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Reviewed Article:

The Scottish Crannog Centre: Sustainable Thinking through Time and Place

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The Scottish Crannog Centre is a small Iron Age Museum, located on the South bank of Loch Tay, near the village of Kenmore. The Centre is currently in the process of moving to a new larger site, just across the waters of Loch Tay to the northern shores. On our journey to our new home of Dalerb we took the decision to embrace sustainability in all its forms and

consider how we can highlight certain sustainable practices that can be seen in the archaeological record.

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The Scottish Crannog Centre has always been rooted in experimental archaeology. Oakbank Crannog, which was located on Loch Tay was excavated in the 1980s. During the late 1990s, a one-to-one reconstruction of Oakbank Crannog was built, four miles downstream at the original Scottish Crannog Centre site. The preservation at Oakbank was extraordinary, with the anaerobic conditions allowing many artefacts that would normally decay to survive intact.

In 2018, the organisation became an accredited museum, a fundamental step towards the ambitious desire to become a sector leading museum. With this change came the appreciation that our responsibilities would become broader and wider; our guardianship of the collection for future generations would need to improve and the responsibility to engage with communities would become more important.

Our vision is to be a national treasure loved by all, with social justice at its heart. This acts as our North star and is our guiding light, as Figure 1 highlights. Our mission is to bring the story of the crannog dwellers to life, through the use of our collection and community engagement. Our values of compassion, curiosity and respect help us to carry out this mission. This is seen in our activism, where leadership runs right through the organisation, where the right person in the right place is able to make the decision. We also acknowledge that the abundance is on the outside, and it is only by having strong partnerships with other people, organisations, and communities that the Centre can bring the collections to life.

These changes paved the way and set the foundations for a redevelopment project. The small size of the existing site prevented expansion, and in the long term, the existing site was not sustainable. As a result, in June 2020, the Trust was successful in its application for Community Asset Transfer to buy a new site from Forestry Land Services. The site is located on the other side of the loch from the existing centre, a mile closer to the original Oakbank Crannog site. The proposals for the new centre, embedded within its social and environmental heritage, with co-curated displays and plans to create community-built crannogs, was so strong that the Trust was granted the land for the token sum of £1. This was followed by the securing of £2.3m of Scottish Government funding over two financial years for the delivery of the first phase of the development, supported by the vision of the Scottish Government that the Scottish Crannog Centre becomes a National Museum.

In June 2021, the iconic reconstruction of Oakbank Crannog was destroyed by fire. The outpouring of support from friends near and far was tremendous, and resulted in fundraising campaigns, offers of labour and raw materials, offers of professional services, and much more. Just as the people who lived in Oakbank Crannog 2500 years ago were almost surely grateful to be able to rebuild, we are thankful no one was hurt, we are thankful we have most of our belongings, and now we look forward to rebuilding a crannog once again. The fire meant that the move to the new Dalerb site had to be accelerated. The development was split into two phases and the first phase must now be fast-tracked. While the fire was devastating for all involved it gave us a unique opportunity to reassess our vision and look ahead to the future.

Our new aim is to become Scotland's most sustainable museum, with a desire to move from sector leading to sector defining. We will do this by embracing the four areas of sustainability: economic, social, environmental, and human. These four areas have now been taken to the core of the Trust and incorporated into the four-branched model of the organisation. These branches are:

- A trusted Partner that organisations and individuals want to work alongside.
- A special Place people want to visit and support.
- A Place of choice to work and grow.
- A Place that belongs in, and cares for, its environment.

Each branch of the model does not represent a specific or single area of sustainability, even though some have a greater focus on a certain aspect. The branches entwine and combine with themselves to create a sustainable system that gives structure, whilst also allowing for flexibility. This also allows us to think both about short- and long-term sustainable goals as we move forward with our development plans. As we look to the future, sustainable thinking must become the norm. With the current climate emergency, there is a clear need for a change in the way we interact with our environment; but it also goes deeper and broader than that. It also must ensure that people are treated fairly, and they have the space to be who they are and are allowed to grow. To ensure that this is possible, financial stability must be considered but it should not be the sole driving factor in decision making.

