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Page last updated at 13:52 GMT, Sunday, 18 January 2009

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Raasay House hit by major blaze

A historic building on the Isle of Raasay, off Skye, has been extensively damaged in a fire.

Raasay House, which is now an activity centre, was undergoing a major renovation programme.

A local community group, which was leading the project, was defiant despite the blaze and said a new centre would be built.

The fire brigade said the damage to the building was substantial but that no-one had been hurt.

The alarm was raised at about 0115 GMT. Volunteer firefighters on the island were joined by five firefighters from Portree, brought over from Skye with equipment on the Portree RNLI Lifeboat.

An RNLI spokesman said: "Passing Churchton Bay en route to the Ferry Pier at Suisinish, Raasay House was seen to be engulfed in flames and lighting up the night sky."

Raasay House is a sprawling 258-year-old mansion, which once belonged to the Clan MacLeod.

It stands in its own grounds on the shore looking onto the sea, with views to Skye.

Much of the property was derelict when it began to operate as an activity centre in 1984.

It transferred to community ownership in December 2007 and was due



The outdoor centre was due to reopen fully in the Easter

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“ We are all a bit dumbstruck at the moment, but this is not the end of things by any manner of means ”

David Westgarth
Raasay House Community Company

to reopen in Easter after the latest renovation works.

The local community was awarded £1m from the Big Lottery 18 months ago towards the estimated £3.5m purchase and renovation bill.

The refurbishment aimed to develop the business on a year-round basis, creating full-time employment opportunities for young people on the island.

According to its website, many bookings had already been made.

Community support

David Westgarth, of the Raasay House Community Company, said: "What has happened is absolutely tragic, particularly as the house was looking so fantastic.

"We are all a bit dumbstruck at the moment, but this is not the end of things by any manner of means.

"We will build a new centre. There is a huge amount of community support for the scheme and whenever you get a setback in a small community everybody gets together to overcome it."

Raasay House managing director Lyn Rowe said: "We have had a number of setbacks with this project over the years and we are not going to let this one stop us.

"We will rise from the ashes."

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