

## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

### **FEBRUARY 2005**

As it has been a relatively short time since our last A.G.M. in June of last year, my report covers a period of consolidation by the Trust and a putting into operation of the early stages of the projects set out in our Business Plan, as signified at that A.G.M.

With funding granted by Inverness & Nairn Enterprise, the Highland Council and European funding, we had just appointed Ian MacRae as our new Development Manager and he, together with Adrian Hooper, continued to run the existing retail shop, tourist information centre and exhibitions throughout the remainder of last summer. The figures and the income were up on previous years and with the introduction of some new lines in the shop we were very pleased with the results. The season finished with an extremely successful Blazing in Beaully Festival during October and this looks set to become an ongoing annual event.

Meanwhile, we had been busy negotiating with tradesmen with a view to starting the renovation works as soon as the Centre closed in November. We were delighted with how smoothly the organisation of the initial building works went ahead, with the old shop counters being moved to their new location, extra shelving being put up in the retail shop and the whole room being painted and restocked. At the same time, our carpenter dismantled the shelving in the old village store and, with much hard work by everyone involved, moved them, together with the exhibits into the back rooms for storage. Once again, midnight painting was carried out to have this room rebuilt as our new bookshop, and both outlets were ready for opening for the Christmas trade at the beginning of December.

As you will see, if you haven't already been on the grand tour, we are now in the process of recreating an old village store in the front exhibition room. This looks absolutely tremendous and is a great credit to all those involved in the planning and execution of this project. We should shortly be in a position to start arranging all the exhibits in the shop and cataloguing all the items.

The Beaully Firth and Glens Trust has a number of roles, acting as an umbrella organisation for community activities such as the Pipe Band, promoting and marketing the area and its businesses and, at the Beaully Centre, providing a base for tourist information and local group activities. Having spent so much time over the last few years trying to turn the Centre into a viable business, we have not been in a position to put as much time into marketing as we would have hoped. However, with matters here at the Centre looking a lot more stable we are now in a position to spend more time on these other subjects. Howard Johnson, one of our newer directors, has agreed to head up a sub-committee to take on the responsibility of public relations and marketing activities. The Trust had 7,869 visitors through the

doors last year in the very short season after opening at the beginning of July and booked around 200 bed spaces for members during that period. Ex-director Jim McAuley has virtually completed the new website and he will be talking about this later on this evening.

There have been a number of other things going on in the background ranging from setting up a proper bookkeeping system, negotiating a better banking deal with the Royal Bank of Scotland, ordering a reprint of our Centre leaflet, agreeing and obtaining the new signage at the front of the building and generally tidying up and improving the building and gardens. You will notice that we now have lino on the floor in this multi-purpose room and also in the toilet areas. We still have quite a few other projects in the pipeline that are listed in our Business Plan and I will be talking about these later in the Agenda.

I always take this opportunity to thank my fellow directors for all their input, ideas and support throughout the preceding year and I would also like to give a very special thanks to the team here at the Centre who have removed a very heavy burden from the directors' shoulders by coping so admirably with the day-to-day running of the business. Unfortunately, we have lost two valuable directors during the year when Clare MacDonald and William Fraser resigned because of other commitments and Carol Hooper is standing down at this A.G.M. I would like to thank all three of them for the tremendous amount of work and generosity they have shown to us during the period of their involvement.