

Applecross Trust

Forum Report

September 2019

HILL & DEER

Radios

Access to the Bealach mast allowed *Hill & Estate Radio's* engineer to assess the condition of the apparatus to establish the reason why the estate radios have not been working recently. The repeater and antenna – the two main components of the system – required to be replaced. The site is susceptible to lightning strike, with the result that the antenna has had to be replaced 3 times in the past 20 years.

Stalking staff

Kenneth MacKenzie has joined David Abraham again this year as 2nd stalker and they are joined, principally by Georgia Carrington and Gregor Watson as ghillies.

Sea Eagle Scheme

Scottish Natural Heritage operate a compensation-based scheme for farmers and crofters who experience lamb losses from Sea Eagles. A breeding pair have a nest on the coastline between Toscaig and Uags although their attempts at breeding this year have been unsuccessful.

There may be potential for Toscaig crofters to apply for such a scheme, if they suggest they are losing lambs. It is less clear how the Trust could engage directly. However, 'positive' actions such as leaving deer carcasses on the hill or building look-out platforms near to nests could be assessed for grant aid on a case by case basis.

FARM

Mike is replacing stock fencing around the Policy fields at present with assistance from George Gilroy.

Cattle are in the Glen for the Summer. Sandy Munro, the silage contractor cut silage at the end of August. Grass volumes were adversely affected this year by high numbers of geese. Normally Sandy arrives with all the equipment required on trailers which resembles something from a biblical caravan. However, he has had to change his strategy in order to reduce the impact of tourists by basing himself at Russel and coming over the Bealach with individual pieces of kit; mower, baler etc as required.

David Leat, a professor at Newcastle University, was recently staying in Applecross and asked if he could ring some young birds. He found a great number of small birds and suggested that the young native woodland near Clachan was providing a very favourable habitat for many types of birds. A copy of his findings will be found shortly on the Trust website.

Mike and Isabelle carried out some fencing at the village hall designed to keep the nursery children contained on site. Materials were purchased by the nursery group.

WOODLAND

Smiddy

Harvesting at Smiddy Wood is complete but removal of stacked timber off the site is slow due to the fact that only one 12-wheel lorry with trailer is available. A quantity of 75 tons has been sold to Iain Gillies and this has been stacked for his use in Gateway Woodland.

Felled Timber

Woodworkz, a timber supply company based in Lochcarron make timber products using locally sourced wood. They have agreed to purchase a couple of the trees which were felled last year as part of the Trust's tree surgery work.

Uags

Planting of the site involved 18 days of work and is complete.

Roe's Walk

A recent Scottish Forestry (previously Forestry Commission) inspection found the site to be in order.

PROPERTY

Fire Risk Assessments

Fire Risk Assessments have recently been prepared for Applecross House and the East Wing and for the 4 holiday let properties. Recommendations are being followed up.

Smiddy Cottage

The planning application is going through the Highland Council system and a query is expected on car parking availability. To short circuit this, the Trust is looking to provide a dedicated parking area for Smiddy, Smiddy Cottage and the neighbouring property of Forge End, possibly within the corner of the farm field.

East Wing, Applecross House

The Listed Building Consent for replacement of the 7 metal windows has recently been approved by Highland Council. This work will be part of renovations planned for The Cabin and Ghillie's Flat.

Airigh Drishaig

The electrical survey work is now complete at the cottage and a lease agreement is being put together to the prospective tenant, Amy Clarkson. Amy is carrying out a PhD at Glasgow University and her studies include the practice of 're-wilding.'

Helipad

Local funding for the helipad is underway.

The site chosen is to the south west of the village hall, on the opposite side of the main road. Although located on Milltown common grazing, the group running the proposal are content that the site retains its crofting status. Kenny MacBeath is due to carry out preparatory works aimed at estimating the quantities of stone required to form a base.

Estate Shed

All groundworks, including the removal of the large pine, are complete and the shed contractor is due to start work on the foundations before the end of September.

Roundhouse

The Roundhouse has again been vandalised. It is thought the damage was caused by children staying at the campsite who used the side of the roof as a slide.



A quote is being sought from the contractor who built and subsequently repaired the previous damage. Some additional measures including the use of netting to cover the roof are being considered as well as signage.

MASTS

The lease of the site on Milltown Common Grazing to WHP has been signed and construction underway. This will provide mobile coverage across the south of the peninsula.

A similar agreement is being set up for the mast site in the Glen, referred to in the lease as Applecross Forest Site. This is to be positioned to the east of the Hartfield Plantation. This will provide coverage around the Glen and Applecross House environs.

A third site, being developed by the Home Office for emergency service use, has been under construction for the past couple of weeks and is located on the hill side. East of the Allt Mor burn.

TOURISM

Hartfield

Marketing of Hartfield by Jess Whistance has helped increase occupancy, especially during the latter Summer period and indications are that the shoulder months of the year will provide reasonably strong demand.

Renovations which are centred around the provision of en-suite accommodation in the hostel is being planned with a view to work being undertaken during the close season of January and February 2020.

Provision of staff accommodation in the form of fitted shipping containers will be provided prior to the 2020 season getting underway.

Improvement works have so far centred around improvements to the external look of the house and the approach.

Marketing

The Trust has updated the Walks leaflet and a new print run is complete. Copies of the leaflet are available from Mike Summers.

The Trust was invited to contribute to Community Council's discussion on developing a tourism strategy at its last meeting, and has agreed to join the TEAM - a proposed peninsula wide initiative aimed at Tourist Education And Management.

The improved communications to be offered by the new Masts may offer an opportunity to develop an "Applecross App" in due course, so as to bring information on all aspects of the peninsula together in a readily accessible format.

Holiday Houses

Bookings to date for 2019 are very similar to 2018 when the total bookings were 152 over 4 properties.

Bookings in 2016 were 140 weeks for the year over 4 properties

Bookings in 2017 were 139 weeks for the year over 4 properties

Bookings are improving over the shoulder seasons. The bookings at the other end (mid October to mid December) have also improved with 13 weeks booked this year compared with 4 weeks in 2017 and 8 in 2016. Part week bookings are popular at these times of the year.

All the houses during high and peak season are fully booked but there are signs that the season is extending to the end of October/beginning of November rather than stopping mid October.

MACKINNON MACNEILL TRUST

The MMT trustees decided to make no Joint Award for 2019/20 as no applicant from Applecross met all of the criteria.

However the Applecross Trust has committed to supporting one local student and is considering the application of a second student.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Plan-It Applecross and The Community Land Use Plan

The Trust endorses the publication of the Community Land Use Plan, and looks working together with all interested parties on the realisation of specific projects as they are identified and agreed.

Allotment Lease

The lease has been prepared and signed.

Bealach lay by works

-Interpretation

Helen Smith of Rowantree Consulting, Inverness has been asked by the Highland Council to design five interpretive panels for laybys on the Bealach na Ba. Helen will be known to some of you as the

consultant who worked up the development phase of ALPS and spent 12-months securing £500k of match funding after HLF had offered their £1M.

-Scheme Extension

The scheme was to be completed and monies claimed by September. However the Trust understands the Council has secured an extension - which is just as well given that work on the first of the lay-bys is only now underway.

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