



Kinloch Castle Friends Association

Newsletter no 29

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Much has changed since the last eNewsletter, not least because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our Chair Professor Ewan Macdonald has been heavily involved in advising on this matter and Committee Member Mairi Gaffney has also been busy working on the crucially important occupational health of NHS workers.

We send our very best wishes to all our members at this difficult time. We are very conscious that we need to stay safe and support the NHS and all carers and all those who are keeping our country running.

1. AGM 13 June 2020 at 12 Noon

One positive result of our enforced stays at home has meant that our regular group meetings are now being held by Zoom which is a saving in cost, time, and energy especially for those of us at a distance from our usual meeting place in Glasgow.

We have therefore agreed that we should hold our AGM on the same date as planned **Saturday 13 June 2020 at 12 noon** but this time by Zoom. Details of the specific link will be sent out nearer the time, but if you wish to join in please download Zoom in advance if you have not already done so. It is a free app. Please will you also let me, Catherine Duckworth, know in advance that you wish to join so that we can forward you the essential link. Any agenda items you wish to add, again please let us know in advance.

2. March Work Party 2020

Our planned March work party had to be abandoned because of the Covid-19 situation. This was necessary but very disappointing. We would have had the biggest ever group (21) of us going and we had many plans for actions.



No photo of our March 2020 group so instead a photo of the small October 2019 work party group

One of those due to attend in March was professional fully trained and insured chimney sweep, Bruce Strachan, who had volunteered to come with all his equipment and clear out gutters and clean chimneys, at the same time investigating the condition of the chimneys using a specialist camera. This was greeted with great interest by our Heritage Surveyor Hugh Garratt as a very useful addition to his knowledge of the condition of the building. Our application to SNH for this to be allowed was refused, as apparently the gutters had been cleared in December 2019. This is something for which we have been begging for many years. We were also to be denied access to any but the museum areas of the castle for Health and Safety reasons. We have asked that access for Bruce should be considered for a later date as gutters need regular clearing and this would be a saving for SNH.



Photos we were sent by SNH at our request showing the gutter cleaning which had been completed in December 2019

We can now only look forward to being able to visit Rum at the earliest opportunity but we are aware that many people besides our members are queuing up to go who have also missed regular visits. So big a party as ours would have been has also made us even more aware of the lack of both suitable and sufficient visitor accommodation on Rum. Our group had booked out all the available accommodation except the camp site, ie B and B plus Bramble Bothy with Fliss Fraser, the whole bunkhouse and both camping pods. Most of our group (along we feel with many other visitors to Rum) do not particularly wish to share a room with others other than a partner; do not want to sleep in a top bunk; and would like to have at least some meals made for them. This has always been the basis of our plans for the castle and our projected work party visit underlined the lack of this sort of accommodation on Rum currently.

We are however, also very aware that for the small Rum Community, the closure of access to the island at the time of their busiest season of the year cannot be other than difficult for sustaining their businesses and we send them our best wishes throughout this time. We also know that for any member of the island community to get Covid-19 could be even more catastrophic than for those of us in easier reach of health services so we fully support the closure of the islands. It has been tantalising to see photos of Rum looking extremely beautiful in some superb weather. The IRCT had four houses in process of being built for new people to come to Rum to live. Their completion was halted for a while but we

understand that the contractors have now returned and are continuing working with correct social distancing. The choosing of new inhabitants has also had to be postponed.

We have asked for photographs showing the internal work done last December as Hugh Garratt needs to assess how much more repair work will need to be completed. SNH do not, as policy, make good any dry rot or other internal work they do. We have also been informed that currently no-one is allowed to enter the Castle including SNH staff resident on Rum. We have queried this directive as it would seem important that someone checks the building regularly given that it is a Category A listed building in public ownership, however as yet the edict still remains.

3. Castle ownership

Following the failure of our asset transfer bid the group met with SNH to discuss what they saw as the future for the castle. They informed us that they would seek a beneficial owner and that they would view us as potentially filling that bill. Our bid was lost partly because the government had not got the available funding we needed for stage one. We enquired of SNH what they mean by 'beneficial ownership' and their response was:

We consider a beneficial owner to be one that will contribute towards the following three key objectives:

- * *Cultural heritage - securing the conservation and preservation of Kinloch Castle;*
- * *Community - contributing to the socio-economic sustainability of the Rum community;*
- * *Nature and climate change - enhancing the natural environment on Rum, promoting its enjoyment and minimising the carbon footprint and environmental impact from the use of the Castle.*

Effectively this means that nothing has changed in the SNH view of new ownership except from our point of view the funding source. Since that meeting we have met with Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIENT) and with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) for review of the asset transfer refusal and discussion of our next moves. We are aware that one point criticised in our plans was our intention to use a diesel generator in the early part of the project. The existing hydro power scheme, put in for the castle by Sir George Bullough but now being used by the Rum Community has proved insufficient for the needs of the proposed Castle business. It has always been intended that green energy would be used as soon as possible but that there would be a time lag. Any future plans will stress the future proposals and explain our current thinking. We are confident that we can demonstrate that we will fulfil the other criteria.

