

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-27

Enabling a thriving and socially connected community through high quality local services, housing and amenities, making use of our natural and human assets to sustain our economic, social, cultural, and natural environment.



MULL & IONA

COMMUNITY TRUST

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WELCOME

Welcome to Mull and Iona Community Trust's (MICT) Five Year Strategy covering 2022- 2027. It presents a set of guiding principles that, when communicated and adopted throughout MICT, will inform our decision making and create a bridge to communicate with stakeholders, our local community, and enthuse new supporters. It's a clear roadmap, comprising operating principles that define the actions we should take (and not take), and the things we should prioritise (and not prioritise) to achieve our desired goals.

It will guide us in allocating resources and building alliances to accomplish our key objectives.

We were founded in 1997, and since that time we have worked hard to embed ourselves in the communities of Mull and Iona, and their associated islands. Island communities are resilient and forward-looking, and can take full advantage of opportunities that exist with appropriate support and encouragement at critical points. As an established and trusted organisation MICT can provide that support as and when it is needed, and take a lead in providing such opportunities.

This Strategic Plan is an expression of the challenges we face, and our ambition and purpose in tackling them.



ABOUT US: OUR MISSION, VALUES AND VISION

Who We Are

Mull and Iona Community Trust is a dedicated and passionate locally based organisation committed to improving the quality of life for the residents of Mull, Iona, and its associated islands. We have a long track record of delivering successful community projects.

We are guided by our **Mission**, which is to enable thriving and socially connected communities through high quality local services, housing and amenities, making use of our natural and human assets to sustain our economic, cultural and natural environment.

We are guided by our **Values**:

- 1. We are community led and driven:** It matters that our work is valued by the community and seen as benefitting the islands, with board members from all parts of the island seeking a range of views on the challenges we face.
- 2. We are fair, ethical and transparent:** We employ our staff on terms that match best practice regarding wage levels, pensions and flexible working. We treat our volunteers with the same respect and appreciation.
- 3. We are environmentally sensitive and conscious:** All our activities follow best practice to protect the natural environment. We promote emerging solutions and technologies to help others pursue environmentally sustainable economic development.
- 4. We respect the cultures and heritage of our islands:** We value diversity and our development activities preserve local culture and natural heritage.

- 5. We are collaborative and supportive:** Nurturing relationships with partners on and off our islands, pursuing opportunities to work together for the benefit of everyone. We use our experience, skills and expertise to support others with their activities.

Finally, we are guided by our **Vision**: An inspiring picture of what our communities will look and feel like: Children educated close to where they live; Their younger siblings have access to childcare allowing their parents to work full time; Their older brothers and sisters enjoying real and worthwhile career opportunities; Families able to live in homes they can afford, with full access to essential services and infrastructure; Older people able to spend their later years properly cared for on the islands, with dignity and respect.

MICT is one of over 300 Development Trusts across Scotland: community-led organisations using enterprise, philanthropy, and creativity to drive local action. We share many common approaches and experiences.

But together, our mission, values, vision, and strategy define the specific and unique direction of MICT's work. They provide the what, who, why, and how that will get us to where we need to be, and enable us to define and help build the places in which we want to live.

THE LONG VIEW: OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND
OTHER SERVICES

LACK OF CHILDCARE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF
PRIMARY SCHOOLS

BARRIERS TO YEAR ROUND
EMPLOYMENT

SUSTAINABILITY AND GOVERNANCE OF MICT

RESPONDING TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

ENJOYMENT, SUSTAINABILITY & PRESERVATION OF
THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Taking a Long View

Since 2016, MICT's activities have grown considerably in range and scale. Our income has increased from £990,000 in 2016 to £1.9 million in 2020. Expenditure over the same period has risen from £700,000 to over £1 million. We now manage assets of £7.15 million, up from £1.6 million.

Our ambitions for the next five years will continue that growth. Not growth for its own sake, but the result of our work to meet the mounting economic and social challenges that our communities face.

