



Urras na Pàirce

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN PLANA-GNOTHAICH RO-INNLEACHDAIL 2016-2020

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Executive Summary ~ Geàrr-chunntas luchd-gnìomha

This Strategic Business Plan sets out the aspirations of the Pairc Trust and the areas of development it will aim to progress between now and March 2020. As a new landowner, the areas identified for development are still at the feasibility stage and the Trust will develop operational plans for the areas as they progress. These operational documents will contain financial projections and specific work plans.

Following consultation with the community the Trust has identified five areas of development which it will focus on over the next four years:

- Tourism
- Housing
- Renewable Energy
- A Permanent Base for the Trust Office
- Crofting Administration

These areas have the potential to contribute towards the economic growth of the area, and provide an income for the Trust. Working Groups have been established for each of these areas, and these groups consist of Trust Directors and members of the community.

The Trust will continue to work collaboratively with the local community to develop these areas, and work in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (H.I.E.), Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (referred to as ‘the Comhairle’), and others who have shown great support to the Trust since it was formed in 2003. We have received input from these organisations into this plan and their feedback has been appreciated.

The Pairc Estate was included with its neighbouring community of Kinloch as a Community Account Management (C.A.M.) area in 2011 by H.I.E. in recognition of its fragile status. There is a Community Plan in place for the two communities which was developed in consultation with H.I.E. and covers the period from October 2015 – October 2020. We view this plan as an overarching document for the two communities, and we share the following vision statement:

‘Pairc and Kinloch is working towards a vibrant and demographically balanced community. It will be an accessible, well serviced community that is sustainable for the future needs of the area and its residents’.

Pairc Trust is now Account Managed by H.I.E. and we see this as a positive move forward, as H.I.E. is committed to supporting communities which can make a strong impact on the success of a region.

The Trust also shares the strategic priority of the Comhairle, which is *‘to strengthen social and economic development in the community of the Outer Hebrides’* and the Strategic Objective of the Scottish Government, which is *‘to help local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer places to live, offering improved opportunities and a better way of life’.*

Background ~ Eachdraidh

Pairc Trust was established in 2003 and completed purchase of the Pairc Estate on behalf of the local community in December 2015.

The Pairc Estate extends to an area of approximately 10,840ha in South Lochs, on the Isle of Lewis. With a population of 400, the furthest away township is 30 miles from Stornoway, the only large town in the Outer Hebrides which has a population of around 8,000.

The majority of the Estate is under crofting tenure, the main exception being an area of grazing land at Steimreway, the shoreline between high water and low water. In total, there are 214 crofts on the Estate, spread between eleven townships. The Estate is mainly hilly moorland with a large number of fresh water lochs.

The key community services on the Pairc Estate comprise:

- Local primary school at Gravir
- Medical surgery, also at Gravir
- Community owned shop, loch-side café, hostel, exhibition area and other visitor attractions at the Ravenspoint Centre, Kershader
- Resource Centre in Kershader which includes a meeting space for community groups and local nursery provision
- Small community hall in Orinsay
- Tigh Ceilidh (meeting house) in Gravir
- Community polytunnels in Habost
- Museum run by Comunn Eachdraidh na Pairc and based in the Ravenspoint Centre

According to the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement 2013-23 the main challenges for the rural areas of the Western Isles are:

- Social isolation
- Lack of resources and facilities
- Fuel poverty
- A declining population
- Limited employment opportunities
- Low income rates
- Deprivation (the Outer Hebrides is one of the most deprived rural areas in Scotland)

These challenges are exacerbated in Pairc due to its remote and rural location.

According to the 2011 Census figures, the population of the Western Isles is ageing, with the greatest increase in age group being the 65-74 category (from representing 10.6% of the population in 2005 to 13.2% in 2015). The situation in the Outer Hebrides is more marked than elsewhere in Scotland, with a higher percentage of individuals in the older age group and correspondingly less in the younger age groups.

A recent H.I.E. study found that the lack of affordable housing, transport, training and decent jobs as well as poor mobile and broadband signal are important deciding factors in pushing young people away from the Western Isles.

When we asked the community what would encourage more young families to remain in, or come to the area, the two most common responses were: affordable housing and employment. Other answers included better transport, broadband, better local services and childcare.

It is the aim of Pairc Trust to address the challenges which are faced by our community, and regenerate the Pairc Estate.

Vision ~ Lèirsinn

The long term vision is for Pairc Estate to care for its population by providing affordable good quality accommodation, employment, community facilities and services. The Trust aims to change the demographic of the population so it is more balanced.

Mission Statement ~ Aithris-rùin

To make Pairc Estate a well serviced community which is attractive to residents and visitors.

Organisation Structure and Procedure ~ Eagrachas agus dòigh-obrach

The Trust is a company limited by guarantee (No SC261145) and a registered charity (SC035193). All the activities which Pairc Trust is proposing to undertake, in furtherance of its objectives, within the context of this development, are permissible, and within its power, under the terms of its Memorandum of Association.

Staff ~ Luchd-obrach

The Trust currently employs an Administrative Officer and a Development Manager on a full time basis. Both members of staff are based at the Resource Centre in Kershader. It is the intention of the Trust to source additional funding and an income revenue to continue to finance these posts.

Directors ~ Luchd-stiùiridh

Directors of the company have been elected by members or appointed under section 21 of the Trust's Articles of Association. Directors are elected by members, and membership is open to anyone who lives in the Estate. The current Directors have a combination of skills, individual qualities, leadership and experience which all combine to create a knowledgeable and progressive team. The Board meet regularly and the minutes from these meetings are published on the Pairc Trust website.

Current Directors:

[Angus McDowall \(Chair\)](#)

[Member of the Renewables Working Group](#)

Angus has extensive experience of private industry in the construction sector. He was previously a founder, owner, and manager of a construction firm specialising in bulk earthworks, utility contracts, and maintenance contracts, employing over 70 staff. He is now a Contracts Manager with a Western Isles based company that works throughout

the west coast of Scotland and all the islands. Angus is also a lifelong crofter, Vice Chair of Muaitheabhal Community Wind Farm Trust and a Committee Member of Lochs Show.

Steve Mortimore (Vice Chair)

Member of the Tourism Working Group

Steve has an extensive history in education with an Honours Degree in Geology, Education Diploma and Certificate of Advanced Study. When he moved to Lewis he worked as a supply teacher and was employed by Scottish Water. He was a Governor at different schools as well as a Health and Safety Representative. Steve has extensive committee and casework experience for NASUWT (Teachers' Union) and was a member of the Liaison Committee for wind turbine development for Pairc. Steve is now retired and spends his time between his home in South Lochs and Evanton.

Ken Kennedy (Treasurer)

Member of the Tourism Working Group

Ken spent most of his career in the Maritime Industry having served as Ship's Master and Offshore Installation Manager on Drilling Units worldwide. He then lectured students at Lews Castle College for seven years before retiring from full time employment. Ken has extensive experience in tourism, mainly focused in providing self-catering accommodation. Ken volunteers as an advisor at the Citizens Advice Bureau and delivers evening courses at the college.

Jim McLaughlin

Member of the Renewables Working Group

Jim has been a crofter for 28 years and he was a Harris Tweed weaver for 18 years. Jim has an extensive experience of livestock management and business issues. He is actively involved in the local community and is also a Committee Member of the Lochs Show. Jim currently works for the Royal Mail as a postman.

Alan Wilson

Member of the Housing Working Group

Alan has qualifications and experience in fish husbandry, fish farming, construction industry, business studies, garden maintenance and land engineering. He has worked in both private and public sectors. Alan is also a Committee Member of the Pairc Hall Committee. Alan works for a local construction company as a joiner.

John Murdo Matheson

Member of the Crofting Working Group

John Murdo has an extensive knowledge of crofting and has a large number of livestock. He has been the Grazings Clerk for Gravir and Calbost for a number of years. John Murdo is also a Director of the Lewis and Harris Auction Marts. He currently works in the Crofters in Stornoway.

Partnership Working ~ Ag obair ann an co-bhonn

The Trust has an agreement in place with Co-Chomunn na Pairc (the Pairc Community Co-operative), which owns and operates the Ravenspoint Centre on behalf of the community to have a mutual seat on both Boards to encourage joint working between the two organisations. We see this as a vital partnership, as Co-Chomunn na Pairc is an important local organisation, which runs the local shop, hostel and cafe. We have common goals, which are to regenerate the Estate and bring more facilities, services and visitors to the area.

In addition to this, the Trust works closely with the Comhairle, H.I.E., other Community Trusts, Muaitheabhal Community Wind Farm Trust (M.C.W.F.T.), Pairc Playgroup, the Scottish Government and Comunn Eachdraidh na Pairc. We are also members of Community Land Scotland, which provides us with a wealth of information and support.

When we held our Community Engagement events, the majority of those consulted with view the Trust as an overarching organisation which supports and works alongside existing community groups to develop the Estate and take forward a variety of projects. In order to do this, we set up Working Groups with members from community groups and individuals to work together with the Directors and Development Manager on the areas identified below.

Development Proposals ~ Molaidhean-leasachaidh

As new landowners with a small turnover the Trust aims to develop a sustainable organisation which can support itself without being reliant on external funding and support the development of the local economy.

We have conducted community consultation with the local residents on a number of occasions since purchasing the Estate.

The consultation took several forms:

- Conversations and interviews with individuals
- Community Consultation Workshops
- Community Consultation Drop in Sessions
- Surveys

The areas for development were discussed during these events, and received positive feedback.

Although Gaelic is not identified as a specific area for development, the Trust recognises that the Pairc and Kinloch areas are traditional Gaelic-speaking crofting communities. Gaelic is still an integral part of people's lives and this is a place where the language is used on a daily basis. The Pairc and Kinloch area has one of the highest proportions of Gaelic speakers and learners in Scotland, with 54.7% of people able to speak the language.

Pairc Trust understands the importance of Gaelic to the community and that it is a valuable asset. We recognise the role of the Gaelic language in our community's strength, its sense of identity, confidence and resilience, and in a broader and more enlightened concept of 'community development'. Additionally, Gaelic provides opportunities to create and support employment through areas such as education and tourism. The work carried out by our partners

Co Chomunn na Pairc in delivering community-based Gaelic language learning courses to visitors over a number of years is one example of this, as is the work of the local historical society Comunn Eachdraidh na Pàirc. We intend to support and promote the use of the language in the Estate as we move forward.

In order to develop the areas identified we are reliant on external funding. Our biggest accomplishment to date was purchasing the Estate and in order to do this we secured funding from: The Scottish Government, The Big Lottery, Scottish Land Fund, the Comhairle, M.C.W.F.T., and H.I.E.

Since purchasing the Estate we have secured funding towards our projects, including:

- Scottish Government Rural Housing Fund towards feasibility work looking into affordable housing
- Scottish Land Fund for a feasibility study into the Resource Centre
- Climate Challenge Fund for a feasibility study into Pairc Produce
- Local Energy Scotland CARES Fund for feasibility work into providing a local business with renewable energy
- Tesco Bags of Help to improve a local walkway
- The Comhairle to help us develop Gaelic courses
- M.C.W.F.T. funding towards our Housing Needs Analysis

It is our intention to source additional funding to take the areas identified forward, which will enable us to develop income streams and become self-sustaining in the future.

One of the biggest assets for Pairc Trust which is not specifically mentioned below is the water that surrounds the area and the fresh water lochs throughout the Estate. The Trust are looking into ways to generate an income from this natural asset in the future.

Tourism ~ Turasachd

It is the mission of the Outer Hebrides Tourism Strategy 2020 *'To harness and focus the passion, energy and drive on the islands to do what we do better and by turning more of our unique, natural and cultural assets into high quality authentic experiences that will grow tourism sustainably -and in so doing help stimulate population growth and enhance economic performance'*

It is also the aim of the Pairc Trust to grow tourism in the Estate by making the most of the unique assets we have available.

According to the Scottish Tourism Strategy (June 2012):

Consumer research shows that people want to feel that they have had an authentic experience, taking in a wide range of things to see and do: from gleaning an insight into a destination's past to appreciating its contemporary offer, interacting with its people and sampling its local produce.

Gleaning an insight into a destination's past

This was reflected in the consultations we held with the community. There was a lot of support for *Improving access to historical/archaeological sites* (94% strongly support this and 6% support it) and we intend to work in partnership with Comunn Eachdraidh na Pairc to take this forward. We are also working in partnership with the Orinsay Development Association to improve access to the deserted village of Steimreway, and we have secured funding from Tesco Bags of Help towards this.

Appreciating its contemporary offer

There was a lot of support for marketing the Pairc Estate so that visitors know what we have to offer, and we have agreed to work in partnership with local businesses and individuals to develop a Tourism Strategy and Marketing Strategy.

This will involve setting up a Tourism Working Group with representatives from the community, private organisations and individuals. This will enable us to work together to identify gaps in current provision and opportunities for development.

We intend to market the area more effectively together in order to increase the number of visitors, emphasising its natural beauty as the Hidden Jewel of the Western Isles, and enhancing what we have to make it a desirable visitor destination.

Sampling its local produce

There was some discussion about producing 'Pairc Produce', taking advantage of the livestock and providing employment opportunities to local people. There was a lot of support for this and we have received funding from the Climate Change Fund to carry out a piece of research into the viability of such a project.

Housing ~ Taigheadas

Additional social and affordable housing in the Pairc Estate is one of the most important keys to reversing population decline, encouraging a more balanced age structure, and achieving the community's social and economic goals for the area.

The Key Themes of the the Comhairle's Local Housing Strategy (2011-16) are that:

- More households live in good quality, dry, warm, and energy efficient housing that minimises the risk of fuel poverty and contributes to a reduction in carbon emissions.
- The balance between housing supply and demand is improved so that more households can secure a suitable home in their preferred area at a price they can afford.

We intend to provide housing in the Estate, which is energy efficient and cheap to heat and keep warm. We also intend to provide housing which is affordable and encourages people to remain in the area.

The Trust recently concluded a Housing Needs Analysis of the Estate. Due to the funding we received from M.C.W.F.T. we were in a position to employ a Housing Needs Support Officer and the final Housing Needs Report is available on our website.

The report clearly shows that the local community is very supportive of a small development of affordable housing in the Estate, either to rent or to buy. 72% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that our community needs more affordable housing for rent. 50% either agreed or strongly agreed that our community needs more affordable housing options to buy.

Based on the results of our study, we will look into the possibility of renovating empty properties in the Estate in order to provide affordable housing. This is in accordance with the Outer Hebrides Local Housing Strategy 2011-16 which states: *'We therefore plan to concentrate our efforts to bring empty properties back into use in remote rural areas where the community audit programme demonstrates there is a need for affordable housing but it would be cost prohibitive to build only one or two affordable units'*.

The Trust intends to purchase the empty Care Unit in Gravir from The Comhairle, with a view to renovating it for affordable housing. An application to purchase the property, and an application to the Scottish Land Fund have been

submitted, and we await a decision. If we are successful we will provide this property as a family home which can be adapted for specific needs. If we are successful in our application, we will ensure the property is energy efficient and this will help to alleviate the prevailing issue of fuel poverty in the Estate.

In addition to this we will also look into the possibility of providing serviced plots for sale in the future.

Renewable Energy ~ Lùth ath-nuadhachail

The Scottish Government's Energy Strategy which will be published in 2017 will promote community ownership and involvement in renewable energy.

Pairc Trust will investigate local energy projects which will benefit the local community. We see advantages in community-owned renewable energy schemes as a means of generating streams of additional income to support other projects on the Estate for the benefit of the community. The renewable energy schemes could potentially involve wind, hydro, solar and tidal energy. The Trust is very interested in exploring the possibility of a 'virtual aggregate' energy system, which has the potential to provide energy to the local community and thus help to alleviate fuel poverty in the Estate.

The Trust has learned from good practice in other Community Estates, which have developed sustainability through community energy projects.

We have secured funding from Local Energy Scotland to carry out a feasibility study which will investigate the possibility of providing a local business unit with energy from wind and solar power. If the feasibility work shows that this is a viable project, we will develop it further. This is an opportunity to provide a local business with cheaper 'green' electricity, reduce carbon emissions and provide a small income to the Trust.

In addition to this we will continue to investigate potential renewable energy schemes which would involve exporting the energy generated should the external grid capacity issues are overcome.

When we consulted with the community we found that 70% of the people we spoke to were very supportive of our plan to investigate renewable energy options.

Permanent Base for the Trust Offices ~ Dachaigh mhaireannach do dh' Oifis an Urrais

The Trust aspires to have a permanent base for the Pairc Trust offices within the Estate, which is easily accessible for members of the public.

We will look into the feasibility of purchasing the Resource Centre in Kershader from The Comhairle on behalf of the community, in accordance with the Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulations 2010. The building is surplus to the Comhairle requirements and our offices are presently in the building.

The Resource Centre is currently used by the Pairc Trust, Muaitheabhal Community Wind Farm Trust and the Pairc Playgroup. In addition to it is used by different groups, such as the local Post Office, the Social Club, Pairc Community Council Gym, First Responders and Alzheimers Scotland. It is also used to deliver local training courses, such as First Aid and Gaelic.

If we purchased the property we would sustain the facility and services for the community, and continue to use the building as a base for community groups. We are very supportive of the Pairc Playgroup and it is our intention to support them, and continue to provide them with accommodation which meets their needs.

We have previously consulted with the community about purchasing the building and found them to be very supportive of the purchase. When we discussed it at recent Community Engagement events, 83% strongly supported the purchase and 17% supported it.

The Trust is also very supportive of the Pairc Hall Committee, which aims to provide a community hall in the area. The Committee have consulted with the community about their plans to build a hall and have received a lot of support for this. The Trust intends to assist the Committee as they move forward with this project.

If the Resource Centre proposal does not prove to be viable, or if the needs of the Pairc Trust grow we may consider whether they can be met as part of any other developments in the area.

Crofting Administration ~ Rianachd chroitreachd

The factors of the Estate currently hold the crofting files and carry out the majority of crofting administration. The Trust plans to bring this in-house. As is the case of some other community-owned estates, the Trust envisages the need for some expert consultancy support on croft and estate administration for an initial period until staff are trained and competent in Estate matters. All the services which are currently provided by the factors will be retained and possibly improved.

It is our intention that local people will come to the Pairc Trust Office to discuss any crofting issues and will be in a position where they can pay their rentals directly to the Trust.

Longer Term Proposals ~ Molaidhean thairis air an fhad-ùine

Although the areas identified in this plan are not exhaustive, and other projects may appear in the future, the Trust will focus on ways to bring an income to the Estate in the short term. Once the areas identified are progressed, and we start to generate an income, we will be in a better position to consider other ways to develop the Estate

The Community Engagement Events indicated that there is a strong desire by many members of the community to build a causeway, across Loch Erisort. This would make the Estate a lot more accessible, with a reduction of 20 minutes in the drive to Stornoway. At present, the Trust is not in a position to consider projects of this scale as it must initially focus on ways to produce an income, and make Pairc Trust sustainable.

In the meantime, we will develop the areas identified and we will continue to work alongside existing community groups to develop the Estate.

Key Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

Prìomh amasan (ro-innleachdail) agus comharran-coileanaidh

Key Strategic Objectives	Possible Partners	Timescale	Key Performance Indicators
Regularly consult with the community and keep them informed.	Local community	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates on the website and facebook page Members of the community join working groups
Develop a Tourism Strategy and Marketing Strategy with other Businesses and Individuals in the Estate	Local businesses and individuals, Visit Scotland, Outer Hebrides Tourism Group	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of a Tourism Strategy working group Tourism Strategy produced Marketing Strategy produced
Provide additional housing in Pairc	The Comhairle, HHP, Scottish Government, T.I.G.	Medium/Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete feasibility studies into empty properties Purchase empty properties in the Estate Renovate properties and offer as affordable housing Produce a final draft of Housing Strategy and Allocations Policy Accredited landlord training completed
Investigate local renewable energy options and energy options which export energy once the grid capacity issues are overcome Investigate the possibility of a 'Virtual Aggregate' system in order to provide local households with cheaper energy	Local Energy Scotland, local businesses, Community Energy Scotland, Scottish Government	Medium/long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete feasibility work into supplying local businesses with renewable energy Complete feasibility work into exporting renewable energy
Investigate the feasibility of purchasing the Resource Centre	The Comhairle, Pairc Playgroup, MCWFT, local groups, Scottish Land Fund	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete feasibility work into the purchase of the Resource Centre Progress to purchase if the feasibility work shows it is a viable option. Look into alternative options if it is not viable.

Take over Crofting Administration for the Estate	Anderson Macarthur	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All crofting administration is dealt with by the Pairc Trust office.
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References:

- Pairc and Kinloch Community Plan October 2015-October 2020
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Corporate Strategy 2012-2017
- Scottish Government Strategic Objectives
- Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement 2013-23
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Outer Hebrides Facts 2016
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise Research Report Our Next Generation 2015
- Scottish Tourism Strategy 'Tourism Scotland 2020' 2012
- Outer Hebrides Tourism Strategy 2015
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Local Housing Strategy 2011-16