

Ardnamurchan Lighthouse

Background Information for Applicants



Ardnamurchan Lighthouse

Ardnamurchan Lighthouse is situated at Ardnamurchan Point, the most westerly point on the British mainland. The 36 metre granite tower soars 55 metres above the rocks, and was built in 1849 using granite from the Island of Mull. It was designed by Alan Stevenson, uncle of Robert Louis Stevenson, whose family designed most of Scotland's lighthouses over a period of 150 years. It is the only lighthouse in the world designed in an "Egyptian" style.

The former keepers' cottages and outbuildings and wider site have been managed by the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust since 1996.

Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust

The Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust (ALT) was set up as a registered charity by members of the local community in 1996 (registration number: SC025610). ALT is also incorporated (SC170704) as a company limited by guarantee.

There are currently 9 directors and 57 members.

The site, excluding the lighthouse itself (owned and operated by the Northern Lighthouse Board), is in the process of being purchased by the Trust with the support of the local community and a grant from the Scottish Land Fund.

The Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust (ALT) has operated its Visitor Centre at the most westerly point of the British mainland for over 20 years, previously under a lease arrangement with Highland Council. The facilities include cafe, shop, exhibition, tours up the lighthouse and self-catering lets. From the start, ALT has employed a full-time manager, and up to eight to ten part-time staff during the season from 1st April to 31st October.

The number of visitors has risen to over 20,000 per year (including local people and visitors from outside Ardnamurchan).

ALT is well connected with other organisations in the community through Board Members / key staff also being on the boards of other key organisations e.g. West Ardnamurchan Community Development Company, the Community Garden the History and Heritage Association and the Community Council.

Development “Project 21”

ALT have successfully operated the lighthouse site at around financial breakeven for the past 20 years. However a step change is now needed to protect the A listed heritage assets, improve the visitor experience and lift footfall and surpluses.

Due to the reduction in the Highland Council support grant and the terminal failure of the wind turbine, together with the need to upgrade the exhibition and other aspects of the site, ALT recognised that that it needed to look at new ways of maintaining a viable visitor attraction and ensuring its long term sustainability. The vision for the site was expressed as follows:

“Our vision is one where the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust secures a long term sustainable future via the purchase, upgrading and extension of its facilities whilst preserving and celebrating the land based and maritime heritage. We will seek UNESCO World Heritage status for the site and wider area and make a positive contribution to stimulating the wider social, economic and environmental well-being of West Ardnamurchan, focusing on the area’s unique history, geographical location, natural heritage and cultural heritage”.

As a first step it was decided to seek community backing to take ownership of the site thereby opening up access to grants which would improve and expand all aspects of the local and visitor provision at Ardnamurchan Point. At the same time its ‘Grade A’ listed status would mean that any development would ensure that its historic buildings were better protected and preserved for future generations.

The development is intended to increase visitor numbers, per capita spend, and length of visitor stay in west Ardnamurchan and contribute to the promotion of tourism and the local economy.

Phase 1 of the project was to ascertain community support for the purchase of the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse site and for its development. There was overwhelming support for the project and consultants were engaged to help the Board submit a funding application to the Scottish Land Fund which was successful. It has enabled the Board

- To go forward with the purchase of the site
- To undertake immediate repairs and upgrades that provide extra capacity for visitors
- To employ a Project Manager to assist with the next Phase

This Phase 2 will include the refinement of the proposed developments in consultation with the local community and heritage professionals; the immediate repairs and upgrades funded by the Phase 1 grant application which will be project managed by the Lighthouse Manager; submission of grant applications for Phase 3 when it is hoped that major developments of the site will be undertaken; exploration of further community uses for the site to include a programme of events and activities.

Phase 3 will be the subject of the grant applications submitted by the Project Manager and could include:

- The preservation, and where appropriate enhancement, of the natural, architectural and historical integrity of the Lighthouse site with a view to achieving UNESCO World Heritage status
- Improving the appearance, amenities and visitor experience of the site in such a way as to increase visitor numbers, months of opening, spend per head and other income generation
- Contributing to the ongoing development of Ardnamurchan as a destination for visitors and holiday makers with a range of high quality attractions and facilities
- Developing additional facilities and activities for the community e.g. use of the walled gardens around the lighthouse; accommodation for Ardnamurchan History & Heritage Association exhibitions
- Maximising the use of sustainable technologies
- Ensuring a healthy and safe environment is provided for all visitors to the centre, and its staff/ volunteers
- Increasing structured work experience / placements / apprenticeship opportunities for local young people, aiming to retain them in the local community.

Accommodation at the Lighthouse



The Lighthouse Keeper's cottage has previously been let as holiday accommodation, however for the duration of this phase of the project the Board has decided to offer it to the Project manager as part of the employment package.

The Surrounding Area

The total population of the West Ardnamurchan area is around 281 with the largest village being Kilchoan with settlements at Achosnich, Portuairk, Sanna, Kilmory, Swordle & Glenmore, Glenborrodale, Laga & Camas Inas. The population has grown over the past 5 years, mainly through new jobs being created by Ardnamurchan Estate and Mowi.

Tourism is a crucial element of the local economy, providing income and employment for a significant proportion of local residents, many of whom are crofters.

Visitors are attracted for a range of reasons including the wild and rugged landscapes, the area's natural heritage, its history and archaeology, its world recognised volcanic geology, plus all types of outdoor pursuits. The Ardnamurchan Lighthouse is the "anchor" visitor attraction for the whole area, located at Ardnamurchan Point.

In addition to tourism, businesses include agriculture/crofting, fish farms, and forestry. Services and facilities include a Primary School, a Community Centre, A Learning Centre (outpost of the University of Highlands and Islands), a village shop, Coastguard, Fire Service and Emergency Responders. A GP surgery operates out of the Community Centre 3 days a week.

The local authority is Highland Council and the local community council is West Ardnamurchan Community Council. The area is also covered by the West Ardnarmurchan Community Development Company.

The lighthouse lies within Lochaber Geopark and is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI map 77.

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