

CROFTING COMMUNITY TRUSTS

Is crofting the obvious answer?

David Cameron, chair of Community Land Scotland, introduces this feature on crofting community trusts.

COMMUNITY LAND ownership is already reaching into areas where for many decades people have lived and watched decline.

In many places there is still an excellent quality of life but only for an ever-decreasing number of people – as lack of housing, lack of employment and lack of social opportunities have led to falling population, disappearance of young people and closure of basic facilities such as shops, banks, and schools.

Community Land Scotland and its members are attempting and succeeding to turn this situation round and we are working more and more with aspiring communities where there is a desire to do things for themselves.

The provision of adequate initial finance for land purchase, appropriate technical help and the presence of political will reflected in legislation are essential.

The first two essential elements are now in place and the third is almost there with the forthcoming Community Empowerment Bill and a revamped Land Reform Act being discussed in Holyrood this summer.

All this opens the way for many more communities to follow the lead of, for example, Bhaltois, Borve and Annishadder, Sleat and West Harris, where community land ownership has led to transformational changes.

Crofting is at the heart of retaining and increasing the population within these examples and today other

similar communities now have the potential to revitalise many more areas of their own land. Today in the crofting counties there are more opportunities opening up than there have been for a very long time.

But now let's think further into the future.

Has the time come for us to look beyond the present upsurge in communities successfully doing things for themselves?

Should we now be looking at how to answer one of the big questions?

How can areas which have been completely cleared of people be resettled and can crofting play a part in this?

Perhaps the answer to this was heard in the crofting showcase presentation given by Kenny MacLennan, chairman of the Carloway Trust and Murdo Mackay, chairman of the West Harris Trust, at the recent Community Land Scotland conference.

Murdo mentioned that in 1929 the Westminster government bought the 16,000 acres of West Harris from private owners and in a mere four years, by 1933, that land was allocated, houses built and crofters were back living on the same land from which many of their forebears had been cleared earlier to the poorer east coast of Harris and beyond.

The establishment of these new crofts laid the foundation for the inspiring development now being undertaken by the West Harris community who purchased their crofting estate from the Scottish Government in 2010.

Can the 1929 situation be repeated today? Why not? Along with other crofting initiatives, there is no reason why not.

Empty land areas must be resettled and once again the sound of families living and working in strong communities will be heard.

It can be done.



Abandoned hearth, Ardfernal, Isle of Jura

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Community ownership of ministers' crofting estate programme

COMMUNITIES LIVING ON Scottish Government's crofting estates are being offered assistance to investigate buying their own land.

Launching the programme in May, minister for land reform Dr Aileen McLeod confirmed that "... whilst Scottish Government will first and foremost remain a willing landlord, if a crofting community expresses a desire to take control of its own future we will support those ambitions and be an agreeable seller".

Highland and Islands Enterprise, working in partnership with

Community Land Scotland, will assist communities wishing to explore the opportunities and responsibilities of becoming a landowner. Whilst there is no intention to dispose of their estates, Scottish Government strongly believes that local decision-making and self-determination is key to delivering sustainable and resilient communities.

The government has set a target to double the land currently in community ownership to one million acres by 2020. As one of Scotland's largest landowners, with 58 crofting estates comprising

235,000 acres, they are actively encouraging local communities to consider community ownership.

What does a buyout mean for crofters?

A community buyout of a crofting estate does not affect crofters' existing rights. Crofters' security of tenure, individual crofters' right to buy and all the benefits, protections and responsibilities conferred upon crofters by crofting legislation will continue under community ownership.

What support is available?

A package of support, such as start-up costs; officer and mentoring support; exchange visits; feasibility and business planning assistance; ballot costs; etc will be agreed to best suit your needs and circumstances. It will enable your community to consider the merits or otherwise of a buyout. There is no obligation – the community can walk away at any time.

For further information see www.hie.co.uk/ministerscroftingestates or contact HIE on: 01520 722988 croftingestates@hient.co.uk

CROFTING COMMUNITY TRUSTS

Assynt Crofters Trust

Jeanette Mccarthy gives update on the first-ever crofting trust.

HISTORY WAS MADE in 1993, when the small crofting community of Assynt, set out on the first-ever crofting community buy-out of their land: the North Assynt Estate, which extends to some 22,000 acres of hill and croft land.

