



SUNART COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Keeping Sunart a great place to live, work & visit

WELCOME TO OUR SPRING/SUMMER 2026 ISSUE

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MAY 2026, ISSUE NO. 4

WELCOME

It has already been a busy year across SCC projects, with exciting progress taking place in woodland management, heritage, community spaces and local funding.

One of the biggest milestones has been the continued harvesting work at **Longrigg Community Woodland**. After years of planning and preparation, seeing activity on the ground marks a major step forward for this important community asset.

The **Sunart Rainforest Project** has also completed both its development phase and early delivery work, helping lay strong foundations for future restoration work across North Sunart.

Meanwhile, the **Craft Hub and Men's Shed** continue to grow as welcoming spaces for creativity, learning and connection, while projects including the **Strontian Playpark** fundraiser, **Oakwood** and the future **Heritage Hub** at Strontian Parish Church continue to gather momentum.

As always, thank you to everyone who continues to support SCC projects and community activity across Sunart.

STRONTIAN PLAYPARK

Exciting progress continues to be made towards the renovation of the Strontian Playpark, with fundraising efforts gathering real momentum over recent months.

The project aims to replace ageing equipment and create a safe, welcoming and accessible play space for local children and visiting families. The group behind the project has been working hard to secure funding, organise events and encourage wider community involvement.

As of the end of April, the project has raised an incredible £51,981 towards its overall target of £85,000. A major boost came through a fantastic £20,000 award from the Sunart Community Benefit Fund, alongside support from Sunart Community Council, Highland Council and many generous community donations and fundraising efforts.

One recent highlight was local runner Caitlin Hilder completing the Liverpool Half Marathon to raise money for the project, raising more than £1,200.

Well done also to the Playpark Committee for organising a successful Spring Sale fundraiser, photographed to the left, which brought the community together and raised further support for the project.

Amongst a number of fundraising ideas planned by the Committee, they are running a tea/coffee and home baking stall at the Sunart Show, and are looking for helpers, or any other ideas to fundraise on the day

As well as creating an improved play space for local families, the project is also seen as an important investment in the wider community, helping make the area an even more welcoming place for residents and visitors alike.

Thank you goes to everyone who has donated, volunteered, attended events or helped spread the word so far. Community support has already made a massive difference, and there is real excitement about what can be achieved over the coming months.

Further updates and fundraising information will continue to be shared through local noticeboards and social media.



OAKWOOD UPDATE

Oakwood has now reopened for the season and continues to provide a welcoming space for both local residents and visitors, opening seven days a week from 10am to 4pm this Spring and Summer, thanks to the support of our fantastic volunteer team.

We would like to say thank you to former Oakwood Manager Karyn Simpkinson for all her hard work, enthusiasm and dedication over the years, and wish her all the very best for the future.

We are delighted to welcome Laura Wilson as the new Oakwood Manager. Laura has been involved with Oakwood since the beginning through both volunteering and selling her own glassware, and brings a real passion for local crafts and supporting small businesses.

“I’ve always had a real passion for local crafts and supporting small businesses, so it means a lot to be part of this in a bigger way,” says Laura.

“Having been involved in the shop since the beginning, both volunteering and selling my own glassware, it feels really special to now help shape Oakwood going forward.”

Oakwood continues to showcase talented makers from across the West Highland Peninsulas, with several exciting new suppliers joining this season, including ceramics from Isabel in Lochaline, woven willow work from Westerly Weave, and linocut prints from local artist Mark. We are also pleased to welcome new volunteer Aileen McCauley to the team.

The outside of Oakwood will soon be getting a fresh coat of paint thanks to recent funding from Sunart Community Benefit Fund, helping give the building a new look for the busy summer season.



STRONTIAN JETTY

Strontian Jetty continues to be a well-used community space for local residents, visitors and regular sea swimmers throughout the year.

One of the most popular ongoing activities is the regular Sunday swim group, which meets at the jetty every Sunday at 11am. New faces are always welcome.

A Jetty Users WhatsApp Group has also been established to help improve communication between users, coordinate maintenance activity and share updates relating to the jetty.

If you would like to be added to the group, please contact Alex Pykett.

For more jetty updates, follow @StrontianJetty&Slipway on Facebook.

