

EILEAN EISDEAL NEWSLETTER : 14 & 15 combined - JUNE 2001

To all Easdale Islanders, members and friends

Dear All,

Some of you may be surprised to be reading this, since it's the first newsletter for a while. We have been relying on the trust page in the Easdale People for the past nine months or so, but with the AGM looming it is time to give you an official update.

First of all, it is worth reiterating the aims of the Trust, especially for those of you who are new to the island. The Eilean Eisdéal Trust was formed in 1997 with the aims of protecting and enhancing the island, the community living here and their local economy and way of life, and improving and managing the island's community hall. Following community consultation, three other projects have become part of our agenda: Community Refuse Recycling Facility, Organic Sewage Treatment Facility, and Renovation of the Harbour.

The community hall project is taking shape and is now at the planning application stage, with the aim of going for major lottery funding in March 2001. We have concluded arrangements with Douglas Hill to sell no.7 when funding for the project is secured. This cottage is now derelict, and we propose to incorporate it in the redeveloped hall in order to give space for toilets, meeting rooms and storage. Legal procedures have been the delay here, and we are now determined to get going. The present condition of the hall renders it unsafe for any further public use, and it is with regret that we feel we must close it for public events. Fiona has kindly offered the Puffer Tea Room as a venue for this year's pantomime (Snow White) and rehearsals have already begun and show great promise. We are, of course, happy to continue our support for this event and to help in any way we can.

The harbour renovation project, together with the refuse recycling facility and the sewage treatment plant, are in the final stages of negotiation with Mr Fiegenbaum, who has agreed on a long term lease of the harbour and outright purchase of suitable plots of land for the above facilities to the north of it for £1 each. There will be ongoing consultation with islanders on all these projects, but it is intended that the refuse and sewage facilities will be going ahead as soon as possible.

The harbour renovation is a longer-term project, and is inextricably linked with the coastal erosion problem, both on the Island and around Ellenabeich, and also to the causeway project, which was dropped by Argyll & Bute Council earlier this year but which may well re-surface in the future. The Trust has contributed to the Seil & Easdale Coastal Erosion Committee, for whom Strathclyde University recently carried out an appraisal study. We believe that engineering solutions alone are not enough, and are pressing the Committee to consider socio-economic factors in order to support the holistic well-being of Easdale in the future. Our preferred option for stabilisation is breakwaters, which would turn the Sound into a safe harbour, make the ferry crossing safe in all weathers, and prevent shoreline erosion at the same time.

The past year has seen progress on several fronts. The arts and entertainment programme has been an unqualified success, helped by financial assistance from the Scottish Arts Council, AIE and Argyll & Bute Council. We were able to field some top class theatre and

music events, as well as a photography workshop for the grown-ups and kite-making and pottery workshops for the kids. The regatta and stone skimming successfully carried on our tradition of being able to raise money and enjoy it at the same time. Both these events raised around £2,000 (less expenses), enabling us to demonstrate to the funding bodies our ability to sustain the on-going costs of running the hall and other facilities.

You are probably by now familiar with Eilean Eisdeal, the whisky for connoisseurs. Following an inauguration in April by George Lyon MSP which was well covered by the media, this has been a great success and continues to sell at a steady rate. Don't forget to place your orders for Christmas and Hogmanay.

We are indebted to John Hendry, who took over the running of the website (easdale.org) from Peter Wright. It is a great site and we are endeavouring to keep it up to date by regularly reporting on events (re-live the mini-titanic of the regatta with just a click of the mouse!). You can contribute your own thoughts to any of several discussion sites within it - the Virtual Ferry, the Virtual Tea Room, the Virtual Puffer Bar. Most of us are as yet not too familiar with this form of conversation, but it will be increasingly used in the future. Try it out!

The Island Community Computer was awarded to the Trust through an initiative by the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations with the aim of getting community centres throughout Scotland wired into the internet. Temporarily housed in the Puffer Tea Room, the computer has been in steady use by both islanders and visitors since May, and you will be pleased to learn that income from internet access charges fully covers the phone bill. We intend to get the Easdale Kids' Website up and running soon; this was put on temporary hold due to software compatibility problems. It is intended that the computer will be installed in the hall once renovations are complete.

And now, the AGM. Mark your diary for 29th December 2000, 8.00 till 9.00 pm in the Puffer Tea Room. Prior to the meeting there will be an election of a new director, as Adrian is stepping down. In case you had forgotten, the incumbent directors are:

David Donnison (Chairman) - elected
Mike MacKenzie (Secretary) - elected
Sandra Melville - elected
Henry Tarbatt - elected
Adrian Laycock (Treasurer) - elected
Fiona Blakey - co-opted

Dan McPherson did sterling work as treasurer earlier in the year and we are grateful for the expertise which he brought to bear.

Any paid-up member may stand for election as a director, and anyone who lives on the Island or owns property here may become a member for an annual subscription of £5. If you fancy chipping in with some hard but rewarding work, please use the enclosed stamped addressed envelope to let Mike have your name and that of your seconder (also a member) in writing before 5th December. Ballot papers will go out to Trust members in the first week of December and you will have three weeks to return your vote. The ballot papers will be opened and the votes counted at the AGM, and a new director can then be announced.

Your involvement and support are greatly appreciated, and we would welcome ideas and suggestions from all members regarding any other projects they would like to see.

See you at the AGM!