



## **Trustees Report 2021 presented at the AGM on 25 January 2022**

### **Chairman**

The Trust was honoured and privileged to welcome TRHs Prince Charles, the Duke of Rothesay and the Duchess of Rothesay who formally opened the Ballater Community and Heritage Hub on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

Following a recruitment and interview process, guided and chaired by Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, the Trust was pleased to appoint Adrian Scripps as the Hub Manager. As you will see below a great deal has been happening since Ade's appointment.

This has been another difficult year for income generation, but through the dedication and contribution of your Trustees and support from the local authority, government agencies and individuals, several refurbishment and maintenance projects have been completed and more are in the pipeline as outlined in the Convenor reports below, all of which contribute to the transformational work of enhancing the Hall amenities.

As the pandemic restrictions ease the Trust again looks forward to the return of community user groups and others to enjoy much improved Hall facilities providing essential additional external revenue generation to sustain this important community facility.

During the year, John Rutherford and Amy Muir stood down as Trustees and their support of the Trust was greatly appreciated. The Trust was pleased to welcome Russell Hogg and Catriona Houston as nominees for election at this AGM.

The Trust is fortunate in having a dedicated team addressing the enhancement and stewardship of the Halls complex. There is always room for others to join in and how ever little time can be spared it all helps to sustain the Halls and make it an attractive destination of choice.

As Chairman, I wish to thank sincerely the collective contribution of the Trustees in working to maintain and improve the Halls for the benefit of the Ballater community. And to Cllr Paul Gibb for assisting through another year with links to Aberdeenshire Council and keeping the Trust up to date with national pandemic guidance.

Ian Hay, **Refurbishment Group Convenor** reports that despite varying restrictions due to the pandemic in the past year, there has been considerable progress made in improving the facilities within our community halls. This has been achieved through government funding support for voluntary organisations such as the Trust which has been badly affected by the restrictions placed on use of their facilities during the pandemic. For more than 6 months of the year, little or no use was being made of much of the accommodation in the Halls complex.

That said, substantial progress has been made on various improvements as follows:

***Ballater Community and Heritage Hub:-*** During the summer months, work on the Hub was completed although not yet fully furnished with intended displays by Ballater Local History Group and Ballater Highland Games. Hopefully, by spring 2022 the internal furnishing will be completed.

***Heaters in Victoria Hall and Albert Hall:-*** All but one of the heaters replaced in 2020 have once again been replaced by the manufacturer, and these, apart from one, are now producing the claimed output. This "miscreant" heater was returned to the manufacturer for checking and testing and has been repaired and its return is awaited. Meanwhile, the Trustees are giving consideration to the possibility of installing additional centrally located heaters with a view to improving the comfort of



halls users sitting in the central part of the main Victoria Hall.

**Basement Improvements:-** Work on the basement office, toilets and storeroom commenced in April and was completed in September. These improvements included new lighting, redecoration and new flooring of the corridor there. Access from the Beaton Craigie Room is now much more pleasant.

**Albert Hall Lift:-** This is one improvement which has been required for some time. The original lift was removed from the building in early August. This then allowed measurements to be taken to establish the largest size of lift which could be installed in the shaft. Unfortunately, protracted discussions with the supplier meant that only in November were enough details provided to the manufacturer in Italy to allow production to commence. Arrangements are in hand for some pre-installation work on the lift shaft to be undertaken by a local contractor in January 2022 for actual installation of the lift scheduled for later in February. Fortunately, the requirement to use the lift has been limited during this time.

**Victoria Hall Kitchen:-** The original kitchen was completely gutted, new units, lighting and flooring installed, and the entire kitchen re-decorated. The kitchen has been in use since August, and following some initial teething problems, is deemed a considerable improvement by users.

**Victoria Hall Internal Door:-** As a result of comments by some Halls users that the public could not see what was occurring within the main hall unless the internal door was pinned back, a decision was taken to replace the solid doors by partially glazed ones. This allows a view into the Hall from outside while improving the well-being and comfort of users within.

**Bin Storage Platform:-** With a view to tidying up the frontage of the Halls, plans are underway to create a bin storage platform to the left of the Hub. This will conceal the refuse bins and improve the general ambiance of the frontage. This work is due to start in the Spring 2022.

