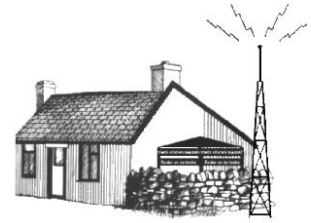


TWO LOCHS RADIO

WESTER ROSS RADIO LTD (SC235969)



REVIEW OF 2017/18

Two Lochs Radio more than meets its commitment to over 30 hours per week of programming, including news, information and entertainment. In addition to our core local programming, we present a range of programmes from contributors around the country, and some from around the world, that are not otherwise available on the air locally, taking our programming to over 73 hours a week, of which about one-third are live, and the rest pre-recorded. More details of current people and programmes follow later in this review.

As well as broadcasting on FM in the local area, we also provide online services to listeners beyond our broadcast coverage anywhere in the world, or who simply prefer to listen online. Until earlier this year we provided a 'sustaining service' for Lochbroom FM in Ullapool to allow it to continue when it faced closure. However, after an equipment breakdown which it didn't have funds to fix, Lochbroom FM ceased broadcasting, and has subsequently been found in breach of licence by Ofcom. The board has considered the possibility of taking over responsibility for the LBFM transmitters and resuming service, but there are licensing issues and potential future costs that might make this impractical, even if the remaining Lochbroom FM directors and Ofcom wished to cooperate with that.

As reported at last year's AGM, our long-term scheme to cover a wider area in Wester Ross has been held up by a frustrating lack of progress with the company that has exclusive control of the transmitter sites concerned. After five years of failing to get what was agreed and paid for, we have now asked the company to return our payment (with interest) so that we can start over, and consider the options afresh. We are currently awaiting the outcome of that request. There are alternative independent sites potentially available, particularly in the Achnasheen area, but these all have significant disadvantages compared with the existing commercial sites.

FINANCES

Our financial year runs to 31st December, and we have published our formal accounts for the financial year 2017 separately (full copies available on request). Our 2016 year-end results saw a dramatic reduction in income for the year, largely owing to circumstances outwith our control (election periods), with an overall deficit for that year of about £6.5k.

Last year we forecast that we were unlikely to completely avoid a deficit again for 2017, but with a return to a more usual pattern of events, and a few additional money-saving measures, our result for the year is very close to break-even, with a deficit of just £67, and our balance sheet shows overall assets and reserves almost unchanged overall.

As a matter of prudence we have always maintained sufficient reserves to ride out a rough period, or perform a planned closedown if that were seen to be necessary, and our cash reserves are currently reasonably stable at a sufficient level.

We are grateful as always to our loyal sponsors who show their support for our service through sponsorship of programme hours and items. However, we still have significantly reduced sponsorship this year, with several potential sponsor slots vacant going forwards, so we must continue to need to pursue potential new sponsors or advertisers, but of course the prospects are limited in our sparsely-populated rural area.

We have benefited from some very generous donations from local supporters, with welcome monthly standing order donations, as well as some very kind one-off donations this year. In particular, when we highlighted the pressing need for a major upgrade of our vital central digital storage system, a very generous local couple donated the full £2,000 cost of the job. Another donated half the proceeds of the sale of a substantial item.

As agreed at last year's AGM, we have investigated the options for reconstituting as a charitable body in order to qualify to reclaim Gift Aid on membership subscriptions and donations, and have also discussed the ramifications with Ofcom and our accountants. The board is now happy to proceed with this, subject to members' approval, and will recommend a resolution to the AGM to authorize it to draft a new constitution for adoption, along with following through the necessary Ofcom procedures and accounting changes.

PEOPLE AND PROGRAMMES

We continue to organize our programmes into 13-week schedules. The broad structure of our live and pre-recorded shows remains the same, but each schedule includes at least one new series. Each schedule is printed once in the *Gairloch & District Times*, and is available online. The online schedule includes extra details of many of our local shows, and we keep it up to date with any planned or last-minute changes. At management meetings and quarterly presenters meetings we review and discuss our programming and presenter resources.

PEOPLE: Volunteer presenters are the heart of Two Lochs Radio. Suzanne "Pinkers" Laing's retirement left us very short of morning presenters. Following an appeal, Stuart Smith agreed to join the team, and as part of a recruitment drive we held open sessions in March. Within a few days, Gairloch newcomer Carol Houghton had joined Anne on *Craic at Dawn* and is now a regular host. Another new recruit, Gail, has co-hosted several weekend shows.

Behind the scenes, Carol Donaldson and Anne Gray work hard to ensure that all the pre-recorded shows go out according to schedule automatically every evening and at weekends. In August, Liz Forrest retired from her role of producing Mountain Weather bulletins, and is sorely missed by the other presenters, who now have to produce their own! Liz continues to support Linda Howarth with production of the What's On Bulletins.

Our licence requires us to produce local news bulletins and for 15 years now these have been put together by Alex Gray, with Ron Cole and others helping out during occasional holiday breaks. Attempts to recruit help from the broader community have so far proved fruitless.

PROGRAMMES: Some of our series are of long standing: *Celtic Weekend* has continued unbroken for over 700 shows, and *Old Gold* is currently in its 38th season. *Halos and Honky Tonks* is in its tenth series, and *Classics with Gordon* in its ninth. We have an extensive archive of good shows of all kinds, and from time to time have re-broadcast individual *Old Gold*, *Ceòl is Criomagain* and *Westwords* shows, and complete series of *Halos & Honky Tonks* and *Classics with Gordon* to give presenters a break from the relentless schedule.

Alan Weston, in the company of various co-hosts, continues to come up with new original shows. John Port joined him in February for *Around the World in Proggy Ways* and in May Rob Williams joined them to explore *Musical Influences*. They are currently exploring the world of *Record Producers*. In August Alan did a solo series focusing on *Classic Guitar Greats*.

Our local writers continue to record their original stories and poems each month for *Westwords*. Other shows in our weekly speech-based series *Voices* this year have included Ian Macmillan reading his wartime adventure novel *Charon*, as well as several interviews, including with ghillies who used to work on the local estates.

Daily early morning Bible readings in *First Light* are organized and read by Catriona Maclean and her team, and Liz Forrest assembles them, along with some of Rev Pam Shinkins musings, into *Sunday Light* compendiums. Local churches continue to record local church services for the Sunday evening programme *The Message*.

We supplement our own local shows with *Aiserigh nan Gàidheal* and *Backroads* from CKJM in Cape Breton, *The Week in Holyrood* (which includes reports from the European and Westminster Parliaments) from Caledonian Media in Edinburgh, the monthly *Taxcast* from Tax Justice Network, *Let's Talk Business*, John Matheson's *Highland Fling* from Nairn, Andy Mack's *Sounds of Scotland* from Ontario, Canada, *The Lively Lounge* from Radio 6 International in Glasgow, Dave W Philips' *Studio B* from southern California, and *On the Weekend* and the live *Rock 'n' Roll Saturday* from Mike Marwick in Fife.

We are indebted to all these people for what they do helping to keep Two Lochs Radio varied and thriving after 15 years. But we are always on the look-out for new people, and fresh ideas for shows – do please get in touch if you think you can help, or have an idea for a new show.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & LOCAL FUNDRAISING

We took part in a range of community events again in the past year, which as always doubled as fundraising activities. We are very grateful to the volunteers and supporters who contribute to these various events in any way, helping us set up and clear down, and by baking and manning stalls.

We are grateful to Nicky Hayes for continuing to organize the Autumn Market as a fundraiser for us, and to all those who help us on the day with our stall, and the fundraising. This year's Autumn Market was our most successful ever, raising £1,000. We also hosted another successful Poolewe Cèilidh Partnership evening. Special thanks go to Julie Brady, Liz Forrest and Michelle Stevenson for their work organizing catering for these occasions. We also provided public address at the Gairloch Highland Gathering.

We 'rebooted' our local lottery as the Golden Notes lottery with a new partner – Gairloch & District Pipe Band. The lottery continues to bring useful extra income, and on its first run reached a rollover jackpot of £900 before a winner arose. We are very grateful to the winner who very generously donated half the jackpot back to Two Lochs Radio, and to Forbes Garage which declined to take its bonus for selling the winning ticket. We owe continued thanks to Helen Mitchell for her dedication to the work of administering weekly ticket distribution and collection, and thanks to others who helped distribute, collect and count tickets over the year.

INTERNET STREAMING

Two Lochs Radio continues to attract listeners via the Internet: those with friends or family in the local area and who want to maintain contact, and visitors who use the radio station before visits to the area, or to stay in touch after. The equipment and the streaming service continue to prove very reliable, and we receive favourable comments on the sound quality of our streaming.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Facebook provides another means of contact with our listeners and other friends of the station, and has proved useful for timely reminders of special programmes, events, Golden Notes results, photos, and of course comments from our listeners. Some presenters use it very effectively to invite music suggestions on a theme for their shows. Our Facebook page currently has just under 1,200 'followers', and has received just over 1,200 'likes'.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The board is recommending no change in membership subscription rates this year. We thank Membership Secretary Julie Brady for her work on handling renewals and changes, however, she has now stepped down owing other commitments, and we are keen to hear from anyone proficient in Excel and general admin who might be willing to take on this role. Fully paid-up membership continues just under 200. Many members generously make an additional voluntary donation on top of their membership subscriptions, and a few particularly generous individuals make monthly additional donations, all of which we greatly appreciate.

COMPANY DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

Many thanks to the Directors who have served on our board through the past year. Julie Brady has retired as a director at this AGM, and Anne Gray is stepping down by rotation, but willing to stand again. Former non-Executive Director Stuart Smith, and Stan Miller have been nominated to stand for election as new Directors at this AGM.

The coming year promises to be the busiest for the Directors since the early days of setting up the station, with the prospect of reconstituting as a charitable organization, reconsidering options for expansion of the broadcast areas, and continuing to try to resolve the so-far intractable issue of reducing the radio station's dependence on a very small group of key people who have expressed a wish to greatly reduce their involvement in the next few years. While the board has spent considerable time discussing these issues and working towards their resolution, it has not yet achieved what it feels is a robust answer.

Anyone who feels they may be able to take on specific tasks or has expertise to offer, particularly with newsgathering and editing, membership and associated Gift Aid work, or even broad future management of the station, is urged to get in touch for a chat to find out more – with no obligation.

If we do not resolve these issues before they come to a head, we could be forced to draw the conclusion that our community's radio station is no longer sustainable, which is something we are very keen to avoid, but we have seen from the example of Lochbroom FM that without the necessary support this can and does happen to other stations.

AND FINALLY...

Thank you for reading our report of Two Lochs Radio for 2017/18. As with every year's report, I haven't had room to mention everyone who has supported our activities through the year, but as always our sincere thanks go out to everyone who has given us help, financial support and keen encouragement to continue to operate Two Lochs Radio as a local service of real value to the community, and one in which we can all take real pride.

Alex Gray
Chairman

December 2018