



GIGHA NEWS



Welcome to the January 2022 Gigha News

Dear Member,

Please find enclosed this month's newsletter and a copy of December 2021 Board minutes.

Regards,

Ian Wilson

Chair

For and behalf of The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

Members Meeting

As Covid restrictions have eased and local case numbers have decreased, the Board has agreed to hold a Members Meeting on Thursday 3rd March at 7pm in the Gigha Village Hall. The meeting will be held in line with Government guidance at the time. A Calling Notice and Agenda for the meeting will be issued in advance of the meeting.

20th Anniversary of the Community Buyout

Invites will be sent out soon to all residents for 20th anniversary celebrations on Tuesday 15th of March. As Covid still holds a threat to small communities, we are proposing to keep the event small scale with few stakeholders invited along to attend with the community. The day will involve an outdoor ceremony followed by refreshments at the Gigha Hotel. Full details will be included within the invitation.

We have kindly been offered the use of the upper story in Craft Unit 3 to display a timeline of the island. We are keen to gather photographs and any other memorabilia that could add to the display. If you have anything you would be willing to lend for the timeline display or would like to volunteer to help create the timeline, please email Carly at marketing@gigha.org.uk or contact the Trust office. Following the success of last year's event, we are also planning to host another resident's picnic in Achamore Gardens on Saturday 19th of March. Look out for further details of this in next month's newsletter.

OSCR

Following the OSCR inquiry from July 2020, a response from OSCR has now been received and the inquiry has now been closed. The response from OSCR notes: "Having fully reviewed and considered all the information provided we consider the actions of the charity trustees to be consistent with the general duties that they are subject to under the 2005 Act. We have not identified any matters of a regulatory nature that warrant any further action by us at this time and as a result are closing our inquiry."

Argyll Community Lottery

Argyll Community Lottery is an exciting weekly lottery that raises money for good causes in Argyll and Bute, including IGHT. Tickets for the lottery cost just £1 per week, with a top prize of £25,000! From every £1 ticket you buy, 60p will go to local good causes in Argyll and Bute and improving our community. Visit their website to find out more and sign up to play the lottery:

<https://www.argyllcommunitylottery.co.uk/>

Zero Carbon Gigha

The community open day event which was due to be held on 29th January has now been moved to Saturday 12th March 2022. More details on the event will be issued next month and posters will be issued soon.

Kinnererach House

Kinnererach house is now vacant and in line with the Board's debt reduction plan, the property will be placed onto the open market. Advertising of the property for sale will take place shortly.

Gigha Community Nurse

Our new Senior Community Nurse is Yvonne McDougall who started work on Gigha on the 10th of January. Yvonne has joined us from NHS Lanarkshire and is looking forward to becoming part of the community. We wish Yvonne well in her new role.



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What a Scorcher!

Look towards the east this month and you will find the brightest star in the night sky rising over the Kintyre hills. The star is Sirius which resides in the constellation of Canis Major (the Great Dog). Sirius appears so bright because it is not that far from us in our corner of the Milky Way. It is twice as bright as the next bright star in our night sky.

It is nicknamed the Dog Star but in ancient Greece it was known as Seirios which translates to 'the Scorcher'. The ancient Greeks even believed that this star provided additional heat to our Sun in summer to create hot humid days known as 'dog days'. For the Egyptians, Sirius was the celestial sign that marked the start of the Nile floods and what was hoped would be good harvest. The Polynesians of the Pacific used Sirius to mark winter and was also an important reference for their navigation around the ocean.

Sirius is a young star compared to our Sun and unlike our Sun it has a faint companion star nicknamed 'the Pup'. You need a telescope to see this faint star which is only the size of Earth. To find Sirius draw an imaginary line through the three stars of Orion's Belt and extend that line towards the horizon.

