
ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

**BUTE AND COWAL AREA
COMMITTEE**

**DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC
GROWTH**

1 DECEMBER 2020

Dunoon CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) – Year 4 Update

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of Dunoon Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (Dunoon CARS).
- 1.2 As a heritage-led initiative, the focus of Dunoon CARS is to regenerate a defined area of Dunoon's town centre, through support to property owners to return historic buildings to a good state of repair. Training to enhance construction skills, and events to celebrate the culture and history of Dunoon are also integral components of the CARS programme.
- 1.3 Dunoon CARS will be delivered over a five-year period and will conclude on 30th June 2022. It is a partnership programme, funded by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Argyll and Bute Council, with a cumulative value of £1.9m, £1.6m of which is being made available to property owners through the offer of grant.
- 1.4 The project is currently in year 4 of 5 and as such substantial progress has been made to date, with 10 training and event projects having been facilitated, 11 shopfront grants having been awarded, 3 of which have been completed, 4 small repair grants having been awarded and the refurbishment of 1 large-scale tenement building having been completed. A further two tenement repair projects are scheduled to start imminently.
- 1.5 The project is facilitated by fully funded officer support.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members of Bute and Cowal Area Committee note and consider the content of the report.

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Dunoon CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) – Year 4 Update

3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of Dunoon Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (Dunoon CARS).
- 3.2 The project is now in its fourth year and is progressing well. All project activity is carried out in accordance with the guidance set out by Historic Environment Scotland (HES). Works are checked for quality against, HES Standard of Repair guidelines and due diligence with regards to project and financial management is followed at all times.
- 3.3 The arrival of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and consequential restrictions implemented by the Scottish and UK Governments have impacted on project timelines. In recognition of this, a 3 month project extension has been agreed with HES. The overarching effects of the pandemic highlight the importance of the project and its ability to form a critical component of the town's economic recovery.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That members of Bute and Cowal Area Committee note and consider the content of the report.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 Project activity is being delivered in accordance with the outputs agreed with Historic Environment Scotland (HES), and which are reviewed by the funder on a quarterly basis.
- 5.2 The project is primarily a grants administration scheme, which involves working closely with property owners to support them make repairs, which are often substantial in scale, to their property. Through offering support in this way, historic properties are safeguarded for the future, and the visual appearance of the town centre is lifted. The project seeks to offer training and awareness raising opportunities to upskill in the use of traditional construction materials and

techniques, and to promote and celebrate the history and heritage of Dunoon.

5.3 The following provides a description of the work and activity undertaken to date.

5.4 Priority Building Repair Grant

- **65-67 Argyll Street** - The full scale repairs to the roof, lead works, stone works, cast iron goods, associated timber repairs and rot works were completed in March 2020.
- **35 Argyll Street** – Fabric repairs to the roof, rot works and rainwater goods are currently being undertaken.
- **81-87 Argyll Street** – The full scale repairs required to the roof and rainwater goods, along with localised masonry repairs are due to commence in winter 2020.
- **106-110 Argyll Street** – Works are progressing to assess the condition of this building and determine the cost of works.

5.5 Shopfront Restoration Scheme - Three shopfront grants were awarded in 2019 to the owners of, **Bookpoint**, **Kent's of Dunoon** and **Gibson's Electrical**. All onsite works are complete, and support is being provided to update the respective, Google My Business and Google Street View listings to provide the most up to date and relevant information online. Three further grants have been made towards repairing and restoring, **Girard's Jewellers**, **Right Medicine Pharmacy** and **The Beauty Box**. Works on Girard's and Right Medicine Pharmacy commenced in August 2020, and work to the Beauty Box has been scheduled for January 2021.

