
Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust – Progress Report

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the progress and future plans of Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT). Argyll and Bute Council confirmed support for ACT in December 2012, a Development Officer was appointed in September 2013 for an initial 18 months and ACT was formally launched in April 2014.
- 1.2 A paper to SMT in November 2014 outlined ACT's intention to achieve charitable status, draw up a 3-year business and marketing plan, establish a brand identity and online presence, open a membership scheme and introduce the charity with a programme of launch events. These objectives have been achieved and ACT is moving towards a second phase of development.
- 1.3 Approaching the end of its first year in operation ACT has delivered and is developing a range of projects in partnership with many organisations across Argyll and Bute. Its key role is as a strategic and independent facilitator, combining existing and new projects resulting in increased and broader ranging project benefits and greater capacity and chances of achieving sustainability for initiatives across the area.
- 1.3 After one year in operation ACT has secured more external project funding than the core funding agencies have collectively contributed for its initial three years.
- 1.4 Securing ongoing core funding is still proving challenging and all opportunities for income generation are being pursued.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper is for noting.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and NHS Highland confirmed their commitment to support ACT in December 2012 as a result of recommendations identified through an extensive consultation and Feasibility Study. A Development Officer was appointed in September 2013 and the Trust was formally launched in April 2014. www.act-now.org.uk
- 1.2 ACT has been awarded charitable status and is established as a SCIO with a Board made up of community and agency representatives supported by an Advisory Group. ACT has one member of staff who works from SNH offices in Lochgilphead.
- 1.3 ACT has the following objectives which align with Argyll and Bute's Single Outcome Agreement, particularly Objectives 1, 2 and 3 and 5.
- To care for and enhance our environment - working strategically and locally.
 - To encourage people to enjoy and benefit from our environment.
 - To encourage investment that will improve our environment.
 - To share ideas on how to care for, enhance and enjoy our environment.
 - To increase opportunities for local people such as work, training and volunteering.
 - To work in partnership with individuals or groups with an interest in our environment.
- 1.4 Throughout its first year of operation, the key role which has emerged for ACT is as an independent and strategic body facilitating projects across the area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This paper is for noting.

3.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 In its first year of operation, ACT has achieved the following:

4.1.1 Brand identity, website and social media presence, governance and management procedures



4.1.2 Your Act/Act Alfresco

Two very successful social media based campaigns designed to raise awareness of ACT and distribute seedcorn funding to groups across the area.



Lorn Natural History Group “Acting Alfresco” and North Bute Primary School entering “Your Act” competition.

4.1.3 Kilmartin Glen Trails

Initially a path upgrade project, which was developed to include setting a series of geocaches which have proved to be extremely popular, and running a programme of art workshops to create “treasures” to be found on our upgraded and newly signed routes. We then organised a programme of guided summer walks to further promote use of the routes and encourage physical activity.

4.1.4 Partnerships

ACT has established a positive relationship with many of the key and emerging groups and projects across the area, working to establish where and if ACT can support, develop or share what they are doing.

A broad range of projects have been proposed and there has generally been a very positive response to the launch of ACT.

4.2 Concerns raised in our first year have been:

- Core funding – from a funder’s perspective, adding this element makes our project costs high. From a project group’s perspective it can create mistrust. Therefore securing ACT Core Funds is proving challenging if we want to work as positively as we can with funders and project groups.
- Competition for funding – we have endeavoured not to compete against community or local groups. For this reason we have avoided certain funding streams, and only progressed projects where we can ensure the benefits will be widespread and that our approach is strategic and aligns

closely with SOA objectives.

4.3 The following projects are at final stage of development due for implementation during 2015/16.

4.3.1 ACT Project Teams

ACT Project Team is a social enterprise trading within ACT charity which will be ready for implementation early summer 2015. There will be teams based in Oban and Helensburgh delivering access and environmental projects and practical work around social housing developments. ACT has worked with West Highland Housing Association, Dunbritton Housing Association, the Employability Teams, SNH, FCS and Argyll and Bute Council to develop the proposal which from the outset will provide work placements for 4 x environmental assistants (which can be taken up by apprentices, volunteers and long term unemployed), provide 4 x 12-month trainee placements plus 2 supervisors and 1 x manager post.

4.3.2 The model is designed to become self-sufficient over three years, and build towards establishing additional units across Argyll and Bute. ACT Project Teams are being incorporated as an element in other Argyll and Bute Council funding projects, including Economic Development's European Social Fund bid.

