

# Brora Development Trust

*Newsletter*

January 2023



## ***Message from the Chair***

Brora Development Trust would like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year! This year we are all facing further challenges, with the high cost of living. Brora Development Trust has been working to support the community during difficult times and will continue to do so.

We warmly invite submissions from groups and individuals to include in the Community Corner of this, a community newsletter. This is a chance to share stories about Brora and the area, information about what's on, about groups and activities.

Tony Gill,

Chair of Brora Development Trust

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## **NEWS**

### ***A Gift for Every Child***

Parents/carers of 205 nursery, primary school and high school children living in Brora received a voucher in December/January to spend in KeyStore Express, Brora as part of Brora Development Trust's effort to support households with children in light of the high cost of living.



***Rehan Amin of KeyStore Brora handing vouchers to Tony Gill, Chair of BDT***

A voucher, worth £20, has been given to parents/ carers for each child of nursery age and above. The vouchers were also offered for children who are home schooled.

Parents/carers had the opportunity to opt out of receiving the one off voucher, which can be redeemed against goods, apart from alcohol, cigarettes and scratch/lottery tickets. The vouchers were distributed through Brora Primary and Golspie High School.

The vouchers were funded by Westminster Foundation as part of its emergency relief fund for Sutherland and administered by Brora Development Trust, in response to an increasing number of people being affected by the sharp rise in cost of living.

Chair of Brora Development Trust, Tony Gill, said “although the vouchers aren’t a long term solution to the high cost of living, they may provide some financial relief to households with children at this time”.

Brora Development Trust would like to thank KeyStore Brora, Brora Primary School and Golspie High School for all their help and support in making this initiative possible.

The vouchers are part of Brora Development Trust’s work to support children of a school age during the holiday periods when they are not at school. Meal starter kits and breakfast packs were offered to children during the summer and October school holidays last year, with funding from the Highland Council’s Food Plus scheme.

Brora Development Trust also contributed funds from the Westminster Foundation to Golspie High School Parent Teacher Association to provide a free Christmas meal to pupils.

## ***Funding to Support Brora Food Share Shed***

Brora Development Trust have released £900 of funds from Anne Duchess of Westminster Fund, to Engaging with Activity, a Community Interest Company which runs Brora Village Hub, to support the operation of Brora Food Share Shed. This funding is part of a wider package of funding secured by Brora Development Trust, to release to charities/groups operating food sheds/larders across Sutherland.



The Brora Food Share Shed has been operating for almost 4 years and relies on the hard work and dedication of a team of volunteers. The majority of stock for the Shed comes from local supermarkets in Brora, Golspie and Tain which is collected daily by a committed team of volunteers. Some stock also comes from the charity CFine which provides food surplus and from kind donations from individuals. The Shed was set up to help reduce food waste in landfill and help fight climate change. The Shed was originally funded by Tesco and Kilbraur windfarm.

However, a survey conducted by Brora Development Trust of all food larders/share sheds in Sutherland, showed that all food share sheds/larders are experiencing a shortage of stock just at a time when local demand for household food support is increasing. The shortage is a result of less surplus food being available from supermarkets, fewer donations and increase in transport costs for collection and distribution of food. These findings have also been echoed by other charities/groups operating food sheds/larders.

The funding from Anne Duchess of Westminster Foundation will enable food sheds and larders to purchase stock and pay for operational costs for the larders. Brora Development Trust will continue to work to seek funding for food related initiatives to meet local demands.

## ***Annual General Meeting***

Brora Development Trust Board of Trustees hereby give notice of the Annual General Meeting of Brora Development Trust. All members of Brora Development Trust are invited to attend.