The trust has enabled ordinary people who live and work on the land to have some control over their own economic future. Almost half of the agreed purchase price for the total estate was raised by crofters and their supporters throughout Britain. Some donations came those who traced their ancestry to Highlanders who had sought a new life in the colonies during the dark days of the Clearances. The remainder came from public agencies, Sutherland District Council, the Highland Fund and Highland Regional Council in the form of grant and loan.

Today the estate is in the possession of the crofters, free of debt and administered by a board of directors who serve for three years, elected by democratic vote by each of the thirteen townships making up the estate.

North Assynt Estate is still a working estate. There are a variety of sheep and Highland cattle on the crofts and grazings. Inland you will encounter sheilings and plenty of evidence of land tended and cultivated in the distant past. There are birch and hazel woodlands, again with many signs of past management, now often a refuge for red deer as well as many other animals, plants and birds.

The trust has around 200 freshwater lochs, all containing natural wild brown trout. Some also have salmon and sea trout runs. The trust carried out a restocking programme, under guidance from the West of Sutherland Fisheries Trust, with two hundred thousand sea trout fry released over a four-year period.

Anglers are welcomed to the area for some of the finest and most interesting wild brown trout fishing in the Highlands of Scotland. The great fun and challenge of fishing Assynt are the lochs around every corner and behind every mound; it is truly a fisherman's paradise.

The trust plans to open up some of the lochs to less able-bodied fishermen, with a project to install disabled-friendly boats that will allow a wheelchair-bound person to go out on the loch and enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of this stunning landscape, as well as the chance of catching a monster!

The trust welcome donations for this project.

Stòras Uibhist

STÒRAS UIBHIST has been the community landowner of the South Uist Estate since 2006.

The estate extends to 93,000 acres across Eriskay, South Uist and much of Benbecula. South Uist Estate is made up of approximately 1,000 crofts, with around 850 individual tenants, further grazing leases, a tenanted farm and commercial tenancies. Extensive sporting and fishing rights, along with Grogarry Lodge, complete the assets that were bought by the community.

Since 2006 Stòras Uibhist has significantly increased the amount of support provided to the crofting community. For example, gamekeeping staff work closely with SNH, RSPB and crofters on the goose management programme that has involved a crop protection scheme funded through EU Machair LIFE+; and the adaptive management scheme funded by SNH designed to manage goose numbers to a sustainable level.

Stòras Uibhist has added to the funded aspects of these programmes with significant additional resources of its own during the past few years. This year, however, Stòras Uibhist will be the only funder for crop protection, as the Machair LIFE+ scheme has finished. This ongoing crop protection activity is particularly important for crofters where seed crop is being harvested for re-planting next year.

The deer herd on South Uist has grown over the years to the point where marauding deer are becoming an increasing and almost year-round problem. Stòras Uibhist carried out an aerial deer

count early in 2015 and plans to implement a new deer management scheme to reduce the herd and the impact of deer on crofts, gardens and road safety.

Stòras Uibhist has improved access to the excellent brown trout and sea trout fishing, expanding the number of lochs fished and almost doubling the number of anglers coming to South Uist and Benbecula. The biggest beneficiaries of this uplift in visitors are the local hotels, B&Bs, shops and service providers that anglers use.

Stòras Uibhist has invested in estate infrastructure and economic development for the benefit of the wider community of 3,000. A 6.9MW community-owned wind farm was constructed to secure a long-term revenue stream to fund this activity.

Some of the revenue generated by the wind farm is being spent on maintenance, repair and upgrading of the extensive land drainage system that protects the low-lying machair from flooding. The bio-diverse machair of South Uist has been extensively designated by SNH and provides grazing and arable land for crofters. Without it crofting would not be viable in the Uists.

A community fund provides funding to local community groups and businesses to help expand delivery of the social and economic regeneration remit of Stòras Uibhist.

Huw Francis, chief executive of Stòras Uibhist



Smerclate drainage outlet repair





Lochs Show, Laxay, Isle of Lewis

SUPPORTING CROFTING COMMUNITIES

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) recognises the importance of crofting in attracting people to live and work within crofting communities, while also creating local employment opportunities. HIE works with whole crofting communities; the inclusive community - including those with and without direct access to crofting.

