Please try to attend and support your community development group.

DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE RULES OF MEMBERSHIP?

A group of 6 members have requested a vote on two resolutions. The votes will be taken at the AGM and proxy votes from members who are absent will be included. We will allow for some discussion at the agm but the principle arguments for and against are set out below.

The resolutions were submitted in the following letter:

11th October, 2007.

To The Directors,
Eilean Eisdeal Ltd.,

We the undersigned, all being members of Eilean Eisdeal at the above date, and together forming more than the percentage of voting members needed by law to do so, require the directors to place two resolutions before the membership at the next Annual General Meeting. These resolutions propose two changes to the Company's Rules or Bye-laws currently in force, and therefore must be put to the members as Ordinary Resolutions in General Meeting, as required by the Memorandum & Articles.

The Rules of Membership at present read:

Membership runs from 1 January to 31 December each year.
A person must be eighteen years of age or older.
A person must live on Easdale Island or own or rent property on Easdale Island, or have a close association with Easdale Island.
Membership fees to be decided by the directors of Eilean Eisdeal.
The membership fee must be paid annually.
Failure to pay the membership fee for two years will result in a person no longer being a member.
A person may cease to be a member by giving notice in writing to the directors.

The resolutions are as follows:

Resolution (i) – that the words “or have a close association with Easdale Island” be deleted from the Rules of Membership, and that any persons on the current membership list who do not live on Easdale Island or own or rent property on Easdale Island be transferred to the non-voting category of ‘Friends’.

The purpose of the change is to ensure that the democratic control of Eilean Eisdeal and its activities rests at all times solely in the hands of the residents and property owners of Easdale Island.

Resolution (ii) – that the words “If a member ceases to live on Easdale Island, or to own or rent property on Easdale Island, then that person immediately ceases to be a member” be added to the Rules of Membership.

The purpose of the change is to ensure that the democratic control of Eilean Eisdeal and its activities rests at all times solely in the hands of the residents and property owners of Easdale Island.

In accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act, the undersigned members require the directors to place these resolutions on the Agenda of the next Annual General Meeting, to circulate these resolutions to the membership with the Notice of the next Annual General Meeting, and to remind members in the Notice of Meeting that they may appoint a proxy to cast a vote on their behalf.

Signed:

Jenifer L. Smith	33a
K. Hives	101
R. Hives	101
M. Withall	13a
H. Tarbatt	33a
Elizabeth Rhodes	49

A Statement in favour of the resolutions, from the proposers:

As members know, HIE’s conditions for granting money to purchase the Museum included the removal from Eilean Eisdeal’s Articles of the clause stating that all membership applications must be approved by directors. The reason for the condition was to ensure that membership is open to “all community members”, and that no community member could be refused by the directors because of – say – personal animosity. However, under the current Rules of Membership, the removal of this clause has inadvertently left membership of Eilean Eisdeal open virtually to all-comers, because now directors have no choice but to accept all membership applications made to them. Indeed, in a communication to one of the proposers, HIE have stated that they feel the present membership arrangements are now “too open” (e-mail from Andrew Anderson, 3/9/07).

The proposers believe that to pass these resolutions would therefore be beneficial to Eilean Eisdeal, by bringing their membership rules into line with HIE’s wish to see membership open to “all community members” (as stated in their grant condition), and allaying HIE’s concern that it is presently open to people outwith the community. In addition, HIE’s and BIG Lottery’s funding criteria (and those of other funders) require groups in receipt of funding to be “community based” and “community controlled” (see funders’ guidance notes). If these resolutions were passed, there could be no doubt that Eilean Eisdeal meets these requirements.

The proposers also believe that to pass these resolutions would be beneficial to islanders, because the strength of our voices in important matters would be safeguarded, and we would be assured that our wishes could not be over-ruled by people (however well-intentioned) whose daily lives and futures would not be affected by the consequences of the votes they cast.

