

Dear all,

We're conscious that much of the work we have been doing has been in the background, and although some of you will have seen updates on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/roadtotheislesfacilitiesgroup>) or more recently on our Go Fund Me page, <https://gf.me/u/ypbzxp>, we should update you on progress to date.

As some of you will have seen, we have managed to install and open the toilets at Traigh. These are completely off-grid, so have neither water nor electricity. This was in part to comply with SEPA regulations, but they were also deliberately designed to provide a facility for those using the beach, without providing sinks for e.g. washing dishes in, which would have attracted more campers (not that there is room for any more campers!) In the end the installation happened quite quickly! Stephen McCaig undertook the demolition, supported by Stuart Griffin, and Bowman Skip Hire kindly donated the skips to dispose of the rubble. Mallaig Harbour also loaned us the Heras fencing to keep the site secure. We had an aborted attempt at demolition when we discovered that, despite the toilets having been closed for years, the electricity was still live inside them! Our original contractors for the installation had too much of a backlog of work post-covid restrictions being lifted, and so we contracted with Fion Construction who agreed to do the work within the timescale, and for only slightly more than the original budget.

These 'extra' costs that we were beginning to incur prompted us to set up the Go Fund Me page, which has already hit its target of £3,500, thanks in no small part to members of some of the campervan organisations. After such a frustrating summer with endless visitors seeming to behave irresponsibly, it has been reassuring for us to have both financial support and words of encouragement from visitors to the area who respect it as much as we do! We have left the page open, as although we have installed a donation box at Traigh, this is a way for those using the facilities who don't have any cash on them to donate towards the running costs.

In Mallaig, we finally have everything lined up to let the contract for the build of the toilet and shower block at the end of West Bay Car Park. The deadline from the funders is that the project has to be complete by the end of December, so time is tight, but Healthmatic, who will provide the modular building, have been working away in the background, and we are confident that we can achieve this!

One of the issues we had to resolve for Mallaig was that the funders don't pay out the last 10% of the funding until the project is complete, so we needed to borrow money to allow us to pay the bills before we could reclaim the grant. Angus MacDonald and his Moidart Trust have very kindly stepped in to give us a short-term loan so that we can manage this, and we are very grateful, as this could have scuppered the project!

Fion Construction will again be undertaking the groundworks at Mallaig, and you may see them starting to dig up the verges within the next few weeks. We thought we were being clever siting the toilet block near the sewage works, but it turns out it's a pressurised system, and so we have to dig a trench back to behind the Community Centre to connect to this system. That's just another example of the challenges we have faced, but we've found a way through them all so far!

We had hoped to have an open day and AGM in May 2020 but, like so many things, this had to be shelved. We still hope to have an open meeting (although probably online) before the end of the year, and we will circulate details before we do.

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.