



URRAS OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN  
GALSON ESTATE TRUST

## Ar Leirsinn

Coimhearsnachd a tha *soirbheachail* le *deagh cheanglaichean* anns a bheil sàr *sheirbheisean* agus goireasan 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.

# Strategic Plan

2017 - 2037

Plana Ro-innleachdail

Update 2022 | Ùrachadh 2022

**Ar Mìsean:** Ath-bhreith shòisealta tro ghnìomhan ath-leumach, goireasach agus freagairteach  
**Mission:** Social regeneration through resilient, resourceful and responsive action

# Contents / Clàr-innse

<b>3</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b> Geàrr-chunntas Luchd-gnìomha
<b>4</b>	<b>Setting The Scene</b> Ullachadh-sgeòil
<b>6</b>	<b>Visioning The Future</b> Dealbhachadh Sealladh air na tha ri teachd
<b>8</b>	<b>Care and Wellbeing</b> Cùram agus Soirbheas
<b>10</b>	<b>Tourism</b> Turasachd
<b>12</b>	<b>Crofting and Land Use</b> Croitearachd agus Cleachdadh Fearainn
<b>14</b>	<b>Exceptional Place</b> Aite air Leth
<b>16</b>	<b>Community Investment Fund</b> Maoin-airgid na Coimhearsnachd
<b>17</b>	<b>Delivering The Vision</b> Lìbhrigeadh an t-Seallaidh
<b>18</b>	<b>Resources</b> Goireasan agus Stòrasan
<b>19</b>	<b>Engagement</b> Com-pàirteachadh
<b>20</b>	<b>Measuring Progress</b> A' Cumail Sùil air Adhartas
	<b>Acknowledgements</b> Fios-freagairtan



# Executive Summary

## Gearr-chunntas Luchd-gnìomha

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

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

Over fifteen years in community ownership has seen a host of challenges emerging, not least over the last three years, but has delivered a significant increase in the estate value, grown employment, improved facilities and ushered in increasingly sustainable land management. Despite the various setbacks encountered, this is proving to be a successful model of community ownership. It would have been difficult to anticipate the magnitude of events that have taken place since the first Strategic Plan. Firstly, the business centre was totally destroyed by fire in early 2019, then the COVID-19 virus wreaked havoc across our communities and, just when that was beginning to abate, the subsea electricity cable to the mainland failed, which robbed the Urras of its income stream for around eighteen months. Throughout that three-year period, the Urras had to draw on all its resilience and respond to various demands that arose. After coming through that series of trials, the Urras is now experiencing more change.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic was a public health crisis first and foremost, it created an economic crisis, reshaping our economy, the way we work and the structure of our lives. Despite

having come through such testing circumstances, the Urras remains positive and determined to pursue opportunities across the Estate. There are a great many challenges facing remote communities at this time leading to continued economic uncertainty and social change. However, there are also many opportunities. New projects have emerged and the centenary of crofts being created at Galson Farm is imminent. We are confident that our community is robust and forward looking and that many of the opportunities ahead can be grasped.

We remain clear about the need to have a flexible strategic plan to guide how our funds should be used. This will incorporate regular progress reviews over the twenty year time frame.

Once again, the Urras has undertaken an extensive consultation process, involving a series of group discussions with cross-sections of the community and a household survey which was made available to all homes in the Estate. Follow-up discussions were held with a range of interest groups. 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 views. We intend to repeat this on a five-year cycle until the culmination of the Strategic Plan period. We have looked at what other communities have tried – at their successes and failures - and continue to learn from these examples.

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



# Setting The Scene

## Ullachadh-sgeòil

We are now six years into the Strategic Plan period and over fifteen years following the buy-out. Significant strides forward have been made and major achievements realised. The flow of wind energy income is well established and this has enabled a considerable expansion of the organisation beyond a level previously imagined. The years of toil at the outset have borne significant fruit and, despite some major unexpected setbacks, the Urras continues to progress with a strong momentum.

In addition to the setbacks experienced, the political landscape has changed remarkably since we last undertook the first strategic planning exercise in 2016. There has been a raft of strategies at national and regional level, the UK has left the European Union and COVID-19 has, of course, brought sweeping changes in its wake. COVID-19 impacted our lives in ways we could not have predicted. We must ensure that our communities that were already experiencing health and wealth inequalities are supported now, more than ever, to become vibrant and sustainable. Significant funding has been delivered by government for recovery activities but as that tails off, the search for sustainable operating models intensifies.

It is clear that conventional approaches to economic development are failing to tackle the intertwined challenges of today, from inequality to the climate and environmental crises. Land ownership and use are inextricably linked: different ownership models embed different governance and decision-making frameworks, which in turn have real world consequences on how land is used. Community Wealth Building

has emerged as a strong policy driver in recent years, an antidote to the highly extractive nature of conventional economic development models and the resulting inequalities in wealth distribution. The Urras is uniquely placed to facilitate this.



Scaling up Community Wealth Building should be viewed as a powerful catalyst for delivering a just transition to net zero. In addition, in the current context of rising fuel poverty, the dangers posed by the climate and environmental crises, and a wider cost of living and rural housing crisis, centring an approach that proactively democratises land ownership, use and management can help tackle the intertwined crises and inequalities facing communities today.

“...community landowners in the Outer Hebrides have been building community wealth for years. They’ve been able to do so because they own the land underneath their feet.”

*Dr Calum Macleod, Community Land Scotland*

Natural resources, particularly in the form of energy, continue to be important to our future. In January 2022 the first round of the Scotwind auction raised £700 million as developers competed to exploit the offshore wind resource. Two developers have been secured for Hebridean waters and community landowners in the West of Lewis are working together to negotiate social investment packages from these parties in the event that projects proceed. Onshore renewables remain important; returns from the turbines at Ballantrushal have been transformational for the area (2022 was one of the windiest on





record), and the Board of Directors has a strong sense of responsibility to ensure that future generations are given similar opportunities to prosper. Whilst the provision of a new interconnector by 2030 is a welcome boost for prospective energy developers, communities will struggle to overcome the many hurdles involved in accessing any of that new grid capacity. The weakness of the electricity grid continues to be the greatest hurdle to overcome for developers and events in recent years show the lack of support at the highest level of government, with aged infrastructure disappointingly dictating the pace of change.

Land has been prominent in the headlines over recent years. Much of that is driven by prospective 'green' purchasers variously motivated by natural capital, rewilding or carbon offsetting opportunities, alongside traditional 'lifestyle' and sporting entities.

We are reminded by our public-sector partners that place matters, however, we need to re-frame the context. Place is the arena where the policies of different orders and departments of government often first coincide, and with sometimes complementary or conflicting outcomes.

Collaboration and partnership need to be at the heart of all that the Urras does. We are delighted to be a founder member of Community Land Outer Hebrides, a distinct Hebridean branch of Community Land Scotland.

Another major piece of the regeneration jigsaw was the launch of the National Islands Plan in 2019. This provides a framework for action with 13 Strategic Objectives aimed at improving outcomes for island communities. Good working relationships have been built with the Scottish Government delivery team which has enabled community landowners to help shape delivery of this Plan and benchmark performance.

From our recent consultation activities, we are confident that the previous priorities remain relevant, although there is a need for some evolving of their focus. These are highlighted to the right.

The next delivery period for the Urras will require more focus on strategic projects - an appropriate balance requires to be struck between smaller, business-as-usual activities that provide important cohesion within the community and the freeing of resources to deliver more tellingly against the Strategic Plan impacts. The Community Investment Fund will be expected to play its part in this and ongoing adjustments to products and evaluation processes may be required in order to deliver the desired results.



# Strategic Priorities

## CARE AND WELLBEING

Living healthier lives, improving access to care facilities and giving opportunities to participate.

## 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.

## EXCEPTIONAL PLACE

Delivering and enabling activities that attract more people and enable families to thrive.

# Visioning The Future

## Dealbhachadh Sealladh air na tha ri teachd

### Ar Leirsinn

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.

The Urras has outlined what success would look like at the end of the 20 year period as set out in the diagram below.



**This strategy is strongly aligned with the Scottish Government National Performance Framework outcomes as follows :**

- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We are healthy and active
- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment.



'The Urras also embraces the Principles of the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement published in September 2017.'



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION  
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA



# Engagement

## Com-pàirteachadh

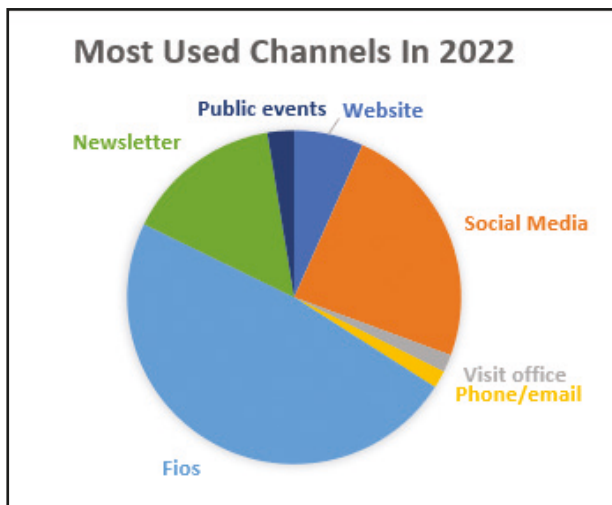
Improved engagement is key to delivering much of the Urras' strategic ambitions in a sustainable manner. The scope covers informal visits or phonecalls to the office right through to in depth community consultation exercises. Relationship building should underpin all engagement where practicable and this should encourage higher levels of participation and membership.

One key determinant of long-term success is enhancing the unique value provided to the Galson Estate residents. This includes local knowledge, project planning support and aftercare, local decision-making, focus on building community capacity, tailoring support to fit local circumstances, delivering social and cultural programmes, empowering the community and co-ordinating local resources to deliver a greater impact. Ultimately, value is determined by the Urras' customers, consumers and stakeholders rather than the organisation itself.



The Urras has a wide-reaching audience and people engage for a variety of reasons. These could be estate business enquiries, tourism enquiries, such as reservations for the Galson Campsite, energy saving and recycling enquiries (e.g., Habost Amenity & Household Recycling Site). Other reasons could be Community investment and event enquiries (arts, wellbeing, engagement with young people via Plòigh, Loch Stiapabhat Local Nature Reserve, etc.) or gardening enquiries (Hebridean Community Garden).

The Urras communicates in a variety of different ways, including printed press, media releases, newsletters, websites, event booking pages, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) plus by telephone and via word of mouth. Research over previous years has shown the preferred channels as below, strongly weighted towards non-physical communication. Results from 2022 are shown above.



The Urras currently has around 775 members, representing 43% of the estimated population. Members receive newsletters and are able to participate in formal activities such as the AGM but benefits are often not persuasive. The deeper the relationship with residents, the higher the value they place on the Urras which should result in increasing membership. As the Urras matures as an organisation and becomes more established, engagement with its target audiences becomes increasingly more difficult and requires more sophisticated techniques to be deployed.

The community newspaper continues to be the most popular medium but social media channels have grown in importance over recent years with rising engagement across various platforms (Twitter/Facebook/Instagram). In terms of more traditional channels, The Urras provides a regular column and articles for Fios plus media releases to other outlets periodically. An annual report has been added to the document family with the first edition launched at the 2022 AGM.

All these aspects are addressed in the communications plan covering the period 2023-27.

# Care and Wellbeing

## Cùram agus Soirbheas

### Achievements

- Community LED Project
- Sunnd programme (Line Dancing, Salsa, Gentle Movement, Release Method, Gym Classes, Art workshops, Guided Relaxation, Sea Swimming)
- Health Walks
- Safe At Home Workshops
- Personal Care Sessions
- Healthy Eating Sessions
- First Aid Courses
- Crossroads Care Attendants (CIF)
- Dementia Café (CIF)
- Extra-care Housing Outline Proposals

### Measurement

- 67% consider their health to be good
- 17% of residents assisted with energy efficiency works (41% in Scottish Islands)
- 26% of pensionable age residents receive pension credit (12% nationally)
- 9% of housing in EPC Bands A-C (55% nationally)
- 42% consider their homes are uncomfortably cold in the winter (35% in Scottish Islands)
- 207 households provided with energy advice and LED lightbulbs
- 230 health sessions
- 10 Sunnd health partners
- Indicative design completed for 16 extra-care units

Since the 1950s, life expectancy has increased dramatically. Estimates provided by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (based on latest 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.

We desire this to be a place where everyone can live long and healthy lives. We also want to create an inclusive and innovative society that not only supports our older population to live healthy lives but ensures they have opportunities to participate, contribute and thrive. If people live longer, but not healthier lives, then more will spend a greater proportion of their lives in some form of ill-health. Whereas the pressing issues in 2016 were around 'repatriating' former residents housed in care elsewhere across the islands, and improving respite opportunities, the focus has subsequently widened out to include wellbeing. The ambition for closer-at-hand care accommodation and respite facilities remains, however, delivering this will be far more complex than expected and will take considerable time. Support across a range of issues has been added to the palette of interventions that the Urras can offer.

At a community level the Urras has undertaken much work to ensure the community is able to access services as well as working with local partners. It is important that communities are now considered partners and are in a position to co-design services that meet the needs of their residents.

The cost-of-living crisis has heightened the extreme fuel poverty levels across the islands and also brought many families into previously unimagined hardship. Efforts must continue to reduce bills and assist households in acute hardship in partnership with local agencies.





## Actions / Obraichean-gníomha

- Encourage and support range of additional elderly activities with enhanced accessibility
- Support events that engage the elderly
- Deliver support to reduce hardship and poverty
- Develop pilot initiatives to reduce consumer energy bills
- Develop local energy-related intelligence and create energy plan with clear actions
- Explore options for low carbon community transport with partner organisations
- Work with relevant public agencies to develop local care and respite facilities
- Support advocacy for vulnerable members of the community.



## Benefits / Buannachdan

- Retention of inter-generational family units
- Increase in community wellbeing
- Reduction in fuel poverty
- Reduction in household hardship
- Reduced demand on public services
- Decentralisation of public services
- Enhanced independent living
- Decline in social isolation.

"There was something for everyone, from cookery demonstrations where we learned about new recipes, handy tips and tricks, to learning about local historical events, plus the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet. The physical activity sessions like dance routines were engaging and fun and, before we knew it, we were getting an energetic workout while having a great time."

*Elenor*



UN Sustainable Development Goals





# Tourism

## Turasachd

### Achievements

- Tourism Strategy
- Heritage Centre Redevelopment
- Public Toilets/Shower
- Campervan Facilities
- Visitor Website & App
- Community Land Exhibition
- Ness-Tolsta Walk Improvements
- Guided Walks
- Coastal Walk Improvements

### Measurement

- 66% of residents consider that tourism has a positive impact
- 14% of residents consider there is adequate provision for tourists
- 48% of residents consider there are job opportunities in tourism
- 32% awareness of Visit Galson Estate digital tourism platforms (Website, App, Booklets)
- 8% of jobs in hospitality
- 100,000 visitors per annum
- 37% of visitor spend over £100 per group
- £81,000 grant investment in facilities

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 number of cyclists and the area also attracts significant campervan/motorhome traffic.

Many visitors struggle to find the range of supporting services and facilities they expect. The lack of accommodation, catering, public toilets and signage creates a disappointing experience for some. Further effort is also required to develop locally branded/themed products, events and activities with a strong Gaelic infusion, beyond addressing the general level of services and facilities.



Due to ferry capacity issues, the main aim is around encouraging more people who are already on the island (locals and visitors) to travel north and entice people to stay longer when they do visit (and therefore spend more money). Cruise visitor numbers are due to increase significantly following infrastructure investments at Stornoway Port. Opportunities exist to create itineraries showcasing local culture and heritage in central venues with retailing included. The main barriers for visitors appear to be accommodation and all-day food but increased volumes have put pressure on key infrastructure which also requires additional investment.



## Actions / Obraichean-gnìomha

- Improve access to visitor information through the internet, promotional material and local information points
- Lead on the improvement of infrastructure and facilities at key locations
- 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 a range of outdoor activities
- Assist providers to promote and deliver guided tours and events, particularly to cater for cruise visitors
- Facilitate pooling of knowledge and resources, improving product consistency and achieving economies of scale
- Investigate longer term potential for improved local visitor branding, area promotion and high-quality product ranges
- Consider means of showcasing and increasing opportunities for local producers/makers
- Ensure Gaelic products are available in all service outlets



## Benefits / Buannachdan

- Increased income for tourism-related businesses
- Additional employment
- Extended visitor season
- Clear branding
- Improved wages
- Stronger business models



UN Sustainable Development Goals





# Crofting and Land Use

## Croitearachd agus Cleachdadh Fearainn

### Achievements

- Crofting administration
- 12 affordable houses
- New crofts / croft re-letting
- Drystone Walling Courses
- Goose Management Scheme
- Deer Management Scheme
- Sporting Management leases
- Fishing Courses
- Loch Stiapabhat Nature Reserve
- Hebridean Community Garden

### Measurement

- 44% of residents believe there are young crofters working in area (36% in Scottish Islands)
- 82% of residents buy food from local sources (equal to Scottish Islands)
- 10 drystone wall courses run with 79 attendees
- 6 fishing sessions
- 12 affordable houses facilitated
- Housing potential at Upper Barvas included in Outer Hebrides Housing Land Audit
- 3 new polycrubs and new 12 growing beds for community use

Whilst society continues to change 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. 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 but has proved difficult to deliver.

Housing remains at the top of many people's list for rural regeneration. Publicly funded housing has been accelerated over recent years but still has a tendency to produce the wrong product



and community groups are beginning to look to other solutions. We need to deliver the homes we need in the right places and of a quality and type to meet people's changing household needs, including those created by an ageing population. Areas of population decline experience problems as housing developments are less likely in these areas without the economic investment alongside.

Natural capital presents opportunities, such as carbon credits and it would be wrong to presume these opportunities are not for crofting communities, and easy to dismiss them as being for the larger estates or landowners. Crofters and crofting communities should be mindful of the opportunities that may be available to them but adopt a long-term perspective.







## Actions / Obraichean-gníomha

- Continue to provide crofting administration support.
- Develop new approaches to housing provision
- 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
- Engage with species management initiatives and build local capacity/skills
- Provide programmes of guidance and tuition and, in particular, showcase crofting activities to younger families and individuals
- Assist collaborative working
- Contribute to national and regional consultations

## Benefits / Buannachdan

- Increased value of livestock and produce
- Healthier lives through increased local produce
- Carbon reduction through lower food miles
- Additional income
- Retention/attraction of population



UN Sustainable Development Goals





# Exceptional Place

## Àite air leth

### Achievements

- Community Investment Fund
- Fèisean (Dùthchas, Fèis na Fairge)
- Plòigh Holiday Clubs (Easter/summer)
- UHI Evening Talks (Crofting/Climate/ Culture/ Heritage)
- Cookery Demos & Tasting
- Gaelic Development Programme
- House Numbering
- Calendar/Photo Competition
- Exhibitions / Artworks
- Household Recycling
- Photography Classes
- Mountain Biking Sessions
- School Visits
- Eco Schools
- School Trips
- P7 Transition Programme
- Scrap Removal
- Rural Housing Body status

### Measurement

- 95% of residents rate area as good (99% for Outer Hebrides)
- 87% of residents feel strongly tied to area (95% for Outer Hebrides)
- 16% of parents have access to suitable childcare (30% in islands)
- 58% of residents volunteer (46% across the Outer Hebrides)
- £40,620 in grants awarded for culture and heritage activities
- £15,000 in grants awarded for young people's trips/excursions
- School roll of 79 at Lionel
- Gaelic medium roll of 45 at Lionel

Creating a place for all generations and families to live well and flourish locally is fundamental to retaining and attracting people. We want to encourage families and people of working age to remain here and also to come and build their lives here; and make a positive contribution to our economy, and our community.

As in much of the Highlands and Islands, the Galson Estate area has been drawn into a falling birth rate and sustained net outward migration over the last 50 years or so, which has been near impossible to address. Migration is heavily concentrated amongst younger people, leading to an increasingly ageing population. As part of the mix, life expectancy has been increasing. Family sizes have reduced from generation to generation and the number of second homes is growing. Some of the most significant population loss in the Outer Hebrides over the previous 20 years has been recorded in North Lewis. Declining population levels impact on the sustainability of the community and the retention of key local services. As the proportion of Scotland's pensionable age population grows, the proportions of both Scotland's working age and child population are projected to fall. People are waiting longer and having fewer children. A declining working age population means that there are fewer people available to deliver key

public services or to meet gaps in the workforce. In addition, the lack of working age families can threaten the sustainability of essential public services like schools which risks families moving elsewhere as has been experienced.



We recognise the importance of enabling all children to have access to high quality and affordable childcare which meets their needs and the needs of their families and the community.

Young people are the future of our area and more attention needs to be given to retaining and attracting those in the critical 16-30 age group.

The change in work patterns with increasing levels of home working as a result of COVID-19 and increased use of digital opportunities does present increased opportunities but only if the necessary infrastructure is in place.

## Actions / Obraichean-gnìomha

- Continue to deliver programmes of events and activities
- Support the provision of family-friendly facilities and amenities
- Participate in repopulation initiatives
- Engage with recent arrivals and provide information through welcome packs and similar
- Pursue opportunities for deeper engagement with young people/families
- Assist with provision of childcare facilities and services
- Devise and deliver young adult initiatives
- Promote family-friendly policies to local employers
- Explore live-work pilot initiatives



## Benefits / Buannachdan

- Improved age balance
- Attraction of younger families
- Retention of young adults
- Increased work opportunities
- Enhanced local amenities and facilities
- Enhanced sustainability for local businesses and organisations



"In relation to rural employment, the Internet is more important than the fishing net."  
*Prof Duncan Maclennan, University of Glasgow*



UN Sustainable Development Goals





# Community Investment Fund

## Maoin-airgid na Coimhearsnachd

CIF has proven to be an important community investment vehicle and offers significant opportunities for local organisations to develop. There is a well set-out application and evaluation process based on clear criteria. The approval rate is high which indicates that communications with prospective applicants work effectively. Coverage has been encouraging with nearly all community organisation across the Estate having been assisted.

Up to autumn 2020, CIF grants totalled £394,271 through 105 awards to 56 organisations - 31 within the Estate and 25 based outside of the Estate which offered benefits to residents. Overall, 80% of funds awarded have been to organisations based within the Estate, indicating that external grants per applicant are generally lower in value (£9,755 compared to £3,054, respectively). Leverage has been impressive at £7.05 raised for every £1 that the Urras invested, particularly for the medium and larger grant streams.

CIF has delivered against most of the Urras' charitable objectives but, for example, poverty and industry sectors (i.e. tourism) have lagged behind. Regarding strategic priorities, tourism plus crofting and land use have been much less prevalent to date.

After recovery from the sub-sea electricity cable failure in October 2020, CIF activity relaunched in June 2022 with a dedicated member of staff in place to interact with applicants and provide the necessary financial and administration support.

Products have been streamlined plus the application, evaluation and project completion processes were simplified to reduce the administration burden both internally and for applicants. One feature of this is a relationship approach that can be adopted for key partners to set out a suite of projects and activities over an extended timeframe that will deliver against their long-term aims and objectives with milestones and obligations set out.



"Good experience with CIF - straightforward paperwork and very good turnaround time."  
CIF applicant

After-care provision will be available to assist the delivery of expected benefits and impacts from larger investments and, as part of this, the Project Co-ordination role undertaken by the Urras staff will continue.

Consultation will be undertaken with businesses and profit-orientated entities to determine what ongoing support is required.

Promotion of all interventions will be made through media releases and statements, with images of applicant/project to be collected as routine, and also some physical recognition to be provided at the facilities/amenities/equipment

through a range of materials with the Urras branding (plaques, signs, stickers, logo, etc.). An impact measurement framework will now be in place for staff to complete using information obtained from applicants.

There is no doubt that relationships with key organisations have been fostered through CIF grants and important partnerships have emerged. It is also clear that CIF activity provides the Urras with regular opportunities for direct engagement with a range of organisations and beneficiaries based across the Estate.

# Delivering The Vision

## Libhrigeadh an t-Seallaidh

Some proposals can be rolled-out 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 solutions.

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

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 improve alignment to the Strategic Plan.

Strategic planning will be a more integrated part of the business-as-usual activities and is expected to follow the following cycle in the remaining part of the 20 year lifespan

- second review/update commencing mid-2026 (for 20th Anniversary in January 2027)
- third review/update commencing mid-2031 (for 25th Anniversary in January 2032)
- final review and evaluation commencing mid-2036 (for 30th Anniversary in January 2037).

The stages in each cycle are noted below and could take three or four months to complete overall.



During interim periods, directors are committed to engaging in ‘board conversations’ to be held to guide strategic planning (aim for 1-2 annually as a minimum) and also providing reflections on progress at each AGM.



# Resources

## Goireasan agus Stòrasan

The Urras team has grown significantly from three in 2010 to 16 posts in 2022. The build-up has taken place incrementally, initially through externally funded posts (with some staff retained after the original contracts expired) and, more recently, through unassisted recruitment. Until recently, staff turnover has been low and very few staff have moved on to other opportunities.

The main item of expenditure is clearly staffing which has increased significantly over the 15 years since the buy-out. The majority of staff are fully funded by the Urras, only Graduate Placement and Apprenticeship posts are now externally financed.

There are a number of critical or core functions for the Urras as a community landowner and these must be adequately resourced with succession. This offers improved resilience in the case of key individuals departing or being unavailable for prolonged periods due to illness, etc. Increasing levels of part-time working also bring challenges. Accordingly, directors have strengthened the management team with additional finance and business skills.