Countryside Ranger's photo of the month



Rainbows reaching for Eilean Garbh

Board Action Plan

Every year the Board prepare an Action Plan to help focus the work of the Trust over the next year. The 2022 Board Action plan is as follows:

1. Continue to reduce the debt burden on IGH to below £500,000.
2. Identify a programme of further housing and agricultural improvements.
3. GTL to open and operate the Gigha camp and motor home site.
4. Take forward and secure funding for Ardminish Housing project.
5. Develop the Activity Centre business by installing a solar PV system and offering e-bikes for hire.
6. Continue the programme to improve the path network and interpretation on the island.
7. Continue to deliver Achamore Gardens Development Plan and continue Phase 1 works.
8. GREL/ GGPL Boards to continue exploring succession planning for the turbine income.
9. Begin the island wide Woodland Management Plan.
10. Engage volunteers in environmental projects and promote low carbon initiatives where possible.
11. Review opportunities for EV charging points.
12. Launch new Visit Gigha marketing platforms and ensure all island businesses are well represented.
13. Continue promotion of the Gigha Community Fund to support small island projects and initiatives.
14. Continue regular reviewing of policies and risks.
15. Facilitate skills development and training opportunities for staff, directors, and residents.
16. Continue the process of reviewing core costs and achieving value for money.

Gigha and Cara Parish Church

The next service in the church will be on 13th February with Rev. Anne McIvor. At this service there will be the ordination of a new Elder followed by Holy Communion. All are welcome to join us at this service. At this time while the services are once a month the Church building is benefiting by being heated in the middle of the week for the craft and singing groups. If you like singing and crafting why not come along. Singing hasn't started up again yet but crafting starts at the beginning of February.

Ardminish Housing Development

The initial consultation for the housing development began when John Forbes from Communities Housing Trust attended the EGM held on 18th July 2019. This was the same date that the housing needs survey was launched. The purpose of this survey was to inform further development plans, and to help establish if there is demand for future new housing in Gigha. There were 54 responses to the survey, representing 132 people. 91% said they permanently reside on Gigha, meaning 120 residents contributed to the survey. This is a high response and a good representation of the community's views. The survey revealed that at least 17 people were either looking to move back to Gigha or move out of an existing property on the island.

Thereafter, a report of the survey data was made available on the Gigha website and publicised in the Members newsletters. Any further updates about the development were also included in newsletters and at Members meetings, specifically:

- July 2019 Newsletter
- August 2019 Newsletter
- September 2019 Newsletter
- October 2019 Newsletter
- November 2019 AGM
- March 2020 Newsletter
- September 2020 AGM
- October 2020 Newsletter
- April 2021 Virtual Members Meeting
- May 2021 Newsletter
- September 2021 Virtual AGM

November 2021 Virtual Members Meeting

The Trust currently has 3 vacant properties. 1 is being sold (Kinnererach which was agreed a number of years ago), 1 is being held for the Campsite Manager, and 1 has been advertised. There are currently 27 registers for Homehunt Gigha, further demonstrating demand for more housing on the island.

Despite the Trust selling properties to reduce the debt burden, retaining ownership of these properties would still not address the need for more housing to support the economic activity on the island.

The new housing development is also being designed to meet varying needs that are currently not being met on the island, including fully wheelchair accessible.

We understand that nearly 2.5 years have passed since the initial survey for housing demand and needs took place however projects of this scale take some time to develop. The Board must move forward on projects based on the information obtained from the community and cannot re-start projects over the course of the development stage given the level of funds, time, and resources invested in these projects. The Board therefore ask that anyone who has any comments on the development to please write into the Board if you have not done so already.

Property to Let

Creamery Cottage is available to let for £480.00 per calendar month. The property is a one storey, three bedroom detached property with garden area. The closing date for applications is Wednesday 16th February 2022.

To apply for this property please telephone the Trust Office on 01583 505390 or email shona@gigha.org.uk to request an Application for Property Form. Please note that applicants can only be considered if they are currently registered with Homehunt Gigha.

Countryside Ranger

What an incredibly mild January we seem to have had. Achamore Gardens' bulbs are sprouting, the daffodils are well and truly on their way around the village, and we haven't yet seen the frost!

This is also a great time of year to take note of our bird species. The village has been filled with finches, blackbirds and sparrows, the hen harrier has been swooping over the fields at north Ardminish, wigeons and red breasted mergansers are occupying our shorelines, and snipe are being spotted amongst the heather. These species are in hyper feeding mode just now, making stores and increasing their strength for breeding season soon to arrive. However, this year has seen a notable decrease in the variety of geese species, we are yet to see the white fronted goose or barnacle goose, and there are definitely less geese squawking in our skies. Please let me know if you see any of these species, so we can make sure our records are accurate and able to draw comparisons from the past year and in the future.