The effects of Brexit on agriculture and fishing have yet to be fully realised; The longer-term economic impact of the Covid-19 epidemic on the tourist economy is unclear; Access to quality, affordable long-term rental and owner-occupied housing is a greater challenge than ever, as is access to childcare and locally delivered primary education for children, and social care for older people and those with particular needs.

We need a flexible strategic plan that will continue to identify needs

and solutions, and to deliver community support where, and in which ways, it is needed.

Achieving sustainable development is an ambitious and long term challenge. It requires ongoing consultation within and with our different communities to understand their problems and constraints. It requires balancing ambition and resources. Above all it requires us to take the long view to ensure our sustainability, as well as that of our communities.

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND OTHER SERVICES

Delivering and supporting affordable housing, across all tenures and affecting people of all ages, remains a key priority for MICT in the short and medium term. We will continue to explore the potential for affordable housing activity, either directly or indirectly, throughout Mull and Iona. We will also work with key stakeholders to support this housing delivery and advocate for residents on the many issues affecting them, such as the appropriate balance and control of holiday accommodation versus homes for islanders.

Housing accessibility affects everything. The lack of affordable local housing, particularly for families with young children, is a critical barrier to maintaining local schools. If key workers cannot find places to live, health and social care suffers.



Building Houses

We have directly built 6 houses at Ulva Ferry.

Helping to Fund Builds

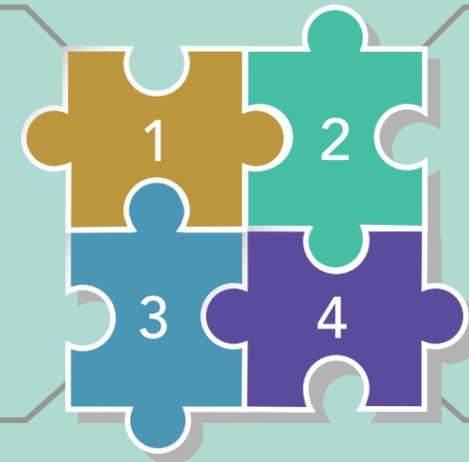
We have assisted both private and social housing providers to fund affordable housing.

Buying Houses

We have purchased housing to safeguard it in the islands' affordable housing stock. We will look for others.

Sustaining Rental Infrastructure

Ensuring connectivity, transport, services and maintenance, supporting landlords with delivery plans.



HOUSING

Between 2016 and 2021 MICT played a vital role in providing 26 new homes across Mull: Two award-winning 'passive houses' at Ulva Ferry; Four modular family homes in the same area: Buying a former schoolhouse in Pennyghael making it available for local rent; Assisting West Highland Housing Association to secure funding for 14 new homes in Lochdon.

Whilst we will continue to make new homes available, over the next five years a central objective is to work with holiday rental businesses, and house and landowners, to arrest the loss of year-round rental property, and address house price inflation linked to the rising number of holiday homes.

We will explore the feasibility of setting up a community owned property management company to oversee the maintenance of community housing on Mull.

AFFORDABLE SERVICES

Careful design of new houses, and improving insulation of existing ones, offers owners and tenants a way out of fuel poverty, and all of us a path to a sustainable environment.

There is also a clear link between housing affordability and access to high quality local services. Statutory and private service providers need to believe there is a demand for their products and activities, and without those services no homes are liveable in the longer term.

We will work with others to accelerate the delivery of high-speed broadband and mobile data services in all areas. We will work with health and social care providers so that they understand our communities and deliver cohesive investment and services responsive to the specific needs of particular areas and people.

INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

Creating five affordable homes in the village of Dervaig, working with a local developer as part of a wider development.

Redeveloping long-term abandoned homes: working with Argyll & Bute Council's Empty Homes Officer to investigate the return of neglected properties to the housing market.

Supporting private landowners with affordable housing development plans.