### *resilient, resourceful and responsive*

Through wind energy income, the Urras is well advanced in being fully self-financing for core-operations. This adds significant responsibility for careful decision-making on the allocation of resources, primarily monies and personnel, between the various development proposals and business-as-usual activities. The events of the last three years has shown the Urras needs to be resilient, resourceful and responsive in the face of changing circumstances and cannot rest on its laurels.

The success of the Baile an Truiseil turbines has enabled the Urras to start realising its potential for regeneration across the Estate. Although there have been setbacks, income has been in line with expectations and occasionally above when windy conditions persist and electricity outages are minimised. Net income over the first eleven years is constrained until repayment of commercial

loans (there are four years remaining). The average income is £415,000 over the expected twenty-year lifespan of these assets.

"Working locally is a huge bonus for me - I cannot now imagine having to drive very far to get to work each day. Great to work for my local community and see progress within the area".

*Urras team member*

Increasing autonomy has reduced reliance on securing grants, which can carry significant bureaucracy, and enabled the Urras to adopt a more strategic approach to external partnering. There remains a strong desire for partnership, most notably with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, which is critical to developing, nurturing and maintaining local services and amenities. They form part of the platform for delivering the Urras' key ambitions, particular for the larger growth investments, such as extra-care housing and tourism facilities.

Addressing climate change is an area of increasing focus and efforts will continue to evolve the Urras operations to reduce its carbon footprint. Climate change also forms part of the assessment criteria for grant applications.

Significant effort has been spent on establishing Community Land Outer Hebrides as a formal consortium of community land trusts to build upon earlier networking to share best practice and knowledge for long-term sustainability. There are likely to be considerable benefits from increased collaborative working and exploring the unique opportunities available to the sector.

Around 70% of income is currently from wind energy, the balance is provided mainly through commercial contracts. Annual expenditure is running at around £300,000 excluding projects. Over the next 5 years, resources will be increasingly aligned to deliver against the Strategic Plan and ensure sufficient momentum is achieved with key transformational initiatives and projects.



# Measuring Progress

## A' Cumail Sùil air Adhartas



Measurement is needed to track the Urras' performance using appropriate indicators. An organisation's implementation process can generally be summarised in the linear diagram above. Activities are delivered from the Inputs, Outputs come from the Activities, Outcomes are the changes that occur and Impacts are significant differences achieved over the longer-term.

There is a tendency to become too focused on measuring what has been done rather than what has changed (Outcomes). In other words, measuring busyness (which is easier to control) rather than desired changes and impacts. The level of control reduces when moving from left to right above due to external factors and, therefore, it is preferable to have a wide range of indicators towards the right.

Outputs (activities/programmes/services) can be measured for quantity, take-up, access and quality. Outcomes (positive changes which are of interest to stakeholders) can be measured for shifts in behaviour, attitude, condition, knowledge or status. Outputs tend to reflect past activity (lag) whereas Outcomes give insight to emerging trends (lead).

As can be seen below the Urras has developed a measurement framework to help maximise its impacts over the 20 year strategic timeframe. This involves a significant array of indicators that will be monitored carefully and benchmarked where possible to allow area comparison. Such an approach requires a process of comprehensive data collection which is now being implemented.



## Acknowledgements / Fios-freagairtan

- Scottish Land Commission : Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, September 2017
- Community energy: Entanglements of community, state, and private sector
- National Islands Plan 2019
- National Islands Plan Survey Report July 2021
- A Scotland For The Future : Opportunities and Challenges of Scotland's Population March 2021
- A Scotland Of Better Places, 2021
- A comparison of the financial benefits arising from private and community owned wind farms: Point and Sandwick Development Trust and Aquaterra Ltd, June 2021
- Community Wealth Building - Delivering Transformation in Scotland's Local and Regional Economies
- Community Insight Report Development Trust Association Scotland June 2022
- CnES/HIE Recovery Strategy 2020-2022
- HIE Operating Plan 2022
- National Planning Framework IV, Scottish Government 2022
- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, Scottish Government March 2022

## Contact

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn

Tom na Bà

South Galson

Isle of Lewis

HS2 0SH

Tel: 01851 850393

e-mail: [office@uogltd.com](mailto:office@uogltd.com)

[www.galsontrust.com](http://www.galsontrust.com)

Strategic Plan 2017-2037 Plana Ro-innleachdail

December 2022

Published by Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn