

## **Trust Update – November 2020**

The Trust is pushing ahead with the processes of transferring ownership of the Hydro field and Torgarve Woodland to Applecross Community Company. It is hoped that this process will be complete around the turn of the year. With the timber extraction route from Torgarve planned to be through the Smiddy Wood clearfell site, the Trust and Community Company will liaise on the combined timescales for timber transport and the Smiddy Wood replanting work.

This stag season, a central feature of annual deer management on the estate, was affected by the restrictions on guests travelling this year. Deer population numbers have declined in recent years and the traditional cull of up to 60 of the older and weaker animals was, this season, reduced by half. However Mike Donegan, the Trust's tenant, has exercised his option to extend his lease for a further five years.

Mike Summers, a lynch pin of the Estate for 25 years, will be 'retiring' from his role at the end of 2020 and interviews were held recently to find his replacement. Such a task might seem almost impossible, as Mike's remit and range of activities has grown and developed with the expansion of the Trust's activities., the Estate had no let holiday cottages when he started work as a general handyman, and the cattle were not managed by the Estate.

Following the interviews held last month in response to the advertisement published in the West Highland Free Press and on the Trust's website, the Trust has appointed Iain MacFadyen to the central role of maintenance and co-ordination. Iain has most recently been in charge of operations at Langwell Estate, Ullapool where he spent 15 years as Stalker, Cattleman, Shepherd and property maintenance person. He will be coming to Applecross with his wife Joan, a trained healthcare worker.

Staff restructuring will allow Mike to continue as the Highland Cattle stockman, assisted by Floortje van Schuppen who will take a more developed role in the daily husbandry. This year's crop of calves, grown on the hill and moor of the glen over the summer have been weaned from their mothers and transported from Applecross this past week, bound for pastures new. A total of 20 beasts, comprising steer and heifer calves will now be settling into their new home in Cumbria. Another 8 heifers are going slightly further afield, to a new customer in Snowdonia. The appeal of the Applecross Fold, considered one of the oldest

in the country, continues to attract interest from Highland Cattle breeders near and far.

It is planned that Isabelle Kerjose will take on the holiday letting co-ordination role vacated by Mike and will also continue to be responsible for tourist/public focussed landscape care and path maintenance.

In a further change in personnel, Zuzana Vojackova will expand her current role as book-keeper and administrator at Hartfield by taking on some of the background administration for the Trust which has been so ably carried out for the past 16 years, by Susie Whiteford, who will now continue with a reduced role with the Trust.

The new general-purpose shed nears completion and will be ready for use once an electricity supply is secured. This fit-for-purpose structure will make the two existing estate workshops at Clachan and at the Stables redundant. Work is underway in developing options for both these buildings. The Clachan workshop would appear to lend itself to be used by Tery and Daniel McCowan as part of their existing business while, for the Stables, uses are being explored which will allow for retention of original features and integration into the Policy environment. This is in addition to the available stock of buildings seeking alternative uses, including the old Cartshed at the campsite entrance - and of course the steading complex itself.

The Trust is grateful to George Graham for his redesign and construction of the new woodshed next to Baker Street (to the rear of Applecross House). The inside walls of the old shed were covered with historic graffiti which is being removed and given to the Historical Society.

Now as autumn develops into winter and we gain a degree of breathing space from tourism based activities, focus will go towards updating of the Trust website, and also on the facilities that it seeks to promote.

The Estate staff have started the process of preparing the pensioners' firewood, a practice which has been undertaken annually for the past 20 or so years. Started as a way of utilising the rhododendrons which were being cut as part of an eradication programme, the initiative provides local pensioner households with a trailer load of logs.

In recent years the Trust has provided donations to some of Applecross' ablest young people as they embark on their journeys into further and higher

education. The Trust is looking to further develop this scholarship programme, and will provide details of this on its website in the coming weeks.

Hartfield has, like everyone else, experienced a difficult season due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, once open again, and with extensive restrictions and procedures in place, business has been positive. Bookings were extremely high over the summer period, right to the end of October, and customer satisfaction looks to be the same. The new refurbished bedrooms have proved very timely, allowing guests to have their own private facilities, and the overall upgrade of the building has been well received.

And on the other side of the hill, developments at Kishorn have been much in evidence during 2020. The continued success of Kishorn Port Ltd in securing projects to the Dry Dock and the expansion of the Fish Farm hatchery under The Scottish Salmon Company are providing significant infrastructural developments which should aid socio-economic benefit for many years to come.