

Heating and Environmental Upgrade for Firth Community Centre

Summary

Firth Community Association have undertaken to provide a new heating and hot water system for the community hall, which is affordable to run, controllable and environmentally friendly. The costly old system, which is on its last legs, is proving difficult to maintain and is not controllable for the hall user groups. Parents and toddlers have also advised on some occasions the hall is cold which is not acceptable for any user group. The Firth Community Association has also been asked by the Island Games Committee if it would be willing to allow the use of the hall for accommodation and catering facilities. As this is something it would wish to do, the new heating would allow the rooms to be controlled as required.

As it is a committee that likes to offer the community and user groups improved surroundings it has decided to use a piece of waste ground as a "Wild Flower Area", planting Buddleia and Rosa Rugosa shrubs and sowing wild flowers to attract wild life, mainly insects and butterflies which in turn will attract birds. It is also their intention to put up a plaque which will name various birds which can be seen in the area, again providing information for the old and young alike. It is particularly important to provide an area that will be attractive to bees. They are responsible for pollination in nature and their numbers are in decline. There will be a seat installed in the garden area in memory of a local resident who recently bequeathed the money to the Community Hall for such a purpose, this would also include the plaque.

Our Island Games competitors and their supporters may enjoy a place to relax and learn of our local birdlife and flowers in our proposed "Wild Flower Area". The views are breath taking at times and why would we not want to share this.

Various different groups within the community will be involved in this project. The children from the various organisations can learn about the biodiversity of the area and help in sowing/planting, taking a positive approach to the wild life in the area. The more you involve the various groups the more pride they take in their surroundings. It is planned to develop a garden club will be developed to ensure future maintenance of this area and continue the community efforts with pride in their surroundings and used of an attractive common space. Where our "Wild Flower Area" would differ from the existing Firth Park is that different user groups could help or even "own" their own area. The children could be "hands on" and could access this area while at their usual weekly sessions in the hall, where they have toilets and access to cleaning facilities to "tidy them up" after their outdoor activities. The SWI (Scottish Women's Institute) can use their knowledge to help the younger members of the community, the Parents and Toddlers, The Brownies and the Boys Brigade to recognise the various plants/flowers and to know where and when best to plant the various species. The garden area can be used for outdoor activities for all groups.

According to the Wildlife Trust, more and more people are living their lives indoors, and seeing birds near their homes, walking through green spaces with wild flowers reduces stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression. The wild flower area would provide an easy, accessible area for people to walk in. There is a car park which is easily accessible for stopping to enjoy the garden.

The Community Association is also aware of the growing encouragement for the use of electric cars and we propose installing an electric car charger at the hall for general use of local residents and visitors. The charger will be robust, vandal resistant and fast charging. There will be a coin meter and or phone app installed to allow payment for the use of the charger. This is an investment for the present and very much the future. At present there are no public charging facilities available in the

Community. What better way to enjoy the time waiting for your car to charge than a walk in the garden or sit and enjoy the view, weather dependent of course.

By improving the facilities, the Community Association will increase the capacity and potential of the centre and encourage participation of individuals and organisations within the local community ensuring social cohesion and development within our area. This hall is a central venue for a vast array of intergenerational activities in the community which it wants to continue to support and provide appropriate facilities for their use.

Aims

The heating upgrade will ensure a sustainable and cost-effective system will be in place for the foreseeable future, allowing us to continue to offer a comfortable environment for locals and visitors including looking towards being a host for the Island Games. The Wild Flower Area will offer an educational and pleasing addition. The Wildflower Garden will enhance the local area and it is envisaged will attract visitors and wildlife enthusiasts to the area which will have an economic benefit to the local community all part of a long-term vision for our premises. The electric car charger will offer a service to locals and visitors in an increasing environmental industry, which is part of the future.

Firth Hall is the central community facility for Finstown and the surrounding Parish of Firth. It is pivotal to the local community and acts as an inclusive venue where new residents from recently built housing developments can interact and “bond” within the local community creating a cohesive and inclusive community.

The project includes the following elements:

Financial Information	£	%
Total project costs	£24,875.92	
Total eligible costs	£24,875.92	100%
LEADER funding	£11,816.03	47.5%
OIC Community Development Fund	£11,816.06	47.5%
Own Funding	£1,243.80	5%