

# MORAR COMMUNITY TRUST REVIEW - FEBRUARY 2018

## Lovat Memorial Field

Two years ago, after we had completed the demolition of the old hall, we resumed our contact with HIE, through their Strengthening Communities Programme, as we now expected to be able to focus on delivering the Games Field Pavilion (as per Feasibility Study). We were advised that we had a good case for achieving a Community Led Activity grant from the Big Lottery which would allow us to increase our capacity and prepare for the larger lottery bid but, meanwhile, we should update our Action Plan and deliver on smaller projects. In order to update the Action Plan we went wider than our membership and made a door to door survey of the whole village of Morar. On smaller projects we focussed on the Gala Day and also on the youth of the area through the Youth Shed Project and the Dance Master Project.

Meanwhile, the field lease became an issue as it is due to run out in 2019 and the current lessees are unable to continue due to age, ill health and death so, following consultation with the management group and Nevis Estates, we decided that MCT should consider taking on the lease and, with this in mind, have commissioned a study which is to report back in the summer.

The field has never been attractive to users as there are no facilities. Furthermore, early nurturance in its development was neglected by Highland Council, due to cutbacks, and the management group were eventually left to maintain a severely damaged asset. They commissioned a survey from SAC in order to ascertain the way forward and discovered their options were to create a superior field at great expense or improve it with a remedial programme at a lesser but significant expense. However, both these options are not fundable, at this stage, as there is so little time left in the lease.

A fundamental problem for the Lovat Memorial Field has been the challenges attached to rectifying inadequacies and mistakes made in the initial access rights/construction. There will be a solution but as there are complex land ownership issues involved there may be some time before resolution.

There is a medium term way forward in that planners feel that with some improvement to the visibility at the current access (providing those involved agree) modest club house arrangements could be agreed (including public toilets) and through acquisition of machinery and galvanising volunteer labour in the community so the field could be improved. To gauge support for this we are holding a Public Meeting in the Mallaig and Morar Community Centre on February 27<sup>th</sup>, at which Andrew Aitchison will represent Nevis Estates, Rory Dutton will represent Development Trusts Association, Duncan Kelly from Kelly Associates will represent Kilmallie Shinty developments, and Allan Henderson (councillor) will represent Highland Council

The Community Led Activity grant is what it says it is and there would certainly be much community effort in taking this route. In general, it can provide £150,000 over three years which would allow for a project worker and finance for the activity. From that total £50,000 maximum could be used for capital.

## **Youth Shed Project**

The Youth Shed has been completed but the concept is being developed. The shed is for the storage of sporting equipment, the purchase of which is ongoing, and there are also plans afoot to hold a rounders tournament in the summer. As well, there are plans to improve a section of the field in front of the shed which will, of course, provide a test example for how the rest of the field may be improved.

## **Dance Master Project**

The Dance Master Project culminated in a performance at the Gala Day by young local dancers who had been coached by the choreographer, Vincent Hantam of Scottish Ballet, and danced to music written especially for the occasion by Eddie McGuire a renowned composer. Of course, the whole event was a celebration of the life of a 19<sup>th</sup> century dance master who hailed from Retland and who created the graceful dances of the Hebrides.

## **Morar Gala Day**

The Gala Day is held at the May Bank Holiday weekend and is just a fun, family day for the community with, hopefully, this year the return of the Lochaber Wind Band.

## **Morar Community Trust Directors**

Andrew Carr, Grace Henderson, Mairi Maclean, David Newnham, Eleanor Read, Deirdre Roberts, Heather Simpson, Maureen Sutherland.

