

THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST



EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

November 2019 – October 2020

AGM FEBRUARY 2021

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Chairman's Comments

The past year has been a particularly challenging one for virtually everyone in the world due to the world-wide coronavirus pandemic. No need to elaborate on that; everyone is aware of it! The North Harris Trust has, of course, been affected along with most businesses. The Trust has suffered a loss of income from a variety of sources, it has found it more difficult than usual to progress projects, staff workload has been reduced, staff and directors have not been able to meet in the way they were accustomed to meeting. However, the work of the Trust has continued, albeit in a different way. I would like to thank staff and directors for their fortitude in persevering with the work of the Trust in rather challenging circumstances. Despite the lockdown and the restrictions on people meeting together, a reasonable amount of work has been progressed. Because of the reduction in workload, The Trust took advantage of the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Since the lockdown, staff have been largely working from home and they have also been on flexible furlough.

There were some changes among staff and directors during the year. We were disappointed when Trust Manager, Gordon Cumming, left to take up employment on the Rothiemurchas Estate. Gordon had been employed by The Trust for several years, initially as Land Manager and latterly as Manager. Gordon was a diligent employee, who was highly respected within the Trust and throughout the Harris community. We were, however, pleased that we were able to quickly appoint a very suitable replacement for Gordon. Michael Hunter, who had been employed by The Trust for a couple of years as Ranger, was promoted to the post of Manager. Ian Macsween, who had served the Maraig/Scaladale area as director for more than ten years decided to retire. We thank Ian for his dedicated service to the Trust over these years. We were pleased that Paul Russ, who lives at Ardvourlie, joined the Board as Ian's replacement. However, Paul has not been able to join a meeting in person since joining The Trust; all meetings since his appointment have been on Zoom!

Towards the end of 2020, The North Harris Trust created the post of Gaelic Ranger. This post was jointly funded by NatureScot and Bòrd na Gàidhig. It reflects the Trust's recognition of the importance of Gaelic within the local community. John Maclean was appointed to this post. Although John is currently unable to interact to any large extent with members of the community, he is busy working on estate maintenance, undertaking beach clean-ups and preparing for undertaking the usual duties of a Ranger once circumstances change enough to allow that to happen.

In March 2020, The John Muir Trust created the new post of Community Ranger for Lewis and Harris. Clara Risi was appointed to this post. She is based in the NHT offices and works with Galson Trust, North Harris Trust and West Harris Trust. Unfortunately, her appointment coincided with lockdown, which meant that her ability to undertake Ranger duties such as guided walks and community volunteer activities were considerably restricted.

The provision of affordable housing continues to be a major talking point in North Harris. Finding appropriate sites on which it is economically viable to build houses is an ongoing problem. It is good to see progress being made on the former police station site, where eight homes are being built by HHP. During this year the Trust has sold two houses and associated outbuildings in Amhuinnsuidhe and purchased a prepared house site in Meavaig. The plan is to put the money from the sale of the

Amhuinnsuidhe properties towards building two new homes on the Meavaig site. There is a real demand for rented accommodation in Harris and it is hoped that progress can be made on this issue in the next year or two.

As always, the Trust is grateful for the support it receives from a number of organisations and agencies. These include Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Scottish Government, NatureScot, Bord na Gàidhlig, Muaitheabhal Community Windfarm Trust, John Muir Trust, Western Isles Development Trust. We continue to have a strong working relationship with Amhuinnsuidhe Castle Estate, particularly on land management issues.

Although this has been a challenging year for NHT, progress continues to be made on a range of projects which will be of benefit to the community of North Harris. It is hoped that we can look forward to the world-wide situation and the local situation improving in the year ahead.

Calum Mackay

Manager's Report

North Harris Trust Direction

In meeting the North Harris Trust's aims and objectives, our work continues to be focused on the following:

- Affordable housing provision.
- Creation of flexible business space for entrepreneurial activity.
- Estate maintenance and outdoor access including parking, footpaths & mountain bike trails.
- Youth work and encouraging community participation.
- Protection of the natural environment including woodland expansion & invasive species control.

Finances

NHT has used the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme when necessary, but has been ineligible for any other Covid-19 support funds. Although reduced visitor numbers had some impact on income over the summer, modest savings have been made over the course of the year and the Trust is in a position of relative financial security despite the adverse economic conditions.

Leases & Land Transactions

The Trust operates 50 leases covering residential and business properties, agricultural land, wayleaves and masts. There are also the tenancies associated with 169 crofts and 29 Common Grazings. This year NHT waived the requirement for crofting payments due to the impacts of Covid-19 and will take this into account in the coming year. Quayside Cottages, Amhuinnsuidhe, were sold by NHT in 2020 and the proceeds are held in a ringfenced account to be spent on the development of affordable housing in North Harris.

North Harris Foreshore

NHT has been working on the submission of a claim to ownership of the foreshore adjacent to much of North Harris ex-adverso Crown Estate Scotland. Many thanks are due to community members for their sworn affidavits in support of this.

