



# **NORTH HARRIS TRUST**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

# **2023**

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# CONTENTS

<b>CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MANAGER'S REPORT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>RANGER'S REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>FINANCIAL STATEMENT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DIRECTOR INFORMATION</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>STAFF INFORMATION</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>GALLERY</b>	<b>12</b>

# CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

On 24th November 1992 the late Queen Elizabeth gave a speech at Guildhall to mark the 40th anniversary of her accession to the throne. In that speech she referred to recent events as part of an “annus horribiliis”. Millions of people worldwide would probably refer to last year as an “annus horribilis”. This would apply at a local, national and international level: earthquakes, war in Europe, strikes, rising energy costs, rampant inflation, chaos caused by an unreliable ferry service, etc, etc

The North Harris Trust has not been immune to the effect of the unstable political and economic situation which impacts on everyone. However, the past year has not been a negative one for the North Harris Trust; in reality, it has been quite a positive year. Yes, it has been difficult to attract funding for planned projects; yes, increased costs have made it difficult to progress some planned projects. Despite all that, the Trust has had many successes.

A major focus this year was on reviewing the Trust's priorities and on strategic planning for the next few years. A Directors' Focus day was held at the beginning of the year with external consultant input. This resulted in more structured forward planning. A greater degree of director input into the day to day working of the Trust was achieved through the appointment of Board Champions and the establishment of four sub groups: Finance; Housing; Economic Opportunity; Estate Management.

As a community company, the Trust strives to implement improvements which will benefit the whole community of North Harris. To that end the Trust engaged extensively in community consultation. The responses from community consultation fed into the various plans which were agreed.



*Photograph of NHT Chairman Calum Mackay*

The Trust now has a clearer direction of travel for the next few years.

We are very grateful for the continued input of the volunteer directors and for the excellent work undertaken by staff. In the course of the year, Donnie Macleod stood down as a director representing Scalpay. He was replaced by John Macdonald. We thank Donnie for his commitment to the Trust for a number of years. We also welcomed a new member of staff: Fañch Bihan-Gallic took up the post of Ranger. Other than that, the complement of directors and staff was unchanged from the previous year.

As always, the Trust is grateful for the continued support it receives from a number of organisations and agencies. These include Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Nature Scot, the John Muir Trust, West Harris Trust. We continue to have a strong working relationship with Rèasort Estates, particularly on land management issues.

In conclusion, I feel that the Trust is in a strong position as it looks to the future.

# MANAGER'S REPORT



*Photograph of manager Michael Hunter*

Given the wider context of challenging economic and social conditions, the Trust has undertaken several planning and policy updates throughout the year. The most significant of these being the publication of a 5-year Strategic Plan 2022-27, which is publicly available online. Producing this document involved input and feedback from Directors, partner organisations and the community at large. The Strategic Plan was adopted by the Trust Board in May 2022 and is an important reference document for our work as well as informing the direction and focus of the Trust for the coming years.

Trust finances were closely monitored throughout the course of the year, which informed a forecast of income and expenditure and the production of a 3-year Financial Plan which was adopted in October 2022. This incorporated core budget setting, as well as associated expenditure policies and procedures. It was highlighted that the Trust is operating with an annual deficit in its core finances, and that the short to medium economic priority for Trust investment must therefore be to grow its own reliable income streams.

A Deer Management Plan was published in June 2022, and subsequently updated following a helicopter deer count in September 2022. This plan describes how the Trust will ensure the sustainable management of the red deer herd on the estate over the next decade and is publicly available online.

Funding opportunities provided opportunities for employment over the course of the year. The North Harris Ranger Service has secured funding through to March 2024, which allowed the Trust to welcome Fañch Bihan-Gallic to the role from April 2022. Fañch has made an excellent addition to the staff team and quickly integrated into his work in the community. The Trust also accessed Harris Warden Service funding this year from July to October 2022, building on the work of 2021 and allowing improved visitor management around Huisinis. NatureScot Nature Restoration Funding was also used to employ three short-term staff to deliver stock fencing for a Native Habitat Restoration Project in the eastern part of the estate from January to March 2022.

The Trust was approached by NatureScot with this funding opportunity to improve biodiversity, particularly to improve local native woodland habitat. Several crofting townships were approached with offers of fencing and associated habitat restoration on parts of the common grazings. This work was actioned principally on Urgha and Carrageich common grazings, as well as areas around Molineganais. Contractors were also involved in delivering the capital works necessary and it is anticipated that there will be significant volunteer participation as the project continues over the coming years.

In summary, the Trust has had another successful year, and is well placed to continue to deliver on its responsibilities and aspirations for the foreseeable future.

# DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The availability of Affordable Housing for rent continues to be a big issue for the community. NHT continues to work with HHP on the major development proposed for Scott Road, Tarbert. We continue to liaise between crofters and individuals looking to build. Development on the Trust-owned site at Meavaig continued with plans being drawn up in advance of a Planning application. The dramatic rise in the cost of materials is making the project difficult to fund.

