

ISLE OF GIGHA HERITAGE TRUST

NewsLetter January 2024

The Board meet the third Monday of every month; therefore, for any correspondence to be considered at these meetings, we ask for it to be submitted at least 1 week prior to give the Board time to review. Correspondence sent within 1 week of the Board meeting will be delayed for review until the following month meeting.

Contact us by emailing directors@gigha.org.uk

Distillery Proposal – Members Meeting

Details regarding a proposed distillery project has been shared with the membership. The Board are keen to understand whether there is general support from the membership for the board to give this project further consideration. We understand more information and detailed plans will be required, but the Board want to get an initial feel for whether a whisky distillery is an ambition for Gigha. Please return initial comments to directors@gigha.org.uk or by writing to the Trust Office.

A members meeting to discuss this proposal and the site location is being scheduled for Wednesday 31st January at 7pm in the Gigha Hotel.

Gigha Hotel

Following the grant award of £247k from the Community Ownership Fund, we are now working with an architect to prepare detailed drawings of the new pub/function space. These plans are still being prepared and will be shared with the community when available.

SKS Scotland, who are carrying out the Options Appraisal for the future management of the Gigha Hotel, had their initial visit to Gigha on Tuesday 16th January. As part of their visit, they wanted to gather initial community feedback on management and operational aspirations for the hotel. It was great to hear from so many community members, so thank

you to everyone who has provided feedback so far. This will form part of their work as they assess the viability of both management options.

Community Helipad

Works continue to progress with the development of an official emergency services landing pad at the airfield. The Royal Engineers are due to begin their work at the end of March and stay for a 2-week period to complete the works. It is expected that a press release on the project will be shared following planning approval which is expected in early February.

Gigha Winter Bar

The bar is open on Friday and Saturday evenings until the end of March, apart from 10th and 11th February. The Rugby Six Nations tournament starts on 2nd February and some matches will hopefully be shown in the bar. Full details will be shared on Facebook.



Save the date!

Friday 15th March – Gigha Day and Simon Fraser Memorial event, details to follow

Friday 12th April - The Mad Ferret Band concert (licensed bar)

Saturday 11th May - The Michael Garvin Trio (licensed bar)

Friday 7th – Sunday 9th June – The Sound of Gigha concerts and events (licensed bar)

Saturday 29th June – Boathouse Raft Race

Saturday 3rd August – Furboch ceilidh (licensed bar)

The Furbochs

The Furbochs would like to thank everyone for their good wishes on the arrival of their little baby at Christmas time. They wanted to let you know that the Furboch Ceilidh is earlier this year, so date for your diary is Saturday 3rd August, welcoming back the amazing Ceol an Aire.



Renewables

The gearbox replacement on T2 has been delayed again because of the weather. It is hoped that this will be replaced by the end of February.

A bearing has gone on the main shaft on T1 which will require the blades to be removed to carry out this repair. It is hoped to have the work carried out while the crane is on site for the gearbox replacement on T2.

MUGA

The MUGA project is still ongoing, although progress has slowed down due to a previous lack of funding opportunities. Some new funding routes have been identified and applications are in the process of being submitted. The Parent Council have been working hard to continue fundraising and are close to reaching their £5k target! The planning application has been delayed since its submission in September, but we hope to receive a decision soon.

Gigha Community Council

The next meeting is on Thursday 1st February 2024 at 6pm in Gigha Primary School.

Agenda

1. Apologies.
2. Approval of minutes of previous meeting.
3. Matters arising from previous minutes.
4. Roads update.
5. Helimed landing update / emergency planning update.
6. West Kintyre Windfarm update.
7. Ferry Users Committee update.
8. Waste disposal.
9. 10-year planning group communication.

Zero Carbon Gigha

ZCG will be holding their first event of 2024 in Gigha Winter Bar at 7pm on 3rd February. Come along to explore how traditional cleaning products can negatively affect health and prove to be less effective than greener alternatives! Please bring along a jar for tester!

