



THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

2015 - 2016

FEBRUARY 2017

CONTENTS

Chairman's Comments

Manager's Report

Land Manager's Report

Ranger's Report

North Harris Trading Company Report

Project Development Officer Report

Directors Information

Staff Information

Chairman's Comments

Introduction

The past year has seen considerable progress being made by the North Harris Trust. A number of projects have been completed and others are at various stages of development. 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, two members of staff left the Trust. Anne Marie Hewitt had served as Scalpay Development Officer for two years, a post which was funded by HIE. Matt Watts had served as Ranger for a couple of years. He left to take up another post in the south of England. We thank Anne Marie and Matt for the excellent contribution they made to the work of the Trust during their time of employment.

In April 2016, Daryll Brown was appointed as the new Ranger. Daryll had a busy summer leading guided walks, preparing for the Mountain Festival and helping with a range of land management projects.

Sheila Roderick, who had served as a Director since 2013, resigned during the year. We thank Sheila also for her contribution to the work of the Trust during her time as a Director. Robert Mackinnon, Lorna Wheeler and Donnie MacLeod joined the board as Directors during the year. We welcome them and hope they will enjoy serving as North Harris Trust directors.

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

'Green' Energy

The Trust is always eager to take forward projects which produce 'green' energy at a local level. There are already a number of small wind turbines on the estate, taking advantage of the abundant wind resource we have available. A new wind turbine was erected on Scalpay this year and it is now operational.

It was pleasing to see the completion of the Bunavoneadar Hydro-electric scheme. This is another excellent example of the Trust making good use of local natural resources. There was a hydro scheme on the site a hundred years ago when the Whaling Station was operational. We would like to see greater use being made of hydro generation, since it is an excellent clean way to produce electricity.

It is, however, frustrating that island communities are unable to take full advantage of the natural resources of wind and water for electricity generation due to the limitations of the local grid and due to changing government policies and priorities.

Tarbert soft play area

During the year work was completed on the refurbishment of the soft play area in West Tarbert, located in the former Croileagan building. It is pleasing to see this facility being used by a large number of young children. It is good that the Trust is able to contribute to improved facilities for the younger members of the community.

Scalpay Care Unit

The Trust is constantly aware of the shortage of affordable housing in the community. In order to ease this situation, the Trust is currently pursuing the purchase of the former Care Unit in Scalpay. It is proposed that the building will be converted into two accommodation units: a 3 bedroom property and a 2 bedroom property. This would provide much-needed rental accommodation.

Scalpay School

A number of small businesses continue 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.

Isle of Harris Distillery Project

We continue to applaud the good work being undertaken at the Isle of Harris Distillery - another good use being made of local water! While we await the arrival of the main product, whisky, we are delighted that the Isle of Harris gin is selling as quickly as it can be produced.

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. There are currently plans to strengthen these links through formal meetings between such groups. This will enable greater collaboration to take place and will hopefully strengthen the role of community land ownership in the Western Isles.

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.

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

Scottish Water Main Tarbert-Hushinish

We were advised in October that after several delays over the years, works on the new water main are expected to begin in the spring of 2017. This will remove one barrier to development on the west side of the estate.

Office Computer Network

A virus infection affected one of the desktops on our network in May 2016 and although 1,000 files could not be restored, quick action in the office and assistance from an I.T. company limited the damage. HIE assisted us with specialist advice to look at ways to improve the network and its security. A programme to update the hardware and software in the office will begin early in 2017, and this will increase productivity and resilience.

Our Plan for Harris

Work on the plan began in March 2015 as noted at last year's AGM and the final version was issued in September 2016 and issued widely to Comhairle departments, agencies, Community Councils and the O.H.C.P.P. Copies of the plan were left on display at locations in Tarbert and we can of course send electronic copies to anyone who wishes. A steering group responsible for maintaining, reviewing and updating the plan will meet quarterly to carry this out.

This is an important strategic document for Harris and carries considerable weight in the agencies and Comhairle, so it is important that NHT continues to contribute to it and delivers on the projects we have included.

