



Morvern Community Development Company

Quarterly Newsletter

September 2024



## MCDC Top Stories — Café Re-opening!

MCDC and MCTC are thrilled to announce the re-opening of the café! Lucy Nevison has been appointed as the new café manager and The Hub Café will reopen on 6th September. It will be open Wednesday—Sunday, 10-3.30 (last sit in orders at 3.10) and you can get 20p off hot drinks if you bring your own cup. You can follow [thehub\\_lochaline](#) on Instagram for ongoing updates. We know how much the community has been missing the café for the last few months and would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for bearing with us as we sought to find a solution. Lucy has written the following to say hello to you all:

“Hello everyone! I’m Lucy, the new manager of the Café here in Lochaline. I lived and worked in Fort William for nearly 10 years but I am originally from the lowlands of Scotland and now a Morvern resident. I’ve been working hard with the MCDC/MCTC team to get the café up and running. My main focus is to provide a lovely warm place for locals to come and enjoy, with local produce and home baking on the menu. Before taking this role I was the supervisor in the popular café, Rain, that was based in Fort William. I loved my time working there before they sadly closed down. I’ve had support from them on this endeavour so I’m hoping to sneak some of the delicious recipes onto the menu. You’ll have to come along and see what makes an appearance. I am on the lookout for local crafts to sell in the café as well as potential employees so please don’t hesitate to contact me (on [hubcafe@morvern.org](mailto:hubcafe@morvern.org)) if this is something you might be interested in. I look forward to meeting and serving the community.”



## Lochaline Telephone Box



MCDC was pleased to be able to donate some of the proceeds raised by The Attic to fund some of the materials required to refurbish the telephone box situated near the shop which had been in a dilapidated state for many years. The rest of the funds were raised through the community's generous support through a Lets Do Lunch.



However, the transformation itself has required a huge amount of volunteer effort, time and skill and our sincere admiration and thanks go to Kevin Laurie, Em Rosier and Sue Rosier for all of their dedication and hard work.



120 hours were spent stripping the telephone box back, making a new door and adding new hinges, new glass and frames, a new door closer, a new telephone and new Lochaline signs on the top.



I think you will all agree that the result is spectacular. You can see the progress and the final result in the surrounding photographs taken by Kevin Laurie—thanks Kevin! He said of the project “Now the phone box can stand proudly in our gorgeous little village”.

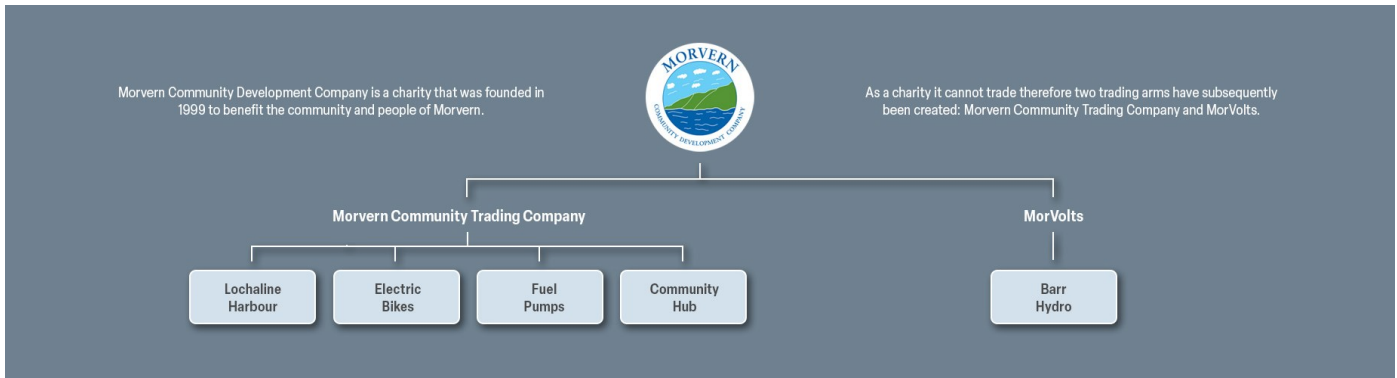


A huge well done and thanks to them and also to the volunteers at The Attic who's hard work each week helped to raise the funds. The Attic has now raised almost £7,000 and remains a popular addition to the village.