We have already made some progress on our sustainable journey which is highlighted by:

- Becoming an accredited employer with the Real Living Wage Scotland initiative.
- Becoming a Disability Confident Employer and Leader.
- Implementing a digital-focused marketing system, shifting away from paper.
- Committing to the Young Person's Guarantee framework.
- Working with Universities through Interface, hosting 19 projects with students providing consultant work on going paperless with marketing, sustainable business models and

branding.

- Creation and delivery of an apprenticeship scheme, where young people can explore and gain experience of a wide range of crafts as well as learning life and career skills.

The new development will allow us to do more. Phase one of Dalerb will focus on moving the collection to its new home, expanding our capacity to deliver an exceptional visitor experience, and using the archaeological record to inform the construction of an Iron Age village, roundhouse, and crannog. With this move we have been able to consider the sustainable practices that the people from 2500 years ago would recognise themselves.

The museum's 'Ideas' collection is a place that shows the skills and materials that will be needed in the construction of the Iron Age buildings. The way that the timbers that were used as uprights in Oakbank crannog show that there was a level of sophistication to their design, with the alder being placed in upside down to extend the life of the timbers. From this we can interpret that the people of Oakbank crannog had excellent woodworking skills. These skills would have been taught for each generation to be able to construct and maintain buildings of their own.

As part of our reconstruction, we will be emulating many of the same actions that the crannog dwellers of 2500 years would have practiced. The materials that we have source have come from as local as possible. The stone from Kenmore, the reed has come upriver from Errol and the timber from Drummond Hill.

We will also learn new skills and techniques while building that will use the resources to their fullest. Working with experts in thatching, dry-stone walling, and turf-roofing, we learn the skills needed to be able to repair and maintain the buildings. Alongside this our apprentices will also be developing their skills in green woodworking, allowing for that knowledge to carry on to a new generation.

We will also be engaging with communities during the construction, with 1000 fingerprints helping to create the new Centre . The Cross-Cut Co-op will be leading part of the build, a women's woodworking co-operative. They will be working with volunteer groups from a variety of interests and backgrounds, helping to teach new skills and giving people the chance to try their hand at something new.

The nature of the materials that were used during the Iron Age do not survive well, outside of very specific conditions. This contrasts with modern day materials that take hundreds of years to degrade. By using materials that compost and breakdown into compounds that ecosystems can handle, we are in essence relearning from the people of the Iron Age. Our imprint on the land around us should not adversely affect those that come after.

Through all this work we still need to look towards the future and consider more ways that the Centre can embrace sustainable practices. With the skills that will have been developed from the build we will be able to teach more people how to thatch, stone-wall and work wood allowing these traditional skills to prosper.

We will also have the unique opportunity of producing our own resources for the site, with the creation of a coppice on Drummond Hill. This will give us a sustainable source of wood to use in the maintenance of the Iron Age structures. We will also start our own forest garden, using permaculture principles, that will allow us to supply our cafe with locally grown produce.

With all this we will also look at the more modern issues facing the museum. We will look at how to decarbonise transport links by working with partners, move towards a zero-waste site and explore the opportunities for the centre to generate its own electricity.

As a museum we are in the privileged position of inviting our visitors to see the belongings of the people who lived on the shores of Loch Tay 2500 years ago. When those visitors leave, we hope they gain an appreciation for not only the people but the skills and knowledge that they possessed. As we continue our sustainable journey, we will show everyone how sustainable ideas and practices can be incorporated into everyday life, allowing people to see sustainability in action and moving us all towards a fairer future.

