

April 2024

# SEDA

Scottish Ecological Design Association

## Eachdraidh Alba - Roots, Rhythms and Realms of Scotland



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# CONTENTS

*April 2024*

SEDA was formed in 1991. Our primary aim is to share knowledge, skills and experience of ecological design. SEDA is a network and links those seeking information and services with those providing them.

SEDA's membership comprises a large number of people involved, and with an interest in design, principally in Scotland. Members include academics, architects, artists, builders, planners, students, ecologists, landscape designers, materials suppliers, woodworkers, and many more whose work or interest involves design for a sustainable future.

SEDA is a charity and is run by a Board of Directors, who are elected at Annual General Meetings. The Board is advised by a voluntary Steering Group which meets 8 times a year for discussion and for planning the activities of the Association. All members are welcome to take part in these meetings. SEDA registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee in February 2011.

A SEDA membership is a great way to support ecological design in Scotland. As a member you will receive the SEDA Magazine for free, get discounted tickets to SEDA events, and have the opportunity to connect with a wide network of talented designers.

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## Editorial team

Shravya Dayaneni, Viktoria Szilvas, Doug Tullie

With thanks to all our contributors, sponsors, and supporters.

What do you think of this SEDA magazine? Do you have any disagreements or something useful to add to the issues covered? Do you have an idea for an article? Drop us an email!

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## Editorial

---

- 5 Roots, Rhythms and Realms of Scotland

*Shravya Dayaneni*

## Roots, Rhythms & Realms

---

- 6 14 Principles for Better Practice

*Lydia Stewart, Felipe Viveros, Ruairidh Moir*

## SEDA Initiatives

---

- 18 Bridgend Bothy - Farm Setting in City Landscape.

*Simon Hackin*

- 20 Photographic Exploration of Experience, Culture and Heritage

*Anna McEwan*

## Ecological Design Snapshots

---

- 24 Bridgend Bothy - Participatory choices for materials and techniques

*Simon Hackin*

## SEDA Highlights

---

- 26 SEDA Director Introductions

## SEDA Book Review

---

- 30 A Review of Andrew Beattie's "Scottish Highlands: A Cultural History"

*Susan McDuffie*

## SEDA Land

---

- 32 SEDA Land influences Holyrood

*Gail Halvorsen*

## SEDA Thoughts

---

- 36 Thoughts from the Chair...

*Gloria Lo*



Image:  
Along the North Saskatchewan River, Lydia Stewart





# Roots, Rhythms and Realms of Scotland

Shravya Dayaneni

In this edition, we delve into the rich tapestry of indigenous cultures, shedding light on their profound connection to our shared environment and the lessons they offer for crafting resilient futures. We explore the essence of indigeneity in our locales, drawing from the wisdom of past practices, the vibrancy of present engagements, and the potential they hold for sustainable tomorrows through the lens of academics in a conversational approach.

Our pages are filled with compelling narratives, vivid photography, and enlightening conversations that bridge traditional knowledge and contemporary ecological thought. A standout feature is the 'Bridgend Eco-bothy in Edinburgh', exemplifying the fusion of heritage and modern sustainability practices. Moreover, we are excited to launch the 'SEDA Encyclopedia,' with some innovative techniques that are practised at 'Bridgend Eco-Bothy'. We also extend an invitation to our readers to contribute knowledge and creativity, enriching our collective understanding of ecological design.

SEDA Land is actively shaping policy discussions at Holyrood with a series of events funded by the Scottish Government, aimed at integrating sustainable practices in construction and land use. There is a highlight event, "Building Futures in Rural Scotland 4 – Over To You Holyrood," with a focus on influencing central government policies.

Additionally, we're excited to launch our first SEDA Book Review Series, starting with

Susan McDuffie's insightful review of "The Scottish Highlands: A Cultural History" by Andrew Beattie". This review offers a unique perspective on understanding indigenous lands through the lens of sustainability, enriching our collective knowledge and appreciation of ecological design.

This issue also introduces you to the fresh faces on our director board, sharing their visions and passions. Together we strive to make SEDA Magazine a comprehensive reflection of our activities and the broader ecological design landscape. Should you notice any oversight or wish to share topics of interest, your feedback is invaluable to us. Please reach out at [magazine@seda.uk.net](mailto:magazine@seda.uk.net)

In this edition, we've curated a diverse array of content formats—including insightful narratives, captivating photography, and engaging conversations—to enrich your reading experience and facilitate a deeper understanding of the topics at hand. Our aim is to present these important themes in a way that's accessible and engaging for all our readers, regardless of their background or expertise.

I'm particularly enthusiastic about your participation in this journey. Your feedback is not just welcomed; it's essential. Whether you found inspiration, gained new knowledge, or simply enjoyed the read, we'd love to hear your thoughts. Your input is invaluable in guiding the direction of future editions, ensuring that we continue to deliver content that resonates with you and contributes to our shared mission of fostering sustainable and resilient futures.

Please feel free to share your reflections and suggestions with us. Your engagement and insights not only enrich our community but also steer us towards more impactful and meaningful discussions in the editions to come. Together, let's continue to explore the confluence of tradition and innovation, shaping a brighter and more sustainable future for all. ■

# 14 Principles for Better Practice

Lydia Stewart in conversation with Felipe Viveros, [Culture Hack Labs](#), and Ruairidh Moir, [BARD](#)

## Principles for designing a better future

1. Care for all, from seed to sky
2. Slow down and listen deeply
3. Find gratitude and see abundance not scarcity
4. Knowing a place is relational
5. Root where you are planted— be like your place
6. Kinship is an active practice
7. Map the stories
8. Capture living memory
9. Use language or you will lose it
10. Community is a resource
11. Call people/places as they wish to be called
12. Measure in value not expense
13. Wander off the path to explore possibilities
14. Find the joy of living

## Introduction

These principles are distilled from a conversation among three creative practitioners whose work revolves around ideas of land, people, and heritage; as well as inclusions from others who have spoken and written thoughtfully on the topics of indigeneity, ancestry, and kinship. For one of us, this is a specifically Gaelic practice, drenched in their own history, their architectural work focuses on nurturing a return of resources and abundance to the Western Isles. For another, their identity and their collaborative creative work are one, rooted in indigenous and colonial ancestry reaching through creative technologies to work across the global north and south. For the third, for myself, the work is an evolving academic discourse about the power of community in action, and the notion that our regenerative futures depend on an integration of old ways of knowing with the now, innovation from tradition. These principles are a guide to keep ever present as we all continue to do work within the ecosystem of people, processes, and place. Whether you are a facilitator, an educator, a developer, a builder, a maker, we can all do with a reminder to think of the big picture, past and present as we shape the future.

Note: the following conversation is edited for brevity and clarity.

## Profiles

### Lydia

I'm a lecturer at the Glasgow School of Art, teaching design innovation and service design, with a special interest in relational ecology and communities of practice. My work in Scotland has been primarily within highland communities looking at regenerative land potential and more recently doing research with [BE-ST](#) and [HUB North](#) around achieving Net Zero. A lot of my thinking comes from my background growing up primarily in Canada, as well as my German dual nationality. I'm very much a person of multiple places and I've had the privilege and hardship of re/rooting myself throughout my life. My work being relational as it is, is rooted in ecofeminism and the pursuit of socially equitable futures. Coming from Canada, this means I have a deep appreciation and constant pursuit to connect with my indigenous neighbours that I share this land with.

### Felipe

I am originally from Chile. I am a 'fruit salad', a mix of coloniser and colonised, with Indigenous and European background. I live in Devon, in the South West of England, and I'm a researcher, technologist, and practitioner. Because of my heritage, I have been trying to better understand the concept of indigeneity and taken particular interest in the term 'Indigenous futurism'. In my work at the [Culture Hack Labs](#), a think and do tank and activist collective, I am constantly grappling with different complex questions such as identity, indigenous ways of knowing-and-being, belonging, community making and place-based sense making in the context of the anthropocene. Exploring how Indigenous worldviews may inform the way we respond to the [polycrisis](#), "where disparate crises interact such that the overall impact far exceeds the sum of each part".

