

Glenurquhart Rural Community Association

Glenurquhart Rural Community Association (GURCA) is a Development Trust set up and managed with the purpose of benefitting the Glen Urquhart and Drumnadrochit community, through the advancement of community development, education and citizenship, and the provision of recreational facilities.

What did we do, and who did we help?

In 2022-2023, we continued to work on a range of projects to benefit our community:

Community Development Officer – Health and Wellbeing initiatives

In his first full year of employment with us, our CDO, Dan Light, was successful in obtaining funding from Highland Third Sector Interface to enable several specific initiatives to help address loneliness and isolation, and improve mental health and wellbeing

Weekly ‘Bite n Blether’ lunch club. This 2 hour lunch club, free to all, quickly proved extremely popular and successful. Most of the attendees are people who do not regularly attend other social gatherings, and through the club many new friendships have been formed. The club has also raised awareness of the village hall with a new set of users.

Laddies Night. Laddies Night is an informal evening social group for men, held weekly. Although this has been slower to grow as a group, the regular attendees have found a sense of camaraderie, enjoying a range of activities, including outdoor ‘bushcraft’ evenings. As with Bite n Blether, this group has appealed to some people who do not regularly attend other social gatherings.

Hall of Games. Hall of Games in an informal 3 hour afternoon session held weekly, where attendees can play a wide range of board games with like-minded people, whilst enjoying a cup of tea or coffee and some cake or biscuits. It has proved popular with those who might otherwise not get the opportunity to play board games they enjoy, in a social environment.

Dan also worked with Glenurquhart Shinty Club to arrange a family picnic and barbeque at Blairbeg Park for the late Queen Elizabeth’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The park is owned by GURCA but leased to the Shinty Club. This well attended event, with generous input from

Glenurquhart Shinty Club, was another example of the collaborative working we seek to encourage and expand within the community.

Dan has secured funding for a further year and it is the intention to continue with the existing groups but also identify new activities to appeal to an even wider range of local people, particularly those groups for whose interests or age groups there is currently no obvious provision.

Seasonal events

GURCA has a dedicated and committed team of volunteers who 'own' and arrange various seasonal events:

Children's parties - parties are held at Hallowe'en and Christmas, and all local children are invited to attend. These are popular and well attended

Bonfire and fireworks – the annual bonfire and fireworks is a family event, which raised over £1,000 last year in donations from those attending. The provision of such a well organised community event also helps reduce the number of smaller, garden bonfires and means that the majority of fireworks take place only within a short period of time, reducing adverse impact on local residents and wildlife.

Light up the Glen – this annual tractor parade takes place just before Christmas, when decorated and brightly lit vehicles make their way through the length of Glen Urquhart into Drumnadrochit. GURCA assists the team behind this event with necessary paperwork and permits.

We are grateful to all the volunteers who make these events happen every year!

Community Action Plan

GURCA has continued to work collaboratively with Glenurquhart Community Council (GUCC) and Soirbheas to ensure the completion and launch of our Community Action Plan. After funding was secured in 2021, the work was tendered and in early 2022 the consultation, including online surveys, drop in sessions, and interviews with key stakeholders, was launched. The final document was published and shared with the community in October 2023.

The results from the Action Plan will inform GURCA's decision making going forward with regards to prioritising potential developments and funding bids. Representatives of GURCA, GUCC and Soirbheas, along

with our Community Benefit Society, Loch Ness Hub, meet quarterly to review progress against key actions.

Village Hall improvements

GURCA continues to seek practical solutions for the problems encountered with our much loved but ageing Public Hall. The long term aspiration remains to completely redevelop, modernise and reconfigure the hall, but we were again unsuccessful in securing the levels of funding required to facilitate this. In the short term we have, therefore, sought solutions for some of the immediate issues.

