

Tighnabruaich District Development Trust
AGM
9th December 2024

Community Development Officer Report

Summary

In the past year TDDT has been able to bring in almost £90k of funding from external sources. This has allowed us to complete projects such as the purchase of the Heritage Centre and buy new bikes for the primary school. Some of the funding will carry over into 2025 helping us towards several community benefit goals. Fundraising has its difficulties, and not all of our applications were successful. However, our ability to deliver community benefit will continue to build our credibility for external funders

Major Projects

Shops Purchase

The purchase of the Heritage Centre and adjacent shop unit had been started in the previous year with Graeme Hogg taking a lead on the Stage 1 Scottish Land Fund Application. This funding allowed the Trust to assess the community benefit of purchasing the two units and secure a valuation.

By the time of last year's AGM I had submitted the Stage 2 application to raise the funds for the purchase. We secured over £61k in January of this year and the community buy-out of the two units was completed in May. The Trust undertook this measure to help preserve the character of the main street and prevent the loss of commercial units to holiday let properties. We are in discussion with Business Energy Scotland to access support to improve the insulation and heating of the two units and will carry out renovations in conjunction with these measures.

Tighnabruaich Petrol Station

After over 40 years of service to the community, Mark and Barbara Critchley hope to retire in 2025. During their time running the service station the sale of fuel was only one part of their income. For any new owners, the business case for continuing to sell fuel as a stand-alone business would not be strong. The Development Trust took the view that sales of fuel would be crucial to the village for the foreseeable future and that the alternative – the whole local population having to travel to Dunoon for fuel – would be environmentally harmful and damaging to other local businesses. In addition, the local Lifeboat and other services depend on the petrol station for their operations.

We were able to access a grant of £12.5k from the Scottish Land Fund to run the current feasibility study. As part of this process we have carried out soil testing and a structural survey of the building. A community survey is running online through our website and Facebook page. We hope it will allow us to demonstrate that a community buy-out would be beneficial and allow us to add to the existing business with card payment pumps, electric charging points, alternative uses for the building and other community amenities. The survey will be open until 18th December and we will hold a consultation event in

February to present the results. We are hopeful that we'll be able to submit a Stage 2 application in March 2025. See the survey at -

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Tighnabruaichpetrol>

Kames Tank Slip

The Development Trust was contacted by Forestry and Land Scotland who are the current owners of the Tank Slip saying that the land was surplus to their requirements and that they were using the Community Asset Transfer legislation to give the community the option of purchase. This project is in its early stages and has a slightly different process to our other community buy-outs due to the legislation involved. We are pursuing a joint valuation of the land along with the FLS and, once we have agreed a market value, we will have the opportunity to apply for a price reduction on the basis that the community will benefit from the purchase. We will consult the community on potential uses for the site at that point. Look out for news of this on our website and Facebook page in the new year.

Supporting Community Activities

Cycling at Tighnabruaich Primary

We were successful in an application to Cycling Scotland for £6.7k to purchase new bikes, safety equipment and storage for the primary school. The new equipment helps to support the school's valuable cycling safety training that all the local kids benefit from. The Development Trust supplemented the award from Cycling Scotland with a grant to see the project completed.

Otter Ferry Otters

It has been a time of growth for the communities around Otter Ferry with 17 kids attending Tighnabruaich Primary. The Development Trust was able to provide grant funding for the local after-school club with a focus on arts, environment and outdoor play. Projects like this one are driven by members of the local community and the Development Trust is happy to offer support and seed funding.

Cowal Gaelic Heritage

South Cowal was a majority Gaelic-speaking area until at least the 1910's. Economic and social upheaval meant that Gaelic was almost lost from the area by the 1960's. Through the efforts of Andree Hawke and others, there is a lively Gaelic learning and heritage group concerned with preserving the language and culture of the area. The Development Trust was able to offer support to build a bilingual website to highlight the Gaelic origins of the area's placenames. You can find it on -

www.cowalgaelicheritage.wordpress.com

Seniors' Activity Club

The COVID lockdowns affected attendance at many community groups, even after the restrictions were lifted. For older folk, the return to normal socialising seemed to be even

more difficult, and this was made apparent by the numbers attending the local Seniors' Lunch Club at Kames Church Hall. During 2023-24, only a few people felt able to attend every week, while most service users depended on their meal being delivered. The Development Trust hoped to reverse this trend and encourage older residents to start socialising again. Our successful application to the Argyll and Bute Supporting Communities Fund has supported the purchase of resources that will help to overcome social isolation for older folk in the coming year.

Kyles 10 Miles

TDDT took on the organisation of 'Scotland's most scenic road race' in 2022. The number of race entrants has increased since the post-COVID relaunch but levels are still down on previous years. In the past two years, the road race has seen around 280 runners and 80 walkers enter the race. This compares to over 350 before COVID.

The Trust has funded the creation of a new website that will go online in January. The race is more visible on different social media platforms and, with dedicated support by TDDT directors, this should see numbers increase over the next couple of years.

Japanese Knotweed Control

The Trust is a tenant of the Crown Estate as a result of our support for the jetty at the Lifeboat Station. This allowed the trust to apply for funding to continue the control of Japanese knotweed along the shore. Knotweed control funding is in place for the coming year as well.

Warmer ColGlen and Tighnabruaich

We are working in partnership with our colleagues at ColGlen Development Trust to expand this project into our district. Two advice workers, supported by the InspirAlba social enterprise, are able to help people access benefits and energy saving measures and also provide onward referrals to Bute Advice and other expert organisations. In the new year we will start a regular foodbank delivery from Dunoon for people in the area.

Projects in 2026

The Trust is working with local residents to make repairs to two local monuments: the Kames War Memorial which is showing signs of subsidence; and the Powder Mill monument at Millhouse, which was destroyed by a traffic collision a couple of years ago. TDDT will seek external funding for these projects while also providing our own financial backing.

Peter McBride has been restoring the mile stones that mark the route from Otter Ferry to Tighnabruaich pier. These markers are over 200 years old and have significant heritage value. Two of the markers are missing entirely and one has been broken with only a single fragment remaining. The Trust has been working with Peter to look at cost-effective ways of restoring the missing markers. We recently completed an experiment using silicone putty to take a cast of the fine details of mile stone 1 at the petrol station. This worked well and we will make a full-size mould in the spring allowing us to cast three replica markers in concrete.

A new windfarm has been proposed at High Brenfield above Ardrishaig that will have a visual impact affecting almost half of the Tighnabruaich district, and the communities of Otter Ferry and Kilfinan in particular. We have been in discussion with the developer and other concerned community groups to make sure that the visual impact is minimised and that the affected communities receive the maximum benefit.

Our community survey of 2023 highlighted a lack of facilities for children and teenagers. We were unsuccessful in an application for a summer activity programme this year but we will re-visit and prioritise the needs of younger folk in the coming year.

Conclusion

We have several exciting projects in progress that will make a big difference in improving community life and protecting the economic and social well-being of the area. We are always eager to help develop new projects and ideas and we would love to hear from you if you have any suggestions.