

# Community Newsletter

Reiss - Killimster - Sibster - Keiss - Nybster - Lyth - Ackergill - Papigoe - Staxigoe - Noss

OCTOBER 2022 - MARCH 2023 | ISSUE THREE

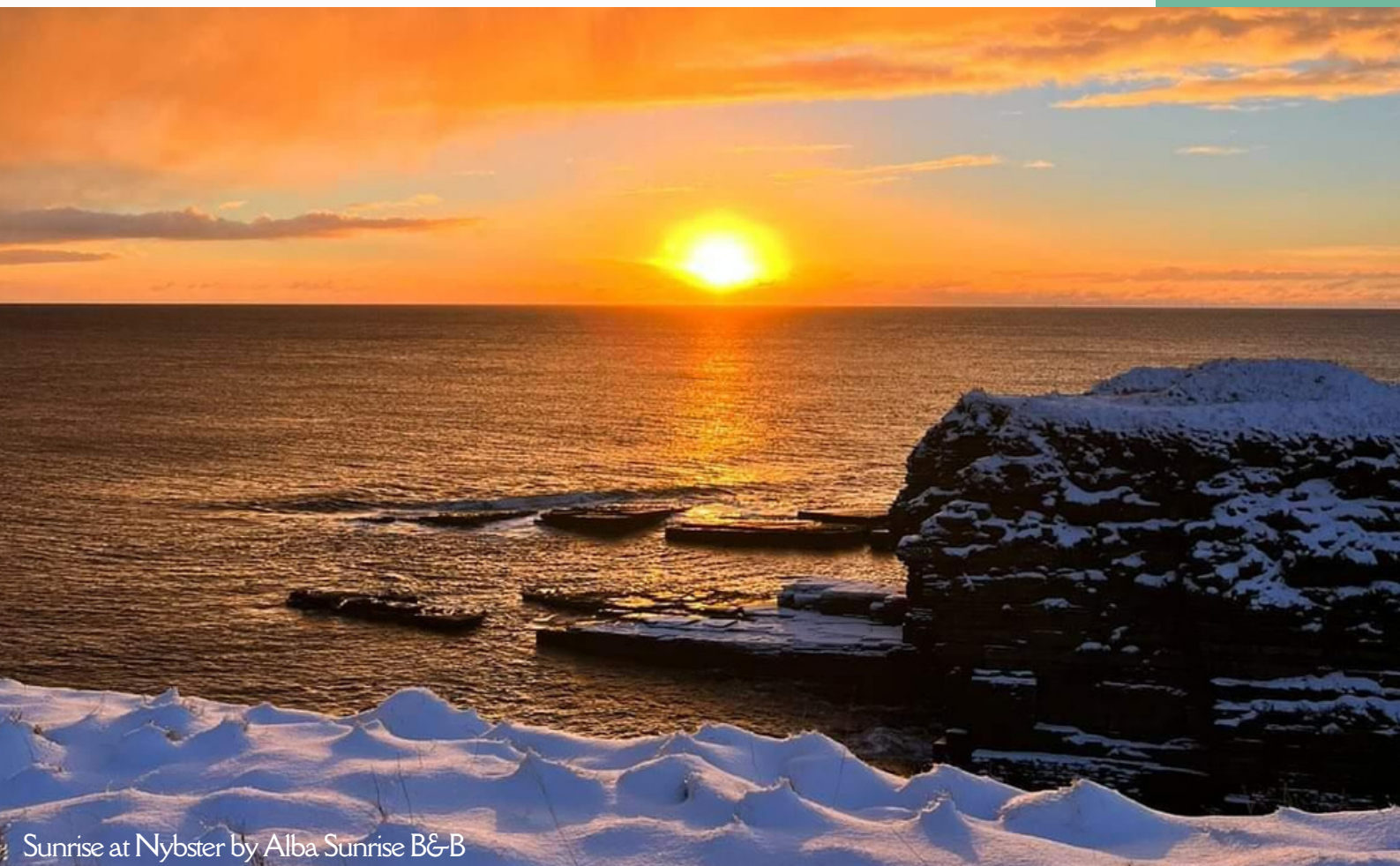
## SINCLAIR'S BAY TRUST

Improving and developing Sinclair's Bay as a place to live, work & visit.

