

Briefing for MSPs
10th November 2020

Community Land Scotland calls for access to safe and warm housing at prices local people can afford

Community Land Scotland – the membership organisation for Scotland’s community landowners – will be publishing a report titled *‘Home Delivery – community led housing in rural Scotland’* on November 11th 2020, the same day on which Parliament will debate a motion on concerns regarding the islands housing market tabled by Alasdair Allan MSP.

Lack of access to safe and warm housing at prices local people can afford is a serious issue in many parts of rural Scotland, including islands areas. That lack of access is exacerbated by increasing numbers of houses being turned into holiday homes and short-term lets in popular holiday destinations. Our report highlights the devastating personal impact this can have, with local youngsters living in caravans for years and young families being evicted multiple times. **Community landowners are seeing this happening on their own doorsteps and are committed to finding a solution.**

One such community landowner is Staffin Community Trust in Trotternish on Skye. Research for the Scottish Government last year found that almost 20% of all dwellings on Skye were available for holidays through Airbnb. Hugh Ross of Staffin Community Trust explains in our report how the community took matters into its own hands to address the problem:

“We refused to sleepwalk into becoming a retirement village dominated by holiday accommodation. Our project would have not happened without the Rural and Islands Housing Fund. It is a project that is vital to Staffin as we haven’t had affordable houses here for 21 years. This development will see seven families secure homes, bolster our school’s roll, provide a modern heath centre and new business opportunities in Skye and Lochalsh’s most economically fragile community. The sound of children playing in the gardens will be a very welcome noise – that of a community with a bright future.”

As with Staffin, the other case-studies featured in *‘Home Delivery – community led housing in rural Scotland’* show that initial affordable housing proposals often act as a catalyst for wider community regeneration by supporting essential services including schools, healthcare, local shops and business facilities, thereby safeguarding existing jobs and creating new ones. In these ways, community led housing projects make enormous contributions to the sustainable local development and repopulation of our rural communities and areas.

Our report highlights the vitally important role that the Rural and Islands Housing Fund has played in helping to deliver affordable, community-led housing since it came into operation. **Community Land Scotland therefore calls for the Fund to be retained with at least the same level of resource after the next Scottish Parliament Election in May 2021 as part of a wider suite of measures to deliver affordable, community-led housing in the islands and elsewhere in rural Scotland.**