**Victoria Hall Sound System:-** For some time now, users of the Victoria Hall have commented about difficulty making themselves heard to an audience. Quotes for installing a suitable sound system are being obtained, but suppliers are themselves having problems sourcing the types of equipment they feel are necessary to provide good quality sound. This matter is still ongoing.

**Halls Notice Board:-** For years, an external Halls Notice Board was maintained by Faye Swan during her time at the Library. The board itself had become rather tatty, and a new one has been obtained and awaits installation.

**Victoria Hall Decoration:-** With a view to making the ambiance in the Victoria Hall less severe, especially on joyful occasions such as weddings and other celebrations, the Trustees have approached the Prince's Foundation (PF) seeking advice and guidance on colour, curtains and the design of decorative hangings from the main beams of the Hall. A visit has taken place recently by a PF designer, Baron von Westenholz, and proposals are forthcoming.

**Additional Storage:-** For years, one of the problems has been where to store items used in the Halls or by users of the Halls. Recently, the Trustees explored the possibility of utilising an area accessed from the basement of the Albert Hall and under the emergency exit from the Albert Hall. Plans for this have been drawn up and submitted to Aberdeenshire Council for a Building Warrant. Costings have also been drawn up and hopefully this work can commence in the Spring 2022.

**Courtyard:** The Trust was pleased to see the courtyard in front of the Halls used for the Farmers Market on 23 October and welcome further enquiries for its use. Accessible external electricity points and a water tap have been installed.



That so much has been achieved is down to hard work and effort by Gordon Riddler in completing and submitting numerous funding applications, many of which were successful. Without his hours of form filling, much of what has been achieved would never have happened, and I gratefully acknowledge his very considerable effort on behalf of the Group, and indeed on behalf of the Trust as a whole.

The professional guidance and input to the Group's successes from Alan Ross and Bill Braid is also acknowledged. Their advice in relation to construction and electrical aspects respectively of work done, and still being done to improve facilities in the Halls, has been invaluable. Thanks are also due to David Cobban for the considerable help and guidance given over these past 12 months.

Finally, I must acknowledge again the bequest left to the Halls through the Edna Mary Edwards Memorial Trust. Each year, the Halls Trust receives a very welcome sum of £20,000 which has helped us to achieve match funding for many of the improvements mentioned above.

The Trust hopes that the Ballater Community in general has recognised how much the facilities in the Victoria Hall complex have improved over the past 2 years, and that only by making use of the Halls can sufficient income be generated to continue updating and improving these facilities. In addition, we need suggestions to be made about alternative uses of some of the areas. After all, the Halls have mutated internally many times since their original construction almost 150 years ago and must continue to do so with the passing years.

Dr Douglas Glass, **Maintenance Group Convenor** reports that as part of the ongoing improvements, the Trust decided for water heating to change to a closed system for heating the water. There is a separate water supply to each of the two Halls. The advantages would hopefully be, reduced cost of heating the water and, as the pressure is provided off the mains supply, no `header tanks` are needed. This, and getting rid of any `dead end` pipes, greatly reduces the risk of Legionnaires infection. As a consequence, the Trust has noticed a huge drop in the electricity cost for the Victoria Hall since the new system was installed.

As noted above, there have been issues with the new heaters in both Halls, more so in the Victoria Hall. The heaters were returned for repair to Herschel. On the advice of the installers a `soft start` has been fitted for each heater. It is felt the heating may need to be augmented in the Victoria Hall and David Cobban will shortly come up with recommendations.

The electrical fuse box in the Victoria Hall kitchen has been upgraded to cope with all the improvements which have been done. As there is a separate electricity supply to each Hall, there are also plans to upgrade the Albert Hall fuse box.

The stair carpet at the Albert Hall needs replacing, however the Trust has postponed this until after the new lift is fitted. The old lift has been removed and the arrival and fitting of the new one is awaited. The old lift was installed more than 40 years ago and had become very expensive to service and maintain.

Wallis Riddell has been updating the Health and Safety Policies with all the changes and improvements in the Hub and basement.

The Hall Keeper, Stan Tongue has painted the remaining repaired areas around the windows in the Mike Sheridan room and new curtains have been put up. The gutters were cleaned out by Allan Milne in the Spring and Autumn. The railings outside the Albert Hall have been painted.

The Hall's Office in the basement has been completed, and files relating to all the changes carried out, for example, the plans about the water and electricity supply and the building plans and policies



on Health and Safety will be stored there. It has been difficult with no office, as many files have been kept at home by Trustees and have sometimes been lost, as Trustees change over the years.

There have been enormous changes in the Halls, mainly by `The Improvement Group`. The Maintenance Group has tried to incorporate some maintenance improvements as the work has progressed and are very grateful that some maintenance costs have been absorbed into the improvement work.

On **Fire Safety**, the Fire Risk Assessment has been updated and the Trust is engaged in attending to update requirements. Fire safety records are now lodged in the new Halls Office.

Lyndsey Boden, **Communications and Marketing Convenor**, reports:

Website: Improvements have been made to the website which includes a home page that is much easier to navigate. There is a bit of work to be done to streamline the website and make it more user friendly. There is a definite need for some more professional photos and hope to contact previous brides etc. to see if we can use their professional photos on our website.

Social Media: Both Facebook and Instagram are now being used more frequently, mainly for sharing posts by the various Halls users. Prior to 2021 our average Facebook posts were reaching under 50 people and now they are averaging 500 – 700 per post. Our most popular posts have been in relation to the Halls improvements in particular the Victoria Hall kitchen refurb post which was viewed by 2700 people. Going forward there are improvements to be made to the social media sites including increasing our audience/likes, producing a larger variety of posts (including history of the Halls) and putting together a social media plan. With the help of a couple willing Trustees our social media presence can improve considerably in 2022.

Mail Chimp: Mail Chimp is now being used on a weekly basis to distribute the `What's on' guide created by the Hub Manager Ade Scripps. The Trust has also used it to promote the 300+ club and the duck race. New members are added to the mailing list when received from Membership Secretary, Janet Riddler.

The Trust was pleased to see **the Ballater Community and Heritage Hub** (the Hub) completed and delivered in accordance with the Ballater & Crathie Community Action Plan (CAP) 2018 with the Trust working with other stakeholders for its establishment. The building and outfitting work has been completed and Trust is excited to see the Hub start work on projects across the Community. The Hub is managed by Adrian Scripps who is responsible for community engagement and activity undertaken at the Hub and there has been significant progress.

Funding from the Cairngorms Trust Green Recovery Fund will go towards the funding of the role of a Hub manager to run and coordinate all the activities. The Hub, with a Hub Manager in place, will play an important role in being for the first time an accessible, user friendly, single point of contact for all residents looking for support as they emerge from a long pandemic lockdowns. Adrian Scripps was appointed to the role in October and many projects are under way. The Hub will better coordinate existing events and activities and introduce new services and programmes specifically directed at supporting social outcomes.

Inside the Hub, there are display areas for the Ballater Local History Group and the Ballater Highland Games, which hopefully will be completed soon. Information will be available about events and local services. There is currently a temporary display of the history of the Newfoundland Dalmochie Camp with a video and the plans for a proposed new Museum located nearby the village in Pannanich Wood are available to view.



The Hub has established links with local care providers (Charities, NHS, Help Groups, Local Groups) and has been working with the local surgery so that the Hub can distribute the information, and the Halls Trust in turn, can provide meeting, exercise and therapy spaces. The Hub also recently got a large stock of lateral flow test kits for collection.

Using the new Visit Ballater website, the central website for the village, the Hub has been gathering and maintaining the information for it alongside updating social media and providing training for groups and users to join in. There is a new online Village Box office, with the Hub as the physical office. Ballater holds several events throughout the year (Ballater Highland Games, Ballater Victoria Week, Duck Festival, Ballater Films and many more), and there are approximately 3000-4000 tickets sold in a good year. Having a central place to buy tickets will allow the events to sell more tickets and develop. Halls users, like Pop-up Soft Play are using the system to book places for their events. Events are being collected and displayed as a "What on" Guide for Ballater Events. Weekly "What's on at the Halls" posts are being sent out via social media and the Halls Mail Chimp accounts. Posts on the new Ballater Community & Heritage Hub Facebook (FB) page are currently attracting over 4.5k followers and this combined with the Hall's own FB page seems to be getting the message out. The Hub is also developing chargeable services to sustain itself (for example, event coordination, fundraising, communications, equipment hire, copying) and to ensure the Trust's Hall assets are more widely used and that other organisations can use them.