Web: [www.sinclairsbay.co.uk](http://www.sinclairsbay.co.uk)

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Find us on Facebook & Instagram



Sunrise at Nybster by Alba Sunrise B&B

Hello and welcome to our third newsletter. What a busy time we've had since the last edition of our newsletter & we apologise for taking so long to get this edition out! We are delighted to share with you what we were up to between October & March. In October, we closed our CAIR Artist in Residence project with local artist Shelagh Swanson with a community ceilidh. We were delighted with the turn out and raised £518.01 from raffle sales and donations which was split between the Trust and local mental health charity, Listening Ear. We'd like to thank Shelagh Swanson & Lyth Arts Centre for working with us to bring this project to our area. Our annual Hallowe'en hunt returned for its third year...this time with another addition - a carved neep competition! We were delighted to see this tradition return. As we saw the colder weather returning and concern about increased living costs, we worked with Caithness Citizen's Advice Bureau to deliver a couple of outreach sessions for our community. One of the highlights for the Trust was our warm spaces project. The response and feedback from our communities in Staxigoe, Reiss and Keiss has been phenomenal (page 2) and we are currently exploring funding with a hope to be able to deliver an extension to this project later in the year. Now that we are entering into warmer and lighter nights, we are moving our focus to our villages and hoping to engage and establish a volunteer network to help make our villages more welcoming through soft planting, tidy ups and more - read more about what has been happening in Keiss on page 3. The Trust work closely with Sinclair's Bay Community Council who have, as you will see, provided a shed jam-packed with equipment to help kick start the groups. If you are interested in joining in with any of our projects, please get in touch. We are also always open to ideas. We hope you enjoy this issue, go grab a cuppa, sit back and enjoy! Until next time take care speak soon - Maysie Calder, Chair.

Sinclair's Bay Trust Board Members are: Maysie Calder (Chair), Andrew Mackay (Treasurer), Maria Aitken (Secretary), Ian Ross, Pat Ramsay, Grant Ramsay, Christina Calder & Emma Fraser. The Trust is supported by development trust officer, Alistair Jack, employed by CVG.



# SINCLAIR'S BAY COST OF LIVING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE



Over the 10 weeks of our warm spaces project, the project attracted an average of **45 residents a week** and served up nearly **450 lunches**

## Feedback

"IT WAS LOVELY TO MEET WITH PEOPLE AND ENJOY THEIR COMPANY"

"It brought the community together"

"Being new to this area it was a nice way to introduce myself & get to know neighbours in the warmth, with tea."

"Such a good idea to do these things"

"IMPORTANT MEETING PLACE, VERY GOOD FOR SINGLE PEOPLE TO SOCIALISE, HELPS MENTAL HEALTH AFTER A LONG WINTER"

"I'VE REALLY ENJOYED MY TIME HERE, MEETING MORE PEOPLE"

"A social space for people to meet, especially after covid"



Pictured are Maysie Calder and Ian Ross from the Sinclair's Bay Trust board who were involved in the project. A selection of sandwiches and the cake to mark the end of the project.

## Join Us!

We're actively seeking new board members! Our board members bring a wealth of skills, experience and passion to the Trust, but quite simply, we need more people around the table!

- Are you passionate about improving Sinclair's Bay as a place to live, work and visit?
- Do you have a wee bit of time to spare and can attend monthly meetings?
- Keen to get more involved in your community and/or put your skills and experience to good use?

If so, we'd love to hear from you! Find out more by contacting us on [admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk](mailto:admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk)

# Sinclair's Bay Connections Project Warm Spaces

With growing concerns about the significant hikes in the cost of living at the end of 2022, as a Trust we were keen to try to do what little we could to support our community. We were successful in securing funding from the Highland Council to deliver a cost of living community resilience project, which we called our "Warm Spaces Project".

The goal was to deliver an 8 week project by opening the doors of three of our village halls (Keiss, Staxigoe and Reiss) for our community to meet three days per week and be provided with a warm, social space with refreshments, lunch, daily newspapers and games to play. Through this project, with support of Caithness Voluntary Group, we recruited two session facilitators, Beverley Martin and June Frame, who week-after-week provided a warm, friendly welcome in our village halls and served up countless cups of teas and coffees and lunches and helped us with the day to day running and delivery of this project. We also secured a caterer, Nadine Stewart, for the project who prepared an excellent lunch for our community three days a week.