Date and Time: Wednesday 15th February, 2023, 7pm

Venue: Brora Golf Club. The meeting will also be conducted online administered via Teams (Dial In Details are available on request)

As well as an overview of Brora Development Trust and the years activities, the meeting will follow the following format:

### ***Agenda:***

Apologies

Notes of Previous Meeting

Chair's Annual Report

Treasurers Report

Election of Board of Trustees

Results of Questionnaire Survey

Any other business

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## **MEMBERS**

Brora Development Trust now has over 200 members whose support is highly valued. If you would like join Brora Development Trust please contact Sarah Morrison, Development Officer to request a form or visit the website where a membership form is available. The Trust's Constitution is also available to download from the website.

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## **PROJECTS**

### ***100+ CLUB***

The 100+ Club is a significant source of fundraising for Brora Development Trust and runs from April to March at a cost of just £12 a year. A winning number is drawn at the Trust's monthly Board meeting. There is one prize of £20 each month with a grand draw in December, with £100, £50 and £30 prizes. If you would like to take part and have a chance to win, please contact Sarah to receive an application form.

### ***Otter's Couch***

The Otter's Couch social enterprise continues to thrive and celebrated three years of trading early this year, attracting local customers and visitors alike. The shop is staffed by volunteers, crafters and one part-time employee. Over 40 local crafters and artists sell their produce in the shop, with local charities such as Brighter Brora, Highland Wildlife Rescue, Blue Highlands Bird Rescue, Friends of Clyne War Memorial and Brora Learning Zone supported. Fara Sutherland's book, *Don't Litter Rubbish* can also be bought in the Otter's Couch, with book sale donations going to the

charity, Education Aid, a group which fill bags and shoe boxes for the Blythswood appeal, sent as gifts to Ukraine and Eastern Europe. Brora Rangers football club also have merchandise for sale in the shop.

Brora Development Trust have also prepared project plans, which are dependent on funding, to set up a visitor information point in the Otter's Couch. The purpose of the visitor information point will be to share information with visitors about where to stay, eat, visit and what to do in the area and encourage visitors to spend more time in and around Brora. The information point will provide local businesses with promotional and marketing opportunities.

The shop is now operating winter opening hours, Tuesdays to Saturdays 10am to 4pm, closed Sundays and Mondays.



*Small driftwood and polymer clay scenes,  
available at Otter's Couch, from Two Blue Dogs Designs*

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## COMMUNITY CORNER

### *A Warm Welcome in Brora*



This winter Brora has several venues which have their doors open to welcome everyone in, whether to take part in an activity, enjoy some quiet time, to find somewhere friendly and cosy to spend some time, to have access to internet or resources: including Brora Village Library, Brora Community Centre and Brora Village Hub.

Brora Village Library have a great number of activities on offer, from fly tying, scrabble group, lego club, storytelling for young children, board games and colouring during school hours for children not in mainstream education, as well as usual library services. The library is open to everyone Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, with times varying.

Brora Community Centre this month launch a Hot Spot initiative, making the lounge and kitchen available to anyone who would like to use it on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9am to 4pm, with free Wi-Fi and hot drinks and refreshments. Other activities include a sewing and crafts. The Community Centre also provide a venue for other clubs and groups, such as the Bowling Club, Toy Library and East Sutherland Live Arts and Entertainment.



Brora Village Hub run daily activities for anyone who would like to take part, from gardening to sewing, group walks, knitting, to gentle exercise sessions. The Hub is also available to anyone who would like to drop by and relax in the front lounge. Freshly prepared meals are available at lunch time too, at a reasonable cost. The Hub is open Mondays to Fridays, with organised activities take place each day apart from Fridays. The Hub also operate the Food Share Shed which is open 7 days a week,

**Brora Community Calendar January 2023**  
Prepared by Brora Development Trust

Check for any additional information on pages 22 to 24 and a code for Brora. Please report any changes to the calendar to the Trust.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>
17 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>th</sup>	23 <sup>th</sup>
24 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	29 <sup>th</sup>	30 <sup>th</sup>
31 <sup>st</sup>						

Details of what's on in Brora can be found in the Community Calendar, prepared by Brora Development Trust with contributions from local groups and individuals. Deadline for contributions will be 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. The calendar can be viewed on the Trust's Facebook and Twitter pages and has been printed and posted at the Library, Otter's Couch, Village notice board, Brora Bowling and Tennis Club, Cunninghams and Brora Village Hub and the Thrift shop. If anyone would like a printed copy, please get in touch with Brora Development Trust (contact details below).

