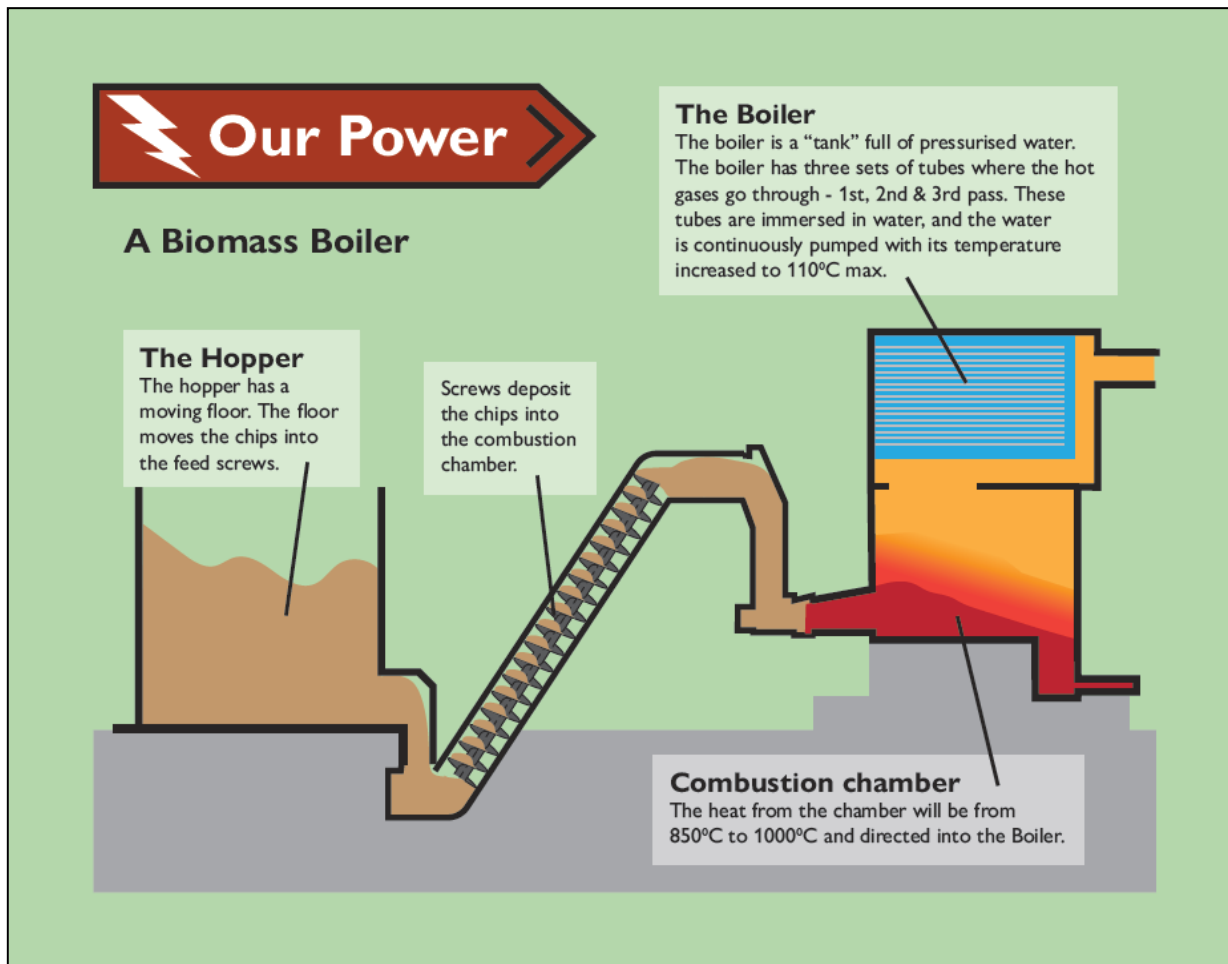


## ANNUAL REPORT AUTUMN 2020 to AUTUMN 2021

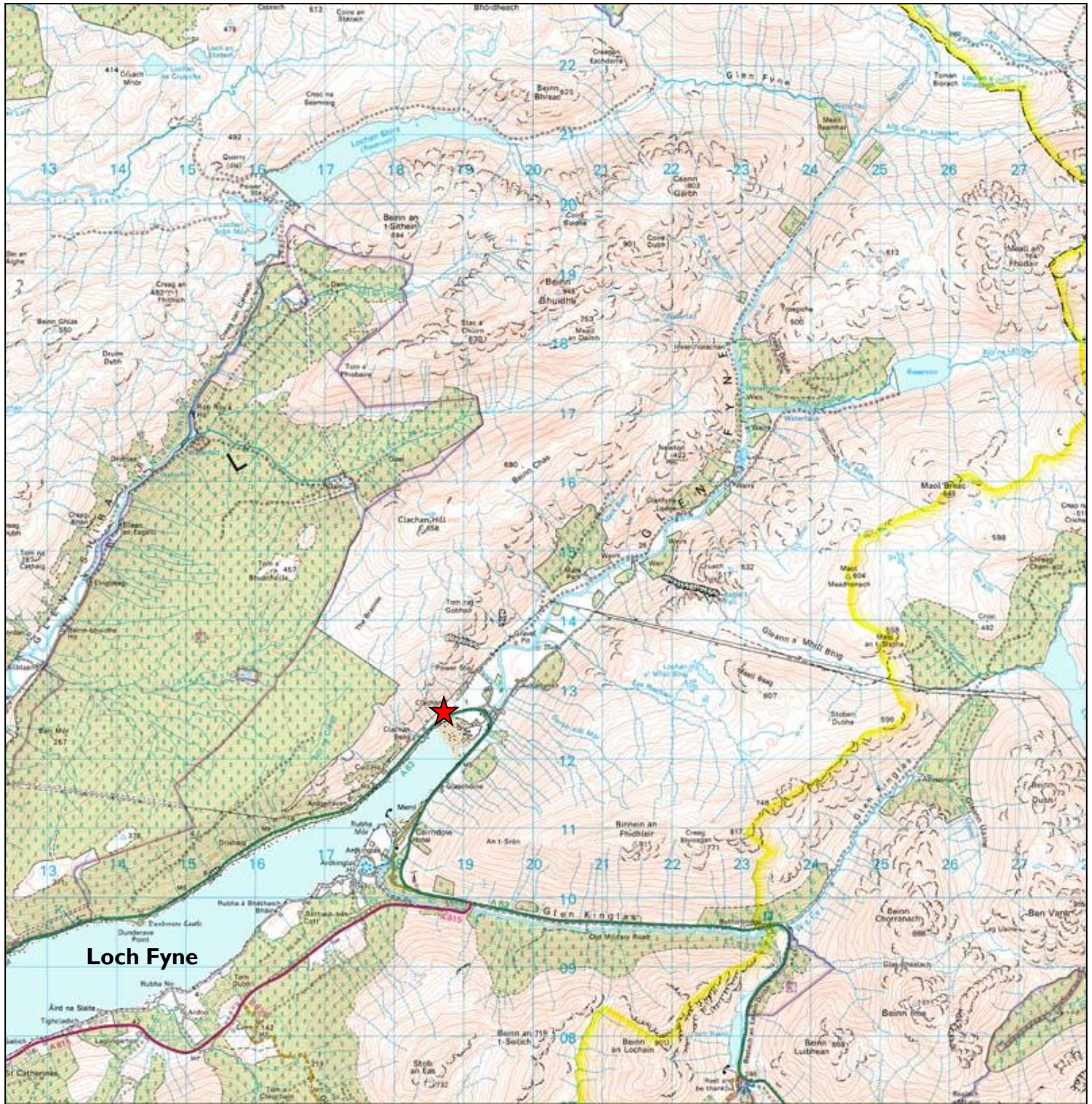


**Here We Are** provides an interface between –

- The visitor and the visited
- The local and the incomer
- The young and the old,
- The more wealthy and the less wealthy
- Agencies and people on the ground
- The urban and the rural
- The past and the future

At its centre at Cairndow, at the head of Loch Fyne, **HWA** shows how a rural community, while loyal to its roots, makes its way in the modern world. We are strongly of the opinion that it is not just “outcomes” that count: more important is the process – this is the social capital that leads to real development. So we were delighted at Magnus Linklater’s comment *“If we are not aware of our own values we become victims of other people’s decisions. We have to bend to their agenda rather than ours, and that means not just a lack of trust in ourselves, but an aversion to risk and an inability to take decisions of our own.”*





Loch Fyne



Kilmorich Parish

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1:20,000

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## Overview of the year Autumn 2020-2021

Time over the last twenty months has been so peculiar. Mid-March to mid-June of the first lockdown was for me an aeon of time. And then I am surprised to find it is already more than six months since the HWA opened to the public after the 2<sup>nd</sup> lockdown. So working on this report on November to November I have often had to stop and re-calculate.

As referred to last year, we have again been fortunate. The Government's furlough schemes helped us retain staff over the closed and restricted periods. The Heritage Lottery Fund has been understanding in the delays to the Here We Are Story project. Grants for the construction of the path from the village via the head of the loch to Clachan coinciding with the electric bike offer happened at an opportune time for the community.

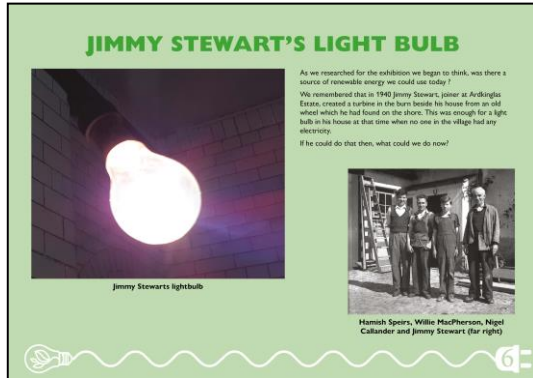


