



Annual Report

November 2024

Funding & Sustainability

The work of the Trust has been supported by two major grants running from April 2023 to March 2026.

- **Scottish Government Investing in Communities Round 2**

This funding provides for one full time development manager post, one part-time freelance information and engagement contract with POP Shop CIC and budgets for a base, a community website and a programme of community engagement to develop a Local Place Plan.

- **National Lottery Communities Fund Community Led Strand**

This funding supports one part-time support worker to develop work with volunteers on priority themes identified by the community and related to wellbeing.

The positive partnership with POP shop enterprises CIC has supported the strategic development of a new, female led social enterprise in the town showing the trust's commitment to reducing known inequalities. This partnership model has increased the level of funding coming into the area for social enterprise support and activities linked to community engagement.

In June 2024 the Scottish Government contacted all *Investing in Communities* funded projects to notify them that this funding stream could be removed in September 2024 due to national budget constraints. In the end, a 5% cut was imposed on all projects for financial year 2024/25. We are awaiting the outcome of the next Scottish Government budget, due in December 2024, and hope to be notified soon after on the funding position for this grant for 2025/26. Trustees are working on contingency plans to protect the work of the Trust, as far as possible, should this funding stream be removed.

Alongside these major grants, other funding applications are regularly submitted to support the development of action identified through our ongoing community engagement programme.

The long term sustainability of the Trust's work is a key priority and research is ongoing to identify potential income generation opportunities and new funding streams.

Governance & Project Administration

DCDT currently has 224 members, 204 Ordinary and 20 Associate (an increase of 43 from 2023), and seven Trustees.

The DCDT Board of Trustees takes its responsibilities as an employer very seriously and regularly reviews all associated employment policies and procedures. DCDT is a Fair Work employer in line with the Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework.

The board meets regularly to receive reports on work progress and finances, and to consider the strategic development of the Trust.

Communication & Information Sharing

The need for improved information sharing and communication continues to be an important issue across our community. Effective information sharing is relevant to all sectors (charities, community groups, businesses and public sector bodies) and impacts on local people and visitors alike. DCDT has developed a multi-faceted approach to improve communication across the town utilising websites, social media, e-newsletters, printed materials, the local paper and community radio, a town centre presence and in person connections. Staff support is central to the development and delivery of this communication strategy for the town.

- **Effective promotion of DCDT Action**

A full audit of DCDT communication channels was completed by local specialist, Lynne MacLaggan, with training sessions delivered for the staff team. Our social media communications have been streamlined and responsibility for communications is shared across the team. Improved social media planning and task allocation has improved efficiency and created a consistent look to our posts. Ongoing support from Lynne is ensuring targeted communication on all of our work streams.

As part of the full review of our communication strategy, the DCDT website was revised and now features a growing series of articles highlighting the range of work that the Trust is involved in. The website also includes details of volunteer opportunities with a sign up form, information on what a development trust is and what a Local Place Plan is, a simple membership form, details of events and updates on specific projects.

DCDT e-newsletters continue to receive very positive feedback from organisations and individuals. There are now 739 contacts for our regular Mailchimp e-newsletter (up from 608 in 2023) and we receive regular requests from groups and organisations to include information in these communications.

- **What's On Dunoon website development**

Our community run **What's On Dunoon** website has continued to develop as a central event calendar for Dunoon and Cowal. The site has been enhanced to allow users to search by

date and venue and a new section has been developed, to be launched early in 2025, that will share information on community support services, clubs and groups.

The website designers have set up a simple process for creating e-newsletters with weekly listings and newly added events. Feedback has been very positive from mailing list members and there is a significant increase in visitors to the site when this update is sent out. A regular column in the Dunoon Observer newspaper, sponsored by DCDT, provides offline access to these weekly listings.

A small team of Digital Volunteers supports the project by helping to find and add events to the site. A paid Community Connector was engaged to distribute fliers and leaflet holders to venues and businesses to help promote the website and to gather feedback from users. Gatehouse Information volunteers have been recruited and are taking part in training to commence their roles soon.

What's On Dunoon summary:

- over 2500 events and activities listed
 - 125 individuals signed up to add their events (up from 50 in 2023)
 - 162 venues listed across Cowal (up from 127 in 2023)
 - 15,000 individual users - 14,000 from the UK; 1,000 international (up from 7,100 in 2023)
 - 190,000 views (up from 79,647 in 2023)
- **Establishing a Town Centre Information Base - Castle Gatehouse**

Following the full refurbishment of Castle Gatehouse through the Argyll & Bute Council Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, DCDT took on the lease of the building in June 2024. This entry date was later than had been hoped for, but we are now developing the space to promote What's On Dunoon, to provide community information and as a base for the Dunoon Bothy active travel project. Work is now complete on fitting out the building and an opening event in October, organised in partnership with Dunoon Bothy, was very positively received.

