

COMMUNITY*
LAND SCOTLAND

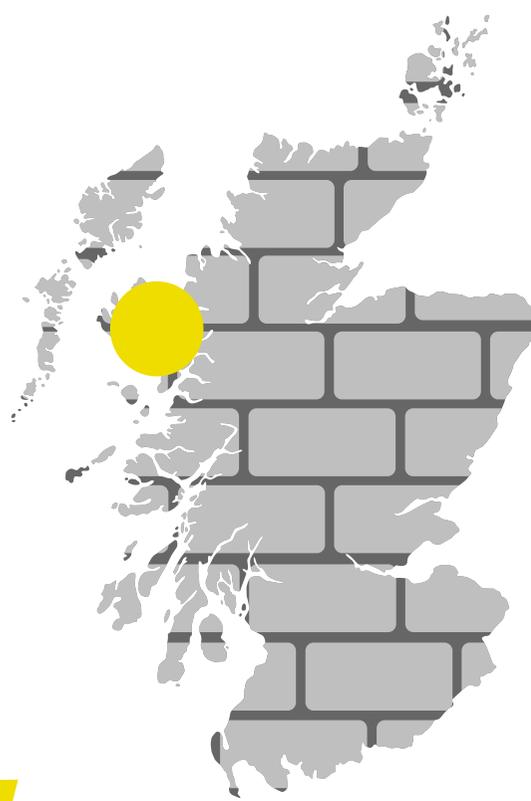


Staffin, Isle of Skye

6 new build houses by Staffin Community Trust
Due to be completed summer 2021

Location

Staffin, Isle of Skye



Background

Staffin Community Trust are finally seeing years of hard work come to fruition with work on site to build six affordable houses. Due to its close proximity to Portree, all new housing investment has centred on Skye's main town, with no new affordable housing in Staffin for decades. While initial housing needs research identified some housing demand, many people felt there was no point requesting housing in an area with no homes on offer. However, the falling primary school roll, population decline and increasing proportion of second and holiday homes proved the housing need was greater than initial evidence suggested.

Facilitated by the Communities Housing Trust (CHT, formerly Highland Small Communities Housing Trust), a housing summit was held in 2014 bringing the Trust, residents, local housing associations, Highland Council and other interested parties together to discuss and tackle the housing situation. After a call for sites, an area of common grazing - right next to the primary school - was identified and plans were made to take the project forward. However, difficulties with the site involved SCT facing several major obstacles, including an objection from SNH, negotiating the complexities of crofting legislation as a neighbouring crofter objected to the proposals - resulting in a land court case, and planning issues. These caused huge delays of years and added considerable costs to the project.

Priorities

- **Reversing population decline**
- **Sustaining primary school roll**
- **Supporting the local economy**

Finally, in March 2020, Staffin Community Trust purchased the land, and, following a delay due to the Covid-19 pandemic, work started on site in August to build 6 three-bedroom homes, as part of a wider development which will also include a new health centre and business units. An island-based contractor has been appointed and the project is due to complete in summer 2021. Allocations for the SCT owned houses have yet to be finalised, but priority will be given to families with young children, those who work locally and people with a connection to the area.

Funding

Feasibility funding from both the Scottish Land Fund and Rural & Islands Housing Fund enabled the Trust to engage an architect and carry out initial feasibility and design work. The land was purchased with a grant from the Scottish Land Fund, and by packaging the overall development, infrastructure funding was secured, along with specific funding from the Rural & Islands Housing Fund, and a mortgage from Ecology Building Society. £7,000 was also raised via a high profile crowdfunding campaign. Only a year ago the Trust faced a £400,000 shortfall, however a grant from LEADER helped unlock further grants from SSE's Sustainable Development Fund and the Quaker Housing Trust, and the full funding package was secured.

Image credit:

Staffin Community Trust



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“Without the Rural & Islands Housing Fund, this project would not have happened”

Hugh Ross,
Local Development Officer,
Staffin Community Trust

Support

CHT have been involved from the outset, including undertaking housing needs research and facilitating meetings between all stakeholders. Their experience in housing delivery, along with their connections politically, legally and with funders proved to be invaluable, and they took the lead in negotiations and funding applications. Subsequently a partnership with both Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association and CHT was formed to deliver 3 housing options on the site: 4 houses for social rent (2 owned by SCT and 2 owned by L&SHA), and 2 houses for low cost home ownership, via CHT, with a Rural Housing Burden attached.

Outcomes

The new houses, along with the new medical centre and business units will contribute significantly not only to a reversal of population decline, but also provide new economic opportunities locally and ensure Staffin remains a cohesive community, retaining vital services locally, and increasing the primary school roll.

Future Plans

Once this project has been completed, SCT plan to refurbish the former doctor's surgery to provide further affordable housing, and ideally they would like to expand on the existing development of 6 houses, to meet the ongoing housing need within the community.

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info@communitylandscotland.org.uk
www.communitylandscotland.org.uk
07884 314297

 @CommunityLandScotland

 @CommunityLandSc

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