

## **Easdale Community Meeting – Notes**

**Saturday 13 May 2017 – 10.00am**

**Easdale Hall**

### **In attendance**

Duncan Smallman, Michelle MacFadyen, Jan Fraser, Iain MacDougall, Jess Hill, Gill Law(LIP) Maria Carenduff(LIP), Racheal Stockton(CCF), Willie Fairbairn, Jenny Smith, Alice Clayton, Ruth Barrett, Dughall McLeod, Calum MacDonald, Lindsey Ferguson, Dave Munro, Don Gillies, Alex MacRae, Tony Hill, Carolyn Perkins, Mike MacKenzie, Voirrey Quillen, Donald Melville, Ghalia Asaid.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Gill Law (GL) opened the meeting with welcome and introductions.

GL ran through the previously circulated Agenda, noting the 4 areas of information and discussion and highlighting who would lead on each item and explaining why these items had been included in the Agenda.

#### **1. Local News and Updates**

Duncan (Chair, Eilean Eisdeal) then provided an update on various local initiatives, including recent success in securing funding for an Arts Programme and new Sound Desk via Creative Scotland. Via the Lorn Islands Partnership, the recent successful Climate Challenge Fund Application and what that would include.

He then went on to talk about the potential purchase of the quarry used for Stone Skimming and explained that funding had been secured for the valuation from HIE. Other funding discussed, computer/printer/scanner, broadband, internet, museum maintenance - a laptop and printer have been sourced for the hall through LIP, two events/talks have been held in the hall this year, one about anaerobic digesters and Back of Beyond Broadband on the how the island could possibly receive a faster service.

#### **Hall and Stone Skimming Updates**

Michelle then gave an update on Creative Scotland, Peatbog Fairies concert, stone skimming and the need for new volunteer skillsets, asking for help from the community.

#### **Climate Challenge Fund**

Rachel Stockton (Climate Challenge Fund Project Officer - LIP) was introduced to the community gathering and she provided an update and how the 140k Climate Challenge Fund would improve carbon footprint on islands for waste disposal, recycle, reuse, repair and asked what their needs and aspirations for waste would be.

Mike Mackenzie (MM) advised that he was very pleased to hear this.

Some comments were offered advising that that some individuals did not think this was necessary and comments were made re previous suggestions and actions proposed in relation to bins etc.

Jenny said that A&B Council had previously been approached about having recycling bins on the Island and that EE had refused.

Jess said one reason for that was because it would have been at the expense of the same number of general rubbish bins.

Rachel stated that she would be based on Easdale and would make herself available to anyone who would welcome the opportunity to chat further to her or raise concerns re her Project.

Mike suggested she speak to Jenny who had previously done valuable work and Rachel asked to meet with Jenny to discuss and Jenny declined offer.

GL said that from her work with all 4 LIP islands, each island had different needs and aspirations, mentioning the active energy group and feasibility study already in existence on Lismore making them slightly further ahead with the Project. GL stressed there would not be “a one size fits all response” to the Funding.

### **Museum Update**

Iain gave a summary on the background to community ownership of the museum. He explained it was an award winning museum which was now going into another phase and asked for additional volunteers (minimum 2) as well as Lyn, May and Fiona.

### **LIP (Lorn Islands Partnership) Development**

GL provided some brief background to the formation of the LIP as a partnership between Easdale, Luig, Kerrera and Lismore, highlighting both the differences and the similarities across the islands. GL confirmed that the LIP Project has been awarded funding for another year and that current Projects for Easdale included;

- New heating for the Hall
- Broadband
- Securing a salaried person to assist with Trust work and island asset management
- Museum refurb
- Purchasing the Quarry for Stone Skimming to ensure all money raised remained on the island for future investment
- Harbour Development

GL explained that all of the above action had been highlighted as needs during early discussion re Easdale support needs in August where a draft Island Development Plan had been worked on. GL explained that there had been plans in place to take this to community consultation in and around March 2017 but that other matters and limited time allocation to Easdale meant that this had not been achievable but that where possible, as listed above, work had been taken forward.

Some comments were noted highlighting that some individuals did not know anything about this although it was noted that an update had been provided in the recent Newsletter.

GL advised it would not be an issue to circulate more detailed information to the whole community.

### **Board Update**

GL highlighted the need for more people in the community to come forward to support the work of the Trust. She advised that securing Board members was a difficulty across the islands as on some islands a large percentage of people worked. GL explained that Board members did not have to stay on a Board for forever, anyone who could help with a particular interest or for even a short period of time would be very welcome. GL that in the next 7-8 months potentially Duncan and Michelle would step down as Directors, leaving a significant gap.

