

## ANNUAL REPORT AUTUMN 2022 to AUTUMN 2023

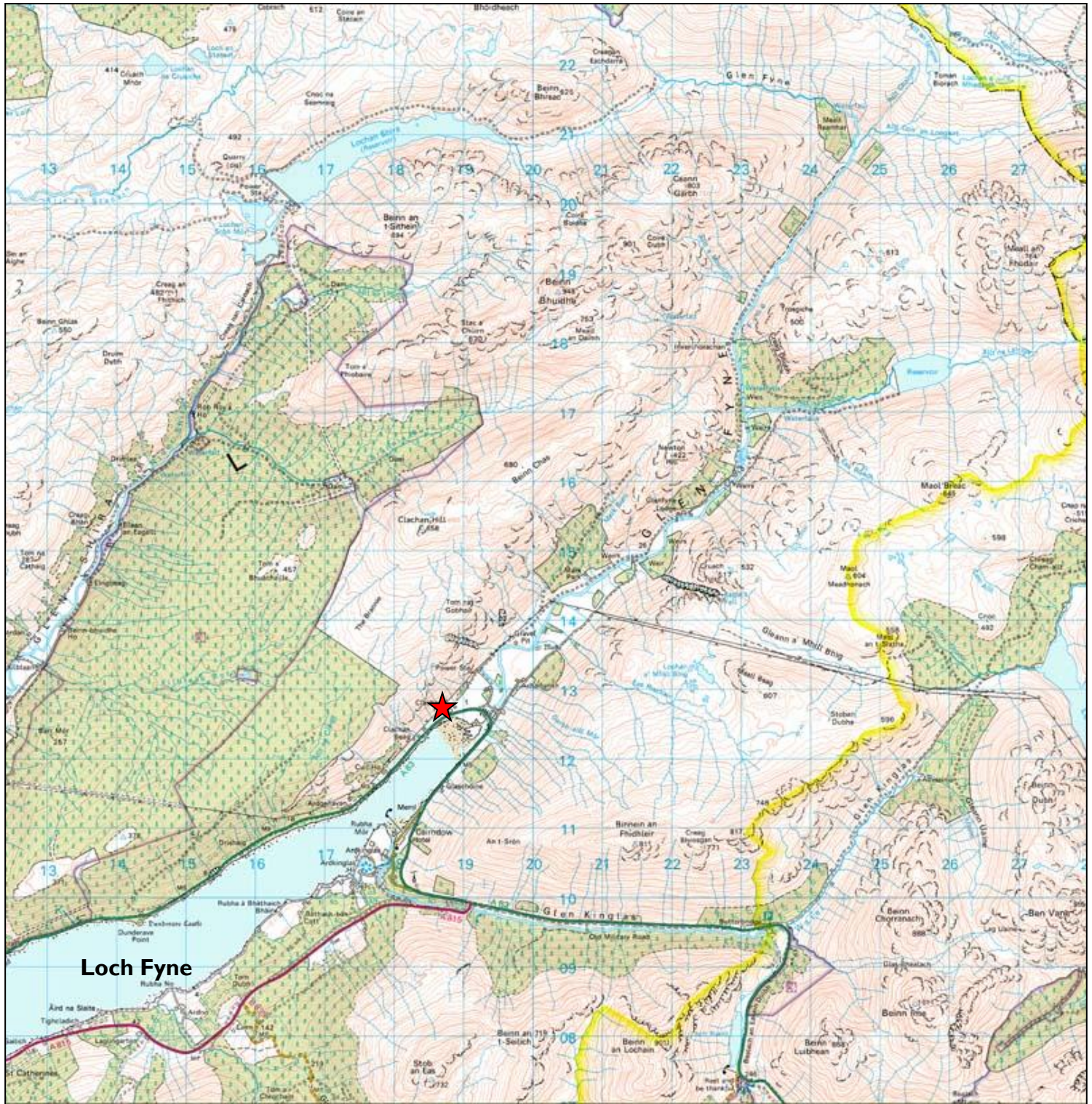


*View of Tail Race Clachan Hydro Electric Scheme 1955*

**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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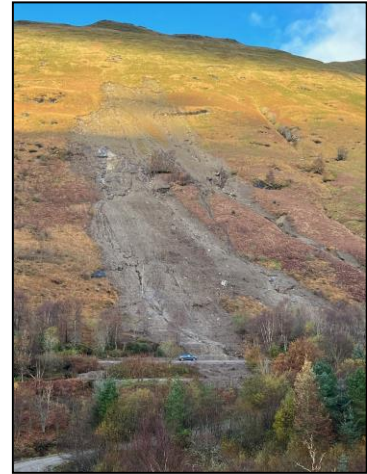
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## Overview of the year Autumn 2022 – 2023

Settling down to write the Overview of the Year it is always hard to stretch the mind back to this time last year and not to be preoccupied by the immediate. The 'PS' on last year's report was that the, just announced, figure for the Merk Hydro's kwh generation was the highest for any month since we began. The 'PS' just now is that between the morning of Friday 8th October and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> morning there was more rain than anyone remembers – 287mls or just under 17.5 inches (*annual* rainfall in Ipswich is 23" or 587mls) with more floods and landslides than anyone can remember. At the moment the Merk turbine is whirling around as it should. But low mist means we cannot see the hills above and so can't tell what expensive damage may have been done to the leats along the high hillside. Meantime Our Power's wood chip deliveries are hampered, just as the autumn chill arrives, as our delivery lorry that blows the chips awaits a part - on its slow way from Canada.



*Landslide at Dunoon Road end.*

On this dark and damp Autumn morning our mood is apprehensive. However, for most of this year it has been positive:

The gross turnover for the Merk LLP was over £1,000,000 by far the highest ever. By the time the rent, maintenance and admin has been paid, and the share to each of the other 3 partners in the LLP and our large loan (not paid off until 2031 – 2032), HWA's share is diminished but well above last year. My original idea for the Merk was to ensure the sustainable future of HWA and then for us to be able to contribute to community development in the Cairndow area. Now we can do that.

Last year we were reviewing what we do and what we might want to do. We have some updates –