## ***Billiards to Burns Suppers: The Life of Brora Scout and Guide Hall***

***By Anne Sutherland***

The Hall, on Gower Street, started life as a Temperance Hall and opened in 1893. It served as a meeting place for members of the temperance movement, which had spread to the United Kingdom (UK) and other countries from the United States of America (USA). There were activities such as billiards, darts and table tennis, although you needed to be at least 16 years old to enter the billiard hall. It was rumoured some local lads would go up to the village for a few pints and only then to the Temperance Hall to play billiards or table tennis and chew the fat.

After WW1 the Hall became a meeting place for WW1 veterans who called it Comrades Hall, before they eventually moved on to the Drill Hall (now Kingcraig's storage area).

In the 1940s, there were Whist Drives in the Hall which were very popular – one lifelong local still remembers helping her Granny with the teas for the Whist Drives but still always no alcohol. The Card Master was Johnny Cunningham. The area which is now the car park at the side of the Hall was a grassed area – known as the Hall park - where the Side Shows used to stop in Brora. The grass was cut by Willac MacLeod who lived just along from the Hall.

After WW2, it has to be assumed that the Hall continued as a Temperance Hall also serving as a venue for some religious services as well. Although into the early/mid 1960s it seems to have lain empty for a few years.



**Brora Scout and Guide Hall, Gower Street, Brora**

At one time the Hall was locked up and no-one had a key. Despite advertising in the Northern Times over several weeks, no-one with a key came forward. Subsequently, some Scouts, aided and abetted by a person of undeniable civic and social standing who shall be nameless, were able to gain access to the Hall. From there began the resurgence of the property as a facility for Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Brownies who had been using the old school and then the new school at Johnstone Place as their meeting place. Most people who remember the Hall though, talk about the three billiard tables which dominated the space. It's not certain what happened to the billiard tables (though some of you may know differently?) – suffice it to say, they are not there now!

In 1992, with the aid of grants, the Hall was renovated to improve access, toilet and kitchen facilities. A grand opening event took place with Mrs Polson, a Brora stalwart and long-time Brownie leader, doing the honours. Management of the Hall from then has been undertaken by Brora Scout and Guide Hall Group, a recognised charity, independent of the youth movements. Since then, the Hall Group has aimed to provide good and safe facilities for Scouting and Guiding, as well as use of the Hall by other local organisations and individuals.

**Brora Scout & Guide Hall Group**

**Burns Supper & Ceilidh Dance**

**ON**

**SATURDAY 28TH JANUARY 2023**

**AT**

**7PM**

**IN**

**BRORA SCOUT & GUIDE HALL**

**Tickets £17**

For Tickets contact  
Margaret Macdonald  
(01408) 621224

**BYOB**

Over the years the Hall has been kept in good order through fund-raising, local favourite The Granny's Attic Sale and the community Burns Supper, both of which have been taking place for 25 years or more. Of course, these events have been absent from the village calendar for the past three years, like so many other community activities, but the Hall Group plans to resume in 2023 with their Burns Supper, Saturday 28 January 2023.

Almost one hundred and thirty years on from opening as a Temperance Hall, the building has evolved to meet the changing needs of village life, more recently as the local centre for COVID vaccination clinics. Let's hope it will continue to be a focal point for many years to come.

Please help the Brora Scout and Guide Hall Group re-launch village social gatherings and go along to the Burns Supper and ceilidh on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January. Tickets are available from Margaret MacDonald on 01408 621224

If you have any more stories or photos about the Hall you would like to share, please send to Sarah, to be included in the next Newsletter, contact details below.

**The Trust is a registered Scottish charity (SC04396)**