**Press release Isle of Kerrera Development Trust**

**The Kerrera Old School Community Centre**

For immediate release

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**Islanders Looking Forward to New Community Centre**

**Isle of Kerrera Development Trust are the proud owners of the old primary school building**

After sitting empty for twenty years, the old primary school building on Kerrera is to have a new lease of life. The island community has bought the building and are planning to turn it into a new fit-for-purpose community centre.

Following a successful bid to the Scottish Land Fund, the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust are now the proud owners of what will become the island’s first ever community building. With the sale completed on Monday 1st July, the local residents group have started fundraising for the renovation.

The Trust were delighted to receive £119,167 from the Land Fund enabling them to purchase the old primary school building from Argyll and Bute Council. The funding also covers some immediate essential repairs and the post of Project Manager for the next year.

Island resident and newly appointed Project Manager, Aideen Shields says about the purchase:

“It’s a really exciting time for us and we’re all delighted! The community has been working towards this for this for a long time and it will be amazing to finally have a place we can all get together for workshops, events, parties, classes, meetings- you name it! Living on the island, I have a personal passion for the project, so it’s great to be getting stuck in and to see real progress”.

This is the second time the island Trust has tried to purchase the building after an unsuccessful attempt back in 2008. The building was then leased to Stramash, but after the organisations plans changed, it has been sitting empty for a number of years.

The Isle of Kerrera Development Trust are now planning a big fundraising drive to raise the money for the renovations. They are planning a number of public events including an Island Art Exhibition at Ardentrive Farm, a Race Night at Oban Marina and a kids bike event at Balliemore, so keep your eyes peeled- either on their website or Twitter for details of how to get involved. A crowdfunding campaign is underway and local businesses are already showing their support. All donations are welcome! Donations can be made via the website www.isleofkerrera.org

**Supporting Information**

The Isle of Kerrera is a rugged wee gem known for its stunning landscape, abundant wildlife and the striking ruin of Gylen Castle, attractions which bring over 15,000 visitors a year over on the short ferry ride from Oban.

The beautiful island is also home to a small but vibrant full time community of 68, but despite the thriving community and visitor numbers, it has almost no public facilities–no shop, pub or village hall - and the school closed its doors to pupils in 1997.

For residents, accessing social, recreational or learning opportunities on the mainland can be tricky with the regular ferry service ending at 6pm. With a booming population of children – 19, with 9 under five and some older residents heading into retirement - the community feels a neutral, central place to meet is more important than ever.

Kerrera School was built in approximately 1872 and was closed as an education facility by Argyll and Bute Council twenty years ago. Since then, the building has remained mostly unused, and is in an increasingly dilapidated condition. For many years, residents have been longing to bring the former school building back into community use, which will provide a central place for islanders to gather for the first time.

The Isle of Kerrera Development Trust had previously been awarded £19,633 from the Scottish Land Fund, enabling them to bring in expert help to find out more about what owning and running the building might involve and how to make it sustainable. Community Enterprise, one of Scotland’s most experienced community support organisations, developed a five year business plan for the former school.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

For further information and to find out more about the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust, contact: Aideen Shields at IKDT, on aideen@isleofkerrera.org

Mondays and Fridays on 07742912564, otherwise on 01631 566367 or visit [www.isleofkerrera.org](http://www.isleofkerrera.org)

Photos of the former school and island are available.

**About Kerrera**

The Isle of Kerrera is situated at the mouth of Oban Bay, with a sea crossing of five minutes and a car journey into Oban of around ten minutes. The population is currently 49 adults and 16 children. Kerrera attracts upwards of 15,000 visitors annually.

There are currently no facilities on island; to access shops, fuel, banking, post office, health services and education, the islanders go to the mainland. The island’s infrastructure is fragile, with one road in very poor condition, majority private waste and water arrangements, ICT issues and reliance on a ferry service which ends at 6pm each day.

Some of these issues are viewed by the community as challenges and some of these are simply differences to the mainland, which are valued by residents. The island has a small but vigorous community and residents are keen to protect the island’s unique character whilst building resilience and making the most of the potential assets the island has to offer both the community and visitors.

**About the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust (IKDT)**

The aim of IKDT is to represent the views of the islanders, and to initiate and develop projects that will benefit the island, both the community and its visitors. We have a number of identified objectives we are currently working on, which have been identified through recent community consultation. Priorities include community owned pontoons, a community centre or facility, improving the condition of the Island's road, housing, recycling issues, activities which bring the islanders together, reducing isolation and improving community cohesion; and the issue of septic tanks on the island.

**About the Scottish Land Fund**

The Scottish Land Fund supports rural and urban communities to become more resilient and sustainable through the ownership and management of land and land assets.

Funded by the Scottish Government and delivered in partnership by the Big Lottery Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, it offers grants of up to £1 million to help communities take ownership of the land and buildings that matter to them, as well as practical support to develop their aspirations into viable projects.

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