We set up a Community Fund - £5k per year, applications to be invited June and December. This has begun, for details of the criteria and what we have funded see page 12.

Along with the Community Council and the Hall Committee we have revised the **Community Action Plan** (see page 12), the foremost needs expressed were improvement to local transport, extension to the graveyard and care for the elderly.

In last year's report I wrote '*The idea (of Come On In) which is volunteers visiting those who live alone or whose family need a break. Awards for All has granted six months funding to set it up*'. Hats off to Dot Chalmers, Fiona Campbell and Fiona Marston and the volunteers, it has now been operating for a year and has just received its third six-month funding.

Disappointingly the plan to work with Ardkinglas Estate and the Community Housing Trust on a housing initiative didn't work out. However, as per the HWA's ethos that you can't tell what may grow out of what, the housing idea having been discussed and the Come on In having highlighted the need for local carers, we decided to buy a plot from Ardkinglas Estate, and to build on it a three bedroom house which we envisage to be for a local carer.

This moves us into a new step in terms of community development. We are delighted that **Christopher Cox** has agreed to further this, to chair the Development group at HWA, and to advise on other roles at HWA.

He says - *“Here We Are is an organisation that I’ve enjoyed being involved with for about 10 years. At this very exciting time, I’m delighted to be taking a more active role, providing advice and assistance, and helping to plan for the future in a changing world”*.

In terms of our Committee and our staff.

It is with great sadness we acknowledge the death of Alice Beattie, nee Sinclair 1933 – 2023. It is no exaggeration to say that without her HWA would not have got to where it is today. It was she who imagined and then invented the *Our Houses: Their Stories* project, with its exhibition at the Kelvin Grove Gallery, Glasgow and Eden Court Theatre, Inverness. It put HWA on the map and the information it held became a base for much more. Until only a few months before she died, she never missed a committee meeting.



