



Morvern Community Development Company

Quarterly Newsletter

June 2025



Exciting developments at Lochaline Harbour

We're all enjoying the new summer season at Lochaline Harbour. We were delighted to start this season as not only building and business owners but now also as the landowners at Lochaline Harbour. The land purchase from Ardtornish Estate went through in May, partly funded by a grant from HIE. Thank you to everyone involved in this process, you have helped us to secure the harbour's long term future. Thank you also to everyone who has been working hard on the extensive improvements we have undertaken over the winter months including refurbishing all of our showers, installing new lighting on our pontoons and other electrical upgrades. We have also significantly enhanced our outdoor offering to include a new nomadic tent, new BBQs and a wood-fired sauna which is available to book through our website— www.lochalineharbour.co.uk/sauna or by ringing our Harbour Master on 07583 800 500. We are looking forward to welcoming more visitors and locals over the summer season. If you would like to enquire about any of our facilities, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



Welcome to Alastair, Heather and Hamish!

MCTC is delighted to have welcomed three new members of staff to Lochaline Harbour. Alastair Grier has joined us as our full time Harbour Master and Heather Fyfe has returned for a second summer season at Lochaline Harbour. More recently, Hamish Kennedy has joined us to provide weekend support to the team. They've all already contributed a huge amount to the Harbour and wider team since starting and we're thrilled to be working with them.

Alastair Grier

Alastair Grier is our new Harbour Master. He has had such a long list of jobs, it takes him a while to bring them all to mind but by far, he confirms, this is his favourite. "I think I've found my calling," said Alastair. "Being Harbour Master suits me so well. It's a great mix of meeting interesting people, being outside and being practical."

Alastair began working at the harbour in April, alongside colleague Heather Fyfe. Between them, they manage the harbour building, the e-bikes, the sauna and the pontoons. It is more than enough to keep them busy, working opposite shifts, seven days on and seven days off. "It's a great system," said Alastair. "It's full-on while we are working but then having seven days off means I have plenty of time to pursue my hobbies and to be with my family."



Family for Alastair is wife Veronique, son Indigo and daughter Terra. He met Veronique while working at one of his many past endeavours, driving a truck in the tulip region of the Netherlands. "I had seen Veronique the year before and eventually summoned up the courage to ask her out. We went to see Four Weddings and a Funeral on 30th July 1994 and the rest, as they say, is history. We've been together ever since and still celebrate the anniversary of our first date."

As well as being a truck driver, amongst other professions, Alastair has worked in Israel milking cows on a kibbutz, was part of the "road squad" and drove the snow plough for Highland Council, was a commercial diver and also worked for the sand mine here in Lochaline but his real passion outside work lies in jewellery making and blade smithing. "It all started with watching a You Tube video and I thought to myself that I could do that," said Alastair. "It took me months to make my first knife and it is full of flaws but to me it's priceless. I'll never sell it. Now I make knives which are top quality and each one is individual. I also make jewellery and I have the opportunity to sell my designs in the café."

From trucks and tulips to sailboats and saunas, Alastair has had quite a journey but he is content to have found his niche in the harbour. "Being Harbour Master is the right role for me and I couldn't be happier helping to contribute to the future of our community." Interviewed by Gill Hart.

Heather Fyfe



Living in a truck may not be everyone's choice but for Heather Fyfe and husband, Quinten, it means the freedom to go where the road takes them and luckily for us, that means Lochaline. "Last year, I was fortunate to be offered the Assistant Harbour Master role," explained Heather. "When the Harbour Master job was advertised for this season, I didn't hesitate to apply and of course, having the truck meant Quinten and I could just pack up and head here to start work in April. Our converted truck is the perfect home for us and we have no worries about finding accommodation in the village." Continued on page 3...

Heather Fyfe, continued from page 2...

Heather is working alongside our other Harbour Master, Alastair Grier, and there is plenty to keep the two of them busy. In addition to their regular harbour duties, there is the new sauna to manage and maintain as well as acting as an unofficial tourist information service. As a community resource, Heather thinks the sauna will be a welcome draw for guests and local people alike and will contribute to helping to grow the popularity of the harbour. "It is such a pleasure to be here on the loch," said Heather. "My favourite type of work is dealing with people and helping them. We have lots of lovely and interesting visitors, many of whom have returned this year so it is great to recognise and catch up with them."