Gunnera Eradication

The project to deal with the invasive non-native species *Gunnera tinctora* continued, building on previous years' work. This was highly successful, with approximately 90% of plants in North Harris being treated effectively. Furthermore, NatureScot were able to offer support to the project including training for staff, contractors and volunteers. This will allow us to work towards eradicating the species in Harris in the coming years.

Community Land Outer Hebrides

NHT has become a member of this newly constituted group representing community landowners on various issues of common concern throughout the Western Isles and at a national level.

Michael Hunter

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 has suffered a number of operational issues this year, resulting in a reduction of forecast performance. As NHTC provides first-responder services for the scheme, it has benefited from additional call-out charges. Moving into its fourth year of operation, Earth Capital (EC), the majority shareholder, started the process to sell this and the West Harris scheme at Seilebost. NHTC, working with West Harris Trust engaged a surveyor to value the schemes. A joint bid was made by the two trusts to bring the schemes back into full community ownership. This offer, along with a subsequent revised offer, was rejected. EC have since rejected a further offer from a third party believing the offers significantly undervalue the schemes. NHTC continues to provide monthly checks on the scheme and has a minority equity stake in ownership.

Microgeneration has continued unabated throughout the pandemic. NHTC owns and operates three solar PV installations and three wind turbines. Loans funding the installation of the two turbines at Huisinis were paid off ahead of time this year.

Huisinis Gateway has been closed since the pandemic took hold in April. The campsite re-opened when restrictions were lifted in late summer. We saw visitor numbers increase in September but overall takings this year were down by 84% on the previous year. Funding was secured from Crown Estates to duct a stream and infill to create a number of additional parking spots.

Little progress has been made in funding additional business space at Urgha. One of the tenants of Iomairt an Obain ended their lease in the summer. This gave us the opportunity to gauge interest in business space. There were 8 applications for Unit 1 which clearly demonstrates the need for more space in North Harris.

NHTC continues to operate the North Harris Community Recycling Site on behalf of CnES. This year has proven challenging with a lack of serviceable skips and drivers meaning that skips haven't been turning over as quickly as needed. COVID arrived, closing the site in MAY/JUN/JUL. At the end of September, with skip availability still an issue, the site moved to a restricted winter opening schedule, a month earlier than usual. The Crofting Supplies business continued to grow throughout the year. Electrics were installed in the container and a card payment system was installed just in time for the new safer ways of working. The product range continues to grow. The local availability of animal feeds and fencing materials has been well received by the local community during the year.

We continue to look for a sustainable way of developing the Maraig Slipway. A public meeting was held with individuals proposing to site a boat-repair yard there. This project has since moved to Scalpay.

Working with Sir E Scott school, funding was secured from Western Isles Development Trust to install new benches and an information panel in Tarbert. Materials were sourced through the Crofting Supplies business with staff working with the pupils on the installation.

David Wake

Project Development Officer's Report

Caraidean

Two issues of the Trust's newsletter were produced during the year, one in December 2019 and the other in June 2020. For the first time ever our June 2020 newsletter was online only due to Covid-19. These bi-annual updates of the work of the North Harris Trust are sent to all Trust Members and Friends.

Helicopter Deer Count

The helicopter deer count which had been scheduled for March 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Deer Cull; Stags 2020 & Hinds 19-20

In the 19-20 hind season 25 hinds were taken from specified locations through the Estate to maintain deer numbers and try to distribute grazing pressure more evenly. In summer 2020, 40 stags were culled from the herd between ACE and the Harris Stalking Club.

Scalpay Bothy

Over the summer month extensive work was carried out on the Scalpay Bothy. The interior stone work and doors were painted, the door frames were repaired and replaced as required and new interpretation panels were installed inside.

Footpath Survey

Also over the summer months a survey was carried out on the Trusts footpath network. The report produced will help to give an overview of the condition of the various footpaths and allow repair and maintenance work to be prioritised. The paths surveyed included:

Scalpay Lighthouse

Lacasdail-Maraig

Bogha Glas - Miabhaig

Leosaid – Cravadale –Husinis

Urgha-Reinigeadail

Cliostair- Gleann Uladail

Maraig – Scaladail

Meavaig 1 House Site

£5000 of funding was secured from the Crown Estate Fund in Spring 2020 to allow NHT to carry out an affordable housing feasibility study on a house site for sale in Meavaig North. The study was carried out by Porteous Architects and completed in August 2020. Having considered the study the Board approved the purchase of the site in September and this process is ongoing as is the work to design suitable houses on the site which will be made available for affordable rent.

Karen MacRae

Ranger Report

Guided walks

The 2020 guided walk programme was considerably reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Whale & Dolphin Walks to Eilean Glas and Eagle Walks at Bogha Glas ran weekly from July-September, with an estimated attendance of 84 participants, significantly down on previous years. Attendance was varied, with the Eagle Walks usually drawing in more participants each week.