*Alice working on Our Houses Project*

Helen MacRaidl has retired after 17 years of loyal service to the cause of HWA. When she joined it was a very different place than it is today. It was she who participated in the introduction of the Post Office, and then reluctantly oversaw its end. All those years she masterminded the day-to-day income and outgoings on Quickbooks and welcomed visitors to the front desk. We miss her constant presence.

Fiona Campbell who joined in 2019 is retiring next month. She was crucial to securing the funding from Heritage Lottery Fund for the Here We Are Story Project. Over the next 3 years (including lockdown) she and Dot worked painstakingly in ensuring the information was accurately digitalised and made readily accessible.

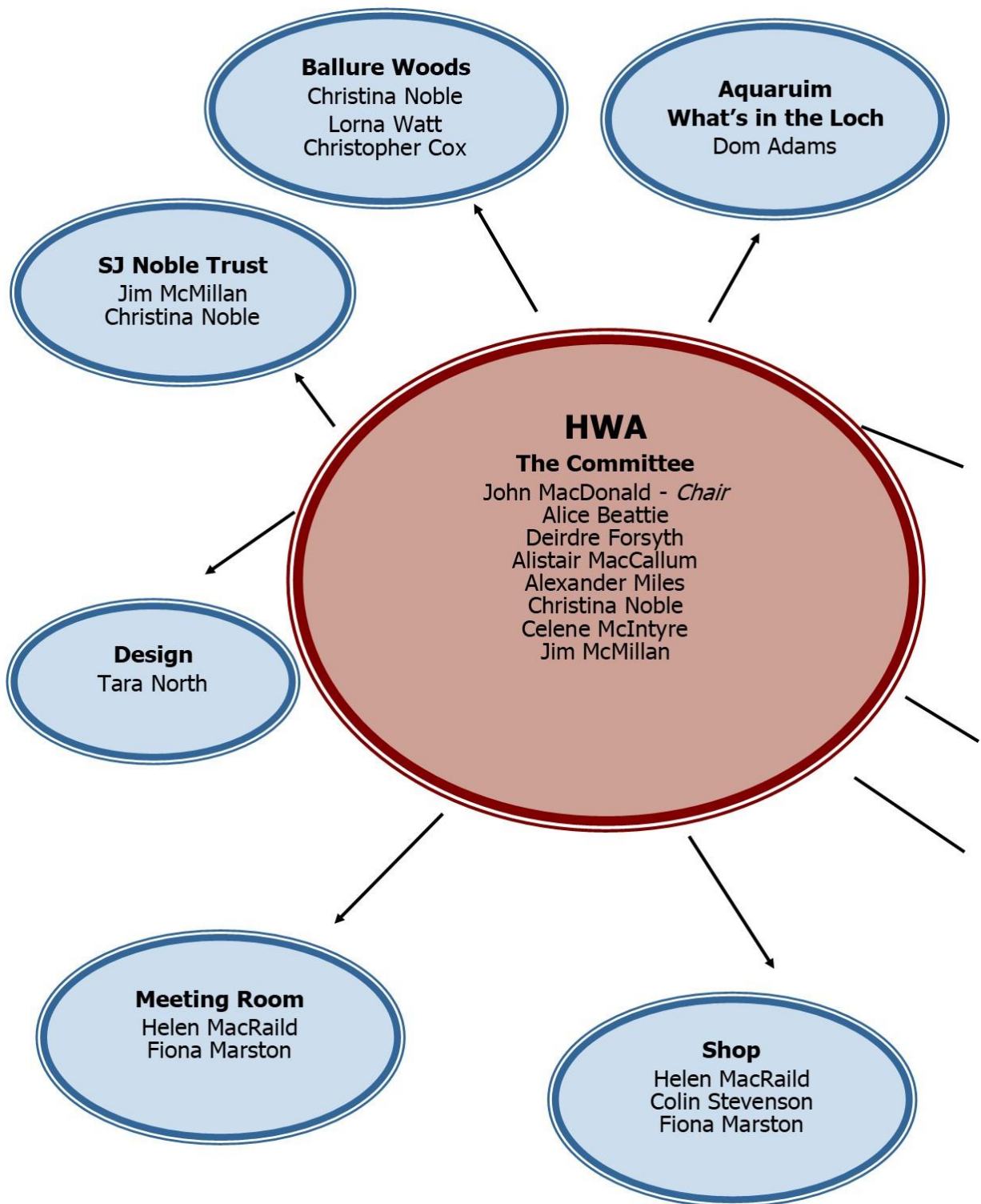


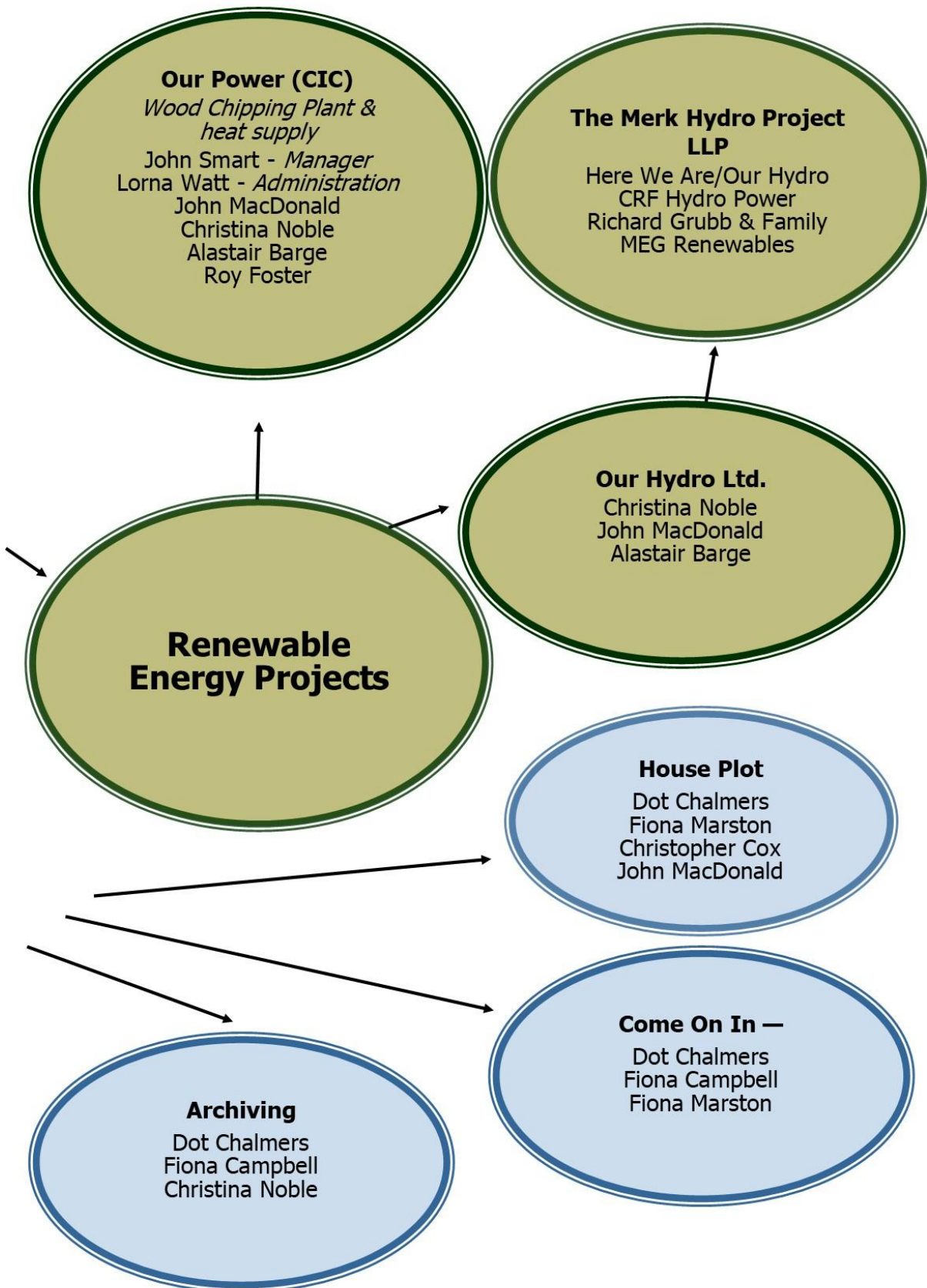
*Helen's retirement lunch at Loch Fyne Oysters*

Similarly, she was crucial to the setting up and the concept of Come On In. She then worked with volunteers in Strachur ensuring the help for the elderly.