### Ruairidh

I'm from the Isle of Lewis, a village called Tolsta and I was brought up on a croft. It's a croft where my grandfather, my sean/seanair, where he was brought up. This village was my world for a long time. Then I went to Stornoway for schooling and decided to become an architect, so I went to Glasgow because of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, then to Barcelona, because of a fascination with Enric Miralles. Since qualifying I've started up [BARD](#) about 8 years ago and have been living between Glasgow and the Isles.

[BARD](#), with the dual meaning of Bard being a poet, a roving kind of person in the landscape that for tells things and Bard is also Gaelic standing for "bailtean, ailtreachd 's rùm dànach", which translates as "townships, architecture the room of poetics", because that was really our modus operandi. So we work a lot in the islands; I roam between Glasgow, Tolsta, and Eriskay. We work mostly with [comann eachdraidh](#) projects and historical societies, and try to do things with them, to go beyond what a historical society typically does. The latest one that we're working on with the Isle of Eriskay is very, very interesting, because it's a whole island. Their ambition is largely about climate justice and decarbonisation and they've just won an award from [BE-ST](#) to try and grapple with what that means for them. They're looking at the past and looking into the future. We're really lucky to be a part of that conversation. But I think if anything, my own Gaelic upbringing helps me understand the way of life here [Western Isles].



## Indigeneity, Identity, and Gaelic Heritage

### Lydia

*Let's dive right in with a big one. What does indigeneity mean to you both in your respective practices and in life. Sometimes those things are mutually exclusive.*

### Felipe

*I come from a mestizo heritage, and that has deeply informed my research and practice. My work focuses on the field of narrative change, how humans make sense of the world through stories. The question of indigeneity has become increasingly relevant, because it helps us better understand how crucial our relationship to the land is. For instance, Indigenous peoples steward 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity in their territories. This reminds me of Robin Wall Kimmerer words: "To become naturalised is to live as if your children's future matters, to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it. Because they do."*

*Indigenous peoples remind us: our body is the territory and our territory is the body [of the Earth]. In other words, we are nature. And yet we have lost our kinship with land and the more than human world. In the words of Aboriginal academic Tyson Yunkapourta's: "Most of us have been displaced from those cultures of origin, a global diaspora of refugees severed not only from land, but from the sheer genius that comes from belonging in symbiotic relation to".*

### Ruairidh

*I think it's not one thing, it's constantly moving with time, even with an understanding of Gaelic— it's constantly evolving, and always has— between villages, there's variations of the Gaelic language, in terms of some vocabulary, as you'd expect with any language. And, from my perspective, that actually translates into the built environment.*

*For me, it's about trying to understand a way of life, and trying to live it. So although I'm a Leòdhasach from Lewis, we go to*

*where we work, we try to listen, and just get under the skin of the place because there's normally a culture, beyond what you see on the surface. What tourists see, it's all very beautiful, but it's when you really start living in those environments, the undercurrent, the particulars of that community, life starts to come through, and a lot of it is embedded in the history of the place. What happened to the ancestors? Why are the crofts in a particular pattern? Why are they scattered with random numbers, one to the other? It all has an underpinning in a kind of logic that's sometimes lost to the first reaction. So I think in a way, it is so multifaceted, and I think that's what makes it so interesting, because it's a well which never runs dry, and you can keep on growing from it.*

## Deep Listening to Yourself, Each Other, and Place

### Lydia

*You've both said things around a deep understanding, and that we can only exist and create in this place if we know where we are and who we are in that relationship.*

*So how do we start to build up those mutual kinships?*

### Ruairidh

*I suppose easy things are just reading and looking, but maps help, and speaking to people, so there are ways of facilitating those kinds of exchanges of information. But I think that the most meaningful one, which isn't all that easy, for many, I don't think, is living in it.*

*So I mentioned that we're working in Eriskay or "Eirisgeidh", well although I have a Gaelic background and so does Eriskay I'm not from Eriskay, but when I'm there, I actually live there. It's not everyone who can pick up sticks and move about but in our Glasgow office we've got this bag, that all the stuff goes into, and then I take it up to the islands and then unravel it. So it's kind of a travelling show. In a way formalising that would be a really good thing. Working from there has led to an awareness of what really unravels once you actually experience a place and the community more readily takes you in. So, the way of getting*

*into that undercurrent is actually living it, and experiencing it totally; from the weather patterns, to knowing who's related to who, or why that person knows what. It might be impractical, but it's important.*

### To know a Place is Relational

Lydia

*That's important, the focus on 'the who'. Knowing who's living around whom, and why, and their histories. From my experience there isn't as much emphasis on relational understandings in the built environment. The relational question ends at "who is this for?" We determine a client and then we build for that person without thinking in equal measure about the relational ecosystem that surrounds that.*

Ruairidh

*Yeah, and I suppose the ecosystem now, is as significant as the histories of a place. For instance, there is someone living in that house, but then we start to learn about the family tree of where the house came from, who built it, who was their relations, and that weaves its own kind of tapestry. So it's ongoing to learn who you're working for, and why you're working for them.*

*If you don't understand the Gaelic psyche, or what Felipe was talking about, in terms of identity, it's quite hard to uncover that history, but it's not impossible. You need to be doubly observant, through listening, and also find a different way of working in these places for these communities, because a solution that works for the majority of the population in the Central Belt, doesn't necessarily fit here. The challenges here are different, technically, socially, and historically there is a recurring pattern where these communities have not been listened to, have not been understood, maybe deliberately or not, and over time they have eroded.*

### Grow Where you are Rooted

Ruairidh

*There are commemorative events just now for the 100 year*

*anniversary of two ships, the "SS Marloch" and the "SS Metagama" which were immigrant ships that were encouraging young islanders to leave for new life in Canada. Now you see the average for these things though the root of that stemming away and bleeding away of brain power and community started many, many centuries before that. And there is still sometimes I think, a prevailing feeling "just make due, don't put your head above parapet, we're not going to get anything better. Just have to put up with it." That's frustrating for me, though I understand where it comes from, but again, this comes down to the understanding of where the root of these feelings and behaviours come from. And once you understand that, we can say, well, everyone here is as deserving as anyone else. So raise your ambition, try to overcome some of these challenges and make it a better place to live for the people who live here.*

Lydia

*It is a good reminder to plant where we are rooted, and that might look different for different people. My ancestors came from Scotland, and settled in Western Canada. My great, great, great grandfather became the provincial leader in Alberta and has quite a legacy, both good and bad, but as a person he was deeply committed to serving his community and the land and was a truly formidable character. The traversing and shifting diaspora that a lot of our globalist ideals covet now means that we lose sight of those roots and values, like the strength of the village, deeply knowing a place, and wealth of our land-based communities.*

*Felipe, do you have similar sentiments around mutual kinship? And how do we engage with people in place?*

### More than Human Knowledge

Felipe

*Indeed. And, what I was actually hearing you saying was how do we build resilience? How do we learn to listen to the more than human world which has been so ignored. Listen to the "deliberately silenced and preferably unheard" as said*

by Arundhati Roy, and notion is taken further by ecofeminist Donna Haraway to say, listen to not just our species, but all species. This is exactly what Australian architect, Julia Watson has done, who for years worked closely with indigenous peoples and studied indigenous technologies that work in symbiosis with nature. Then, she applied those principles, knowledge and technologies, to contemporary design creating futuristic resilient cities and urban environments.

I too, have worked with Indigenous peoples in diverse terrains. One of the key things they have taught me is that life is a wonderful, queer and wonderful gift that must be celebrated. We need to restore the kinship between people and place, the love and reverence for the land.

