



Annual Report for AGM

Monday 6 November 2023

A Positive Transition

Over the course of the past year Dunoon Community Development Trust has transitioned from receiving direct support from [SURF, Scotland's Regeneration Forum](#), through their **Dunoon Area Alliance** initiative, to being an independently funded organisation employing its own staff team. The board of trustees would like to extend their sincere thanks to SURF for their investment in Dunoon, which made the establishment of DCDT and its subsequent funding success possible.

Membership

DCDT currently has 181 members, 161 Ordinary and 20 Associate (an increase of 41 from the last AGM), and seven Trustees.

Community Action Plan

The Community Action Plan developed through the work of Dunoon Area Alliance has been adapted to reflect Scotland's Place & Wellbeing Outcomes. Work has started on reviewing the Community Action Plan and on researching how we can support the development of a **Local Place Plan*** for Dunoon.

**Local Place Plans were introduced by the [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), which contains a new right for communities to produce their own plans as part of the new Scottish planning system. Local Place Plans contain the community's proposals for the development and use of land, and provide a new opportunity for communities to feed into the planning system with ideas and proposals. Similar to Community Action Plans, they can help communities understand what they want their area to be like in the future and help to develop positive community identity.*

Sustainability

With the SURF Facilitator post concluding in March 2023, DCDT began the search for funding to replace this support and maintain the considerable momentum achieved to date. Two major applications developed in 2022 were both successful in attracting funding:

- **Scottish Government Investing in Communities Round 2**

Approved in April 2023, this funding provides 1.5 support worker posts until March 2026 along with budgets for a shopfront base, a community website and a programme of community engagement to develop a Local Place Plan.

- **National Lottery Communities Fund Community Led Strand**

Also approved in April 2023, this funding supports one part-time support worker over three years to develop work with volunteers on priority themes identified by the community and related to wellbeing.

Recruitment & Project Administration

With the positive news of funding being awarded came the need to establish DCDT as an employer. A significant amount of work then followed to:

- establish a full suite of employment policies and procedures
- create a set of job descriptions, person specifications and employment contracts
- organise and deliver a fair and open recruitment process led by trustees
- develop appropriate systems for financial management, payroll and grant claims
- support staff induction
- establish Key Performance Indicators for monitoring and evaluation
- secure temporary desk space in the Queen's Hall

The three members of staff were appointed in June and July 2023. Sincere thanks go to the volunteer trustees and SURF team members who gave their time to leading the recruitment process.

PROJECT UPDATES

Communication & Community Connections

The need for improved information sharing and communication continues to be an important issue across our community. Effective information sharing is relevant to all sectors (charities, community groups, businesses and public sector bodies) and impacts on local people and visitors alike. DCDT is developing a multi-faceted approach to improve communication across the town utilising websites, social media, e-newsletters, printed materials, the local paper and radio, a town centre presence and in person connections. Staff support is central to the development and delivery of an effective communication strategy for the town.

DCDT e-newsletters and social media posts continue to receive very positive feedback from organisations and individuals. There are now 608 contacts for our regular Mailchimp e-newsletter (up from 420 in 2022) and we receive regular requests from groups and organisations to include information in our communications.

In December 2022 DCDT launched a test project developed in partnership with local design company **Tacit Tacit** and funded with support from Scotland's Towns Partnership Scotland Loves Local Fund. **What's On Dunoon**, a community-run events website has since hosted:

- over than 1500 events and activities
- 50 individuals signed up to add their events
- events and activities from 127 venues across Cowal
- 7100 individual users (6900 from across the UK; 200 international)
- 79,647 views

What's On Dunoon is currently being enhanced to improve the ability to search by date and venue. It will be expanded further in the coming months as part of our funded project to include information on community support services, clubs and groups.

Grow Food, Grow Dunoon – Shared Food Growing

Led by local volunteers in partnership with Kirn Primary School, **Grow Food, Grow Dunoon** has been supported to establish a shared food growing site within the school grounds. Learning support has been delivered weekly to primary school pupils. The project has been visited by other schools, MSPs and national organisations interested in this shared approach to organic food growing in a community. Martin Gerrish, the lead volunteer with Grow Food Grow Dunoon, was invited to speak at the annual SURF conference in September 2023.

Over this second growing season produce sales at summer markets and on site brought in £780 in fundraising to cover ongoing costs for seeds and compost.

A second site visit from the Royal Horticulture Society's **Keep Scotland Beautiful** scheme resulted the Grow Food Grow Dunoon being awarded the highest assessment achievable – 'outstanding'. Congratulations and thanks go to the volunteers for this achievement.

Discussions are now underway to transfer to a new site as Kirn Primary School takes on full responsibility for the growing space.

Dunoon Bothy Project / Dunoon Active Travel Network

The Dunoon Bothy Project is delivered by **Cycling UK** with funding accessed through **Argyll & Bute Council Sustainable Transport Team** from Transport Scotland's Smarter Places Smarter Choices fund. The Dunoon Bothy Project was set up as a direct result of partnership support for an Active Travel Network from Dunoon Area Alliance.

DCDT co-ordinates a Dunoon Bothy advisory group to support development and the promotion of activities. Funding has been continued over this year for the part-time Bothy Co-ordinator post to organise e-bike trials and support trained volunteers to provide regular

led cycles and health walks for individuals and groups. In 2023 the original post holder moved on to a new opportunity and DCDT was involved with Cycling UK in the recruitment of a replacement support worker who is now in post and developing a new programme of activities.

Through this Active Travel partnership work Dunoon Bothy Project was identified as a potential tenant for the Castle Gatehouse in Castle Gardens. This tenant option provided Argyll & Bute Council with a business case to attract external funding to complete the building's restoration as an Active Travel Hub for the town. The refurbishment work, led by **Dunoon Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)**, is due for completion in December 2023. Discussions are underway on the option of DCDT taking on the lease of the building as a base to be shared with Dunoon Bothy Project.

Dunoon Active Travel Network has continued to develop with support from **Social Enterprise Academy Scotland** through local design company **Tacit Tacit**. An Active Travel workshop brought relevant community groups, organisations and businesses together in October 2022 to review existing resources and to identify potential opportunities for development through partnership action.

A proposal has been developed with the Improvement Service Shaping Places for Wellbeing project team to create a **Behaviour Change Plan** for Dunoon. This will utilise the Active Travel Network and involve a programme of inclusive community engagement. Argyll & Bute Council Sustainable Transport Team has approved grant funding to DCDT to deliver this work.

Connecting Heritage

Dunoon Area Alliance provides support to The American Years Revisited (AYR) project and occasional advice to Castle House Museum and Historic Kilmun on grant applications and project planning.

The **American Years Revisited** project continues to develop its website and podcast series recording the heritage of the 31-year US Navy presence on the Holy Loch. Their pop-up exhibition is used to tour community events to share and gather interesting stories. In November 2022 AYR shared a **Community Chat Shop** on Argyll Street with DCDT to test the work involved in providing a drop-in heritage exhibition. Four weeks of high street presence prompted interesting conversations and allowed the volunteers to share their display materials.

DCDT was a delivery partner in **Dunoon Castle Archaeology Weekend** with DigVentures archaeology, Argyll & Bute Council CARS project and Castle House Museum. This initiative was funded by The Castles Trust and provided a weekend of geophysical archaeology and family activities in Castle Gardens from Friday 21st to Sunday 23 July engaging local people

with heritage, regeneration and volunteering. The event helped to highlight the importance of Castle Gardens as a community asset.

Outdoor Activity & Play Provision – Skate park Working Group

Initial discussions with a small group of volunteers led to a meeting on site at Dunoon Skate Park with representatives of Argyll & Bute Council to discuss the need for repairs and improvements and ideas for development. No further action has been taken as yet.

Community Engagement

West Bay Regeneration / We are building a Beach Hut project

This project was led by **Tacit-Tacit** with **Dunoon CARS** and partly funded through the Development Trust from **Scotland's Towns Partnership Scotland Loves Local** fund.

A small grant of £2500 has been awarded from **The Dandelion Trust** to support the development of an outdoor exhibition of findings from the Beach Hut project in spring 2024. It is hoped that an Environmental Management Plan for West Bay can be discussed and agreed to ensure appropriate control of the flora on the shingle shore as part of a wider regeneration plan for West Bay.

DCDT has been working with Claire Hallybone at Argyll & Bute Council CARS to enhance the opportunity for volunteer railing painting along the West Bay adding traditional skills support. A&BC Roads & Amenities department has given permission for training and volunteer painting to be taken forward by DCDT. This activity is weather-dependent and a WhatsApp group has been set up to call for volunteers when the conditions are suitable.

Community Conversations - Soup-er Sundays

A series of Community Conversation events were held in partnership with Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust between November 2022 and February 2023. SOUP-er Sundays brought trust members and other community members together to talk about our town, while providing some practical support with food and warmth. Support organisations were invited to attend and join the conversations. Each event was well received with attendance ranging from 20 to 80. A new set of SOUP-er Sunday dates has now been set for winter 2023/24.

Establishing an Information Base

DCDT is aiming to establish a town centre information base as part of the funded project. A longlist has been drawn up detailing the vacant premises both for lease and for sale in Dunoon and Kirn. These options have then been reviewed to consider the option of a community purchase. Six premises are being given further consideration and development ideas from ongoing action are being explored. In the short term staff are based in the Queen's Hall.

Additional Community Funding

When **Kirn Gala** committee was winding up Dunoon Community Development Trust offered to hold their remaining funds and ring-fence these for similar activities to be led by Dunoon Grammar School in coming years. As a result, £8962.61 was transferred to the DCDT bank account.

When **Dunoon Community Council** reconvened the sum of £576.78 that had been ring-fenced for a number of years for cycling related activities was transferred to the DCDT account for use on the Dunoon Bothy project.

Strategic Planning & Partnership Action

Dunoon Town Team Network

Through the work of Dunoon Area Alliance the Dunoon Town Team Network was established. The aim of the Town Team is to provide a neutral setting in which representatives of groups and organisations involved in regeneration action across the Dunoon area can share information on their current priorities and explore opportunities for joint action. By making introductions and growing connections between workers and group representatives we are helping to improve communication, build trust and local knowledge.

Two network meetings held in 2023 were attended by 35 organisations and service providers.

Consultation and engagement with other relevant projects

DCDT has contributed to consultation meetings on:

- Argyll & Bute Council Rural Growth Deal
- Improvement Service Shaping Places for Wellbeing Project for Dunoon
- Dunoon to Hunter's Quay Active Travel Route Consultation

Through our connection to SURF, DCDT was asked to host a ministerial visit to Dunoon by Joe Fitzpatrick, Minister for Local Government Empowerment & Planning. This involved a town tour, a visit to The POP Shop CIC and Grow Food Grow Dunoon at Kirn Primary School. A round table discussion at Dunoon Burgh Hall involved representatives of Scottish Government, Argyll & Bute Council, Dunoon Presents BID, Scotland's Towns Partnership, Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust and DCDT.

Support for other projects

Where possible, DCDT has offered support, advice and introductions for other local community groups and organisations. These include Dunoon & Cowal Heritage Trust; Historic Kilmun; Cowalfest; Cowal Open Studios; Oban Community Council.

Ann B. Campbell, Partnership & Development Manager

06 November 2023