STRONTIAN PATHS

The Sunart Footpath Volunteers continue to make a huge difference to local paths and outdoor spaces, with regular volunteer sessions helping improve access, safety and enjoyment across the area.

Over the past two years, volunteers have worked alongside the Lochaber Countryside Rangers on a wide range of practical improvements, from resurfacing well-used paths and clearing vegetation to repairing drainage and improving accessibility.

One recent session in March saw volunteers tackling vegetation clearance and ditch work around the Ardnastaing beach car park and old hatchery shed in Strontian.

The volunteer group has continued to build momentum, with local people contributing time, skills and plenty of wheelbarrow loads along the way. Recent years have seen significant improvements to routes including the Back Road in Strontian and Ardnastaing Beach path.

Thank you to everyone who has taken part in volunteer sessions over the past two years!



DUALCHAS - SUNART HERITAGE

It has been a hugely significant year for local heritage, following the successful community buyout of Strontian Parish Church through Sunart Community Company, with Dualchas - Sunart Heritage Group leading the vision for the building's future. After almost three years of negotiations, fundraising and community consultation, the sale was officially completed in July 2025 with strong support from the local community, the Scottish Land Fund and the Sunart Community Benefit Fund.

The aim is to preserve and renovate the historic building for future generations, creating a shared space that will continue as a place of worship while also becoming a Heritage Hub for the Sunart Archives and wider collections gathered by Dualchas over many years.



Since the buyout, volunteers have continued progressing archive work, heritage projects and community engagement activities.

In April, Dualchas hosted a successful open weekend at the church, giving people the opportunity to explore the building, view exhibitions and hear more about future plans.

Work is also ongoing on a local heritage trail, archive digitisation and new publications celebrating local history.

Dualchas continues to welcome volunteers and anyone interested in local heritage.

Further updates and a short film about the project can be found on the SCC Facebook page and YouTube channel.

CRAFT HUB & MEN'S SHED

The Craft Hub and Men's Shed continue to grow as welcoming community spaces supporting creativity, learning and social connection.

Thanks to successful funding applications, a number of improvements are now planned for the Hub, including additional roofing work to improve weather protection, a new outdoor gazebo workspace, and raised beds to support gardening and "Learning to Grow" sessions.

Workshops delivered in partnership with Urram have continued to be extremely popular, bringing people together through practical and creative activities including ceramics, wreath making, journalling, crochet and other craft sessions.

The project is about much more than simply learning new skills. It also supports wellbeing, confidence, social connection and community resilience.

Exciting plans are also progressing for the recently acquired Polloch site, which is intended to become a second community workshop space in future years.

The Men's Shed itself is nearing full opening, with final works and organisation currently underway.

Volunteers continue to play a huge role in supporting the project, and SCC would like to thank everyone who has contributed time, skills and energy to help develop the space.

Anyone interested in volunteering, sharing a skill or becoming involved is encouraged to contact our Craft Hub Coordinator Annie Harpur:

crafthub@sunartcommunitycompany.co.uk



SUNART RAINFOREST

The Sunart Rainforest Project has now successfully completed both its Development Phase and its early delivery work, funded through the Rainforest Restoration Fund and facilitated by SCC.

Over the past year, significant progress has been made towards landscape-scale rainforest restoration across North Sunart.

The project has delivered extensive habitat and herbivore impact surveys, invasive species mapping, woodland assessments and strategic planning work designed to support long-term ecological restoration.

In parallel, practical delivery work has included large-scale rhododendron control, deer management activity and the development of new propagation infrastructure for future community growing and restoration work. The project has also helped strengthen collaboration between landowners, community organisations, agencies and stakeholders across the area.

SCC would particularly like to thank Rory Sinclair, James Hilder, Alison Gainsford, Bruce Taylor and Euan Palmer for their significant work in helping manage and deliver the project over the past year.

The scale of work completed during both funding phases has created a strong evidence base and clear direction for future restoration activity over the coming decade.

The Working Group is now focusing on securing longer-term governance and funding arrangements to continue delivering coordinated rainforest restoration and habitat recovery work.

SCC would like to thank everyone involved in the project over the past year, including project partners, consultants, volunteers and working group members. The Sunart Rainforest Project represents a significant long-term opportunity to restore and protect one of Scotland's most important temperate rainforest landscapes.