## Radical Gratitude

### Lydia

That ties in nicely to a quote by Robin Wall Kimmerer from her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* that "in a consumer society, contentment is a radical proposition. And recognizing abundance rather than scarcity undermines an economy that thrives in creating unmet desires, gratitude, cultivates an ethic of fullness." Gratitude, and this mindset of joyful abundance, is something that came up when I was chatting with Professor, Dwayne Donald at the University of Alberta a few weeks ago. He said, gratitude is a really core principle within indigenous communities; that we are to be grateful for the things around us. That we walk through our forests, and we are grateful for the trees to allow us breathe, and we drink our water, and we are grateful for its source. So I think gratitude is an interesting principle. Is there a way that we can pull these ideas of play, of joy, of gratitude into our practices in some sort of way? What might that look like, when we start to do the work? Felipe have you encountered any of that in your work? Have you started to implement facets of that?

### Felipe

I used to work in Bhutan where I encountered first hand a new developmental philosophy inspired by ancient wisdom.

The former Prime Minister famously said that in order to have wellbeing economies, we need to fulfil the needs of the body, and those of the mind. In other words we need food, we need shelter, we need clothes. But we also need meaning and purpose. And we also need a sense of belonging, culture, leisure, and play. Furthermore, when we think about our ancestors' values, whether in South America, Asia, or in Scotland, we often find the same core principles: community, belonging, solidarity and reverence for life.

## Wellbeing

### Felipe

Currently we are experiencing an epidemic of loneliness, created by an economic system that has pushed our civilization and the planetary systems to a critical point, nearing total collapse. But life is abundant, if we know how to share, however capitalism, our current operating system, breeds inequality and that breeds social violence and so many other kinds of issues such as loneliness, poor mental health and corruption. We need to start at home, remembering our shared humanity, and the principle that human beings are naturally altruistic and kind, and not selfish and self destructive as the dominating paradigm wants us to believe. We can begin to change the system right where we are, by joining a mutual aid network, volunteering our time, or joining a community group There are so many ways we can all contribute to creating wellbeing economies.

### Lydia

Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, states that we cannot languish to the overwhelm of our current climate crisis, but equally we cannot absolve ourselves with optimism. We must stay in this liminal space, stay present for the good and the bad. And I think there is a sort of liminal space here, even in our conversation, where, on the one hand, Ruairidh, you talked about people who, you know, have settled and make do with what they have, and that there needs to raise the ambition, that we can strive for better conditions, better resources. But that does not necessarily negate this idea



of contentment, and gratitude. Especially in this idea, maybe we can start to touch on some of the Gaelic preservation or the Gaelic vernacular materials that Bard is working with? How do you do this work through material practice?

Ruairidh

*With what Felipe said, I was thinking that contentment versus gratitude should be linked. I think you're probably grateful for the others in the community, because you do tend to look out for one another, similarly to those in the central belt, the tenement is an excellent example of micro communities within blocks, that become sort of districts etc. But I think, in terms of what you are saying about inequality, out here it is also about infrastructure. There's a huge erosion of common infrastructure and there is a feeling, within the changing land economics, that people right now feel they are living through a new Clearances. There's many young people who don't live full time in the islands for various reasons. So they/we migrate away, but your heart isn't there, your heart is back home. So there's huge systemic problems and they're reoccurring.*

Use language or you will lose it

Ruairidh

*But with Gaelic vernacular there is something to be grateful for, because it's still there, and it's still resisting. There was a systemic effort to diminish its cultural significance and diminish its use [Gaelic]. When I went to school in the early 90s, and even then our teachers were very dismissive of speaking Gaelic; and that's from Gaels. Thankfully that is changing now, it's cool to speak Gaelic, it's cool to be getting under the skin. That's a really good thing. More power to people.*

*I suppose then the idea of vernacular is another conversation, I would say, because from a building perspective I think it's a word that sometimes gets used too often. In a way people think it's all sort of quaint little cottages with smoke coming out. I actually think it's far more basic than that, it's using the means of which you have available to you. Building with what you*

*have, you do make do, as well. There is a kind of resourcefulness about dealing with whatever problem that you're up against, with whatever you can find. It's trying to understand where we are now and there are elements for which we can be grateful, but that there are big problems that need to be dealt with.*

Community as a Valuable Resource

Lydia

*There are two things here: one, I want to touch on this idea that you said, the thing that we're grateful for, the contentment is, we are here, and we are together. There is something to be grateful for. And it's maybe that togetherness, that is something that can be harnessed: what can we do together? That is why these elements of community are so important, to realise that when we become quite disparate and isolated, we lose the knowledge of our relational ways of being. That's the second bit: language is a big part of that. There is a significance to language that I often think about being bilingual. I grew up with a German mother and a Canadian father in Canada, and my mother raised us German. And it made me 'other' in both Canada and Germany. So I'm home in both places, and I'm 'other' in both places. And that is both a gift and a hardship. I'm always at home and also homesick and so I talk with family in our vernacular ways and I surround myself with cultural signifiers that quench the sickness. So language can be really powerful because it is a living embodiment of both cultural and familial roots. The preservation of language, stories, materials, the artefacts, I think all of those things can play such a big role.*

Call as They Wish to be Called

*When I was speaking with Professor Donald he introduced himself as a member of the Papaschase First Nation. He made this effort because there is great significance and respect in "using the name that people have for themselves, in their own language, in an ancient way". Even by calling people 'indigenous', it is an 'othering'. It's as if to say, we are this rich tapestry of identities (Canadian, German etc) and you are that other one, that indigenous one. Canadians often refer to the indigenous peoples*

*on treaty 6 land in Alberta, as 'Cree'. Dwayne and I talked a little bit about this word, Cree, because it's the word that I grew up hearing for this community of people. But Cree is a term that was given by the white settlers because their songs resembled the sounds of cries. And so in that way, again, you're sort of creating this other identity for these people, rather than calling them by their own name. It is an important consideration when creating inclusive practice for all sorts of folks, such as queer communities. We need to be asking as a common practice "what do you call yourself? What can I call you?". The language we use and the stories we share are a preservation tool and a generative one to carry things forward. How do we capture these things?*

## Listen to Living Memory

Ruairidh

*People need to feel encouraged to really cherish the language and the stories, which I think is happening. But the next step in preservation is use— use in the day to day life. You mentioned artefacts and materials, that's really important too, and I did want to touch on that. There's a number of really good organisations through the west coast that collect these things in hubs and I think that there's a next step of that and it's recording the elders in the communities who still have these links going back a long, long time, and recording the stories and understanding their life. We were looking at something similar to this for Eriskay recently pertaining to climate change. We were trying to envisage what climate change might do to Eriskay, in terms of rising sea levels through conversation with some of the people in the community. They say "well, in my own lifetime, that bit of coastline has changed, there used to be a house there and it's now covered by sand." If you aren't recording that then that knowledge is gone. Maybe there's complacency that the stuff that we don't manage to put into a building, or an archive, we think it will be archaeology and it'll be found eventually. But, there are really interesting things, nodes of landscape, natural things that have a cultural significance, that will never be archeology. In 100 years time, an archaeologist will come across and not understand it, unless it's written or mapped. So for instance, one example of that is in Tolsta, we have this kind of*

*crevasse in a hillside called "sloc an t-searmon", so the "hollow of the sermons", because when there was no church, people would gather there. It was a beautiful setting, a natural hollow in the land, how it was formed I don't know, but that has a cultural significance, that requires that kind of storytelling, which I think Gaels are really good at. So it's something that needs to be promoted, facilitated, understood, and preserved, and then crucially, used.*

## Kinship in Action

Lydia

*Storytelling is crucially important in helping us relate and develop connection within communities. It is how we feel a sense of kinship with one another through generations. Keavy Martin, a Canadian academic wrote a great paper entitled "Kinship is not a Metaphor" and it reminds me to enact these ideas of relationship, to be in relationship. Storytelling has long been a way for ancestral knowledge to be shared through generations, and yet in creative work it is often a mechanism of persuasion. How do we ensure we are using what we do for good— telling the right story? Felipe, that is very much something that you spend your time with, stories and language.*

Felipe

*Since time immemorial, myths and stories have helped us navigate and make sense of reality. A unique quality of being human is our ability to tell and live by our stories--we are Homo narrans ('storytelling human') . Moreover, we are heavily influenced by our environment; we are contextual beings. Especially in this day and age, "we're prisoners of context in the absence of meaning", as the political adage reminds us. Personally, I grew up in a culture filled with violent conflict during dictatorship, where we had to learn how to grapple with conflicting ideologies. That was part of my context, that despite all the attempts to erase, silence and homogenise us, we are still here telling our story of resistance.*

*For better or worse, the polycrisis is a direct result of our*

ancestors' choices. This is the age of consequences, a term coined by archeologist Courtney White to describe "a time when the worrying consequences of our environmental actions- or inaction - have begun to raise unavoidable and difficult questions." This is the landscape that we are traversing right now, one of uncertainty and jeopardy, but also pregnant with possibility and learnings.

