

OCTOBER 2023

Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust Newsletter

Board Correspondence

The board meet the third Monday of every month; therefore, for any correspondence to be considered at these meetings, we ask for it to be submitted at least 1 week prior to give the board time to review. Correspondence sent within 1 week of the board meeting will be delayed for review until the following month meeting. Contact us by emailing directors@gigha.org.uk

Gigha Hotel Development

Following a community workshop with Collective Architecture in September, plans are starting to be developed for renovating the existing bar space. The current sketches propose to knock through to the cabin space, creating a larger bar area. It has also been proposed to have doors through to the front lounge, which may help maximise the use of these rooms together. These plans have still to be worked up in detail but will be presented for further discussion when possible. A cost estimate for this work has been developed and a funding application has been submitted on this basis with the understanding that detailed drawings are still to be finalised.

There is still further consideration required with regards to management options, therefore we are discussing the possibility of an Options Appraisal being prepared through HIE funding support.

In the meantime, necessary works continue to be undertaken. This includes securing an electrician to re-wire the building. Business Energy Scotland have also visited to do an energy assessment and will present funding options for replacement heating systems with renewable energy sources.

Gigha Winter Bar

The Bar in the front lounge of the hotel is now open Friday and Saturday evenings throughout winter.

- Open from 5pm Fridays and 6.30pm Saturdays
- Bar can open at additional times by advance request – contact Gigha Winter Bar on Facebook or Trust Office
- Regular events on Saturday evenings
- Children welcome until 10pm
- BYOT – Bring your own takeaway!
- Well-behaved dogs welcome!



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IGHT Finance Update

The IGH Triodos loan has now been fully repaid. The final £143k was paid by a £100k donation from GGPL and the remaining £43k being paid by IGH funds which came from the proceeds of the Kinnererach sale in 2022. This brings IGH's current debt level down to £125k which is made up of £99k owed to Nationwide and £26k owed to the Bank of Scotland Bounce Back Loan. The interest on the Triodos loan was 7.25%, meaning over £10k has been saved in interest payments.

The Triodos loan being repaid means that security will be removed from a number of properties. The repayment of the loan also reduces internal administration time and costs. Security is still held by Nationwide over Ferry Coft 1 & 2, the Steadings, Keill 2 & 3, Croft 6, and Woodside 2. Highlands and Islands Enterprise hold security over all of IGH's ownership.

There is still £180k owed to the Trust for the pathway development, therefore it is hoped when this cash becomes available, the Trust may be in a position to repay its loans with Nationwide and Bank of Scotland.

GGPL still has a loan with Triodos for £397k which the board would also like to see repaid as this would give GGPL more confidence for future developments. GGPL is still owed an insurance claim from the downtime experienced during 2020-22. The insurance claim is expected to be in the region of £350k. Cash currently available to GGPL exceed the debt owed, however it is prudent of the Trust to continue to observe the cash position of the companies and consider which debts should be repaid based on interest levels and security held.

Intercompany loans also exist between the IGH group however these are not considered high priority compared to external lenders.

The housing development has a loan of £320k with Social Investment Scotland which is not included in the above figures as this loan is being directly repaid by part of the rental income generated from the new housing. Scottish Government and Social Investment Scotland (SIS) hold security over the housing development site as part of the loan and grant funding agreements. The SIS loan is for 15 years at 6% fixed interest with no penalties for early repayments.

It is expected that the annual audited accounts for the Trust group will be available later this year, prepared by Geoghegans Chartered Accountants, based in Edinburgh.

IGHT debt levels (excluding subsidiary company debts)



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Campsite

After a successful summer season, things are quietening down now at the campsite and we will be closed for most of November before reopening in December for the rest of the winter. Over winter we'll be undertaking a few development projects based on feedback from customers who've stayed this summer.

The Sound of Gigha Weekend

The date has been set for the next Sound of Gigha Weekend – 7th-9th June 2024, pop it in your diary now! We're wanting to create a weekend full of music, arts and crafts, food and drink, children's entertainment, heritage and wellness activities and more. We'll be celebrating all the talent and skills here on Gigha and the wider local area, and will be holding a community open day in January to collect all your ideas.

Goose shooting dates

November: 5th - 11th & 19th - 30th; December: 1st – 9th & 19th – 23rd.

January: 4th - 14th & 21st – 27th; February: 4th – 10th & 19th – 24th.

Renewables

Vestas are planning on changing the gearbox in T2 the week commencing the 13th November. Unfortunately, this has been pushed back again and again due to the weather holding up other projects.

Vestas will also investigate issues with T1 as it has had ongoing issues that have been difficult to find.

The E33 Enercon turbine was down for a few days prior to the annual service but issues are now resolved.

Achamore Gardens

Legacy donation

We begin this month with a bit of a mystery that we are hoping a resident might be able to help us with. Does anyone recognise the name of a Mr James Lyndsay McCombe from Dundee? Mr McCombe passed away in 2019, but we've recently been contacted by his solicitors – it turns out that Mr McCombe has left a generous bequest to Achamore in his will, to be spent protecting the plant collection. His solicitors weren't able to give us any information about any links he may have had to Achamore or Gigha, but his obituary mentions that he was a very keen gardener. We'd love to discover his connection to the garden or the island so that we can honour his memory fully.