Deer Larder, Amhuinnsuidhe

The roof of the building was damaged during a storm in December 2015 and this caused the rear slope to become detached from the ridge. The repairs and strengthening works to the entire roof were completed in May 2016 under a successful insurance claim.

Iomairt Units Urgha

The business units at Urgha were awarded first place in the Outer Hebrides design awards, Business/Non-Domestic category, held in May 2016.

Bye-Laws Amended

The Board voted in July 2016 to reduce the age limit for membership of the Trust from 18 to 16 years and the Bye-Laws were amended accordingly.

Broadband

When it became clear that the water main project was going to proceed, the Trust and other individuals contacted S.W. and B.T. asking them to work together to install a fibre optic broadband cable in the same ducting. This would provide a great opportunity, and possibly the only one realistically, to make reasonable broadband service available to many people on the B887. Despite intense lobbying and questioning by NHT and other individuals both Companies have said that it is not something that they will do for various reasons.

A project by E.E. (A part of B.T. Group) to expand and improve the Emergency Services Network resulted in the likelihood that a new mast will be required in the Ardhasaig area to connect to an existing mast near Govig. During discussions, we became aware that an upgrade to the mast could enable a 4G signal to be achieved which will deliver a strong

mobile service and the ability to source broadband packages as an alternative to satellite systems.

Talks are ongoing however we have said that this is something we will require of the Company and the indications are that there is willingness to cooperate.

Scalpay School

The Trust presently leases the School and outbuildings from CNES and sub-lets all the available space to 6 small businesses. The lease term has been extended to August 2017, by which time a decision should be taken whether to purchase the site from CNES.

HIE offered to part fund a feasibility study that would look at all the factors that must be considered before an informed decision is reached. I must admit that there has been a lengthy delay in preparing the brief for the study, however this is almost complete now at the time of writing.

Land Sales

In the year November 2015 to October 2016 amounted to £2,450.

Leases

New lease agreements were arrived at; renewal terms were negotiated successfully and there are some pending arrangements that we hope will increase the income of the Trust significantly.

Youth and Philanthropy Initiative

The Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) is an active citizenship programme that raises awareness amongst young people about philanthropy and their local community. Each participating school, each year is responsible for directing a £3000 YPI Grant to a local charity through a unique programme of team work, research and competition. YPI Scotland is all about creativity and passion, leaving the four walls of the classroom behind, and supporting the issues young people care most about.

In December 2015 the winning group of pupils from Sir E. Scott school nominated NHT as their charity and we were awarded £3,000 to deliver their chosen project, which was for an after-school "Youth Base" where young people can meet informally to complete homework and socialise. The lack of suitable premises has been the main difficulty we have faced; however, we have now reached agreement to lease a building that is under construction now. So, we hope to move forward with planning the detail of arrangements with a group of senior pupils shortly.

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.



Willow cuttings ready for planting at Kyles.

During the spring of 2016, 2,500 willow cuttings were prepared from trees cut on site. With the help of local volunteers and a group of children from George Watson's College (see pic.) the cuttings were planted along with 3000 alder trees that were bought from the mainland.

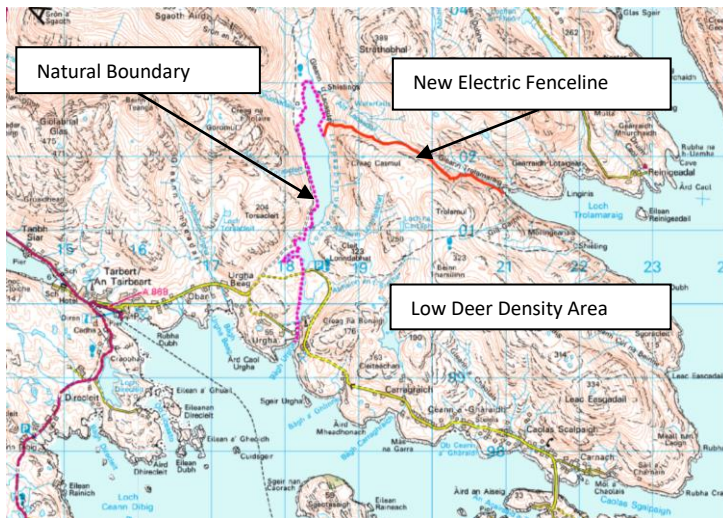
Unfortunately the rabbits continue to be a big problem causing serious losses especially to the willows. The area has been rabbit proofed and the fence has been maintained, but there is now a well established resident population within the fence. Members of the stalking club have been asked to shoot the rabbits whilst we to seek a better solution.