## Map the Stories

Going back to the question of language, there is a huge need to start mapping the future's uncharted territory. Seeing that despite political instability, social breakdown and ecological collapse, there is a future that needs to be forged today. And language can help us do that, help us not only to understand our current trajectory but to imagine a different path. Human beings are incredibly creative beings, we can and we always have come up with groundbreaking ideas and inventions. In that sense, language is a crucial tool that can help us convey stories of the beautiful alternatives, that acknowledge the urgency of the moment and at the same time imagine more just and flourishing futures.

### Lydia

Consequences is an interesting idea to bring up. Tyson Yungkapourta, says to "be like your place." He speaks of place as a living sort of breathing thing. He talks about the interdependence of our ecologies, that we are a part of it, and that our actions create ramifications, consequences, good or bad, and to be cognizant of this in our daily interactions. How we can tap into those places? To be like our places? It was said that we need deep listening and to spend time and live in that place. And I think part of our challenge as practitioners is that things move at a pace that doesn't always allow for those conversations, and doesn't always allow for that immersion. Ruairidh you mentioned, being in that place, living in that place. Hearing those people's stories, mapping, but you also mentioned a bag and I want to come back to these tools and how BARD navigates that sort of roaming into communities.

## Slow Down

### Ruairidh

We do a lot of travel so this bag is a sort of toolkit of all our stuff that we're going to need, files and drawings and tracing paper etc. The back of the car is for the boxes, for models and materials. We don't fly much at all anymore, so, that time at sea, when you're six hours on a ferry is brilliant, because you get so much work done, and sometimes it actually becomes a bit of a workshop too, because people who are roaming the ship come and find you, speak to you, or you have meeting on the ship, it's fantastic. It is best when the team can come with me, we've had some major adventures and serendipity happening to us. The weather will play a big role. So it helps the team actually get a sense of what a storm is really like; we'll be stuck for three days. Then there's power cuts, so you start to get a sense of the existence there. It's also great fun; one of the memories, as well with our old car we were driving along looking at the various sites. Everyone in the full car has got models up to here [indicates neck]. But then Ciaran, from our office, is sitting on the backseat with a football, ready for a game when we get to the beach. It's not just all work, sometimes we'll get invited onto a boat, go fishing, we'll spend the evenings actually making the best of where we are, go for a swim, and catch up with friends, some new, some old. You spend your time wisely. So it's not a hardship at all. If the ferries were more reliable, it'd be a dream.

## Wander off the Path

### Lydia

I wonder if there's something in that though, that, you know, it's maybe because of these disturbances to scheduling that maybe you're afforded the extra time. And time is so precious. We rarely get to move on nature's time. How do you reconcile that from a business standpoint? Do you work with billable hours?

### Ruairidh

If we were to charge all the hours that we would otherwise be able to charge for these trips, we would throw this kind of



*way of working in the water, it just would not be economically advantageous to the client. So sure, it'd be useful, but it doesn't work that way so that's why this is rather beautiful because it's fun, because we can, because the communities here and our couple of bases allow that to work.*

Lydia

*There's something from COVID that I wish we'd held on to. For all of the terrible things that came along with that period of time, I think it afforded people a lot of time to take space to do things at a slower pace and people were clamouring for common spaces that didn't previously exist. There are a lot of things that come with slow living that we would benefit by holding on to. Now we've done this pendulum swing as things opened up again. So, I think these disruptions, though they are disruptive, they can also be really fruitful. We get to spend time at the beach playing football, or chatting on the ferry.*

*I'm always curious how we start to subvert the structures that want to keep us moving in that linear and productive driven fast pace; how to do things differently? I try to spend time outside and I do a lot of walking to creatively process and I encourage my students to do the same. And it sounds like those trips out to your contextual sites, to see your partners, and those places are really important to the practice, and really important to your team and the work that's being done. It affords you the ability to see what sits underneath and to see oh, yeah, these disruptions like power and infrastructure and community dislocation, those things are really pertinent. That is part of the research, but you wouldn't necessarily catch them if you just go for one day. So it's interesting. How do we build that into more of our models of work?*

## Measure in Value Not Expense

Ruairidh

*It also comes down to thinking of another way of running design practice in relation to how you mentioned billable hours, and how you manage to get that to balance in terms of paying your*

*staff, paying the expenses, and keeping things fluid. Maybe another way of looking at it is thinking of the value of the time, the value rather than the expense of time.*

Felipe

*In the wellbeing space there is a phrase "time is the currency of well being." Which means that study after study we have seen that doing things you love, being with friends, meaningful relationships, spending time in nature makes us happy. When you ask people: what makes you happy in most varied contexts, no one ever says money, or my new car. Moreover, only when we stop competing, we can create bonds based on care and solidarity. Take 'degrowth' for instance, that talks about "a planned downscaling of energy and resources used to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a safe, in a just and equitable way."*

*We need a new guiding vision for the future that can help us move from extraction and domination to reciprocity and commoning. The challenge then is 'mythopoesis' or myth-making that can galvanise the best of us. I think it's fascinating that this conversation has been convened by Scottish researchers and practitioners, who are inspired by the beauty and the myths of this land. Together we need to rethink what are the principles guiding our work and practices. What are the principles and practices that honour both the beauty and memory of the land, and the brilliancy of our lineages?*

## Be like your Place

Lydia

*The land speaking through us is something I see coming up repeatedly in the works of indigenous researchers and practitioners. In *We Need a New Story: Walking and the wàhkôhtowin* Imagination Prof. Dwayne Donald speaks about this term wàhkôhtowin, a cree word for kinship and relating to the natural world. In it he writes that walking is a form of convening with nature and meeting nature where it resides. Like Keavy Martin wrote Kinship is not a metaphor but a way*

*of being in relationship with place and sometimes that takes changing your ways of engaging to meet place where it is. Dwayne Donald does a course at the University of Alberta that eschews typical curricular structure and takes place over a year, only meeting on the lunar cycle. The students study a place and engage with it over that year, to map it, capture the stories that it imparts, and understand it and reflect it through any sort of medium they like. This is not an artistic course, he teaches pedagogy and curriculum. But it's about engaging with a place deeply, meaningfully over time; engaging outside the bounds of conventional education.*

*Wàhkòhtowin is not only about the physical body and the imaginative mind but also an alignment of the spirit. That we are spiritually connected to the place where we are planted. You both reminded me of this, when you mentioned our generational lack of connection to land and these feelings of being uprooted.*

Ruairidh

*For any individual, you're going to be shaped by your experiences growing and then evolving in later life. What you're saying about uprooting, touching on our conversation, it's a very present feeling. But I think that for those of us who are maybe uprooted, temporarily or otherwise, you take your identity with you. There's a Gaelic saying " 's binn guth an eòin far an do dh'fhàs e" which is "the bird's song is sweetest, where it grew". So I think a lot of the time, if things were perfect, people would stay. But even aside from that, even when times were maybe easier, there's always been a prevalence in Gaelic culture, or west coast, island culture of people going to then come back.*