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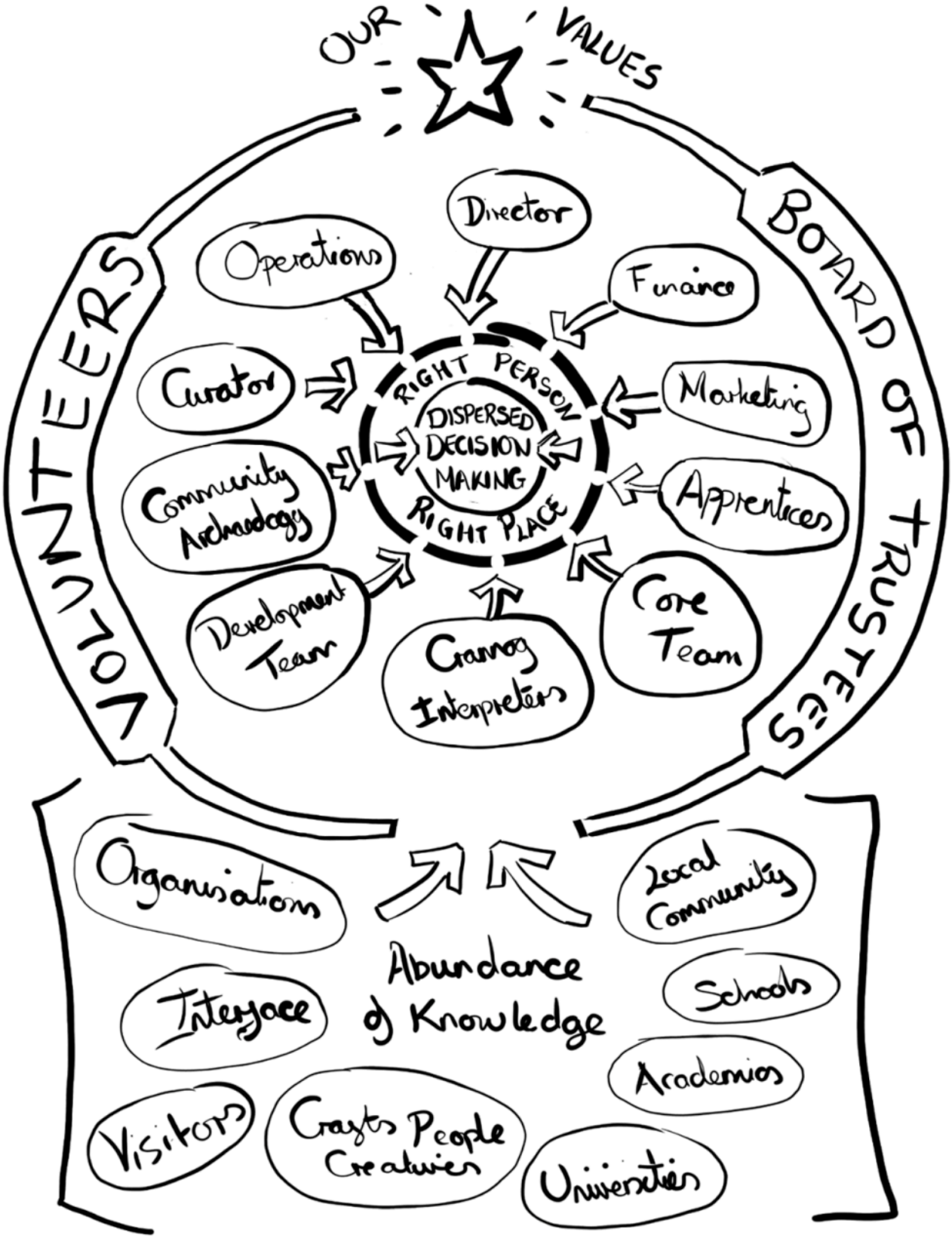

FIG 1. OUR VALUES ARE THE GUIDING STAR, AND WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE ABUNDANCE IS ON THE OUTSIDE. IMAGE BY CRANNOG CENTRE