Tree planting with George Watson's College pupils

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, erect 3km of electric deer fence and employ the skills of the Harris Stalking club to discourage deer from entering the area.

The fence now runs all the way from the Lacasdale Lochs to Loch Trolamarig and was switched on for the first time when the John Muir Trust volunteers helped to construct the base station in May. The fence has remained 'live' ever since, powered by a solar panel and 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.



Base Station for the Trolamarig Fence

Members of the Harris Stalking Club culled 7 Stags within the fenced area during the 2016 season. There are still a few points where determined deer can get through or around the fence. By culling these stags we hope the numbers will rapidly drop to a point where grazing pressure within the fenced area allows native trees species to get established.

Deer Management

On the 7th & 8th March, NHT & Amhuinnsuidhe Castle Estate staff were joined by volunteers from neighbouring estates, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Harris Stalking Club to carry out a census of the North Harris Deer population. The event was very well supported with 27 participants turning up on the first day and 11 on the second. As a result, this 'ground' count was completed in record time and should be reasonably accurate. As you will see from the results table below the deer population appears to be healthy and the numbers are similar to those seen on previous ground counts.

| Year | Count Type | Stags | Hinds | Calves | Unclassified | Total |
|------|------------|-------|-------|--------|--------------|-------|
| 1993 | | 231 | | | 466 | 697 |
| 2000 | Helicopter | 396 | | | 678 | 1074 |
| 2006 | Helicopter | 246 | | | 583 | 829 |
| 2008 | Ground | 359 | | | 1018 | 1377 |
| 2010 | Ground | 298 | 685 | 203 | 19 | 1205 |
| 2012 | Helicopter | 325 | 573 | 174 | 7 | 1079 |
| 2013 | Helicopter | 207 | 432 | 177 | | 816 |
| 2016 | Ground | 358 | 539 | 107 | 293 | 1297 |

The data from this ground count will be used to determine the future cull quotas required to maintain the population at its current level.

A total of 27 hinds and 37 stags were taken during the last year (21st October 2015– 20th October 2016).

Upland Habitat Management Plan

The Trust's Upland Habitat Management Plan, which specifies monitoring and grazing management objectives for the moorland areas, has been used to support an application to the Agri-Environment Climate Change Fund (submitted in March). If successful the Trust will be eligible for an annual payment of £11,000 which will replace a similar amount previously received through an SNH Management Agreement.

Hushinish-Land Court Hearing

NHT gave evidence at a Land Court hearing held in the Community Centre on the 26th and 27th April where Scarp Common Grazings contested the boundary which had been registered by Hushinish Common Grazings. The Land Court found in favour of Scarp. As a result the 'Meilein' area was removed from Hushinish Common Grazings and is now subject to a joint grazing right held by shareholders of Hushinish and Scarp Common Grazings.

Gunnera

With funding support from North Harris CC and SNH, the gunnera control work continues. All of the areas treated in 2015 were revisited to evaluate our treatment trials and mop up survivors. Then the opportunity was taken to extend the areas treated. A hire scheme was also established, providing spraying equipment and ready-mixed herbicide for residents. Uptake of the hire scheme was limited, but we had a number of enquiries late in the season and I expect 'word of mouth' will result in more interest next season. Now that we have the resources, experience and distribution maps, I will be looking to recruit some supporters to monitor and direct treatments in their own areas.

