

SGOIL AN IOCHDAIR AGUS A CHOIMHEARSNACHD

This is the third AGM of Sgoil an Iochdair agus a'Choimhearsnachd. Several projects identified in previous years are complete, or underway. Our most ambitious project to date, the upgrade of the school playing fields, is poised for the start of fundraising.

Just to recap, the association exists

1. To promote interest and participation in sport, and related recreation in the Iochdar area, especially in the interests of education, social welfare and health.
2. To assist in the coordination of various sports clubs and recreational organisations operating in the Iochdar area, both generally and in relation to specific projects.
3. To examine the available sports and recreation facilities in the Iochdar area as against current and anticipated need and to make applications to the local council, local enterprise company and any other appropriate body in this connection.
4. To liaise with the councils sports development staff in furtherance of these objects.
5. To raise funds for such charitable purposes as the association may deem appropriate.

Feasibility study

At the start of last year, we had a completed feasibility study, on which to base our project planning. The feasibility study concentrated on providing facilities for existing clubs, and to meet local need. The feasibility study covered 4 main areas:

1. School playing fields
2. Footpath and tree planting
3. The hall football pitch
4. Parking for the SUBAS show.

We then called a special meeting; we changed our constitution slightly so that we could register as a charitable organisation. As well as having some tax advantages, this would also enable us to access funds from a greater range of trusts and other charitable bodies.

Developing facilities

We identified several smaller elements within the feasibility study that were amenable to being undertaken as mini-projects.

1. Designs and text commissioned for the walk leaflet, which can also be used for signboards. (ACE grant) **Project Completed March 2001**
2. Historical Circular Walk leaflet (Western Isles NHS Board health promotion department) **Project Completed April 2002**
3. Tree planting and seating area at Rubha Chlachain (ACE challenge fund & WIE) **Project in progress August 2002**. This included a very wet and happy collaboration with the junior youth club, and local volunteers, who planted the trees. A millennium Earthwatch volunteer, Barbara MacAulay, assisted with the costs of running the tree planting.
4. Seating/picnic area at Garrieganachy (ACE grant) **Project Completed May 2002**
5. Drystone wall at Rubha Chlachain (Lottery Action Grant) **Project in progress August 2002**

6. Upgrade to changing rooms at Iochdar School, in partnership with the School board (New Opportunities Fund) **Funds applied for August 2002**

Forming and supporting clubs

The junior athletics club was formed at the start of the year, and ran through 2001-2002, through the PTA, for insurance reasons. Several adults have completed training courses as assistant instructors. The club will restart this year. There is a need to develop the club to include 4-6 athletic meets per year, and to broaden the number of participating coaches.

Other clubs with whom we have maintained links during the year include the junior youth club, the croileagan, the senior youth club, the junior football club, Bowling Club and the North End Football Club. The local Rugby Club has also approached us with several ideas for the year ahead.

Preliminary work on the school playing fields project

An outline application for the upgrade to the school playing fields has been submitted to SportScotland. They feel the project fits their criteria, and that we should work up and submit a full proposal. This is very encouraging indeed. The council's legal department is still preparing a lease agreement for the site.

The total funds required are shown in the copied application form. We need to raise in the region of £137,000 privately, including local fundraising.

Fundraising

Apart from the funds raised through grant applications, we have been raising money through the local community.

1. Sales of local telephone directory
2. Sales of gardening book

This has not been high profile fundraising.

The year ahead

How do we keep user groups involved in the development of the school project? Potential user groups currently include the junior football club, the junior youth club, the athletics club, the croileagan, the rugby club (for a junior section) and the school. Should we develop a website?

Apart from ensuring that the current projects are completed on time, our main facilities program will concentrate on getting the school facilities up and running. This includes getting the changing rooms upgraded in 2003. The capital projects program from the council means that the playing fields themselves may not be considered until 2004-2005, which leaves us 2 years to raise and secure the total of over £500,000. £137,000 will need to be raised from private funds and local fund-raising. This is a daunting task, and the fundraising will need to be extremely high profile.

The project following on from this would be to upgrade the changing and showering facilities at Iochdar hall. There may be funds available from the council to include

public toilets in a new build, which would have to look at upgrading the Talla nan Iochdar septic tank, which lies on private property. A separate project leader could conceivably develop this project alongside our existing projects.

We also need to support any clubs in our area; we have made a start in this area, but there is scope for being more focussed, and more proactive.

Conclusion

Through the year we have achieved a lot. The funding secured at the end of last year has been spent on some of the smaller elements of the overall project, including the footpath, boardwalk, walk leaflet and formation of the junior athletics club.

With physical evidence of our success, and with future plans and projects clearly outlined, we are now on the way to achieving our objectives. In the year ahead, we need to complete the process of securing the funding for the playing fields at the school, to oversee the completion of existing projects, and to consider which other projects could be initiated.

In particular, we need to consider how to raise funds locally, with a high-profile event to highlight our aims and fundraising target.

We also need to continue to engage with local clubs, responding to their needs.

As the committee expands and becomes more complex, the use of small subgroups will become more important to our success.