These grants feature on Lorna's excellent Income and Expenditure page 10. The increase in accountant's fees mentioned was because we needed help to set up the furlough payments and then the new payroll formula; this has now been taken back 'in house'. The consultant's increase was due to a one off document issue. For the Merk Hydro the difference in revenue between '19-'20 and '20-'21 is largely because when we re-financed it we changed the terms and the timing of the payment to Social Investment Scotland. This year's exceptionally sunny summer (see Lorna's graph has had a significant negative impact). We know the FIT owed to the LLP for the quarter to 30<sup>th</sup> September this year is £57k compared to £150k for the same period last year. However, we won't know the final figures until the end of the year and are hoping that this good wet autumn will have improved the overall figures.

Income from Our Power: Lorna has had several years' experience of how to keep the enterprise running smoothly and the customers happy, while John Smart and Alastair Fraser have chipped and loaded and delivered through the dark winters and the dire days of lockdown. Between them - and with help from John MacDonald and the OP directors - they have ensured Our Power Community Interest Company contributes to the community coffers.

On pages 11 to 12 Dot and Fiona describe their careful and imaginative work for the Here We Are Story website and the cataloguing and archiving funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The story is described from our tentative beginning in 1998 - when we were unsure what we were doing, and not too sure what significance terms like 'social capital' and 'empowering communities' might have for Cairndow. That is for future generations to assess. What is already sure is that HWA has amassed a detailed depiction of 100 years of Cairndow's social history. Our decision to concentrate on documenting the knowledge and experience of the living (leaving the old history to historians), was a good one, already some who gave us their valuable memories have died. Thanks to the HLF, to Dot and Fiona and Mark Vale (the website guru), this remarkable collection is now available on line.

