Chairpersons Report
6/8/26

The Arran Community Land Initiative is now more than 13 years old, established as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation ('SCIO') regulated by the Scottish Office of the Charity Regulator ('OSCR'). Our Constituted Purpose is the advancement of outdoor recreation and education.

Our priorities this year, building on what we reported last time, have been:

- Refresh our 5-year strategy
- Engage directly with Arran schools management wherever possible
- Expand our educational remit to broadcast the main findings of our ecology survey with a particular emphasis on biodiversity
- Initiate a significant new 'pollinator' project
- Maintain hub, demonstration garden, children's garden and access to wider site
- Maintain our volunteer based sustainable self-funding model

A draft of the five-year strategy was circulated in March to all members, and the finalised version is now on our website. This is intended as a comprehensive approach, grouped with desired outcomes and appropriate steps to meet these, under five main themes:

  - ACLI Assets for Community use
  - ACLI Education and Outreach
  - ACLI Nature Recovery/Biodiversity
  - ACLI Resource Management
  - ACLI Administration

Using these themes as a basis to report activities since our last AGM:

- We continue to benefit from significant volunteer effort with the upkeep of our main 'hub' field, the community garden, the 'wee growers' garden and polytunnels and the access paths across the wider site. Also, more than 600 broadleaf saplings have been planted by volunteers.
  Professional track repair with the installation of metal run-off drains, fence repairs and the need to have a large tree removed from the edge of our land have all required above average expenditure.

- Effort has been made to offer education, in a variety of ways, to all ages.
  The 'wee growers' group consisting of families with c. 20 children of pre-school age continue to attend on Saturday mornings and sporadically on weekdays through the holidays.

After consulting with senior teaching staff at the primary school, we were made aware of the potential benefit for some pupils from Whiting Bay and Kilmory to have regular, weekly outdoor sessions with us from February. This was run with volunteers (including one of our trustees who is a teacher) and involved a variety of 'hands on' activities including the construction and filling of raised beds, bird-box making and planting of a variety of vegetables and flowers. This is the first time that regular structured sessions of this type have been run with local schools. As a 'proof of concept' it was well received with the intention of repeating in the coming school year.

Although sporadic 'ad hoc' visits have been made from the secondary school in the past (and we have a regular annual visit from George Watsons College, Edinburgh) we are engaging with the local high school with a view to identifying a more structured approach which might relate to specific elements of the school's Life or Earth Science curricula or The Duke of Edinburgh award or similar.

Since receiving the Ecology Study completed in summer of '25, we have given talks to U3A of its findings as well as 'biodiversity walks' on our land. The main thrust of the study was to map the constituent habitats identified and mapped, describe the processes that have been in play since agricultural activity stopped 20+ years ago and provide advice on how to continue to manage with optimal biodiversity and carbon sequestration as priorities. In order to broadcast to the widest possible audience, we have deployed explanatory 'story boards' around the path network with QR codes that link to our website with additional environmental detail. Initial monitoring of our website suggests a wide audience extending to elsewhere in the UK, Europe, the US and even China!

- Following on from the Ecology study and the desire to reach a wider audience we have engaged with North Ayrshire Council's Biodiversity Initiative from which we have received a grant to undertake a 'Pollinator Project' as well as the opportunity to interact with c.20 other groups with common interests to share knowledge and best practice.

  The Pollinator project, now underway, has provided funding for both the equipment and a significant quantity of wildflower seed which will be used to establish 'meadow grassland' in three target fields with a view to supporting pollinators and in turn other birds and animals. A key additional deliverable included educational items specifically story board(s) and website update.

- Priorities for the coming year include:
    - Complete the ‘Pollinator Project’
    - Increased Social Media activity and especially with respect to fundraising and volunteering
    - Education-focusing in a targeted way on priorities identified by senior teachers in both Primary and Secondary School curricula
    - Continuing to maintain our volunteer based self-funding model.