



MacDougall of Dunollie Preservation Trust

Annual Report

2022 - 2023



ABOUT US

The MacDougall of Dunollie Preservation Trust (DPT) is a registered charity, founded in 1998, when Morag MacDougall, 31st Chief of the Clan MacDougall entrusted part of her estate to the Board of Trustees. Today, the DPT looks after several listed buildings and monuments, including Dunollie Castle in Oban, Gylen Castle on Kerrera, as well as the 1745 House Museum, which was once part of the living quarters of Dunollie House. The Trust also cares for nationally important archives and a collection of more than 10,000 objects.



These charitable purposes are delivered in the main, via Dunollie Museum Castle and Grounds and it's thriving community programme Dunollie Links.



We are delighted to report on the first fully operational year since the COVID-19 pandemic. As ever, there has been a lot taking place in relation to Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds – its preservation, conservation, and presentation to our local, national and international community. In this report you will find an overview of our main achievements and successes, but firstly our heartfelt thanks go to our volunteers, staff team, trustees and worldwide supporters for their help in opening Dunollie's gates to the public.

ALISON MCNAB, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES



The pandemic tested Dunollie financially, however the hard work and tenacity of the team, our valued volunteers and Trustee Board, has helped us reopen the Dunollie site for the first time in 3 years. We wish to thank each and every one of the individuals involved in the running of Dunollie and are delighted to report on our 2022-23 activities.

EMMA SUTCLIFFE, GENERAL MANAGER



ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE



15,905 visitors to Dunollie
Museum, Castle and Grounds

Our Tour Guides
delivered 330
public tours



Our volunteers
contributed 2,871
hours of valuable
time



Our special
events were
attended by 483
adults and 336
children



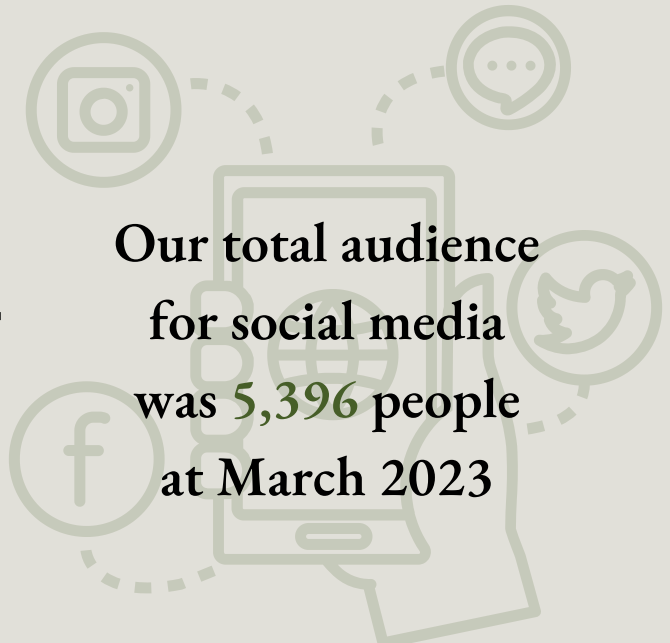
Our earned
income was
£171,126

Our income from
donations &
legacies was
£68,135

Our fundraising
income was
£188,311



Our total audience
for social media
was 5,396 people
at March 2023



Highlights of our achievements and performance are explained in relation to our strategic goals



Outcome 1: Public Access to Heritage

To position Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds as a high-quality attraction, recognising the richness and significance of our historical, social and environmental value to the local community and visitors to the West Coast of Scotland.

- The main focus of 2022 was the first full seasonal opening of Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds to the public since 2019. We were delighted to welcome a new Front of House Team who helped to welcome 15,905 visitors onto the site. The feedback we have received from the season has been overwhelmingly positive, with visitors enjoying the chance to purchase a new annual pass, take in one of the 330 tours of the site delivered by the DPT tour guides, view fascinating photographs from the Hope MacDougall collection, as well as accessing the first floor of Dunollie Castle to look out onto the stunning views of Oban Bay.



Fascinating place to visit | May 2022

"Thoroughly well spent 2+ hours. Fascinating insight to the history of the house and castle. Excellent guided tour that lasted an hour with stunning views of Oban harbour and over to Mull. All the staff were charming and helpful. This is a must visit attraction to anyone coming to Oban"

An Oban must see | Oct 2022

"We had a lovely visit to Dunollie. Located just outside the town, and walkable, it was a highlight of the visit. The castle remains are lovely, the view spectacular on a clear day, old house interesting to view, great gift shop and great staff. We had a wonderful lunch in a sheltered tent-excellent food. Judith at the entrance was so well informed and very friendly. Although they were closing for the season, there would still be special events, and she encouraged us to visit again. I bought a few gifts including a Lorne tartan scarf, a red hair and and if I had a bigger suitcase I would have bought the small blanket."