Find the Joy

Lydia

*I feel we are coming wonderfully full circle. We have talked about the need for rooting in place, embracing collective identity, cultivating gratitude and resilience, designing contextually, preserving stories and language, spending slow time, and seeing abundant joys around you. What do you take away from today?*

*We're here and we're together, what do we want to be here and together working toward? What are the emergent opportunities that you see?*

Ruairidh

*The exciting things of the future is that if those challenges, that we identified earlier, are addressed, then these are really brilliant places to live in and to thrive in. The outlook for these places are very bright indeed, in part because you are building it from a root, a foundation of such richness, despite the adversity. Some of that requires political will, of listening, of appropriate intervention and action. And if that's done, then it'll be tremendous.*

Felipe

*This reminds me of philosopher Antonio Gramsci's words "The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born; now is the time of monsters." As you both have said, we have all the tools, the science and understanding to alchemize and transform our current scenario. I often feel so lucky to be doing this work, but especially exploring and prototyping new ideas, because I get to see how many people around the world are doing excellent work, and coming up with groundbreaking innovations and lasting sea-change. Lastly, I think it is a matter of awareness, of realising that indeed we already have so much, that life just is--incredibly beautiful and abundant.*

Lydia

*This idea that there is a sort of return to the land that has a more contemporary application is interesting, that there are different ways of doing things, that we maybe haven't been afforded the time and ability to see though into implementation. I think sometimes we see resources and processes in their conventional paths and we don't see the different potentialities they could have in different applications or times. That is where these contemporary innovative practices can come from; where stories as living memory become tools for contemporary applications. There is a real richness in returning to some of these stories and seeing them as innovation from tradition. ■*

Images:

Top Left: BARD arriving on Eriskay, Ruairidh Moir

Top Right: Las Islas Flotantes floating island system on Lake Titicaca in Peru inhabited by the Uros, Enrique Castro-Mendivil

Bottom: Along the North Saskatchewan River, Lydia Stewart



#### Acknowledgements:

Deepest thanks to Prof. Dwayne Donald for his generous time and storytelling prior to writing this piece.

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# Bridgend Bothy - Farm Setting in City Landscape

Simon Hackin, [Greenworks \(Scotland\) Limited](#)



The Bridgend Bothy was completed in October 2022, created by volunteers as part of the Scottish Ecological Design Association & the 2017 Festival of Architecture. It sits within the land occupied by the last known cattle farm of Bridgend within the boundary of Edinburgh.

During the period of 2019 to 2022 over 70 volunteers, many of whom were new to the skills of construction, worked together in over 200 sessions to deliver a community space for the benefit of the Bridgend community.

At its simplest the Bothy is a straw bale - timber framed construction with a lime rendered exterior and internal clay finish with an extensive green roof and an annexed compost toilet of similar design and build.

Built with a high degree of thermal insulation using locally sourced materials with fittings and detailing to achieve a high level of efficiency and comfort.

Physically the structure sits within the land locally known as “Bridgend Farmhouse” central to the areas of Craigmillar and Liberton. It supports these communities with social activity, life marking celebrations, varied workshops, meeting spaces, cafe / training kitchen, food growing and numerous opportunities for a wide range of social interest groups and supported individuals.



The farmhouse, near dereliction in 2013, was rescued by the community and successfully renovated incorporating new workshops as a result of a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Bridgend Farmhouse is an established CIC and sociocratic organisation.

Designs for an exemplar community self-build was proposed by SEDA with a desire to develop further ideas of SEDAbuild through community led projects. Bridgend was successful as the chosen site and after considerable work engaging with the community a design was adopted to create a 28m<sup>2</sup> building within the now redundant and overgrown piggery byre.

The main aim of the project was to provide an opportunity for those new to construction and sustainability to learn all aspects of such a build from design through to completion.

The eventual design by architect Duncan Roberts was a simplified construction. Using locally sourced wheat straw bales with larch and douglas fir timber from Scottish Borders sawmill Abbey Timber.

From early on, emphasis was placed on choosing materials with low toxicity, ease of handling and from suppliers recognised as providing readily available sustainable materials. The aim was to ensure a low impact build, generating a minimum of waste over its lifespan. If ever demolished its constituent parts could be demounted, reused or recycled.

The large timber bifold doors made locally define the inner space when closed and become “outdoor” to the volunteer built landscape and play area, complemented with larch decking and covered area. Nordan double glazed windows were fitted in bale walls and clerestory windows and larch cladding, Thermofloc cellulose laid between floor joists, 100% sheeps wool within the ceiling. Sub floor joints and window reveals taped with Pro-Clima air tapes and solvent free adhesives creating a well insulated internal envelope heated by two 800w oil filled wall mounted radiators.

Volunteers took part in all aspects of the construction from site surveying, laying pad foundations, and a joyous community timber frame raising of over 20 volunteers leading the way ahead.

Most notable was the progress of individual learning, gaining confidence and ownership of the build, quickly, from unsure to proficient. As with all such projects the weather and the repetitive nature of many of the tasks tested at times the enthusiasm of the group. It was an added bonus to achieve those critical milestones, bales on site, cladding finished, green roof laid, sub floor sealed & insulated.

Tool training sessions were delivered on site days, inclusively, supported learning, sharing skills in pairs, small groups, with external trainers brought on site to share professional experience.

New skills became intuitive after a period by praxis and immersion. Straw, wood, clay and lime, fundamental “by hand” materials known to previous generations now being employed to create a space that generates a weight that is more than the sum of its parts. The human scale of this perfectly pitched Bothy was enabled by material choice and the skills gathered.

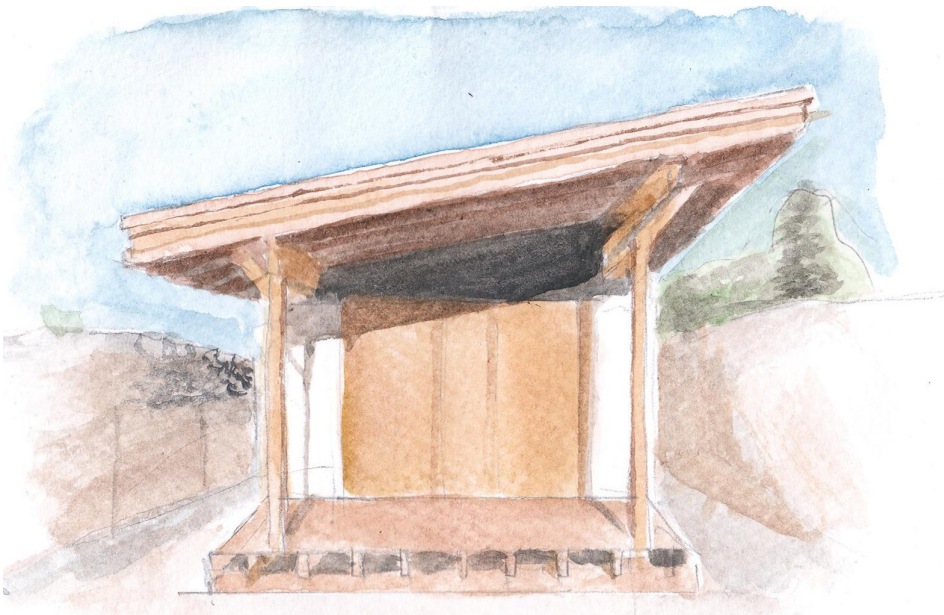
Today, 2024 the Bothy is much admired by visitors and those that use it, not just for its simple beauty but for its amassed community effort. As always such a project wouldn't be possible without the generous financial support of over 40 different funders, the community at Bridgend Farmhouse, its staff, supporters and friends.

