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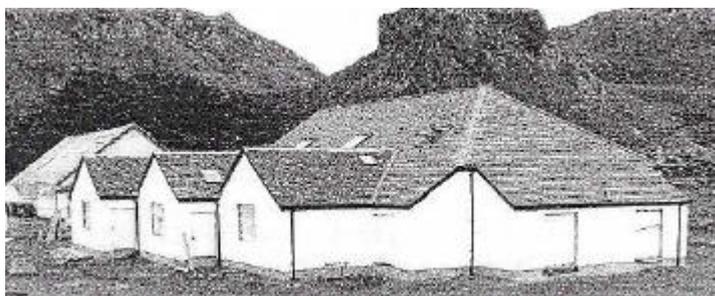
SEIL AND EASDALE COMMUNITY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL



This will be the last picture of the new hall to grace these pages until it is ready for occupancy. For, as you can see, the exterior is now complete—wind and watertight, and all the construction activity is now taking place indoors. As the next issue of this cornucopia of local information will be hitting the doorsteps sometime in October, now seems a good time to remind all those purveyors of winter activities that they can get a bit of free publicity by phoning 300344 or via the internet on jimcee6@hotmail.com. Copy date for the next issue is 30th September, but after 10th September only by email.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL NEWS

Our latest public meeting of the Seil and Easdale Community Council was held in the Hall on Easdale Island on 25th July and was attended by 12 members of the public, plus Cllr Duncan MacIntyre and PC Jeremy Moore. Some of the main issues we discussed are as follows:-

HEALTH SERVICES Always on the agenda but we continue to monitor changes and developments as best we can. We are still pursuing the matter of emergency evacuation for residents on Easdale Island. This is more of a problem during the winter when normal arrangements might be disrupted by darkness and severe weather. We have not got the guaranteed procedure we were looking for but, as a result of our efforts, there is a much better awareness at Scottish Ambulance Services Medical Dispatch Centre of the problems which could arise. PC Jeremy Moore also assured us that if there was an emergency, help would arrive quickly. Such situations are handled by the police, who are well practised and have established procedures for dealing with a variety of contingencies in remote areas. The matter is also being considered by the Consultants conducting the STAG appraisal into future transport links to the Island so we will await the outcome of this. As you may know, Tina Jordan is our representative on the NHS Highland Health Forum and keeps us up to date with developments. The good news is that the third Consultant for the Oban Hospital - Mr Ramish Gupta - has been appointed and his specialisation is laparoscopy. The bad news is that our NHS dental service provision seems no nearer being resolved. Authorities are still looking for suitable premises and the nearest NHS dental practice is in

Lochgilthead and there is a waiting list of 400 people. There is a private practice in Shore Street, Oban, but we understand the owners of their premises have gone bankrupt - though the lease runs until 2009.

We are still looking for volunteers for the Easdale Medical Practice Group. Their next meeting is on August 10th - possibly passed by the time you get this. If you are interested in future involvement, please call Tina on 300274.

LOCAL ROADS Another old chestnut, but the only way to crack it is to keep on keeping on! We have also written to neighbouring Community Councils to enlist their support for improvements. We have written to the Area Roads Manager about Japanese Knotweed, which is proliferating. There have been ineffective attempts by the Council to destroy it with chemicals. The weed was accidentally introduced by the Council when carrying out roadside repairs but has now spread away from the roads. Accordingly, we dispute the claim by the Roads Manager that they are responsible only for 2 metres from the road and we are arguing for total removal of all affected soil.

We are also concerned for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists using our roads. A number of people have reported near misses. We have asked if speed limits might be imposed but this idea has had a cool reception - mainly because of the problem of enforcement. It has been suggested that better road management might help. So we have asked for more verge cutting, pedestrian warning signs and white lining at the road edges. We have also asked for priority signs at Clachan Bridge. There was a collision there recently. We may also borrow a mobile speed recorder for a few months to alert drivers about their speed.

POLICE REPORT We were fortunate to have PC Jeremy Moore at our meeting and he reported on the latest burglary to happen on (or just off) the Island. He lavished praise on the response and support given by the community - which, he said, was instrumental in the police being able to arrest the perpetrator. He did ask everyone to be aware of the risks, especially during holiday time, and to lock doors if away from the house.

SCOTTISH WATER You have probably seen the blue barriers and piping along the road between Acha and Clachan Seil. Scottish Water have started replacing the water mains pipe between Loch Seil and Kilbrandon Church. This will take until October to complete but should mean we no longer get any bursts. There is bound to be some traffic disruption, I am afraid, but they are trying to keep this to the minimum. Rather than digging the entire road, they will be opening up the present system every 200 metres and driving a new pipe through the old one - then reconnecting all the houses. You should be informed when you are likely to be disconnected but if you have any problems or questions, please phone the Customer Helpline on 0845 601 8855 quoting 'Clachan Seil Mains Improvement'.

