

COMMUNITY NEWS

AUTUMN 2025

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During 2025 Mount Stuart has celebrated our 30th anniversary of opening to the public and it's given us the opportunity to look back over the developments within the Trust during that period, and to look ahead to our plans for the future.



We've seen many changes since 1995; staff have joined us from near and far, bringing their breadth of experience and skillsets; some have taken their Mount Stuart experience and moved on for exciting new opportunities and others have developed long term fulfilling careers within the Trust.

Throughout this time of change the Trust's fundamental vision, mission and values have remained – the supporting, enabling and promoting of learning, innovation and creativity, and the provision of the stewardship of the heritage assets in our care. Our Strategic Aims of Conservation, Engagement, Sustainability and Community are the four pillars on which we conduct and grow our business and although our year to year plans change to include new projects, practices and policies, the vision of the 6th Marquess has prevailed.

We look forward to the next 30 years in partnership and collaboration with our stakeholders and the wider Bute community.

Stormy Weather

January 24, 2025 will long be remembered as the day the force of Storm Eowyn hit the Isle of Bute.

The UK's most powerful windstorm for over a decade brought damage and destruction across the island along with power and communication outages.

Within Mount Stuart's policies alone 50 trees were lost, many rural buildings lost roofs and amenity woodlands were damaged.

Our recovery plans prioritised clearance of main roads and access routes, removal of trees at risk of impacting power and telephone cables, and trees on tenanted farms which posed a danger to livestock or buildings.

Further storms on August 4 and more recently Storm Amy on October 3 & 4 have meant areas of Mount Stuart's grounds remain closed off until our hard worked woodlands team can make safe hanging branches and split trees.

Tree replanting has begun, replacing some of our lost old favourites; below are a Wisteria Sinensis and an Acer Palamtum "Emerald Lace" which will hopefully grow to become new favourites.

Some trees are being left where they've fallen, to return to nature, providing nutrients and a habitat for insects and fungi.



Tree Planting

As part of a year of celebrations to mark the 30th anniversary of Mount Stuart's opening to the public, Primary 1 children from the island's three primary schools were invited to help with commemorative tree planting.

These keen foresters from North Bute Primary School were three of the many children who planted trees they can visit again and again to see whose is the tallest!



Community Open Day

Earlier this year we were delighted to welcome representatives from across the region to our Stakeholder Forum, hosted by our Chair, Sophie Crichton-Stuart, and Community Liaison Lead, Fiona Hardie.

This gathering brought together partners, community voices, and industry leaders to discuss our plans for 2025, all based on the four pillars of our strategic aims – Conservation, Engagement, Sustainability and Community.

With the return of the Mount Stuart Christmas Fair on Sunday, November 30th, we'll also be sharing an inside look at some of our ongoing projects and activities as part of the community open day.

As a reminder, our team hosts monthly community surgeries, offering anyone the opportunity to meet with us, ask questions, and share their thoughts. Details of upcoming surgeries can be found on our website.



Age Friendly Pledge

As part of Mount Stuart's consistent drive towards inclusivity we've recently signed up for two initiatives promoting commitment to diversifying our staff and offering opportunities to as broad a section of the community as possible.

In July Mount Stuart became a Disability Confident employer. Disability Confident is a network of employers creating a movement of change, thinking differently about disability and taking action to improve how we recruit, retain and develop disabled people.

In August we signed the Age-friendly Employer Pledge, a nationwide programme run by the Centre for Ageing Better. By signing the pledge we show our commitment to older workers and making our workplace age-friendly. This means we're taking action to improve our recruitment, retention and development of workers aged 50 and over.



New Trustees Sought

We're actively searching for three additional board members to support Trust activities and the ongoing implementation of our strategy, with a focus on sustainability, community engagement and long term financial stability. Board experience and a record of public facing service is preferred.

We're particularly seeking board members with expertise in the following areas: Finance and Charity Governance, Environment & Sustainability, Tourism, Heritage & the Built Environment, and Education.

If this is of interest please email your expression of interest accompanied by a c.v. to charlotte@mountstuart.com by 30th November 2025.



CVA Community Involvement



In mid-September Thomas Abercromby opened a body of work at Mount Stuart exploring how gardens and gardening contribute to personal and collective healing.

As part of Thomas' preparations for his exhibition he engaged with local community groups within the house and gardens, running creative workshops, interviews and sensory walks. Here, Thomas is seen with scent artist Clara Weale and staff from the We Are With You project.



Scottish Land Estates Conference

Mount Stuart's Head of Rural Operations, Katie Warden, addressed delegates at this year's SLE's Annual Conference in Edinburgh.

The rural business organisation asked Mount Stuart to share our experiences of engaging with our local community, identifying the steps taken to implement a community engagement plan and open new channels of communication.

The conference's keynote speech was delivered by Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Kate Forbes, MSP which focussed on the future of the rural economy.

Seasonal Staff

During 2025 our numbers have been swelled by our wonderful seasonal staff members who work from pre-Easter through to late October whilst the visitor attraction is open. This year we've employed a total of 37 staff, including Tour Guides, Welcome Assistants and Catering Staff, ranging in age from 16 to 90!

Each does a great job of making visitors to Mount Stuart very welcome and we'll look forward to their return in spring 2026.





Pumpkin Picking

Our junior horticulturists from Appletree Nursery recently visited Mount Stuart to check on the pumpkins they planted earlier this year — and to harvest a wonderful mix of large, small, and colourful varieties to take home.

A big thank-you to our Gardens team for caring for the pumpkins, and to the amazing Appletree helpers for their hard work during the harvest.



There are just a few days left to enjoy our beautiful Autumnal Gardens, Recovery Island Exhibition and a seasonal visit to the Courtyard Cafe before we shut our doors for the 2025 Season.

Heartfelt thanks to all of our volunteers, members, guests and community visitors for sharing our 30th Anniversary season with us.

It was our pleasure to welcome you and hope to see you on Sunday November 30th for the Mount Stuart Christmas Fair.

