



PAIRC ESTATE HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY REPORT
2016

with the support of



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.2. Pairc Trust	3
1.3. The Pairc Estate.....	3
1.4. Context to the Housing Needs Survey	4
1.5. Methodology.....	4
1.6. Response Rate.....	5
2. Available Properties in the Pairc Estate	5
3. Housing Needs Survey Results	6
Section A: Your Current Home	6
Section B: The Condition of your Home.....	8
Section C: Your Future Plans	8
Section D: Views on Local Affordable Housing	10
4. Report Summary and Future Plans	11



1. Introduction

1.2. Pairc Trust

Pairc Trust purchased the Pairc Estate in December 2015 on behalf of the local community, and it now aims to become a sustainable business whilst regenerating the Estate. The Trust was set up in 2003 and is a Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The long term vision of the Trust (as stated in the Pairc Trust Strategic Business Plan 2014-2024) is *'for South Lochs to have an increasing population, a more balanced age structure with more young families and children, **with more affordable good quality housing**, community facilities, and local jobs to enable people to live in the area'*.

1.3. The Pairc Estate

The Pairc Estate extends to an area of approximately 10,840ha in South Lochs, on the Isle of Lewis. It is a remote and rurally isolated area of the Western Isles, with issues of social exclusion and a lack of resources and facilities. With a population of 400, it is 30 miles from Stornoway, the only large town in the Outer Hebrides which has a population of around 8,000. Many of the young people move to the mainland for University or work and do not return, which results in an elderly and declining population. South Lochs was included as a Community Account Management area in 2011 by Highlands and Islands Enterprise in recognition of its fragile status.

The majority of the Estate is under crofting tenure, the main exception being an area of grazing land at Steimreway. In total, there are approximately 208 crofts on the estate, spread between 11 townships. The Estate is mainly hilly moor land with a large number of fresh water lochs.

The key community services on the Estate comprise:

- a local primary school at Gravir
- a medical surgery, also at Gravir

- a community-owned shop, loch-side café, petrol pump, hostel, small meeting room, exhibition area and other visitor attractions at the Ravenspoint Centre, Kershader
- a Resource Centre in Kershader which includes a meeting space for community groups and local nursery provision
- a small community hall in Orinsay
- Tigh Ceilidh (meeting house) in Gravir
- community polytunnels in Habost and Gravir

1.4. Context to the Housing Needs Survey

Additional social and affordable housing in Pairc 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.

We believe that more low cost housing suitable for those on a lower income, can play a crucial part in reversing the long decline in population in the area, and in achieving a more balanced age structure.

One of the key themes of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's current Local Housing Strategy (covering the period 2011-16) is that 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. As a Trust we hope to address this imbalance, and encourage people to live in our Estate.

Although there are a number of empty properties for sale in South Lochs, there are no properties available to rent. This means that families who cannot afford to pay a deposit to purchase a house are forced to move elsewhere, where they can access shared equity properties, or rental accommodation. We believe that local people on lower incomes are therefore disadvantaged, and less likely to remain in our community.

The majority of new social housing or shared equity developments are focused in and around Stornoway, with very little provision elsewhere in the rural areas of the Western Isles.

There is a significant housing need in the Western Isles, and the Outer Hebrides Needs and Demand Assessment supports our view that more affordable housing is required in the rural areas of the Western Isles. It states: *'There is currently an undersupply of 36 affordable lettings per annum which shows a mismatch between location of need and the location of supply across the rural housing market'*

In order to determine local support and need for affordable housing, we carried out a Housing Needs Analysis of the Estate over the Summer of 2016.

1.5. Methodology

The primary mechanism for carrying out this piece of research was through surveys, which captured both quantitative and qualitative data.

The surveys were delivered to every household in the Estate, along with covering letters which explained the purpose of the study. Stamped addressed envelopes were included.

In addition to the surveys, the Trust held various Drop in Surgeries and visited a number of households.

1.6. Response Rate

Overall, we received 56 completed surveys from local residents. There are currently 212 occupied properties in the Estate which equals a response rate of just over 26%. In addition to this we received 2 completed surveys from people on the mainland with local connections.

2. Available Properties in the Pairc Estate

At the time of this report there are currently no properties available for rent in the Estate. There are a number of empty properties, and properties for sale on the open market.

Based on the properties currently for sale in the area the average price for a 3-bedroom property is £142,500, the average price for a 2-bedroom property is £92,000. The only 1-bedroom property is on the market for £90,000.

The income required to meet these prices has been calculated on the basis of a 90% mortgage with 3.5x gross income lending ratio.

Table 1: House Prices and Income Required

House Size	Average Price	Income Required	Deposit Required
3 bedroom	£142,500	£36,642	£14,250
2 bedroom	£92,000	£23,675	£9,200
1 bedroom	£90,000	£23,142	£9,000

A barrier to a lot of people trying to get onto the property ladder is the need for a deposit, which is usually around 10% of the property price plus additional funds to cover the associated legal fees, improvements etc.

According to the Scottish Parliament Information Centre publication Disposable Household Income in Scotland in 2012, the average disposable income for the Western Isles is £14,541.

3. Housing Needs Survey Results

From the responses received it can be summarised that there is a lot of local support for additional affordable housing in the Estate. The surveys were split into three sections, and the results are shown below.

It is worth noting that, although there were 58 respondents, the number of answers given to the questions do not always add up to 58. This is because the respondents did not always answer all the questions, and sometimes gave more than one answer. In addition to this, when we carried out follow up home visits we used abbreviated surveys which did not have as many questions as the original version.

Section A: Your Current Home

Current Housing Tenure

The results show there is a stable population in terms of the length of time they have lived in their homes.

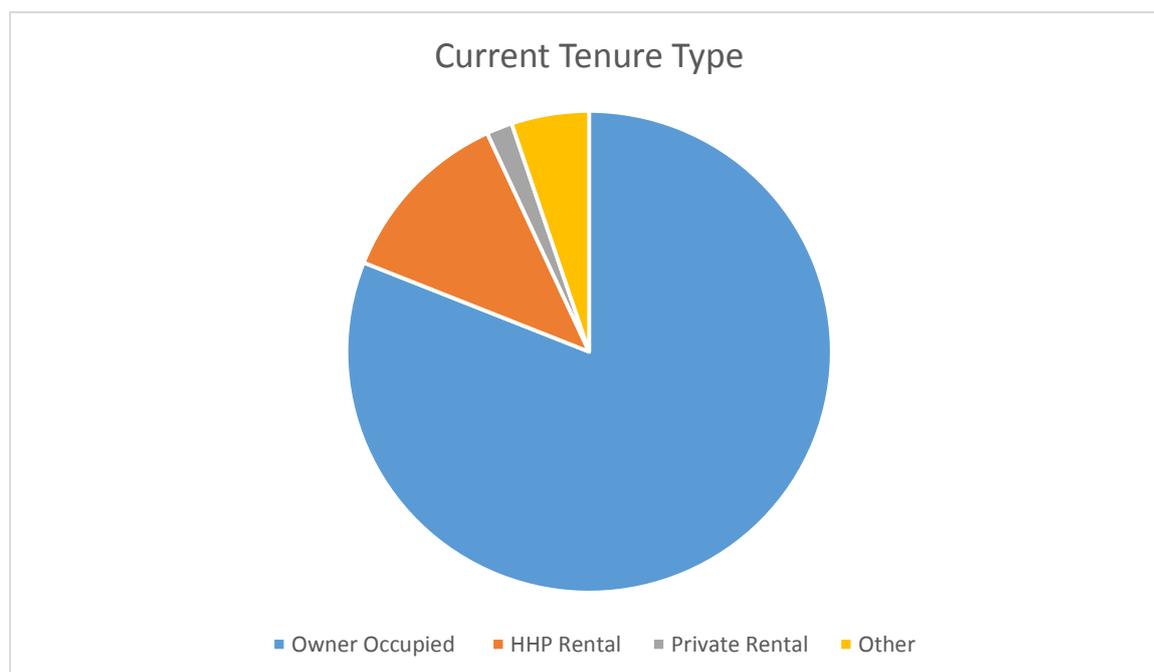
Table 2: Number of Years in Property

Number of years in property	Number of respondents
0-5	5 (13%)
6-10	10 (26%)
11-15	8 (21%)
16-20	5 (13%)
21-25	2 (5%)
26 +	8 (21%)

The vast majority of those responding (92%) identified their current home as their main residence.

Of those in their main home, the greatest population (80%) own their property.

Figure 1: Current Housing Tenure Breakdown



Housing Type

Households with 3 bedrooms represented the most common house size amongst those who responded to the survey, making up 34% of all respondents. The next most popular number of responses was for 4 bedrooms, at 31%, with 23% 2 bedrooms and 10% 1 bedroom properties.

Table 3: Number of Bedrooms in Current Home

Number of Bedrooms	Number of Respondents
1	4
2	9
3	13
4	12

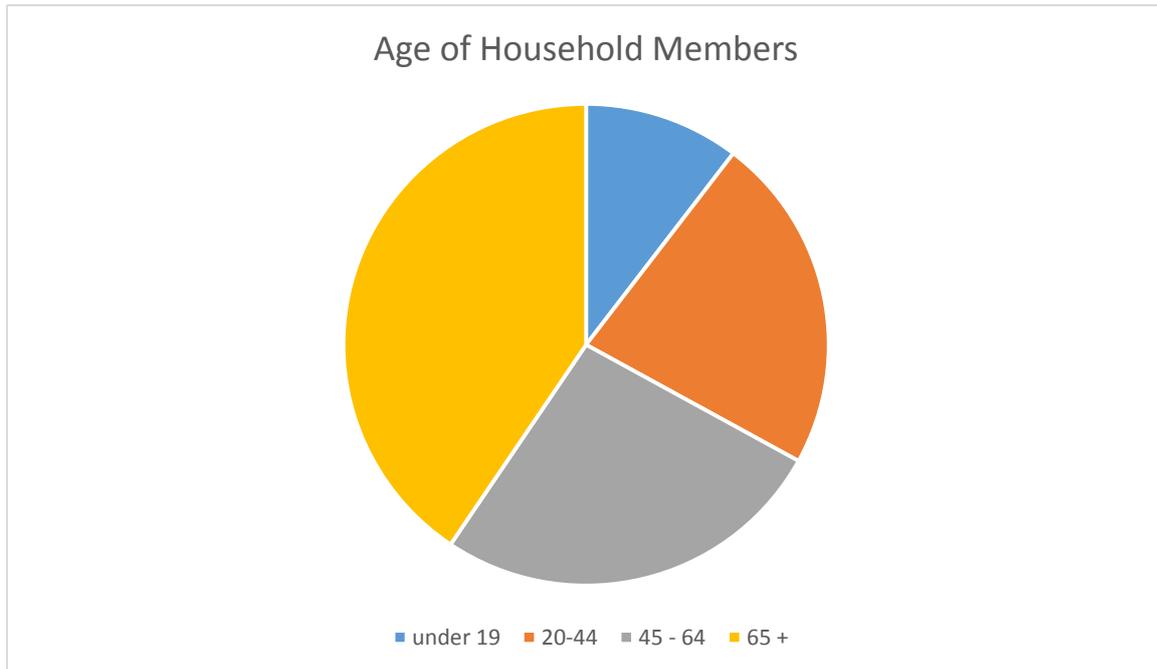
89% of the respondents did not believe their houses were overcrowded, and only 3% found their houses were too big for their needs.

Households

The majority of the households who responded were aged 45 and above, with only 10% under 19 and 40% over 65.

46% of the respondents were couples, 23% were single people and 25% were classed as a family.

Figure 2: Age of Household Members



Section B: The Condition of your Home

Adaptations and Improvements

4 of the respondents told us that their current home requires medical adaptations to become suitable for the needs of a household member. 10 of the respondents require major work to be carried out, and 17 require minor work. The main reason given for preventing these improvements was cost.

Section C: Your Future Plans

This section was completed by respondents who would like to move house within the next three years.

3 of the respondents wish to remain in South Lochs, with 6 wishing to move elsewhere in the Western Isles, 1 to the rest of Scotland and 1 to the rest of the UK.

Half of these respondents want to move within the next year, and the other half in more than a year.

3 of the respondents are on either the Hebridean Housing Partnership or Trust House waiting list.

Table 4: Number of Bedrooms Required

Number of Bedrooms Required	Number of Respondents
1	0
2	4
3	4
4	1

Table 5: Preferred Option for Future Housing Need

Preferred Option	Number of Respondents
Buy on the open market	4
Rent from the private sector	2
Rent from Housing Association	4
Rent to Buy	2
Buy as shared equity owner	3
Build own house	2
Build own house with a grant/loan	2
Build own house on croft	2

Table 6: Rental Affordability

When asked how much they could afford to pay per week on rent, the responses were:

Amount per week	Number of Respondents
Up to £50	1
£51 - £70	1
£71 - £90	2
£91 - £120	4

Table 7: Purchase Affordability

When asked how much they could afford if buying a property, the responses were:

Property Price	Number of Respondents
£40,000 - £60,000	1
£60,001 - £80,000	1
£80,001 - £100,000	1
£100,001 - £120,000	2
£120,001 - £140,000	0
£140,001 - £160,000	0
£160,001 - £180,000	1

Section D: Views on Local Affordable Housing

In response to the question ***‘What do you think would encourage more young families to remain in, or come to the area?’*** the two most common answers were affordable housing and employment. Other answers included better transport, broadband, better local services and childcare.

Some of the comments given include:

‘Affordable housing of affordable quality’

‘More solid housing stock, i.e. in a modern condition; central heating, insulated, neat and tidy, good external space and storage’

‘Affordable housing’ x 7

‘More housing’

‘Cheaper housing’ x2

‘Housing’ x2

‘Lower rent’

‘Cheaper houses to buy’

‘More affordable local housing, including plots for new buildings’

‘Pairc Trust should also consider the need for more sheltered housing and the scope for renovating derelict housing in the area’

‘There are properties which could be converted to dwelling houses or single person flats – Taigh Ceilidh for one; the old care unit for another. Why aren’t these being used?’

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.

70% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that most of the people who live in our community wish to stay here permanently.

When asked if local applicants with children of school age or younger should get priority for new affordable housing in the area, 21 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, 10 neither agreed or disagreed and 6 generally disagreed.

84% of the respondents would support a small development of affordable housing for local people in the Pairc Estate.

4. Report Summary and Future Plans

The results of the Housing Needs Survey clearly show that the local community is very supportive of a small development of affordable housing in the Estate, either to rent or to buy. The comments given illustrate a desire to bring empty properties back into use, rather than build new housing schemes.

Whilst the results did show some current need for housing, this was only a small number. 3 of the respondents wish to move elsewhere in South Lochs whereas 6 wish to move to the rest of the Western Isles. However, this may change if there were local properties available at an affordable price.

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'*.

It will be our intention to install additional energy efficiency measures in order to make the properties cheaper to heat. This will help to reduce the number of local people living in fuel poverty, and reduce carbon emissions.

We plan to continue to work closely with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to help them meet their targets to provide more affordable housing in rural areas, and reduce the number of households living in fuel poverty.

We will also continue to consult with the local community on all our future plans, and keep them up to date on our progress.

Acknowledgements:

Pairc Trust is grateful to the Muaitheabhal Community Wind Farm Trust and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for their support.