When planning projects, it can be hard to gauge what the uptake might be – we were blown away by the response to this project and delighted to see so many members of our community attending warm spaces. It was great to see numbers growing week after week in the early weeks and the project sustaining high numbers throughout, so much so we were able to extend the project from eight to ten weeks. What became apparent from the feedback we received was that this project filled a social need in our community - the opportunity in the colder months, with its shorter days, to have somewhere to go and something to do, to socialise within the community, meeting with neighbours or making new connections and feeling more included and connected with the community.

We would like to thank everyone who helped to make the project such a success, including our development officer and board who undertake a huge amount of work behind the scenes.

Given the success of the project and the feedback received, we are currently exploring options and funding opportunities which we hope might see us be able to continue this project when the colder months return. We are aware from feedback that this project could have been advertised better and primarily relied on social media and word of mouth, we will endeavour to make improvements for any future projects.

# A Year In Sinclair's Bay



Credit: Vicky Mackay



Credit: Ian Nicolson



Credit: Paul Steven



Credit: Marie Fraser



Credit: Alison Hamilton (above)



Credit: Catherine Harris.

If you follow Sinclair's Bay Trust on social media, you'll know that we started a new project, A Year in Sinclair's Bay, at the start of the year. The project is a collaborative community photography project capturing and celebrating Sinclair's Bay throughout the year in photographs. Every month we collect photos taken in Sinclair's Bay that month. The project is open to all - you don't have to live in Sinclair's Bay and you don't need to have a fancy kit. All that we are looking for is that any photos sent it for the month should have been taken that month in Sinclair's Bay.

We had quite a start to the year - in January, February and March, photos featured stunning aurora displays, beautiful winter light, snowy landscapes, colourful sunrises and sunsets and blue skies that could've been mistaken for July! We collected just short of 100 photos from the year from the community over the first three months of the year.

We are really enjoying recording the year in this way! We love seeing our regular contributors send photos in month after month and are enjoying seeing new people taking part too. If you'd like to take part, send your photos from the month by 6pm on the last day of the month to us by messenger on Facebook or Instagram or via e-mail [admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk](mailto:admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk)

To see the collection of photos so far, visit our website.

## Keep Sinclair's Bay Beautiful: Village Volunteers

Our Keiss volunteer group, who are a subgroup of Sinclair's Bay Trust, have been busy beavering away and now have some additional mini volunteers from Keiss Primary School, which is wonderful!

Treasa, one of our lead volunteers recently accessed some fantastic whisky barrels which were kindly donated by Iain Kerr, who is the manager for Wolfstone Distillery. Allan Ross cut them in half, Thomas and Treasa then sanded and stained the barrels ready for the Keiss school children who then planted bulbs and plants guided by Treasa and her Mum, Lillian. John and Cameron from the Village Inn are now going to be re-building the wall that has fallen down around the car park area. Lesley and her son Jack, along with others from the village, tidied up the bush areas. Thanks to Highland Council staff who gave assistance along the way. Keiss volunteer group have recently been awarded a sum of £3000 from SSE Renewables which will be really helpful for our tidy up of the Keiss car park area.



Thank you to many of the Keiss volunteers who give up their time helping to keep the village tidy and a wonderful place to live and work. You can follow Keiss Volunteer Group on Facebook for updates and ways you can help, or have a chat to Maria or Treasa in the village. Thank you to Keiss Primary who sought permission for us to use the photo.

We're keen to establish village volunteer subgroups in other areas of Sinclair's Bay - please get in touch with us if you're interested.



## CAITHNESS AT WAR



The 19th November 2022 was the 80th anniversary of Operation Freshman. To mark this anniversary we prepared a series of detailed posts on our Facebook and Instagram pages between the 11th and 21st November to share information with our community.

At long last we have now submitted our planning applications for the information panels for the Caithness at War trail and things are shaping up nicely to hopefully have the trail ready later in the year. We are working closely with Wick Development Trust to ensure that both the Sinclair's Bay and Wick elements of the trail will be launched at the same time.

A lot of work has gone into the A2 visitor leaflet and maps that will accompany these trails and the draft version is currently being reviewed by the board. Once the wording and layout has been checked and approved the new leaflets will then be able to go to print prior to the launch of the trails.

