



URRAS OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN  
GALSON ESTATE TRUST

# Strategic Plan

2017–2037

Plana Ro-innleachdail

## A' Coimhead Romhainn

### Ar Lèirsinn

Coimhearsnachd a tha *soirbheachail* le *deagh cheanglaichean* anns a bheil *sàr sheirbheisean* agus ghoireasan ionadail, a' cleachdadh a stòrasan nàdarra gus cultar agus àrainn a tha sònraichte a dhèanamh seasmhach.

### Vision

A thriving and well connected community with excellent local services and amenities, harnessing its natural assets to sustain a unique cultural and social environment.



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# Executive Summary

## Geàrr-chunntas Luchd-gnìomh

*Fàilte oirbh gu toradh a thàinig a-mach à co-chomhairleachadh air feadh na coimhearsnachd, tha sinn an dòchas gun còrd seo ribh.*

Welcome to the result of our community consultation, we hope you find it of interest.

With the tenth anniversary of the buy-out fast approaching and wind energy income starting to filter down, now is the time to start planning ahead in earnest. There are a great many challenges facing remote communities at this time, possibly more economic uncertainty than many of us can remember. However, there are also many new opportunities. We are confident that our community is robust and forward-looking and that many of the opportunities ahead can be grasped.

At this juncture, after a series of many challenges, the wind energy development at Baile an Truiseil is now set to pay dividends for the Galson Estate. It has unexpectedly taken ten years to arrive at this point but we are delighted that the moment has finally arrived when meaningful income has started to flow to the Urras.

We are clear about the need to have a flexible strategic plan to guide how these funds should be used. This will incorporate regular progress reviews over the twenty year time frame. This plan has been developed through inclusive consultation activity, rather than relying on one-off public events and surveys. We have looked at what other communities have tried – at their successes and failures - and attempted to learn from these examples.

As part of the consultation process, the Urras undertook a series of group discussions with cross-sections of the community and with a range of interest groups. The findings from these events were fed into a household survey which was made available to all homes in the Estate. In addition, a sample of households across the Estate, covering a mix of ages and locations, were interviewed in person to gain a more detailed insight into their survey responses.

From these consultation activities, three priorities have emerged as follows :

**Elderly care** – permanent accommodation, respite care and support services.

**Tourism** – more and better facilities with a focus on unique aspects that provide a different visitor experience.

**Crofting/land use** – collaborative activity, improved horticultural facilities, together with guidance and tuition.

Strategic Planning is an ongoing process and we welcome your feedback on this Plan.





# Priority: Elderly Care



## Prìomh Chùis : Cùram Seann Daoine

Elderly residents have sometimes been provided with places far from families as there is no care facility locally. This has led to a growing desire in the community to 'repatriate' former residents housed in care elsewhere. Respite opportunities are few and far between and home support services have been drastically cut, with people often being forced to identify their own solutions.

Estimates provided by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (based on 2015 mid-year projections) indicate that a significant proportion of the population will be of post-retirement age by 2037. In addition, the number of single or small households is expected to increase. People are living longer and desire to remain at home for as long as possible, thus creating a growing demand for services and support to enable independent living. There are clear health and mental benefits for keeping elderly people active and occupied.

### Actions / Obraichean-gnìomha

- Encourage and support range of additional elderly activities with enhanced accessibility
- Support events that engage the elderly
- Set up and operate local hardship fund for exceptional needs.
- Work with relevant public agencies to develop local care and respite facilities

### Benefits / Buannachdan

- Retention of inter-generational family units
- Increase in elderly wellbeing
- Reduced demand on public sector services

Impact - High Quality of Life

# Priority: Tourism

## Prìomh Chùis : Turasachd

The natural environment of the Outer Hebrides appeals to many visitors; the Butt of Lewis is a key attraction, second only to the Callanish Stones. Visitors are generally interested in walking and sightseeing/touring, historical and heritage attractions, wildlife pursuits, outdoor activities and dining out. Whilst the majority travel by car, designation of the Hebridean Way has drawn an increasing numbers of cyclists.

Many visitors are drawn to the northern-most tip of the island to pursue these activities but struggle to find the range of supporting services and facilities they expect. The lack of supporting services such as accommodation, catering, public toilets and signage create a disappointing experience for some visitors.

Opportunities may exist in the future for locally branded/themed products, events and activities once the general level of services and facilities has been addressed.

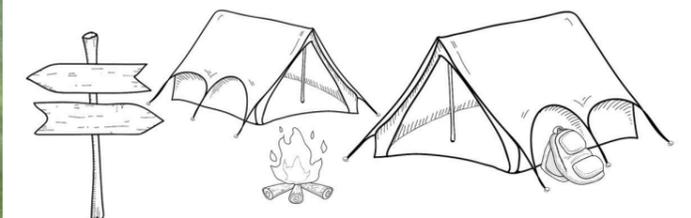
### Actions / Obraichean-gnìomha

- Improve access to visitor information through the internet, promotional material and local information points such as the UOG Business Centre
- Support providers to increase range and quality of local services and facilities
- Continue developing and promoting Loch Stiapabhat Local Nature Reserve as well as other wildlife opportunities
- Continue creating and promoting events such as guided walks and wildlife talks
- Work with available providers to develop range of outdoor activities
- Assist providers to promote and deliver guided tours and events
- Facilitate pooling of knowledge and resources, improving product consistency and achieving economies of scale
- Investigate longer term potential for local visitor branding, area promotion and high quality product ranges



### Benefits / Buannachdan

- Increased income for tourism-related businesses
- Additional employment
- Extended visitor season



Impact - Economically Strong



# Priority: Crofting and Land Use

## Prìomh Chùis: Croitearachd agus Cleachdadh Fearainn

Whilst society is changing rapidly, crofting and agriculture remain vital to the fabric of the communities in North Lewis. Today, there are many challenges and disincentives to crofting, not least increasing regulation which adds an administrative burden and undermines community confidence. Financial support remains available but is increasingly difficult to access and often fails to target critical areas. Collective effort and co-operation offer opportunities for better efficiency and economic returns in connection with livestock and produce. Improvements in horticulture infrastructure have led to renewed interest from many people in sustainable food production and this should be encouraged and supported.

The age profile of those engaged in crofting remains challenging and additional efforts are needed to encourage retention and attraction of younger crofting families. Re-letting of unused crofts is of interest across the community: some headway has been made with re-letting but requires increased momentum.

### Actions / Obraichean-gnìomha

- Investigate potential crofting administration support
- Accelerate croft re-letting where possible and develop croft entrant packages
- Support the expansion of local produce and assist with development of appropriate communal infrastructure
- Provide programmes of guidance and tuition and, in particular, showcase crofting activities to younger families and individuals
- Review opportunities for collective actions such as stock clubs
- Contribute to national and regional consultations



### Benefits / Buannachdan

- Additional incomes through increased value of livestock and produce
- Healthier lives through increased local produce
- Carbon reduction through lower food miles
- Attraction of younger families to improve population balance

Impact – unique and cohesive community

# Other Initiatives: Community Life

## Iomairtean Eile : Seòl-beatha na Coimhearsnachd

As well as the priority areas identified at Pages 5-7, there has been strong survey feedback in support of other development initiatives. The most popular of these are noted below and then also ranked in accordance with the responses from separate age groups.

### Top ten responses

- Acquire Rònaigh/Sùlaisgeir
- Socially rented housing
- Home Energy improvements
- Childcare facilities/services
- Ness-Tolsta Walk
- Mountain biking track
- Hardship Fund
- Fishing/shooting activities
- Youth Café
- Visitor Information Centre

### Top responses by age groups

- 30-44**
  1. Childcare facilities and services
  2. Visitor Information Centre
  3. Ness - Tolsta walk
- 45-59**
  1. Ness - Tolsta walk
  2. Home Energy Improvements
  3. Visitor Information Centre
- 60+**
  1. Ness - Tolsta walk
  2. Home Energy Improvements
  3. Hardship fund



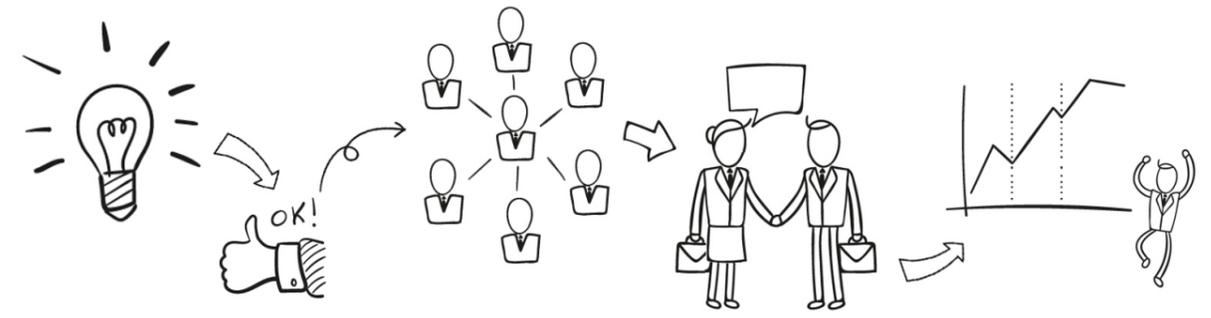
Top priorities for young people under 30

Impact – Growing and sustainable population

Change	Output	Indicators	Measurement Actions
Growing & Sustainable Population	Increasing population	Population growth Age re-balance	National Census Local authority population surveys
	High youth employment	Young people in work	Employment surveys
	Healthy school rolls	Pre-school roll School rolls	National Census Local authority school rolls/forecast rolls
	High level of house occupation	Number of year-round occupied houses	National Census Housing stock surveys
High Quality of Life	Wide range of local services	Number/range of services	Local surveys/data collection
	Improved social & recreational facilities	Number/range of facilities	Local surveys/data collection
Economically Strong	Eradicated fuel poverty	Number of households in fuel poverty	Housing agency surveys Local surveys/data collection
	Increase in visitors	Number of visitors	Public-sector surveys Local surveys/data collection
	Improved range of cultural, heritage and leisure activities	Number/range of activities	Local surveys/data collection
	Improved range of local produce	Increased range of produce Number of local markets	Local surveys/data collection
	More visitor accommodation	Number of bedspaces Bedspace grading levels	Local surveys/data collection
	More entrepreneurs	Business/social enterprise start-ups	Local surveys/data collection
	Effective partnerships	Number of new organisations	Local surveys/data collection
Unique & Cohesive Community	Increase in Gaelic speakers	Number of speakers Number of young speakers	National/regional surveys Local surveys/data collection
		Number of active grazings committees Number of Community Investment Fund applications	Local surveys/data collection
		Attendance numbers at public events Increase in UOG membership	Attendance lists Membership register

# Delivering The Vision

## Libhrigeadh an t-Seallaidh



Some proposals can be implemented relatively quickly, others need some planning and a few will need to be carefully developed over a longer timescale.

Methods to take proposals forward will include :

1. Direct delivery by the Urras
2. Setting-up working groups to assist with planning and delivery by an existing organisation
3. Creation of new organisations/businesses with locally based directors to deliver proposals
4. Co-ordination and liaison with existing public-sector agencies/partnerships to plan and deliver locally-tailored, accelerate solutions

As always with community development, volunteers will be required to plan, deliver and possibly even manage or operate the facilities or activities involved. The Urras hopes that members of the community will step forward to assist.

Effective communication will be essential during delivery of the vision and the Urras intends to use the following methods :

Type	Frequency	Accessibility
Community newspapers	Fortnightly/monthly	Retail outlets/subscribers
Community newsletter	Quarterly/bi-annually	Community hubs/ UOG
Regional newspapers	Occasional	Retail outlets/subscribers
National newspapers	Occasional	Retail outlets/subscribers
Social media	At least monthly	Internet
Annual General Meeting	Annually	UOG members
Other public meetings	Occasional	Open to public

Care will need to be taken to manage resources by leveraging in other funds to assist with costs of the riskier stages of development. The larger and longer-term projects that are more complex to progress could use up significant monies in the early planning stages.

All proposals will be assessed under the Community Investment Fund criteria at an appropriate stage in their development to ensure compliance with the Urras' key charitable aims.

- Develop skills
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Relieve poverty
- Protect and conserve the environment
- Protect and promote heritage and culture
- Develop and revitalise growing industry sectors
- Support active community engagement

# Resources

## Goireasan agus Stòrasan

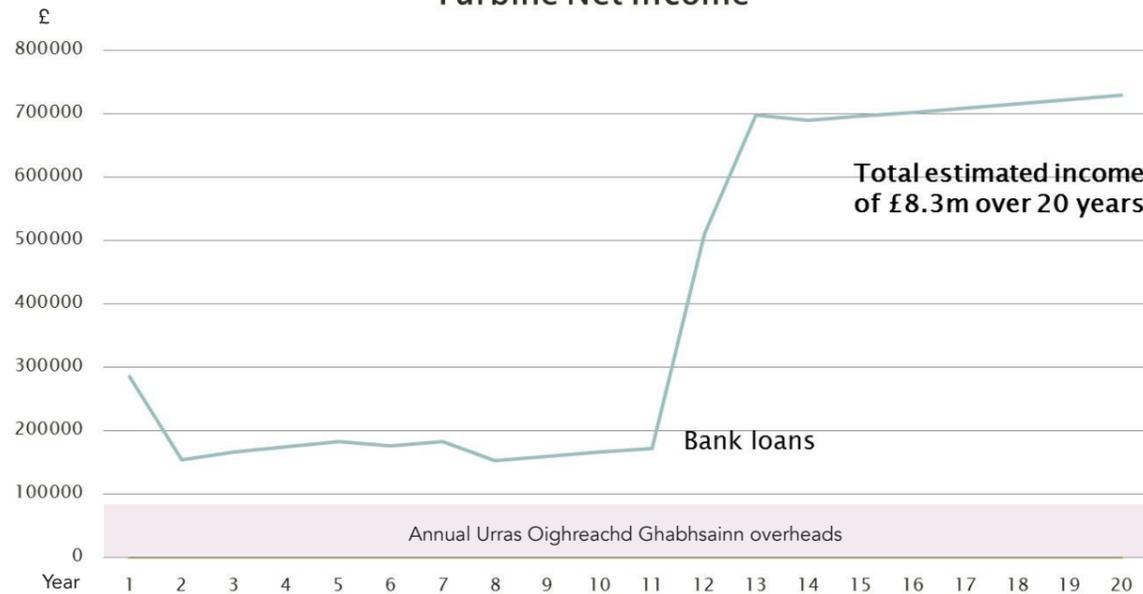
The Urras currently employs six development and administration staff plus two waste management operatives, amounting to 4.3 full-time equivalents. A Community Account Management officer sponsored by Highlands and Islands Enterprise to support local initiatives and projects is also based in the UOG Business Centre.

The Urras has carefully managed the draw-down of its public sector grant income associated with the community buy-out and is moving to a position of being fully self-financing. This will require careful decision-making on the allocation of resources, primarily monies and personnel, between the various development proposals and business-as-usual activities. Urras directors will address these issues on a regular basis.

The anticipated income profile over the lifespan of the Baile an Truiseil wind turbines is shown below for information. Actual annual amounts will depend on a range of factors. For example, one third of annual income is based on prevailing electricity market wholesale tariffs. Also, UK Government policy has recently sought to reduce renewable energy support schemes. Net income over the first eleven years will be constrained until commercial loans have been repaid, after which net income will rise considerably. The average income per year is £415,000, which depends on variables such as wind speed, electricity network outages and electricity wholesale prices.



Turbine Net Income



# Business-as-usual

## Gnothachas Àbhaisteach

We will continue to undertake the normal range of community landowner activities from the UOG Business Centre in South Galson.

- Baile an Truiseil wind turbine management
- In-house crofting administration
- Negotiation and management of commercial leases
- Negotiation and management of mineral extraction
- Support for and delivery of community events/activities
- Collaboration with community groups
- Advice and guidance to community organisations
- Management and operation of subsidiaries and related organisations
- Best practice sharing and knowledge transfer with community organisations
- Management of office facilities
- Finances/book-keeping and administration
- Board meetings and membership communications

Additional actions that the Urras plans to pursue are :

- Creation of new crofts
- Devolved management of the marine estate
- Community skills programmes
- Community advice
- Gaelic Language Plan



As an organisation, the Urras is committed to good-practice and, as such, has adhered to The National Standards for Community Engagement throughout this strategic planning process. The process undertaken has been underpinned by the key principles of fairness and equality, and a commitment to learning and continuous improvement. The engagement undertaken and future activities provide a sound foundation for shared decision-making, shared action and support for community-led action.

# Community Investment Fund

## Maoin-airgid na Coimhearsnachd

Following the successful operation of a pilot programme for two years from October 2014, the Urras is able to confirm that the Fund will continue and be maintained through wind energy net income. By September 2016, 36 projects had been assisted with a total commitment of £32,600 in grants awarded during the pilot programme. A total of £323,300 of additional monies was levered in by community organisations to undertake these projects.

This grants programme is targeted at organisations that provide or seek to provide activities or services that focus on any of the programme objectives. Grants should be used for projects which address the issues, needs and aspirations of the community of the Galson Estate. These outcomes are important in making a difference and projects will be assessed against these headings. Applicants must demonstrate that one or more programme objectives will be met to be considered for a grant.

The Urras will fund a wide range of community projects that meet the programme objectives: developing skills; improving health; relieving poverty; protecting or conserving the environment; engaging citizens to become more active in the community; promoting and protecting the rich heritage and culture of the area; developing, revitalising and growing industry sectors.



### What grants are available?

#### Up to £1,000

There is a simplified process operating for this category of assistance, commensurate with the smaller level of monies. Funds should be spent within 12 months from the date of a letter of offer. This Fund can be applied for twice in any 12 month period by an organisation. If applying for a second time, there must be at least 6 months between an award of funds and the next application.

#### Up to £5,000

This is a newly launched grant category and we expect organisations to be realistic in setting out clearly how the money applied for is to be used and the outcomes that will be achieved. The money must be spent within 12 months from a letter of offer.

#### Up to £10,000

The Urras expects to launch this fund in Spring 2017 to offer opportunities for larger projects to be delivered across the Estate. Given the scale of monies and projects involved, the application and grant award processes will be more rigorous but still in proportion with the capacity of community organisations in the area.

Applications should demonstrate the following attributes:

<b>Clear outcomes showing strategic relevance</b>	Link your application to the programme objectives you believe your project will contribute towards.
<b>Provides value for money</b>	If you can, provide costings or quotes that will help to assess value for money.
<b>Shows strong evidence of need</b>	You should carry out some market research/needs assessment to show there is a need for your project or activity.
<b>Avoids duplication of services</b>	It is advisable to not duplicate services, so ensure your application states clearly that your project is different from any other in the Estate.
<b>Supports the involvement of the wider community</b>	Provide examples of how you will engage with the community and raise awareness of your project.



### References:

- o Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement 2013-23
- o Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Outer Hebrides Facts (May 2016)
- o Western Isles Care Inspectorate Report (March 2016)
- o Outer Hebrides Visitor Survey Report 2012/13
- o Tourism Outer Hebrides 2020 Strategy (August 2015)
- o Scottish Crofting Federation Crofting Charter
- o Scottish Community Alliance – Local People Leading (March 2016)
- o North Lewis Development Plan 2011/15
- o Scottish Natural Heritage - Better Places for People and Nature. (2012)

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