Exploring shared-equity house purchases to make buying a home a possibility for more families and key workers.

Working with Scottish Government and Argyll & Bute Council on the link between housing availability and new crofts, and the role of new Island Bonds.

LACK OF CHILDCARE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

There is a chronic lack of childcare provision for working age residents with children. This affects children aged 0-2, and three years and above. The lack of reliable out of school care for children aged 5-12 creates barriers to full time employment, particularly for mothers seeking to return to work.

Threatened access to primary schools impacts the number of families and economically active adults who can stay living on the islands, or who are attracted to move from elsewhere. This places further pressure on the schools themselves.



PROVIDING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES

We will address the different education and childcare issues that we face through demonstration projects and enhanced direct local provision. This will involve collaborative partnership working with statutory and other providers.

A holistic approach between ourselves and other local agencies has already proved successful in not only preventing further primary school closures but has directly led to an increase in provision.

Building rental homes at Ulva Ferry with a design and lettings policy specifically focusing on families with young children, has directly impacted on a primary school that was threatened with closure in 2010 due to falling pupil numbers. In 2021, pupil numbers have increased to such an extent that an additional primary teacher has now been employed to cover demand.

RURAL OUT OF SCHOOL CARE TRIAL

MICT was selected by the Scottish Government to trial a Rural Out-of-School-Care Programme from 2021. Working with the Scottish Government Out of School Care Policy Team, and several local organisations, a dedicated staff/volunteer team will test several ways of delivering a sustainable programme of activities, such as holiday and breakfast clubs, that will not only work across Mull and Iona but can be rolled out to other rural and island communities.

The trial will enable MICT to employ dedicated staff and: Design models for providing safe, caring environments offering active, stimulating and mindful activities for children; Consider mobile provision; Explore new ways of increasing childminding provision on the island, potentially through a new local support network/agency.

INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

Further support for young families will reverse the demographic trend towards an ageing population. Living on the islands not only becomes attractive and possible for young people, but it keeps multi-generational families together and makes living in remote communities possible for older people too.

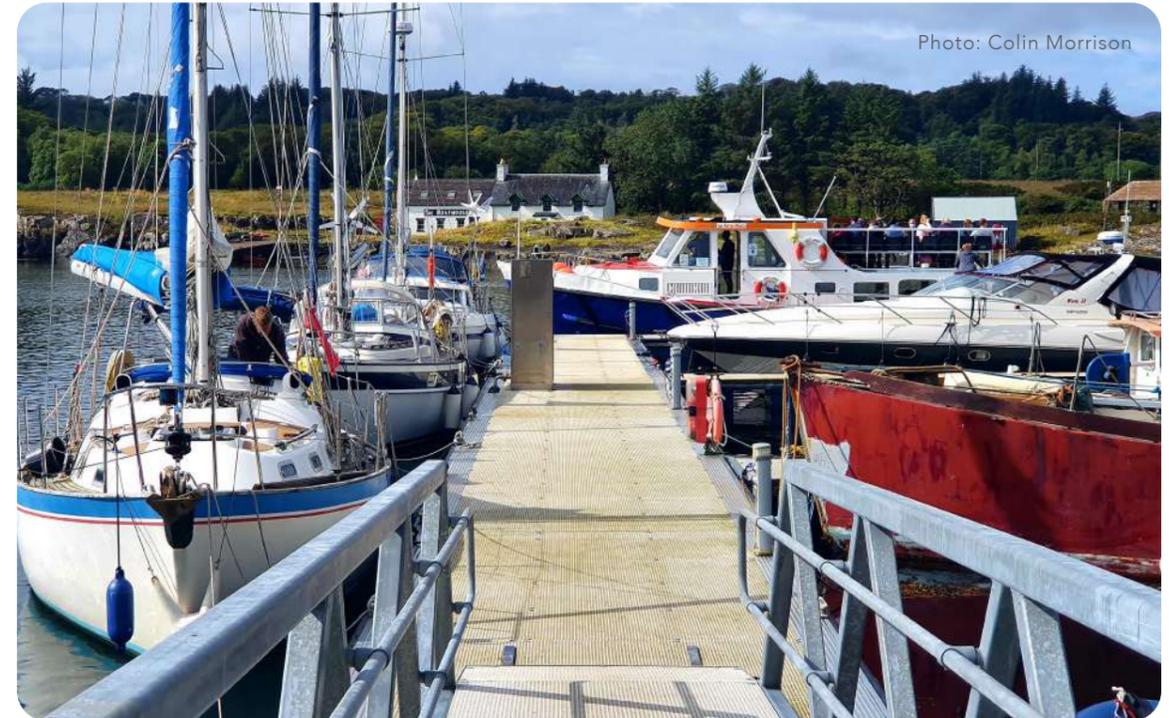
Review the Rural Out-of-School-Care programme in 2022. Identify ways to use existing community buildings and new facilities to provide childcare for working parents with babies and young toddlers.

