

Uig Development Trust
Community Housing Needs Study
Final Report
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Uig Development Trust (SCIO) is a registered Scottish Charity no. SC047581

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Community Housing Needs Study was undertaken by the Uig Development Trust (UDT) to better understand the current housing situation in the area and to assess demand and support for additional housing development(s).
- 1.2 This report sets out the findings from survey research carried out in September and October 2020. It combines qualitative and quantitative research to provide analysis of the demand for housing in Uig.

2. Background

- 2.1 The current Scottish Government funding period for housing runs from 2016/17-2021. This includes the £25 million Rural Housing Fund and the £5 million Islands Housing Fund. Both funds aimed to increase the supply of affordable housing of all tenures in rural Scotland and contribute to the national target of 50,000 affordable homes.
- 2.2 The Scottish Government is currently developing a vision for how homes and communities should look and feel in 2040.¹
- 2.3 An announcement was made by the Scottish Government on the 11th November that The Rural and Island Housing Fund will be extended beyond March 2021.²
- 2.4 In June 2017, the Scottish Government confirmed that the Comhairle na Eilean Siar (CnES) as the strategic housing authority for the area. CnES has a statutory responsibility as the strategic housing authority for the Outer Hebrides to produce a Local Housing Strategy (LHS).³
- 2.5 The specific focus of the LHS is two-fold:
 - to assist population retention and the regeneration and sustainability of our rural areas by increasing housing supply and introducing new housing options; and
 - to help address the significant potential impact of our population profile on demand for health and social care services and ensure the availability of appropriate housing and related services to maximise care at home and independent living
- 2.6 CnES is required to submit a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) to the Scottish Government on an annual basis.⁴
- 2.7 The SHIP primarily identifies proposed investment through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP). The SHIP can include affordable housing supply through new provision,

¹ Housing Beyond 2021 is available from <<https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-beyond-2021> >

² Affordable Housing for Rural and Island Communities: <https://www.gov.scot/news/affordable-housing-for-rural-and-island-communities>

³ The Outer Hebrides Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 is available from < <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/media/10321/outer-hebrides-local-housing-strategy-2017-2022.pdf> >.

⁴ SHIP 2020/21 to 2024/25: <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/housing/affordable-housing/strategic-housing-investment-plan>

replacement of existing stock or through refurbishment/repurposing. It can include social rented housing, low cost home ownership and shared equity schemes.

2.8 The current CnES SHIP (2020/21 – 2024/25) was produced in October 2019 and identifies four units to be built in Uig 2021/22. A further eight units are identified for 'Rural Lewis' in Year 4 (2023/24) and 16 Units Year 5 (2024/25).

3. Uig

3.1 Covering approximately 100 sq miles, Uig has is a mixture of privately owned and community owned land. The Bhaltois Trust was established in 1998 and covers the 690 hectares on the Bhaltois Peninsula. The Gallan Head Community Trust was incorporated in 2014 to purchase the promontory previously owned by the MOD Aird Uig. Other areas of land are privately owned. These include the Uig and Hamanaway Estate and Morsgail Estates (recently combined under single ownership under "Reasort Estates"), Scaliscro Estate and Uig Lodge. Crofts and grazings rights are still central to housing and land use across the area.

3.2 A housing audit was undertaken by UDT in April 2019. It identified 295 houses in Uig of which 188 (64%) were primary residences, 72 (26%) second homes, 22 (6%) holiday lets and 13 (4%) empty homes.⁵ These figures include croft houses.

3.3 Community Consultations were undertaken in May 2019, with a total of 65 attendees. 139 suggestions were put forward. Housing was highlighted in two of the top three suggestions, with the following comments:

"Work with HHP to identify new sites in Uig for social housing" and

"Community purchase of empty homes with a view to upgrading them for long term rent or sale"

3.4 Housing has been identified as one of three key priority areas on the Uig Development Plan 2019-2024 to "ensure that there is adequate provision of quality, affordable land and houses to attract and retain people to the area".⁶

3.5 UDT have been in contact with the Empty Homes Officer at CnES to support his work bringing empty homes back into use.

3.6 Proposed builds within Uig:

3.6.1 Social Housing:

Cal Max, working with HHP, are currently planing to build three units (3 bedrooms per unit) at Leana Ruadh. These houses are noted on the SHIP.

3.6.2 Private Housing:

A number of private builds are at the planning stage or being undertaken across Uig. This has

⁵ Additional information available from Uig Development Trust

⁶ Uig Development Plan available from <https://www.uigdevelopmenttrust.org.uk/development-projects-funders/>

increased the number of homes from the 295 identified in 2019. These are a mix of primary residencies and second homes.

4. Methodology

4.1 This study incorporates the following activities:

Desk Research

- Scottish Government Housing and Planning Delivery Framework
- Scottish Government Housing Beyond 2021
- CnES Strategic Housing Investment Plan (2020/21 – 2024/25)
- Review of previous Uig audits and any available statistics relevant to housing demand in Uig, the Isle of Lewis and the Outer Hebrides more generally.
- Discussions with CnES, the community and UDT Board members around housing provision in Uig.

Date collection

A paper-based survey delivered to 223 occupied houses in Uig (23rd /24th September 2020) asking for both quantitative and qualitative feedback on housing. 96 completed (or semi-completed) questionnaires were returned. This is a 43% return rate.

Reporting

Final report produced November 2020.

5. Results and Analysis

This section sets out the findings from the survey. It is worth noting that in some cases respondents did not answer all the questions. Where this is the case the percentages given are of those who answered the questions as opposed to a percentage of survey respondents. Copies of the full data set are available from the Uig Development Trust.

5.1 There is a clear housing pattern within Uig with the vast majority of homes being detached properties, owned (with or without a mortgage) and lived in for more than ten years.

5.2 Ten surveys were returned (over 10% of total) where respondents said that they are looking to move within a one to three-year timeframe.

5.3 Those looking to move are three families, a couple, and five single adults aged 20-44. A total of 23 people in total. Although these actual numbers are small it does provide a very manageable starting point and action could make a real difference – especially to younger people looking to move out of home. With an overall permanent resident population of Uig at approximately 350 this represents approximately 7% of the community.

5.4 The key reason identified for the requirement to move was the desire to live independently from the family home.

- 5.5 For those looking to move out it is notable that only one household has put their name down on Hebridean Housing Partnership's housing list. Other than a requirement for a croft, none of the households looking to move have any specialist housing requirements.
- 5.6 The most popular options to acquire a house is to either buy on the open market or build (ideally with a grant on a croft). This echoes the pattern already established regarding homes in Uig (detached and owned with or without mortgage). The amount respondents would consider when looking to purchase a house varied considerably (from £40K-£60K up to £160K-£180K). Unsurprisingly the middle ground £80K-£120K was the most popular choice. It is possible to purchase a house in Uig for around £100K, however, prices are going up and houses at this price would usually require considerable renovation.
- 5.7 There is strong support for a housing development in the area. When asked "If a need is identified, would you support a small development of affordable housing for local people in this survey area", 85% of respondents said 'Yes' with the remaining 15% marking 'Maybe'. There were no surveys returned with 'No'. The reasons for marking 'Maybe' centred around the possible location of housing. Typical examples of comments marked next to a 'Maybe' response is "Choose location because its quiet so development close by would change this, but understand need for affordable housing stock", "...any development (location and design) would have to be carefully considered".
- 5.8 Respondents were asked if they know of any suitable sites, available land or property in the area that is currently out of housing stock but could be brought back into use, with assistance. A number of sites were identified. Comments and sites that were mentioned on multiple responses were:
- Creating plots on Common Grazings
 - Potential to develop the site of the former Outdoor Centre at Cliff
 - Potential to develop derelict buildings in Aird.
- 5.8.1 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar previously wrote to all Grazings Committees (Autumn 2018) about the potential to free up land for housing and an additional note was put in the Uig News (Autumn 2019) by the Uig Development Trust. A number of respondents noted that Ardoil Grazings have already come forward with an area identified as a possibility for affordable housing. HHP have decided not to progress this at this time.
- 5.8.2 The Outdoor Centre at Cliff is on Bhaltos Community Trust Land.
- 5.8.3 Any developments at Aird would need to be undertaken in partnership with the Gallan Head Community Trust. One respondent noted that "There are several derelict buildings in the old RAF Camp in Aird. They are all owned, but nothing is being done with them and they are an eyesore. Is there any chance of compulsory purchase or the owners being required to bring them to a state suitable for occupation by rent? They are good solid structures which could be turned into homes as most of the other buildings have been".

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Uig Development Trust to clarify what properties/sites will be undertaken by HHP in Uig. Cal Max are leading on the site to the west of Leana Ruadh, a proposed development of three units (each three bedroom) to be built. Investigate whether or not HHP have plans to develop any other sites (eg Care Unit). HHP had also produced a Stage One feasibility study on the plot of land behind Eireastadh.
- 6.2 Uig Development Trust to investigate how best to support landowners and Grazing Committees should they wish to offer up land for housing plots for self-build. Is it possible for legal restrictions be put on plots of land to dictate who can buy them and for what purpose?
- 6.3 Further discussions required with the new Estate owner around the provision of housing in the area.
- 6.4 Investigate the potential for empty homes in the area to be put out for long-term rental accommodation. The majority of families who have recently moved to Uig have required a period of long-term rental before either purchasing land on which to build or buying a property on the open market. Discuss further with the Empty Homes Officer at Comhaire nan Eilean Siar.