Developing a Local Place Plan

As part of the Scottish Government Investing in Communities funded element of our work, DCDT is taking the lead on the development of a **Local Place Plan** for Dunoon.

Local Place Plans were introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, which contains a new right for communities to produce their own plans as part of the new Scottish planning system. Local Place Plans contain the community's proposals for the development and use of land, and provide a new opportunity for communities to feed into the planning system with ideas and proposals. Similar to Community Action Plans, they can help communities understand what they want their area to be like in the future and help to develop positive community identity.

Source: Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park

This process involves connecting with key partner organisations and engaging with our community to gather information, share ideas and identify priorities.

- **Connecting with Partners**

To support effective partnership working, DCDD continues to connect with the full range of groups, organisations and service providers involved in regeneration action across our community.

A series of presentations and meetings were arranged with partner organisations and networks to share information on Local Place Plans and encourage partners' involvement in the process of developing a LPP for Dunoon. These included:

- Dunoon Community Council
- Argyll Community Housing Association
- Improvement Service Shaping Places for Wellbeing steering group
- Dunoon Presents BID board
- Cowal & Bute and Helensburgh Planning Teams

Memoranda of Understanding detailing how we agree to work together are now in place or being reviewed with POP Shop CIC; Dunoon Community Council; Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust; and ACT Argyll Coast & Countryside Trust.

A meeting of our **Dunoon Town Team** was arranged in March 2024, with Arianne Burgess MSP as guest, to outline the programme of community engagement to support the development of the Local Place Plan.

- **Community Engagement Programme**

DCDD's Information & Engagement worker developed a creative programme of thematic community engagement which has been delivered across the year. This programme included:

- Thematic events and activities developed with partners
- Surveys and focus groups
- Community Connector training and targeted engagement
- Reviewing existing data sources relating to Dunoon

Community Conversations - A series of Community Conversation events were held in Dunoon Burgh Hall between October 2023 and March 2024. SOUP-er Sundays brought trust members and other community members together to talk about our town, while providing some practical support with food and warmth. The events were used to introduce the Local Place Plan project and its community engagement programme. Each event was well received with attendance ranging from 20 to 80.

Community Connectors – seven local people were recruited and trained as paid Community Connectors to engage with their neighbours, friends and community groups on the themes

of the DCDT community engagement programme. By providing feedback on their conversations, they have added richness to the engagement findings and helped to reach people who are less often heard from.

Creating a Climate of Change programme

Active Travel - DCDT was commissioned by Argyll & Bute Council Sustainable Transport Team to develop an **Active Travel Behaviour Change Plan** for Dunoon. The project proposal was developed with the Improvement Service Shaping Places for Wellbeing project team to connect with the DCDT **Active Travel Network** and to deliver a programme of inclusive community engagement.

The resulting report identified an extensive project list which has been approved and prioritised by the Active Travel Network steering group and reviewed by the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Dunoon project. The findings of the report will inform further funding applications to support the delivery of the identified projects.

Youth Engagement – A consultation workshop with Dunoon Grammar School pupils was held with Ariane Burgess MSP and three Argyll & Bute Council elected members in attendance. Over 20 pupils discussed Active Travel and community regeneration themes.

A group of young people from Dunoon Grammar School were supported to take part in a series of workshops considering the West Bay as a community asset. With the support of local artist, Alan Lyons, the group produced interesting ideas for the redesign of local green spaces.

West Bay Exhibition - The outdoor exhibition developed through the *We are Building a Beach Hut* project was installed along the length of the West Bay over the summer of 2024. It featured interpretation of the history, heritage, flora and fauna of the shingle beach and promenade and highlighted regeneration ideas developed through community engagement. An online survey was circulated to gather more community feedback on West Bay regeneration to inform the Local Place Plan. Challenges identified around beach management and supporting biodiversity are being raised with Argyll & Bute Council.

Play at West Bay - this community consultation day included an introduction to sea swimming, guided walks on shingle beach and seabird spotting, a Marine Conservation Society beach clean, trishaw rides with Cowal Elderly Befrienders, a play session for children with additional support needs and their families and low key art and play opportunities. Over 150 people took part and shared their views on West Bay as an important community asset.

Second Hand September - A series of talks and a £20 Challenge second hand fashion show (linked to Oxfam's Second Hand September campaign) took place in September 2024. This programme of events was designed to explore themes of reuse and repair with local people, charity shops and businesses. The engagement identified gaps in Circular Economy approaches that could potentially be addressed by the Trust and its partners, for example, establishing a reuse project to run alongside the Dunoon recycling centre.

The Second Hand September £20 Challenge and fashion show provided an excellent opportunity to engage with young people in thinking about reuse and repair. Over 20 teams entered and an audience of over 170 local people enjoyed the resulting community fashion show at the Queen's Hall. This project highlighted the potential for working with young people on enterprise ideas connected to the circular economy.