I found putting together our current exhibition on renewable energy was a challenge: it wasn't easy to sift through years of documents to highlight the significant steps in the lengthy roller coaster journey from the 2004 exhibition entitled 'Power Past Present and Future' to where we are now. I hope that the



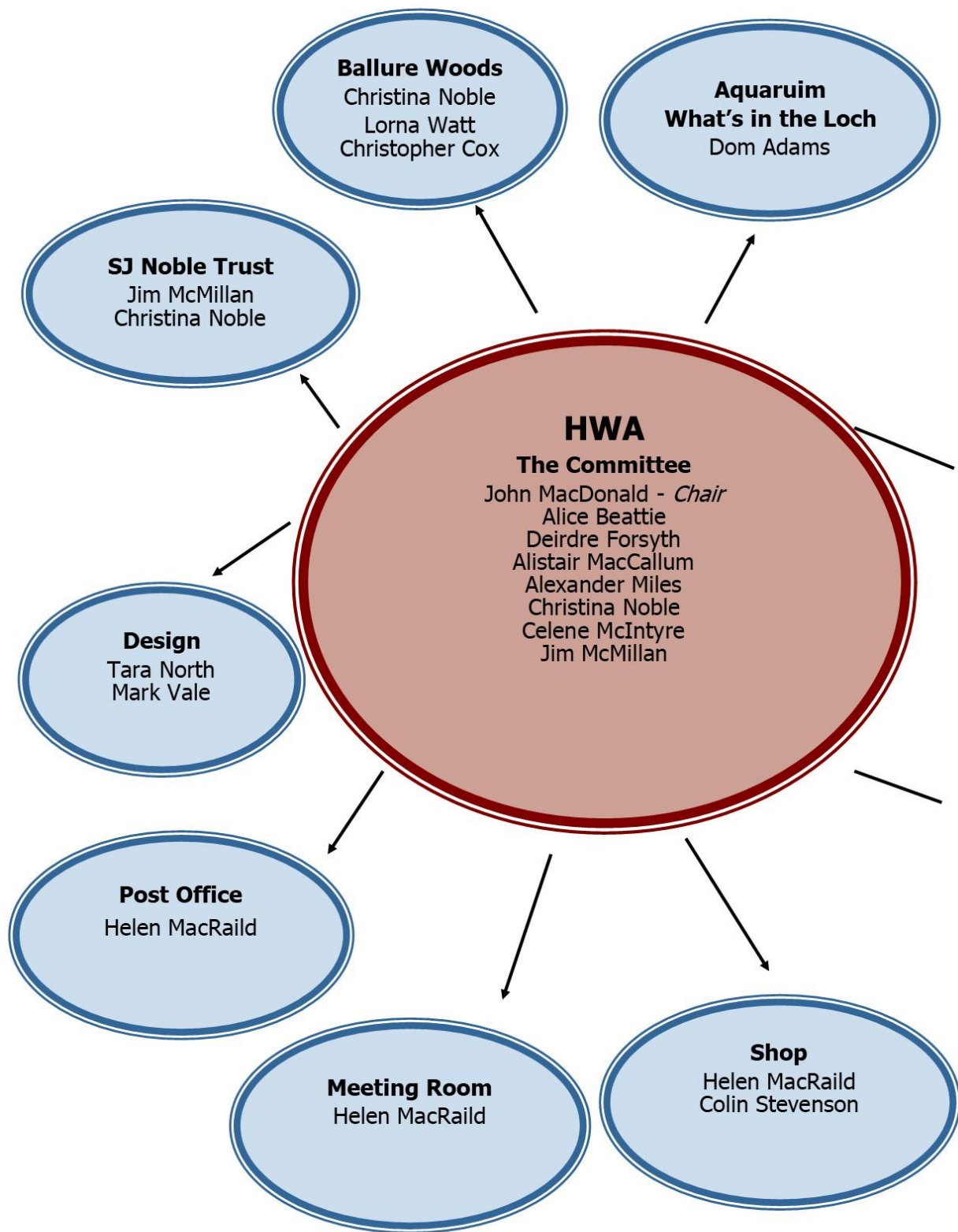
boards (see pages 15 to 16) do illustrate our determination to be self-supporting and how, with the assistance of the Scottish Government, we have achieved this - and more.

