



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

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

Gearr-Chunntas Luchd-Ghniomh

Welcome to 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 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 momentous struggles to get the project over the finishing line, the wind energy development at Baile an Truiseil is now set to pay dividends for the Galson Estate. It has 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.

How should these funds be used ? We have looked at what other communities have tried – at their successes and failures - and attempted to learn from these examples. We are clear for the need to have a flexible strategic plan which has regular progress reviews incorporated. The plan has been developed through inclusive consultation activity, rather than relying on one-off public events and surveys.

As part of the process, the Urras undertook a series of group discussions with cross-sections of the community and with a range 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, ? households across the area, covering a mix of ages and locations, were interviewed in person to ensure that a more detailed picture of the situation could be determined ??

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 growing facilities, together with guidance and tuition

Visioning The Future / Dealbhachadh Seallaidh Air Na Tha Ri Teachd

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			
Impacts (changes required)	Growing & Sustainable Population	High Quality of Life	Economically Strong	Unique & Cohesive Community
Outputs (deliverables)	Increasing population High youth employment Healthy school roles High level of house occupation	Wide range of local services Improved social & recreational facilities Eradicated fuel poverty	Increase in visitors Improved range of cultural, heritage and leisure activities More visitor accommodation More entrepreneurs	Effective partnerships Increase in Gaelic speakers Improved range of local produce High community engagement
Activities (actions required)	Support childcare Create affordable homes Support key sectors Improve access to higher/further education Boost digital connectivity	Boost elderly care packages Enhance activities for elderly Improve home energy Maintain local services Enhance transport links Community renewables	Increase recreational activities Extend range of visitor facilities Improve visitor information Develop local businesses	Increase cultural activities Expand local produce Identify lead organisation Enhance livestock management Boost croft take-up Support voluntary sector
Initiatives/Projects (specifics)	Childcare services/local facilities Education/training bursaries Social rented housing Mountain bike track Youth café Business training initiative ?	Elderly care home Elderly home services Home energy initiative Hardship fund Community renewables project	Footpaths/walks/trails Campervan/camp site Wildlife facilities Visitor information points Sporting/fishing Outdoor activities centre business growth/mentoring programme.	Ness-Tolsta Walk Horticulture facilities Crofting support services Create Gaelic Plan Croft re-lettings Acquire N Rona/Sulasgeir Expand Community Investment Fund
Guiding Principles	UOG to ensure its own long-term sustainability; wide partnership approach is critical and new delivery models may be required; utilise local expertise/knowledge; focus on community-led initiatives but also exploit public funding opportunities and public sector partnerships/delivery models; avoid 'crowding out' of local entrepreneurs.			

SETTING THE SCENE

Ullachadh-Sgeoil

Change is all around us, rarely in living memory has society seen as many uncertainties and unknowns converge at the one period of time. Across international, European, regional and local landscapes, many of the previous well known and understood institutions and principles in life have been challenged and either disappeared or been radically altered in recent years.

Society is confronted with a unique combination of circumstances including :

- Frequent political change, creating uncertainty and inconsistency in public policy, causing constant debate around Scotland's constitutional future within the UK and outwith the European Union.
- services to achieve budgetary cuts against rising expectations of what public services should deliver.
- Unreliable and stagnating economic systems, creating great uncertainty in markets and placing limitations on businesses.
- Climate change impacts on places, people and livelihoods.

At a community level, we are seeing the disintegration of traditional economic and social activities; the emergence and growth of new footloose economic and social opportunities; the reduction and even withdrawal of public services; and, the dying out of crofting townships. Demographics continue to be challenging with younger people leaving rural areas for education and employment advantages in urban locations. Birth rates are lower and family units are smaller but the numbers of households are increasing.

We have sought to learn from other communities, looking at their development aspirations, consultation processes and ways of communicating with residents. We have seen many traditional and some innovative approaches, with successes and failures. We have aimed to tailor what we learned to suit our particular community. The days of just holding single public meetings and distributing some leaflets are in the past; today, people need to be consulted in a variety of ways, through different media and given opportunities to engage when and how it suits them. This calls for a community conversation over many months rather than a single event or survey.

In March 2016, the Urras kicked off the consultation process with two workshops involving various members of the community. This helped to set the broad agenda for the aspirations of the Estate community and helped shape the 'Visioning The Future' table that is on Page ? below. This was followed up with various focused sessions, including senior citizens groups, churches,

school children and public agencies. Separate household and youth surveys also formed part of the process. In the course of the consultation, the Urras engaged directly with around ? individuals, ? organisations,

In addition to the area specific priorities identified, the wider outcomes in the Single Outcomes Agreement created through the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership should also be kept in focus.

- **Populations** - The populations of the Outer Hebrides are stable with a better balance of age, gender and socio economic groups.
- **Economy** - The economy of the Outer Hebrides and the economies within the Outer Hebrides are thriving.
- **Well Educated, Well Trained & Well Skilled** - The people of the Outer Hebrides are well educated, well trained and well skilled
- **Health & Wellbeing** - The physical and mental health and wellbeing of the people throughout the Outer Hebrides is improved
- **Communities** - The communities of the Outer Hebrides are stronger and more able to identify, articulate and take action and responsibility regarding their needs and aspirations.
- **Natural and Cultural Resources** - The people of the Outer Hebrides derive maximum benefit from the natural and cultural resources to benefit future generations
- **Services** - The services of the Outer Hebrides are of high quality, continuously improving and reflecting local needs.

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.

The Urras is grateful for the whole-hearted and enthusiastic participation of all those involved and is keen to maintain this inter-action and dialogue in the years ahead. We are committed to measuring progress and have set out proposals for monitoring the delivery of development ideas in the years ahead.



Prìomh-Chùis : Cùram

Recent experiences with local authority care services have been well below expectations. Elderly residents have been provided with places far from families as there is no care facility locally, which 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 procure their own solutions.

Estimates provided by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (based on ? mid-year projections) indicate that a significant proportion of population (will be of post-retirement age group 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, 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
- Work with relevant public agencies to develop local care and respite facilities

Benefits / Buannachdan

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

PRIORITY : TOURISM

Prìomh-Chùis : Turasachd

The Butt of Lewis is a key attraction in the Outer Hebrides, second to the Callanish Stones, as is the natural environment. 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 north most tip of the island to pursue these activities but struggle to find the range of supporting services and facilities they expect. 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 have 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 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
- Develop for a pooling of knowledge and resources, improving product consistency and achieving economies of scale
- Over the longer term, investigate 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



Prìomh-Chùis : Croitearach agus Cleachdaidh Ferrann

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. A new generation of horticulture infrastructure has led to renewed interest from many people in self-sustainable food production and this should be encouraged and supported.

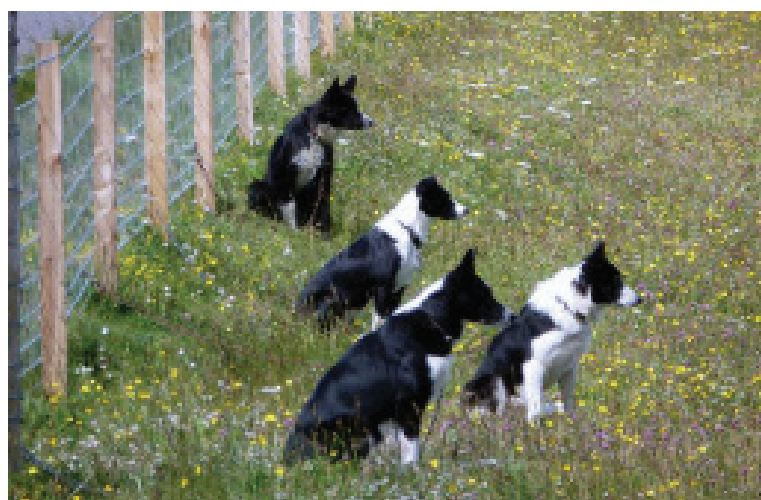
The age profile of crofting remains challenging and additional efforts are needed to encourage retention and attraction of younger crofting families. Re-letting of unused crofts is a priority for the communities, especially for younger families, some headway has been made but this requires increased momentum.

Actions / Obraichean-Gnìomha

- Investigate potential administration support
- Accelerate croft re-letting where possible and develop croft entrant packages
- Support the expansion of local produce and assist with development of 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 will assist to address population imbalance





OTHER INITIATIVES : COMMUNITY LIFE

Prìomh-Chùis : Sèol-betha a' Choimhearsneachd

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

The overall top 10 survey responses were as follows.

Ness-Tolsta Walk **Socially rented housing**
Visitor Information centre **Childcare facilities/services**
Home Energy improvements **Hardship Fund**
Mountain biking track **Aquire North Rona/
Sùlaisgeir**
Youth Cafe **Fishing/shooting activities**

Within the tree main age groups the top priorities are as follows:

Age Groups	60+	45 - 59	16 - 44
First Choice	Ness - Tolsta walk	Ness - Tolsta walk	Childcare facilities and services
Second Choice	Home Energy Improvements	Home Energy Improvements	Visitor information Centre
Third Choice	Hardship fund	Visitor information Centre	Ness - Tolsta walk

Consultations with Young people highlighted the folowing priorities:



Measuring Progress / A'Cumail Sùil Air Adhartas

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	?
	Healthy school roles	Pre-school roll School rolls	National Census Local authority school roles/forecast rolls
	High level of house occupation	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
	Eradicated fuel poverty	Number of households in fuel poverty	Housing agency surveys Local surveys/data collection
Economically Strong	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	Quantity of produce Number of local markets	Local surveys/data collection
	More visitor accommodation	Quantity of bedspace Bedspace grading	Local surveys/data collection
	More entrepreneurs	Business/social enterprise start-ups	Local surveys/data collection
Unique & Cohesive Community	Effective partnerships		Local surveys/data collection
	Increase in Gaelic speakers	Number of speakers Number of young speakers	National/regional surveys Local surveys/data collection
	Enhanced township activity	Number of active grazings committees	Local surveys/data collection
	High community engagement	Attendance numbers at public events Increase in UOG membership	Attendance lists Membership register

DELIVERING THE VISION

Lìbhrigeadh an t-Sealladh



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 the proposal
4. Co-ordination and liaison with an existing public-sector agency to plan and delivery locally-tailored, accelerated 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 communities would step forward to assist.

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

All proposals will be assessed under the Community Investment Fund criteria at an appropriate stage in their development to ensure that the Urras' key charitable aims are being met as follows.

- 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

Communications will be important 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
Facebook/Twitter	At least monthly	Internet
Annual General Meeting	Annually	Only to members
Other public meetings	Occasional	Open to public

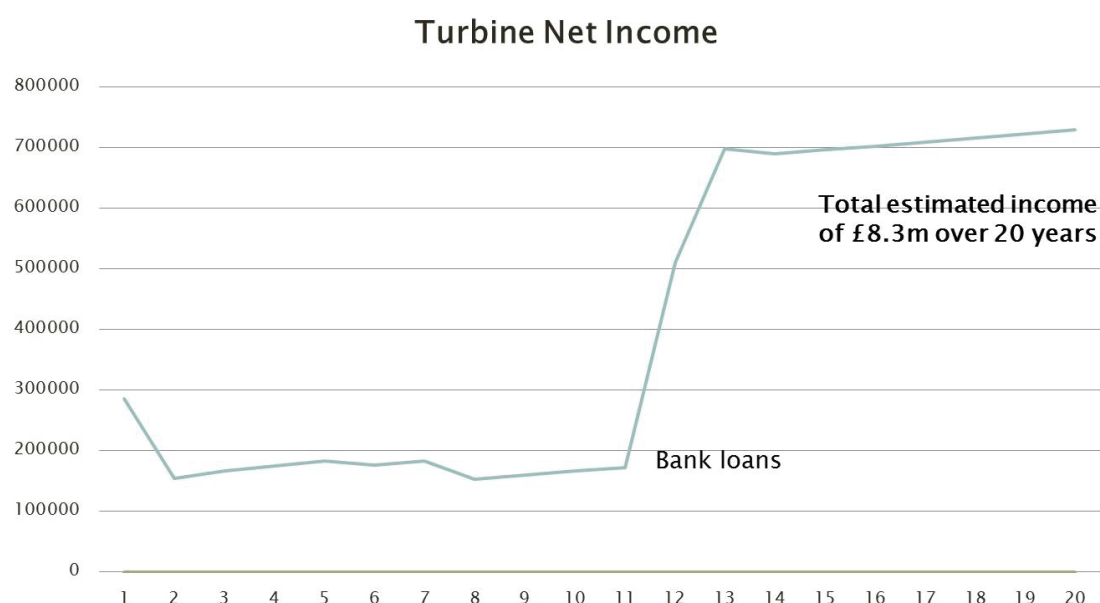
RESOURCES

Goireasan agus Stòrais

The Urras currently employs five development and administration staff plus two waste management operatives, amounting to 7 full-time equivalents. A Community Account Management officer employed 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 position demands careful decision-making on the allocation of resources, monies and personnel, between the various development proposals and business as usual activities. Urras directors will require to address these issues on a regular basis.

The anticipated income profile over the lifespan of the Ballantrushal wind turbines is shown below for information. Actual annual amounts will be dependent on a range of factors – one third of annual income is based on prevailing electricity market wholesale tariffs – not least UK Government policy which has sought to undermine renewable energy support schemes. Net income over the first eleven years will be significantly lower until commercial loans have been repaid after which net income will rise considerably.



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.

- Ballantrushal 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
- Co-ordination 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

Specific actions that the Urras plans to pursue are :

- Creation of new crofts
- Devolved management of the marine estate
- Community skills programmes
- Community advice
- ?

Data protection :



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND

Maoin-Airgid a'Choimhearsnachd

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, 3? organisations had been assisted with a total commitment of £? in grants awarded during the pilot programme.

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

The Urras will fund a wide range of community projects that meet the key objectives of 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 a 12 month period from letter of offer. This fund can be applied for twice in any year by an organisation. If applying for a second time, there must be at least 6 months between awards.

Up to £5,000

This is a newly launched grant category with a set upper limit of £5k 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 a 12 month period from a letter of offer.

Up to £10,000

The Urras expects to launch this fund in Spring 2017 which will 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:

Clear outcomes showing strategic relevance	Look to the table and link your application to the priorities you believe your will project will contribute towards these strategic priorities.
Provides value for money	If you can, provide costings or quotes that will help us to assess value for money.
Shows strong evidence of need	You should have carried out some market research to show there is a need for your project or activity.
Avoids duplication of services	It is advisable to not duplicate services, so ensure you application says what makes your project different.
Supports the involvement of the wider community	Provide examples of how you will engage with the community and raise awareness of your project/

References:

(to come)



Contact

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn
UOG Business Centre
Tom na Ba
South Galson
Isle of Lewis
HS2 OSH

Tel: 01851 850393

e-mail: office@uogltd.com

www.galsontrust.com