## MCTC Board Directors

In recent newsletters we have published introductions to our MCDC directors. In this edition we are delighted to introduce some of the Morvern Community Trading Company (MCTC) directors who have kindly provided an introduction to themselves in their own words. MCTC is one of the two trading arms of MCDC as illustrated below. As always, if you would like to contact any of the directors, please email [admin@morvern.org](mailto:admin@morvern.org) and your message will be passed on.



### Em Rosier



I have been the treasurer of MCTC since January 2024 and lived in Morvern since 2012. I was born in Raigmore and we shortly moved to Dervaig on Mull from Portree on Skye. We then moved to the island of Carna in Loch Sunart and we were the last family to live on the island full time, every day my parents took my sister and I to Glenborrodale primary school in a small boat unless the weather was too rough, then we were home schooled for the odd storm here and there. From Carna we moved to Kingairloch and then Ardmaddy where we attended Easdale Primary School. We then moved to Honiton for a time and I finished my high schooling just outside Oxford.

Growing up in rural communities meant that the big cities were an amazing experience but I longed for the hills and lochs of home. I then headed back up to Glenmoidart where I was a home carer for a time. Having been very practical throughout my life in remote places and being involved in everything from road building, boat handling and general maintenance to deer stalking I decided to go to Inverness College UHI and went on to complete a 4 year modern Apprenticeship in Plumbing and Heating.

I went self employed in 2016 and I'm now in my 8<sup>th</sup> year of my business. I took one season out to Ghillie which involved taking Highland ponies up the hill to recover the deer on a shooting estate but otherwise I have been working all over Morvern, Mull and Ardnamurchan.

Having moved around a lot and done a reasonable amount of travelling I have experienced many different places but when I moved to Morvern I felt like it was home. The community were so welcoming and warm and there was so much going on. I have since been involved in different community projects including 'the village tidy up' and restoring the telephone box. I am now putting my business skills to use in MCTC and have enjoyed working with the board and employees to help run our fantastic amenities both for the residents of and visitors to Morvern.

I am an avid explorer and adventurer and have covered most of Morvern and the surrounding peninsulas on foot with my beloved spaniel, on my push bike, in a boat or on horseback. I love sailing, fishing, taking my boat on long trips, recording butterflies and moths, local history, hill walking and generally being outside in nature.

## Sue Layton

I was introduced to the membership in May's newsletter but as some of you will know I also sit on the Board of Morvern Community Trading Company, one of the two trading arms of MCDC responsible for the harbour, hub, fuel pumps and the electric bikes. I was born in West Sussex, emigrated to NZ as a toddler and grew up in the native and pine forests of NZ so retiring to Morvern is a home from home! I spent many years in the volunteer sector fundraising for charitable causes both paid and unpaid. My passion has always been the sea and it was a huge privilege to spend seven years on the Greater Manchester Challenge, the Ocean Youth Trust NW gaff rigged ketch, as sea staff and then acting first mate. I was also a Trustee for three years.



Stu and I set up and ran our own skippered yacht charter holiday company in 2006 doing fifteen years, eight of which we also did RYA training. Attaining my commercial skipper's ticket was more than a dream come true.

Lochaline became a favourite port of call and in inclement weather we did a lot of sail training in the Loch's relatively sheltered waters. We were the first to come alongside the new pontoons and the last eight years of chartering we were liveaboards so spent more and more time here in LA. I've taken on the mantle of treasurer of the Lochaline Mooring Association (LAMA) and have helped, together with the committee, transform the Association into a shining example of how Mooring Associations should be run according to our Crown Estate representative.

When we came to Morvern we were staggered by the diversity of interests, clubs and groups and the shared hard work of those who make Morvern such a vibrant and diverse place to live. It was only natural for me to want to give back and keep that momentum going. We feel very blessed to have found Morvern and made it our home.

Footnote from Stu - Sue and I met sailing as volunteers for OYT NW. Since we became a couple in 2004 and married in 2009, I can testify to Sue's tenacity and commitment to any project she takes on. "If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well." She has a true passion for doing the best she possibly can whether that be for family, clubs and associations we belong to and indeed the wider community as a whole. Two words that sum her up: Sue cares.

---

## Jane Stuart-Smith



I am an employment solicitor. I trained and worked in London for nine years before moving to Morvern in 1999 with my young family. I run my legal practice from home, commuting to London on the sleeper for court appearances etc.

I co-founded the award-winning Whitehouse Restaurant in Lochaline with Sarah Jones and we ran it together for just under 20 years. I co-founded SLOW Adventure, a sustainable travel company to help remote communities like Morvern to build and manage tourism sustainably. Over the years, I have been involved in different ways to make Morvern an even better place to live. I chaired Lochaline Primary School Parent Council when my kids were there and helped get Highland Council to agree to a new primary school and fire station for Lochaline which was completed in 2013.

...Continued on page 5.

*Jane Stuart-Smith MCTC director biography, continued from page 4.*

I set up a charity—Morvern Outreach in 2000, a vehicle for obtaining grant funding for educational activities in the community. Ballet, Scottish dancing and Spanish lessons were some of the classes held in the Village Hall.

I joined the board of MCDC in 2007. I have been a director since then on and off and also a director of the trading company, MCTC. When I joined the company the only assets were the petrol pumps and the Hazelwoods.

I am very proud of what the company and the community has achieved since then: building the marina and shore facilities, 3 houses at Miners Court and the critically important Barr Hydro Scheme and the Hub. MCDC has also supported many community groups over the years including the allotments. This has all been achieved with only one full time employee and volunteer directors. The inward investment into Morvern via MCDC and MCTC in the last 25 years is estimated by HIE to be in excess of £6 million. There is still much to do. In January 2024 I stood down from being Chair of MCDC and MCTC and remain on the board. It is great to have new (and younger!) directors on the boards to help us identify priorities and lead the companies in the next phase of the company's development.

I love being outside walking and travelling and I am a fair weather sailor of sorts.

---

## Housing



Following on from our announcement in the May newsletter that we had been awarded a grant from Crown Estates to fund a Housing Project Officer, MCDC are delighted to announce that they have appointed Isla Robertson to the role. Isla will be responsible for pushing forward the next phase of the Phase 2 Housing project—the building of ten family homes. She is excited to take on the challenge and will be working closely with the Project Officer and the MCDC Housing Sub-Group to move this project through the next phase including securing the finance to get the project nearer completion.



In other housing news, during the MCDC board meeting in May, a decision was taken to pay off the remaining loans for the building of Miner's Court. Angus Robertson, chair of MCDC commented that: "MCDC's 20 year mortgage, from Triodos bank, stood at a little over £50,000. Interest on this variable rate loan was based on a margin of 4% over base rate. The board reviewed our options and decided that investing some of the profits received from the Barr hydro scheme this year to repay this mortgage early, represented the best investment that MCDC could make. Saving the monthly interest and capital repayments, will allow us to do more of the things we want to do for the community in the coming months and years."

---

## Produce Celebration

MCDC were delighted to once again be successful in their application to the Highlands and Islands Climate Festival Fund. Following on from a successful community big picnic last year, this year they are partnering with CLAM to host a Produce Celebration at the Allotments over the weekend 14th-15th September. There will be a series of walks, talks and workshops throughout the weekend on everything from the plants and bugs in the allotments to composting to native plants that you can grow in your garden that will help the environment. MCDC will also be talking about their renewables plans and the pizza oven will be fired up and ready to go. We're looking forward to seeing you there and for more events in the area throughout September, check out the H&I Climate Festival website.





## Hub Bookings

Don't forget, the Hub Meeting room is available to book for hot desking, meetings and much more. We've hosted everything from baby massage to board meetings. Hot desking is £5/hr for non-exclusive use of the room and local businesses and groups can book for meetings etc for £8/hr. Email Isla on [admin@morvern.org](mailto:admin@morvern.org) to make your booking today. Please do remember to book so that we can ensure there are no double bookings. We're glad the room is proving so popular for individuals and groups/businesses alike and look forward to welcoming you soon!



---

## Lochaline Harbour Newsletter

We're delighted to announce that we have launched a Lochaline Harbour newsletter. We will be publishing several editions a year to keep subscribers and followers up to date with all of our news at the Harbour! If you would like to be added to our Lochaline Harbour newsletter mailing list please let us know by emailing Isla at [admin@morvern.org](mailto:admin@morvern.org). For more frequent Harbour updates you can follow us on Facebook and Instagram by searching Lochaline Harbour.



---

## Morvern Eco Wheels sold to Urram



As announced on social media a few months ago, Morvern Community Development Company (MCDC) and Morvern Community Trading Company (MCTC) made the decision to sell the community car – Morvern Eco Wheels. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who joined our car club and took Morvern Eco Wheels for a spin. We're sorry to see it move on but as the old saying goes, all good things must come to an end.

However, we are delighted to announce that Urram have bought the car so it will still remain a useful asset to the community. Sam Firth, MCDC Vice-Chair, said. "The board of MCDC are delighted to be passing on our electric vehicle at a heavily discounted rate to the local charity Urram and were unanimous in our decision on this. The vehicle wasn't getting enough use through the local car share scheme, and we know Urram will put it to good use."