Barnacle geese



White fronted geese



In other wildlife news, some of you may have seen on our social media pages that a Kemp Ridley's sea turtle washed up on our southern shoreline. Whilst out with a volunteer for a beach clean, we came across the turtle which unfortunately was not alive. The stranding was reported to the Marine Conservation Society, but sadly on this occasion little could be done to find out what happened to this turtle. However, this kind of data is important and will help to indicate what is happening with turtle populations across the UK and the world. This information will also be able to contribute to conservation efforts now and in the future in the face of environmental changes such as climate change. There are many reasons for this turtle ending up on our shorelines, such as being swept off course by storms and being stuck in ocean currents, ingesting pollutants such as marine plastics, being injured by fishing activity, or simply coming to the end of its natural life and carried to our shore. The Kemp Ridley's sea turtle is usually distributed throughout the Gulf of Mexico and the east coast of the United States, and is the smallest sea turtle in the world. Not only this, but they are also the most endangered, with bycatch in commercial and recreational fishing gear continuing to be the biggest threat facing this species. This piece of news reached the Campbeltown Courier in the last week of January, which is great in raising awareness of strandings, environmental and species population changes, and informing conservation efforts. This small turtle has found its way back into the sea to now become part of the natural life cycle and is likely to be a source of food for other marine creatures. My small plea is that if a stranding is found, please contact myself or organisations such as the Marine Conservation Society to seek professional help before trying to interact with the animal whether alive or not. This will allow the animal to receive the best response for science or its welfare.

Leading on to our own conservation efforts. This month the Ranger Service has set up a conservation work party that will aim to take place on every 3rd Friday morning of the month. January's first session was fantastic. A team of 5 participants helped to clear the woodland that houses our new pathway heading towards Leim Farm. The woodland is being cleared of invasive and over abundant vegetation to:

Countryside Ranger continued

- Increase light in the woodland to make way for a greater variety of ground flora to support our insect, butterfly and bird species.
- Reinforce woodland edges to provide wind shields, shelters and feeding habitats for both woodland and farmland birds.
- Make way for additional tree planting to go ahead in the coming months.
- Create a mosaic of different habitats to support a wider variety of wildlife.



Thank you to everyone who joined in and a special thank you for your patience whilst I attempted to light a Kelly Kettle with soggy matches! If you'd like to join in on a session please don't hesitate to get in touch – I promise more efficient tea making facilities will be used. Future sessions will include tree planting, invasive species removal, beach cleans, and path maintenance amongst many other things.

Camp and Motorhome Manager

The advertisement for a manager for the new Camp and Motorhome site generated considerable interest with over 350 initial registers of interest. Seven applicants were shortlisted for interview with some very strong candidates to choose from. We are pleased to announce that Anna Lannigan has accepted the position and will be joining us on the 1st of March. Anna will be residing at Croft 3-4. We wish Anna all the very best with this new venture.

Gateway to Gigha

Those of you who live on the island will have seen the rapid progress on the new paths over the past weeks. The Garbh Eilean path is complete, as is the route from the Ardlamey track along the island's backbone to the Leim track. Finishing touches are being put to the Fire Station to Village Hall track, and good progress is being made on the Boathouse to Port a'Chinn Mhoir (Johnny's Shore) route.

Now it's onwards to Phase 2. The paths in this phase will be for walkers only, with routes waymarked and walking surfaces improved with the placement of steppingstones, stone 'steps' (flat-topped stones and boulders) and, in at least one location, a stretch of plaswood (recycled plastic) boardwalk. These routes will take shape over the coming months.

In the meantime, we continue to work with our heritage consultants towards the creation of our heritage interpretation infrastructure. Hand-built stone plinths will form bases for the main panels, with smaller panels being mounted on plaswood lecterns. These will be an integral feature of our paths network, with additional heritage and paths information presented on our new visitor website.

The planned Community Heritage Project is also taking shape with Historic Environment Scotland staff and experts on 'ogham' and archaeological 3D modelling from Glasgow University visiting in March. Archaeology Scotland are also planning to visit, so that we hope to be able to announce an exciting series of training events and activities in the next newsletter. The remainder of our e-bikes will be delivered in the near future too, along with training in their maintenance.