Go see it! ■

Bridgend Bothy,  
Bridgend Farmhouse,  
41 Old Dalkeith Road,  
EH16 4TE

# Photographic Exploration of Experience, Culture and Heritage

Anna McEwan, Bridgend Bothy Volunteer, Architect and Photographer



"Managing rain and damp and pests through traditional architectural elements, such as roof overhangs, etc"







"Learning about materials; where they can be sourced locally and how to use them when building"



"My experience volunteering at the bothy connected me to Scottish culture & heritage, renewed my commitments to sustainable futures."



"Connecting with the local community and various experts, learning about their lived experiences, new techniques, culture, fauna, materials "





Before / Site Clearance and Repair

Summer 2018



Framing with Timber

May 2019





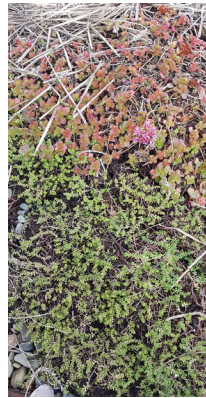
The Straw and the Render

Summer 2019



Upon Completion

October 2022





# Bridgend Bothy - Participatory choices for materials and techniques

Simon Hackin, [Greenworks \(Scotland\) Limited](#)

## Strawbale



Winter wheat strawbales sourced within ten miles of the build site.

An inexpensive material with a high degree of participatory site work for all abilities with numerous techniques that fit well with other material choices, lime and clay renders, hazel rods etc. Low environmental impact throughout the whole life cycle.

## Lime Render



Traditional render material for local buildings giving an opportunity for skills training on site. Infinity repairable. A complex choice with a need to weigh impacts against building performance.

## Clay



Clay render. Traditional and increasingly contemporary internal render material with many positive attributes. Partially sourced from Fife, the site and UK suppliers.



Cellulose insulation - Thermofloc



Used as subfloor insulation. Chosen for ease of use and application. High performance and low environmental impact throughout the whole life cycle.

Larch Cladding



Sourced from local Scottish sawmill, durable and sustainable. Replaceable and employing standard construction skills.

Double glazed windows - Nordan



Chosen for high performance, quality of manufacture and availability.

# SEDA Director Introductions



Sandy Halliday

Sandy is a chartered engineer and internationally respected author, thought leader and communicator. She has been a researcher, educator and sustainability adviser on built environment issues since 1986. She founded Gaia Research (1995). The practice portfolio embraces research, design, evaluation, dissemination, training and capacity building

Sandy's extensive experience of trans-disciplinary working and ability to bridge gaps between architecture, placemaking and engineering is recognised by Honorary Fellowships of the Royal Institute of British Architects (2020) & the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (2018). In 2018 she was voted one of the Top 50 women engineers working in Sustainability in the UK.

Sandy developed an interdisciplinary CPD programme in design for the built environment. This became the highly acclaimed international monograph Sustainable Construction, 2nd Edition with 120 best practice case studies embracing the history of sustainable development ideas, policy, circular economy, building physics, energy systems, lighting & daylighting, ventilation, low allergy housing, cost, community, indoor air quality, low impact materials, urban ecology and performance evaluation.

Nick Domminney

1984 Qualified and registered as Architect  
 1982+ Hull Energy Action Team - energy advice  
 1983+ Architects & Builders Cooperative (ABC)- set up practice- domestic/ community projects  
 1983 Association of Community Technical Aid Centres (ACTAC) co-founder with ABC  
 1985 Tyne & Wear County Council- architect until Tyne&WCC abolished- fire & police projects plus a bus garage  
 1987 Newcastle upon Tyne Council- architect- housing refurbishment, health & Social Work Projects  
 1989 Glasgow City Council DARS & Building Services- architect/senior architect- MSF housing, housing, and social work projects  
 2002 Gareth Hoskins Architects- architect/director  
 Award-winning projects: National Trust for Scotland's Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre; 3-8 St Andrew Square, Edinburgh; Greyfriars Community Project; Category A Listed David Livingstone Birthplace, Blantyre; RIBA and Doolan Award-winning Aberdeen Art Gallery  
 2004 RIAS Accreditation in Sustainable Construction  
 2018 Retired Hoskins Architects  
 2018 Mackintosh School of Art- Year 5 architectural technology coordinator  
 2020+ Strathclyde University Architecture Department- Year 2 design tutor  
 1996 Joined SEDA: SEDA magazine editor 2018-2023







Magdalena Blazusiak

Magdalena's passion for retrofit and preservation of existing build environment is rooted in the research into relationships between buildings and people, working on creating resilient, supportive places for thriving communities. Magdalena is a Chartered Architectural Technologist with over 10 years of experience in the public and private sector, delivering variety of new build and existing building projects. In her role of Knowledge Exchange Coordinator for CIAT Scotland East Region, Magdalena is promoting learning in the industry, support for members, recent graduates and students, with emphasis on women. Through her involvement with SEDA working groups, she is actively looking into the challenges of modern, holistic education in construction-related degrees, health and wellbeing in design, retrofit delivery and promotion of locally sourced natural materials.

Magdalena believes in community empowerment as the foundation for sustainable life which will directly feed into her research PhD at Robert Gordon University on 'Sociological and psychological value of retrofit interventions as means to promote health and wellbeing, community empowerment and local regeneration'.

Jonathan Lynn

Jonathan Lynn is a Part 2 Architecture student at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. He won the SEDA Krystyna Johnson Award in 2022. Prior to studying Architecture, Jonathan repaired heritage and traditional buildings. With an interest in traditional building methods, he has developed expertise in timber and lime mortar repairs and has trialled and used a variety of natural building materials to enhance thermal comfort and preserve dry building fabric. He has developed a property renovation and rental business providing high-quality homes for low-income families. Jonathan believes in good stewardship of the planet for the benefit of people and communities and enjoys mentoring and teaching others. He is a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Building Limes Forum, and the Lime Finishes Group.



Tom Morton

Tom is a 1980's modernist Architect upgraded for the 21st Century with Conservation and Sustainability accreditation add-ons. He's retrofitted with an interest in natural materials and culture change and has developed an intolerance for Patriarchy and other incompatible social dynamics. He currently operates across diverse habitats including Arc Architects, Cohousing Scotland, Earth Building UK & Ireland as well as SEDA.



Gail Halvorsen

After qualifying from the Architectural Association School of Architecture, Gail worked for Michael Hopkins and Partners in London. She established Halvorsen Architects in 1994, moving to Edinburgh in 1999, where she specialises in ecological design for residential and nursery school buildings. Gail was chair of ECAN (Edinburgh Chartered Architects Network) from 2001-2 and on the board of Gorebridge Community Development Trust for 10 years, being chair from 2014-16, where she project managed the £2.5m community centre, Gorebridge Beacon. She was a Civic Trust Award assessor 1997–2011 and has run environmental projects with primary schools. Gail is an events organiser for the Scottish Ecological Design Association and organised the A New Vision for Land Use in Scotland: Six Conversations in Spring 2021.

Natascha Houchin

Natasha is a Chartered Architect and Associate at LMA Architects, with an unwavering commitment to innovative design and sustainable architectural practices. With a strong foundation in both theory and application, Natasha's expertise spans over two decades. At the heart of Natasha's professional journey lies her specialised experience in both Conservation and Sustainable Design. She has a passion for preserving architectural heritage whilst integrating modern sustainable solutions. As an on construction' energy assessor and a Passivhaus designer, Natasha's work reflects her understanding of energy-efficient methodologies that pave the way for a greener future.

She has an ardent interest in crafting very low-energy healthy buildings that prioritize human well-being and is committed to enhancing health and wellness through architectural spaces and placemaking. Natasha firmly believes that the key to achieving this lies in a thoughtful and empathetic approach to understanding the needs of building users.

Natasha's has experience of working in Scotland, Canada, and Singapore, allowing her to draw from a diverse array of influences. She is committed to creating spaces that enrich lives and coexist harmoniously with the natural world whilst safeguarding the planet for generations to come.