The programme of community engagement is ongoing with housing and the high street identified as the next key themes to be explored.

Volunteering for Wellbeing

DCDT Volunteering for Wellbeing Co-ordinator has developed a full suite of volunteering policies and volunteer role descriptions to support the involvement of a growing number of local people in Trust led community action. This work has a focus on individual, community and environmental wellbeing and links to priorities identified through the Trust's community engagement work. Our sincere thanks go to all of the volunteers for their continuing enthusiasm and support.

- **West Bay Improvements**

DCDT is supporting a team of volunteers to prepare and repaint railings along West Bay. Working with Claire Hallybone at Argyll & Bute Council CARS, the project has been designed to share traditional skills. A&BC Roads & Amenities department gave permission for volunteer painting to be taken forward by DCDT and provided the paint supplies. This activity is weather-dependent and a WhatsApp group has been set up to call on the trained volunteers when conditions are suitable.

- **What's On Dunoon Volunteers**

A small team of Digital Volunteers is supported to work from home to add events to the What's On Dunoon website. Additional Community Information Volunteers have been recruited to undertake training to gather and share information from the new What's On Dunoon base at the Castle Gatehouse.

- **Grow Food Grow Dunoon**

DCDT's **Grow Food Grow Dunoon** initiative brings together volunteers with varied skills who want to grow food together, rather than alone in their gardens or on private allotments. Working in partnership with Kirn Primary School, Grow Food Grow Dunoon established a growing space in the school grounds in 2022. This space allowed the group of adult volunteers to create a ten-bed rotational vegetable garden alongside the school's existing poly-tunnel. The food produced through the project was shared between the volunteers and the school with any surplus sold to the local community to provide funds for seeds and compost.

Due to understandable limitations in access to the school-based site during term-time, the Grow Food Grow Dunoon team set out to find a new site for 2024. Following DCDT negotiations with Argyll & Bute Council, a month-by-month licence was approved for the use of land in the grounds of Struan Lodge Residential & Day Care Centre.

Work is now well underway developing this new growing site, where more community volunteers are able to become involved in the project throughout the week and across the year. A number of local support groups have become involved in the project, including Dunoon Grammar School Learning Centre, ASIST and The Help Project, offering young people and people with additional support needs the chance to be part of this community project.

A grant from Argyll & Bute Council UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund has provided £17,120 toward the capital costs of setting up the site. The volunteer group has made significant progress in laying out paths, building a poly tunnel, shelter and toilet shed, and in setting out and preparing the growing beds.

A visit to the new site from the Royal Horticulture Society's **Keep Scotland Beautiful** scheme in September 2024 resulted in Grow Food Grow Dunoon being awarded a level 3 'advancing' assessment on their 5-level scale. This recognises the excellent progress achieved by the volunteers in under six months.

- **Therapeutic Garden – Struan Lodge**

Lesley Palmer of the University of Stirling Dementia Services Development Centre led a very positive and informative design workshop with a group of 12 representatives from DCDT, GFGD, Struan Lodge staff and their support group. The outcomes of this workshop are being used to inform fundraising and grant applications for the development of a therapeutic garden alongside the GFGD food growing site. This initiative will also help to support wider thinking about how we can create a more dementia-friendly town.

Dunoon Grammar School pupils studying for a new film making qualification have chosen to feature these DCDT projects at Struan Lodge, 'Struan Green Haven', as the subject for a series of short films.

- **Beach Cleaning Activities**

A lead volunteer has been recruited and has taken part in Marine Conservation Society training to support beach cleaning activities around the town. Two beach cleans have been arranged this year bringing interested people together. We are grateful to local diving company, Wreckspeditions, for providing support and the kit for these activities.

- **Sunday Lunch Club**

A new initiative being tested from October 2024 is offering people who live alone the opportunity to learn new skills from local chef, Elena Morozowa, and to share the food that they cook together. This pilot project is being delivered in Dunoon Foodbank and has been developed from an idea brought to the Trust by an active member.

- **Volunteers Thank You Events**

It is important that all of our volunteers know that their contributions are valued. To support this, we have now organised two events at the Argyll Hotel as a thank you for all DCDT volunteers.

Thematic Partnership Action

Active Travel

- **Dunoon Bothy**

The Dunoon Bothy Project is delivered by **Cycling UK** with funding accessed through **Argyll & Bute Council Sustainable Transport Team**. The Dunoon Bothy Project was set up as a direct result of partnership support for an Active Travel Network from Dunoon Area Alliance.

