

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Kinloch Castle Friends Association held via Zoom on Saturday 13th June 2020 at 12 noon

Present: Professor Ewan Macdonald, EBM (Chair), Catherine Duckworth, CD (Sec), Jackie Roberts, JR (Treas), Judith Moen, Sheila Mather, Peter Macaulay, Alan Rodger, Sheila King, Mairi Gaffney, Ian Spouse, Iain Macniven, Alison Stewart, Andrew Marsden and Zoe Tregellas, Thomas Krebs, Mhairi Ferrier, Gordon Davies, Tim Martin, Mark Bridges, Ann Hall, Joan and Simon Purvis, Sarah Beston, Sibel Kiran, Katherine Riley

Apologies for absence were received from: Jill Burlton, Jeannie Carpenter, Gill Gibson, Trish Melville, George Randall, Gill Simpson, Effie Wallace, Alan Bowles

1. Welcome and Zoom Explanation

EBM recalled that KCFA had been founded in 1996 by himself and George Randall, who had attempted to join the AGM but had unfortunately experienced technical difficulties. He welcomed all to the meeting which was being held using Zoom technology due to the current coronavirus restrictions. One advantage of meeting electronically was that it enabled members from further afield to attend, and he extended a particular welcome to members joining the meeting from Switzerland and Turkey. CD explained that, in order for the meeting to be manageable using Zoom, attendees would be on mute and she asked those wishing to comment at any stage to raise a hand.

2. Report from Chair

EBM briefly summarised action taken since the previous AGM held in June 2019. He reminded attendees of the intention to apply for asset transfer of the castle from SNH, in pursuance of which a detailed business plan had been prepared and submitted in Spring 2019. EBM extended thanks to members of the project group who had worked hard to produce the business plan, highlighting also the significant contribution made by Hugh Garratt, heritage surveyor, who had undertaken a very detailed assessment of the castle. Prior to the submission of the business plan, there had been extensive interaction with a number of public sector organisations (SNH, Historic Environment Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise) which had been generally helpful, and also meetings with relevant politicians who had been supportive.

In December 2019, KCFA had been advised that the application for asset transfer had not been successful. In assessing the business plan, the public sector bodies involved had appointed a number of consultancies to review specific aspects, and very detailed feedback had been provided. One key issue was the unavailability of the amount of capital funding required to restore the castle. The cost of restoration had increased due to power supply difficulties on the island, and the consequent need to include the cost of a combined heat and power unit in the proposed budget for the project.

EBM referred to the decline in the island's population from over 50 in the 1950s to 20 adults at the present time. He commented that the employment opportunities provided by the restoration of the castle (both directly through posts involved in the restoration and subsequent running of the accommodation facility; and indirectly through subsidiary business opportunities provided due to the increased visitor numbers on the island) would have contributed substantially to regeneration of the Rum community.

Other issues highlighted by EBM included:

- The proposed re-establishment of the walled garden behind the castle to provide an element of self-sufficiency in locally grown fruit and vegetable produce;

- The inclusion in the asset transfer request of the steading building for use as workshop accommodation, and storage of some castle contents during restoration of the building; and
- The proposed asset transfer would have involved transfer of the castle to community ownership, notwithstanding the differing views of the community, some of whom were supportive, others less so.

In conclusion, EBM assured attendees that there was no diminution of interest among the project group for restoration of the castle, with alternative ownership models being explored, and action being taken to identify potential investors. Finally, he referred to continuing Press interest, stimulated by the considerable efforts of CD, which was helpful in maintaining the profile of the castle and the restoration project.

In response to a question from Mark Bridges, EBM quantified the estimated cost of restoration at £6.7 million, advising that this would cover the following:

- Making the building wind and watertight
- Treatment of extensive dry rot
- Provision of a secure power supply
- Restoration of the former hostel accommodation to provide rooms for use as a 50-bedded B&B facility
- Provision of bar and bistro facilities
- An accommodation “village” for staff
- Securing the Steading for use as workshop and storage of castle contents.

EBM undertook to contact Mark Bridges following the meeting to discuss the proposals in greater detail.

Following a request from Tim Martin to expand on the views of the local community, EBM described an extensive consultation exercise, centred on those running businesses on the island, during which a substantial majority of locals could envisage advantages from an increased number of overnight visitors, whilst one or two expressed concern over possible competition. Efforts had been made to respond to those concerned over competition, with assurances provided and opportunities for joint marketing of all Rum businesses emphasised.

