

Establishment of Oban Community Harbour progressing well

The work to bring about a new Harbour Authority in Oban moved forward significantly this week with a successful public meeting and the appointment of legal advisers,

The meeting, held by Oban Harbour Community Development Association (OCHDA) on Tuesday night, was well attended, with between 50 and 60 people covering a wide range of marine interests (ferries, cruise ships, leisure sailors, fisheries and aquaculture, kayakers and divers) and local businesses and with representatives from Argyll & Bute Council, Oban Community Council and Caledonian Marine Assets Ltd (CMAL). The audience heard, from the Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB) that the impact of recent changes to the buoyage and that there appeared to be a significant reduction in the number of incidents. This was welcomed by all. Tony Bennett (Chair of the Stakeholder Group on the Oban Bay Management Group) outlined the progress made in the work towards establishing a new harbour authority. He emphasised that, once established, the beneficiaries would be Oban and its surrounding area. Discussions with Argyll and Bute Council on future arrangements are progressing well, and legal support would soon be required to draw up agreements relating to future operations. OCHDA are meeting Transport Scotland this week to share its thinking about the future arrangements, including the boundaries of the new Harbour Authority. The drafting of the Harbour Order, which will follow on from these meetings and incorporate the results of the discussions with Argyll & Bute Council, as well as the consultations with CMAL & CalMac, the NLB, other local water users and the wider community of Oban will take place during the late Spring and early Summer and, again, will require considerable specialist legal support.

The meeting heard that some of the greatest challenges to be overcome, now, are the need to keep the momentum, so that a draft Harbour Order can be presented during the summer, and to acquire the funds needed to pay for the specialist legal services that will be necessary.

OCHDA are delighted to announce that they have successfully secured the services of Burness Paull to help them with this work.

Burness Paull are one of the UK's leading specialists in the development of Harbours, particularly in the sphere of community-led and Trust Port developments. Senior Partner, Chris Mackay said "We're very excited to be involved in this development and look forward to helping the community of Oban establish a new Harbour Authority to guide the safe development of this beautiful bay".

Chair of OCHDA, John MacAlister, welcomed the partnership with Burness Paull, emphasising the important work they will be engaged with, helping draft legal agreements with the Council and preparing documents for submission to the Scottish Government. John MacAlister said "This is great news and we can now get on with the next phase of our work. As well as the legal tasks ahead of us we now urgently need to raise our profile, increase our membership and raise the funds needed to bring the development about!"

Information about OCHDA is available at www.obanharbour.scot and follow the Trust Port links.