I would like to take this opportunity to set out in more detail where I, my family and the wider Clan stand in relation to recent statements issued by The Clan Donald Lands Trust. However, I cannot comment for legal reasons on any Trust business that I was involved in prior to my resignation as a Trustee and Vice Chairman of CDLT on 28 February.

It will have been obvious to anyone remotely interested in CDLT and who has looked at their accounts, that their finances have given increasing cause for concern in recent years.  In light of this, it is perhaps no surprise that the Trustees would contemplate a sale of some of the Trust’s assets. However, whilst I am supportive of this idea in principle, I am devastated that the Trustees have decided to sell the Clan Centre. This, to me, is the Crown Jewels, the corner stone around which the principal objectives of the CDLT as a charitable foundation was established in 1971.

On the morning of Tuesday 25th March, while in Edinburgh, a friend in Ardvasar made me aware of the statement issued by CDLT on their website, intimating their intention to place the Estate on the open market, as soon as possible; and to follow this up with the marketing of The Clan Donald Centre a few months later. I took no part in this decision and had no prior warning of this announcement: it was news as much to me as it was to everyone else. On the morning of Wednesday 26th March, I issued my own statement in response, which accurately and succinctly set out my position and which has been reported fully in the West Highland Free Press and in various sections of Social Media, in this country and overseas.

In the days since then, in my capacity as Chief of Clan Donald, I have contacted and been contacted by numerous members and adherents of Clan Donald around the world. I have had meetings with the Clan Donald hierarchy, primarily in the United States, where the largest clan membership resides. I would describe the reaction from the vast majority as one of incredulity. They cannot believe that a decision as important as this could have been announced in what they consider to be such an offhand and dismissive fashion, without any prior consultation with either the Clan or the local community. The overwhelming sentiment from overseas concerning the proposed sale of the Clan Centre, which I know is shared widely in the local community, is a strong feeling of betrayal.

These are individuals and families who, since the inception of CDLT, have treasured their connection with Armadale and the Clan Centre. Although most have never been able to contribute in a financial sense, they have all felt a common bond unique to those of Highland descent, that clanship is a family matter transcending national boundaries, centred here at Armadale in Skye.

For my part, although I understand the financial imperatives which have driven the Trustees to make a difficult decision, as indicated in my earlier statement I am personally deeply saddened that the Trustees have felt the need to pursue such a drastic course, and I am hugely disappointed that this course has been adopted in the manner it has, without prior notice or consultation with the Clan or the Community.

I was born here, and have lived and worked here all my life, and hopefully will die here.   I have been an elected representative in a number of organisations over many years and seen many changes: some good, some bad. I believe the proposed sale of the Clan Donald Centre would be both a tragedy for the Clan and for the local community. I pray that there will be is a change of heart on the part of the Trustees and I implore them to take the time to consult with the Clan and the community and to consider all other alternatives for addressing the financial issues facing the Trust.

Ideally, the publicity around this might attract a sympathetic benefactor who might come forward and invest in the land for the benefit of the whole community. If that does not happen, however, then I earnestly hope for a more palatable alternative to emerge which will enable, at the very least, the ongoing operation of the Clan Donald Centre and along with that, the preservation of our history; the maintenance of local employment; the continued attraction of tourism to the area; and an ongoing connection between the Clan, the land and the community here in Sleat.