The first resolution addresses the very loose membership criterion of “close association with the island”, which effectively opens up voting membership of Eilean

Eisdeal to anyone who claims they have such an association. Under the present rules all our relatives and friends, all former property-owners, all regular visitors – in fact, anyone who has ever heard of Easdale Island – could claim a “close association” and apply for membership. The directors have no powers to refuse their applications.

The proposers remind members that the category of ‘Friends’ already exists to enable all who wish to do so to keep in touch with what’s happening here, and confers all the benefits of membership except the right to vote.

The second resolution addresses the fact that, having paid an annual subscription, someone can shortly afterwards sell their house on the island, and still remain as a full member for two years – with the consequent ability to vote on matters which no longer affect them, but do affect all of us.

The proposers therefore respectfully request members to vote in favour of these resolutions, in the interests of islanders and of Eilean Eisdeal.

And a statement against the resolutions, from the Directors:

Resolution 1.

This reminds me of a poem attributed to Burns called Ode to a Bastard Child. If this resolution is adopted it will further disenfranchise islanders that have long standing association with the island and the families of current owners. The following current members, most of whom have contributed a great deal to the Island and some of whom were even born here, would be thrown out:-

Georgina Wolfson
Jan McIntosh
Hazel Mackenzie
Michael MacKenzie jr.
Rosie Noble
Kirsty MacKay
Philippa Bull
Colin Blakey
John Merrilees
Elaine Merrilees
Geoff Heslop
Brenda Heslop
Bert Baker.

This resolution goes against the spirit in which Eilean Eisdeal was originally established, which recognized the unique history of the place and placed an important value on long-standing and ancestral relationships with the Island. It is significant that none of the proposers have brought up children here, nor (apart from Mary) have lived here for more than ten years, nor have any family roots here.

Why should someone who owns a derelict cottage and never visits, or a holiday home and visits infrequently, have more rights to membership than Michael and Hazel McKenzie, Jamie Clayton, Jamie Melville, Rosie Noble, and Rosie Collinge, all of whom have been brought up on the island and have moved or will probably move away, but still retain close family ties with the Island.

Resolution 2

This appears to be an attempt to steer Eilean Eisdeal into line with the Resident's Association, which recently changed its name to Easdale Island Residents and Property Owners Association. They disenfranchise the families of non permanent residents by limiting them to two members per household. This is not an example of an open association, rather one of restricted practices.

Reference to Andy Anderson

We were unaware of any such correspondence with Andy Anderson of HIE and so asked him why he was communicating with others regarding Eilean Eisdeal and openly criticised the present arrangements without having contacted us, - after all we would never have made this change if we had not been forced to by BIG through HIE. This was his reply:

Dear Jan,

As ever, a comment taken out of context and without permission to make any attribution to my name can be misconstrued. In this case, the fact is that changes to the memo and arts were checked and accepted by the Big Lottery Fund and **EET is under no pressure from either HIE or the Big Lottery Fund to make further changes**. I have no objection to you attributing that statement to me. It will be entirely up to the Trust and its members to make any changes now.

I hope that clears up HIE's position.

Regards,

Andrew
20/11/07

The case for a bye-law

When Jenny raised this issue at the EGM we replied then that we could cover this point by bringing in appropriate bye-laws. Surely this is the sensible course of action. We suggest introducing a bye-law as follows:

“Acceptance of new members will be at the discretion of the Directors”

or

“All new members will be admitted subject to their acceptance by the Directors”

FEEDBACK FROM THE LAST NEWSLETTER CONCERNING THE PUBLIC INQUIRY AND PLANNING ISSUES

In the newsletter, I attempted to set the record straight by setting out the actual course of events leading up to and including the inquiry. Keith Oversby, who is not a member of Eilean Eisdeal, wrote the following:

55 Easdale Island
21 August 2007

Dear Jess,

Eilean Eisdeal Ltd Newsletter No 38

I would like to draw your attention to a few erroneous statements regarding the Local Plan Inquiry in the above Newsletter, which I believe are likely to mislead your members and the wider community, as follows:

1. It states:

“The council is proposing to re-classify three areas of land on the island which have hitherto been classed as potential development areas (PDAs),...”