### Sinclair's Bay Trail

Delivered by Sinclair's Bay Trust



### Wick Trail

Delivered by Wick Development Trust



## Points of Interest: Altimarlach.

### When Wick River ran red! - The last clan battle in Scotland

The Earl of Caithness, before his death in 1675, being in financial strife, sold his property, title and all, to Sir John Campbell of Glenorchy. George Sinclair of Keiss disputed Campbell of Glenorchy's right to the title and the claims of both were submitted to the most eminent lawyers in Scotland who ruled in favour of Glenorchy. Sinclair paid no attention and retained possession of the lands, with huge local support - the locals thinking the late Earl's financial position had been taken advantage of. Glenorchy, through an Act of the Privy Council, raised an army to invade Caithness and reclaim his properties.

In July 1680 Glenorchy reached Caithness with between 700 and 1100 men. Sinclair had assembled between 800 and 1500. Reports vary as to how many men were involved on either side. It was noted at the time that many of Sinclair's men were old, and all were untrained.

The night before battle a ship laden with whisky ran aground at Wick, allegedly arranged by Glenorchy with its contents a prize quickly indulged in by Sinclair's men. Early the next morning Glenorchy crossed the river of Wick below Sibster. Sinclair's men mustered with great difficulty.

Glenorchy, seeing the Sinclair advance, prepared for battle. 500 of his men stationed 200 yards up from the burn of Altimarlach where the rest of his men hid in the gully. Sinclair's men, taking the higher ground, didn't see the hidden men, waiting.

The onset of the Campbells was furious. Sinclair's men quickly retreated towards Altimarlach Burn where the hidden men ambushed them meeting Sinclair's men head-on. Being pressed front and rear, the Sinclairs made a rush for the river. The Campbells chased, cutting them down with battle-axe and broadsword. It is said they crossed the river dry shod over the dead bodies and the river in Wick ran red that day. The battle did not last long and was as bloody as it was brief.

The site of the battle at the Sibster stretch of Wick river is marked by a monument (pictured), between Sibster and Wick.



Credit: Ian Ross

## Community Council Corner

The community council recently secured funding to purchase three community sheds for the villages of Reiss, Keiss & Staxigoe alongside tools and equipment to support village upkeep and TLC. We work closely with SBCC and look forward to using the shed, tools and equipment with our village volunteers as part of our Keep Sinclair's Bay Beautiful project. Community Councils act as the voice for their community with the council, meeting on a regular basis to identify, discuss and raise issues in their local area. All community members are most welcome to attend monthly meetings. SBCC can be contacted and any issues can be raised via Facebook or email - [sinclairbaycc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sinclairbaycc@hotmail.co.uk)



**Sinclair's Bay**  
  
**Community Council**

## Connections Project - Noticeboards

We're very conscious that we cover a vast rural area comprising many villages and small settlements and not all members of our community will access social media. We are keen to promote inclusion and share information with as wide an audience as possible through our website and social media, but we also recognise a need for information to be readily available elsewhere. In part, we hope to achieve this via our newsletters, but also recognised there might be a potential need for more noticeboards in Sinclair's Bay. As a board, we spent time identifying where noticeboards currently are situated. We identified gaps in Keiss & Reiss villages as well as Reiss beach as a key, well-used, central site in Sinclair's Bay and the East Caithness community.

You may recall we sought help via a survey on social media to gauge if this was a good idea and understand where noticeboards should be sited. The survey attracted over 80 responses with 100% of respondents agreeing that community noticeboards would be beneficial for sharing information. 99% supported community noticeboards being erected in Reiss, Keiss and Reiss Beach and 97% indicated that they would use noticeboards as a means of finding out information about what was happening locally. Alongside letters of support from a variety of groups, the community survey helped to provide evidence of community support. We are delighted to announce that we secured funding from the Community Regeneration Fund and Beatrice Offshore Windfarm to purchase noticeboards.

### Community Corner

A new feature for our newsletter, featuring groups from our community. First up, Staxigoe Selkies, tell us about their group: "Round the corner from Noss Head Lighthouse, as the seal swims, you'll find the beautiful, sheltered harbour of Staxigoe - home to the Staxigoe Selkies. A cheery bunch of water babies who swim all year, through hail, snow, haar, rain and occasional sunshine. New members are always welcome. As well as all the health benefits of a cold water dip, you will meet some of the kindest, funniest, most supportive people. Most swims are followed by coffee and a catch up and we have regular picnics and visits to other swim spots and events. Selkie Donna says, 'during the pandemic I felt quite isolated and lonely. Being part of the selkies really boosted my mental and physical health, I've made loads of new friends and had such a laugh'. If you'd like to join us, you'll find our group on Facebook, where we share swim times and photos (like the one below)."