Tracy Cameron from Urram has very kindly written the following article to mark the occasion. (continued on page 7)

## Urram are delighted to be the new owners of the Eco Wheels Nissan Leaf.



The car has re branded and will now be located back in Lochaline. Urram will be using the car to support the hospital transport and the befriending services. We are still working out all of the logistics of car collection and cleaning etc, but when we have a good system we will add this car to the Urram car club, so local residents will be able to make use of the car, when it is not in use. The car club is proving a popular option in Strontian, and we have recently extended it to Acharacle. You can find out more about the car club on our website—<https://urram.scot/>

Urram services of transport and befriending are only possible through willing volunteers- and we are very grateful to our current team of volunteers. However, we are seeing a continued increase in referrals for befriending, and requests for journeys- which indicate to us that the services are really valued by our communities. This means that we are always in need of more volunteers who can offer a small amount of time to be part of these life line services. Perhaps you like to drive, and would be willing to help with the transport service. Maybe you make an excellent cup of tea and enjoy talking to others- then volunteering as a befriender or helping at the tea and chat or community lunches might be a good fit.

We always appreciate whatever time you can give, whether it's a monthly transport journey locally or a short regular commitment as a befriender. The volunteering role is really flexible and can be designed around your commitments. Lots of people doing a little bit really does make a difference- so please do consider if you could be involved!

If you would like more information, or to chat with a service coordinator then either email or phone on the details below.

Email – [info@urram.scot](mailto:info@urram.scot)

Phone – 01967 750 060



## Urram are pleased to be introducing a new Support in the Right Direction service

The aims of the service is to develop an information hub in each of the communities on the peninsulas which shares information about support services that are available. The project is designed to support people to access these services, which can be achieved in one to one sessions or group information sessions.

Alongside the information sharing and individual support, Urram are building a data base of people, who are able to provide domestic and personal care service locally. As we gather this information we hope that individuals in our communities will have more choice and control over the Self-Directed Support option they want to choose. In particular, it should enable individuals to consider Option 1 (Direct Payments) as a real choice.

If you need help in accessing support services, or are interested in supporting members of your community to live at home then please contact Tracy by;

Emailing – [tracy.cameron@urram.scot](mailto:tracy.cameron@urram.scot)

Phone 01967 750063

# MorVolts Update

With thanks to the MorVolts Chair, Nick Tordoff, for writing the following update:

After all the drama of last winter's storms and collapsed timber roads, things have been moving along reasonably smoothly.

The turbine and generator have a number of safety features that will keep the turbine and generator safe if there are problems with the wider power grid. The system is designed to stop generating and, if necessary, stop the turbine if there are power surges or connection problems. These are designed so that, if possible, the system will either restart automatically or can be restarted remotely. However, if the problem on the grid is severe there is a physical breaker switch will trip and break the connection to the grid. This requires someone to drive up to the powerhouse at Barr and physically reset the switch. This is supposed to be an exceptional case. One of the bugbears from the beginning of operations has been the number of times that problems on the SSE power grid have caused these trips. Glen Hydro arranged some specialist monitoring kit to find out what is causing these problems. Fortunately, or unfortunately, we had quite a few events and this has allowed Glen Hydro to arrange some tweaks to the system which seems to have enabled the system to handle more of these problems without needing to travel out to Barr.



The MCDC Board has asked the Directors of MorVolts to lead the MCDC work on renewable energy and carbon reduction in support of the Live, Life, Morvern Local Plan. We have now agreed a remit for that work and will be focussing on



- Finding ways for the community to benefit directly from the power we generate
- Looking for opportunities for developing more renewable energy both through MCDC directly but also through working with other community groups
- Looking at where we can reduce the communities carbon footprint through carbon reduction initiatives

In financial terms the scheme is doing well. Our costs have gone up due to inflation and due to part of our debt being linked to Bank of England base rates. This has been balanced by the Feed in Tariff rising at the same rate as inflation and the very good prices we got when we signed the Power Purchase Agreement two years ago. The overall effect of that is that we have been able to transfer £250,000 to MCDC in the first months of this year with approximately an additional £200,000 later in the year.

As always our monthly data report prepared by Glen Hydro, our consulting engineers, can be found [here on the MCDC renewables page of Morvern.org](#).

---

If you would like to donate, volunteer or become a member of MCDC please email Isla at [admin@morvern.org](mailto: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.