At the end of this first tranche of local updates, Gill asked if anyone had anything to add and no one did.

## **2. Harbour Issues**

Easdale Harbour – Gill explained that issues had been raised with the Trust in recent months re Harbour H&S, financial management, allocation of moorings and about previous correspondence issued on behalf of the Trust and the role of Harbour Master.

GL asked if these concerns were widely shared or if anyone wished to make any comment.

Mike Mackenzie (MM) acknowledged immediately that these concerns had been raised by him. Specifically, health and safety, his concern about problems with marine facilities and moorings and talked about Tony's (Tony Hill – TH) input as "Harbour Master".

MM provided an example of a health and safety issue when he was asked to move his boat from a holding mooring by TH.

TH explained that on that occasion strong winds were forecast and he had advised Mike as a fellow user of the Harbour that the weather was deteriorating and possibly he should consider moving his boat. TH advised this was for the safety of the boat.

GL clarified that the "mooring was designed as a holding mooring" TH was "not saying the mooring was inadequate he was offering "advice, not a demand" "I didn't say it was unsafe" (TH)

Discussion then took place re the use and quality of this mooring and TH advised that the mooring had been inspected and was now a permanent mooring. TH confirmed the costs in relation to this.

MM advised he was happy the mooring had been inspected but wanted an independent assessment of the harbour and not a self-regulating, kangaroo court.

Tony Hill read out the statement below;

### **STATEMENT 1**

*A recent complainant to Eilean Eisdale raised issues of incompetence and mal administration of Easdale Harbour. The complainant stated there was a group of harbour users who were not happy with the current situation. The meeting held to clarify issues raised 16 points against the harbour. Three persons attended the meeting which commenced at 1000 yet two only attended from 1100 and discussed other issues.*

*Firstly, can one safely conclude that the points raised against the harbour came from one individual and as yet no other person has come forwards to support his views?*

*Secondly – Subsequent to the meeting in question further written correspondence from the initial complainant has included accusations of Conflict of interest, Collusion, Coercion, Removal of privilege for not volunteering, and more latterly stating the Trust (the complainant's words) is not a fit and proper body to be in receipt of public funding and there are concerns which relate to governance and financial conduct. These are serious allegations.*

*The two late attendees to the previous meeting should clarify whether they too are of similar opinion supporting these views. It is also important to this community that others of similar opinion make their views known either at this meeting or by correspondence to an agreed timescale.*

*If like me you condone these as yet unsubstantiated allegations I urge you to either speak up now or correspond in writing soonest with the directors of Eilean Eisdeal.*

MM raised his concerns re harbour safety in general and wants an independent consultant marine specialist to look at the harbour.

MM spoke about potential insurance claims if there had not been a proper inspection and health & safety hazards of a mild and serious nature around the harbour.

Michelle said there was 140K of investment at the time of the purchase for improvements (eg. corner wall support) etc.

Jenny said the harbour should be restored. EE have to look after the assets they already have and the proper restoration of the harbour is a priority.

Jess said the current assets up-keep were the problem.

GL advised that on receipt of MM's first concerns re Harbour health and safety the Trust had contacted their insurers re their responsibilities. GL advised that the Trust had reverted to the insurers with details of their practice against each of these responsibilities and that the insurers had advised they had no concerns. GL also advised that the Trust had been advised that inspections could be carried out by a "suitably qualified and experienced person" and that TH was considered such. She also confirmed that other small islands used the same approach.

GL had confirmed that the Insurers were happy with arrangements undertaken.

GL also suggested that with limited Trust revenue the community had to utilise experience for checking as they don't have money for independent specialists.

MM – Rejected the argument – MOT certificate, insurance companies wouldn't pay out and claim wouldn't hold up. Mike wants a fully independent report.

GL questioned what the next steps would be if the Harbour was inspected and deemed so dangerous that repairs would be prohibitive and the harbour closed.

MM advised that would just have to be the case.

Mike – numerous hazards from mild to serious

GL asked MM to give an example but he refused stating he had previously submitted these to the Trust. GL advised he had received an extensive reply to all matters raised, MM advised he was not satisfied.

MM then said GL had agreed with him re the need for a Harbour Consultant. GL said this was not the case but that MM had received a copy of the Draft Harbour Development Plan produced by the Trust and agreed actions were included within that. GL explained however that these actions required significant investment and could not be actioned overnight.

