



Island of Hoy Development Trust

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IoHDT Report by the Chair for the year ending 31.03.21

This financial year proved somewhat challenging for the Trust as it began just as Covid restrictions were introduced. For the island this resulted in travel restrictions, limited access to shops, job losses and financial hardship.

Fortunately for the island, the Trust had a Health and Well Being co-ordinator in post which proved significant in the Trust's response to the pandemic as information regarding key priorities for the island were already established and with the co-ordinator's help the Trust was able to respond rapidly in instigating projects to mitigate the impact of the covid restrictions.

Applications were made to several grant funding bodies and the Trust was awarded almost £39,000 from Foundation Scotland, Wellbeing Fund and Supporting Communities Fund to undertake various projects to address fuel, food and financial poverty. Initial funding enabled the creation of an Advice and Support hub and the recruitment of a group of volunteers, whilst with subsequent funding the Trust was able to establish a Community larder and provide Community Covid grants to support those facing financial hardship from the loss of income and increased utility costs who met the criteria.

Additional money awarded from Foundation Scotland and the Communities Recovery fund allowed a continuation of the food bank and an expansion of the covid grant scheme. A mental health resource leaflet was also developed and delivered to every household, whilst to provide a bit of Christmas cheer in 2020, Christmas dinners cooked by local business woman, Emily Smith, with food supplied by the Trust and delivery by volunteers were available to all residents. A secret Santa for all island children was arranged with gifts kindly donated by residents.

The pandemic crisis highlighted the fragility of the island economy and the impact caused when access to mainland Orkney is restricted.

Community Hall: The Community Hall was closed at the start of the first lockdown in March 2020, although use of the building was made for essential activities related to the Community Larder. With its closure, the Trust made the decision to change the way that the management of the building was undertaken in the light of the need to be fully compliant with Covid regulations and restrictions. To this end, it was agreed that a project Development Officer would be employed on a part-time, temporary basis to complete all the required health and safety work including exploring and developing

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resources for a new management group. The new Project Officer started in this role at the beginning of February 2021.

The second key part of this project will be to undertake community engagement activity with the aim of identifying both the wishes of the community in terms of the future use of the Community Hall but also to bring together people who have an interest in being part of a future constituted management group.

During this year, the Trust agreed to fund a replacement of the Fire Safety System and repairs to the heating system. To meet the additional cleaning requirements brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic funding that had been previously ringfenced for the Community Hall will be used to employ a part-time cleaner/caretaker on a temporary basis, with a potential start date of April 2021.

The successful bid submitted to the Covid Recovery Fund included costs that were associated with this project, including funding towards salary costs for the project officer, cleaning equipment and PPE.

Community Bus: Transport on the island was also compromised during this period with the suspension of the community bus until August 2020. Financial assistance was provided by Transport Scotland's Covid Support grant, which continued throughout this financial year. All bar one of the drivers were furloughed for several months but in August 2020 the service resumed, albeit with Covid-19 restrictions and requirements in place. Valuable advice was sought from the Community Transport Association to provide as safe a service as possible. Some seats were removed from the buses and numbers restricted to comply with Government social distancing requirements.

During this period the Trust applied for and was awarded a grant from Orkney Island Council's Community Transport Grant. Additionally, the Trust tendered for and were awarded (in April 2021) the contract to operate a one day per week public bus service on the island.

The Trust continued to participate in the ReFlex project through its collaboration with Community Energy Scotland. The two electric people carriers that formed part of this project arrived just weeks before the Covid-19 pandemic shut down the whole service. However, during this period they proved their value by being utilised for various activities that the Trust undertook as a response to the pandemic. This included the delivery of prescriptions to reduce footfall to the island's Health Centre, of hot meals, supporting an initiative by the Haey Hope Club and delivery of library books in partnership with the Island Liaison Officer.

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The implementation of infrastructure associated with the EVs and funded through the ReFlex project, included an upgrade of the electricity supply at the Community Hall and the installation of new rapid charging facilities.

Community Funds: Applications to the main Community fund were few as community groups were limited in their activities. However, two groups, the Friends of the Hoy Kirk and the Longhope Lifeboat Museum Trust received funding for the continued employment of staff so that their archiving and key operations could continue despite the pandemic.

Applications into the Training and Learning Fund (TLF) remained high with a total £11,186 awarded to island residents enabling them to undertake many varied activities. These included music lessons, sea faring tickets, construction certificates, and qualifications in astrology, cooking, horticulture, and counselling.

Digital Connectivity: During lockdown poor connectivity hampered communication for all groups and residents on the island. This has been a long-term problem on Hoy and Walls, with Scottish Government initiatives failing to provide any adequate solutions. The Trust will continue to liaise with the Community Council and other relevant organisations.

Youth, Leisure and Heritage: The development of the Longhope Playpark has progressed little this year. However, proposals submitted to Orkney Islands Council by the Playgroup sub-group were accepted. OIC have prepared a lease but negotiations regarding the start date of the agreement are ongoing.

Community Engagement and Development plan: Unfortunately, the launch of the draft version of the Community Action Plan was scheduled for the end of March 2020 and had to be cancelled. No further work has been undertaken on the development plan in this financial year, although issues experienced during lockdown will add valuable information to feed into it.



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Trust update: As noted throughout this report, the Covid 19 pandemic and national lockdown affected some of the Trust's projects and operations. Staff were forced to work from home and some adjustments had to be made to maintain the efficient running of the organisation. Some issues were identified, not least problems of communication but some solutions to the digital connectivity issues experienced by the directors and staff were addressed to ensure that all could keep in touch to minimise any disruption. Despite everything, staff and the directors rose to the challenge and the effect on the Trust was relatively minimal and financially, the Trust remained in a good position.

I would like to thank all the directors, staff and volunteers for stepping up and rising to the challenge over this last year. None of this could have been achieved without the hard work and determination of all.

Debs Jaques