Ran Boydell

Ran has studied and practised architecture in both the UK and his native Australia for over three decades. His career has encompassed roles as designer, developer, regulator and educator, and this view from “all sides of the table” has given Ran a unique holistic perspective on the built environment. At a time of major global challenges, Ran’s professional focus has turned to architecture that delivers on net-zero targets, broader sustainability issues such as the Circular Economy and Natural or Social Capital, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. To do this, he works collaboratively and across disciplines to drive the rapid and fundamental transition to sustainable construction. Apart from his architectural design practice, Ran researches and writes about current sustainability issues, teaches university courses, was a founder of the [#ArchitectsDeclare](#) initiative in Australia, and, through his Ecohus brand, is a pioneer of sustainable homes for the mass market.

David Seel

I am currently the longest serving current Director at SEDA, having been doing this since 2013! I also had three years as Chair, and am now doing the Secretary role. I will have met many Members in past years, and here is a short outline of who I am generally.

My current position is as a Teaching Fellow in Architecture and Environment at the architecture school in Edinburgh University (ESALA). This means I am involved delivering teaching with both meanings of ‘environmental’, that is both how we can create good internal environments, and the effects of the building and its use on the wider environment. In the last year, I had a hand in teaching at all levels of the Undergraduate architecture course, plus postgraduate courses, both some specialized on sustainable design and more general ‘arts’ courses. This follows on from working in a number of Scottish practices who looked to employ lower energy and ecological strategies in their projects, such as ARC Architects in Fife.

Beyond that, I enjoy travel (preferably by bike and train) and being outdoors, and my favourite eco activity is growing my own food on an allotment in Leith, and then cooking up something good with it. Around lockdown, with my wife Barbara, we built a shed from scratch using a specially designed cedar frame and reused cladding, with a ‘fold up’ window we can sit under it when it rains: our neighbours on the plot expect us to start selling coffees. My interest in SEDA are in education, and co-ordination between parts of SEDA, to make out activities really work well.



# A Review of Andrew Beattie's "Scottish Highlands: A Cultural History"

Susan McDuffie

## Embracing Cultural Vitality for Sustainable Development

In "Scottish Highlands: A Cultural History", Andrew Beattie embarks on an ambitious journey to encapsulate the essence of the Highlands. He divides his work into four diverse sections. Each examines the region from a specific viewpoint, allowing the reader the opportunity to engage with the region from a variety of perspectives. The book provides a multi-dimensional and holistic exploration of the Highlands, essential for those hoping to integrate ecology and traditional culture with a sustainable contemporary life.

"Landscape" looks at this vibrant, dramatic area through the lens of the breathtaking geology, flora, and fauna that make this region so enthralling. This section explores how the geography of the Highlands has shaped the culture and lifestyle of those living here, and how this remarkable ecosystem continues to entrance visitors.

"History" gives the reader an overview of over 6000 years of human settlement. Beattie's exploration of the past gives the reader essential insight into the many different threads twining together to make up the region's cultural tapestry, and provides many jumping off points for further investigation.

Especially relevant to sustainability may be his discussion of historical farming and fishing practices, including intriguing references to thriving fishing fleets dating

back to 836. Beattie discusses traditional farming through the lens of the clan system as well as through the shieling traditions, and explores how the original droving paths have in many cases transformed into modern transport systems. This understanding of past methods can crucially inform approaches to sustainable practices in our own time.

Beattie's discussion of the Clearances reveals the poignantly profound and lasting impact of this period on the land and people of the Highlands. Paradoxically, this era coincided with the growth of the outsider's romanticized perceptions of the Highlands, underlining the complex dynamics between indigenous populations and new arrivals, and the sometimes painful ramifications of those interactions.

"Imagination" introduces the reader to the entrancing and far-reaching spell the Highlands have cast over the larger world through literature, the visual arts, and media. From the Gaelic and Romantic poets to contemporary films, Beattie's treatment explores the continuing inspiration this region provides, investigating how this fusion of beauty and artistic expression contributes to economic vitality, increases appreciation for local ecology, and provides a cornerstone for thriving, sustainable community.

"Visitors" offers a historical overview of tourism in the Highlands, beginning with rugged tours in the 1600s and ending with the hikers and sightseers of the present day. While vital to the area, tourism can

sometimes present challenges. In one sense it provides sustainable livelihoods for the population but conflicts can also arise with the impacts an influx of tourism can have on local communities.

Overall, "Scottish Highlands, A Cultural History" is a well crafted, compelling book that serves as a lovely and lively introduction to the complex tapestry of the region. It's an engaging read for those planning a visit or someone simply wanting a literary tour of the majestic Scottish Highlands, and Beattie's extensive bibliography opens many intriguing doorways for deeper exploration if desired.

*Susan McDuffie writes historical mysteries set during the medieval Lordship of the Isles. Her writing, exploring the nuanced history of the Scottish Isles, resonates with Beattie's exploration of the Highlands as a wellspring of cultural richness and sustainability. For more about her work, visit [SusanMcDuffie.net](http://SusanMcDuffie.net)*

# *Scottish Highlands*

A CULTURAL HISTORY



ANDREW BEATTIE

# SEDA Land influences Holyrood

Gail Halvorsen

Top down or bottom up – that is the question. It is always difficult to know when to use grassroots activism and when to focus on top-level lobbying, but in this case it's clear. We're aiming high.

The Scottish Government has awarded SEDA a [£98,500 grant](#) as part of its Climate Change Engagement and Participation Programme. The funds are being split between a string of events on sustainable construction that is being put together by [ARC Architects'](#) founder Tom Morton, and still more events on land-related issues from SEDA Land. Of course, there will be overlaps between the two.

The first of these SEDA Land events was the fourth in our Building Futures series – *“Building Futures in Rural Scotland 4 – Over To You Holyrood”*. This was held as part of Rural Housing Scotland's annual conference in Aviemore on 22 February. While previous events in this strand have focused on local government and communities, this live event focused on central government policy. That makes a lot of sense, since the aim of the events being sponsored by the Scottish Government is to inform policy. We have been asked to submit reports which will influence upcoming policymaking and there is a lot to come.

The other three events will take SEDA Land into a new dimension. They will be whole day events incorporating field trips, site visits and networking events in the morning and hybrid roundtable discussions in the afternoon. Two of these

will look at supply and value chains – working towards retaining more of the value of supply chains within a local area.

In *“You Are What Your Food Eats”* we looked at food and in *“Which Trees For Homes?”* at timber. In both cases, we try to focus the discussion by starting with an end product. For the timber event this was the timber required to build affordable homes in the Dumfries and Galloway council area following a tour of Crofthead woodland managed by silviculturist Andrew Macqueen. For the food event we focused on a nutritional plate of food for the population around Huntly, Aberdeenshire, after a tour of Roger Polson's Knock Farm. In both cases, we had representatives from every stage of the supply chain, as well as academics, artists and other land users including from the renewable energy and tourism sectors.

The final event, to be held in Selkirk, will be the third in our bioproduct series – *“Imagining A Fossil-Fuel-Free Future”*. This will be held in collaboration with South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE). The roundtable discussion in this case will follow a morning of showcasing and networking.

I believe that it is only by gathering all interested parties around the same table that we can come up with proposals that are both imaginative and workable. We will never make everyone happy but, as they say in negotiations, if everyone is mutually satisfied you have probably reached the right solution.

In each case, with a view to getting participants' creative juices flowing, a poet and a musician will perform during artistic interludes. The joy of having funding for these events is that we are now able to commission new pieces to fit the events rather than scrabbling around for existing pieces. The artists intend to make the most of the indoor-outdoor programme, with celebrated Borders violinist Iain Fraser, likely to be celebrating a birch tree with his fiddle, and award-winning Aberdeenshire poet Dawn Finch delivering an ode to a handful of soil. Personally, I can't wait for their performances.