It is my understanding this only applies to the removal of PDA 5/173 from the Modified Finalised Draft Local Plan. The other areas were not designated as PDAs in the previous version of the Local Plan.

2. In relation to the harbour funding, it states:

“it was a condition set by the funding agency which enabled the harbour purchase that such facilities should be incorporated into the forward planning of the island’s development”.

I would refer you to the formal record of the Eilean Eisdeal meeting held on 17th July 2004 – “Proposed Harbour Purchase”, when, in response to my question:

“Is support from SLF dependent on development of the land indicated above?”

Mr Duncan Baird of the Scottish Land Fund replied:

“There is nothing binding on the island or the Trust to gaining the secured funding”.

3. With respect to the Rush & Gush PDA status, it states:

“It is clear that the Trust as the landowner was obliged to object to the removal of this PDA”.

It is my understanding that there was no PDA for the Council to remove from the Finalised Draft Local Plan.

4. In relation to the removal of PDA 5/173, it states:

“this objection was later withdrawn as it was felt that the Trust had no formal involvement in property outwith its ownership.”

This begs the question why there was an objection in the first place. I understand the objection was **removed by the Council** following the email from Donald Melville as Chairman of Eilean Eisdeal Ltd to its members dated 9 May 2007 which stated:

“Eilean Eisdeal’s only representation to the Council on the Local Plan is in connection with the area of land to the north east of the harbour, the Rush ‘n’ Gush as we colloquially refer to it..”

Up until then, the objection to the removal of PDA 5/173 by Eilean Eisdeal Ltd, dated 29th August 2006, had not been publicly declared by EEL, nor to my knowledge, discussed or agreed with its members or the wider Easdale Community.

5. It states:

“...the council was removing them (PDAs) without any real debate or proper consultation with local people”.

In fact, the Council had carried out full public consultation, and the Seil Community Council had staged open displays of the proposals in the Ellenabeich Hall. Your former Chairman was a Community Councillor at this time.

6. It states:

“Any of us who signed a petition supporting the removal of the PDAs may inadvertently be supporting a causeway”.

I understand the petition merely supported the Council in its stance regarding development on the island. Your link with an inevitable causeway as a result is mere supposition on EEL’s part, and which appears

designed to mislead the petitioners. It is more logical to assume that a fixed link would be essential in order to sustain any major developments on the island.

In view of the above, I suggest you issue appropriate corrections/withdrawals at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

Keith Oversby

Cc Councillor MacIntyre, Stuart Reid

Keith also wrote to the planning dept and we got the following email from Adrian Jackson Stark.

Dear Eilean Eisdeal Directors

I have received correspondence requesting clarification on matters raised within your newsletter no. 38 regarding the Public Local Inquiry into the designations contained within the Argyll and Bute Local Plan as relating to Easdale Island. As a result I feel it is necessary to advise you that your newsletter contains a number of factual errors or points requiring clarification. These errors/points are as follows :-

There are three separate areas of ground that have not been included for development within the new Argyll and Bute Local Plan that have been the subject of objection. These are marked 1 – 3 on the attached map. Eilean Eisdeal originally objected to areas 1 and 3 not being included for development and Eilean Eisdeal have not at any time objected to the non – inclusion of area 2 for development.

