

# CAITHNESS BROCH PROJECT

## CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

### FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER 2018 TO OCTOBER 2019

It was decided to progress our main project, building a replica broch, using an architect to phase the work based on the RIBA Plan of Work 2013. The first two phases are "Strategic Definition" and "Preparation and Brief". In line with this, we went out to tender to Scottish architects with the specification to deliver a "Project Brief". We raised the money to fund this mainly through Crowdfunder, Caithness and North Sutherland Fund (CNSF), and other sources including Your Cash Your Caithness, Dunnet Bay Distillers, and Tesco. The work has progressed slowly, with care being taken over the identification and assessment of potential sites. No invoices have been raised yet by the architect, so no funds have been transferred from CNSF. The financial viability of the replica broch is a key consideration in the work of the architect and their sub-contracted consultants.

Our project to conserve the broch at Ousdale is getting off to a slow start. The work is funded by Historic Environment Scotland, the European Development Fund LEADER, and SSE. Negotiations with LEADER are on-going to ensure that our costs are covered to the greatest extent possible and that our cashflow will be managed. LEADER funds are transferred after payment of suppliers is made, which is of concern. A no-interest £40k loan has been secured from the Highland Council to help with cashflow. The contract for the stonemasons will be administered by a firm of consulting engineers. They will also provide engineering supervision on site. The archaeology services have been tendered and the lowest cost supplier selected. A drone survey was conducted free of charge by local company MerlinWorks. The path construction works were tendered but due to changes in the specification from site meetings it has been decided to retender this package.

Conservation work was carried out on Achvarasdal Broch. The main work took one day and involved the Caithness Countryside Volunteers. Funding was provided by West Caithness Community Fund to cover supplier costs.

CBP met with a windfarm developer who was offering a stable source of funding for local projects. While the Project is glad to receive funding from windfarms and their community funds, it was not felt to be appropriate for the Project to invest in a windfarm, which essentially what was on offer.

Merchandise sales included the regular stock (e.g. t-shirts) with additions of tea towels and a 2019 calendar. Because of the slow returns on investment in stock and the requirement to buy in quantity to get good unit prices, purchase of new stock during 2019 has been paused to build up cash reserves to help the Ousdale project. The business finds it difficult to balance choice of sizes and colours of t-shirts for bulk orders, and suppliers offering manufacture to customer order and drop shipment were thought to be too expensive on the sale price for the quality. A fantasy-style map of Caithness is being procured from a map artist to promote Caithness attractions and to be used on merchandise.

CBP continued to give talks about archaeology, history, and CBP work and objectives within and outside Caithness. We are now trying to proactively get the receiving group or venue to cover our travel costs in these instances.

CBP reserves are sufficient to cover the current project work, but will need to build up over future years in the expectation of managing larger value projects.

### DIRECTORS DURING THIS PERIOD:

Robin Herrick (chair), Iain Maclean (vice-chair), Chris Aitken, Joanne Howdle, Dawn Mackay, Kenneth McElroy

### NON-DIRECTOR POST-HOLDERS:

Treasurer: Sara Herrick

## CAITHNESS BROCH PROJECT

### OCTOBER 2019 ONWARD

- Architect site visits and reduction in number of sites on shortlist
- Visualisations of replica broch
- Completion of Ousdale conservation, access and interpretation project
- Lyth Arts Centre hosted events – talks and art auction
- Marketing of fantasy-style Caithness map
- 2021 calendar
- Redesign of website
- Videos and podcasts