ZCG have also set up a sustainability library within Gigha Hotel. The bookshelf contains a variety of books on sustainable living, food growing, amongst a whole host of other things. This is a community library, please borrow as many times and as many books as you like, but please pop them back when you're finished for others to learn from. If you have any books you'd like to donate/contribute, please get in touch or simply pop them on the bookshelf in the Gigha Hotel foyer.

Achamore Gardens

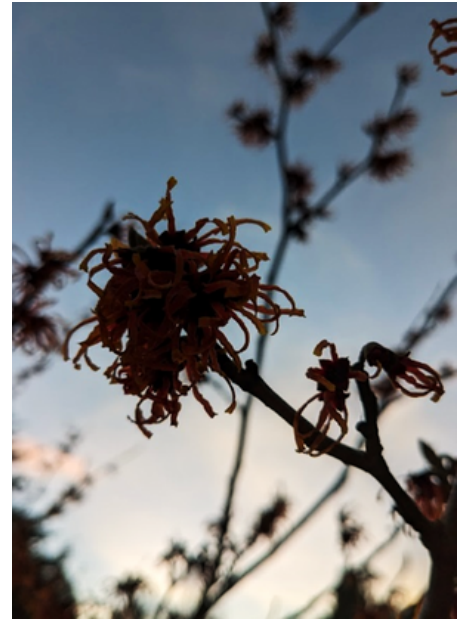
Any January visitors to Achamore Gardens will encounter wafts of fragrance as they wander through our woodland and walled garden. Witch hazel, Daphne, Sarcococca and Mahonia are all something to be sniffed at!

The cold at this time of year means it's better to keep on the move and attempt energetic tasks. We've been keeping our volunteers busy by extending the dead hedge mentioned last month. This winding wall of brash can shelter young shrubs from harsh winds so we will introduce Rhododendron species and cultivars under its protection, in the Spring.

The New Year storms brought about the forced closure of the gardens. Large hanging tree limbs dangle over paths, as do leaning uprooted trees. Where the gardens team can, we have removed and processed fallen trunks, but many damaged trees require experienced professional attention.

Please note that the entrance path, main drive and walled garden have reopened but all other areas of the garden south of the drive and south of the machine sheds will remain closed for now. Barriers will block off unsafe areas.

Serious damage has been caused to one of Colonel Horlick's most prized plants, Rhododendron 'Lady Horlick', has suffered a potentially fatal hit, and one of her two main stems has been blown down. In other areas of the Gardens, it is quite miraculous that torn off tree limbs have missed important plant specimen. For now, we are hopeful we have dodged the worst of the winter weather, touch wood!



Isle of Gigha Ranger Service

Let's start this year's first newsletter with a review of 2023. We had a fabulous time! It was our best year yet for volunteer hours, from 108 hours in 2021 to 386 in 2023! We would not be able to achieve anywhere near as much without this amazing, dedicated team of people who give up their time to make Gigha a better place.

Our 2023 volunteer celebration was sadly scuppered by the weather affecting ferries before Christmas, but we were able to deliver a delicious afternoon tea, made by Wild Chameleon, to our volunteers as a small thank you for all their help.



This was also the first year that funding was awarded to Ranger Service projects, a whopping £250,000! £248,000 for our invasive non-native species and hedgerow project, and £2000 to continue Forest School for another 12 months.

We are so looking forward to exciting things to come in 2024!

To kick off the new year, we have been blessed with a few weeks of great wildlife. Most notably the hen harriers that are around just now. There have been sightings of males north of the village and females at the north of the island. Hen harriers are fabulous creatures, with an elegant but twisty flight and hunting pattern, and long thin wings with primary feathers, making them look like fingers. At the moment, their hunting behaviour is rife, trying to fatten for the breeding season, and being more visible simply because it's winter with less food about, so hunting more regularly. We only really see these during the winter months. We think this is because Gigha doesn't have quite enough nesting habitat. These are ground nesting birds that prefer thick, high vegetation among moorland, and sometimes

along woodland edges for a little bit of shelter. However, we're a bit short of that here on Gigha, and unfortunately our predatory creatures such as mink, can decimate ground nesting birds. That being said, we haven't spotted any mating behaviour, so perhaps they have better sites elsewhere.