GL went on to explain the future of the harbour and explained the draft development plan and the long term commitment of the Trust to the harbour.

MM then highlighted his concerns re the number of Seafari boats in the Harbour. He asked TH what Seafari paid for their moorings which Tony responded to, confirming £400 and he had two moorings.

Discussion then took place with some others highlighting what they paid and querying these figures which TH provided responses to and advised individuals had emails explaining their fees.

Ruth said she was unhappy about her charges and felt the increase was steep. Tony explained this was the difference between summer and winter rates.

Mike asked how much Seafari pays?

Tony made a statement about what Seafari pay as charges;

Mike interrupted Tony's statement stating that he had never been chairman of EE. Tony instantly apologized withdrawing this reference. Tony did however state that he had an email from Mike in his possession requesting Donald Melville to act on behalf of EE - this email had been sent by Mike Mackenzie.

## **STATEMENT 2**

*Seafari Pontoon and harbour charges.*

*The basic structure for harbour charges was drawn up by Eilean Eisdeal directors shortly following the purchase of the harbour. Its structure has only marginally changed although there has been across the board inflationary increases to charges.*

*After harbour improvements in 2004/2005 Seafari corresponded with Eilean Eisdeal requesting the use of the two moorings nearest the Rush and Gush for its commercial vessels. Mike Mackenzie as chair of Eilean Eisdeal appointed Donald Melville to act on behalf of Eilean Eisdeal. Seafari were granted the use of both moorings at a cost of 2 x commercial rates.*

*Circa 2009/2010 with increased pressure for additional boats and Seafari winning contracts for winter work Seafari approach Eilean Eisdeal to place, at its own expense, its current pontoon in the same position as the previous moorings. Eilean Eisdeal accepted that the provision of a pontoon reduced significantly the space taken up by two swinging moorings hence allowing increased space for other vessels.*

*All mooring equipment and maintenance costs within Easdale harbour is paid for by Eilean Eisdeal. Harbour dues covering these expenses.*

*Eilean Eisdeal recognised they were not able to provide and maintain a pontoon. At the time of the harbour purchase a bid for public funding for a pontoon facility for the harbour at a cost of £90,000 was withdrawn. All costs for this development would have to be met by Seafari which included the the capital cost of the pontoon and its associated moorings. The annual maintenance costs for this structure are in the region of £1200 to £1500. The agreement which stands to this day is that as previous Seafari are charged for two commercial moorings. Seafari 's fees are paid timeously.*

*The basic harbour fee structure of 2005 was drawn up following advice given by Dunbar harbour trust. Commercial users do enjoy discounts particularly in remote areas. Our vessel Celtic Voyager heads to the Western Isles next week. Our overnight berth fees will be £10.82 whilst the berthing fee for the equivalent leisure boat would be £24.20.*

*Commercial users of what many may see as a leisure facility can be controversial. Public money for this harbour is unlikely to be available for a few leisure users to moor their private boats.*

*Commercial interest and job creation are high on the list of priorities for grant funding. I am sure Seafari's use of the harbour would have been used in the grant application to purchase the harbour. The claimed boat building business with the creation of two jobs has not materialised. Whilst there are opportunities for work associated with the harbour it requires entrepreneurs to grasp the opportunities and deliver on promises of employment. At the height of the tourist season Seafari employs 17 persons locally. This does not include people like Duncan and Joe who work away from home with Iain. We hope people see our seasonal staff as contributors the Easdale in general.*

*The relationship between commercial and leisure use of the harbour is a balance but it needs to be cooperative and harmonious. Communication is key.*

*The points below were not raised at the meeting but Seafari has requested that this information be included to put the comments re fees in context.*

- 1. Boats are measured in metres*
- 2. Measurement have been readjusted in line with all marines i.e. up to but not exceeding a given length no rounding down*
- 3. Restructuring slowly to payment prior to the season in line with all marinas*
- 4. Utility boats have been more closely defined – no engines above 15hp*
- 5. Fishing boats are to be charged as Commercial Boats*
- 6. Commercial vessels must show their commercial licence to receive the discount rate*
- 7. Boats stored on land owned by EE are now charged the appropriate rate. EE is not responsible as to whether the boat is used or not.*
- 8. Approximately 2010 EE introduced a 50% reduction in fees for ferrymen. This continues.*

*EE accepts in the interest of fairness action is required to deal with non-payment of harbour dues. Whilst pursuance has been delayed concentrating on allegations made by one complainant one is able to report that negotiations with one long term non-payee has commenced. It will be for EE to negotiate the compromise but please see this as a success with directors quietly working behind the scenes. A similar result may not be forthcoming from other non-payees.*

Mike suggested that Seafari did not pay enough for their use of the harbour considering what the boats were worth.