Collect information about demand for childcare away from the larger centres of population, particularly the south of Mull and Iona. Explore the options for enabling the establishment of a childcare agency that can deliver specific support to families/parents in flexible ways.

ADDRESSING THE BARRIERS TO YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT

Access to well-paid year-round employment is the foundation stone of a sustainable population represented by all age groups.

Despite previous successful activities, the islands still suffer a lack of suitable business premises, poor digital communications, and problems with ferry and other public transport access for people needing to commute within the islands or to the mainland. Public and ferry transport is either heavily booked in the summer, or unavailable during the winter.



IMPACT

MICT is itself one of the largest year-round employers on the islands and we will continue to invest in our own services.

Continued development of shore and pontoon facilities at Ulva Ferry is providing direct access to services on the west side of the island, providing an alternative economic hub to Tobermory.

Ulva Ferry Community Transport service offers sustainable transport to and from the area via a diesel-electric hybrid minibus and fully electric car. A scheduled service is offered to tie in with public transport services. The service enables people with no or limited private transport options a way of supporting local businesses.

NONHEBEL PARK

Nonhebel Park, named after local businessman Andrew Nonhebel, opened in March 2020. It offers self storage, fenced compounds, lock up units and business premises. Despite the opening coinciding with the first Covid-related lockdowns, and consequent challenges to business throughout the islands, the demand for facilities has already exceeded initial expectations.

After its first 12 months, the site is 85% occupied across all facilities, with all six business units and eight lock up units already tenanted.

INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

Ulva Ferry pontoon directly supports part-time employment and indirectly supports hospitality businesses in the area. Additional infrastructure is required to complement the existing services. We have already prepared designs, and are actively seeking funding, for a shore facilities building that will provide further part-time employment and offer visitor services and amenities.

We will develop solutions directly or in partnership with others that support new business start-ups, and offer routes to growth for existing businesses.

We will explore expansion of current facilities at Nonhebel Park, which is now at capacity.

RAISING RESOURCES

Our income profile will change over the next five years.

Where possible, we will use earned income from our business activities to complement our other sources of money, enabling some activities to become self-financing.

Grant funding is very important, particularly for high interest and topical areas of work. But that funding often only covers the delivery of the project or activity itself. It doesn't include the years of community consultation and planning that go into an effective programme. Nor does it include ongoing management or support costs that are required for longer-term sustainability.

Expanding our income base will enable us to take a planned approach to investment and project funding, supporting future activities that provide community benefit, and using operating surpluses to sustain them.

GOVERNANCE

MICT's growth in recent years has added to the complexity of running the organisation. The Directors are committed to responsible decision making about the allocation of resources, both financial and of our staff and volunteers.

We will improve our business planning cycle to allow time for review and seeking investment. We will explore the ability to seek shareholdings whilst retaining full community ownership.

We are proud of our engagement with people across our islands. But we can improve. We will develop a mentorship and support programme to ensure that our Board of Directors/Trustees and project working groups can be representative of all sections of our community regardless of age and background.



INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

We will increase individual donations and membership. These not only reduce dependence on grants, but are a real indicator of the extent to which MICT is respected within the local community and has goals that are shared further afield. This will require a sustained programme to raise the profile of members and membership, including non-islanders who share the common purpose of improving liveability on all of our islands.

Our fundraising strategy will focus on Growth, Involvement, and increased Visibility to raise development funding and support new ideas and project research/initiation.

Full Cost Recovery will be vital in covering our support and management costs as well as project expenditure.

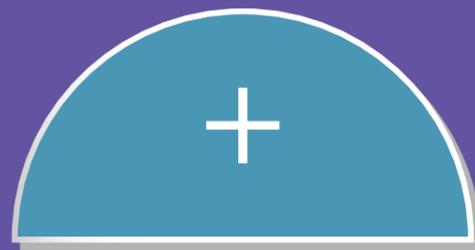
We will encourage all paid staff to integrate unspecified but planned time into their diaries to give flexibility to respond to new developments.

ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY & PROPER GOVERNANCE OF MICT

Ensuring the sustainability and proper governance of MICT anchors everything we do. Over the next five years we are committed to growing the financial and human resources we have available to invest in new work, and pilot new ideas.

Much of what we do requires many years of commitment. So, we also focus on streamlining our financial and operational management so that efficiencies can deliver greater capacity and effectiveness.

Improving stewardship is the key to expanding our membership, pool of volunteers, and our donors.



INCOME FROM
Ardura Forest
Affordable
Housing Rents
Recycling
Shops/Services
Nonhebel Park

EXPENDITURE

Loan Repayments
Support Costs
Overheads



SURPLUS
For Community
Reinvestment



MAINTAINING FLEXIBILITY TO RESPOND TO NEW CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Unforeseen opportunities will arise either from new challenges created by outside influences or government policy changes. These opportunities will not be reflected as priorities in our strategy or the community development plans linked to it.

Our Board and Senior Management Team will continue to monitor how change affects us, and when appropriate will allocate resources to respond.



ARDURA COMMUNITY FOREST

Our ownership of Ardura Community Forest is an excellent demonstration of how trusting and investing in new opportunities yields many returns.

During 2021 the first phase of ownership of the Forest will see the start of harvesting some 70 hectares of mainly Sitka spruce trees. This will yield significant financial resources for future investment in community programmes and the stability of MICT itself. A further 40 hectares is available for future harvesting.

But rather than simply replace the spruce with a similar stand of one species, we are restocking the area with a range of native species that will provide a varied habitat for ground, tree, and air-living animal species, as well as plants.

Further local collaboration has also enabled the creation of a community tree nursery to provide tens of thousands of seedlings.

INVEST IN IDEAS

MICT tries to succeed in everything it does, but you can often learn more from your failures than you are able to from your successes. Being open to experimentation requires local awareness, a solid financial base, and preparedness to invest in new approaches.

Our first step into the next five years will be to better understand the long-term effects of social, economic and environmental changes beyond our control, and the needs of all our residents. Better understanding of the problem enables better decision making about solutions.

Thanks to building our earned income over past years, we are able over the next five years to trial action research projects to experiment with new ideas, with the confidence to learn from failure and not having to take the safest path.

INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

To explore MICT involvement to facilitate construction of a Helipad at Mull and Iona Community Hospital.

Existing public toilets are under pressure of closure by Argyll and Bute Council. MICT is working alongside Mull Community Council and South West Mull and Iona Development to find solutions to keep all the islands' public toilets open.

To investigate the provision of a community-led nursing and care home alongside home based social care options.

To become proactive in working with landowners to explore the creation of new bare land and woodland crofts. This would promote repopulation, help rebalance an increasing elderly population, and offer opportunities for further environmental projects.