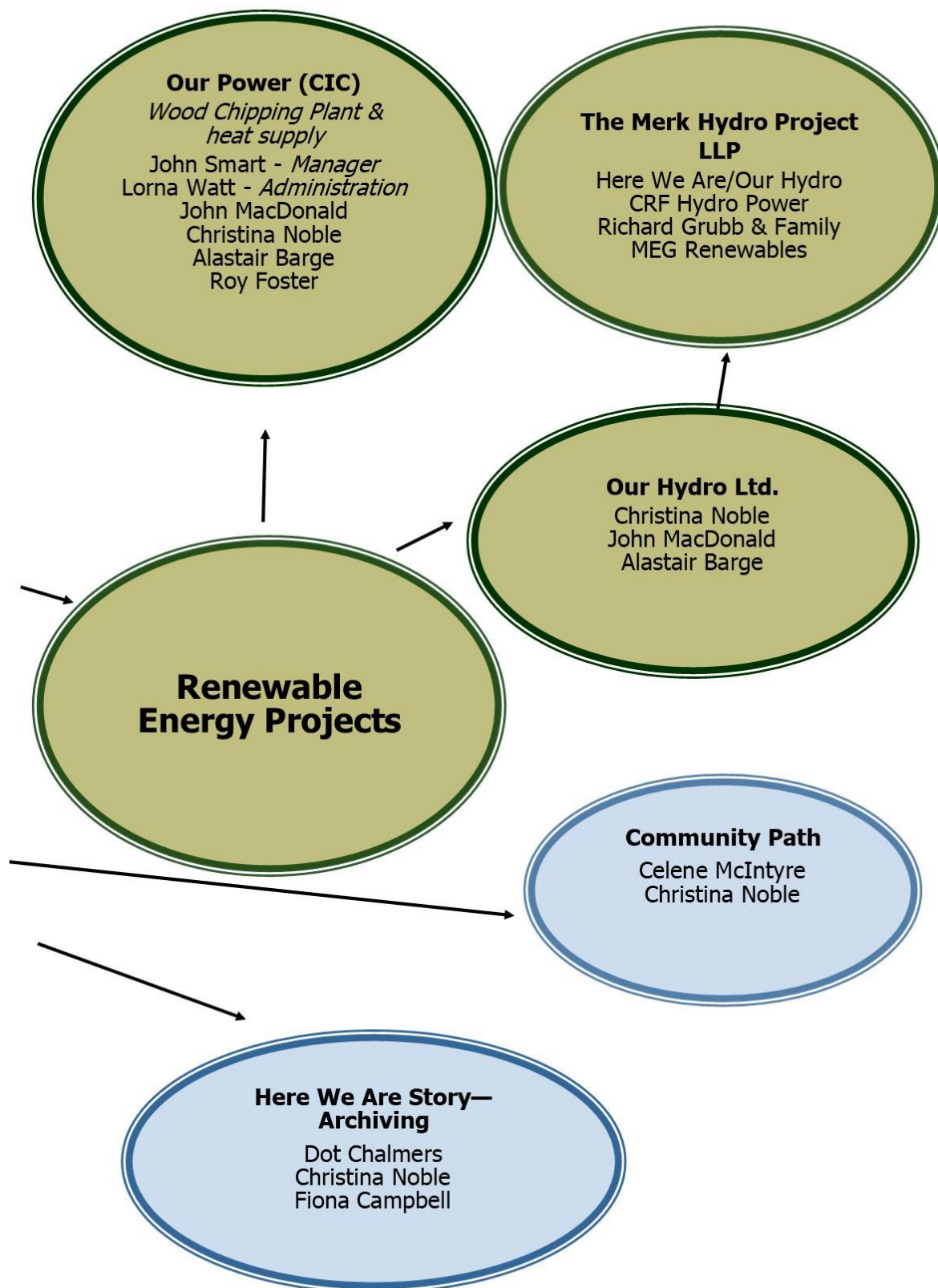


During these unstable and continually unpredictable times we, like many others, may have tended to be narrow minded and to focus on the immediate. We are trying to guard against this. For instance, we were pleased to accept the offer of Skills Development Scotland to Our Power. They saw a gap in our organisation which we were aware of but highlighting it made us take action. Next, we commissioned the Communities Housing Trust to look at the idea of offering a section of our Ballure wood as a Woodland Croft. While many of the 'actions' on the Community Action Plan of 2015 have been achieved through various Cairndow agencies - the path round the loch; the retention of the Post Office conscientiously managed by Helen (as a HWA subsidised service to the community, particularly as so many banks and local post offices have closed); the purpose built childcare; the walkers map; a hill bothy in Glenkinglas, though not yet in Glen Fyne; the Defibrillator and Fyne Homes have built new houses. But so far little headway has been made on improvement to the junction of the A83 and the village road at the Monument nor about provision of appropriate housing for the elderly of the village. So now we are determined to further discussions with Trunk roads about the former, and are discussing with Ardkinglas Estate about availability of building plot for the latter.

Christina November 2021

# The Organisation Chart







## The Staff, Committee and Company Personnel

### Staff

#### Christina Noble



Christina, one of the founders of Here We Are, is still the main contributor of ideas for innovative projects undertaken by this community organisation. Her dynamic personality and determination has helped secure HWA's financial situation, keeping the centre open to visitors and local people, not allowing set-backs to deter her from her goals.

#### Dot Chalmers



Dot, our archivist, is very enthusiastic, collecting photos, information about the locality and taking voice recordings for transcription, a time consuming activity. Dot was responsible for overseeing the design of our websites and now keeps the content up to date. As well as creating a local walking map, Dot is also the driving force behind the many successful exhibitions that Here We Are has held.

#### Lorna Watt



Lorna is now very experienced in administration work, having worked for several years as secretary to both Merk Hydro LLP and Our Power, the Community Interest Company which supplies woodchips for biomass plants. She is responsible for keeping track of stock as well as the income and expenses and keeping abreast of both Our Power and HWA's cash flows and budget predictions.

#### Helen MacRaid



Helen, as office manager, is at the front desk of the Here We Are centre, ready to greet visitors and customers. She looks after the administration and important book-keeping for Here We Are as well as running our small Post Office. Helen is also responsible for running our small retail outlet, making sure the shelves are well stocked.



### **Fiona Campbell**



Fiona is a very enthusiastic researcher, delving into local history and working with Dot on our various projects. She has been busy this year with the Here We Are Story project, history of the Cairndow Hotel and gathering names connected to the War Memorial.

### **Colin Stevenson**



Colin's outgoing personality makes him the ideal person to meet and greet visitors to Here We Are. Providing badly needed weekend cover, he enjoys chatting and sharing his knowledge of the history and the surrounding locality with all who come into the centre.

## **SJ Noble Trust**

### **Jim McMillan**



As one of the SJ Noble team, Jim acts as consultant for financial advice and handles their administration work. His advice given to SJ Noble Trust and to Here We Are is invaluable and he is a great asset to our group. He also entertains with his guitar and singing at the Hogmanay Ceilidhs.

## **Aquarium**

### **Dom Adams**



Opening our new Aquarium gave Dom much work but his enthusiasm never wains. His knowledge of local waters, drawn from his experience working on the shores of Loch Fyne, is vital to the running of our Aquarium. His fascination for the creatures, seaweeds and anemones found in Loch Fyne is infectious and he always keeps the display colourful and interesting.

## Committee

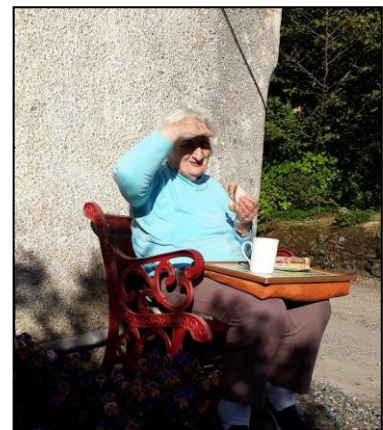
### **Alexander Miles**



Alexander has been a member of our committee for many years now and willingly gives his advice and guidance to Here We Are. His cheerful personality and extensive knowledge make him a valued member of the team.

Alice is one of the founding members of the Here We Are committee. Since 1998, she has added to our local knowledge and never loses her enthusiasm for our aim to collect as much historical information about the local area as we can. We greatly appreciate the work she has done and the contribution she has made to our many projects.

### **Alice Beattie**



### **Alistair MacCallum**



Alistair is also one of the founders of Here We Are and the person we turn to for information on farming, weather patterns and history of the locality, tapping into his vast knowledge for many of our projects. His enthusiasm for here We Are's aims and activities never wains and we are privileged to have him on our committee.

### **Deirdre Forsyth**

Deirdre's knowledge of legal matters has been invaluable to us. She is always willing to give practical advice on running of Here We Are and when problems beset us, her cheerful and optimistic personality keeps us looking forward, making her a much appreciated member of the committee.



### **John MacDonald**

John has been Chair of Here We Are committee from its first inception. He cheerfully takes on the responsibility of chairing the meetings, making sure everything is done according to the rules and makes valued contributions to the discussions. John is also Director of both Our Power and Our Hydro, always willing to support the companies with advice and practical help. As an experienced tradesman, we know we can turn to him for help with maintenance and technical problems. We admire his commitment to Here We Are and its aims.



