



## **Press release Isle of Kerrera Development Trust**

**Embargoed until: Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019**

### **Isle of Kerrera secures funds to enable former school purchase**

The Isle of Kerrera Development Trust has been awarded £119,167 from the Scottish Land Fund which will enable them to buy the island's former school from Argyll and Bute Council and turn it into a much-needed community hub, as well as employ a part time project worker for a year.

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 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 64, but despite the thriving community and visitor numbers, it has no public facilities of any kind – shop, pub or village hall - and the school closed its doors to pupils in 1999.

Residents have long held an ambition to bring the former school building back into community use. For islanders, accessing social, recreational or learning opportunities on the mainland can be tricky with the regular ferry service ending at 6pm, and there's no place on the island where people can get together to discuss the issues that affect them, or just socialise. With a booming population of sixteen children and some residents heading into retirement, the community feels a place to meet is more important than ever.

Chair of the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust, Martin Shields said:

“We are absolutely over the moon. Taking the school into community ownership will be a genuine game changer for our island community and provide us with a place to gather for the first time in living memory.

I'd like to thank our local councillors and the Lorn Islands Partnership for supporting our bid to purchase the school and we look forward to working in partnership with the Council and other local organisations.

We can't wait to get the building back into use - now the hard work of fundraising for the renovation begins – if you would like to support this, just go to [www.isleofkerrera.org](http://www.isleofkerrera.org) and click the Donate button on the homepage”

Councillor Robertson, on behalf of the Oban Lorn and Isles Area Committee, said:

“We are delighted that a recent Argyll & Bute Council meeting, it was agreed to sell the former Kerrera school building to the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust. This community ownership project is great news for all concerned”

Sebastian Tombs, Chair of the Lorn Islands Partnership said:

“Fantastic projects like this demonstrate the value of our Partnership and of Easdale, Lismore, Luig and Kerrera pooling their resources to enable great strides forward in securing the sustainability of our small island communities”

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

For further information and to find out more about the Isle of Kerrera Development Trust, contact: Martin Shields at IKDT, on [info@isleofkerrera.org](mailto:info@isleofkerrera.org) or 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 48 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 Lorn Islands Partnership**

The Lorn Islands Partnership is a collaboration between Eilean Easdeal, Isle of Kerrera Development Trust, Lismore Community Trust and Isle of Luing Community Trust which enables each of the member island Trusts to benefit from shared knowledge and experience and pooling of resource. The Partnership successfully secured resource which provided support worker time to IKDT for the school project and Scottish Land Fund bid.

**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.

**ENDS**