STAG APPRAISAL (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance) Steer Davies Gleave have started their appraisal on behalf of Argyll and Bute Council into the transport link between Easdale Island and Ellenabeich. They have held initial consultations with stakeholders and residents on Easdale Island and at Ellenabeich. The next step is to report to the Council on their preliminary findings and objectives before producing their STAG 1 report at the end of August. Following this, if accepted, they then focus on certain alternatives before producing their STAG 2 report due by the end of October. This report will outline more specific proposals.

CORE PATH PLANNING We are still looking into the matter of pathways on Seil. Despite the freedom granted (with responsibilities!) under the Land Reform Act, people still prefer to walk on signed paths - then they know they are not upsetting anyone. We will prepare a plan of existing pathways and paths we would like to develop in the future and submit the list to the Access Manager at Argyll and Bute Council. If and when funding becomes available, we may be able to obtain financial support to establish new routes. Ideally, we would like people to be able to walk safely between all the main hamlets on Seil. This is something which will happen in the longer term but we welcome any suggestions.

NEXT MEETING Our next public meeting is on Thursday 27th September at 7 p.m. in the Hall at Ellenabeich. Still the old one, we think, if it has not been demolished by then! We look forward to seeing you there.

HEARTSTART UPDATE

We are planning a Heartstart refresher/update course for all previous participants in autumn. The Heartstart procedure has changed and we'll have an opportunity to learn and practise the new method for resuscitation. If you were a previous participant and would like to attend the session or more information please contact Tina Jordan 01852 300274.

GILLIEBRIDE'S COLUMN (By stand in Richard Wesley)

Seil Island is home to three species of owl, Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*) and Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*). The most uncommon and lesser known is the Long-eared Owl which is largely nocturnal and is almost certainly under recorded here in Argyll. At rest, the long ear tufts and distinctly orange eyes make the Long-eared Owl easy to recognise. However, in flight they can be confusingly similar to Short-eared Owls. The most obvious features to look for are the uniformly dark under-parts, the lack of a white trailing edge to the wing and less distinct barring everywhere, especially under the wing-tip.

They often roost in small stands of conifers surrounded by open hunting habitat. If you're lucky, you may see the male wing-clapping as he performs his display flight. This involves slow steady wing beats with soft single wing claps below the body every few flaps. Hence you hear several well-spaced claps, unlike the flurry of claps given by a Short-eared. The adults are not particularly vociferous and the females tend to sit tight during incubation. The nest is often laid in an old crow's nest or a stick nest of similar size. They breed from February-July, with incubation taking 26-28 days. The young leave the nest after about 3 weeks but can-not fly for another 2 weeks. They become independent after a further 8 weeks. The calls of hungry young are often the first indication that a breeding pair is present. The begging call is a loud and plaintive, high pitched "pee-eh" which can be heard for some distance. Their prey includes small mam-

mals, such as mice, short-tailed voles, and small birds. June and July would be the best months to see them, just before dusk, as the young once fledged are calling regularly for food from their parents.

COMMUNITY HALL NEWS

FORM A NEW GROUP!

We have not increased the charge for Seil community groups who want to use the new hall facilities regularly. The charge will be £5:00 per hour with a maximum of £8.00 for a 3 hour session. We have a range of regular groups but there is time and space for others. Perhaps you could revive a defunct group. Some possibilities might be: parents and toddlers group, carers group, seniors group: readers, writers, drama, music groups: bridge, whist, canasta groups: keep fit, yoga, indoor sports groups: model making, photography groups - the possibilities are endless. At the rates quoted above you only need small numbers and you can still keep the costs reasonable. However you do need to think about it now to be sure of booking a suitable session, so get together with friends and like minded people in the community. You can register your interest with any member of the hall committee.

BECOME INVOLVED

The hall committee are very conscious that their average age is best described as "mature". Members are anxious that decisions relating to the management of the new hall should reflect the interests of future generations. However a smooth transition is needed. We would ask user groups to bear this in mind when selecting their representatives in time for the Hall AGM in December 2007. We would also like to invite younger members of our community, particularly those in the 30 - 50 age group, to come to a meeting in the hall on Tuesday 4th September at 7.30 p.m. to discuss how this transition can be achieved.

2008 CALENDARS

Following on from the successful calendar that we introduced last year, it is gratifying to be able to report that one for next year is now in production, and despite the scourge of inflation, global warming, climate change, and other negative influences, the price is still a modest £3.50 and this includes a substantial envelope. Copies are available in the same outlets as last year,

Our New Hall is substantially built. There remains some work to be done inside, but the project is on time. The building is already very attractive, but will not appear at its best until site works, scheduled for this month, tidy up the surroundings. The old hall is now leaking badly and sadly may not remain useable up to the time of its demolition in October.

The project has, predictably, run somewhat over the estimated cost, but is just within the total sum set aside at the beginning. Fund raising is now directed at paying for important last-minute touches that will give us the standard of finish and facilities that the community deserves. Contributions received now will result in immediate and visible benefits.

We can expect to occupy the New Hall during November, and the Committee is now working on matters relating to the management of the new premises. It is important that these decisions are shared with the community, and they hope for a good turn-out at the consultative gathering at 7.30 in the Hall on Tuesday 4th September, more details are printed above.