

**Bute Houses Partnership  
Venue: House of Falkland  
24<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

**Attending:**

From Falkland Centre for Stewardship: Ninian Stuart, Neil Anderson, Patrick Laughlin, Amelia Stevenson, Helen Lawrenson

From Mount Stuart: Andrew McLean, Roisin MacDougall and Donna Chisholm

From Dumfries House: Charlotte Rostek

Apologies from Mike Schafer (Dumfries House) plus Kevin Burt and Mathew Williams (Cardiff Castle).

Update from the partners

**Dumfries House**

- A grant from the National Monument Trust has allowed further restoration of the House
- Upgrading of the electrical and heating system is planned.
- Visitor route has been change, providing a better route to tell the 'story' of the House.
- Restoration programme underway including parts of the Chippendale collection.
- Accommodation is being upgraded for HRH Princes Charles stay.
- Lively events programme but a challenge to get this fully booked.
- Website being overhauled.
- Café given a new look.
- Partnership with Historic Scotland to peel back to original paint schemes.
- On wider estate, partnership with Morrisons - £1m investment in the farm.
- Farm now has two FTE posts.
- Plans to build a hotel on site.
- Day to day operation continues to remain a challenge.

**Mount Stuart**

- Want to exploit the collection at Mount Stuart – increasing possibilities for education projects.
- Increased appreciation of what the Bute family was trying to achieve.
- Public events programme is a mixture of culture/music/food.
- Corporate events include residential and weddings – continuing.
- Catering changes – small farm shop opened and new chef appointed.
- Commercial team has been restructured.
- 2009 was a tough season for corporate. So refocus on day tourism as the key market.
- Want to be a centre of excellence for food – encouraging facilities around Mount Stuart to do increase quality.
- Have held first farmers' market of the year
- Self catering is now in its third year – starting to yield results. Plan is to roll out 3 or 4 more sites for self catering.
- Building community trust eg Bute 2010 event. Keen to make sure community voices are heard.

**Falkland**

- 450 acres brought in house over the last three years. Producing a range of products – not yet at farm shop level and would not wish to undercut Pillars of Hercules farm/café.
- Continuing to consider development of the Stables as the base for the Centre for Stewardship

- One Planet Food system project is an initiative to encourage a sustainable, healthy and inclusive food culture.
- Big Tent 2010 taking place at end of July. Decision to move festival into the heart of the Estate to promote work of Falkland Centre for Stewardship.
- Invitation open to Bute partners to attend the festival.
- Dundee University coming to the end of their 5 year research project which focused on the past, present and future of craft practise, looking at the House of Falkland. <http://www.futurecraft.dundee.ac.uk/>
- Websites for FCS and Big Tent have been overhauled.
- Various events taking place including Re-Sounding Falkland – a continuation of work with sound artists on the landscape of Falkland Estate.
- Learning and Development Manager for 21<sup>st</sup> century woodlands has been appointed looking at the opportunities within the Forest of Falkland.
- Falkland Palace – NTS have had a difficult few years. Recently appointed a good new manager. Open to joint-venture proposals from FCS and/or BHP.

### **Opportunities for commercial and educational joint ventures or knowledge transfer**

- Specialists residential events
- Study tours (NB Falkland might include Falkland Palace). These can be very lucrative if done well e.g. for curators as part of professional development.
- Attending events such as Eat Bute and Big Tent.
- Shared knowledge of best practice in house maintenance and risk management
- Shared funding knowledge – possible joint funding applications.
- Promotion of other properties at each of the other sites.
- Guide exchange scheme
- Educational resources – Pondi (Elizabeth) Stevens at Cardiff Castle has developed an excellent resource pack.
- The story of coal, cultural heritage and philanthropy links the properties.
- Emphasis on children – all properties enjoy good links with local schools.
- **Books**
  - Bute Houses cook book – a coffee table style book (selling for around £20). Donna to circulate a proposal put forward by Christopher Trotter.
  - Bute Houses and buildings book – could include up to 50/60 properties (including Kew that receives 2m visitors per year). More populist style of book that could be retailed at all property outlets and shops.
  - History of the Bute Family
  - Way forward for a book would be 1. To use own funds or 2. Seek a publisher
  - Agreed there needed to be more research done on this with costings included. Agreed it would make sense to go to a selection of commercial operators to discuss buildings/family/cook book – and get their recommendation. Mathew at Cardiff has experience of this.

### **Action points**

- Simple quarterly news-bulletin to be circulated to all four properties updating on developments. Rotating 'Editors' to be Helen (Falkland), Roisin (Mount Stuart), Charlotte (Dumfries), to be identified (Cardiff).
- Full group to meet once a year. Perhaps at Dumfries House in 2011?
- Inter-property working groups to meet/email more frequently targeted on development of study visits, residential tours, curatorial group, events and engaging young people in cultural and environmental activities. Not every property needs to be involved. Attendees invited to circulate draft proposals on remit of possible working groups with lead person. No date set but ASAP.

- Sharing of data – Each organisation to consider whether they might inform members, friends and supporters of wider Bute Houses Partnership developments. By 10<sup>th</sup> June.
- Add links and descriptors on websites by 10<sup>th</sup> June.
- Mount Stuart team to share information on Bluetooth data (sourced from the Moffat Centre and the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions).
- Long term possibilities - a central database and development worker!?
- Visit Scotland growth fund has been suspended (no more funding) for at least a year but we agreed we should keep them fully aware of the emerging BHP.
- Charlotte to discuss with Mike whether Dumfries House might be in a position to host annual meeting in 2011 – and if so to suggest a date.

**Date of next meeting – Around May 2011. Venue TBC**