When she isn't at the harbour, Heather describes herself as the outdoors type, enjoying walking, cycling, nature and gardening. She is also one of a growing number of people who take part in WWOOFing, the Willing Workers on Organic Farms, where she helps out on a local croft in exchange for parking her truck on the land. At the end of the summer season, Heather will head home to Dumfries & Galloway to be near her three children and grandchildren. "I've really got the best of both worlds," said Heather. "I spend half the year here doing a job I love, surrounded by the most amazing scenery and then I spend the other half of the year with my family. How lucky am I?"

Interviewed by Gill Hart.

Hamish Kennedy

The final person to join the harbour team for this season is Hamish Kennedy. Home from Edinburgh's Heriot Watt University for the summer, Hamish was keen to find a part-time job which would use both his practical and people skills. As a third-year student of Sports and Exercise Science, he knows the value of putting people at their ease and so he is a good fit as front of house at the harbour, working alongside our two Harbour Masters Heather Fyfe and Alistair Grier.

"The social aspect of working at the harbour is what prompted me to apply," said Hamish. "I like meeting new people and I enjoy welcoming them to our lovely village. I'm really enjoying the job. I've never worked at the harbour before so it has been great learning new skills."

In his spare time, as you'd expect for someone studying a sports-related degree, Hamish is a keen sportsman and likes nothing more than to represent the university and Lochaber RFC in rugby, especially "for the socials that go with it." He is also currently getting ready to run a marathon in September and tries his best to fit in some serious training between his role at the harbour and his other part-time job at CalMac. "I'm training hard and working hard and I'm pleased to say I'm enjoying both," said Hamish. "There is so much to do at the harbour, no two days are the same and it is great experience for when I leave university and enter the job market."

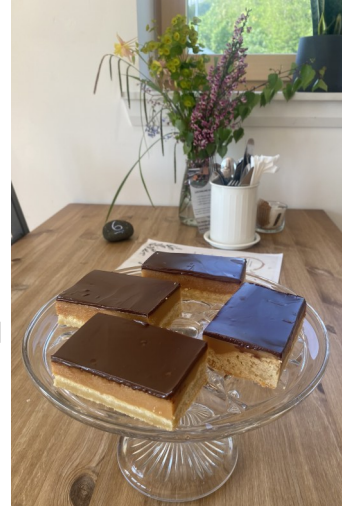
On that front, Hamish is thinking about a future career as a performance analyst for a sports organisation, of course a rugby club would be his first choice and he's also hoping to fit in some travelling at some point too. In the meantime, summer at Lochaline harbour is a good choice for Hamish. "I consider myself lucky to have found this job. What a place to spend the summer."



Interviewed by Gill Hart.

Community Café Re-Opened and a warm welcome to Madi and Gill!

Our community Hub Café, in the ground floor of the community hub building, re-opened in April and we've all been enjoying having the buzz of the café back in the building. The café is currently open Wednesday—Saturday, 10am-4.30pm but from July it will also be open on Sundays. We have leased a brand new coffee machine and serve a range of hot and cold soft drinks, a mouth-watering range of bakes and treats made by our new patisserie chef, Madi Elwell, and a delicious range of soups, sandwiches and lunch plates. MCTC is delighted to have welcomed Madi to our team alongside Gill Hart in front of house. Alongside a wider café team of staff and volunteers (to whom we're all very grateful!) they've worked incredibly hard to get the café up and running again. Thank you to them all for their hard work and dedication. And of course for making and serving such delicious food for us all to enjoy!



Madi Elwell



Cakes, cakes and more cakes...if you've a passion for pastries or flip for frittata then look no further than the café where Canadian chef Madi Elwell is enticing the village tastebuds with a new menu and has plans for much more... "My creativity in the kitchen stems from my interest in painting and drawing which I developed at a young age," said Madi, "I love baking but the best part is decorating and that's where my artistic side comes in. Nothing pleases me more than seeing people come into the café, saying they can't decide which cake to have, then buying two or three to share so they can try some of each. The team has passed on some lovely feedback from customers and that just inspires me to do more."