There have been a number of events throughout the year which the Hub has been involved in including a Buttery Morning raising money for the Halls, A Children in Need event (where folk could play the Drums outside the Hub), and the Winter Festival. On the Weekend of the Winter Festival there was Storm Arwen, which caused a black out across the village, so things had to get hastily rearranged around the Resilience Group efforts. The Halls were powered for a while using the Winter Festival carousel. As the incident progressed, the new Victoria Hall kitchen was set up along with the Hub to supply people with hot drinks and water throughout the weekend. The Hub has been helping with The Ballater Food Pantry project and has been redistributing donated food to the public and helping by sharing the information about the project, via FB and Posters.

The printer usage has increased as folk have got to know about it and the Hub has done several projects for Ballater Highland Games, Climate Action Network (CAN), and the Winter Festival. The Hub has been helping with some Ballater Eagle logistics. CAN has given the Hub some litter picking equipment so folk can come in and borrow it if the fancy a productive walk. There is a lot going on so do drop in.



### **Ballater Films**

Due to pandemic restrictions the amount of films and events that could be shown this year was limited. Working with Film Hub Scotland a few online events were joined and attended. In August Misbehaviour, as part of Ballater Victoria Week was shown. In September, as part of the new Mountain Bike Festival, the Big Bike Film night was held and managed to sell out the Victoria Hall! October saw the hosting of the Annual Halloween Disco and some fun was had at the Halls with the scarecrow Trail. In November unfortunately a film was cancelled due to Storm Arwen. Several projects with NEAT are being worked on, so funding for a couple of films is in the pipeline, along with financial support from Ballater Victoria Week. In the new year Ballater Films is hoping to get back on track with a few new films ready to be shown, including the new James Bond Movie. Discussions have been had regarding fundraising for local projects including Ballater Winter Festival, Ballater Food Pantry and Crathie School PC. A new

sound/projection system is proposed for the Victoria Hall, so we look forward to see what Ballater Films can get up to in the new year.



Ballater Films is grateful to the Trust and its advertisers for their continued support for the venture despite the circumstances. So watch this space. Look out for posters around the village or check our Facebook page or website for updates – [www.ballaterfilms.co.uk](http://www.ballaterfilms.co.uk) . If you would like Ballater Films to help your group, organisation, charity or cause to raise funds, get in touch via the same means or email [info@ballatervictoriaweek.co.uk](mailto:info@ballatervictoriaweek.co.uk) or call Ade or Cat Scripps on 013397 55243.

**Fundraising.** The Trust has benefited from support from various funding sources during this difficult year. These are related to assistance through the pandemic restrictions, refurbishment and maintenance. The Trustees wish to acknowledge the support of all donors, charities and organisations which have contributed including The Privy Purse Charitable Trust, The Princes Foundation, Ballater (RD) Ltd., Scottish Towns Partnership BIDs Resilience & Recovery Fund, Scottish Government Town Centre Fund, Aberdeenshire Discretionary Business Fund, the Place Based Investment Programme, the Cairngorms Trust Green Recovery Fund, and individual donations for the Mike Sheridan Room curtains, the Dolls House (constructed by Jack Coull to whom we are most grateful) and the Amazon Smiles programme. The 300+ Club draw is underway and has attracted several new members. And a special thank you to the community members (young and a little older) who raised funds for the Halls through local events and teas such as the most enjoyable Buttery Morning.

William Meston, **Treasurer** reports that as mentioned at last year's AGM lockdown has had a disastrous effect on lets. However, since the year end we have seen a slight improvement. The monies from HMRC relate to the furlough payments received. Fund-raising needs to be looked at and hopefully with the easing of restrictions we will again be able to hold fundraising events. The usage of electricity has now been looked at with a new meter and more rigorous control by all concerned. In view of the reduced usage a number of necessary repairs have been completed and with the monies received from grant awards the Trust has been able to complete many improvements and additions to the Halls complex. A large vote of thanks is due to our Chairman who has done great work completing grant applications.

The following Trustees were elected:

Lyndsey Boden, Bill Braid, Ed Bushnell, Dr Douglas Glass, Ian Hay, Russell Hogg, Catriona Houston, William Meston, Wallis Riddell, Gordon Riddler, Alan Ross