In early 2022, we successfully applied for funding to allow the replacement of the very large windows in the Main Hall, and to replace the slating on the Main Hall roof. This work took place over the summer of 2022 and has made a huge difference to the appearance of the hall, and the comfort and warmth of hall users.

Early in 2023, the Hall Committee drew up a list of minor works that could be undertaken to improve the hall environment, and launched a DIY SOS appeal in the community. We have been successful in obtaining funding / funding in kind locally to allow many of these works to take place in the coming year.

So far, we have been able to provide useful shelving in the store room, to free up valuable floor space, and we have replaced the flooring in both the kitchen and the meeting rooms. Before the new floor was laid, a group of volunteers refreshed the meeting rooms with a much needed coat of paint! We have also replaced the old tables and chairs, which were becoming increasingly difficult and dangerous to move. Our thanks to Soirbheas and Highland Council for assistance with funding for these works.

Glenurquhart Men's Shed

In summer 2022 we were happy to allow Glenurquhart Men's Shed to occupy, rent free, the disused former caretaker's cottage adjacent to the hall, as their temporary base. Men's Shed have worked closely with the hall committee to identify odd jobs and maintenance work in the hall, and their assistance has been invaluable and much appreciated. Going forward, they have committed to assisting with the Hall DIY SOS project.

As and when we are successful in securing funding for the hall major renovation scheme, the area occupied by Men's Shed will no longer be

available, so the group is actively looking for alternative premises, and has identified a potential site within Glen Urquhart. In the coming year, GURCA has agreed to work with, and support, the Men's Shed to consult locally and go through a Community Asset Transfer process for this site.

Community purchase of local woodland

Last year, we reported that we had worked towards the submission of a Community Right to Buy application for several plots of woodland central to Drumnadrochit. We obtained Scottish Land Fund Stage 1 support to have the plots surveyed and valued, and undertook the large amounts of administration work necessary to support any applications. Our efforts were unsuccessful because the plots were sold privately before we could make our submission, but we learned a lot about the level of documentation and evidence required to support any such submissions, and the necessary process. There was a very high level of community support for the proposal, and we said we would continue to consider ways to protect these plots of land for the community.

We are pleased to report that after long negotiations with the purchaser of the woodland plots, we were able to agree the purchase of three parcels of the woodlands on behalf of the community. We are grateful to the Scottish Land Fund for their support with this project.

It is hoped that the purchase will be concluded in Summer 2023. Meanwhile, we have held several well attended community consultation events regarding use, maintenance and protection of the woodlands.

Community Litterpicks

Between April and November 2022, regular monthly litter picking evenings were arranged, and there was an encouraging level of attendance. Many individuals have now undertaken litter picking on a more regular basis, as a result of this. Litter will always be a problem in most communities, but by raising awareness we hope that the levels of litter around our roads and trails will continue to diminish.

Loch Ness Hub

GURCA is the Anchor Shareholder of Loch Ness Hub Ltd, a Community Benefit Society based in Drumnadrochit. In 2021, all the ongoing management of the Hub and its business was passed over to its Board of Directors, but GURCA remains strongly supportive of the Hub and its

objectives, and has 2 of its Trustees as Hub Directors, in accordance with the Hub's governing Rules.

This year, GURCA and our community has continued to benefit from the Hub directly, though the rental income received by GURCA from the Hub for the building it occupies. This year we received £5000 from the Hub, and that sum is set to rise next year, in accordance with the Lease between GURCA and Loch Ness Hub

Market on the Green

The popular Markets on the Green, held on the village green which is owned by GURCA, take place twice monthly throughout the summer. The markets bring direct benefits to our community through rental income for stalls, as well as providing increased attractions for tourists and local people alike. This year, the markets raised £3,800 for GURCA.