We continue to investigate opportunities to create more business space in North Harris. After the study into redeveloping the area around the recycling site at Urgha, it was decided that the cost of clearing the contaminated land would be prohibitive. The option of relocating the recycling operation to the Old Gun Club was investigated, but similar ground issues make this unviable.

Huisinis Gateway saw 425 campervan nights at the hook-ups, with 1081 in the Gateway carpark, in the 5 months to the end of September. This is a significant rise in the number of vans making multi-day stays in the main carpark. To help manage this influx, and free up some space for day visitors, parking meters were installed at the end of August.



Photograph of Huisinis campervan parking meters

Initial communication issues have now been resolved, ready for the first full season. Along with general maintenance and improvements, two vending machines were installed at the end of the season. Hot drinks and snacks are now available to meet the demand of visitors.

The Urgha Aire project took a leap forward as funding was finally secured. Planning approval was secured for 6 campervan pitches with hookups on land next to Urgha Depot. Despite failing in a previous round of Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, 70% funding was secured from RTIF at the end of this year.

Work on the Ardvourlie Outdoor Hub project, to develop trails in the Community Woodland continued. Planning Approval was eventually received, after much detailed design and environmental survey work to develop a Facilities building and Trails. Working with Lewis & Harris Youth Club Assoc. a number of funding applications were made. The project was turned down by three large funders but succeeded in securing Nett Zero Tourism Fund money. This allowed our first Electric Vehicle charger to be commissioned, signage to be improved and interpretation panels to be installed.

The Tarbert Growing Project got underway with the agreement of Heads of Terms with Scottish & Southern Energy Networks for the use of land behind the Harris Health Hub. Planning permission has been secured for a Polycrub and storage shed. It is hoped to offer allotment space to the community, develop a native tree nursery and allow the Trust to expand the work it does with the local school. Funding has been secured from CnES/Crown Estate for the purchase of the Polycrub. Other applications are pending to fund a Gardener to manage the site and offer advice to growers.

# RANGER'S REPORT

The Ranger Service resumed in April 2022 with funding from NatureScot and from the Gaelic Community Fund (Bòrd na Gàidhlig & Community Land Scotland).

## Educational and Outreach Work

Welcoming and helping visitors around the estate is part of the remit of the Ranger Service, and Spring and Summer were in great part dedicated to that task. A total of 550 individual visitors were welcomed by the Ranger Service directly or took part in Ranger-led activities. Most visitors emphasised that learning about local language, history, and culture alongside environmental information was of great value. The multilingual service was also appreciated, with visitors being interacted with in Scottish Gaelic, Irish, English, French, and Welsh. The Ranger Service also updated and translated information brochures, which seems to be highly appreciated by visitors and locals alike.

While welcoming visitors is an important part of the responsibilities of the Service, community work remains at the heart of it. Thus, the Ranger spent time at the local school, working with every level from Sgoil Àraich to Highschool. In particular, pupils were taught how to make a traditional feannag (lazy-bed) using seaweed as fertiliser.

Several visiting groups were also welcomed by the Ranger, notably the universities of Oldenburg (Germany) and Glasgow. Moreover, the Service worked with both the Gordonstoun School and the George Watson's College as they stayed and volunteered in the area. Finally, the Ranger offered Gaelic-medium walks to Comunn na Gàidhlig as part of their Sradagan programme.

The Ranger Service has also been a point of contact for media outlets visiting the Estate. Thus, the Ranger supported MacTV for a reportage on red deer and took part in a programme on local birdlife with Drum Studios.

*Photograph of NHT staff maintaining deer fence in Gleann Trolamaraig*



A photographer from SandiePhotos was also accompanied on a Bòrd na Gàidhlig funded project. Last but not least, the Ranger Service contributed a piece to most issues of Dè Tha Dol?, the local news outlet.

Over the period covered, a total of 25 institutions were interacted and worked with, including national public bodies, charities, community estates, media companies, educational institutions, and local associations.

## Estate Management

While the social and educational works of the Ranger Service are important, estate management and environmental work constitute a core part of the job. Time was spent monitoring the local environment, including bird colonies, regenerated native woodland, and monitoring sighting of dead seabirds during the Avian Flu outbreak. Shorewatches are also regularly performed in partnership with Whale and Dolphin Conservation.

Fighting invasive species is an important part of the work of the Trust, and the Ranger Service supported the annual gunnera removal programme whenever appropriate. Moreover, we liaised with the Hebridean Mink Project regarding reports of American Mink sightings. Other estate works included organising or supporting three beach-cleans, helping maintain the deer-fence in Gleann Trolamaraig, and performing pathwork.

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST

### Statement of Financial Activities (Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account) for the Year Ended 31 October 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.10.22 Total funds £	31.10.21 Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>					
Donations and legacies	3	36,993	302	37,295	47,791
<b>Charitable activities</b>	6				
Charitable activities		108,875	375,306	484,181	174,055
Other trading activities	4	5,298	-	5,298	3,093
Investment income	5	194,758	-	194,758	188,831
<b>Total</b>		<u>345,924</u>	<u>375,608</u>	<u>721,532</u>	<u>413,770</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>					
<b>Charitable activities</b>	7				
Charitable activities		<u>232,060</u>	<u>127,791</u>	<u>359,851</u>	<u>395,737</u>
<b>NET INCOME</b>		113,864	247,817	361,681	18,033
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>					
Total funds brought forward		<u>271,322</u>	<u>4,353,589</u>	<u>4,624,911</u>	<u>4,606,878</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<u>385,186</u>	<u>4,601,406</u>	<u>4,986,592</u>	<u>4,624,911</u>

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST

### Balance Sheet 31 October 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.10.22 Total funds £	31.10.21 Total funds £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible assets	14	136,861	4,232,509	4,369,370	4,171,283
Investments	15	<u>60,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>60,000</u>	<u>60,000</u>
		196,861	4,232,509	4,429,370	4,231,283
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	16	13,995	26,422	40,417	61,275
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>189,835</u>	<u>342,476</u>	<u>532,311</u>	<u>356,592</u>
		203,830	368,898	572,728	417,867
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due within one year	17	<u>(15,506)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(15,506)</u>	<u>(24,239)</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>188,324</u>	<u>368,898</u>	<u>557,222</u>	<u>393,628</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>385,185</u>	<u>4,601,407</u>	<u>4,986,592</u>	<u>4,624,911</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>385,185</u>	<u>4,601,407</u>	<u>4,986,592</u>	<u>4,624,911</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted funds	19			385,185	271,322
Restricted funds				<u>4,601,407</u>	<u>4,353,589</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>				<u>4,986,592</u>	<u>4,624,911</u>



# DIRECTOR INFORMATION



**Calum J. Mackay - Chairman**  
Retired, Crofter  
Represents Ardhasaig and Bunavoneadar  
area



**Tim Langley - Vice Chair**  
Solicitor  
Represents Tarbert area



**Lena Morrison**  
Shop Manager  
Represents Tarbert area



**Philip Butterfield**  
Retired  
Represents Scalpay area



**Kirsty Mary MacKay**  
Legal Adviser  
Represents Rhenigidale, Marig,  
Eileananabuich area



**Finlay Euan MacLeod**  
Fisherman, Crofter  
Represents Kyles area



**Kate Lewis**  
Outdoor Instructor  
Represents Huisinis – Meavaig area



**Paul Russ**  
Crofter  
Represents Scaladale, Ardvoirlie, Bowglas  
area



**Barbara MacKay**  
Retired  
Represents Tarbert area.

# DIRECTOR INFORMATION



**Robert MacKinnon**  
Postman, Crofter  
Represents Tarbert area



**Donald MacLeod**  
Fisherman / Crofter  
Represents Scalpay area



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

# STAFF INFORMATION



**Michael Hunter**  
Manager since 2020  
Permanent, Full Time



**Diana Maclennan**  
Office & Land Administrator since 2007  
Permanent, Full Time



**Faïch Bihan-Gallic**  
Ranger since 2022  
Rolling 12 months, Full Time  
Salary paid by NatureScot, Community  
Land Scotland & Bòrd na Gàidhlig



**Steven Morrison**  
Chargehand since 2010  
Rolling 12 months, 0.8 FTE  
Salary part funded by CNES



**George Owens**  
Estate Worker since 2021  
12 months 0.6 FTE

**David Wake**  
Development Officer since 2009  
Rolling 12 months, 0.8 FTE  
Salary paid by NHT

# GALLERY



*Craobhan a' fàs ann an Gleann Mhiabhaig.*



*Sgrùdadh na mòintich ann an Gleann Trolamaraig.*



*Connecting new part of Urgha loop walk across Lochannan Lacasdail to the original path. This was to reduce erosion on bank edges and the bridge.*



*Primary school potato growing project*

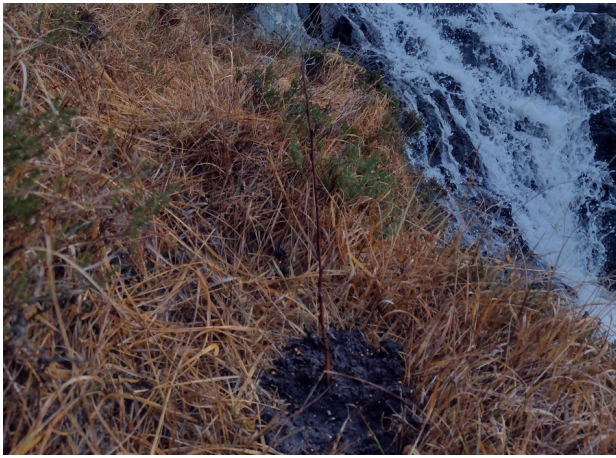


*Replacing the first bridge as you ascend the Abhainn an t-Sratha from Urgha as main beams were rotten.*



*Completed bridge on Abhainn an t-Sratha.*

# GALLERY



Tree planting high above Ghleann Lacasdail



Electric Vehicle charge point installed as part of Àird Mhulaidh.



Tree planting with volunteers at site near Glenn Lacasdail



Installing signage on Urgha loop walk in Glenn Lacasdail to inform walkers of nearby cattle grazing.