Notwithstanding the above, Eilean Eisdeal did object to the removal of PDA 5/173 (area 1 on the attached map) at the Modification stage of the Plan. This objection was based on Eilean Eisdeal's "agenda for some time (for) a proposed project to provide some affordable housing for which there is a clear and generally acknowledged need. The most recent draft of the plan entirely precludes this by the removal of the PDA." (copy objection letter enclosed) and not as stated in your newsletter as "the Council was removing them without any real debate or proper consultation with local people". Your then director, Donald Melville, then sent an open email stating that Eilean Eisdeal did not object to the removal of PDA 5/173. Accordingly, Eilean Eisdeal's objection was duly removed from the Public Inquiry process and an email sent to Donald Melville to this effect (copy correspondence can be provided if required). This matter was further raised at the Public Local Inquiry and it was confirmed by Eilean Eisdeal, through the QC John Campbell that they had withdrawn their objection to the removal of PDA 5/173 from the Plan.

Therefore at present Eilean Eisdeal are now only objecting to the non – inclusion for development purposes of area 3 on the attached map. Eilean Eisdeal's objections in this regard were included within the Public Local Inquiry process and were presented by John Campbell QC with various directors giving evidence. For clarification, with the exception of the area of ground shaded pink on the attached map which has been designated as Settlement Zone in all versions of the Argyll and Bute Local Plan, area 3 has not at any time been designated for development purposes by the Argyll and Bute Local Plan.

The Council does not have any stance on the re-introduction of slate quarrying on Easdale Island. The evidence presented at the Public Local Inquiry merely stated that Historic Scotland wishes to investigate any potential within all former slate quarries in Scotland given the scarcity of Scottish roofing slate which is used on the roofs of many Listed Buildings.

I do not consider there to be any implication (as stated in your newsletter) that a fixed link to Easdale Island would make provision for waste re-cycling, boat repairs, craft workshops and affordable housing possible on the mainland. I do not consider these issues to be linked.

Finally, I have not included in the above any points relating to the merits or otherwise of the three sites inclusion for development within the Local Plan as these issues were fully discussed at length at the Public Local Inquiry.

If you have any queries regarding the above please contact me on 01546 604312.

Regards

Adrian Jackson-Stark
Planning Officer

I got the following email from Henry:

Dear Adrian,

I am writing to you as a member of Eilean Eisdeal. I am appalled at the arrant nonsense which has just been released to all members, and islanders, vis-a-vis Eilean Eisdeal's interpretation of the Local Plan Inquiry. It is patently wrong and misleading. Since it has been widely distributed, and has completely misrepresented the facts, this gives grave cause for concern.

I believe an apology is due to all recipients of this information, and a carefully considered correction, which states the true facts, must be issued to all at the earliest opportunity.

Since at the Public Inquiry ex-directors Mike Mackenzie and Sandra Melville, and current directors Jan Fraser and yourself were present and gave evidence, how is it possible that this gross misrepresentation was issued in your official newsletter, presumably with the approval of all the present directors?

I would be obliged if you could confirm that you will take the suggested action, and advise me when this has taken place.

Yours,

Henry

And I got the following email from Jenny:

Dear Adrian,

I was astonished to read the item about the Local Plan Inquiry in Newsletter no. 38, because it is a complete garbling - and in places a total inversion - of the facts.

I was present at the hearing last Friday, where one former director was a key witness on all three cases, and one former director and two current directors also gave evidence as witnesses. If what appeared in the newsletter represents Eilean Eisdeal directors' understanding of the Local Plan Inquiry process, than I think it casts serious doubt over the evidence they presented at the Inquiry.

As an interested islander and member of the public who has been following the lengthy Local Plan consultation process, I am requesting you to issue a correction to the newsletter, so that no-one is misled as to the true facts.

Perhaps you should contact the relevant officers at Argyll & Bute Council to determine for yourselves what the true facts are.

Yours,
Jenny

In reply to all this, I leave you to judge for yourselves what you will from the above. All I will say is that my only intention in writing it in the newsletter was to set out the facts in an honest and straightforward way, in the interests of openness. I am really sorry that some of you have chosen to misconstrue it as an attempt to mislead.

Adrian Laycock

Many thanks to all those who contributed to this newsletter.