4.3.3 Rhododendron Management

We will submit two funding applications addressing rhododendron management. One is to Heritage Lottery Fund, which will consolidate and progress with work started by FCS in Glen Creran with a view to completely eradicating the species within that area.

The second proposal is to make an application for Interreg funds to develop a suite of approaches to community rhododendron management at a range of sites across Argyll. We are working with community groups, FCS, SNH, Argyll Fisheries Trust and Argyll and Bute Council's European Funding Unit to develop this project which if the bid is successful would launch in Spring 2016.

4.4 Branching out

Branching Out is an innovative partnership programme between FCS and NHS which provides woodland activities on referral for mental health services which has proved very successful in Perthshire and Highland. We have developed a three year proposal to tailor the programme for Argyll, establish a network of trained leaders and consolidate links with Community Health Mental Teams, Healthy Living Networks and Community Woodlands Association.

4.5 Projects under development include:

Tighnabruaich Path Network - improving a network of well signposted, mapped and maintained paths around the Tighnabruaich area. We hope to attract external and developer funding for the works and use the pilot project as a showcase for other communities to refer to and deliver in their own areas.

Long Distance Routes – we are working with a number of the long distance routes in Argyll and would like to further develop ideas to address the collective

maintenance, marketing and improvement needs that the routes have to contend with.

Your Act/Alfresco Campaign 2015

Following the success of our 2014 campaigns, we will be launching one for Spring/Summer 2015 at our AGM on May 15th at Portavadie Marina.

4.5 Finance

4.5.1 Agency contributions:

following confirmed in 2013 for core and project funds until September 2016:

Argyll and Bute Council	£42,000
Forestry Commission Scotland	£25,000
Scottish Natural Heritage	£30,000
NHS Highland	£30,000

4.5.2 Additional financial support for specific projects has been awarded:

ACT Project Teams

SNH	£20,000
FCS	£20,000
Argyll and Bute Council	£20,000
People in Communities Fund	£131,530
Skills Development Scotland	£8400
WHHA/Dunbritton Housing Association	£46,000

Oban- Tyndrum Route

SNH	£15,000 (tbc)
Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (ScotGov)	£15,000

Kilmartin Glen Trails/ACT Summer Walks

Awards for All	£10,000
A&BC Access/CWSS	£4,000
Dalriada Project	£500
FCS	£4314
Paths for All	£550
Heart of Argyll Tourism Alliance	£500
NHS Highland	£500

4.5.3 **Income generation**

A source of ongoing income would relieve pressure on project funding applications and on ACT's supporting agencies. All renewables developers have been written to asking if either they could contribute to ACT, or could discuss community investment options. ACT is one of four bodies listed in the "Review of the Argyll and Bute Guidance on Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy" as a potential recipient of regional funds. (Review currently open for consultation).

4.5.4 Memberships and donations

Membership fees have been set low (£5) in order to encourage take up. Non-Argyll residents are able to become “friends of ACT”. We are currently developing a range of membership benefits.

4.6 Board and Staff

There have been three changes in Board members since the initial 8 Trustees were appointed.

Charles Dixon-Spain and Hugh Fife have stood down due to other commitments, and Carol Muir of NHS has moved to another post and has handed over her duties to Yennie Van Oostende, NHS Health Improvement Specialist based on Bute. New Board members are Grace Ferguson, Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Director of Mental Health Services for Argyll and Bute Hospital (retired), Fiona MacPhail of Tighnabruaich Sailing School and member of Argyll of the Isles Tourism Co-operative has also joined.

ACT Development Officer (Julie Young, on secondment from Argyll and Bute Council) initial 18 month contract has been continued until September 2016.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 ACT has met its initial targets and is now a firmly established community led partnership that is helping to deliver a number of key SOA outcomes. ACT is uniquely placed as an independent and strategic body for environmental, access and rural development projects and has a proven ability to attract external funding. The key challenge for ACT in the final pilot year of the partnership is to secure sufficient core funding to be able to continue and operate the implementation of projects. ACT will also continue to raise its membership and look for additional opportunities to attract external funding to Argyll and Bute.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy None
- 6.2 Financial None directly arising from this report
- 6.3 Legal None
- 6.4 HR None
- 6.5 Equalities None
- 6.6 Risk None
- 6.7 Customer Service None

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