After graduating from both pastry and business college, Madi fine-tuned her skills working in a number of island fishing lodges, heli-ski lodges and middle-of-nowhere wilderness resorts all across Canada. "These types of remote environments suit me so well," explained Madi. "I was raised and lived my whole life on an island and couldn't imagine not being by the ocean, especially since I grew up always being on or around boats. The opportunity to work here was ideal for me, combining my love of patisserie with being in a natural and unspoiled landscape. I was really drawn to the community aspect of Lochaline and absolutely love this beautiful little village."

When she's not whipping up a storm in the kitchen, Madi makes the most of an active lifestyle, whether that's hiking or paddleboarding here on the loch. "I feel so comfortable here as I can do a lot of the things I do at home. I love all things outdoors and camp with my 4x4 truck all over Vancouver Island with my kayak and paddleboard and books of course. I adore wild swimming, hiking and snowshoeing and have an unhealthy obsession with snowy mountains."

All being well, Madi is hoping to stay through to Spring 2026 to make the most of her first time managing a café. "I am so excited to make the café live up to the potential I see in it and hope to make all of you proud," she added.

Interviewed by Gill Hart.

Gill Hart

Gillian Hart joined the café team at the start of the season in April. Hailing from Liverpool, she believes she has the benefit of standing out in the community thanks to her distinctive accent and control of the café coffee machine. “People can be very picky about their coffee,” said Gill, “so it’s crucial we get it right.”

“I had a love-hate relationship with the old coffee machine. That small hunk of metal ruled my day. When everything was firing on all cylinders, we worked together to produce frothy cappuccinos and faultless flat whites but other times, just as the queue is building, it worked against me, demanding to be watered and producing vapid little wisps of steam. Now we have the new bigger machine it’s much easier but I do miss its challenging ways and quirky charm,” she added.



Gill worked in cafes and pizza restaurants in her younger days but is confident being front of house in the café as it’s “like riding a bike. There are some skills you never forget and the importance of good customer service is one of them,” said Gill. “Thanks to our talented chef Madi, we have great products on offer so it’s my job to make sure our customers are served quickly, courteously and, most of all, wanting to come back.”

Gill works in the café for three days a week and for one day each week, she supports the MCDC team with its communications and marketing plans. “I have a background in communications so it’s an opportunity to contribute my skills from that side of my working life,” said Gill. “The two jobs couldn’t be more different and I’d be hard-pressed to say which I prefer but being on my feet all day does edge me in one direction.”

Although here on a temporary basis, Gill is already enjoying being part of the Lochaline community. “I’m not sure I will want to go home at this rate. I think my husband, children and grandchildren may have something to say if I don’t but, for now, I’m happy combining coffee, cake and communications!”

Interviewed by Gill Hart.

Fuel Pumps Upgraded



The fuel pumps payment terminal was upgraded in May and is now able to take contactless payments. This will hopefully be a solution to the issue of various cards being declined due to being too thick to be read by our chip and pin device as well as allowing payments from phones.

Congratulations to The Attic!



A huge congratulations to the whole Attic team who have just reached the £10,000 mark in donations! Thank you to everyone who has volunteered, donated and bought from The Attic. The Attic will be open throughout Gala Week in July. Keep an eye on Facebook for details. Well done everyone on all the very hard work put in to this fantastic community venture.

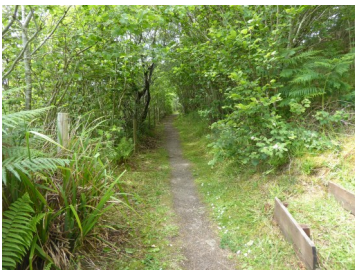
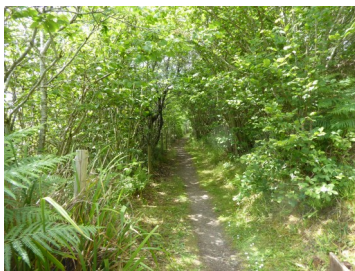
Hazelwoods



Lochaline Hazelwood, acquired by MCDC in 2003 has long been a resource of recreation for our community, and an important native habitat for wildlife. To date, no formal plan of management has existed for the site, meaning MCDC recently commissioned woodland advisor Diane Baum of The Woodland Trust to create one.

