

COMMUNITY*
LAND SCOTLAND

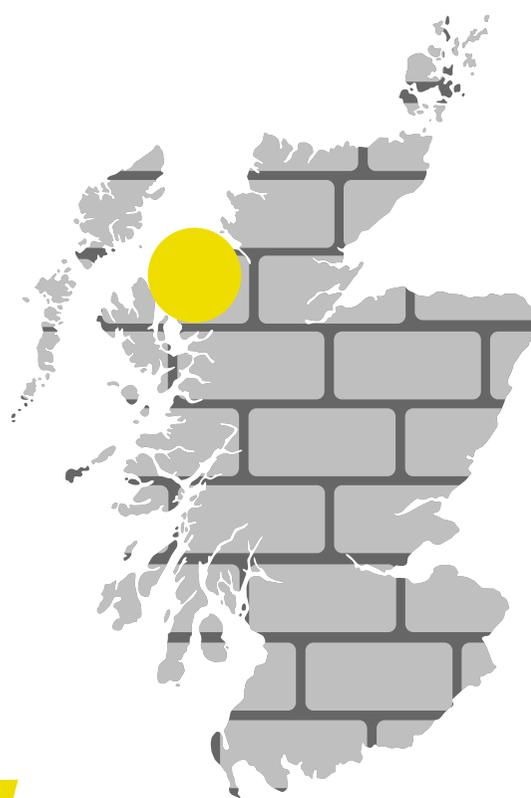


Gairloch, Highlands

5 new build houses by Communities Housing Trust
for Achtercairn Development Group
Completed in August 2020

Location

Gairloch, Highlands



Priorities

- **Reversing population decline**
- **Supporting the local economy**
- **Redevelopment of prominent site**

Background

The Achtercairn development in Gairloch, Wester Ross is an example of a successful phased and partnership development, led by Communities Housing Trust (CHT). As with many popular visitor destinations in the Highlands, Gairloch has struggled with a high percentage of second and holiday homes and a lack of affordable options for local residents. An opportunity arose when a brownfield site in the middle of the village became available, the site of a former hotel. Local residents prepared a brief for a mixed commercial and housing development on the site and took it to The Highland Council, who then involved Communities Housing Trust (formerly Highland Small Communities Housing Trust).

CHT bought the site in 2000, and the Achtercairn Development Group was formed, comprising the local community council, community groups, business association, neighbouring landowners, local authority and housing association. HSCHT chaired the Group, developing a masterplan for the site which has been delivered over several phases. As well as 20 homes delivered by Albyn Housing Association and The Highland Council, the site is now home to the local community enterprise (GALE) which includes a tourist office, a farm and garden shop, the Air Training Corps and the award winning Gairloch Museum.

The final phase of 5 houses was completed by CHT in late 2019, with tenants moving in following lockdown in August 2020, using a locally agreed allocations policy. Overall the site has a variety of tenures and ownership, offering a diverse range of housing options.

Funding

The initial 20 houses by Albyn Housing Association and The Highland Council were funded via the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. The final 5 houses met a mixed ongoing housing need, with CHT delivering 2 three-bedroom rent to buy houses, with Rural Housing Burden attached, and 3 flats for rent. These houses were funded via grants from the Rural Housing Fund and The Highland Council, and loan financing.

Support

While community members were quick to realise the opportunity the former hotel site could bring, they were not in a position to take the development forward themselves. As an experienced housing developer and enabler, CHT were able to bring all local and stakeholder groups together and lead not just the purchase of the land, but the subsequent masterplanning and consultation exercises, via the Achtercairn Steering Group, ensuring all parties and community members had a fair opportunity to engage in the process.



Image credit:

Communities Housing Trust

“The Rural Housing Fund has been really important for communities like Gairloch”

Roy Macintyre,
former Councillor

Outcomes

By taking a holistic approach to redevelopment of the Achtercairn site, the social, economic and environmental benefits have been far reaching. Masterplanning allowed different agencies, businesses and organisations to develop each element of the site at their own pace, and now with GALE, the museum and farm shop all situated alongside the health centre, school and police station, the village has a cohesive centre that was previously lacking. The mixed housing development has met various housing needs locally, from families to older residents, while the commercial enterprises have supported the local economy and employment, and a prominent site in the village has been sympathetically redeveloped.

Future Plans

While there is no room for further development on the Achtercairn site, there is potential to deliver additional housing on neighbouring land, to meet ongoing housing need in Gairloch.

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