DCDT co-ordinates an advisory group for Dunoon Bothy to support development and the promotion of activities. Funding continued over this year for the part-time Bothy Co-ordinator post to organise e-bike trials and to support trained volunteers to provide regular led cycles and health walks for individuals and groups. Sara Hawley, Project Development Worker for the Dunoon Bothy project, has established a strong programme which has also included bike maintenance training and silent disco walks linked to DCDT events.

DCDT was successful in its application to Paths for All Smarter Places Smarter Choices open fund providing £20,000 towards the Cycling UK Dunoon Bothy project costs.

Action towards Net Zero

- **Argyll & Bute Climate Action Network (ABCAN)**

DCDT developed a proposal to deliver the Dunoon and East Cowal elements of the Argyll & Bute Climate Actions Network project (ABCAN) led by ACT (Argyll Coast & Countryside Trust). This proposal was submitted and approved as a partnership project with The POP Shop CIC and was designed to maximise climate action activity and minimise duplication.

- **Dunoon & Cowal Food & Growing Network**

DCDT has established and is supporting a new network of projects and groups involved in food and growing activities across Dunoon and Cowal. The aim of this network is to build positive connections and consider shared challenges and opportunities. One outcome of the first meeting was a shared bulk order of high quality organic compost that reduced the rural delivery charge for the organisations involved.

Supporting Enterprise

- **Dunoon & Cowal Coworks Network**

Monthly network sessions for people with small businesses, freelance workers and lone workers ran until June 2024. This approach is now under review and quarterly themed networking events will be considered going forward. Funding support to sustain this network has been difficult to identify, despite its clear value and importance.

- **International Women's Day**

DCDT was a partner in The POP Shop CIC's 2024 International Women's Day event at Dunoon Burgh Hall. The event focused on women in enterprise as part of a Scottish Government funded Take the Plunge project and took a deliberate Community Wealth Building approach by engaging local business people to deliver workshops and talks. It also

engaged key partners including Argyll & Bute TSI, Castle House Museum, Dunoon Burgh Hall and Business Gateway. Feedback from those involved was very positive.

Heritage

- **American Years Revisited**

The **American Years Revisited** project continues to develop its website and podcast series recording the heritage of the 31-year US Navy presence on the Holy Loch. Support is being provided to the volunteer group to ensure the effective completion of their current National Lottery Heritage Fund project. A freelance worker has been engaged to undertake the remaining creative tasks. A printed booklet was developed detailing the history of the American presence. In addition, group members were interviewed on film by National Galleries of Scotland for an exhibition on the Cold War.

- **Connecting heritage projects**

DCDT continues to provide occasional advice to Castle House Museum and Historic Kilmun on grant applications and project planning.

Infrastructure

- **High Street Premises Review**

In preparation for setting up a town centre information base, trustees undertook a review of empty premises available in Dunoon town centre. This review considered the size, cost and condition of each space and explored project options for specific spaces. This review of premises now provides a useful data set to support potential project developments resulting from Trust activities.

- **Dunoon Pier Working Group**

DCDT board of directors agreed to support a newly established volunteer working group interested in developing a feasibility study on the potential regeneration of Dunoon Pier. Links have been made with Argyll & Bute Council Development & Economic Growth Team and initial exploratory discussions are underway. Funding will be sought for a feasibility study to consider the options for bringing this A-listed asset back into some form of sustainable use. Significant capital costs would be involved in any major refurbishment works. A separate Pier Trust may need to be established once any capital work stage is reached.

- **Outdoor Activity & Play Provision**

Dunoon Skate Park - An informal working group has been involved in gathering information on examples of skate parks in other communities and their development costs. No further action has been taken as yet.

West Bay Play Park - Dunoon Community Council is leading engagement and fundraising for improvements to the West Bay Play Park. DCDT is involved in discussions and being kept informed of progress.

DCDT Long Term Sustainability

- **Community Energy Projects**

Discussion with Argyll & Bute TSI, DTAS (Development Trust Association Scotland) and Foundation Scotland resulted in a learning event for community organisations on the themes of Community Ownership and Community Benefit Schemes related to renewable energy schemes.

Information has been gathered on small scale renewable energy options, including mini-hydro and solar schemes as potential options for future development.

- **Identifying Income Generation Opportunities**

DCDT has been accepted on to the Scottish Government *Accelerate* programme to receive four-days of consultant support to help identify potential income generation opportunities for the Trust. This support is provided through Community Enterprise Ltd.

Sharing our Learning

DCDT was invited to give a presentation to an online learning event organised by **Scotland's Towns Partnership** on the active travel behaviour change plan project. We were also invited by **Improvement Service Shaping Places for Wellbeing** to share information at an online learning event on using the Scottish Wellbeing Outcomes in community engagement. We continue to connect regularly with **SURF**, Scotland's regeneration forum, to share and learn from projects across the country.

Ann B. Campbell, Partnership & Development Manager

22 November 2024