- On the 16 July we hosted Flags and Ropes attended by 45 adults and 17 children. A family day out, drawing on DPT's social history collection of flags and rope building equipment, including tug of war and flag printing.

“Really lovely day out, we weren't expecting the activities, but we really enjoyed it overall and so did our children.” (Flags and Ropes Feedback Respondent)

- In August 2022, we organised a Walking Ceilidh (25 August 2022) attended by 71 adults and 17 children. This was an early evening event held aimed at adults, highlighting the history and heritage of Scottish music. Performers included a traditional music quartet, bagpiper, the Oban Gaelic Choir, and accordionist.
- In September 2022, we delivered a One Planet Picnic attended by 45 adults and 35 children. A family day highlighting sustainable food and nature-based activities to encourage biodiversity, including seed planting and building bug hotels.
- A series of traditional skills demonstrations organised by Jamie MacGregor (Heritage Engagement Coordinator) took place during October 2022, open to all visitors, but primarily aimed at local heritage enthusiasts. The demonstrations included Basket Weaving attended by 36 adults, 25 children (19 October), Blacksmithing attended by 60 adults, 56 children (25 October), as well as Woodworking and Carpentry attended by 24 adults, 20 children (28 October).

- Our annual Halloween event, organised by Siubhan Griffin (Visitor Services Coordinator), took place on the 30 October 2022 and was attended by 111 adults and 98 children. Activities included a Halloween Trail, Halloween Crafts and making Chocolate Apples.
- The ever popular Dunollie Makes Christmas took place on the 27th November, as part of the Oban Winter Festival. It was attended by 147 adults and 145 children. Activities included marshmallow toasting, Christmas crafts, face painting and posting letters to Santa.



- Finally in February 2023, Siubhan Griffin (Visitor Services Coordinator) designed and delivered a Wellness Weekend attended by 64 adults and 24 children. A weekend schedule of activities highlighted nature and wellness, including nature-based art sessions, forest bathing and outdoor yoga, a wellness market and activities for children, such as building birdfeeders and a wellness trail.

“Really enjoyed this event and learned lots about the castle and the grounds. My 4-year-old really enjoyed herself too! Very interesting” (Wellness Weekend Feedback Respondent)



- As part of the National Lottery Heritage Funded GLAD project, Digital Content Assistant Iris Piers developed a new trail aimed at children aged 5+, highlighting mythical creatures and their habitats in Scottish folklore, drawing on both the heritage and biodiversity of the area. This trail was available from July 2022 and can be accessed by all visitors via QR code stations around Dunollie's Grounds. A map and sticker set were designed to enhance the experience, with illustrations by local artist, Ruth Slater. The interpretation itself was written by Digital Content Assistant, Iris Piers, who was also able to update the content for the trail to be used as specific events, such as Christmas and Halloween.



“We visited to try the new QR Trail, staff from reception to those explaining how to use the trail were fantastic. The map and stickers were greatly appreciated by me Granddaughters aged 12 and 13 and by my 36 year old daughter. The grounds were very clean, exhibition very interesting Great granny age 85 years loved it.” (TripAdvisor July 2022)



- We have long felt that Dunollie would be a perfect wedding venue and in 2022 we concentrated on developing packages for launch over the winter. Using market research, Iris Piers (Weddings and Marketing Coordinator) chose to concentrate on the micro wedding and elopement market and has developed pricing, marketing, and branding as well. Bookings are now being taken for 2023 onwards.
- Finally, we were very grateful to have received £24,387 from Museums Galleries Scotland towards Front of House Staff, Fundraising and Marketing support. As well as core costs this grant enabled the development of a new Strategic Fundraising Plan, new external and internal signage for promotion of Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds and marketing copy written by copywriter Clare Crossan. In March 2023, we also received a top up of this grant of £41,230 which was put towards increasing the charities' reserves.



Outcome 2: Management and Conservation of the heritage assets in our care

To ensure we utilise both internal and external resources and skills to appropriately care for, develop and enable access to our heritage assets for future generations.



In November 2021, we were delighted to learn of our success with an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and were awarded £114,583 to undertake activities in Dunollie's Grounds, with Dunollie Links and to increase our engagement digitally.

Dunollie GLAD, as this project is known, saw the introduction of three new posts, a Heritage Garden Leader job share undertaken by Caroline Boswell and Aidan McCuish, and a Digital Content Assistant post undertaken by Iris Piers. Alongside Jamie MacGregor (Heritage Engagement Officer), and other members of the core team, the GLAD team have been busy caring for the historic woodland Grounds, planning events and activities for the Oban Community and installing digital trails. The project ended in February 2023, and visitors to the site will be able to see the following upgrades and improvements.