“MICT tries to succeed in everything it does, but you can often learn more from your failures than your successes”

ENABLING THE ENJOYMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND PRESERVATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Our unique natural environment is a major benefit for local residents.

Increased national and international publicity, particularly with respect to environmental tourism, has attracted large numbers of visitors, benefitting the economy, but placing great demands on island infrastructure and posing a threat to the environment that people are attracted by. The growth in numbers of caravans/motorhomes has been a particular problem.

Managed access to the environment not only protects often fragile areas, but also enhances educational and recreational benefits to locals and visitors.

Sensitive management of natural resources, for example woodlands, provides commercial opportunities for MICT and other local organisations.



IMPACT

Ardura Community Forest came under the ownership of MICT in 2019. Ardura Community Well-Being Project will work with other organisations to develop outdoor-based well-being activities tailored to the needs of older people, people experiencing loneliness and isolation, people with poor mental or physical health, and children and families.

As one of the first community-led ranger services in Scotland, the Mull and Iona Ranger Service provides support to landowners and visitors on issues of access, runs a range of events and activities for locals and visitors on topics including wildlife, conservation and heritage, and works with local school children and visiting schools from the mainland.

Mull and Iona Environmentally Sensitive Solutions (MESS) provides local solutions to the waste and environmental issues that affect local communities. Its three charity shops on Mull recycle clothes, furniture and other items, and provide income to MICT.

A POLICY DRIVEN APPROACH

MICT adopted an Environmental Sustainability Policy in 2019, which is reviewed annually. This is complemented by the Mull & Iona Eco Charter. The core components of our Policy are:

1. To encourage, facilitate, or undertake research and development concerned with local environmental well-being.
2. Environmental data collection and monitoring of local trends affecting Mull and Iona, and the dissemination of focussed and authoritative interpretation of local environmental information
3. Training and educational activity relating to protection or conservation of the environment, including initiatives involving MICT personnel, local schools, businesses, the wider community and visitors to the islands.

INDICATIVE FUTURE ACTIVITY

We will work closely with local people, the tourism industry, and other businesses and suppliers to promote membership of our Eco Charter and enable low-carbon initiatives and practices.

We will explore the feasibility of a National Deposit Return Scheme on Mull, improving recycling on the islands and contributing to the Scottish Government's vision of 90% return.

We will extend activities within, and associated with, Ardura Forest, including: a long-distance path; new accessible woodland paths; wildlife viewing hides and interpretative signage; and a Forest School;

Through the Ranger Service, provide better support for, and joint working with, Friends of Calgary Bay and its activities and service needs locally.

The exploration of benefits of future wind and/or hydro electricity generation projects.



HOW WE WORK

Projects may be long or short-term. They may also test ways of working or delivering services that will later be delivered by others.

MICT's experience and skills are combined with others to expand the range of expertise available and increase financial and human resources.



Co-ordination and liaison with existing governmental and public sector bodies. Close ties with local groups and partnership organisations. This ensures that other organisations understand and respond sensitively to the needs of our local communities.

Some activities are particularly demanding. With community businesses there may also be compelling legal, financial, and governance reasons to deliver services through independent additional organisations.

WHERE TO NOW?

Our strategy for promoting and achieving sustainable development across Mull & Iona and its associated islands is an ambitious and long-term challenge. It requires an understanding of the problems, opportunities, and constraints experienced by our different communities. It requires on-going consultation with and within those communities. It requires balancing ambition with available resources for piloting new approaches. Above all, it requires building and maintaining relationships with people, and private, statutory and voluntary organisations that are better placed than us to deliver solutions.

If you share the fire, enthusiasm and occasional frustrations we have in combining a pilgrimage to Mull and Iona's past, understanding its present, and embarking on a voyage to reach its future, we want to hear from you. Whether it's to share your experience and ideals of life as a Muileach, or you want to work with us on practical solutions to issues outlined in this strategy document, or you want to back us with donations or other resources...



PLEASE SPEAK TO US

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With thanks to:

