

STRUAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Update July 2018

Since the 18th of January when we set the Development Group up we have managed to move the project along a considerable amount. At the moment we have just under 50 members, and would welcome any other members of the community who have not yet joined to do so. That way you will have a say and be able to influence the direction of the project. We sorted out Office Bearers and confirmed membership of the Steering Group at a meeting in early February, and applied to open a bank account (all approved minutes of meetings are now on the community website). In March we managed to secure a grant from the Scottish Community Alliance to visit four similar community projects in the Western Isles and five people spent a very intensive but useful two days visiting Callanish Visitor Centre, Sportnis, the Clan MacQuarrie Centre at Borve and Talla na Mara in West Harris. A lot of practical advice and suggestions from really helpful and supportive people!

Since then we have been trying to identify the most appropriate places to apply for Stage 1 funding, and starting the application process. We applied to the local LEADER fund, but were unsuccessful, but we have now managed to get through the initial stages of applying to the Scottish Land Fund (primarily to buy the land) and are preparing a Stage 1 funding application for £20k-£30k which we hope will cover a feasibility study, conceptual design, draft business planning, legal costs, engineering and archaeological surveys and land valuation costs. We aim to submit this by 7th September, with a decision date of early October. If we manage to secure this, we will then have to start the long hard slog of raising the funds to get the project out of the ground!

As a result of our visits to other projects, and the decision to settle on the larger site (between the broch and the school), we have also decided to investigate whether there is a need for additional housing in the area, with a view to potentially working with a partner (for example, the Highland Small Communities House Trust) to construct a number of affordable housing units on the same site as the community building. We will therefore be carrying out a housing survey of all households in the area over the next few weeks, and also invite people who are interested in returning to, or moving to, the area to complete a survey. If the results are positive, we will start talking to possible partners about working together to make new housing units a reality.

In parallel with activity on the main project and in conjunction with the Community Council we have also managed to carry out three beach cleans – Struan, Eabost and Caroy – and will continue to work with other organisations on the island to try and reduce the problem of primarily plastic contamination on our shore line. We have also managed to secure a grant of 420 young trees from the Woodland Trust, so again in conjunction with the Community Council we will be drawing up plans to get these planted when they arrive in November – hopefully including a group of volunteers to help plant them.

Please don't forget that although the main reason for setting up the Development Group was to try and raise funds for a community building, we are always prepared to help and get involved in other projects within the community, so please don't hesitate to get in contact with us if you have other ideas of things that we could do to improve things in the community – drop a note into the collection box at Bog Myrtle, or drop us an email at struancommunityproject@gmail.com !