She has an aptitude and enthusiasm for historical research, I hope she continues with it in her retirement.

# 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, our archivist, is very enthusiastic, collecting photos, information about the locality and taking voice recordings for transcription, a time consuming activity. 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. She is currently working on our Come On In service.

### Dot Chalmers



### Lorna Watt



Lorna is now very experienced in finance and 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. Thus the introduction of Xero to replace Quickbooks means that she had to master an entirely new system.

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.

### Helen MacRaid



**Fiona Campbell**



Fiona is a very enthusiastic researcher, delving into local history and working with Dot on our various projects. She has been crucial to the setting up and concept of the Come On In service.

**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.

**Fiona Marston**



Fiona Marston was keen to come to HWA because of its community role. Having been the Day Services Officer at Argyll and Bute's Struan Day Centre her background was with community organisations. Like all other members of our staff she found working with the Post Office too onerous. We are delighted she has joined our team welcoming visitors to the centre, and now she is using some of her previous experience assisting with the Come On In service.

**Wendy Reid**

We have known Wendy for many years while she worked with Development Trust Scotland. In 2006 she was responsible for finding us funding for the business plan for Our Power. Through the DTAS and Strengthening Communities Fund we were enabled to do the Community Action plan for Cairndow in 2015. We have stayed in touch with Wendy over the years and knew she had moved to the Island of Ulva as a development officer. On a trip to Ulva last summer it occurred to us it would be good if she came and assisted us part time with development initiatives. We are delighted that she agreed.



## **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**

Our Aquarium gives 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.

**Adrian Curtis**



Adrian has recently moved into the village and we are delighted that he wished to join our committee. He worked for Ordnance Survey so his mapping skills are invaluable to Here We Are.

**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 the 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’s committee for many years. 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 MacIntyre**

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 Smart



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.

### 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.



## Staff



*Here We Are Staff*

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

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

	Apr '21 - Mar '22	Apr '22 - Mar '23		Apr '21- Mar '22	Apr '22- Mar '23
<b>INCOME</b>			<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Merk Hydro- Admin work	6,000	6,000	Operating Costs		
Bank interest received	1	45	Assistance	10	0
Catering	25	16	Bank Charges	298	268
Donations			Work on Aquarium	1,768	1,797
Aquarium	162	281	Design work	300	300
Churn	159	215	Displays/Exhibitions	3,810	771 (2)
Other donations	276	514	Hospitality	369	147
Total Donations	597	1,010	Insurance (incl 2 E-bikes)	2,480	2,995
Meeting Room Hire			Marketing, Advertising	237	0
Catering income	0	152	Meeting Room Catering	0	33
Meeting Room Hire - Other	143	260	Office Supplies	914	935
Total Meeting Room Hire	143	412	Postage	395	396
Membership income	10	67	Printing	0	105
Community Initiatives			Professional Fees		
Electric Bikes/Sheds- Grant	2,083	12,070	Accounts	5,465	4,600
Total Community Initiatives	2,083	12,070	Consultancy	2,940	3,410
Sales Commission	0	13	Legal	0	0
Post Office Revenue	4,571	3,074	Other	336	1,320
Merk Hydro Community Payment	11,130	12,154	Total Professional Fees	8,741	9,330
Our Power - Donation towards Core Cost	5,000	5,000	Stock Purchases		
Our Power - Contribution towards Salary Costs	12,600	12,915	Books, Maps, Stamps	1,019	557
Merk Hydro Revenue			General Shop Purchases	767	386
Hydro Revenue	53,406	91,364 (1)	Total Stock Purchases	1,786	943
Revenue Grants			Streamline	82	93
Inspiring Scotland - Housing Project		5,000	Subcontractors	0	0
Heritage Lottery Fund - Here We Are Story	36,080	9,020	Subscriptions	79	110
Come on In - Award for All	0	9,450	Telecoms, ICT	3,450	3,535
Shop Sales			Total Operating Costs	24,719	21,758
Books, Maps, Stamps	597	548	Property Costs		
Office services	9	0	Cleaning Costs	400	180
Shop Sales - Other	1,893	1,110	General Maintenance	1,898	1,370
Mothers' Messages	5	0	Lease costs	1	1
Total Shop Sales	1,907	1,110	Non Cap Furn & Equipment	1,767	569
Total Sales Income	2,513	1,658	Utilities	4,030	6,314
Sundry Income	4,949	5,045	Total Property Costs	8,096	8,434
Total Income	139,104	174,313	Legal/Consultancy Work - Ballure Housing Project Expenses	1,050	1,250
				0	8,146
			Path Construction/Maintenance	15,301	1,689
			Community Fund Expenses	0	3,000
			Here We Are Story - expenses	8,912	5,890
			Electric Bikes/sheds - Costs	12,769	0
			Come On In - Expenses	0	804
			Staffing Costs		
			Employer's NI - Core	3,339	4,669
			Pension Payment - Core	524	882
			Travel & subsistence	31	411
			Wages and Salaries		
			Core	51,735	75,235
			Here We Are Story	34,790	9,792
			Come On In		7,000
			Total Staffing Costs	90,419	97,989
			Sundry expense	361	128
			Total Expenses	161,627	149,088