Visit Scotland

The Visit Scotland Quality Assurance Scheme rates tourism businesses on a sliding scale from 1 to 5 stars and for several years now the gardens have been rated at only 2 stars. This week we received the great news that we have been re-assessed and our rating has gone up to 3 stars! The assessor particularly noted the improvements to the path network, the sense that the gardens are now cared for, the increased interpretation and the professionalism, enthusiasm and friendliness of the staff. Its brilliant that the hard work of the gardens team is now being recognised by our national tourism body and I'm sure you'll join me in congratulating both the staff and garden volunteers for this achievement.

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Achamore Gardens

Volunteer Bulb Planting Day

The nights may be drawing in, and winter may be approaching, but it's already time to look forward to the brighter days of spring and get planting bulbs for early colour. We've got lots of bulbs to plant this year, so if you'd like to give us a hand and perhaps learn a bit more about the wonderful world of bulbs, we're holding a volunteer bulb planting day on Saturday 11th November. See the attached poster for details – you don't need to come for the whole session, even an hour would be a great help, and you'll be handsomely rewarded with cuppas and cake!



familiar black pepper, it's not the whole seed that is used; only the red outer skin is removed to make the spice – a very labour-intensive process. You can find our plant at the bottom of the walled garden, near the gate to the sheds, but despite its fuzzy texture beware of stroking it – it is covered with lots of thorny spines, both little and large!

Temporary Garden Closure

Back in August, we told you the bad news that some of our trees had become infected with Dutch Elm disease, meaning that we would need to get the tree surgeons back in to deal with these, along with various other diseased and dangerous trees around the garden. The trees that need felled are distributed throughout the garden, so to ensure everyone's safety and to allow us to carry out this work as efficiently as possible, we have decided to temporarily close the whole garden to all residents and visitors from Monday 20th to Sunday 26th November. The garden should reopen on Monday 27th November, but please be aware that there may still be vehicle movements and some temporary path closures beyond this date as we finish the clear up works.

Autumn Colour

The garden may be slowly entering its winter slumber, but there's still plenty of colour to be found if you look closely. A real staff favourite at this time of year is our Szechuan Pepper, who's new growth is covered in hot pink fluff; it reminds me of 1970s flock wallpaper.

Szechuan pepper is a key ingredient in many Asian cuisines and is one of the spices in Chinese 5 spice powder. Unlike the more

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Gigha and Cara Parish Church

The Remembrance service will be at 11am on Sunday 12th November.

Rev. Lyn Peden will be back again on 26th November. This service will be at 12 o'clock.

Christmas is not far away. Please save the used stamps from your Christmas cards. The church collects them for Charity.

Isle of Gigha Ranger Service

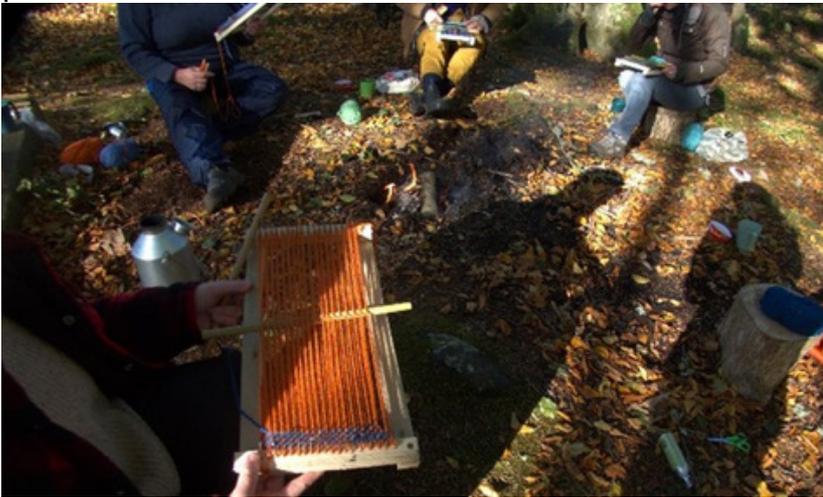
This month we had some amazingly exciting news! We are absolutely delighted to announce that we have received £248,000 of funding from NatureScot to carry out the "Protecting Gigha's Woodlands Project". In March 2023, we held a community event in the Village Hall to understand if and how the community would like to see Gigha's woodlands and landscape protected and enhanced. The outcomes were: hedgerows to help with farm boundaries and fence lines, and the removal of invasive non-native plant species. This has also been a desire of the Zero Carbon Gigha community group since it began in 2021. We are now able to realise these ideas by eliminating 21 hectares of invasive non-native species: rhododendron ponticum, skunk cabbage and Himalayan balsam, which are dominating and threatening much of Gigha's landscape and existing woodlands. The project will also plant near to 3000m of hedgerows to increase tree cover, provide greater structure by connecting pockets of isolated woodland and naturally regenerating areas, as well as provide hedgerow habitat that over half the UK's priority species make use of for travel, nesting and foraging. We are so grateful to the members of the community who shared their ideas that created the project, including the Zero Carbon Gigha group and land tenants, and of course to NatureScot for making this project possible. Jane Millar and Casey-Jo will be managing the project, which is due to run until March 2025, and start this winter with contractors beginning the work on invasive non-native species removal and fencing for the hedgerows. In the coming months, we would love to see the community get involved by helping to plant some of the hedgerows. If you have any questions or to find out more about the project, please contact Casey-Jo.