- New Flowers, Shrubs and Trees planted in the Grounds to continue the tradition of innovative planting by the MacDougall's, using the skills and expertise of former Head Gardener at Arduaine Garden, Maurice Wilkins, alongside Fiona Hutchison from Kinlochlaich Garden Centre.
- A new Gazebo situated in the world of trees to provide more covered activity space.
- A Heritage Greenhouse behind the Willow Garden for vegetable/seed preparation.
- A replacement for the Willow Dome structure, providing covered activity space in the Willow Garden.
- The GLAD trail installation highlighting the amazing flora and fauna on the Dunollie site.
- A new path leading through the Dunollie Shrubbery.
- Installation of archways to highlight the entrance to the Dunollie site and Dunollie Castle.



- Work has continued to conserve and improve facilities at Dunollie Castle. In 2022, we were able to complete a new handrail built into which elm logs lining the Castle Path in order to protect the archaeology beneath the Castle mound. The handrail project was made possible thanks to generous donations from the Oban Common Fund, Clan MacDougall and MacDowell Society of North America, as well as several individual donations, volunteer time and the support of Historic Environment Scotland. We also owe thanks to our contractors Norman Steeman Engineering and Highland Tree Routes, to CalMac for providing rope, as well as former Business and Sustainability Manager Jane Isaacson who had the original idea and worked on the scheduled monument consent from Historic Environment Scotland.



- DPT's Curatorial Group, led by Heritage Mentor Catherine Gillies, undertook an exhibition designed to let visitors delve into the photography captured by Hope MacDougall, daughter of Clan MacDougall's 29th Chief and a talented photographer. Miss Hope used her skill to document our region, its people and their activities throughout her lifetime. The exhibition was available for viewing in the 1745 House during the April-October season and during out of season special events. The exhibition installation was funded by the North American Clan MacDougall, to whom we are very grateful.



Outcome 3: Education and Heritage Skills development

To strengthen community engagement with programming that stimulates participation, increases heritage skills and supports volunteering opportunities, recognising and demonstrating the social, environmental and historical value of the assets in our care.

- Through the work of Jamie MacGregor, we have been able to continue the Dunollie Links Programme. This includes welcoming the New Routes group back to Dunollie and we wish to thank them for all their hard work looking after the Grounds.
- The Gaelic Sessions in partnership with Furan Gaelic Centre are now being conducted online and in person, reaching a global audience. With up to 15 people now attending, the sessions continue to prove popular.
- We are also very pleased to have welcomed Threads and Yarns back to Dunollie over the summer months and are extremely grateful for their help in the Draper's Shop.
- In November 2022, we were successful with a bid of £1,470 from the CalMac Communities Fund towards the Dunollie Links Community Programme during the winter months. These funds were used towards refreshments, travel, and practitioner support for New Routes, as well as material and equipment costs for Threads and Yarns.



- We are also extremely grateful for individual donations towards the Dunollie Links activities.

Dunollie Links



Sharing

Inspiring

Empowering



- Using the National Lottery Heritage Funds for the GLAD project, DPT's Heritage Engagement Coordinator, Jamie MacGregor, designed and delivered a community-based events programme highlighting traditional skills, which included:
- Plant Cataloguing of the flora, fauna, and trees in the Dunollie Grounds during the summer and winter of 2022 by former Head Gardener of Arduaine Gardens Maurice Wilkins.
- In July 2022, a team of 5 volunteers worked with a Woodworking Practitioner on the design and build of decorative items to enhance the installation of a new handrail up the steep path to Dunollie Castle. This included an archway and feedback box.
- In October 2022, archaeological test pitting of Dunollie's Grounds took place, led by local archaeologist Roddy Regan, alongside 6 volunteers. Primarily a way of establishing whether any archaeology existed on the site of the new path, this activity was also aimed at community volunteers.
- DPT developed two new School Workshops covering Bug Life Scotland and Plants and the Environment. Aimed at highlighting Scottish biodiversity and the localised environment at Dunollie, the sessions were written by a volunteer Primary-age School Teacher. Primarily aimed at the same age group, the Teacher also developed a nursery age session for each workshop. 65 nursery and primary aged children were engaged through School Sessions.
- In October 2022, 2 Den Building sessions were run for local children during half term. Primarily a fun activity for children aged 5-15, the sessions also highlighted the reuse of materials for play, utilising fallen branches from Dunollie's Grounds.
- Finally, in October 2022, 19 students aged 16+ from Oban High School were invited to work with woodworking practitioner, Oliver Penny to create new garden furniture for Dunollie's Grounds. Primarily aimed at increasing seating capacity for visitors, the activity helped the students to develop new skills, and encouraged the reuse of materials, making use of a fallen walnut tree in the Dunollie Grounds.



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