

éilean eisdéal

Supported by



Newsletter No. 45 Nov 2010

To all islanders, members and friends

Welcome to the 2nd newsletter for 2010. Winter descended on Easdale quickly this year as late October and most of November brought a dreadful reminder of the weather we often face on Easdale for most of the winter; high winds and torrential rain storms battering us on a daily basis and a far cry from the glorious sunny days we experienced at Stone Skimming weekend and the first few weeks in October. However this last week saw the temperature plummet and although the rest of Scotland seems gripped by continuous blizzards we're sitting here with beautiful blue skies and sunshine albeit with our thermals on!!

The summer season started well and showed all the promise of being another bumper year for tourists however August definitely reflected the overall economic downturn that has been felt around the whole of Argyll and there was a drop in visitor numbers. That certainly didn't stop us from having two fantastic fundraisers on the island with glorious sunny weather and great turnouts at both.

The directors have been extremely busy with the many projects and proposals which are taking place at the moment as well organising the two biggest fundraisers of the year. With the festive season just round the corner panto practise and script writing are well underway and we look forward to meeting up with old and new friends over the holidays and enjoying some great times together.

Atlantic Adventure Day

We made the decision this year to try and reformat this fundraiser as we thought it had lost its identity. A small group of volunteers brought together some new, exciting ideas and Atlantic Adventure Day was re-born with the emphasis on water and fun but with a bit of competition thrown in for good measure. Along with the statutory sponsored swim an Aquathon featuring a swim and run round the island was introduced and we hope to make this a unique feature for the future. The Kayak race will also be developed and we hope to encourage more competitors over the next few years as it establishes. The duck race featured its biggest entry yet with over 120 ducks taking part and some folk getting very competitive even having their duck painted on their face with their lucky number! What a glorious sight it was as they were all released from their cardboard containment and floated perfectly from the far side of the harbour into the slipway at the bins. All in all a beautiful sunny day brought in a great crowd who cheered everyone on as well as giving plenty of abuse especially during the raft races! The fantastic sum of £1600 was raised and the directors would like to thank all the volunteers who helped with the organisation before and on the day itself and also to everyone who supported and took part in the events.

World Stone Skimming Championships

This year's event really had it all...great weather, huge crowds, record number of competitors, record number of back wall hits and that was just the day itself! Add in the most amazing gig in the hall on Saturday night by the fantastic and very energetic Sheelanagig and this years championship was probably the best ever!

The event has been featured in several high profile television programmes this year and has even made the top ten in a list of Scottish cultural traditions on The United Nations Cultural Organisation UNESCO website.

Our thanks once again must go to John Forteith and Forteith Food Service in Oban for their continued sponsorship of the event. Their commitment considering the overall financial climate is very much appreciated and helped us raise a staggering £8,000.

The directors would like to say a huge thank you to Mellon who continues to be THE main man at this event and also to our Stone Skimming Committee Jan, Jess, Michelle and Beth. This event would not be possible without the many volunteers who help out on the day and at the pre skim dance so we are very grateful to all of you and of course a special thank you must go to our ferrymen Willie, Alan, Tom and Callum for their tireless work throughout the day.

Museum

The museum reached the end of its normal season with a slight downturn in visitor numbers some 2.8% from last season but our association with the Slate Islands Heritage Trust has seen an increase in the number of American visitors of 579%. There has been a small increase in retail sales all contributing to the museum by returning a modest profit.

The model of the Hesperus was transferred to the Oban War & Peace museum as a more suitable venue for artefacts relating to the Commissioners for Northern Lights Lighthouse activities. This transfer has created additional sales space for local crafts which in turn provides a steady income to the museum through commission.

Our dedicated volunteers have offered to keep the museum open as much as possible in the winter now that The Puffer is open during these months and the directors are very grateful for this commitment.

The directors would like to thank the staff and volunteers for their continued support and enthusiasm throughout the year.

There is now an A3 colour copier, scanner and printer available in the museum.

The museum will shortly be insulated to current standards under the auspices of the Scottish Gas Green Streets project.

Harbour

The 'bull' or slate shingle bank which protects and shelters the harbour continues to be a major problem and towards the end of the summer was in an altogether precarious state. When storms coincide with high tides there have been occasions when the bank has been partially over-run resulting in shingle being transported in large quantities into the harbour and this threat loomed once again as the equinox and associated high tides approached. As is often the case many people do not realize quite how catastrophic such a scenario could be but it could mean the end of our harbour as we know it and possible loss of ferry service. We have had continuing talks with the council but again they do not necessarily appreciate what it could mean for this community to lose the harbour. As it is the whole bank has gradually crept into the harbour over several years causing an encroachment into the harbour area of several metres as well as a general silting up and loss of depth. Once again Mike stepped in and offered his help in what was a massive undertaking to secure and reinforce the bull and we would like to thank him and his team for their continued commitment and assistance. Mike also re-instated the informal slipway to the rush and gush which was overrun by the 'bull' during a gale in 2006. This provides a good place for the landing of commercial goods rather than the harbour walls which are continually deteriorating.

Winter moorings were re-instated slightly later this year following several requests from harbour users who wanted to use their boats during half term in October. Our thanks go to Tony and his crew for their assistance with the moorings.

Hall Events and Arts Programme

The Arts Program had another successful year and featured an eclectic mix of performers including 'The Hidden Masters', 'Ray Harris & The Fusion Experience', Mull Theatre, Red Note Ensemble, 'Lord Rochester', 'Terry Haines', 'Blueflint' and the one and only 'Ceilidh Bandidoes'.

We're looking forward to the usual panto shenanigans on the 2nd January and enjoying all the amazing talent at the Ne'er Day Ceilidh.

We would like to thank Wee for his continued dedication in organising the arts program and to the hall committee Annabel, Lynn & Jess who have once again done a fantastic job keeping all the events running smoothly.

Our thanks also to Michelle and Eug for standing in and helping out on the door at several events.

Visitor Lodge

The visitor lodge remains high on our agenda following a fantastic positive response to the online questionnaire at the end of last year and the directors are looking forward to taking this project forward.

Scottish Gas Green Streets & Climate Challenge Fund

Following robust community consultation and a very positive response to the questionnaire planning applications were lodged for the proposed 6kw wind turbine, heat pump and solar PV. The team have also been contacting participants regarding wood pellet boilers/stoves, draught proofing and insulation. Following some concerns over the position of the turbine we have responded by relocating the turbine which will now be 105m away from the nearest cottage. The applications are currently awaiting decision from the planners.

An award from the Climate Challenge Fund will allow us to install an all island consumption meter at the substation and a monitor in the hall which will display the islands energy consumption for all to see. Hopefully as the project progresses this will show our consumption reduce and encourage the community to save energy.

Playpark

The buccaneer ship and other play equipment were assembled throughout the summer by a team of parents and volunteers. This was no mean feat due to the equipment being supplied with no instructions however it was finally completed and has been a huge hit with the kids since then. A name is still to be chosen and it is hoped a competition at the school will provide a suitable option!

The directors were delighted that that this project was led by the parents of the island children and Zoe and Keith played a huge part in seeing this come to fruition. We would also like to thank Mike and his team for assisting with the concrete and assembly.

AGM

The AGM will be held on Thursday 30th December at 2pm and we look forward to seeing you there.

Dates for your diary

Panto....Sleeping Beauty

Sunday 2nd January

Current Directors

Keren Cafferty - Chair, Jan Fraser - Secretary, Stephen Carr – Treasurer, Donald Melville & Iain McDougall