

29<sup>th</sup> August 2022

### Statement of support for Bays of Harris buy-out ballot

Land and our connection to it has a particular resonance in the Outer Hebrides. Over the past 25 years we have seen a new dynamic to this relationship develop with a number of communities taking ownership of their land. These community owned estates vary in size, the scale of their operations and the areas in which developments have been made. But one theme that is common to all is the opportunity that ownership provides a platform on which to develop strengthened communities and address the challenges they face. About 75% of the population lives on community owned land, at a time when our population is of great concern not only in terms of its scale but also its composition. We undoubtedly face a number of challenges to address the predicted demographic changes that will place a heavier demand on service and communities.

The people of the Bay of Harris now have the opportunity to join the vibrant community land sector and look to the future with optimism and ability to deliver meaningful change for their community and generations to come.

The business plan sets out a range of potential developments that respond to needs of the community. Ownership of the estate would provide the platform for these developments to progress and for the benefit to be felt within the wider community. The development of housing, business units and crofting can form part of the solution to address the challenges faced by communities. The North Harris and West Harris trusts provide examples of what can be achieved through community ownership, over the years these organisations have been at the centre of a number of significant developments for their communities. We believe that ownership of the land provides a great foundation on which to build on the resilience and vibrancy of our communities ensuring a bright future. We would be overjoyed to see people of the Bays of Harris take hold of this opportunity and grow in strength as they develop their own approaches to the challenges we face as island communities.

Kind Regards,

Darren Taylor, Chair, Community Land Outer Hebrides & Chief Executive, Storas Uibhist