(1) Year 23/23 The Merk Hydro production was good therefore it was able to increase donations to Here We Are

(2) Exhibitions costs are down from previous year as we were not working on a project that involved an exhibition

## Come On In

We are delighted to say that our “sit in service” has gone from strength to strength. It has continued due to us successfully securing funds for another six months from TSI, Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund taking us to September 2023. We are continuously applying for funding to support this service; we know that it is not sustainable to work in six-monthly periods so therefore we need to source longer term funding.

While providing our “sit in service” we asked the elderly what other ways we could help to make their lives easier. They came up with various ideas, being rural, transport was a main issue. Our volunteers began taking folk to their appointments, to visit family, shopping etc, this service has mushroomed. We are now providing a service through our volunteers where we visit folk, provide transport, and doing small errands. Our volunteer number has grown to 20, with us providing 264 tasks over the six-month period.

As well as our “sit in service” we have continued to have our monthly Afternoon Teas, we have added to this by inviting the Hub (Strachur) members to come to Here We Are for morning coffee once a month, we hire the Strachur community bus, this allows them to have a day out to visit the Tree Shop, Loch Fyne Oysters and to chat over their morning coffee.



*Afternoon Tea Party*

The feedback we have had from the folk we have helped through our service has been extremely positive, we are certainly making a difference to families, and our volunteers tell us of the great benefit to themselves, they feel that they are needed, they are making a difference and that makes them feel good within themselves.

Our long-term aim is to have a personal assistant/home help, and then a carer for our community, living in a purpose- built house in Cairndow, we are taking the steps to do that whilst still providing this service.

## Aquarium

We were shocked and disappointed to find that our aquarium had been vandalised overnight and all the water had drained out of it. Luckily Dom Adams managed to get the sea creatures back into the loch before they died. We are now in the process of getting another tank installed, John MacDonald has been working hard trying to make it fit! It has made us aware of how many people enjoy the aquarium as lots of people have come into Here We Are asking what has happened to the aquarium particularly Fyne Den who sent a nice card. We are hopeful that it will be open again in the New Year.



*John MacDonald replacing the Aquarium*

## **Cairndow Community Action Plan**

Discussions were had with The Hall Committee, Cairndow Community Council and Wendy from Here We Are to review and update the Community Action Plan.

It was agreed that Here We would take the project forward.

Research was undertaken in order to establish the current priorities for the improvement of services and facilities in Cairndow which would then inform the outline of specific projects for future development.

A local consultation exercise was undertaken in order to try and establish the current community priorities for development. The following consultations were carried out:

- Surveys were sent out to local residents.
- Displays in the Village Hall and Here We Are for people to indicate further priorities using stickers and post comments.