The Glenurquhart Bulletin 1952-2022

GURCA continues to fund and support the publication of the annual Glenurquhart Bulletin which has been an ever present in the life of the Glen since 1952. The Bulletin aspires to be a comprehensive record of life in the Glen year by year and as such reports from each Club, Society and Church in the community are carried as well as articles on social history, local history, natural history or personal accounts / memoirs of incidents and life in the Glen and the nearby parishes. The whole encompasses a valuable record of the social history of a Highland community over 70 years of change and the sheer length of time that the publication has been maintained means that it is without parallel in the north of Scotland.

DTAS Annual Conference September 2022

GURCA were in attendance at the Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS) Annual Conference last September. We were delighted to be selected as the Trust for the Conference's virtual case study. This process included making a 15 minute film with local film maker Chris Dell telling some of GURCA's story so far. The film proved very popular and the question and answer session with other trusts was informative, especially outlining the journey taken with the Loch Ness Hub Project. The film is available to view on our website, so please have a watch. The conference's main speaker: MSP Tom Arthur, Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance paid the Hub and GURCA a visit in July 2022. We were grateful to have the opportunity to share our

community's success stories along with the barriers and challenges we face as we move forward with other projects.

Financial Review

2022-23 accounts in summary:

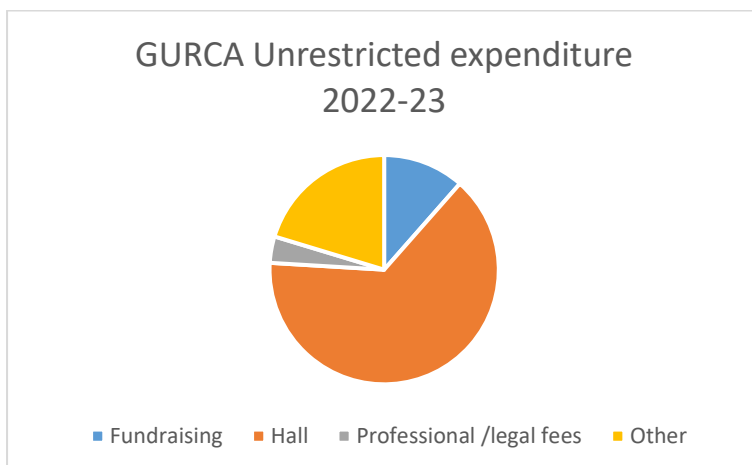
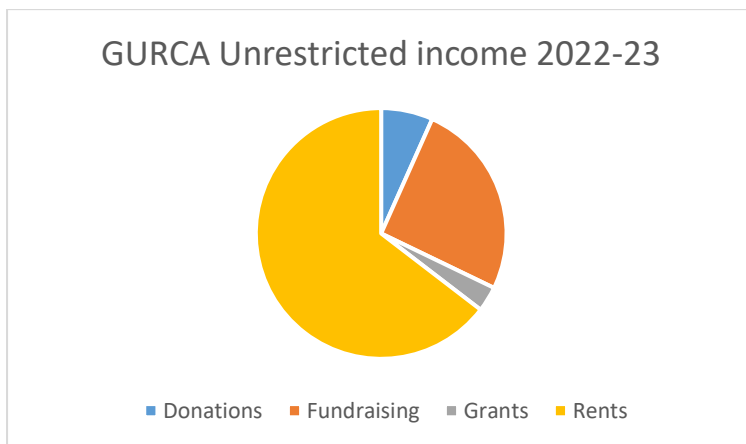
Unrestricted funds

Brought forward from 2021-22 £21,448

Unrestricted income £24,542

Unrestricted Expenditure £15,302

Carried forward to 2023-24 £30,687



Restricted Funds

Brought forward from 2021-22 £47,731

Restricted income £87,286

Restricted Expenditure £99,292

Carried forward to 2023-24 £37,877

As in previous years, most of our **unrestricted** income came from rents (from users of the hall, and Loch Ness Hub) and fundraising activities such as the Markets on the Green, the Glenurquhart Bulletin, and the fireworks / children's parties.