It's going to be another busy few months! As ever, if you would like to discuss any aspect of the project, current or future, please don't hesitate to get in touch: craig@gigha.org.uk
0755 469 2799.

Boathouse Restaurant

Sam Berry has taken over the lease of the Boathouse Restaurant. We wish Sam well in his new business.

Local Events

Introduction to Line Dancing in Gigha Village Hall at 7:30 pm on all Mondays throughout February (7th, 14th, 21st and 28th). This class is suitable for secondary school age upwards and smooth soled shoes are advisable. Entry is a £3 suggested donation towards Hall hire.

Table Tennis in Gigha Village Hall on Thursdays at 7:30 pm. Entry by donation. All are welcome.

Crafty Gigha sessions are being held in the Church every Wednesday between 2 and 4pm. Come along to craft, learn and blether! Donations to the Church will be appreciated. Contact Marion Wilson on 01583 505006.

Achamore Gardens

The arrival of winter always heralds the start of another area of restoration in the Gardens, and this year we are focussing on clearing the old Macabeanum Wood which lies to the east of the pond. This area of the Gardens is so badly choked with our old enemies, *Rhododendron ponticum* and bramble that there are plants I have never managed to reach, only knowing of their existence in the spring, when the occasional scarlet bloom pokes its head above the jungle.

The team set about work in the Macabeanum at the start of January, and I'm in awe of the progress our wee group have made! We started out clearing along the old ditch lines so that Tim Lister could get in with his trusty digger to clear the choked ditches, before spreading out to clear the rest of the area. Maggie Lister is now an expert at bramble removal, having developed a range of techniques to suit every situation, and she's passed that expertise onto the rest of us – the brambles don't stand a chance now! We've also removed tons of ancient *ponticum* that was clogging up the area, and Tim and the digger have done a great job of pulling out the root plates to ensure it doesn't come back. Bit by bit we are discovering many lost treasures, as well as creating lots of space for future planting, so at the moment the cleared areas do look a bit bare, but soon we'll fill them up again. As well as clearing the ditches and *ponticum* roots, Tim has replaced the 2 old wooden bridges that lead to the hospital garden/Macabeanum and to the pond.

These bridges had reached the end of their lives and were beginning to rot, so had to be replaced for safety apart from anything else. Tim has built two beautiful stone culverts to replace the old bridges and was helped in this by Morgan (our Apprentice Gardener) and Kacper (appointed through the Kickstart scheme) who put their drystone walling training from last year to good use, helping to build the new headwalls and repair the HaHa (the retaining wall of the ditch).

Here's a few photos of all the hard work – please do come along and have a look for yourself.

Macabeanum before



Macabeanum after



In less good news, we've recently taken the difficult decision to close the path up to the viewpoint. The stairs up the hill have deteriorated and are now unsafe, with a high risk of injury to walkers. We are working on a repair solution for this path, so I'm hopeful that the path won't be shut for too long, but at this stage I can't give a timescale for its reopening.

Achamore Gardens

New bridge



Tim Lister's trusty digger



New Gateway to Gigha path



Gigha Primary School

We will celebrate 100 days of learning at school this year on Friday 4th February. Families are helping children to design 100 day hats and as usual at this time of year we will have a lot of 100 Day fun. This year we are joining the NSPCC Number Day campaign in support of their programmes for vulnerable children across the UK. If you would like to contribute, NSPCC Number Day cash donations can be sent to the school for 4th February. Waste Week also comes up in March and this year will focus on home heating and heat energy. The older children are completing a survey about home energy needs and we hope to be able to issue participation details soon. There will also be news from the Recycling Shed Crew who might have new Terracycle boxes for community use in recycling waste household items. We are beginning plans for our children to join with four other small schools as part of a national creative wellbeing project. This will involve children leading and designing a Children's Festival, to be held on Gigha during the last weekend in May 2022. Artists, theatre, dance and music performers will work with the children to create content and host something wonderful for families across Kintyre to once again access our beautiful Isle of Stories. Separately, we presently need to form a small organising group to raise funds for infrastructure on Gigha, including the main festival marquee. If you would like to help turn our children's dreams into an amazing and practical reality, please contact Julie Wilson at the school on 01583 505259.

Main Contacts

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