LONGRIGG WOODLAND

Harvesting operations at Longrigg Community Woodland have continued to make strong progress throughout the spring, with significant visible changes now evident across the site.

The scale of activity highlights just how far this long-term community project has progressed following years of planning, consultation and preparation.

While harvesting continues, the woodland remains closed to public access for safety reasons. Heavy machinery is operating daily and all safety signage must be followed.

One of the major long-term aims of the community purchase has been improved local access to timber and firewood. Bulk lorry loads are currently available through Scottish Woodlands, while smaller community supplies are planned once harvesting operations are complete. Due to rising fuel and operational costs, local timber sales have become increasingly important in helping sustain the project and maintain planned activity.

Alongside harvesting work, SCC is currently developing a new Woodland Management Plan for Longrigg.

A public survey has been launched to gather community views and priorities, helping shape the future management of the woodland.

Community engagement events are also planned for June, where survey findings and future ideas will be discussed with local residents.

Volunteer sessions continue on the third Sunday of each month and remain a valuable way for people to get involved with practical woodland management and community activity.

Photo Credits to Calum McIntyre and Robert Dunn.

REGISTERED CHARITY NO: SCO39640, REGISTERED COMPANY: SC293485



SUNART COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND

The Sunart Community Benefit Fund (SCBF) continues to play a hugely important role in supporting community-led projects and local initiatives across Sunart.

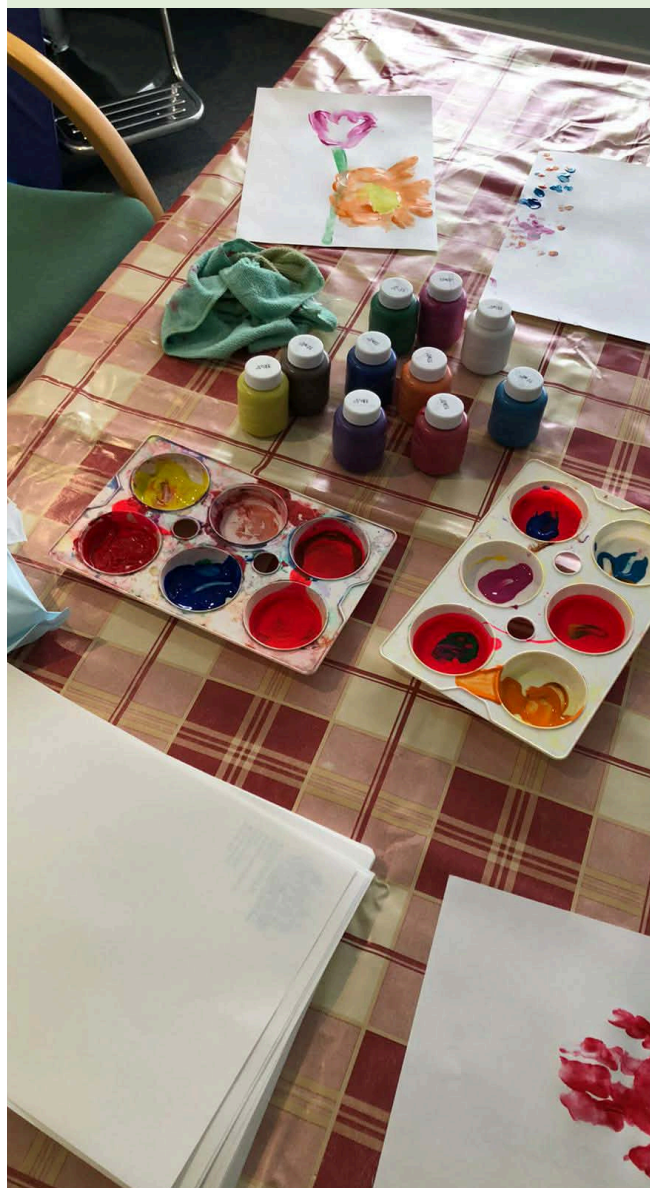
The Fund was created using annual profits generated by the community hydro scheme operated by Sunart Community Renewables (SCR). As rainfall varies year to year, so too does the amount available for distribution.