Around 65% our unrestricted expenditure went towards the day to day running of the Glenurquhart Public Hall. Hall costs rose almost 42% compared to last year, as hall use returned to pre covid levels, and the impact of fuel price increases was felt.

The level of restricted funds income and expenditure also rose dramatically against the previous year. This reflects the funding we received and spent for works to the hall windows and roof.

Our year end saw a healthy surplus for unrestricted funds, and the £30,687 carried forward remains within the amounts required by our Reserves Policy.

Reserves Policy

GURCA Trustees review the Reserves Policy annually. The current agreed level of required reserves of unrestricted funds is £20k

GURCA's primary unrestricted funding streams are from rents, community events, and donations. The charity owns a number of fixed assets on behalf of the community, namely; Glen Urquhart Public Hall, Blairbeg Playing Fields, the Drumnadrochit Village Green, and the Loch Ness Hub building. Each of these assets charge rents to users, or in the case of the Village Green, is used to host events which provide donated income to GURCA.

Reserves are the funds that GURCA has which can be freely spent on any of its charitable purposes. This definition excludes restricted funds as these must be spent in a specific way. Reserves also exclude the tangible fixed assets held by GURCA (such as the buildings and land owned by GURCA).

Having a reserves policy is part of the internal financial management of GURCA and will help us manage our resources better and plan ahead for our needs. A reserves policy is required by GURCA to ensure that critical activities undertaken by GURCA are not affected by any funding shortfall. As we consider our budget for the year ahead and our future plans, we need to consider any uncertainty over our income or the risk of unexpected expenditure.

Particular areas for consideration are:

- Funds to allow for unforeseen emergencies or other unexpected needs, for example an unexpected repair bill or requirement to fund an urgent project.
- Unforeseen day to day operational costs, such as excessive heating costs, or additional insurance premiums.
- Grant income not being renewed with little advance notice which would impact our ability to fund ongoing commitments such as the CDO salary, activities and projects underway etc.
- Planned commitments which may need more funds than estimated.
- The short-term funding of identified projects and activities, for example money may need to be spent before grant funding is received.

Reserve Details

The following outlines the steps taken by GURCA trustees to establish the level of reserves as well as the amounts identified. The areas of consideration listed above were assessed against the criteria of likelihood, impact on the charity's ongoing operations and the ability to execute its purpose. Not all possible impacts will happen simultaneously, thus the total amount of reserves identified by this policy will reflect sufficient funds to cope with an undefined subset of events. Key to the ongoing effectiveness of GURCA is its ability to retain its Community Development Officer (CDO). Thus, the reserves ensure a minimum of six months' salary and expenses so as to enable alternative CDO salary income to be identified and secured. The other impacts considered were the expenditure required to "keep the lights on" in the Public Hall (heating, lighting and insurances), and finally reserves to meet either

emergency maintenance, or initial funding of projects awaiting grant funder income.

- A six months reserve for CDO salary and expenses is £15k
- Emergency operational, maintenance and project reserve is £5k

The total level of unrestricted reserves required by GURCA is £20k

Trustees and Governance

GURCA Trustees during 2022-23 were as follows:

Susan Clark – Chair

Carolyn Wilson – Secretary

Monique Riddle – Treasurer

Margaret Davidson

David Fraser

Gordon Findlay

Fiona Macdonald

Fraser Mackenzie

Dot MacKenzie – stepped down 21st June 2022

Fiona Urquhart – stepped down 21st June 2022

Gordon Watson

Mary Tiles – from 21st June 2022

Suzanne Irvine – from 21st June 2022

Chris Balance – from July 2022

Dominic Thierry – from July 2022

GURCA Trustees are all unpaid volunteers. **None of the Trustees received any payments for any services during 2022-23.**

Trustees are governed by GURCA's Code of Conduct for Trustees.

Trustees meet regularly (usually 6-10 times per annum) and review GURCA's financial position on a quarterly basis.