

Applecross Trust Report

Some of you may have met Ian MacFadyen, who started with the Trust in mid-November. Ian replaces Mike as the main contact for anything property or maintenance related. He can be contacted via the Estate Office (744 209) or at ijmcfadyen@aol.com

Meanwhile, Mike has delayed plans of retirement for a couple of months and will continue to be a Trust employee until Spring-time. Thereafter, he and Floortje will continue to look after the Highland Cattle.

Along with others, Jess has put a great deal of work into creating the draft Tourism Strategy. This is a complex subject which deserves considered discussion. Action on some of these points will require to be taken in time for the 2021 Tourist season. Given that restrictions on international travel are likely to be in place over the Summer, this puts all the more emphasis on places like Applecross being ready to receive and manage visitors in as positive a way as possible.

Isabelle is now very much involved in managing the holiday lets on the estate. QinetiQ, the operators of the Sand base, have a requirement for rented accommodation in the locality and is working with the Trust and with Hartfield Applecross Ltd in trying to match demand with supply.

On the property front, Coilliemhuridh is being prepared for its new tenants. Jess and her family are due to move in later this month. A new oil heating system is one of the main changes as a replacement from gas; the deliveries of oil now being possible due to upgrade works on the access road.

A property condition survey has been carried out at Arigh Drishaig in conjunction with Amy Clarkson, the tenant. The remote nature of the place makes renovation tasks all the more tricky to accomplish. Replacement of lime mortar on the gables and provision of new windows are two of the most pressing tasks requiring completion in the short term.

Elsewhere, the Trust is embarking on a survey of all existing domestic properties with a view to ensuring they meet legislative requirements.

The roof of the Round house was recently repaired, following a vandalism incident last year. No sooner had works been completed but the strong east wind this week caused new damage.

Following the last Zoom Forum Meeting, the Trust received one enquiry about possible building upgrade. Separately, the Clachan Workshop is being designed and costed as a Workshop and retail outlet, to be rented by Tery McCowan.

The Trust has identified the entrance building at the steading as a possible stand-alone project for restoration. This will leave the remaining steading structures to be progressed at some future date and with Community direction.

The Trust and Community Company are working towards completion of the sales of Torgarve Wood and the Hydro Field. All terms have been agreed and the Solicitors are completing.

The Trust continues to work alongside the Healthcare Association in progressing plans for the Helipad. Costed options which compared use of purchased stone from Kishorn against use of estate won stone from a site within Gateway Wood found the latter to be significantly cheaper to fund. A Project meeting has taken place and it is expected that works will start as soon as machinery and labour hire can be secured.

The Trust is looking to develop its conservation management measures by engaging further with the Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES) initiative, run by Scottish Land & Estates, which aims to promote the best habitat and wildlife management practices, build recognition and raise standards through the introduction of an objective accreditation system.

Key aims of the initiative are centred around the promotion of best practice in wildlife and habitat management; building on information about local species, their habitats and wildlife management, and integration with other land uses.

Hartfield, like all other tourism businesses, is closed for the foreseeable future. We are taking this opportunity to ensure all repair and maintenance works are completed in time for the new season. Work is underway to refurbish the two shipping containers, which will take the form of staff accommodation for the summer months.

Hartfield has signed up to the 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency' group which means making the business a greener place to be. We are also working towards our GTBS award. All of this means that 2021 will be about being sustainable at Hartfield, environmentally and economically.

The Trust is eager to relinquish accounting responsibility of the Community Fund and hopes a suitable vehicle to accept the money can be established very soon.

With the lock down continuing, Zoom is offering a useful medium for Trustee Meetings. However, it is hoped that a meeting in Applecross can take place later this year.