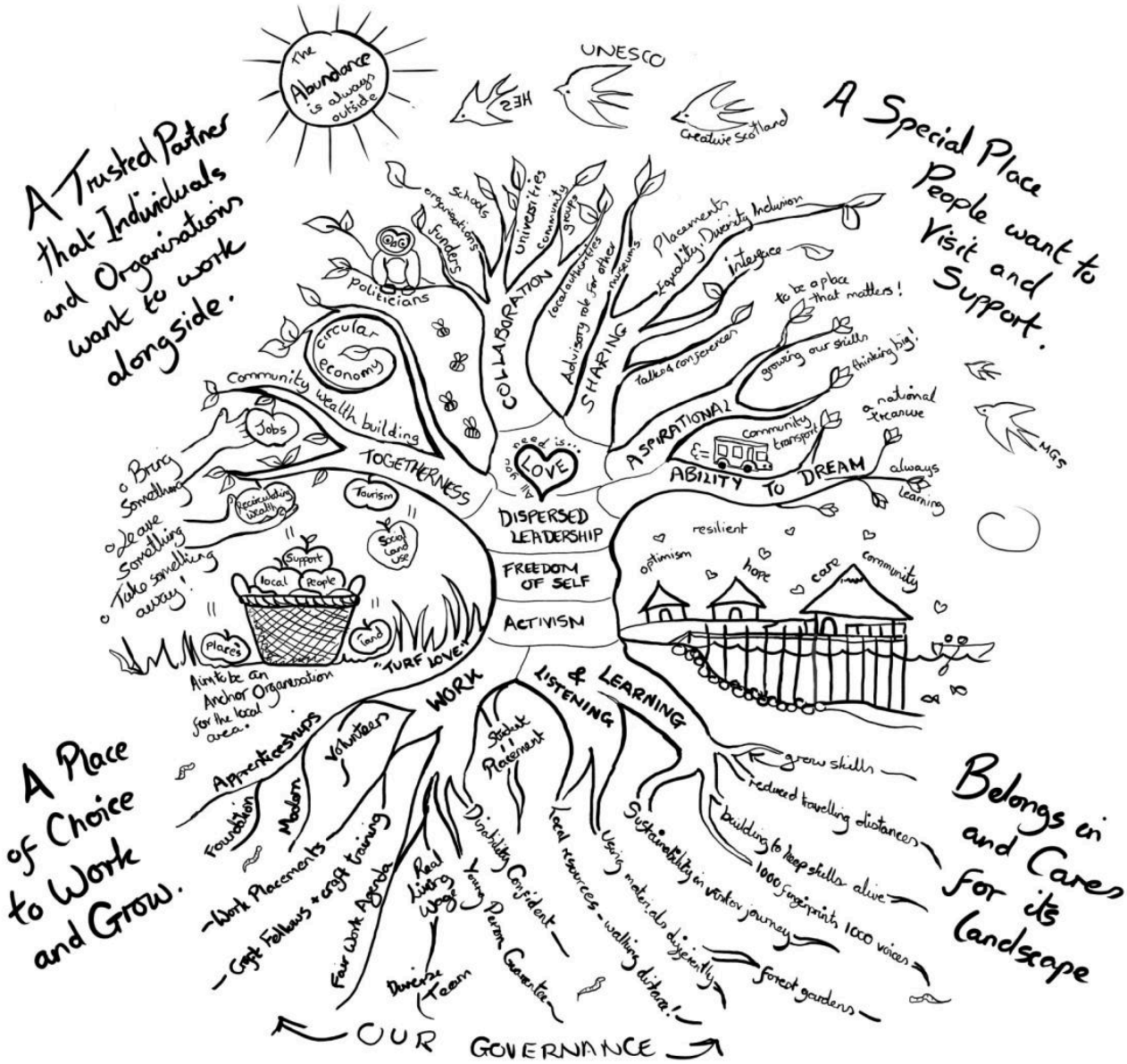

FIG 2. THE SCOTTISH CRANNOG CENTRE'S FOUR BRANCHES MODEL OF SUSTAINABILITY. IMAGE BY CRANNOG CENTRE.

FIG 3. APPRENTICE CAMERON AT WORK. PHOTO BY CRANNOG CENTRE.

FIG 4. GREEN WOODWORKER JULIE DURKACZ USING AN ADZE. PHOTO BY CRANNOG CENTRE.