



Oakwood Tourism & Crafts

About the Project

In the mid 2010s, the Sunart Community Action Plan identified support to local businesses as a priority. So when the Visitor Information Centre closed, the Sunart Community Company (SCC) bought it in 2018, with support from the Scottish Land Fund. 12 local craft businesses expressed interest in stocking their products in a craft shop. The local tourism group (Sunart, Morvern, Moidart, Ardgour, Ardnamurchan Tourist Association) joined a partnership with the Community Company because it was concerned at the closure of the Information Centre.

A combined craft shop and Information Centre was opened in 2019. SCC employed a part-time co-ordinator and a rota was drawn up for local volunteers, many of whom found the work enjoyable and sociable. Oakwood Tourism and Crafts runs as a community-owned business that provides commission-based sales to local producers. It raises funds to support the Sunart Community Company, which in turn supports the development of a variety of local activities, including a Men's Shed and a new Heritage Centre. The shop benefits from being part of the wider SCC because it can access its experience in areas such as banking, audit and IT.

Within two years the shop had proved its viability by generating a healthy financial surplus, with the wherewithal to support a 10 hour-per-week manager's job.

“The existence of the Sunart Community Company, plus its partnership with the local Tourist Association, made it possible to make a timely and credible business case to buy the building. The experience of SCC in areas such as grant applications, business and project management kept the project going, whilst the flair of the craft producers and volunteers made it into an attractive and profitable shop.”

James Hilder, SCC

Combining social goals and entrepreneurship

Key to the success of the shop is the combination of social goals and entrepreneurship. The shop relies on volunteers and enthusiastic craftspeople who use their skills to create an attractive retail space. A detailed producers' agreement has been developed, with lessons learnt over time about shelf space charges and levels of commission on sales.



Location: Strontian, Highland

Type: Buy

When Set Up: 2019

How Funded: Shop sales, plus grants from Scottish Land Fund, Sunart Community Benefit Fund, Sunart Community Council and Sunart Community Company.

Beneficiaries: Local craftspeople who sell products; tourism providers; volunteers; visitors.

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