5.6 Complementary Initiatives

- **Information Events** - Information events have sought to focus on the repair and maintenance of traditional buildings and shopfronts, with a view to supporting property owners in carrying out visual inspections and finding suitable contractors. 189 people have participated in these events to date.
- **Shop Focussed Events** – A Visual Merchandising Event was held with 18 business owners in 2019 to explore ideas and provide tips for store design, window displays and visual merchandising. This was followed by an open day, which asked people to share their memories of Dunoon and also a week-long, street-long exhibition, celebrating the Shopkeepers of Argyll Street. The project was a collaboration with Castle House Museum, and held in conjunction with the Architecture Fringe. Over 500 people visited the trail and were very enthusiastic in their feedback. Over a month in early 2020, Dunoon Burgh Hall hosted an exhibition showcasing the work of the traditional signwriter. The exhibition was visited by a number of shopkeepers in Dunoon who have since commissioned the artist to carry out work to their shops. This was followed by an evening lecture on the history of traditional shopfronts. The evening talk, attended by 17 people, focussed on why traditional shops should be celebrated and cared for, and fittingly took place in the gallery surrounded by Frank Carty's, Traditional Signwriting Exhibition.
- **Doors Open Day** - Macpherson's Imperial Tea Room was opened as part of Doors Open Day in September 2019. Having closed over 20 years ago, the space has lain vacant for a number of years and piqued the interest of 107 visitors.
- **Traditional Building Skills Course** – Dunoon CARS has been instrumental in the delivery of a highly successful traditional building skills course in collaboration

with: HES, Argyll College UHI, Dunoon Grammar School and Developing the Young Workforce. Six students from Dunoon Grammar School worked on an outbuilding within the grounds of the Burgh Hall, with the help and oversight of local contractor, John Browne (Strone). The students worked through a number of modules including design/architecture, stone masonry, carpentry and joinery, and painting and decorating. Stone masons from Glasgow Cathedral also worked with the students on the stone masonry module to repair and consolidate the stonework to the outbuilding. On completion of this course, five students received qualifications. It is hoped that this will be continued in future academic years and work is therefore taking place with Argyll College UHI, Dunoon Grammar School and HES to look at the logistics of running the initiative for a second year, once COVID-19 related constraints can be relaxed.

- **Scottish Government Town Centre Funding** – Following a first tranche of Town Centre Fund monies, which saw the enhanced illumination of Dunoon's, Argyll and Castle Gardens, a second tranche of funding will enable the Dunoon CARS shopfront grant pot to be bolstered by £10,000, and £45,500 to further enhance the bandstand area and include additional elements of illumination.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 To date, Dunoon CARS has supported the setting up of 6 tenemental owners' associations, completed the full-scale repair of 1 priority building project, completed 3 shopfront projects to a high standard, and involved 837+ people directly in a range of complementary initiatives, including secondary school pupils, shopkeepers and homeowners.
- 6.2 Dunoon CARS continues to deliver against the outputs agreed with Historic Environment Scotland, taking cognisance of all funder requirements, to ensure due diligence is followed and all relevant criteria is met.
- 6.3 The programme seeks to make Dunoon a more attractive place in which to live, work, visit and invest, and performs a critical function in supporting the town's economic recovery.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 **Policy** - The Outcome Improvement Plan, Local Development Plan, Economic Strategy and Economic Recovery Plan support town centre regeneration and a diverse and thriving economy.
- 7.2 **Financial** - Argyll and Bute Council funding of £500,000 is committed. Historic Environment Scotland have committed £1,002,348.

Of the £1,502,348.00 budget, £630,389.83 is committed to date. Funding drawn down to date amounts to: £537,111.00.
- 7.3 **Legal** - Grant contracts will be provided to third parties.

- 7.4 **HR** - A dedicated project officer has been recruited for the duration of the project and salary costs are included within the project budget.
- 7.5 **Fairer Scotland Duty:**
- 7.5.1 Equalities / Fairer Scotland Duty - None
 - 7.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None
 - 7.5.3 Islands – None
- 7.6 **Risk** - That grant schemes are undersubscribed or that projects run over time or budget. These risks will be carefully monitored and mitigation measures introduced on a case by case basis. The risks associated with the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic will be constantly reviewed and Government guidance continually monitored.
- 7.7 **Customer Service** - The Council is responsible for administering Dunoon CARS grants on behalf of Historic Environment Scotland and for ensuring due diligence in the performance of its duties.

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APPENDICES

None