Bodha Glas to Miabhag Bridges

Maciver Consultancy Ltd. have surveyed the locations and prepared designs for the proposed bridges required to cross the Langadale and Stuladale Rivers. These designs were used to support an application to the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme-Improving Public Access fund. If successful, this grant will pay £35,000 towards the cost, allowing construction to proceed in 2017.

Millennium Seed Bank

In 2015 NHT agreed to collect native tree seed for Kew Gardens, who offered a grant to cover the costs for two years.

The seed collected is all destined for the Millennium Seed Bank, where it is stored, ensuring that the unique genetic characteristics of our Hebridean trees is preserved and available for future scientific research.

Once the 2016 collecting season finishes in December and a report is submitted in February 2017, the terms of our agreement will be fulfilled.

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:

- path work at Hushinish/Cravadale, Leosaid and Laxadale lochs
- beach cleans at Hushinish and Miavag
- pirri-pirri extraction on Leosaid/Cravadale path and
- installing solar panel on deer fence at Glen Trolamarig
- gunnera bashing at Urgha.

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
- seawatch survey at Scalpay Lighthouse
- and grazing impact monitoring along either side of the Trolamarig Electric Fence.

Gordon Cumming
Land Manager

North Harris Ranger Report

Guided Walks Programme

In the 2016 season (May to October), over 300 people attended a total of 43 walks led by the North Harris Ranger Service – an average of 7 people per walk. There were less walks than previous years (69 in 2015). We continued to work with RSPB Scotland to deliver the weekly Eagle Walks. Next year's programme has been written with a few new walks included including a couple of weekend walks.



Isle of Harris Mountain Festival

The 2016 Festival was funded by Calmac and Marine Harvest. We had over 250 people attending, less than the previous two years. Unfortunately the weather was against us and many events were cancelled. A few people had come to Harris for the week specifically to take part in the festival. The festival continues to forge partnerships with numerous local organisations to deliver events during the week. This year's festival programme is nearly finished and should be available from February. We are nearly finished work on the new website and event booking system.

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 footpath from Hushinish to Cravadale as well as carrying out gunnera eradication, and beach cleaning at Hushinish and Loch Mhiabhaig.

Scaladale Centre

Through the year I have worked with a number of school groups that were staying at the Scaladale centre, carrying out drainage improvement works on the old post road footpath above Glen Scaladale, doing a beach clean at Meilein and taking them on various wildlife walks.

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.



Shorewatch

In May I worked with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation organisation, to set up a new Shorewatch site on Scalpay at Eileen Glas lighthouse. Shorewatch is a national volunteer-based cetacean monitoring programme. So far it has been a very positive experience for the people visiting the site with good sightings of both whales and dolphins. We are intending to create an information centre by the lighthouse providing visitors with information on whales and dolphins and how to watch them as well as information on the lighthouse and Scalpay.



People Counters

People counters were installed at the beginning of June across the estate on core paths and at the eagle observatory. It seems that all the readings were viable except the one for the path leading up from Urgha. Looking at the data collected from the counters, we can see that numbers of people using the paths and visiting the eagle observatory continue to rise. I will activate the counters at the beginning of April to build a picture of early season use.

Eagle Observatory

The eagle observatory continues to be a big draw. I installed people counters at the start of the board walk in June and collected them in November. They recorded 5864 people during this time. If the counters were installed earlier then the figure should be much higher. I am aiming to have the counters out for 1st April this year.

At the start of the seasons I carried out some repairs to the board walk. Cleaning the windows has made a huge difference.

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 intend to tie in with a national beach cleaning campaign in order to raise awareness and try to attract more volunteers.



Trolamaraig Fence

Throughout the year I have provided support to NHT's Land Manager in our work on the Trolamaraig Fence.

Walking groups

During the summer I provided support and guiding to three walking groups from the mainland.

Daryll Brown February 2017

North Harris Trading Company 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.

After over seven years developing a hydro-electric project at Bunavoneader, the 100kW run-of-river scheme was connected to the grid in June. Owned by River Generation Limited (RGL) – a joint venture between the NHTC and Sustainable Technology Investors Limited, the turbine has worked well through the summer and autumn. After three months of BT being unable to provide broadband to the site, the system is now fully operational with technicians being able to support the site remotely. NHT staff members have been trained as first responders and to carry out regular checks.

Our plans for the next hydro-electric project at Maraig were shelved when SSE closed the grid to new generators. With no clear date for the new under-sea cable to the mainland, Directors chose to recover the significant deposits lodged with SSE for this and the earlier Loch na Ciste schemes.

After being unable to find a viable way of developing the turbine site at Outend in Scalpay, we agreed a lease with a turbine manufacturer to develop it. A 50kW Orenda machine was commissioned in July. NHT is now receiving a rent for the site.

Away from Renewable Energy, with all permissions in place, we started the hunt for funding for the Huisinis Gateway project. In April we secured £50,000 from the Community Capital Grants Fund at CnES. This was followed by £125,000 from Outer Hebrides LEADER. Finally in October, HIE awarded us £80,000, which along with NHT's own contribution, completes the funding package. A contract to redevelop the public toilets into a visitor centre with changing facilities and campervan pitches was tendered after year end.

The Iomairt an Obain development of three business units finally received its completion certificate from Building Control. Despite losing one of the first tenants, we secured a replacement and have renewed leases with each of them.

NHTC continues to operate the North Harris Community Recycling Site. This year we have been successful in securing funding for a placement from CnES. This along with another Community Jobs Scotland placement has swollen the staff compliment to 3.

Project Development Officer's Report

Community Development Fund

Awards amounting to £3900 were approved through the Community Development Fund between Oct 15-Oct 16. The fund is open to grant applications from groups or individuals based in or working for the benefit of North Harris.

Bunavoneader Whaling Station

Historic Environment Scotland have continued to work closely with the Trust and in February 2016 the Trust was offered a grant to pay for an up to date plan of the first phase of the site's conservation. This was completed in May and we await a costing for the works within this plan before going in search of funding again. Over the year we were contacted by a number of interested individuals who have seen the site while visiting the islands and were looking for further information. Work continues to secure funding towards tackling the most urgent issues on the site, namely the stabilisation of the chimney and sea wall.

Croileagan Refurbishment

The soft play facility in the former Croileagan building proved hugely popular during 2016 and so the initial lease of the building to Rionnagan Og was extended.

Caraidean

Two issues of the Trust's newsletter were produced, one in December 15 and the other in June 16. These bi-annual updates as to the work of the North Harris Trust are sent to all Trust Members and Friends to help keep those with an interest in the Trust up to date as to our various projects and progress.

Guided Walks Programme

In the 2016 season (April to October) a total of 42 walks were led by the North Harris Ranger Service. We continued to work with RSPB Scotland to deliver the weekly Eagle Walks.

Isle of Harris Mountain Festival

The 2016 Festival was funded by CalMac and Marine Harvest. We had over 250 people attending the various events. The festival continues to forge partnerships with numerous local organisations to deliver events during the week.

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.

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 work to raise funds for the buildings refurbishment continues.

Scalpay School

The lease of the Scalpay School buildings from CNES and sub let of the individual units to tenants continued while discussion as to the potential of purchasing the buildings were held.

NHT Vehicle Lease

A 3 year lease was agreed with VW Financial Services for a Skoda Yeti Outdoor 4x4 for NHT use across the Estate.

Karen MacRae
February 2017

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

Fisherman
Represents Scalpay area

Kenny MacLeod

Civil Servant
Represents Scalpay area

Lorna Wheeler

Self Employed Crafter
Represents Scalpay area

Donnie MacLeod

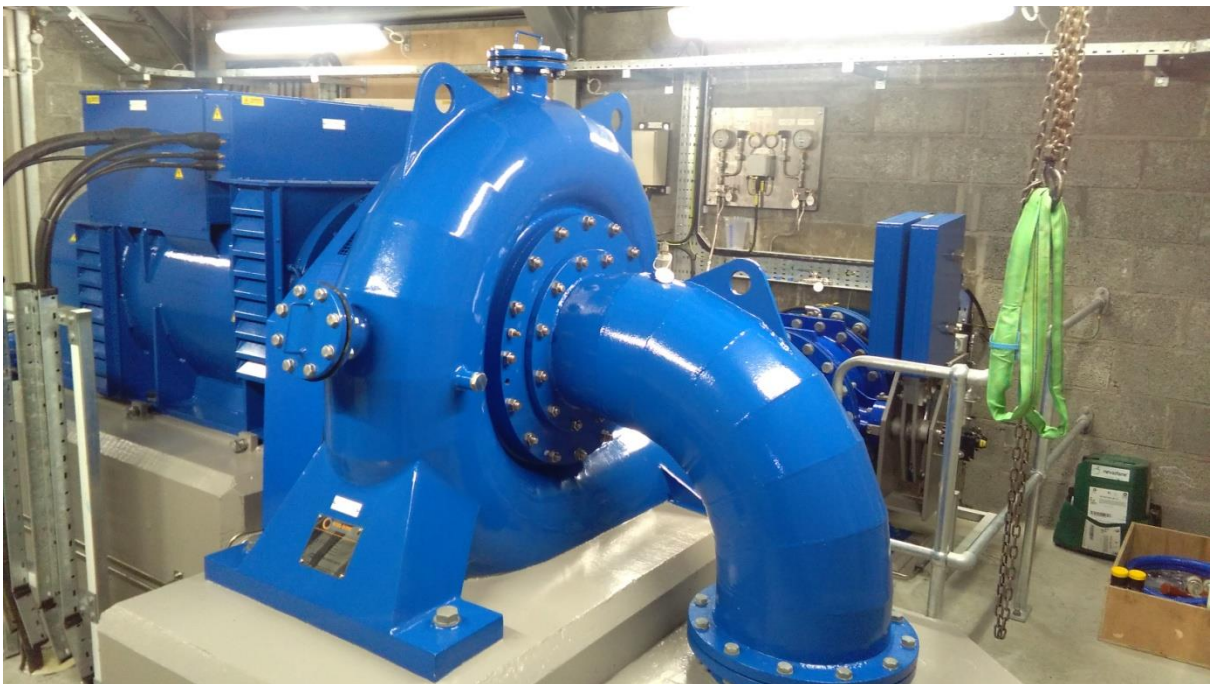
Marine Engineer
Represents Scalpay area

Staff Update: February 2017

| Member of Staff | Job Title | Date of Appointment | Length of Contract | Salary Paid By |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Alistair MacLeod | Development Manager | 2003 | Permanent | NHT |
| Diana MacLennan | Administrator | 2007 | Permanent | NHT |
| Gordon Cumming | Land Manager | 2014 | Permanent | NHT |
| Karen MacRae | Project Development Officer | 2013 | Permanent | NHT |
| David Wake | Energy Officer | 2009 | Part time (renewable) | NHT |
| Daryll Brown | Ranger | 2016 | 12 Months | SNH/NHT |
| Steven Morrison | Civil Amenities Operator | 2010 | 12 Months (renewable) | NHT (reimbursed by CNES) |
| Ewen Morrison | Recycling Assistant | 2016 | 12 Months | OHMEET |
| Alasdair Morrison | Recycling Assistant | 2016 | 6 Months | SCVO Community Jobs Scotland |



Old Croileagan Building



Bunavoneader Hydro



Scalpay Turbine



Stag on Rutting and Roaring Walk



North Harris Trust



@NorthHarris

Annual Report of the North Harris Trust Ltd, Tigh an Urrais, Tarbert, Isle of Harris, HS3 3DB
Telephone: 01859 50 2222. Email: info@north-harris.org Web: www.north-harris.org
Scottish Charity No SC033413 A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, No 235889