Using a diverse approach, the management plan applies an understanding of the local perceptions of the woodland, owing to how they use it and how it affects them. It also considers site history, including previous management activities and the changes in species presence and composition. The first draft includes the following core proposals:

- Identify key views from properties neighbouring the woodland and carrying out limited cutting of native trees to maintain and/or re-open these views.
- Include the surrounding land owned by FLS and Ardtornish Estate in the management plan (decision making on this matter is in progress).
- Improve the biodiversity value of the woodland by removing non-native species and managing for greater diversity in tree age structure.
- Provide an accessible recreation space for the community by maintaining footpaths and benches.
- Increase the educational value of the woodland by hosting school and community events.



On Monday 30th June, we will visit the residents who live close to the woodland (primarily of Torr Na Faire) to hear their thoughts on the plan. There will also be the opportunity to provide written feedback to operations@morvern.org, all of which will be considered and implemented into the final version of the management plan. We envisage that the final version, which is ready to be enacted, will be ready by October 2025.

Going forward, we hope this plan will improve the site for local residents, the wider community and the natural environment.

New merchandise



We now sell kids t-shirts and kids beanies as well as adult sizes. They are all available to buy from Lochaline Harbour and the café. The café also stocks local craft products. Pop in and have a look!

Housing Project Update

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our housing project community drop in events earlier in the year. We are currently in the final stages of planning and putting together the final funding package to move the project into the build stage. We aim to start the build phase later this year and welcome our first tenants by the end of 2026. Thank you to everyone who has submitted an expression of interest for the houses. It is not too late if you would like to fill one in as we will keep adding to our list of those who would like to receive an application pack when the time comes. If you would like to fill in an expression of interest form, please email housing@morvern.org and we will send you one. Alternatively, please pop into the café or office in the hub. We will be providing a more detailed update on the housing project once we have all the final planning information in place.



Lochaline Housing Development
Aerial Sketch of revised proposals
Feb 25

Lochaline Housing - Morvern Community Development Company

G+GA

MorVolts Update

All operations are running effectively at MorVolts and the Barr Hydro scheme. After a wet January and February 2025 we have had an exceptionally dry Spring and early Summer, which means we have generated less power and made less revenue. However, as we know this is Scotland and the wet weather will prevail in the near future.

In terms of operations – we have been busy improving our resilience. We have invested in a new Schnieder ACB transformer, we hope this will enable the plant to better manage power surges and have less outages as a result. Also, this should enable us to reset the plant remotely without one of us travelling to Barr.

We have been reviewing health and safety at the Hydro plant, particularly working to improve the safety of our Hydro Technician who inspects the plant every week and regularly cleans the water inlets. We have also reviewed the Fire Risk Assessment for the plant and increased our fire fighting equipment.

The “pigging” or cleaning of our largest water pipes will take place in July. This involves contractors using a large sponge and machinery, with significant safety processes in place. We can't re-use the sponges after, so if anyone wants a large amount of foam sponge, please let us know! This helps our Hydro operate more efficiently.

In terms of finance, the Hydro will make less money for the community in the future as nationally the prices paid for electricity by the grid is reducing. We continue to repay our loans as planned and maintain a sensible operating reserve for breakdowns. Where possible, according to the conditions of our loan, we have also moved our reserves into a cash manage service to ensure we are getting the best interest rates and our funds are covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). MorVolts annual accounts are published on Morvern.org or emailing operations@morvern.org



If anyone from the community is interested in visiting the site, please let us know.

If you would like to donate, volunteer or become a member of MDCD please email Isla at admin@morvern.org. All that is required to become a member is to fill in a short form providing your address (to show that you are a resident of Morvern) and to pay a £1 lifetime membership fee.