### **Celene McIntyre**



Celene's determination and hard work saw the creation of the walking path between the two parts of Cairndow. The same enthusiasm has driven her to obtain grants for the introduction of electric bikes into the community. Never shrinking from a challenge, Celene is an asset to Here We Are and the local community.

### **Our Power**

John has been with Our Power from the very beginning. He runs the chipping business, ordering timber, chipping and organising deliveries, making sure that everything runs smoothly and dealing with problems calmly and efficiently.

### **John Smart**



### **Alastair Barge**



Alastair was on the board of AIE and is a trustee of the SJ Noble Trust. He is a halibut farmer and has many years' experience of business in Argyll and its impediments. He is a director of Our Power and buys woodchips for Otter Ferry Seafish Ltd.



## Merk Hydro



Gregor Cameron's childhood and formative years were spent in Cairndow. We are very fortunate to have his skills and tenacity (and good humour) as the driving force for a variety of projects towards our business growth including, crucially, The Merk Hydro and the Ballure Wood purchase.

Roy Foster is senior partner in CR Foster Ltd, our partners in the Merk Hydro scheme. He and his brother Martin have built and run their own very successful hydro schemes at Achnamara, as well as having recently bought a large scheme further north. We are lucky that they find a joint venture with a small community is something they want to do. Without them the Merk Hydro would not have been possible.

## **Staff**



*Here We Are Staff*

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

HERE WE ARE Income and Expenditure – Comparison of this year's figures to last years.

	Apr '19 - Mar '20	Apr '20 - Mar '21		Apr '19 - Mar '20	Apr '20 - Mar '21
<b>Income</b>			<b>Expenses</b>		
SJ Noble/Merk Hydro- Admin work	9,600	6,300	<b>Operating Costs</b>		
Bank interest received	32	2	Assistance	60	0
Catering	0	0	Bank Charges	360	239
Consultation work	0	0	Work on Aquarium	1,632	1,846
Donations			Design work	0	0
Aquarium	184	15	Website Design	0	0
Churn	397	62	Displays/Exhibitions	73	619
Other donations	808	431	Hospitality	336	134
Total Donations	1,389	508	Insurance (incl 2 E-bikes)	1,818	2,225
Display of Planning Applications	0	0	Marketing, Advertising	0	0
Meeting Room Hire			Meeting Room Catering	151	0
Catering income	95	0	Office Supplies	1,341	1,598
Meeting Room Hire - Other	832	60	Postage	713	675
Total Meeting Room Hire	927	60	Printing	214	387
Membership income	49	47	Professional Fees		
Community Initiatives			Accounts	4,235	7,390
Path - Grant funding	152,322	127,615	Consultancy	1,560	2,860
Community Fund	8,000	4,000	Legal	0	0
Electric Bikes/Sheds- Grant	0	22,232 (1)	Other	596	9
Total Community Initiatives	160,322	153,847	Total Professional Fees	6,391	10,259
Rechargeable income	0	0	Stock Purchases		
Sales Commission	26	0	Books, Maps, Stamps	981	153
Post Office Revenue	4,639	4,856	General Shop Purchases	198	640
Merk Hydro Community Payment	10,506	10,600	Newspapers	1,955	0
Our Power - Donation towards Core Cost		5,000	Total Stock Purchases	3,134	793
Our Power - Contribution towards Salary cost	12,000	12,300	Streamline	73	59
<b>MERK HYDRO REVENUE</b>			Subcontractors	0	0
Hydro Revenue	24,797	72,442	Subscriptions	342	78
HMRC Furlough Salaries Grant Scheme	0	8,797	Telecoms, ICT	4,579	3,203
<b>REVENUE GRANTS</b>	0	0	Total Operating Costs	21,217	22,115
Clachan Flats Windfarm Trust - New Year Event	1,000	0	Property Costs		
Heritage Lottery Fund - Here We Are Story	45,100	0	Cleaning Costs	1,061	530
Argyll & Bute Council - Coronavirus Support Scheme - Core Costs	0	10,000	General Maintenance	506	2,487 (2)
HMRC Furlough Grant Scheme	0	8,797	Lease costs	1	1
Mothers' Messages Sales	126	20	Non Cap Furn & Equipment	766	36
Other Online Sales	150	0	Utilities	3,844	3,795
Shop Sales			Total Property Costs	6,178	6,849
Books, Maps, Stamps	567	88	Legal/Consultancy Work - Ballure	1,450	0
Newspapers	1,133	29	RBS - Loan repayment	2,840	0 (3)
Office services	12	1	Path Construction	166,538	20,533
Shop Sales - Other	1,543	665	Rechargeable expenses	2,155	916
Total Shop Sales	3,255	783	Community Fund Expenses	0	3,900
Total Sales Income	3,531	803	Here We Are Story - expenses	502	4,969
Sundry Income	4,146	4,397	Electric Bikes/sheds - Costs	10,095	14,901
Total Income	278,064	279,959	Staffing Costs		
<b>Notes</b>			Employer's NI	3,949	3,683
(1) The Grant funding was for the purchase of Electric Bikes and also construction of bicycles sheds			Pension Payment	937	621
(2) This includes converting old aquarium shed to bike shed and also built a tent box for marquees			Travel & subsistence	304	27
(3) The RBS Loan for Ballure Woodlands was fully repaid in the last financial year 19/20.			Wages and salaries		
			Core	80,979	60,020
			Here We Are Story	5,353	23,505
			Total Staffing Costs	91,522	87,856
			Sundry expense	1,140	573
			Total Expenses	303,642	162,617

## Here We Are Story

### The “Here we Are Story – Heritage Lottery Fund

Last September we began to take part in zoom calls with Mark Vale (Hebridean Information Services) who was designing our new database /website. These weekly meetings continued for months as we created a website that contained all the information about Here We Are and all the different projects we had achieved.

There was a lot of sorting through documents scanning and numbering the ones that were to be added to the database. By the end of August we started adding information on to. Alison Diamond (archivist) had shown us how to archive documents at the beginning of the year, so we began archiving hard copy documents about how Here We Are began and storing them correctly in the archive cupboard that John MacDonald converted for us.



*John making archive cupboard!*



*Dot and Greta Archiving*

Due to Covid restrictions we were unable to do the activities we had planned with the schools and the elderly members of our community. This worked out well for us as we could concentrate on the database. We were unaware of how much time adding information to it was going to take! It also meant that we could spend a lot of time getting the website right. Luckily Stuart Crane had installed 4G Wi-Fi for us to use on the project and this made uploading the information to the database much quicker.

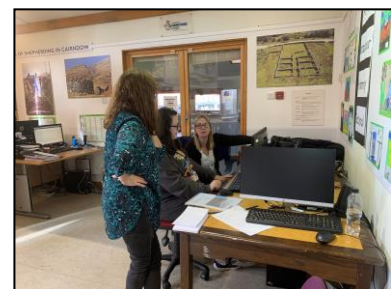
In December we started the design the Front end of the website and working on the content for all the different projects. This was all done through zoom meetings with Mark. Again we had to pause this for a few months as Fiona was working from home and Christina was in London due to Covid restrictions, making it difficult to discuss our ideas. We continued to add information to the database and worked on any snagging.



*Working on website design*

When we were all back in the centre, we were able to get the Homepage designed for the website. Mark visited us from Tiree for a few days and we made great progress on the website. It began to take shape.

In July, Casey Liddell came to help us as a volunteer. She had previously been with us on work experience when she was at school. Casey was a great help with uploading material onto the website, and it gave her the opportunity to learn new computer skills. We also had help from Greta Cameron, who was able to add the names to the people on the database. These tasks were quite laborious but really important for the website, so we were really pleased and thankful for their help.



*Teaching Casey IT skills*



Eventually, on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021, the new Here We Are website went live, exactly 20 years from when the Here We Are Centre opened! There is a tremendous amount of information on it, and we are delighted with the outcome. There have been lots of positive comments about it, have a look at [www.hereweare.com](http://www.hereweare.com)



*Lesson on photography repairing*

During the summer David Fiddes very kindly gave us training on how to repair old photographs. This is very useful as we have quite a few damaged photographs. We had planned for this to be an open event but with Covid restrictions it was best to have it limited in numbers in the hope that at a future date we could then pass on what we had learnt to others.

We ran a training course on Oral Recording for Strachur History Society. They benefited greatly from the training and advice on what equipment to use. We hope to do another one later in the year.



*Audio Recording Course – Strachur History Society*

At the beginning of November Alison Diamond ran a Paleography Course, which involved studying and learning how to read old handwritten documents. This was a very interesting day, with a very good turnout.

The schools were still restricted to outings and visits, however during the October holidays Thomas Miles volunteered to learn how to take audio recordings and recorded Nigel Callander about his time working on the Clachan and Lairige Hydro Schemes in the 1950s. We were also delighted that Strachur Primary School gave us Art Work on Renewable Energy which Jim McMillan judged. These have been added to our new Renewable Energy Exhibition in Here We Are and look amazing.



*Fiona and Greta working on archiving*



*Thomas audio recording Nigel*

## What's in the Loch? The Aquarium

The Aquarium, having been re-opened after lockdown, has proved popular with visitors. Dom continues to be enthusiastic and keeps an interesting and informative exhibition showing what could be seen in Loch Fyne.

## Post Office

In recent years we have seen so many local bank closures and Post Office closures but Cairndow Post Office has survived and, although only open two days a week, has proved to be a lifeline for local residents and businesses. It is well used for banking as well as postage and sale of stamps. With Christmas just around the corner, we anticipate a busy few weeks.

## Path

The Path is now completed and is being used regularly. The signage was completed September 2021 and the plan is to install benches donated by members of the community by the end of the year. The path has been a great success and we have had terrific enthusiasm from the community and visitors. The benefits it brings to the local community in terms of safe accessible connection between the village, Fyne Den (developments at the head of the loch) and Clachan are immeasurable. The route enjoys spectacular views in either direction while walking, cycling or running on the path. Local flora, fauna, wildlife and birds also add to the attraction.



*People enjoying the path!*



*It's a lovely walk!*

ways. We learned a lot in the process and built great relationships with the many stakeholders involved. A path opening ceremony will be planned in the next few months and we will make sure all of the local community, businesses and many stakeholders who contributed to this project are invited to join.

Fyne Den/Cairndow Community Childcare use the path as an outdoor activity for the nursery and have advised us that the children love to count the bridges! We think a bridge naming competition might be a good thing to have in the near future.

The size and complexity of this project brought many challenges and opportunities and saw the community come together to help support and build in a variety of

## E-Bikes

To date we have had two grants from the Energy Savings Trust to purchase ebikes. Individuals and local businesses have contributed to the purchase of them. The project is to provide for 18 ebikes for local businesses and individuals. So far on behalf of the community we have managed to purchase 14 which have now been distributed and are in use. The first lot of 10 ebikes coincided with the first lock down in March early April 2020.

The project was launched to encourage residents of our community to use more sustainable travel for work and leisure activities. This was at the same time as we completed the new 3.5km path which opened up safe pedestrian and cycling access between the village of Cairndow and Clachan. The aims and objectives of the project was to give access and participation with ebikes to our community members and to promote sustainable travel and health benefits.

Several users have been able to significantly reduce car usage to access their work place and people have enjoyed using there ebikes for leisure and activity. This was particularly relevant and hugely impactful during lockdown as it encouraged and enabled people to get out and about and exercise more.

There has been significant interest in the ebikes and we have a waiting list of people and businesses. The local community have been very engaged in the project by observing the usage of the ebikes within the local area



We have 14 dedicated users but unfortunately due to covid restrictions we have not been able to hold any publicity events but it would be our intention to do this in the future.

From senior community members, the feedback is “*it makes cycling a pleasure again*”, so it definitely encourages older members of the community to take up a more active lifestyle.

## Cycle Shelters

With a contribution from Here We Are and a grant from Cycle Friendly Scotland we were able to erect 2 purpose build cycle shelters at Here We Are and Cairndow. They have been well used and positive feedback provided by various members of the community. Keeping with our efforts to try or encourage local participation, the shelters were erected by John MacDonald and John Beattie who did a great job.

The shelters are adding to our cycle infrastructure and helping to put Cairndow and Clachan on the Map as a Cycle Friendly community and environment.



## Here We Are – Power Exhibition

*Here at Cairndow*

### RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES ARE:

This exhibition is to show how and why Here We Are became involved with renewable energy and the benefit it now brings to HWA and the community.

## WHAT DO WE GAIN NOW?

Back in 2004 we had wondered if there was a way we could generate renewable energy 17 years later we have:-  
**Our Power** - a woodchipping & delivery company & 25% of **The Merk Hydro** electricity company.

**Our Power**

**Our Power Community Interest Company (CIC)** is owned by HWA see boards 8-9 to the left

- We supply to 12 different customers.
- In an average year we sell 2,200 tonnes of wood chips.
- This generates 3,960 mw/heat (at 25% moisture level).
- Average year gross turnover is £250k (we still have large loans to pay off !)

**The Merk Hydro LLP** - see the wall behind and on the right

- In an average year the Merk Hydro generates 4.4million kwh, sold to the National Grid.
- In an average year produces a gross turnover of approximately £850k.
- HWA owns 25% of the LLP (and still has many years of loans to pay off!)
- Merk can generate enough to supply over 1,000 houses p.a., based on the UK average.

John Smart and Alastair Fraser and the lorry

Roy Foster in the turbine house

# OUR RENEWABLE ENERGY

For Scotland (and beyond) our renewable energy schemes contribute to the Scottish Government's aim of 50% of all energy to come from renewables by 2030 and 2 gigawatts of which is to be produced by community owned schemes.

Opening the Merk Hydro LLP John Swinney, then Deputy First Minister & Cabinet Secretary for Finance said

*"The Scottish Government is defining a distinctive approach to Scotland's future energy provision - putting communities at the heart of decisions about their local energy system - and empowering them to take an economic stake in new developments.*

*Merk Hydro, is a prime example of how putting communities at the heart of decisions about their local energy system can help ensure we make sustainable use of our natural resources."*



On the way to work. Assuming a distance of 10 miles/day each weekday of the year, a new petrol Volkswagen Golf 8 would emit 1.12t of carbon a year. Meanwhile, an average ebike would emit 0.007 t of CO2 a year, given the same use.



## WHAT NEXT?



# THE MERK HYDRO PROJECT

**The Merk Burn catchment area:**  
Glen Fyne, Cairndow, Argyll  
**Construction cost of scheme:**  
Over £4 million  
**Designer and concept:**  
Roy and Martin Foster, CRF Hydro Power  
**The Project Director - construction:**  
Ginger Cameron, Ginger Cameron Consultancy  
**Contractor:**  
Michael McMillan, MAM Contracting



The head of Glen Fyne from the header pond site

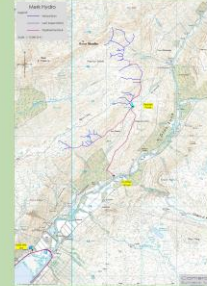
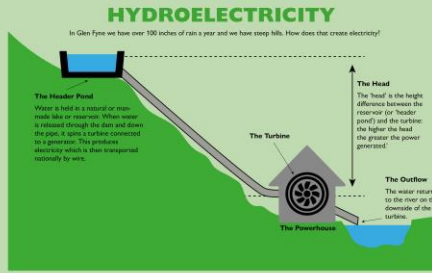


The Header Pond

Merk Hydro catchment area is 2.75km<sup>2</sup>. It can store 20 hours of water in the header pond which works like a battery storing water = power. This enables full capacity sale of power to the National Grid during the period of peak demand, and price.

It uses approximately 300 litres per second when it is operating at its maximum of 1 megawatt. Merk uses a specially designed Peltron turbine to convert water from its over 370 metres of head height to electricity.

The Merk Hydro Project LLP has annual turnover approximately £850k enough for 1000 average UK houses per year.



The Merk Catchment Area

## HOW IT HAPPENED

- 1** In 2006 Roy Foster assessed the Merk Burn catchment area's hydro electricity potential and suggested that Here We Are and CRF Foster might develop it in partnership. This had the potential to provide Here We Are with a self-supporting income.
  - Roy Foster & Ginger Cameron assessing the site
  - Steep hillsides, glenwater water
- 2** Despite a positive feasibility study, during the years from 2008 to 2013 the project was endlessly delayed due to:
  - objections from one of the landholders, so the scheme had to be redesigned
  - hesitancy and indecision at the Co-op bank
  - delays to the financial incentive tariff
- 3** Ultimately in 2013 MEG Renewables & Richard Grubb & family decided to invest in the Merk. Now, at last, with Social Investment Scotland's loan for HWA's share, the venture was viable. The partners in the registered Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) at 25% each became:
  - Richard Grubb & family
  - CRF Hydro Power
  - Here We Are/Our Hydro
  - MEG Renewables

LLP meeting: Christine Nettles, Richard Grubb family, Roy Foster, Richard Grubb, Roy Foster, Neil McGeech, Ginger Cameron, Nancy Hamer.
- 4** The main reason the scheme was delayed was because it was such a steep and challenging site and considered difficult and dangerous. That it exists is partly due to Roy Foster's intuitive sense of a potential site and his insistence on the importance of the 'head', the open ditches that carry trickles of water (even when there is little rain). And its partly due to Michael McMillan of MAM's coincidence that his team could build it.
  - Lean
- 5** The first sod of the Merk scheme was cut (at last) in May 2013 by Michael McMillan and Finn North (Christina's grandson).
  - Finn North & Michael McMillan
  - Ginger Cameron, Alison (Ginger's) Social Investment Scotland, Tom (Christine Nettles), Roy Foster, Neil McGeech
- 6** Construction continued over the following two years.
  - Construction, laying pipeline
  - Construction, the head scheme
  - Construction of header pond, the 170m Long Ben in the distance
- 7** John Swinney, Deputy First Minister & Cabinet Secretary for Finance, opened the Merk Hydro Scheme August 2015.
  - Christine Nettles, Roy Foster, John Swinney, Martin Foster



## Merk Hydro Project LLP

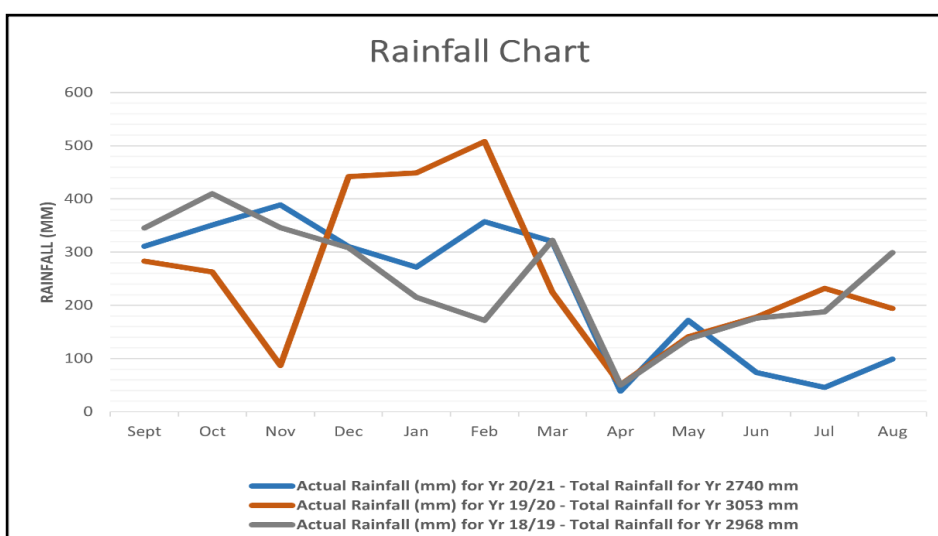
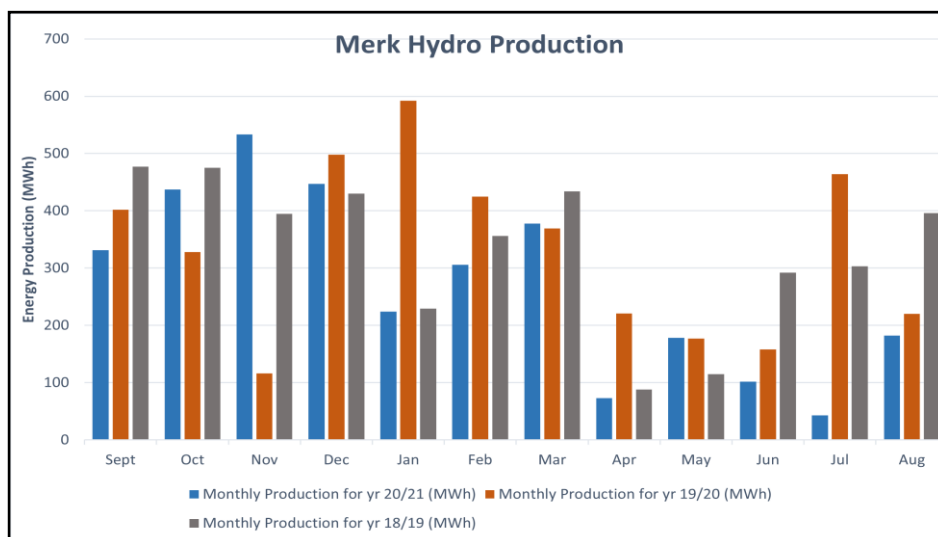
As per the Income and Expenditure revenue is well up on the previous year. The figures are a little misleading as the previous year we had just renegotiated the Social Investment Scotland loan in order to capital available.

During its sixth year of operation, Merk Hydro generated 3.2 gigawatts compared to 3.9 gigawatts the previous two years.

As can be seen in graph, June, July and August have been exceptionally dry months compared to previous years and this reduced production.

The leak at the drain valve at the new headerpond has been repaired and exceptional repairs were needed at the south least due to large rock fall and slippage. We have been fortunate that we have had no major repairs until now and this work will enhance production.

Roy and Martin Foster have worked exceptionally hard to keep the Hydro Scheme running smoothly and efficiently.





## Our Power

Our Power has been operating for 15 years now and we are happy to say that the company has gone from strength to strength. We are still supplying our loyal customers with high quality, low moisture woodchips, all within a 30mile radius of our chipping plant, keeping our carbon footprint as low as possible.

We have recently negotiated a new contract with Tillhill for the purchase of timber. Although we buy as much wood as we can in advance, it is always a struggle to obtain enough dry timber for our needs. We have therefore sourced another supplier, giving us a back-up in the event of a supply shortage during the winter months.

Once again, we found problems over the winter months. Purchasing enough timber proved very difficult. This year we had to buy in dry chips in order to keep up with customer demand. We have always felt that it is better to keep our customers supplied than to risk their boilers running short of chips. We were grateful to be able to carry on as usual during lockdown as we are considered an essential service.

Going forward, we have now purchased a large quantity of timber which is currently seasoning and will be ready for this winter.

The price to Our Power of purchasing timber has significantly risen by 20% during the last year. The total rise over the last five years is 45%. While we make every effort to keep our prices down for our customers, it is inevitable that some of this cost has to be passed on. Fortunately, our customers have stayed loyal, including Cooke Aquaculture, (previously known as Lakeland) with whom we have signed a new contract.

We are of course, still registered on the biomass suppliers list, necessary for claiming the RHI payment. We were audited by Woodsure in the summer and continue to be an approved supplier of quality woodchips.

Fortunately, we have had no major mechanical problems this year and we are optimistic for the future of Our Power. We feel sure that the next 12 months will be a profitable and successful. Thanks go to John Smart and Alastair Fraser for their continuing hard work and commitment. Thanks go to John MacDonald for helping from time to time.



*John busy loading the lorry!*



*John and Alastair worked all through lockdown!*

# Strachur Primary School

## What is renewable energy and non-renewable energy?

There are two types of energy: **renewable** and **non-renewable**.

**Non-renewable energy** includes coal, gas and oil. They are made by burning fossil fuels to create energy.

**Renewable energy** includes solar, hydro and wind energy. Wind energy is made when the wind moves the blades on a wind turbine.

### Why is renewable energy important?

Much of the world relies on non-renewable energy to heat their homes, power their electronic devices, and power their cars. Once these energy sources are used up, they will be gone forever.

Developing technologies that can efficiently use renewable energy sources is critical to the future of our planet.

We asked  
the school  
to  
contribute  
to our  
exhibition