The three main issues that came out of the review were:

- Transport – the need for more local public transport and a bus shelter at Clachan.
- Infrastructure – an extension to the graveyard at Kilmorich Church
- Health and Welfare - care service for the elderly

## **Here We Are – Community Fund**

Our first year of providing grants to our local community has gone very well.

The initial proposal was to be able to give £5,000 in the first year and we are happy to say between December 2022 and June 2023 we have issued individual grants totalling £4,000 to benefit the local community.

Local Village Hall events have been supported alongside support for community initiatives and support for local people in further education.

This has been well received, and Here We Are is looking forward to receiving more applications in the future.

Funds will be granted twice a year, 30<sup>th</sup> June and 31<sup>st</sup> December. Applications will need to be submitted before 1<sup>st</sup> June and before 1<sup>st</sup> December.

Applications do not have to be from a constituted body they will have to be considered to be of a community benefit and would include applications for assistance with education and apprenticeships.

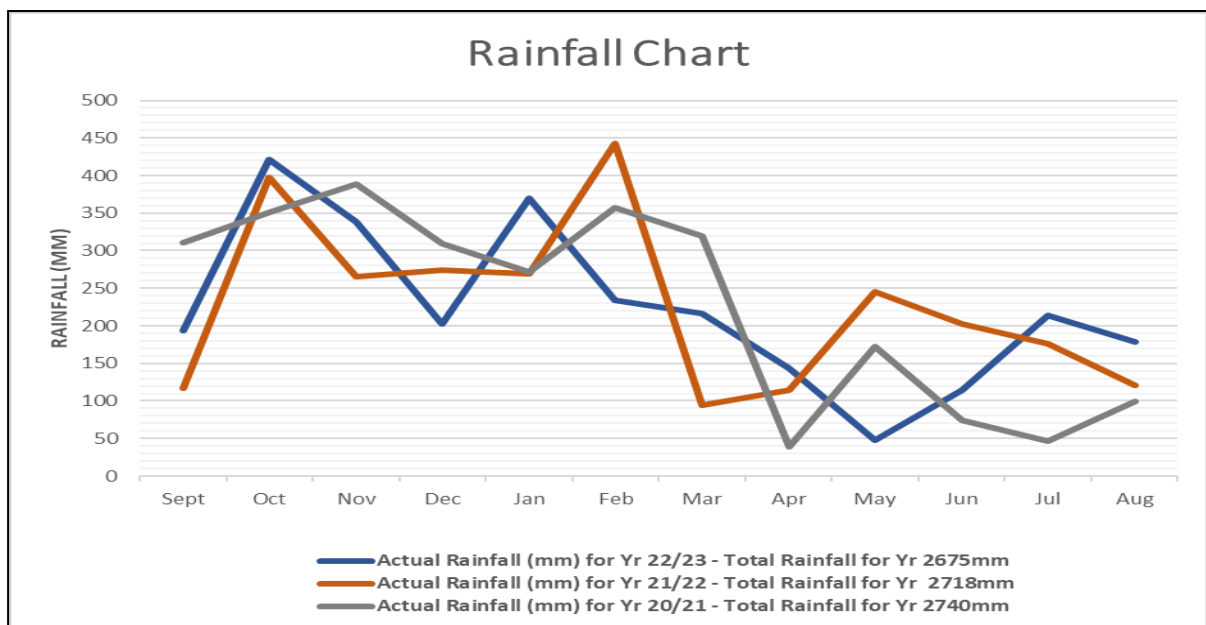
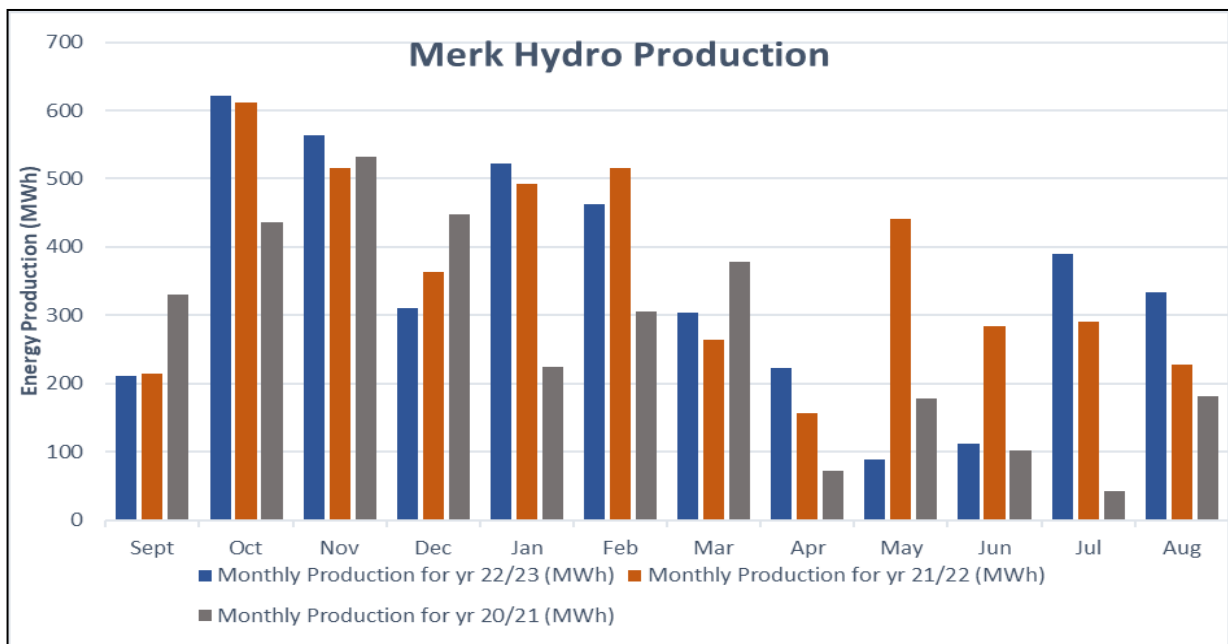
You can request an application form from [mail@hereweare-uk.com](mailto:mail@hereweare-uk.com)

