



Westray Development Trust
*Annual
Report
2003/4*



Chairman's Report

Whilst the Care Centre has quite rightly taken most of the headlines, this past year has seen success on a number of fronts as well as steady progress on many others. I hope you will take the time to read the detail within the Annual Report and bring yourself up to date.

We have also worked very closely with other communities throughout Orkney and further afield too. It's encouraging to see a number of Development Trusts in other Isles growing in confidence and launching ambitious plans with community backing. We have much to gain by sharing ideas and working together on bigger projects and remain committed to helping other groups, particularly with start-up advice whenever asked to. The establishment of the Isles Forum has already provided an effective setting for this and has given a collective voice that didn't exist before.

Closer to home, we continue to work closely with our colleagues in the Papay Development Trust and are greatly appreciative of the support we receive from our own Community Council in Westray.

The biggest single piece of work for the Board over the past year has been the preparation of the new Development Plan. This has been at times tedious but is essential to ensure that we keep our projects up to date (and to be seen to be doing so) and following the last public meeting we are now ready to go to the printers as soon as funds allow.

Losing Danny Marcus and Geordie Thomson as directors earlier in the year was a real blow but we were delighted that both Jenna Hume and Robbie Rendall accepted co-option invitations to join us during the past year. We remain hugely grateful to Danny and Geordie for their time of service as directors and for their hard work which it's impossible to overstate.

Eight of the current twelve Directors are standing down at the forthcoming AGM but all are entitled to stand again for a further term. It's my personal hope that they all will. The AGM will also see some proposals for constitutional change which should improve accountability and bring us more into line with what's already current practice.

The most frustrating issue of the past year has been our effort to secure two years further funding for the Local Development Officer (LDO) post. Despite commissioning an independent study which very strongly recommended this, we have encountered difficulty in persuading some public agencies that they should be committing themselves to more than one year. We have presented a funding strategy which should make us self-financing in two years but need public support to reach that stage, during the phase-out period of the Initiative at the Edge programme.

After an initially disappointing outcome from Orkney Islands Council, there has since been a far more positive response and we're encouraged that councillors have decided to revisit the whole issue. It is fair to say that the response from Orkney Enterprise has been less enthusiastic and that there is a significant difference in opinion over what level of support ought to be provided. It has always been our position that investment in a Local Development Officer, free from interference from public agencies, provides an excellent public investment and generates money rather than drains it. The study we commissioned bears that out with hard facts and figures.

It is a source of intense frustration that the work of the Trust and value for money in supporting the LDO, has been lauded and applauded far and wide yet is not always recognised on our own doorstep.

This situation will be updated at the AGM.

Finally, I want to record my personal thanks to my fellow directors and our advisers; to Sam and Yvonne; and most of all to the people of Westray for your constructive criticism and encouragement, both of which are appreciated and needed.

Hope to see you at the AGM on 14th April

Iain MacDonald.