SEDA Land will again be represented at [GO Falkland](#) this year. After the success of last year's regenerative agriculture festival, Ninian Stuart has decided to expand the event to two days on 17th and 18th July. We will be focusing on the *“sharing vs. sparing”* debate and how we need to look strategically at all competing land uses. At present there is very unequal treatment of, for example, forestry and farming. And where do rewilding, tourism, sporting estates and other land uses fit in? Hopefully we will see you there. ■



Images:  
Top; Spruce & Red Alder in mixture, Crofthead, Moffat; Andrew Macqueen  
Bottom: Cattle at Knock Farm, Roger Polson; Andrew Macqueen





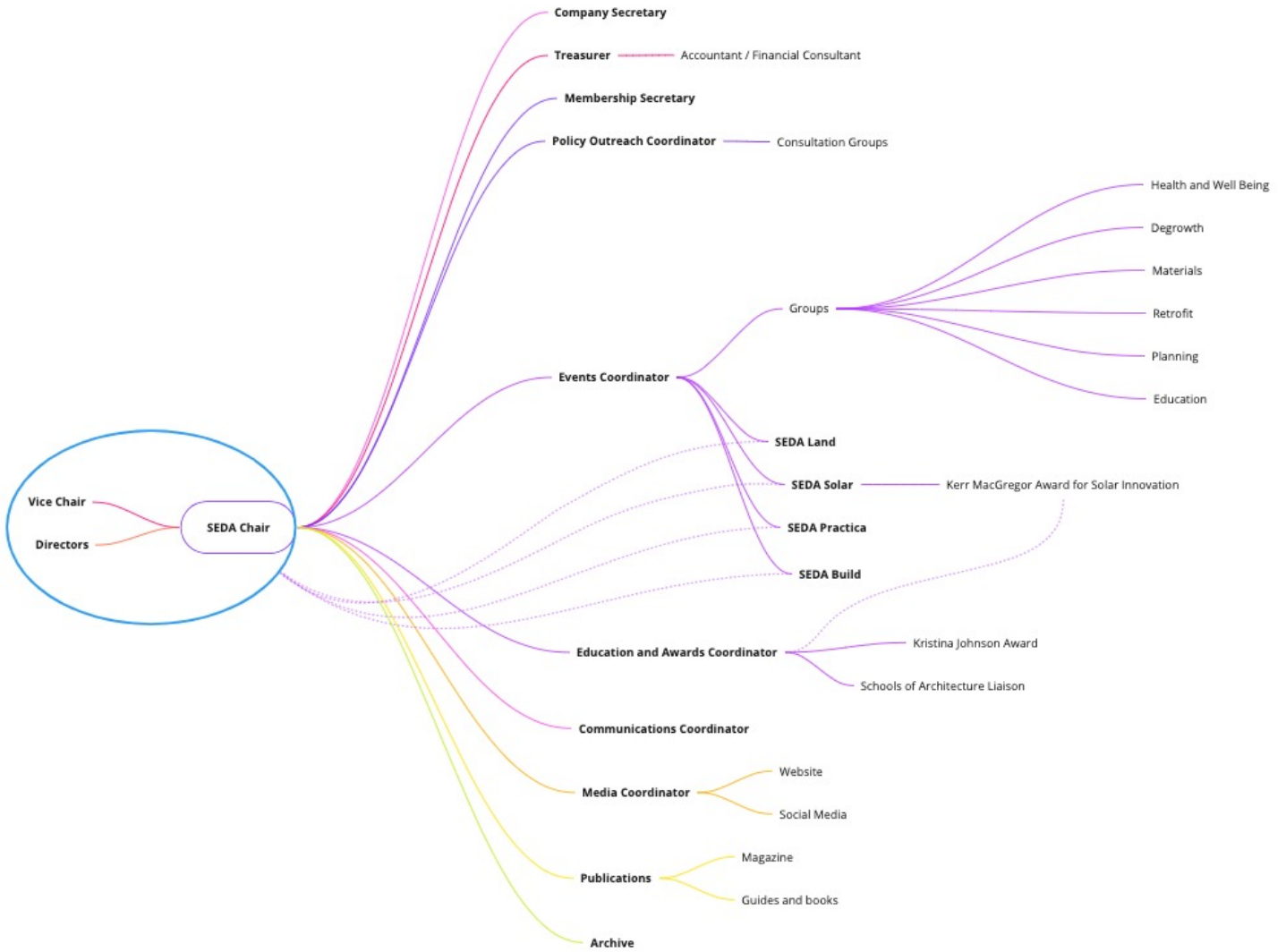
# SEDA WEBINAR

## CARBON CREDITS - SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY?

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April 4:30pm



**S E D A**  
Scottish Ecological  
Design Association



SEDA Structure - Roles, Responsibilities and Lines of Reporting



Gloria Lo, SEDA Chairperson

This perhaps is a long time coming. I have been a SEDA member for over 20 years, starting soon after I moved to Scotland, and realise that is most of SEDA's life also, as only a couple of years ago SEDA celebrated its 30th anniversary. When one has been part of something for so long, there is inherently a feeling that one should give back. Of course, throughout this time, I have been actively organising Green Drinks, joint events with Edinburgh Architectural Association (EAA), and more recently SEDA Solar (which was merged from Scottish Solar Energy Group, a merger that I initiated and facilitated as chair of SSEG). Although I have chaired many different organisations before - professional body, voluntary youth organisations, interest societies, community groups - SEDA is very special to me and it is a real honour to be elected as Chair. Firstly, it has a very special place in my heart, because it represents a vision that I had always believed in, that we are part of the wider habitat, a species among many, and our harmonious living with the planet is essential for our existence and all. Secondly, it has a special place in my mind, with the events and magazine articles, all the connections and knowledge the diverse membership brings, stretches my mind and extends my knowledge. Thirdly, it engages my body, while personally I believe that it requires one to visit buildings to fully understand them, SEDA provided some of the most worthwhile project visits, as well as taking a practical line with campaigns and consultations, to take action on what we believe in.

Taking on SEDA Chair is not a light task, I knew this, it is said that "if you want anything done ask a busy person" ... so it is perhaps apt that this might be the busiest period in my life that I take this on, while practising as an architect, teaching (masters in architecture and building physics), and juggling my PhD research that accidentally resulted my engagement in a range of subjects at high level from all disciplines of engineering to molecular and soil physics.

One may think that I am crazy to do this, but firstly climate change isn't going to wait for us. Secondly, there is a logic in what I want to give to SEDA, the connections I am able to make because I'm also involved with ACAN Scotland, RIAS Education and other organisations, it is a good start to make **collaborations**. I would endeavour to broaden SEDA as a nexus for inter-disciplinary and sectorial connections, engender cross-pollination of ideas, exchange of knowledge and skills, leading to fruitful action. Climate change cannot be tackled single-handedly, meaningful involvement with other organisations and people is imperative to make any impact, silos as our society has created often means duplication of effort with minimised power.

How are we going to do this? The first step that has been slowly taking shape since I started in late September 2023, which was a much-needed internal re-structure, one that can support the diverse membership and envisioned activities. With the help and encouragement of the existing directors, special mention to Sandy Halliday, David Seel and Ran Boydell, a new clearer structure of SEDA is set up (attached diagram). We are now working towards more defined roles with clearer contact points identified, rather than more work being piled onto the same handful of people. This will hopefully help gather more folk to help, in that no one task is too big, and manageable as a volunteer. We are always looking for more volunteers, more hands make work light, and the more vibrant and interesting the organisation becomes. Do come forward, whether you know what you want to help with specifically or have an open mind to give only 5 minutes a week. Perhaps you have a particular project interest, or would like to share your knowledge with the wider public. You may have a special skill you can offer to help make SEDA better. All encouraged and welcomed.

If you have suggestions for how SEDA might be a better membership organisation for you please write in to [chair@seda.uk.net](mailto:chair@seda.uk.net) I look forward to hearing from you.