HIE AND ITS PARTNERS

We work in partnership with several other bodies to support crofting, to ensure that crofting communities continue to thrive, becoming more resilient and are able to meet opportunities and challenges.

Our key partners include the Crofting Commission, the Scottish Government, local authorities including Business Gateway, Registers of Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean



Scalpaigh na Hearadh, Eilean Siar

COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT

Through each of HIE's eight area teams – covering Shetland; Orkney; Caithness and Sutherland; Moray, Inner Moray Firth; Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross; Outer Hebrides, and Argyll and the Islands – we work directly with a broad range of local communities.

HIE's approach mirrors the way it supports businesses to grow, and is called community account management (CAM). It recognises that each community is different, but all are resourceful, and many face similar challenges such as demographic change, housing, service provision and employment opportunities.

Within HIE account managed communities, there is recognition of the contribution that crofting community development can play in addressing these issues. As a result, many communities have prioritised projects associated with crofting community development.

Our assistance takes many forms and is always tailored to suit the needs and ambitions of each account managed community. In many cases, we have funded the employment of a local development officer who helps the community create growth plans to develop and deliver projects - which make a real and practical difference. These projects are led by the communities themselves, and typically generate income as well as providing services and jobs.

Examples include setting up and managing renewable energy projects and running social enterprises, both of which generate profits to be re-invested in initiatives which benefit the community. In August 2014, HIE was working with a total of 42 account managed communities, 15 of which featured crofting in their growth plans.

- These include Coigach, Ross of Mull and Iona, Glendale and Duirinish, Helmsdale and District, Durness and Laide, Raasay, Scourie, Galson Lochcarron, Durness and Laide, Melness - Tongue and Skerry, Rum, Tiree, Colonsay and Barra and Vatersay.

COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY

Through supporting account managed communities, we have helped local people deliver successful renewable energy installations. Examples include several communities in the Outer Hebrides which have recognised the potential of using less productive, often communally-owned, ground to develop renewable energy projects which generate not just power, but wider community benefits as well.

HIE's work developing Local Energy Economies – using the energy innovatively within the communities in which it is generated – already involves the Wester Ross village of Applecross and has huge potential for other crofting communities.

- HIE has contributed £412,000 to renewable energy projects, £151,790 of which assisted 6 projects under crofting tenure.
- HIE facilitated finance via Community Renewable Energy Investment Fund (REIF) to 3 major projects driven by crofting communities.
- The above schemes delivered £1.54m of direct finance and attracted £18.7m from market sources endorsed by Scottish Government.

GEOGRAPHICALLY FOCUSED COLLABORATION

Working with partners, HIE identified an opportunity through public sector collaboration to enhance the vitality and resilience of crofting communities, and opportunities for crofters to diversify their activities and make the best use of opportunities for funding and other support.

This opportunity is through a geographically focused collaboration and has been designed to build on existing partnership work, focused on specific issues including research, co-operatives, stock clubs, marts, and micro abattoirs.

The resulting pilot projects which will be established during 2015/16 are expected to integrate and focus support from public sector partners to deliver greater impact through acting together.



Crofting Connections: Gaelic medium pupils in Argyll learning how to build a traditional thatch roof

The pilots will be delivered in account managed crofting communities working with HIE to design and deliver a growth plan. The Crofting Commission will support croft occupancy and purposeful use, Business Gateway will guide and assist croft business development opportunities, the Scottish Crofting Federation will offer access to skills and training opportunities, and the Scottish Government (through SGRIPD) will provide localised grant support— all delivered in an integrated manner. Other organisations which are also expected to play a role include Scottish Natural Heritage and Registers of Scotland.

This collaborative, multi-agency approach will aim to bring forward the development and resilience of crofting communities. If the pilots are successful, we expect to lead the expansion of the approach across the region.

CROFTING SKILLS

Newcomers and existing crofters can benefit from an extensive programme of practical training delivered by the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) with funding from HIE and the Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme.

Courses in subjects as varied as dry stone dyking, fencing, soil analysis, sheep shearing, livestock husbandry, poultry keeping, deer management, fruit growing and thatching are available and crofters have taken up training across the region including:

- Support to 480 participants in Entry Level -Intermediate Courses.40 Practical Skills Learners in 2014-17.
- 344 Entry Level participants in Years 1 and 2 well in excess of 240 target.
- By May 2015
 - 704 people had attended Practical Skills Training Courses
 - 338 had participated in Entry - Intermediate Courses
- A new e-learning module has been developed with Napier University

SUPPLY CHAIN SUPPORT

HIE has funded the Community Retailing Network, now part of the Plunkett Foundation, which supports rural communities to establish co-operatives and community enterprises, including food initiatives.

In 2013 the Plunkett Foundation successfully ran a series of workshops in the Western Isles, Skye and Shetland, bringing together local food producers and community shops with the aim of increasing the availability of local food in the local shops.

CROFT CREATION

Through its community account management work, in recent years HIE has helped create several new crofts on the Island of Rum. Several other communities are also recognising that creating new crofts can play a part in helping to retain and grow population.

We have also worked with partners to develop a strong rationale for the creation of innovative woodland crofts. As a result, new woodland crofts have now been successfully established in Mull, and the Community Woodlands Association is supporting communities to create more around Kilfinnan Forest, Colintraive, Glendaruel, Raasay and Lochcarron.

COMMUNITY ASSET ACQUISITION

We have a long track record of investment in community asset acquisition and is a core source of advice and support for crofting communities considering land ownership.

We are also working in partnership with the BIG Lottery Fund across Scotland to deliver the Scottish Land Fund which creates significant opportunities for crofting communities and others to grow through owning and managing their own assets. With awards ranging from £10,000 to £750,000 and a total value of £9m over four years, the fund is currently open for applications until 30 November 2015.

The appetite for community ownership is nowhere more evident than the Outer Hebrides, as the listings opposite demonstrate. This table shows the prospect of communities acquiring a further 89,000 acres of land, supporting a population of over 4,000 people. Throughout the Outer Hebrides, the areas and communities involved are predominantly under crofting tenure.

CROFTING CONNECTIONS

Crofting Connections is an innovative educational project which will enable young people, aged 3-18 and living in rural communities across the Highlands and Islands, to learn about crofting past, present and future.

The traditional crofting principles of providing food, shelter, clothing, energy and entertainment are very much aligned with the 21st century desire for sustainability and offer tremendous opportunity for outdoor learning and place-based education.

This £325,000 project is delivered by Soil Association Scotland and funded by HIE, the Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Heritage Lottery Fund and some small private trusts.

Crofting Connections is currently working with 127 schools covering every part of the region. The project is also attracting an 'in kind' contribution, valued at £150,000, from crofters, farmers, volunteers, business people and public and third sector employees. The project is firmly aligned with the Curriculum for Excellence and creates a natural link to sustainable living and working in places where people and the environment are valued and nurtured. It is also providing valuable professional development opportunities for teachers. Crofting Connections has a broad reach with:

- 127 Schools (110 primary and 17 secondary) along with 75 crofters 107 community volunteers have participated.
- 105 small businesses and 49 NGO/LA/ Agency Staff have assisted the project.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Strong leadership and management skills are essential within HIE account managed communities to sustain momentum and ensure that the potential identified in growth plans can be fulfilled, both now and in the future.

We provide access to a range of capacity building programmes for communities and opportunities for aspiring leaders, who are involved with and contributing to our account managed businesses, social enterprises and communities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We have commissioned The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust to develop a publication illustrating the options for developing affordable housing opportunities on croft land. This will map out the process and provide a diverse range of case studies to showcase the community-led housing developments that have been achieved within crofting communities.

COMMUNITY BROADBAND SCOTLAND

Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) is a Scottish Government programme led across Scotland by HIE. Digital connectivity is key to our communities, and it is essential that all parts of crofting communities are able to access high quality broadband as this is the foundation for economic growth and building stronger communities. CBS helps communities gain access to faster broadband by supporting them to build and manage their own infrastructure.

CBS is currently supporting over 40 communities through scoping and project planning work and has funded 4 community broadband projects to deliver over 750 faster broadband connections in crofting communities.

HIE/SLF SUPPORTED LAND ACQUISITIONS

Galson Estate	56,000 acres
Bhaltos Estate	1,705 acres
North Harris Estate	63,523 acres
Scalpay Estate	1,735 acres
West Harris Estate	16,254 acres
South Uist Estate	93,000 acres
Pairc Estate	26,774 acres
Carloway Estate	11,454 acres

Totals 270,445 acres

COMMUNITIES CONSIDERING LAND ACQUISITIONS

Bays of Harris Estate	31,998 acres
Barvas Estate	34,600 acres
Great Bernera Estate	5,397 acres
Barra and Vatersay Estate	16,890 acres

Totals 89,000 acres

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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CROFTING COMMUNITY TRUSTS

North Harris Trust

Ann-Marie Hewitt, Scalpay development officer, outlines the work of this crofting trust.

THE 25,900 HECTARES of North Harris makes up one of the largest community-owned estates in Scotland.

The trust area includes a large crofting community of 170 crofts. The trust aims to increase employment opportunities, address local housing needs and protect and enhance North Harris's wonderful cultural and natural heritage.

In 2013 the North Harris Trust celebrated its 10th anniversary of community ownership. Over the years the trust has been involved in a range of projects, spread throughout the whole of the estate. The trust's most visible presence is in Tarbert, where the offices are located, but has been involved in activities in virtually

all the villages in North Harris.

In 2011 the owner of the neighbouring island of Scalpay, Fred Taylor, offered to transfer the island to the community for no cost. After a feasibility study and a process of community consultation, in 2013 Scalpay residents voted to join with the North Harris Trust.

Mr Taylor had seen the benefits of community ownership in other areas, including North Harris, and hopes that Scalpay will be able to achieve great things with its own land, with his vision for the future of the community-owned island being one of enterprise, small business and families.

The trust now employs eight staff who run the estate and take forward

projects and initiatives, compared to only two when the trust was formed.

A number of large capital projects have been completed in 2015. The main achievement has been a three-turbine wind farm on the estate – a project which has taken over 10 years of work to bring to fruition. Three zero-carbon business units have been built just outside Tarbert. These address a lack of affordable business space in North Harris and we hope to see improved economic activity in the area as a result.

The trust has dedicated staff to run its significant land management programme and ranger service. Our land management work is wide-ranging and includes control of invasive plant species, crofting

administration, habitat monitoring, native woodland regeneration and the maintenance of our extensive footpath network.

The ranger service runs a popular guided walks programme through the spring, summer and autumn, including the weekly eagle walks run in collaboration with RSPB. These walks serve as a good introduction to the natural and cultural heritage of the area and encourage outdoor participation.

The ranger service also secured funding for the North Harris eagle observatory, which has proved to be popular with visitors and locals alike, with approximately 6000 visitors to the site in 2014.



West Harris Trust

Linda Armstrong highlights recent developments.

THE WEST HARRIS Trust is a community charity responsible for managing 7225ha of land on the west side of the Isle of Harris.

The estate was purchased from the Scottish Government in 2010 and earlier this year we celebrated our 5th birthday. We feel that we have achieved a lot in the last five years and hope that our work will help to meet our goal of improving the long-term sustainability of the trust and the community which we serve.

A key aim of the trust is to revitalise the community by attracting new residents and creating new housing and employment opportunities.

We have made huge strides towards this aim as we have recently begun construction of a £2.1m Community Enterprise Centre (CEC). It is hoped that the building will be ready to move into by March

2016, providing much-needed office and studio space. There will also be a community venue of about 80sqm which can be divided into two. Half of the area will be for general community use and the other half will be for a café/restaurant on a franchise basis.

There is also a site identified for affordable housing, with Hebridean Housing Partnership planning to build six houses in 2016-17, and four self-build plots, two of which have been allocated.

It is hoped that the project will revitalise the area as well as bringing in some much-needed employment. It is predicted that once the centre is fully occupied it will create 10 full-time jobs.

Outwith the development we have allocated a number of affordable self-build plots which will be home to permanent residents.

A further aim of the trust is to create environmentally sustainable energy for the community via micro-wind projects. Our renewables projects are managed West Harris Renewables, a subsidiary of the trust. These projects are delivered in co-operation with common grazing committees from whom we lease the land on which we site turbines.

We erected a 65KW Harbon wind turbine in Scarista in early 2014 and are currently looking at options to erect a further turbine above the CEC. The turbine will provide energy to the centre, making it more

sustainable by reducing running costs as well as providing an income to the trust through electricity sales and the feed-in tariff.

It is our eventual aim that the trust will be self-sustaining and it is hoped that projects such as the above will help us to achieve this goal.

To follow our progress and see what else we are working on please visit our website at www.westharristrust.org.



CROFTING COMMUNITY TRUSTS

Community buyout in Pairc nears

FOLLOWING YEARS OF disputes, delays and frustrations, the purchase of the Pairc Estate in south-east Lewis by Pairc Trust on behalf of the local community is close to conclusion.

At the Trust's AGM on 14th May it was announced that missives have recently been concluded and a legally binding contract with the landlord is in place for the first time. The date of entry, when Pairc Trust will take title to the estate, depends on resolution of the landlord's claim for professional fees involved in negotiating and completing the transaction, and should take place later this year.

Over the last year, Pairc Trust and the landlord, through their respective lawyers, have been drawing up a legal contract to implement the agreement for a voluntary transfer of the whole estate, which was endorsed by the Pairc community in a ballot, the result of which was announced on 1st May 2014. External funding for the purchase and initial revenue costs have been committed by Scottish Land Fund, HIE, and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

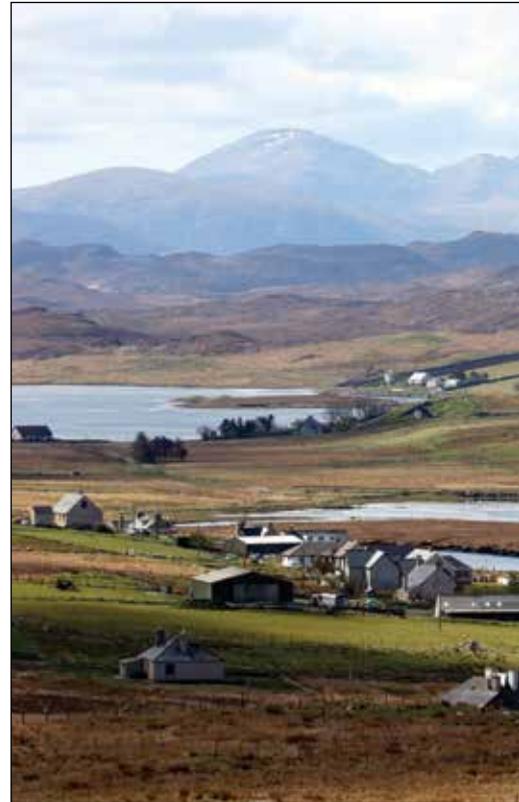
The main issues which delayed the process were:

- Mapping of the estate. Over 260 pieces of land have been sold off from the estate since it last changed hands in 1924 and it was necessary to prepare detailed maps of all boundaries before Registers of

Scotland would allow registration of title.

- Ownership of the foreshore. This will come to Pairc Trust following a letter received from the Crown Estate confirming they have no interest in the Pairc foreshore.
- Whether VAT is payable on the purchase price of the estate.
- The decision by SSE in September 2014 to withdraw from the lease with Pairc Renewables Ltd, following which the lease has been terminated. This required some technical updating of the previous agreement to reflect the legal change.
- Handling of the landlord's claim for legal and other professional fees 'reasonably, necessarily and properly incurred' in negotiating, progressing and completing the transfer of Pairc Estate. Pairc Trust has the right to refer the landlord's claim to an interim auditor for determination and the date of entry depends on when this process is concluded.
- Finally, a procedure has been agreed whereby Pairc Trust is consulted and has the right of veto over any estate transactions during the period between conclusion of missives and date of entry.

*John Randall
Pairc Trust*



Breaslate and Carloway with Harris Hills



Pairc Ballot

CROFTING COMMUNITY TRUSTS

conclusion at last



Comataidh a' bhaile - deamocrasaidh ionadail

THA E IOMCHAIDH an dèidh taghadh airson pàrlamaid Lunnainn a bhith cuimhneachadh gu bheil deamocrasaidh cuideachd ag obair aig ìre ionadail, gu h-àraidh sna sgìrean croitearachd.

'S e an comataidh ionaltraidh, no comataidh a' bhaile a tha mi a-mach air an seo. Chunnainn sinn uile an dealbh ainmeil "Pàrlamaid Hìort", agus na fir cruinnichte air sràid a' bhaile a' deasbad obair an latha. Ach tha fhios gun robh rudeigin mar seo a' tachairt sa h-uile baile croitearachd. Sa bhaile againne, bhiodh iad a' cruinneachadh air an "lianag" air Disathairne gus beachdachadh air an obair a dh'fheumte dèanamh – eadar càradh nam feansaichean, cladhach dìgean no tional airgead airson an tairbh. Bhiodh buill comataidh gan taghadh leis na croitearan ann an dùil gum biodh iad a' cur air adhart gnothaichean a' bhaile ann an dòigh a bha ceart is cothromach.

Tha sinn uile eòlach air bailtean far nach eil cùisean idir a' dol gu rèidh, far a bheil croitearan a' tuiteam a-mach air a chèile no dh'fhaoidte dìreach nach tig daoine gu aonta. Bidh sin a' tachairt, ach fhad 's a tha a h-uile duine onarach, bidh cothrom ann cùisean a dheasbad agus fuasgladh air choireigin obrachadh a-mach. Tha e iongantach mar a ghabhas eas-aonta tionndadh gu còrdadh.

'S ann nuair nach eil daoine fosgailte gun tèid cùisean ceàrr. Ma tha iad breugach, no ri cùl-mhùtaireachd chan eil cothrom

aig deamocrasaidh – aig ìre sam bith. Tha ball-pàrlamaid nan Eileanan a Tuath sna naidheachdan an dràsta an dèidh dha fios dìomhair (agus ceàrr) a chur gu pàipear naidheachd, breug innse, agus an dèidh rannsachadh cosgail, ag aideachadh gur e bh' ann ceart gu leòr. 'S ann a bha e a' briseadh na h-earbsa a bha luchd-bhòtaidh a chur ann, agus chan obraich deamocrasaidh mura bheil earbsa ann.

Ach ma tha earbsa eadar daoine, tha na cothroman a' fosgladh a-mach. Aig ìre nam bailtean croitearachd gabhaidh sgeimichean coilltearachd agus sgeimichean àrainneachdail cleachdadh gus buannachdan eile a thoirt leotha. Chan e a-mhàin gun tig sruth airgid a-staigh ach pàighidh iad airson pìosan monaidh fheansadh, gus trusadh a dhèanamh nas fhasa.

An-diugh tha cothroman ann sruth airgid fhaighinn bho chumhachd ath-nuadhachaidh. Tha gu leòr a ghaoth, uisge agus uaireannan griann againn airson feum mòr a dhèanamh dhiubh. Bha comataidhean airson ionaltradh coitcheann ann an dùthchannan eile cuideachd agus an-diugh tha coimhearsnachdan ag aithneachadh am feum agus a' dèanamh oidhirpean gus an ath-bheothachadh. Ma tha earbsa eadar daoine agus ma bhios deamocrasaidh ag obair ceart, bidh bunait ann airson coimhearsnachdan seasmhach.

Gabhan Mac a'Phearsain

Carloway Estate Trust

Urras Oighreachd Chàrlabhaigh

Trust chair Kenneth J MacLennan describes how this new community-owned estate came into being.

ON 1ST MAY 2015 the communities in Callanish, Breasclete, Tolsta Chaolais, Doune, Kirivick and Knock Carloway, Isle of Lewis took over official ownership of Carloway Estate, which extends to 11,500 acres, over 200 crofts and a population in the region of 600 people.

We have been on a three-year journey which proved to be exciting, challenging and hard work, but we have achieved the goal the community entrusted us with – and we see it as a great achievement. This is the first step in a process that we hope will see prosperity, development and long-term benefit for the residents of Carloway Estate.

We were in the fortunate position of having a willing seller. The community has expressed their appreciation for the way the Galloway family has managed the estate over many years; and also the professional manner they adopted throughout the buyout process.

A local steering group was elected at a public meeting in June 2012 to investigate the viability of the project and a subsequent ballot resulted in 76% voting in favour of a community buyout. After valuation by the district valuer, funding was approved by the Big Lottery, Scottish Land Fund, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, with revenue funding for a development officer for two years whose remit will be to look at ways to develop the estate for the benefit of its residents and to generate an income stream into the estate.

Carloway Estate also acquired the foreshore of the estate from the Crown Estate in May, which may lead to further opportunities in the future. Tourism, renewables and housing highlighted in the feasibility studies will be investigated further by the development officer.

This is an exciting time for Carloway Estate and plans are in hand for a community celebration event in Breasclete hall on 6th June when the official re-enactment of Sasine will take place.