Responding to a question from Alan Rodger over the availability of Scottish Government funding for community land schemes, EBM explained that the proposed asset transfer had sought to access this source of funding. Following the decision, different funding models were being explored, including the Financial Transaction Fund, essentially a low interest long-term loan, which might be used as one contribution to the costs involved. The business plan was currently being revised to take account of elements of the feedback received following the asset transfer decision, a revised restoration plan having been produced by Hugh Garratt.

3. Report from Secretary

The Secretary presented a report, which had been previously circulated. The report is attached.

CD highlighted the success of the Facebook group which was now nearing 400 members, some of whom had joined following articles in the media. She also referred to interesting queries received and information obtained on topics such as the Orchestrion, the stained glass windows, and, most recently, interest in the Japanese garden.

Questioned over the approach to HRH the Duke of Rothesay, CD advised that a response to EBM had recently been received pointing KCFA in the direction of the Prince's Foundation, and providing the offer of advice on architectural heritage. It was considered that this could be very helpful. EBM referred to the previous interest in the castle shown by HRH following the BBC Restoration series, with HRH visiting Rum and proposals for restoration of the castle being drawn up by the Prince's Regeneration Trust. The proposals had not progressed, and HRH had subsequently been instrumental in the extremely successful restoration of Dumfries House.

EBM expressed thanks to CD for the huge contribution she was making to many aspects of the project.

4. Report from Treasurer

The Treasurer presented a report, which had been previously circulated. The report is attached.

JR drew attention to the decrease in funds available, which was over £5K less at the end of the 2019/20 financial year than the previous year. She referred to a recent unexpected but very welcome contribution of £500 to the Orchestrion appeal and £500 to KCFA from a donor in Holland.

Referring to the funding raised at the Dundee Mountain Film Festival and the International Sheepdog Trials, Sheila Mather made a plea that members consider the potential to run stalls at events in their localities. In addition to generating income, such initiatives played an important part in raising the profile of the organisation.

EBM thanked JR for her hard work as Treasurer. He also drew attention to the considerable amount of expenditure during the year on the preparation of the business plan, in particular on professional fees.

5. Next Year Elections for Officers and Committee

It was reported that an item on the agenda for the 2020/21 AGM would be elections for officers and members of the committee.

6. Way Forward

EBM reported on the actions taken subsequent to the asset transfer decision, which had included meetings with the public sector organisations involved, and also meetings with the politicians for the constituencies which included Rum, at Holyrood and Westminster (Kate Forbes MSP and Ian Blackford MP respectively), who had both been very supportive. At the meeting with SNH, KCFA had been advised that SNH proposed to seek a "beneficial owner" for the castle. As described more fully in the Secretary's report, this was defined as an owner who would contribute to the three objectives of cultural heritage, community, and nature and climate change. KCFA were seeking to become the beneficial owner, but required to raise sufficient funding to restore the castle. EBM advised that the current proposal involved seeking primarily private investment, and that work was continuing on a revised business plan to take into account aspects of the feedback received following the asset transfer decision. Historic Environment Scotland had been particularly supportive, having upgraded their view of the importance of the castle in the light of the business plan assessment, and offering the opportunity to apply for funding towards the cost of making the building wind and watertight.

It was recognised that the current pandemic, and consequent effects on the economy, compounded the difficulties of raising the necessary funding for restoration of the castle.

During discussion, Alan Rodger emphasised the potential importance of HRH's response to the approach from KCFA. He considered that this could be extremely useful, citing the huge success of Dumfries House, not just in terms of restoration, but also in helping young people to develop skills in a range of different areas. Advice on how this had been achieved, and also potentially assistance from the skilled workers there, could be a very valuable resource. Andrew Marsden concurred, adding that he considered the three aspects, the castle, the community and the island, to be inter-dependent elements, all three essential to the sustainability of Rum.

There was general support for the way forward outlined by EBM.

7. Subscriptions – Proposed Increase from 2021

The Treasurer proposed increasing subscriptions for the 2021/22 financial year as follows:

- ❖ Individual membership to be raised from £12 to £15
- ❖ Family membership to be raised from £22 to £25.

This proposal was approved by Sheila King and seconded by Alan Rodger.

8. Any Other Business

Minutes of June 2019 AGM

The minutes of the AGM held on 15th June 2019 were approved (by Alan Rodger, seconded by Sheila King).

Cancellation of March Work Party

EBM referred to the cancellation of the March work party and advised that it seemed unlikely there would be an appropriate opportunity to re-schedule until 2021.

“Eccentric Wealth” by Alastair Scott

With regard to the suggestion made at the June 2019 AGM that KCFA might fund a reprint of “Eccentric Wealth” by Alistair Scott, CD reported that she had investigated, and discovered that the book had been re-published. She had contacted Alistair Scott who was happy for KCFA to sell the book at a profit in order to raise funds. However, this required to be organised, including a facility to store the books. Further consideration would be given to the proposal.

Visual Anthropology Project

Katherine Riley described her proposal to use the March KCFA work party as the subject for a Visual Anthropology project, comprising a dissertation and short film. Following cancellation of the work party due to Covid19, she was considering how to take this forward, possibly involving interviews with members, and was awaiting University approval.

Topotheque Proposal

Thomas Krebs reported on Topotheque, an Austrian invention aimed at storing and making available photographic and archival material from a variety of sources. He had used this successfully to establish an archive of Grand Hotel Giessbach, the Hotel in the Bernese Oberland at one time managed by George Bullough's grandfather. This was considered to be an exciting opportunity to bring together the vast amounts of photographic and other research on Kinloch Castle undertaken by many members and others over time. EBM undertook to discuss this further with Thomas Krebs. CD drew members' attention to a link on the KCFA Website to Topotheque.

Potential to Use Kinloch Castle for Educational Meetings

Sibel Kiran suggested that an appropriate future use of the castle would be to hold small group educational meetings. This was very much in line with the organisation's constitution and had been done successfully in the past.

9. Date of Next AGM

It was agreed that the next AGM would be held on Saturday 12th June 2021.

KCFA Secretary's report for AGM 13 June 2020 by Zoom

This has been quite a year. Last year at this time we had been busy getting the business plan together and in some ways it seems nothing has changed but everything has.

We finally got the delayed answer to our asset transfer bid but by the time the actual answer arrived we were expecting the refusal. While it was annoying to be contacted by the press before we had received the actual message, we had already planned our response and had an appropriate press statement ready. We received the refusal papers and again while some elements were especially irritating (such as the number of overnight visitor beds already on Rum which seemed to list every cave), we accepted the overall decision.

We accordingly met to decide what we would do next and agreed to continue the fight, although one or two needed to rest. Ewan and I met with Nick Halfhide and Stewart Sandison of SNH in early December. We asked them what were their plans for the castle. Their reply was that they were looking for a 'beneficial owner' for the castle which could be KCFA. The refusal notes had mentioned that the value of the castle is £1.00 but this does not include the value of the contents.

Since then we have also had meetings with Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIENT), with Historic Environment Scotland (HES), with Ian Blackford MP and with Kate Forbes MSP. We were about to meet with Gordon Barr of the Architectural Heritage Fund and with the Highland Historic Buildings Trust when Covid-19 reared its ugly head. We were also to have had a work party to the castle in March which would have been the biggest group (21) of KCFA history. Sadly we had to cancel this meeting but already some had had to pull out as SNH had refused us permission to enter any but the museum areas of the castle.

We continue to keep in contact with these groups as they have much expertise and advice to give.

We are also in regular contact with Hugh Garratt our Heritage surveyor who has now completely overhauled the figures of the proposed restoration and repair. We are always exceedingly grateful to him for his enthusiasm for the castle and the professionalism he brings to the restoration of this special building.

What do SNH mean by 'Beneficial owner'? When we asked SNH this question, we received the following answer which was also recorded in the latest newsletter but I add here for official record. NB In England there is a legal term 'beneficial owner' which may or not also mean the legal owner. This is not the perception of SNH: any owner would be the legal owner but criteria for their choice would be as below: we understand that a more extended answer is being prepared.

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.*

Since the lockdown started, our team have continued to meet via Zoom, which has been a very great benefit both in time and money. We have tried to meet every two weeks and as many of our group take part as can. The wider interest in the castle has been maintained throughout - last summer we held a very successful Facebook 'post a day' where I found a variety of photographs which illustrated both the castle and the island. We gained new members on the Facebook group and it generated much interest, memories and helpful comments. It is clear that there is a great fondness for the castle but also an awareness that there is a need for the sort of accommodation we want to provide and an understanding that it could generate a viable income. The Facebook group now numbers over 380.

We are still working on an updated business plan taking into account the comments made on the asset transfer plan submitted. Many of the reports on our asset transfer plan were desk based without any site visit and we were aware that this led to misapprehensions such as those over available bed spaces. It has been helpful to understand aspects we need to address.

When Ewan and I met Ian Blackford, he suggested we write to HRH Duke of Rothesay, which we did. I included this mention in the latest newsletter received by members which also went out to press and others. It was picked up by the Press and Journal and in turn by HRH. This has been very recent and after an initial phone call by a member of his staff we still await the results.

As far as the press goes, we have had very positive reports and we have now a good range of contacts. But you never quite know what will catch their eye! The recent newsletter led the Press and Journal to a report about our letter to Prince Charles; the Oban Times had good quotes from both Ian Blackford and Kate Forbes; and the Lochaber Times also contacted me about the Japanese garden.

I continue to be asked about very special aspects about both the castle and the Bullough family, such as about the Japanese garden, the stained glass and further information is regularly being found about George Bullough's brother Edward.

One positive to come from lockdown has been the completion of filing all the paperwork which was passed on to me from previous secretaries so that it is now accessible. This has meant we have found much useful information which has been collected over the years, such as several different inventories of contents. We have a substantial archive of material. A start has also been made on better indexing of the thousands of photographs we have which have been handed on by other people but work on the website has had to go into abeyance while other more urgent work is done. If anyone would like to help with any of these tasks it would be great!

The next work party will take place as soon as possible once the islands are reopened. It may however be next March by the time we can get over there.

Catherine Duckworth
Hon Secretary
Kinloch Castle Friends Association
8 June 2020

The Accounts for 2019 – 20 have been inspected by Mrs Jennifer Hindshaw, FCA, and will be sent to ¹OSCR in due course. The Receipts and Payments Sheet summarises the situation. It was not to be expected that the income of last year (£32,490) and the surplus of £4,981 would be repeated, given the length of time it took to produce the Business Plan and the disappointing news that it was rejected in December 2019. Donor fatigue was evident throughout the year but our expenditure has remained high owing to the large number of necessary meetings. The immense amount of hard (unpaid) work put in by the Working Group is quite impossible to quantify.

We did well to generate income of £13, 098, but this could not cover our expenditure of £18,539, and lead to an inevitable loss of £5,442.

The income and expenditure lists on the Receipts and Payment Sheet give details of the main transactions:

- Subscriptions have remained the same since at least 2012 - £12 for single members and £22 for family members. (£1,180)
- We were most grateful for the grant of £2,000 from the Haldane Trust.
- I have claimed Gift Aid (£990) on subscriptions and donations where people have given their consent.
- MyDonate was a well organised charity giving website set up BT which was a miracle of efficiency, reporting weekly and collecting Gift Aid on our behalf. Unfortunately the site closed down at the end of June 2019; CAFDonate and Virgin Money Giving have proved much less easy for supporters to use.
- The Crowdfunder site from last year was left open and has brought in some income.
- Easy Fundraising is a scheme whereby online purchases from companies such as M&S, John Lewis and many others attract small percentage donations. Only about a dozen members have used it and it is not particularly user friendly.
- Recycle for Charity gives £1 for used printer cartridges.
- Stalls at the Dundee Mountain Festival and the International Sheepdog Trials brought in a few hundred pounds, not as much as the amount of work involved in such events ought to realise.
- In the autumn of 2019 it was decided to re-launch the Orchestrion Appeal. Initial support brought in about £1,668 from a world wide community of enthusiasts, but it has not been possible to proceed further. The money in the Savings Account is 'Orchestrion Money'.

A major part of our expenditure is travel expenses to Working Group meetings in Glasgow. The money paid to Smith and Garrett represents only a small proportion of their support for our project, and the same applies to legal advice from Burness Paul.

I hope the accounts reflect in some way the immense amount of work put in by members of the Working Group and the support received from what is still quite a small organisation. Our bank balance at the moment (£8,923) is worryingly low for the work that lies ahead if the project of saving Kinloch Castle is to continue.

I hope we have spent the association's money wisely and that the outcome will be the one we have all been hoping for over the last twenty years.

Jackie Roberts.
13 June 2020

¹ OSCR Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator