



# **THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST**

## **SIXTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT**

**November 2017 – October 2018**

**AGM FEBRUARY 2019**



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Annual Report of the North Harris Trust Ltd, Tigh an Urrais, Tarbert, Isle of Harris, HS3 3DB  
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Scottish Charity No SC033413 A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, No 235889

## Chairman's Comments

### Introduction

During the past year the North Harris Trust has been involved in many projects throughout the North Harris community. Some of these projects are clearly visible, most notably the Hushinish Gateway centre and the two houses renovated at Creag Aonaich in Scalpay. In addition to these large projects, the Trust has also been involved in a whole range of smaller activities. A lot of the Trust's work is ongoing from year to year. For example, the recycling facility at East Tarbert provides an invaluable service to the community of Harris. Its role continues to grow, with its staff contributing to many aspects of the Trust's work. The continued hard work of staff and directors means that the Trust is a stable organisation with a steady income and with the capacity to make a significant contribution to the North Harris community.

There were a number of changes among the Directors throughout the year. Steve McCombe and John Archie Macdonald both retired as directors after serving the Trust for many years. Steve served on the Steering Group which negotiated the purchase of the estate and John Archie had served since the estate was bought in 2003. Steve continues to serve as a director of the Trading Company. Lorna Wheeler and Kenny Macleod resigned as directors. They had both represented Scalpay since it was united with the North Harris Trust. We thank Steve, John Archie, Lorna and Kenny for their dedicated service to the Trust over many years.

I will refer briefly to a few projects and developments which have taken place over the past year. Staff reports give more detailed information.

### Affordable Housing

The Trust is constantly aware of the shortage of affordable housing in the community. If the population decline in North Harris is to be reversed, the availability of affordable housing is essential. The recent increase in tourism in Harris and the consequent need for more housing for staff is a particular problem. The Trust is in regular discussions with HHP and CNES regarding opportunities for further provision of affordable housing. However, the Trust continues to be frustrated by the fact that many of the potential sites which are identified are deemed to be unsuitable for development. We appreciate that the unit cost of building houses in the more rural areas of Lewis and Harris is higher than around Stornoway. However, that is an issue that needs to be addressed by funding providers. The Trust is currently investigating whether it could secure funding in order to build more homes of its own.

### Tourism Developments

The increase in the number of visitors to the Highland and Islands in recent years has had considerable publicity throughout the past year. Harris continues to enjoy a great deal of positive publicity. This is in no small measure due to the increase in two particular businesses in North Harris: The Isle of Harris Distillery and Essence of Harris, both of which are giving Harris world-wide publicity. However, the increase in tourist numbers in Harris provides both opportunities and challenges. One specific issue which is often discussed is the increase in camper van numbers. It is pleasing that the Trust has been able to provide improved tourist facilities at Hushinish. The 'Hushinish Gateway' building has been well received, with a very high number of visitors. It has received very positive comments from locals and from tourists. The Hushinish – Cravadale path is a particularly popular walk. The camper van parking provision close to Hushinish is becoming increasingly popular. It is hoped that such provision will expand in the years ahead.

### **John Muir Trust**

Once again, NHT hosted groups of John Muir Trust volunteers to Harris. There were three groups this year, undertaking voluntary work such as fence maintenance, beach cleaning, path maintenance and ditching. This annual input from JMT volunteers is very much appreciated. However, we feel that there is insufficient recognition locally of the work undertaken by JMT volunteers. When the Chief Executive of JMT visited the North Harris Trust earlier this year, we suggested to him that it would be good for NHT and JMT to jointly undertake a sizeable project. He was receptive to this idea and further discussions have followed. We hope to make some progress on this matter in the next year or two.

### **Scottish Water**

There was considerable disappointment throughout North Harris a couple of years ago when Scottish Water halted plans to lay a mains water pipe from Tarbert to Hushinish. That proposed project was stopped only a few days before it was due to begin. This was disappointing for the villages which had expected to benefit from the proposed project and it was also disappointing for NHT because the Trust had invested a lot of time in negotiations with Scottish Water regarding the project. Subsequent to that, Scottish Water revised their plans and finally came forward with a proposal to lay a pipe between Govig and Hushinish. This would ensure a sufficient supply of water for Govig, Bedersaig and Hushinish. At present Berdersaig has no mains water supply and the supply to Govig and Hushinish is inadequate for most of the year. Unfortunately, Amhuinnsuidhe will not be served by this revised provision but Scottish Water insist that the latest proposal is the best they can do at present. It is hoped that work will begin on the project soon.