# Merk Hydro

The Merk has now been in operation for eight years and has been very successful.

During the last year, Merk Hydro generated 4.12 gigawatts compared to 4.37 gigawatts last year. As can be seen in the graph below, during the year there were several months of extremely wet weather, giving us high production. These graphs show that April, May and June do average to be our driest months, but they also show the inconsistency of our rainfall.

There have been no major problems or repairs during the year apart from normal maintenance. We are grateful to Roy and Martin Foster for their constant work and attention, making sure the Merk Hydro runs efficiently and smoothly.



## Our Power

We are delighted to say that Our Power has been operating for 16 years now though initially we were presented with many challenges and set-backs. However, happily, we went from strength to strength, providing our customers with high quality, low moisture content woodchips. We have always aspired to keep our carbon footprint as low as possible by supplying businesses within 30 mile radius.

Like other businesses countrywide, the last few years have given us many challenges, from high price increases in all aspects of trade, including timber, fuel, electricity as well as the products and services required to run our business.

This year's winter season proved to be difficult, Our Power encountered several problems with our machinery, and found it very difficult to source the parts needed. We took the decision to buy in chips to keep up a continuous supply to our customers. We have always felt that our customer loyalty is very important to us, and we felt it was vital to make sure their boilers kept running.

We have negotiated a new contract with Renewable Fish and Chips and Cooke Aquaculture for the next heat season. We are continuing to supply our customers who have been loyal to us over the last few years, all of whom have been essential to the growth of Our Power.

Our Power was audited by Woodsure in the spring of this year and continue to be an approved supplier of quality woodchips. This is necessary for customers who claim the RHI payment.

We are proud to have kept Our Power running successfully during difficult times and are optimistic that the coming year will be a profitable and successful. Our thanks go to John Smart and Alastair Fraser for their commitment and hard work and also to John MacDonald for his continuing help.



*John and Alastair organising deliveries*



JIM CAMPBELL  
1961/1962  
A.M.