

COMMUNITY NEWS

SPRING 2023



FIONA HARDIE



DEAR ALL,

Welcome to our first Mount Stuart Trust community newsletter. Since we launched our community survey in 2022 we have been incredibly busy behind the scenes working on our community engagement plan, which we were delighted to launch in March this year. Our plan along with an introduction to our team can be found on the community section of our website.

in 2022 I took on the role of Business and Community Liaison Officer and will act as the key point of contact for all community queries.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

▶ As part of the launch of our Community Engagement Plan in March 2023, we took part in two events to explain the strategy's detail and outline the next steps.

On March 2, our Community Liaison Officer Fiona Hardie was on Gloria Fear's early afternoon show on Bute Island Radio, where she discussed the plan for the strategy's rollout and her part in the process. Fiona also was invited to choose a piece of music!

Later in March, Harry Bowman, our Rural Operations Manager, and Fiona accepted an invitation from the convenor of Bute Community Council to attend their monthly meeting to present the Trust's community engagement strategy and take questions from the council and members of the public. Harry gave an overview of the breadth of Mount Stuart's operations, and Fiona explained the

background to the community engagement plan, its research and the next steps. We look forward to returning to the Council's future meetings with updates and increasing interaction between our organisations.

Future Events

To make Mount Stuart Trust more accessible to the community, every month we will set aside a morning, afternoon or evening to be available by appointment to discuss any concerns, ideas or questions you may have.

We'll do this in central locations in addition to Mount Stuart for ease of access.

Details of how to make an appointment with the appropriate member of our team will shortly be available on the Community page of our website – <https://www.mountstuart.com/community>.



FUTURE NEWS

If you have any feedback on the newsletter or anything you would like to see included please reach out to us at contactus@mountstuart.com

ASH DIEBACK

Mount Stuart's Woodland team has conducted a survey of ash trees around the island, identifying those infected and prioritising those to be taken down in the interest of public safety as their location and condition are causes for concern.

Unfortunately, we've lost some significant trees across the island to ash dieback. We're continuing to prioritise the trees identified as infected along roads and pathways to minimise the potential risk to members of the public; the work will be ongoing for a considerable time.

Ash dieback is caused by a fungus which affects a tree's water transportation immediately under the bark. It originated in east Asia and spread to Europe around thirty years ago.

Early signs of ash dieback include dead and blackened leaves hanging amongst the live foliage. The bark of live shoots and twigs turn darker, sometimes with a purple tinge. The disease will cause diamond-shaped lesions where older twigs and branches join the stem or trunk. It's a complex issue as the trees can show very little outward appearance of disease and then suddenly lose major limbs.



ETTRICK BAY CAMPSITE

Following public consultation meetings in January at both Ettrick Bay and the Bank of Ideas, and application has been submitted to Argyll & Bute Council for planning permission to construct a campsite area at Ettrick Bay.

The consultation feedback hugely favoured providing the facility to enable campervans and tents to use the site instead of camping on the pathway verge or the foreshore. A&BC's planning department is currently validating the application.

Other island sites – your opinion counts!

We'll shortly launch a poll on the Community page of our website – www.mountstuart.com – to ask for your input on how to accommodate campervans around the island.

Your input would be greatly appreciated to help Mount Stuart Trust review whether if this is an offering the island requires. We must try and facilitate an island for residents and visitors.



EDUCATION



Our Countryside Ranger, Mark Low, has been hosting an apprentice from Rothesay Academy. Ewan McMillan spends an afternoon each week, learning about responsible land management and the many activities our rural team undertake before he starts college in the autumn. Recently, Ewan has been constructing bird boxes, bird and red squirrel feeders and fire-beaters, and tree planting. We're hoping his



red squirrel feeders help us to achieve more confirmed viewings of red squirrels to assist in the monitoring of their numbers across the island.



COMMUNITY PROJECT INVOLVEMENT

One of several projects Mark has recently been working on with the Bute Conservation Trust was the repair of the walkway to the bird hide at Loch Quien, clearing scrub and improving access.



PROPERTY SALES

Since 2020, Mount Stuart Trust has sold ten non-core properties of which six were sold to people already residing on Bute; five of those six properties were sold to owners of established businesses on the island.



Kerryfern

Kerryfern, on the island's west side, was marketed in early spring with the closing date for offers on 22 March 2023.

Barone Park Farmhouse

The next property to come to market is Barone Park Farmhouse, situated above The Meadows and north of the Kirk Dam. It will be marketed by Savills - <https://www.savills.co.uk> – and the proceeds from its sale will be reinvested into our island agricultural activities.

HEALTH & SAFETY



KERRYCROY PIER

The pier at Kerrycroy is currently closed to public access; significant erosion has been identified through an initial survey. We're awaiting a more detailed survey to determine the required repairs to make it safe. It's always a popular site for bathers and dog walkers, but we ask the community to please keep off the pier for their safety and advisory signage has been put in place.



KERRYCROY JUNCTION

As the open season for Mount Stuart House approaches, coaches and service buses will again be exiting via Kerrycroy village on to the main road at the junction with the A844. Taking the advice of both Argyll & Bute Council and West Coast Motors, to allow sufficient space for the buses and coaches to exit the junction safely, the restriction on parking in that area will be enforced, and we ask for the community's assistance in keeping this area clear. The area is clearly marked with signs.



Phytophthora ramorum



MOUNT STUART BOATHOUSE PLATFORM

The small platform located off the Boathouse cannot be accessed for safety reasons. Unfortunately, this structure is crumbling and cannot be used as a diving platform.

SHORE PATHWAY

Four years ago, a routine inspection by the Scottish Government's Department of Science & Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) identified the invasive disease *Phytophthora ramorum* within Mount Stuart's policies and imposed an order for specific site closures and remedial action.

The shore path from Kerrycroy village displayed a high incidence of *Phytophthora ramorum* – because of this, it has been necessary to close the pathway to stop further spread and eradicate the disease.

Phytophthora ramorum is a fungal-like organism that causes the death of a wide range of trees and shrubs - oak, sessile oak, sweet chestnut, larch, beech, sycamore, horse chestnut, cherry, ash and birch - and can spread by physical contamination, for example, foot transfer by dog walkers.

SASA's plant health inspector visited in February 2023 and was highly satisfied with the steps taken. It's hoped that the follow-up reinspection in May will allow the pathway to be reopened.

We'd like to thank the users of the Shore Path for their support during this protracted process and especially for their assistance in not spreading the disease to other areas of the island and the policies.