### **Support from partner agencies**

The Trust continues to enjoy a lot of support from a number of organisations and agencies which make a considerable contribution to the work of the Trust. These include Highlands and Island Enterprise, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage, John Muir Trust, Big Lottery and Community Jobs Scotland.

A lot of the Trust's work depends on support funding from various agencies. At times. It appears that it is increasingly difficult to attract external funding.

We continue to have a strong working relationship with Amhuinnsuidhe Castle Estate, particularly on matters related to land management.

We also maintain strong links with other community based land owning groups in the Western Isles. There is currently a proposal that the group of community landowning organisations should be given a more formal structure. That would strengthen the voice of the group and would enable it to be more effective.

Calum J MacKay  
Chairman

# Manager's Report

## Staff Review

Following a review of staff, the previous Land Manager's responsibilities were redistributed amongst the remaining staff. New employment contracts were issued and signed by:

Gordon Cumming- Manager (Permanent, Full time)  
Diana MacLennan- Office & Land Administrator (Permanent, Full time)  
David Wake- Senior Development Officer (FTA, Part Time)  
Karen MacRae- Development Officer (Permanent, Full time)  
Daryll Brown- Ranger (FTA, Full Time)  
Steven Morrison- Charge Hand (FTA, Full Time)

## Forward Planning

NHT Directors considered the feedback from the Community Consultations held in November 2017 and agreed the Trust would prioritise work in the following areas:

- Housing -DW
- Creation of Business Space for others- DW
- Maintenance Team- GC&DW
- Footpaths- Lacasdale Lochs- GC
- Scalpay Circular- DB & GC
- Cravadale (JMT Support) -GC & DB
- Mountain Bike Trails- DB
- Parking at Outend & Ulladale- GC & DB
- Ardvourlie Woodlands Development (New Hide & Interpretation)- DB
- Community Woodlands Expansion-GC
- Gunnera Control- KM & GC
- Maraig Slipway- DW

(Initials indicate responsible staff member(s))

## Housing

NHT has continued to work with crofters to identify land suitable for affordable housing development. Any potential sites have been offered to Hebridean Housing Partnership(HHP). Most sites have been rejected as non-viable on the grounds of high build costs. One location which could form an extension to Scott Road, is currently under assessment.

Rather than be reliant upon HHP to deliver all affordable housing, NHT is looking into the feasibility of its own development at a location identified by the community in Ardvourlie.

## Deer Management

NHT is working alongside Ammhuinsuidhe Castle Estate and the Harris Stalking Club to deliver on the objectives specified in our Agri-Environment Climate Scheme Contract. This contract which is overseen by Scottish Natural Heritage, outlines our agreed objectives for the maintenance of habitats by controlling deer numbers. NHT is paid for habitat monitoring, deer population monitoring and deer culling. Our target is to maintain deer numbers at their current level, but to re-distribute the herd so that it is less focused on overgrazed areas along the shores of Loch Resort and

### Cravadale

The results of Habitat Impact Assessment work carried out by consultants in 2017 concluded that the Deer Forest continues to show signs of gradual recovery from historic heavy grazing pressure, but a few areas of intense grazing pressure remain.

A deer count carried out in the spring, by volunteers on foot, was affected by severe weather conditions. The results indicated a significant drop in numbers, but subsequent outings gave reassuring evidence that the population remains stable at around 1,100. A helicopter deer count has been scheduled for spring 2019.

Our culling obligations of approx. 42 stags and 80 hinds taken per year, have been met.

**Woodlands**

Glasgow University Students and JMT volunteers have carried out ground preparation work at Ardvourlie and trees have been ordered for planting in spring 2019. This is the start of plans to gradually extend the woodland areas within existing fences at Ardvourlie and Miavaig.

The Forestry Commission and Viv Halcrow (Woodlands Trust), were asked to assess land around the middle loch on the Lacasdale System for woodland establishment. Unfortunately, they both concluded that there is very little ground suitable for planting trees and therefore a scheme would not be viable.

Aline Estate are hoping to establish native woodland along two sections of the Scaladale River. In the past NHT has provided advice, surveyed the area and prepared planting plans for this project. The location has been assessed as suitable for native broadleaves by the Forestry Commission. Aline has now asked Viv Halcrow to help with the applications and NHT is assisting with crofting negotiations.

**Gunnera**

Practical work on gunnera eradication in Harris was greatly hindered by poor spraying conditions during the 2018 season, but the effort continues.

In the meantime, NHT staff have been working on a report investigating the feasibility of a scheme to eradicate Gunnera throughout the Western Isles. This work is being paid for by SNH.

Gordon Cumming  
Manager

# Ranger Report

## **Guided walks**

The 2018 guided walks programme had a turnout of 647 people. The wildlife walks continue to be popular, with the Whale and Dolphin walk introduced last year becoming as popular as the eagle walk.

## **Mountain Festival**

The 2018 Mountain Festival was badly affected by the weather. Out of 29 events offered during the week, 11 were cancelled due to weather. A further 4 events were cancelled in the weeks before. Moving the festival to August did allow local and visiting children an opportunity to take part in the events. All the children's events were fully booked. Generally, the events that ran were well attended.

The new festivals website is performed well, making it easier to manage bookings.

## **JMT volunteer groups**

In 2018, we hosted three volunteer work parties from the John Muir trust. The volunteers split their time on Harris between the West Harris Trust and ourselves.

During their visit in May, they cleaned the beach at Hushinish and repaired a section of path to

## **Meilein Beach**

In July, we had a group of 8 volunteers from JMT. We worked on the footpath from Hushinish, cleaned the beach and collected rubbish from Eilean Glas.

On their final visit, the volunteers they spent two days repairing and rebuilding the path from Hushinish to Meilein. On Thursday, they joined up with 17 students from the University of Glasgow (and thousands of midges) to clean the beach at Ceann an Ora. We also started preparing ground in Ardvourlie Wood for more tree planting next spring.

It was a pleasure to host a BBQ for two of the volunteers' silver wedding anniversary. The BBQ was down at the Hushinish Gateway and was attended by the work party, NHT staff and Glasgow University's field course students. Scalpay Shellfish donated a gorgeous box of fresh lobster and crab. These JMT volunteer groups play a vital part in the ongoing upkeep of the North Harris estate.

## **School groups**

During 2018, the Ranger service worked with both local and visiting school groups. With the students we cleaned beaches, monitored wildlife, removed invasive species and repaired a couple of sections of path.

## **Scalpay Footpath Signage**

At the beginning of the summer, I applied for a grant from Paths for All to improve the signage around the Heritage and coastal footpaths on Scalpay.

We were successful in our application and have been awarded £1000. This figure will be matched by

## **Scalpay CC**

The money will pay for marker posts, finger posts, interpretation panels and equipment hire.

We are hoping that we can use an unused community garden in Scalpay to provide a much-needed parking area. We would also undertake some remedial work to make the garden usable again.

We will start the works next month

## **Ardvourlie Woodland Observatory**

We are hoping to build a second observatory in the Ardvourlie Woodland. The Observatory will sit at an elevated position offering 270 degree views over Loch Seaforth and up Glen Vigidale. Sitting on the existing circular path, the Woodland Observatory will be a signed destination for visitors, allowing them to rest and shelter half way round the route. They will be able to watch the increasing number of birds in the maturing woodland and learn about the local environment from new information panels.

We aim to fund the project with a match funding grant from LEADER. Currently, we are still awaiting a decision on the remaining funding.



**Glasgow University Field Trip**

At the end of August, the University of Glasgow brought 17 students studying Environmental Sciences over to Harris.

I was out and about with them over the week. We cleaned the beach at Ceann an Ora, prepared ground for tree planting, undertook Shorewatch Survey, removed invasive plants and done some drainage work.

**Scalpay Bothy**

The bothy out at Eilean Glas opened in March and has received many visitors over the summer. We will be adding some more interpretation this year.

**Beach Cleans**

During the season, we cleaned several beaches including some that haven't been cleaned for some time and therefore were covered in rubbish. Turn out for the beach cleans this year was poor, with no people turning out to the clean organised on Scalpay. Again, we have tied in with Big Spring Beach Clean campaign to raise awareness and try to attract more volunteers.

**Eagle Observatory**

The observatory received 12,011 visitors between March and the end of November!

We have carried out repairs to the boardwalk and repainted the eagle on the outside.

**Scaladale**

The ranger service continues to work with the Scaladale centre. I have been working with visiting groups helping to deliver John Muir Awards and other ranger led activities.

Daryll Brown

## Senior Development Officer's Report

The North Harris Trading Company (NHTC) is the wholly-owned subsidiary of the North Harris Trust (NHT). It was established in 2003 to deliver new income streams to the Trust to allow it to expand its community development activities.

The Bunavoneader hydro-electric scheme passed its second anniversary and delivered a performance slightly ahead of forecast generation this year. The support issues that blighted the first year of operation have now been resolved with the appointment for Renewables First to remotely monitor the scheme. NHTC continues to provide monthly checks on the scheme and has a minority equity stake in ownership

The Monan Windfarm continues to operate as planned despite a major outage on Turbine 3. Ownership of the scheme has now passed from Windflow, the manufacturer to a company wholly owned by the financier. NHTC continues to hold a minority stake in ownership.

Huisinis Gateway has been through its first tourist season seeing some 38,000 people pass through the door. A number of upgrades have been made during the year including the installation of a cattlegrid on the carpark, vinyl flooring in the shower, additional parking spaces and donation posts. Feedback from visitors has been positive, with social media spreading the word about the facilities. The Trust has received a significant increase in donation income with the offer of showers, chemical disposal point and the campsite.

The Iomairt an Obain development continues to operate at full occupation. New leases have been agreed with all three tenants. Unit 3 is now being prepared for the production of beer rather than candles. NHTC is now looking for opportunities to develop further business space. A brief for a study to investigate demand for business space was drafted. We continue to work with HIE to progress this.

NHTC continues to operate the North Harris Community Recycling Site. This year CnES has been tightening the rules on acceptable waste for the site. This has caused some friction with the community. At the end of the year, a commercial skip was hired to allow customers to dispose of items not accepted at the main site. This service is chargeable and has been relatively well received. For the majority of this year, the company has had the benefit of two fully funded placements -one from Community Jobs Scotland and one from CnES OHMEET. This has allowed a small team to carry out estate management tasks for the Trust in addition to operating the site. Public benches and picnic tables have been painted, paths repaired and parking space markers installed in car parks.

This year saw the launch of the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Scheme and Rural Housing Fund. The first scheme is being administered by CnES and HHP. A number of prospective development sites were offered for investigation in March. At the end of the year, all but one had been rejected and deemed unviable. Following this, an application was submitted to the Rural Housing Fund for assistance with our own feasibility study on a site at Ardvourlie. Funding was granted and a team appointed to progress the study. It is hoped that NHT/NHTC will find a way of making the scheme viable.

David Wake

# Project Development Officer's Report

## **Community Development Fund**

Awards amounting to £2000 were approved through the Community Development Fund between Oct 17-Oct 18. The fund is open to grant applications from groups or individuals based in or working for the benefit of North Harris.

## **Caraidean**

Two issues of the Trust's newsletter were produced, one in December 17 and the other in June 18. These bi-annual updates of the work of the North Harris Trust are sent to all Trust Members and Friends.

## **North Harris Foreshore - Crown Estate**

The NHT Board agreed in early 2016 to find out what would be involved in the Trust acquiring the Estate foreshore. Discussions began with the Crown Estate in March 2016 as to this process and are still progressing.

## **Bunavoneader Whaling Station**

Historic Environment Scotland have continued to work closely with the Trust to secure funding towards tackling the most urgent issues on the site. In February 2017 thanks to funding from HES drainage ditches were cleared with a minidigger which will help slow the vegetation growth through the site.

## **Scalpay Care Unit**

The £250,000 refurbishment of the former Scalpay Care Unit was completed March 2018 with the newly refurbished properties 7A & B Creag Aonaich advertised for rent and the successful tenants (two young families) moving in April.

## **Scalpay School**

The decision was taken by NHT Directors in April 2018 following the receipt of the feasibility study commissioned not to proceed with the purchase of Scalpay School. The lease with subtenants ended in November 2018 and the building handed back to CNES.

## **Scalpay Play Park**

The Trust has worked closed with the Scalpay Community Association to resolve land issues in relation to the Scalpay Play Park.

## **Gunnera Eradication Feasibility**

The Trust have been working with SNH to carry out feasibility work looking at the eradication of Gunnera in the Western Isles.

Karen MacRae

**THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**  
**(INCORPORATING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2018**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.10.18 Total funds £	31.10.17 Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>					
Donations and legacies	2	18,263	-	18,263	9,744
<b>Charitable activities</b>	5				
Charitable activities		48,579	222,611	271,190	413,910
Other trading activities	3	6,889	-	6,889	8,505
Investment income	4	180,084	5,039	185,123	181,008
<b>Total</b>		<b>253,815</b>	<b>227,650</b>	<b>481,465</b>	613,167
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>					
<b>Charitable activities</b>	6				
Charitable activities		205,714	114,840	320,554	339,507
<b>NET INCOME</b>		<b>48,101</b>	<b>112,810</b>	<b>160,911</b>	273,660
<b>Transfers between funds</b>	21	<b>(18,640)</b>	<b>18,640</b>	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>29,461</b>	<b>131,450</b>	<b>160,911</b>	273,660
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>					
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>		<b>82,236</b>	<b>4,062,203</b>	<b>4,144,439</b>	3,870,779
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>111,697</b>	<b>4,193,653</b>	<b>4,305,350</b>	4,144,439

The notes form part of these financial statements

**THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST**

**BALANCE SHEET  
AT 31 OCTOBER 2018**

	Notes	<b>31.10.18</b>	31.10.17
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Tangible assets	13	<b>4,269,530</b>	4,207,713
Investments	14	<b>60,000</b>	60,000
		<b>4,329,530</b>	4,267,713
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors	15	<b>9,346</b>	7,818
Cash at bank and in hand		<b>34,014</b>	11,785
		<b>43,360</b>	19,603
<b>CREDITORS</b>			
Amounts falling due within one year	16	<b>(67,540)</b>	(142,877)
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)</b>		<b>(24,180)</b>	(123,274)
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>4,305,350</b>	4,144,439
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>4,305,350</b>	4,144,439
<b>FUNDS</b>	21		
Unrestricted funds		<b>111,698</b>	82,236
Restricted funds		<b>4,193,652</b>	4,062,203
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<b>4,305,350</b>	4,144,439

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on ..... and were signed on its behalf by:

.....  
C J Mackay -Trustee

The notes form part of these financial statements

## North Harris Trust Directors

**Calum J MacKay**                      **Chairman**  
Retired Depute Head Teacher of Sir E Scott School, Crofter  
Represents Ardhasaig and Bunavoneadar area.

**Catherine I Morrison**              **Vice Chair**  
Retired Citizens Advice Bureau Manager  
Represents Hushinish – Meavaig area.

**Barbara MacKay**  
Secondary School French teacher.  
Represents Tarbert area.

**Steve McCombe**                      – retired on 26/02/2018  
Ambulance Technician, Crofter  
Represents Tarbert area.

**John Archie MacDonald**              – retired on 26/02/2018  
Local Authority Chargehand, Crofter  
Represents Kyles Scalpay area.

**Kenneth MacKay**  
Crofter.  
Represents Rhenigidale – Marig area.

**Donald J Morrison**  
Bus Driver, Crofter  
Represents Urgha area.

**Ian A MacSween**  
Retired Teacher, Crofter  
Represents Scaladale- Ardvourlie- Bowglas area.

**Tim Langley**  
Solicitor  
Represents Tarbert area

**Robert MacKinnon**  
Postman  
Represents Tarbert area

**Kenny MacLeod**                      – retired on 28/05/2018  
Civil Servant  
Represents Scalpay area

**Lorna Wheeler** – retired on 21/05/2018  
Self Employed Crafter  
Represents Scalpay area

**Donnie MacLeod**  
Marine Engineer  
Represents Scalpay area

## Staff Update: February 2019

<b>Member of Staff</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Date of Appointment</b>	<b>Length of Contract</b>	<b>Salary Paid By</b>
Gordon Cumming	Manager	2017	Permanent	NHT
Diana MacLennan	Office and Land Administrator	2007	Permanent	NHT
Karen MacRae	Development Officer	2013	Permanent	NHT
David Wake	Senior Development Officer	2009	Part time (renewable)	NHT
Daryll Brown	Ranger	2016	12 Months (renewable)	SNH/NHT
Steven Morrison	Chargehand	2010	12 Months (renewable)	NHT (reimbursed by CNES)



Ardvourlie Shelter



Bench Repairs



Huisinis Gateway

Bridge Repairs







Scalpay Lighthouse Walk



Proposed Ardvourlie Observatory



Whaling Station Drainage



Creag Aonaich Tenants





North Harris Trust



[www.iohmf.co.uk](http://www.iohmf.co.uk)

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