The Fund is administered by Sunart Community Company and overseen by a voluntary local panel made up of Sunart residents aged 16 and over.

Since its creation, the Fund has distributed more than £330,000 to projects across the area, supporting everything from local events, heritage and youth activities to woodland projects, resilience work and community facilities.

The most recent Spring Grant Round saw approximately £64,000 awarded to local projects and SCC initiatives. This included support for:

- Strontian Playpark
- Ewen's Room / Strontian Open Doors
- Urram & Ardnamurchan Childcare Action Group for the Sunart Work & Play Club
- Sunart Heritage Project
- Sunart Rainforest Project
- Fairies Walk lower bridge installation
- Paths development work
- Craft Hub & Men's Shed support
- Oakwood
- Jetty repairs and development



SUNART COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND CONTINUED

Supporting Sunart

The Fund continues to support projects that strengthen community wellbeing, facilities, learning opportunities and local resilience across the Sunart area. This is possible through the funds generated by the community hydro scheme.

Join the Panel

We are currently looking for new volunteer panel members. The Panel meets twice each year to review applications and help decide how funding is distributed locally.

It is a great opportunity to contribute to the community and support projects making a real difference. Email enquiries@sunartcommunitycompany.co.uk to find out more!

Keep an eye on SCC communications and social media for details of future funding rounds and panel recruitment opportunities.

SUNART SOCIALS

SCC has hosted a number of successful community events over the past year, including our 20th Anniversary AGM and Celebration Ceilidh, which brought the community together to reflect on two decades of local projects and achievements.

Our annual Christmas Auction was also another fantastic evening, raising an incredible £2,909, including a record-breaking £23 for a single block of the legendary tablet. Huge thanks to everyone who donated, attended and supported these events.

Keep an eye on SCC social media channels and local noticeboards for details of upcoming events and engagement sessions, including the Longrigg Community Woodland engagement events taking place in Strontian on 19th and 20th June.



KEEPING SUNART A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT

Sunart Community Company is led by a voluntary Board of local people who help guide and support projects across the area. Together, they bring a wide range of professional experience, local knowledge and practical skills, shaping initiatives that benefit the wider Sunart community

Join the team: To find out more, please contact enquiries@sunartcommunitycompany.co.uk.



John Jones
CHAIR



Alison Gainsford
TREASURER



Nick Brooks
SECRETARY



Laura Cameron-MacGregor
DIRECTOR



Paul Sharples
DIRECTOR



Hollie Taylor
DIRECTOR



Simon Willis
DIRECTOR



FORMER DIRECTOR
James Hilder



Sarah Traynor
VICE-CHAIR



Neil Mellis
DIRECTOR



FORMER DIRECTOR
Rowena Henderson

James Hilder recently stepped down from the SCC Board after many years of dedicated service. We are hugely grateful for all his support over the years and are delighted he continues supporting local projects such as the playpark in a voluntary capacity.

We would also like to thank Rowena Henderson for her contribution during her time on the Board and for the support she gave to SCC projects and community events.

JOIN US - IT'S FREE!

Application for Membership (Free!) Scan the QR Code to complete online, or tear this page off and hand in to Oakwood Centre, Strontian.

I wish to apply for membership of the Sunart Community Company and can confirm that I support their aims and objectives as outlined in the Memorandum & Articles of Association (available on our website).

Please enrol me in the following membership category, (please tick one):

- Full Membership** I am resident within the Sunart catchment area and I am aged 16 years or over. I am entitled to vote at local government elections in the area.
- Junior Membership** I am resident within the Sunart catchment area and I am aged between 12 and 15 years.
- Associate Membership** I am not resident within the Sunart catchment area. I am aged 16 years or over.

I understand that membership is FREE and in the event of the Company being wound up, my liability will be limited to a maximum of £1 (one pound).

Full Name:.....

Address :.....

Postcode:..... Date of Birth (Junior Members only)

Email address:.....

(We will not share your email with anyone else but will occasionally update you on community initiatives and the work of the Company.)

Tel No (optional):..... Date:

Signature:

Please return your completed application to the address below. Full members are entitled to elect and be elected as Directors. All members will receive regular updates and are welcome to comment on, support and get involved in our activities.



A photo from our 20th Anniversary Ceilidh and AGM



SCAN ME