2023 GIGHA RANGER SERVICE REVIEW

EVENTS & GUIDED WALKS

Including whale watching, bat walks, bird song ID, and historical heritage events!

25



VOLUNTEER HOURS

Not just our fabulous island volunteers, but also Scouts and Edinburgh Young Walkers came to lend a helping hand. The work we do would not be possible without them!

386



EVENT PARTICIPANTS

Events were attended by island residents and visitors!

283



FOREST SCHOOL SESSIONS

Forest School was ramped up this year by hosting amazing off-island practitioners to deliver the best sessions we possibly can for our community.

10



AWARDED FUNDING

We are so grateful to our funders, NatureScot and Argyll and Bute Council for providing us the opportunity to carry out new projects in 2024

£250K



Isle of Gigha Ranger Service

Female or juvenile hen harrier. Identifiable by brown plumage and mottled bellies. Males are blue grey with white rump and black wing tips.



Upholding tradition, our January Forest School session was based around birds in honour of the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch being held between 26th and 28th of the month. The amazing forest schoolers made an incredible bird table to help our feathery friends during the harsh winter months, and were so brilliant with all the tools, and their determination was second to none! The table can currently be found in Achamore Gardens near to the machine sheds if you fancy setting up for the bird watch there! Our next Forest School session will be held in March.



The Sound of Gigha

The Sound of Gigha Committee would like to thank everyone who came along to our open afternoon in January or have chatted with us about it since. There were loads of great ideas which we'll work through to pull together an exciting programme for June. If you have any further thoughts, feedback or ideas please get in touch by chatting to any of the committee or dropping us an email (thesoundofgigha@gmail.com). We'd also love to increase the size of the committee, so please let us know if you'd like to help organise the event.

Gigha Green Power Ltd and Gigha Trading Ltd Merger & Logo

We are in the process of merging GTL with GGPL in order to create a more financially sustainable future for the Trust's trading activities and reduce future administration and accountancy costs associated with the subsidiary companies. The new trading company is to be called Gigha Trading & Renewables Limited (GTRL) which we hope will take affect from 1st April 2024.

As part of the process, GTRL will need a new company logo. We are seeking any artwork from the community which will help design a new logo. Please send any artwork to jane@gigha.org.uk before 9th February.

Gigha Primary School & Early Learning Centre

We have been very busy since returning to school after the Christmas break. Pupils have written letters in response to the decision to no longer send the Screen Machine to Gigha following funding cuts. Pupils practiced their skills of persuasive writing in trying to persuade ministers to restore this service.

We have also now ordered all the equipment to allow us to keep chickens and these will be arriving after the February break. This will help teach pupils many life skills including caring for animals and preparing simple meals using the eggs we collect. We also hope to visit local farms in the summer term to learn about diversification and locally produced food options.

In the ELC pupils have been joining with Rhunahaorine ELC for collaborative learning opportunities. This has included visits to the soft play, Campbeltown library and also swimming lessons at the Aqualibrium. This has been a fantastic opportunity which we hope to continue into the summer term.

More recently pupils have been learning all about Robert Burns and have practiced poems. This week we held a Burns Day soup and sandwiches where we were joined by elders from the island. Pupils each took a role in chopping vegetables, buttering bread and adding fillings. Younger pupils also helped to design their own tartan which were laminated as placemats. Two pupils read poems and we all listened carefully to poems and the Selkirk Grace read to us. The pupils enjoyed hosting visitors into school and hope to make this a monthly event.

Zero Carbon Gigha

GREEN CLEANING

Saturday 3rd February | Gigha Winter Bar | 7pm



Come along to explore EASY, cheaper, and more effective homemade cleaning products that are better for your health, your home and the planet! BRING ALONG A JAR FOR A TESTER!



In remembrance

Sadly, we have lost some members of the Gigha community, past and present, in recent weeks. Our thoughts are with the families of Mary Sheriff, Audrey Tart and Johnny Andrew.