Schools and youth work

A significant contribution towards the Scaladale Centre John Muir Discovery Award was made by the Trust, with all activities occurring on the estate and the NHT Ranger in attendance. Involvement with Sir E Scott School / Sgoil an Tairbeart continued with an Elective delivered by the Ranger, supporting a Rural Skills Course, and offering tree planting at Ardvourlie. During the Covid-19 lockdown March-June 2020 children and young people's activity sheets focusing on nature were created and circulated via social media channels weekly by the Ranger Service.

Paths

Funding for a maintenance team and materials has been secured to allow work on stretches of path throughout the estate in poor repair, this is due to begin in earnest in summer 2021.

Mountain Festival – Fèis nam Beann

The mountain festival was rebranded as Fèis nam Beann in 2020 with a full agenda organised. Unfortunately, as with many other events in 2020, it was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Volunteering

Limited volunteering took place this year due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, all JMT volunteering weeks and many local volunteering days were cancelled. However, we did have one of our best ever turnouts for a beach clean on a brilliantly clear Saturday in February with 17 participants out at Huisnis.

Tree planting

In Spring 2020, 3000 trees were planted in the Gleann Miabhaig enclosure on the way to the Eagle Observatory and another 1000 trees were planted in the Autumn around Ardvourlie with the help of 11 volunteers. Also, tree seed was sown wild experimentally in Gleann Cul na Beinne and vegetation was cleared around saplings planted in previous years.

Gleann Trolamaraig Electric Fence

This fence needed some repair and maintenance this year alongside the usual checks. Habitat impact assessment (NatureScot Best Practice Monitoring) surveys were used to compare deer impacts on vegetation either side of the fence. There was no significant difference either side of the fence (low deer density vs high deer density).

THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCORPORATING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2020**

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.10.20 Total funds £	31.10.19 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM				
Donations and legacies	8,003	-	8,003	35,860
Charitable activities				
Charitable activities	87,578	27,104	114,682	133,551
Other trading activities	1,312	-	1,312	2,293
Investment income	187,813	-	187,813	196,330
Other income	-	258,144	258,144	-
Total	284,706	285,248	569,954	368,034
EXPENDITURE ON				
Charitable activities				
Charitable activities	210,279	84,385	294,664	341,796
NET INCOME	74,427	200,863	275,290	26,238
Transfers between funds	(15,498)	15,498	-	-
Net movement in funds	58,929	216,361	275,290	26,238
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	136,212	4,195,376	4,331,588	4,305,350
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>195,141</u>	<u>4,411,737</u>	<u>4,606,878</u>	<u>4,331,588</u>

THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST

BALANCE SHEET
31 OCTOBER 2020

	31.10.20	31.10.19
	£	£
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	4,160,940	4,260,247
Investments	<u>60,000</u>	<u>60,000</u>
	4,220,940	4,320,247
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	15,327	19,003
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>374,930</u>	<u>23,181</u>
	390,257	42,184
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year	(4,319)	(30,843)
	<u>385,938</u>	<u>11,341</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		
	4,606,878	4,331,588
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		
	4,606,878	4,331,588
NET ASSETS		
	4,606,878	4,331,588
FUNDS		
Unrestricted funds	195,141	136,212
Restricted funds	<u>4,411,737</u>	<u>4,195,376</u>
	4,606,878	4,331,588
TOTAL FUNDS		
	4,606,878	<u>4,331,588</u>

North Harris Trust Directors

As October 2020

Calum J MacKay **Chair**

Retired Depute Head Teacher of Sir E Scott School, Crofter
Represents Ardhasaig and Bunavoneadar area

Tim Langley **Vice Chair**

Solicitor
Represents Tarbert area

Barbara MacKay

Secondary School French teacher
Represents Tarbert area.

Donald J Morrison

Bus Driver, Crofter
Represents Urgha area

Paul Russ

Crofter
Represents Scaladale, Ardvourlie, Bowglas area

Robert MacKinnon

Postman
Represents Tarbert area

Donnie MacLeod

Marine Engineer
Represents Scalpay area

Finlay Ewen MacLeod

Fisherman
Represents Kyles area

Phil Bertin

Distiller
Represents Tarbert area

Philip Butterfield

Retired
Represents Scalpay area

Kirsty Mary MacKay

Project Officer
Represents Rhenigidale, Marig, Eileananabuich area

Kate Lewis

Outdoor Instructor
Represents Hushinish – Meavaig area

Staff Update

As of October 2020

Member of Staff	Job Title	Date of Appointment	Length of Contract	Salary Paid By
Michael Hunter	Manager	2020	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
John Maclean	Ranger	2020	12 Months (renewable)	SNH/BnaG
Steven Morrison	Chargehand	2010	12 Months (renewable)	NHT (reimbursed by CNES)

Some moments from the year

Clockwise from top left; the completed Ardvourlie Woodland Observatory, Abhainn Maraig bridge repair, Rural Skills Course ,SES, treeplanting, Gearraigh Lotaigear bridge replacement, native trees planted in Gleann Miabhaig, the refurbished Scalpay Bothy.

