



THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

2016 - 2017

FEBRUARY 2018

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Introduction

The past year has been another busy year for the North Harris Trust. A number of projects have been completed and others are at various stages of development. While the Trust is principally concerned with the management of the land in North Harris, it is involved in a wide range of projects which are all aimed at making improvements within the local community. 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.

During the year we were saddened by the untimely death of Donald John Cunningham, one of the Scalpay directors. Donald John had joined the Trust when Scalpay became part of the North Harris Trust. He made a significant and valuable contribution to the work of the Trust during his time as director. Donald John was a true gentleman, who is sorely missed within the Trust and within the community as a whole.

Alistair Macleod retired from the post of Manager during the summer of 2017. Alistair had been employed by the Trust since the establishment of the Trust. Alistair made a huge contribution to the work of the Trust throughout these years. He was totally dedicated to his work and guided the Trust through many difficult situations. Having devoted so many years to hard work, Alistair certainly deserves the more relaxed opportunities provided by retirement. We wish him many happy years of contented retirement.

Gordon Cumming was appointed as Manager of the Trust to succeed Alistair. Gordon had served as Land Manager with the Trust for four years prior to this appointment. We congratulate Gordon on his appointment and are confident that he will have the full support of staff, directors and the wider community in this new role.

I will refer briefly to a few developments. Staff reports give more detailed information.

Affordable Housing

The Trust is constantly aware of the shortage of affordable housing in the community. It is important that suitable land for the provision of has is identified. The Trust is in regular discussions with HHP and CNES regarding opportunities for further provision of affordable housing. It is pleasing that there is to be an increased allocation of money for affordable housing in 'rural' areas (i.e. areas outwith Stornoway). One specific project the Trust is engaged in is the conversion of the former Care Unit in Scalpay into two accommodation units: a 3 bedroom property and a 2 bedroom property. This will provide much-needed rental accommodation in Scalpay. The Trust is considering a number of options which could lead to further housing development on the estate.

Scalpay School

A number of small businesses continues to use the former Scalpay School. While this is a positive development which is good for the local economy, the condition of the buildings makes it difficult for the Trust to make a long-term commitment to the purchase of the buildings. Further investigation of the condition of the buildings is currently being planned and it is hoped that further discussion with potential partner funders will lead to a long-term solution being agreed fairly soon.

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. This has been particularly true for Skye and for the North Coast 500 route. 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 and it is already being used by many people. It is anticipated that the camper van parking provision close to Hushinish will also be well used in the years ahead. In addition, the Trust also provided improved waste disposal facilities

at a couple of locations in North Harris. The Trust also gained information on camper van users through a survey conducted by a resident student. It is hope that this information will be used by the Trust and by other organisations to make better facilities available in the years ahead.

Isle of Harris Mountain Festival

Once again, the Mountain Festival was a great success. There was a wide range of activities and events on offer for locals and for visitors to the island. The attendance figures continue to increase each year. The festival attracts a considerable number of mainland visitors to the island. I feel, however, that it would be good to see greater participation by local people in the festival. The high attendance at the Mountain Festival, the high level of participation in the guided walks programme and the high level of visitors to the Eagle Observatory are clear indicators of the increased level of interest in outdoor pursuits in North Harris in recent years.

John Muir Trust

Once again, a group of JMT members came to Harris in May and September to undertake voluntary work such as fencing, beach cleaning, path maintenance and ditching. This input from JMT volunteers is very much appreciated.

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, Caledonian MacBrayne, Big Lottery, Community Jobs Scotland, Marine Harvest Scotland. 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. A number of formal meetings between these groups have taken place throughout the past year. These meetings have been very successful. It is helpful to exchange ideas and to share experiences.

Conclusion

I feel that this year's annual report illustrates that The Trust is involved in a wide range of activities and is in a strong position for going forward with confidence.

Manager's Report

NHT Staff Changes

After 14 years of service, Alistair Macleod resigned as Manager at the end of July 2018. Interviews were held and Gordon Cumming, previously NHT's Land Manager, was appointed to the Manager's post at the end of August 2018. This left a vacancy for the Land Manager post. Rather than advertise the post, the decision was taken to review the Trust's staffing needs. As it happens NHT is about to conduct community consultations and prepare a new business plan to guide future Trust activities. Funding remains limited and therefore it makes sense to delay staff appointments whilst we ascertain if it is necessary and affordable.

Scottish Water Main

Despite an intensive campaign by the Trust and residents, the plan to install a new water main between Bunavoneadar and Huisinis has been shelved because of national budgetary restraints. Scottish Water have revised their plans and by the end of 2018 are committed to upgrading the treatment works at Gobhaig and laying 5km of new water main to connect it with Huisinis. The existing Huisinis treatment works will no longer be required. Investment is also planned to add a new balancing tank at Miabhaig; and a further water treatment works at Cliasmol will be retained. These developments are expected to improve and safeguard the supply for current residents, but the Trust is disappointed that the opportunity to develop additional housing along missed sections of the coastline will be limited.

Leases

Leases are under negotiation for the new EE network which will provide 4G coverage throughout the island and freshwater extraction schemes to supply Marine Harvest and The Scottish Salmon Company. The income from these leases will be shared with the relevant crofting townships and will provide a welcome addition to our long-term income.

Land Sales

The Trust has asked solicitors, Anderson MacArthur & co. to review NHT's Land Release policy. The review will consider the terms under which land will be released to support local housing needs and business development. Advice is also sought on the legal burdens the Trust can place on sold land to ensure it is used as intended, not exploited for personal gain and not left undeveloped. During the 2016/17 financial year, the Trust received £17,000 from land sales.

Harris Forum

The North Harris Trust has joined the newly created 'Harris Forum'. This group has been formed to discuss and provide a united voice for issues affecting the whole of Harris. NHT has two votes on the committee which will meet every second month and includes representatives from other Harris Community Groups/Trusts, the three Harris Community Councils and the Councillors.

Land Manager's Report

Kyles Biomass

Back in 2007, over 26,000 trees were planted over 2.5 ha. of croft land in Kyles to create an experimental short rotation coppice woodland and test the potential for generating biomass energy on the islands. About 50% of this trial site successfully established. NHT continues to manage the established trees and make efforts to re-stock the failed areas.



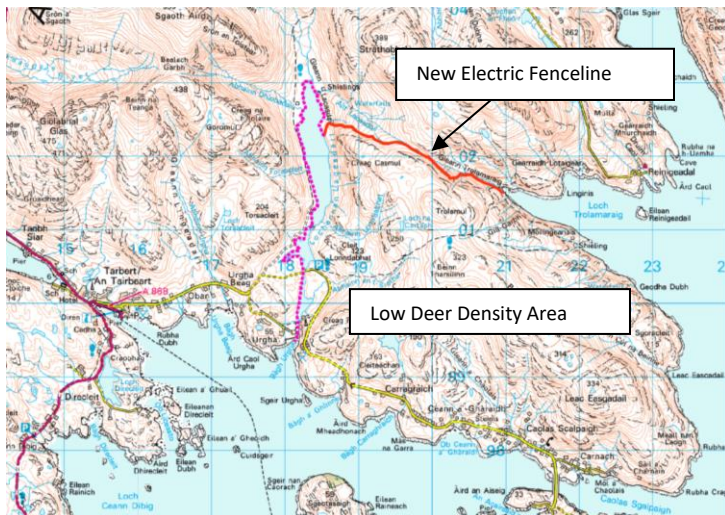
During the spring of 2017, 2,000 willow cuttings were prepared from trees cut on site and planted by NHT staff.

The Forestry Commission, who grant aided the Project, have now agreed that NHT has fulfilled all its contractual obligations on this site. So, no further re-stocking will be necessary.

NHT management of the site will continue until June 2021 under the current lease arrangements. Data on the production of biomass will need to be gathered during a final harvest in spring 2021.

North Harris Eastern Woodland Project- Trolamarig Fence

Our long-term project to encourage the expansion of relic native woodland over 1,500ha of the eastern part of the Estate, continues.



The plan is to make the most of natural boundaries, 3km of electric deer fence and the skills of the Harris Stalking club to discourage deer from entering the area, thereby encouraging the growth of native trees.

The fence now runs all the way from the Lacasdale Lochs to Loch Trolamarig (red line on map) and was switched on for the first time when the John Muir Trust volunteers helped to construct the base station

in May 2016. The fence has remained 'live' ever since, powered by a solar panel and a small wind turbine.

NHT staff now make regular visits to the fence to install gates, river crossings etc., inspect the fence and carry out any repairs.

During the 2017 stag stalking season members of the Harris Stalking Club culled 11 stags in the area.

Two years on, it is evident that significant numbers of deer are still entering the area. The fence-line itself remains porous i.e. there are points such as river crossings where deer are finding ways through the fence. NHT staff are currently working to resolve these 'holes' in the fence.

Deer Management

The North Harris Trust continues to work with Amhuinnsuidhe Castle Estate and the Harris Stalking Club to manage the red deer population. Cull figures for NHT are summarised below.

Year	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total
2003-4	31	23	2	56
2004-5	39	22	2	63
2005-6	33	37	4	74
2006-7	26	40	4	70
2007-8	41	36	4	81
2008-9	50	87	23	160
2009-10	46	88	19	153
2010-11	37	85	0	122
2011-12	38	66	5	109
2012-13	41	65	15	121
2013-14	42	77	17	136
2014-15	33	8	6	47
2015-16	37	29	1	67
2016-17	37	53	1	91

Two haunches of venison were kindly donated to Harris House this year.

The stalking club continues to provide a successful model, encouraging community involvement in deer management. In June 2017, the NHT Land Manager was engaged to sit on a discussion panel at the Scone Game Fair attended by Government representatives and landowners, to share NHT's Deer Management experiences.

Moorland Management Funding

Our application for Moorland Management funding from the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme was successful. The Trust can now claim £11,000 per annum to support ongoing land management, plus capital payments to cover the cost of two helicopter deer counts and two habitat impact surveys. In total the Trust will receive £84,000 over the five-year term of the contract 2017-2021.

Gunnera

NHT is still co-ordinating the Harris-wide campaign to control the Non-Native Invasive Plant *Gunnera tinctoria*. Most of the eradication work is now carried out using herbicides applied by NHT staff and contractors from OH-MEET- (The Comhairle's employment training scheme). With funding support from all the Harris Community Councils, SNH and NHT.

In August 2017, *Gunnera* was recognised as a 'species of concern' and listed in the 'EU Invasive Alien Species Regulations'. As a result, *Gunnera* will no longer be available for sale in the UK. Gardeners who continue to cultivate *Gunnera* will also be held responsible for preventing any dispersal beyond their property.

This change in the legal status of *Gunnera* has resulted in more funding for control work. NHT has therefore been asked to assess the feasibility of scaling up the eradication project to cover the whole of the Western Isles.

Bodha Glas to Miabhag Bridges

With full funding (£35,000) from the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme-Improving Public Access fund, the project to install two new bridges and link paths on the Langadale & Stuladale River



Crossings went ahead. The bridge foundations were constructed by Isle of Harris Plant Ltd. The bridges were then installed by the 9th Parachute Squadron of the Royal Engineers. The path works were completed by SCS contractors.

Student Placement

Throughout June and July, Hannah Baird, an MSC Student studying Tourism Heritage and Development at Glasgow University, worked alongside the NHT Ranger & Land Manager. As well as gaining a detailed insight into the activities of the Trust, Hannah carried out a survey of campervans visiting the islands and helped to prepare interpretation materials for the NHT website.

Volunteers

A great deal of work was completed by The John Muir Trust volunteers during their two weeks with us in May and September including:

- Beach cleans at Huisinis & Traigh Mheilen
- 1500 trees planted at Cliasmol and some work on the fence
- Over a kilometre of the Maraig to Urgha path worked on with ditches reopened, a small section rebuilt and lots of lets opened up
- almost ten metres of the Huisinis to Cravadale path completely rebuilt with about 5 metres of pitching built and almost a ton of surfacing laid
- 3 days on postman's path including 3 new water bars, 6 new anchor bars, around 50m ditching, 6 culverts cleared and 10 m of new surfacing
- a day at the Huisinis campervan site fencing, spot turfing and seeding the ground.

In September NHT also enjoyed the support of Glasgow University Students who helped with:

- path maintenance on the Postman's Road
- gunnera bashing in Urgha
- a seawatch survey at Scalpay Lighthouse
- and grazing impact monitoring along either side of the Trolamarig Electric Fence.

Gordon Cumming
Land Manager

Ranger Report

Guided walks

The 2017 walks programme included some new walks as well as some Saturday walks. Turn out for walks was random. A few were cancelled due to weather.

- 529 people attended the walks this year. 196 of those were on the eagle walk, 157 attended the new 'whale and dolphin walk'.
- A further 65 people were given guided walks from private groups or organisations
- The Saturday walks were not a success, only one person turned up on one walk.
- Anything to do with wildlife has a good turnout. The whale and dolphin walk should become a firm fixture to the programme like the eagle walk.
- The weekly eagle watch was chaos! I couldn't get a firm number of people attending but on one occasion there were 130 in two hours at the eagle observatory. Definitely worth doing again next year.



Mountain festival

The 2017 mountain festival attracted 714 people. This figure would have been even higher if we didn't have to cancel a few events.

This year we launched the new website for the mountain festival. The online booking system has been a real bonus allowing us to simply monitor and manage bookings. The website had over 60,000 visits since the launch at the beginning of March. During September, there were over 600 plus people a day visiting the site. Due to the reach of the website we had people coming to Harris specifically for the festival. There were people from seven countries attending events.



Snorkel trail

In January 2017, we formed a partnership with The Scottish Wildlife Trust to create Scotland's second Snorkel Trail.

The snorkel trail is a series of six sites around North Harris, highlighting different marine environments.

We launched the snorkel trail on 1st July at Hushinish beach. There were 23 local children and a handful of adults at the launch. Highlands and islands

MSP Maree Todd and some Scottish Wildlife trust members came over from the mainland for the event. So far the feedback has been positive. I hope to develop the trail further next year.

The trail has received local, national and international press interest and has featured in several papers and magazine articles. Have a look at this recent one:

<https://adventure.com/snorkeling-in-scotland/>.



Eagle observatory

2017 was extremely busy out at the eagle observatory. Over 10,500 people visited between April and October. This figure is well up from previous years and will continue to grow.

During the year, we carried out repairs to the boardwalk leading into the observatory and re-turfed the roof in places.

Unfortunately, the donations box was broken into and the money inside was stolen. We hope that this was a one off and we have installed a new tougher box.

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. A landing craft was needed to remove the collected rubbish in some instances. We have tied in with a national beach cleaning campaign to raise awareness and attract more volunteers.



John Muir Trust Volunteers

This year we hosted another two work parties of JMT volunteers in May and September. Both parties did incredible work repairing the footpaths from Hushinish to Cravadale and sections on the Postman's Path.

The volunteers also planted trees as well as carrying out gunnera eradication and beach cleaning at Hushinish and Loch Mhiabhaig

Scalpay Bothy

We have been busy restoring a bothy at Eilean Glas lighthouse. We are opening it up as an information centre, providing insights into the lighthouse, whales, dolphins and whaling history. It will be open in the spring 2018.

Schools

During the summer, I worked with a number of school groups. I organised beach cleans, wildlife watching, invasive species control and footpath maintenance.



Glasgow University Environmental Field Class

Myself and the land manager continued to work with Dr Steven Gillespie and the University of Glasgow to host their environmental field class.

I took the students out for some path repair on the old post road, performed a Shorewatch and carried out a cockle survey.

Scaladale Centre

Through the year I have worked with school groups staying at the Scaladale centre, carrying out drainage improvement works on footpaths, doing beach cleans, invasive species control and taking them on various wildlife walks.

Daryll Brown, February 2018

Development Officer's Report

Year ending 31st October 2017

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 first anniversary of commissioning in July. A number of support issues remain to be resolved. This contributed to the underperformance against expected generation.

The electricity grid remains closed to any significant new generation in the Western Isles. The proposed Maraig hydro-electric scheme was effectively closed down last year. The planning permission has now also expired. There have been positive noises in the press about the undersea interconnector, which will open up the grid once more. This however will happen within the next 5 years.

Away from Renewable Energy, a funding package was finally completed for the Huisinis Gateway project. With the help of CnES, Outer Hebrides LEADER and HIE a Design & Build contract was awarded in January. Practical Completion was achieved at the start of September. The visitor centre with changing facilities and campervan pitches opened at the end of the tourist season, but still managed to attract a lot of positive feedback, and significant Donation income for the Trust. The project could not have been completed without the cashflow loan offered by CnES. This addressed the gap between invoices being paid and grants being received.

The Iomairt an Obain development continues to operate at full occupation. Income from the solar panels will create a small fund for maintenance.

NHTC continues to operate the North Harris Community Recycling Site. This year the company has been successful in securing a further Community Jobs Scotland-funded post. This has allowed a small team to carry out estate management tasks for the Trust in addition to operating the site. Developments on site this year include the installation of CCTV cameras on the gates to help address the fly-tipping issue. A Portable Appliance Tester has also been purchased to allow all NHT/NHTC testing to be carried out in-house. A Chemical Disposal Point was installed at the rear of the site in August. Funded by CnES, this has helped address the issue of campervan waste disposal during the summer season, which was exacerbated by the closure of the point at Leverburgh pier.

David Wake

Project Development Officer's Report

Community Development Fund

Awards amounting to £3934 were approved through the Community Development Fund between Oct 16-Oct 17. 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 16 and the other in June 17. 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 ongoing.

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.

Scalpay Care Unit

Having leased the former care unit building from CNES for 2 years the NHT Board made the decision to purchase the building from the local authority with a view to converting it into two houses. Funding for the purchase was secured from the Scottish Land Fund and the purchase was completed in February 2017. Funding applications to Outer Hebrides LEADER and The Rural Housing Fund for the refurbishment costs were successful with work beginning on site in June 17.

Scalpay School

The lease of the Scalpay school buildings from CNES and sublet of the individual units to tenants continued through 2017. The Trust commissioned a feasibility study in October 2017 to inform Directors before a decision is made on whether to purchase the complex, this work is ongoing. The current lease will come to an end in August 2018.

Scalpay Play Park

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

Eilean Glas

The Trust have been working closely with CNES and the owners of Eilean Glas to try and secure the future of the buildings.

Karen MacRae

THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCORPORATING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2017

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.10.17 Total funds £	31.10.16 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies	2	8,846	900	9,746	19,971
Charitable activities	5				
Charitable activities		30,941	382,969	413,910	54,387
Other trading activities	3	8,505	-	8,505	5,116
Investment income	4	181,006	-	181,006	164,903
Other income	6	-	-	-	6,470
Total		229,298	383,869	613,167	250,847
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds	7	-	-	-	100
Charitable activities	8				
Charitable activities		240,387	99,120	339,507	281,640
Total		240,387	99,120	339,507	281,740
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(11,089)	284,749	273,660	(30,893)
Transfers between funds	22	(6,278)	6,278	-	-
Net movement in funds		(17,367)	291,027	273,660	(30,893)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		99,603	3,771,176	3,870,779	3,901,672
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		82,236	4,062,203	4,144,439	3,870,779

CONTINUING OPERATIONS

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

The notes form part of these financial statements

THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST

BALANCE SHEET
AT 31 OCTOBER 2017

	Notes	31.10.17 £	31.10.16 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	15	4,207,713	3,792,522
Investments	16	60,000	60,000
		4,267,713	3,852,522
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	17	7,818	25,807
Cash at bank and in hand		11,785	16,560
		19,603	42,367
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	18	(142,877)	(24,110)
NET CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)		(123,274)	18,257
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		4,144,439	3,870,779
NET ASSETS		4,144,439	3,870,779
FUNDS	22		
Unrestricted funds		82,236	99,603
Restricted funds		4,062,203	3,771,176
TOTAL FUNDS		4,144,439	3,870,779

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 26 February 2018 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

Ambulance Technician, Crofter.
Represents Tarbert area.

John Archie MacDonald

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

Donald John Cunningham -until 14/02/17

Fisherman
Represented Scalpay area

Kenny MacLeod

Civil Servant
Represents Scalpay area

Lorna Wheeler

Self Employed Crafter
Represents Scalpay area

Donnie MacLeod

Marine Engineer
Represents Scalpay area

Staff Update: February 2018

Member of Staff	Job Title	Date of Appointment	Length of Contract	Salary Paid By
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)
Ewen Morrison	Recycling Assistant	2016	12 Months	OHMEET
Luke Lockett	Recycling Assistant	2016	12 Months	SCVO Community Jobs Scotland



Huisinis Gateway



Huisinis Gateway Campervan Site



Scalpay Care Unit Refurbishment





North Harris Trust

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