

Dear all,

As we are still not able to host a meeting to update you all with progress so far, and it's been six months since our previous update, we thought it was time for another one. Many of you will have seen some of our posts on the Facebook Group, [Road to the Isles Facilities Group \(SCIO\) | Facebook](#), or in the Westword, but there has been lots of activity that you may not all be aware of.

The Mallaig Playpark project, to upgrade the playpark at Loch Nevis Crescent, is managed through the SCIO by Catherine Young and Vivienne MacDonald. They have done some great work in securing funding to provide a new picnic area and access at the park, and to install a new playhut and mud kitchen, which were built by Iain Milligan, and painted by a group of volunteers. It's looking brilliant, and is already well used.

There are lots of photos on their Facebook page – [Mallaig Play Park | Facebook](#) but I have included a couple here.



The Traigh toilets are up and running, and we are grateful to Claire Wortley who is doing an excellent job of cleaning them. We were kindly donated a hand sanitiser station for outside the toilets by Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, and once again we've had some great volunteer support, especially from Ross Carr who re-purposed an old shed to provide a storage area (the turquoise bit!).



In Mallaig, we were all excited when the toilet block finally arrived mid-February, and was fairly speedily put together. The observant of you will remember from the last update that the funding deadline was originally end December 2020. However, the funders recognised the difficult circumstances of last year, and thankfully gave us an extension. After the initial flurry of activity, and the toilets being almost ready, but without a roof, we were disappointed that there were further delays. However, the roof is being installed this week, and this will allow the access paths to be completed next week. As with all building projects, there are some snagging works to be completed – the most serious of which is the replacement of the roller shutters with doors. Unfortunately the doors will not be on-site until late April, so although we will try to have the building open for restrictions easing on 26th April, it's unlikely that we will have the completion certificate by then, and more realistic that we will be open for the May bank holiday!

The toilets are a bit grander than the ones at Traigh. They are unisex – everyone uses the same entrance and exit, and within there are five enclosed cubicles, as well as four urinals behind a wall, and the shower, which is fully accessible. On the side of the building nearest the road, there is a disabled toilet, with a baby-change facility. We would have liked to be able to provide facilities to the standard of a 'changing places' toilet, but unfortunately the budget did not permit that at this stage.



We were invited to partner with The Highland Council and other interested local parties on a group to look at the range of issues associated with the Coastal Road between Arisaig and Mallaig, the B8008. One of the results of this is that we have started negotiations to take ownership of the car park at Tougal, and to lease a further area of land to extend this car park. We were awarded funding from the Better Places Fund run by Nature.Scot, to draw up plans and undertake some feasibility into extending the car park, and have also been awarded £100,000 from the Coastal Communities Fund (operated by The Highland Council with funds from Crown Estates Scotland) towards the work. Although we really hope this car park can be open in time for the peak season this year, we have to agree the lease and get planning permission before works can start so we are realistic about the timescales for this. Regardless, it will be in place for future years! The intention is that the car park will have a charge, and that the existing space will be available for campervans, while the extension will be for cars only. Based on the design work undertaken, we think we can create a further 60 spaces, which will then allow Highland Council to restrict parking on the main road at Silver Sands.

We're keen to keep the momentum going. Some of you will have seen that The Highland Council has published a Visitor Management Plan, [Tourism Committee | The Highland Council](#), which includes a number of 'Ranger' posts, which will cover this area among others. Ultimately we hope that the project we run through the Road to the Isles Facilities Group can generate enough income to employ a dedicated Ranger for the Road to the Isles, but this will be a bit further down the line!

Once again, thanks to all our members for your support. If you have any questions, then please don't hesitate to ask one of the Directors; Stuart Griffin, Jacqueline McDonell, Nick Murray, Dave Newnham, Iain MacNiven, Susan Carstairs, Eilidh Henderson, Catherine Young or Stephen McCaig; or email us using this email address. If you are on Facebook and haven't already joined the group, then please consider doing this – we try to post regular updates!

Road to the Isles Facilities Group.

25th March 2021