Jan said Tony had been a great help in improving the harbour to its current position. There had been inflationary increases only in the historic fee structure inherited by EE.

Michelle pointed out that when people come into the harbour with boats, who do they ask about things – Tony and or his Seafari staff or the ferrymen who are invariably around in the vicinity of the harbour on a regular basis.

Mike again spoke about an insurance claim being made because of the state of the harbour and there could be potential loss of the island assets as a result.

Alan said little had changed in 30 years and there is a level of personal responsibility.

Mike suggested the fees paid by Seafari were a bit low.

DS advised that the harbour fees were commensurate with other small harbours.

TH advised that Harbour Fees had not increased significantly and only in line with inflation, since the harbour was purchased but that all users were advised of the costs.

GL explained that the Trust's broad commitment to harbour development was detailed in the Draft Island Development plan . Community Consultation had been planned for March but Harbour matters had overtaken this.

Jenny asked what the development plan is and where is it

GL explained process for development plans for Lismore, Luing, Kerrera and Easdale

GL went on to explain difficulty in progressing Easdale's plans with logistics, everyone works, difficulty meeting, schedules etc. GL explained that some Boards had people on them who had bid-writing and project management experience and they could press ahead with funding applications etc, others did not.

MM – are you saying that the Board does not have the right skills.

GL advised not and that the LIP was there to support Boards to fill gaps in capacity-building and asset management.

MM stated that he wanted to record that he is saying, in his opinion, it was irresponsible to self-regulate and he is going to write to the authorities to raise his concerns.

GL asked if anyone shared views, William said he shared views and then left the meeting with no other comment

After revisiting the health & safety issues (Alan) advised no difference since previous years, quarries without gates, walls down etc.

MM went on to say that if an independent Consultant came in to do an assessment of the Harbour, they would agree with him about the health and safety.

Mike went on to say if he is wrong, he will make an apology to everyone if they emerge with a clean bill of health.

MM once again advised he was going to contact all "regulatory authorities" with regard to the Harbour.

GL advised that she had hoped the community could come together to see how they could make improvements together but advised MM that it was his right to take forward his contact with authorities as he saw fit but again highlighted that there would be consequences to doing this.

Discussion then went on about the level of support Seafari provide to the harbour, harbour users and the community.

MM stated that the harbour had become a "commercial harbour" or "Seafari Harbour" and not a community harbour.

GL asked if the question should not be whether the community were being prevented from using the harbour due to Seafari presence.

MM stated this is not the question to be asked at all.

Discussion took place between TH and MM and how Tony helps with mooring but is not harbour master.

Other Board members highlighted the work Seafari do in support of the community, the harbour and visitors.

MM advised others have done plenty work for the community too and asked if Seafari wished paid for this, (their community and voluntary work).

Alex pointed out that MM had not objected to Seafari or TH's role when he had assisted when MM's boat sank.

GL advised that TH acted on behalf of the Trust in relation to the harbour as once again the Trust did not have the experience and a member of the community did.

MM then raised the issue of health and safety again but again would not get into specifics as he said he had already reported these to the Trust.

DS advised that in relation to the ladders at the harbour (as MM had raised these as one concern), these had been put up by individuals with Jan confirming that MM had put one up for her. DS advised these were not the responsibility of the Trust.

GL made the point that all harbour users were responsible for their own health and safety and risk assessments and those who identified "risk" also had the responsibility to mitigate it. This was reiterated by Iain and Alan.

Alex also pointed out that as a member of the community he was more concerned about moving forward and not looking backwards.

At this point GL thanked everyone for their comments. MM advised he would be taking action with the relevant authorities.

### **3. Volunteer Support**

GL advised that a suggestion had been received for an island clean up. GL asked if this could include any identifiable clean-up needs in the harbour and that possibly if a roof could be placed on the tractor shed, the tractor could be used to help with this

There was general interest in an island clean up only.

### **4. AOB**

GL asked if there was anything anyone else would like to raise.

No items were highlighted.

GL closed the meeting advising that there were feedback sheets but as there were people who had not attended she would amend these to provide opportunity for wider and would circulate these with the notes.