HES particularly have been most supportive and have intimated that there is a grant of up to £500,000 for which they suggest we apply at the end of this year. They have also encouraged us to apply to the Architectural Heritage Fund and we have also been in contact with Highland Historic Buildings Fund. In both of these latter cases, Covid-19 regulations came into effect before we could hold planned meetings but we continue to be in contact by phone and email. HES funding would apply to ensuring the building is wind and watertight, and to this end we are awaiting separated costings from Hugh Garratt for this initial stage of work and for the next stage of creating a commercial operation from the former hostel area. For this latter section of the job, we are looking for other funding from either grants or from commercial bodies or both.



HES talked to us in more detail of the greater consideration they are now giving to the quality of the house and its position as more Art Nouveau than a rather poor example of Scots Baronial. Many features of the house fit

this far better such as the fireplaces, and the stained glass. This will better inform our future bids for funding.

We have also had meetings with Ian Blackford MP and with Kate Forbes MSP and have contacted Roseanna Cunningham at the suggestion of Ian Blackford. They have also been very supportive of our proposals. We have also written to HRH the Prince of Wales and to Lord Thurso the Chair of Visit Scotland who also has enormous experience of the hotel industry.



One important point which has come through is that we need to get some sort of agreement such as a memo of understanding from SNH before we can access definite funding. This applies to both the castle and the Orchestrion appeal. This puts us into a 'chicken and egg' situation. We can't get funding without the agreement of SNH and can't get their agreement without funding. No doubt we will persist and achieve a satisfactory agreement shortly.

Our group has been meeting fortnightly where possible. We are extremely grateful to our members for your support throughout this time. It seems as though just when we think we cannot succeed something happens or we get messages of encouragement which keep us fighting on. Please continue your support.

4. Architectural Heritage Fund

We are delighted that the AHF have supported us with a grant of £1,200 towards legal costs in connection with governance advice. This is much appreciated and we have been grateful for the verbal advice from AHF.

5. Potential investors

As we go forward to restore this important building and return it to productive use, we are revising the business plan for the castle and developing our original commercial plans into something much more agile than that which was proposed if it had been transferred to community ownership. While our charitable purpose has not changed, ie that of restoring the castle and its contents for the benefit of the public and education, we are even more convinced that the local island economy which has declined under state ownership, can only be improved if the castle is restored and used to support the rural luxury retreat and nature tourism market as well as educational and family groups.

We are also encouraged by now being able to apply for partial funding from government agencies, eg HES for example to make the building wind and watertight - the first important step. We have taken legal advice about future commercial models and believe

that there is the potential for any private donors to have an investment return once the castle is operational.

Obviously the impact of COVID19 cannot be ignored, but should pass within the next two years and in the meantime we are happy discuss our ideas with any potential investor, large or small, and at the same time actively progress this restoration and development project.

We are now looking for potential investors in the commercial side of our plans. This could be in a variety of formats. We are confident that our project will achieve a profit and would be a good investment. Please contact any member of the team for more details.

6. Stained Glass

I was contacted last year about the stained glass at the castle. I'm sure we have all admired it on our visits but certainly I was unaware of the artist involved, and it was with great pleasure that I learned more about James Jervis Bloomfield, of Canada, who worked for Reuben Bennett of Manchester for some years as lead designer. The quality and uniformity of the hand which has designed it while each window is individual is very clear. If anyone has good photos of the stained glass and would be willing to share it, I would be very grateful. I have some but it would be good to have more!



7. Japanese Garden

I was contacted recently by Katie Croft of the Japanese Garden Society who is compiling an online directory of all Japanese gardens in the UK. She commented that the garden at Kinloch Castle is one of the earliest in the UK. George Bullough was the grandson of the landscape gardener Eduard Schmidlin and obviously had an interest in gardening. Japan was included in his world tour and it is obvious from both many of the contents of the castle and evidence of the garden that he was impressed by the country. Sadly there is very little left of the garden to the untrained eye, but Katie still wants any information available.

If you have any, please let me know. Meanwhile you can check out her website :

<http://www.theadventuringgardener.com/>

I commented to her that the replacement bridge, designed by KCFA member George Logan, was very steep and awkward to cross. She tells me that that is normal for these bridges but that in Japan they are never red although the colour was taken up in British Japanese style gardens.



8. Subscriptions

These are due shortly. As before, £12.00 for individual, £22.00 for family subscriptions. Jackie's address is given at the end of this newsletter. Please take out a standing order if possible. Bank details : sort code 05-09-44 and account number 35777395. Please pay as soon as you can. We have for years kept the amount the same as for so long we had plenty in the pot with little use being made of it. The situation has now changed radically. We have put the money to good use - we hope you agree with that. We remain convinced that the Castle can be rescued and put to a viable and sustainable use but wish that this could be achieved as soon as possible. Please support us in any way possible. Our dedicated team is a small one and we would welcome anyone who would like to join us or to take part in just one area. We need YOUR help!

9. Disaster planning

Covid-19 reminded us, if we needed reminding, that the majority of our group are in the 'vulnerable' category and not getting any younger. We accordingly have taken steps to ensure that more than one person can access the bank account should this be necessary and that documents and research material would also be accessible. We are also always ready to welcome others to join our team in whatever role can be offered, whether short or long term. We are currently meeting by Zoom. Please let me, Catherine Duckworth know if you feel you can help in any way. Our officers come up for election next year at the AGM - if you are wondering whether to give some of your time to this cause then please bear this in mind too.

10. Scottish Natural Heritage name change

SNH are in process of changing their name to Nature Scot. This has however been deferred because of Covid-19. For some time they have been using the new email addresses - please note this if you have old addresses stored they should now all end @nature.scot

11. Contacts

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