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Isle of Gigha Ranger Service

From the 13th to 29th October, Community Land Scotland celebrate Community Land Week. Any geographic community organisation that owns land or another asset, from an estate to a woodland or a community centre, were lucky enough to receive funding to run an event as part of the week. To celebrate, the Ranger Service held a woodland weaving session, building our own loom and weaving some marvellous creations over a campfire – with a few tasty treats of course! We had a great time, thank you to those who joined us, and to Community Land Scotland for making this possible.



reaching all members of the community and conduct some feathery research on our doorstep. Things will hopefully kick off next spring – we're looking forward to working together and getting stuck in!

Gigha Community Council

Screen Machine

The Community Council has recently written to a number of politicians, ranging from our local councillors up to the Scottish Minister for Culture, to ask for their support in encouraging the Scottish Government to provide the necessary funding for a replacement Screen Machine. The replies we have received have been very supportive.

Fish Farm

The final planning application for the proposed West of Gigha fish farm has now been received by Argyll & Bute Council ref 23/01758/MFF.

The Community Council will submit a planning comment that reflects the views of the survey we carried out earlier this year.

Any member of the public wishing to comment through the council's website has until 3 December to do so.



This month we also met with ornithologist, Colin Cross, who has moved to the island and is keen to set up birding events, activities and groups. Colin manages a bird observatory in the Gambia, carrying out conservation tasks, bird ringing and research. With his background in teaching, he is looking to bring his skills and enthusiasm to Gigha,

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Bakkafrost Fish Farm

We would like to provide an update on the proposed development of the West Gigha fish farm (the 'Proposed Development') off the west coast of the Isle of Gigha. We have submitted a formal application for planning permission, under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, to Argyll and Bute Council (ABC), this application has now been validated and is live on the Council's planning portal (<https://publicaccess.argyll-bute.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=S0IMK9CH0IO00>).

This planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and associated Annexes, as guided by the Scoping Opinion from ABC and stakeholder responses during pre-application discussions. All documentation relating to the planning application is available on the planning portal.

If you would like to make a formal comment on this application, you can do this through the planning portal or directly to ABC. Any such comments will be taken into consideration by ABC in the determination of the planning application.

If you have any questions regarding the planning application process, or the supporting documentation, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Frederick Parffrey, Bakkafrost Environmental Officer.

Tel: 01499 665880 Email: Freddie.Parffrey@bakkafrost.com

Ranger's photo of the month:

Low autumn sun at Port na Carraigh



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Gigha Primary School

During the last week of term before the October break we visited the Crinan Canal. Pupils have been learning about engineering on both a local and global scale. Pupils had the opportunity to find out how the canal transports a variety of boats from Ardrisaig to Crinan and even got to alter the water level and open the lock gates themselves. We also visited the old pump house which ensures the canal does not overflow. Despite the pouring rain, pupils had a fantastic trip and learnt lots about this feat of engineering in their local area.

Last week we returned from our two week holiday and spent the week practicing our spooky story writing in the run up to Halloween. We have also been creating lanterns and carving pumpkins kindly donated by the Co-op in Campbeltown. In addition, we continue to work towards becoming a Rights Respecting School, increasing pupils' knowledge of their global rights as children and hope to have achieved our Bronze Award for this by Christmas.

Monday 23rd October marked my first day as Headteacher at Gigha Primary School and ELC. This is a very privileged position which I do not take lightly and I am excited to build on the work started by our Acting Headteacher, Mrs Blake. I look forward to forging positive relationships across our island community and providing equity for all our pupils.
Mrs Vipurs, Headteacher



Gigha Primary School children on Halloween



GIGHA PRIMARY PARENT COUNCIL

INVITES YOU TO:

SPARKLERS

&

BONFIRE NIGHT!

Saturday 4th November

6:30PM

[AT] THE HOTEL CAR PARK

HOT DOGS
&
HOT CHOC!



ALL WELCOME!

FUNDRAISING FOR THE MULTI USE GAMES AREA

(DONATIONS WELCOME)

HOUSEHOLD RESILIENCE

DO YOU NEED HELP FILLING IN A FORM?



We provide help with filling in forms to anyone who needs it

Examples of forms:

* Blue Badge form

* Passport form

* Driving License form



01586 552240

Give one of our Household Resilience team member a call!