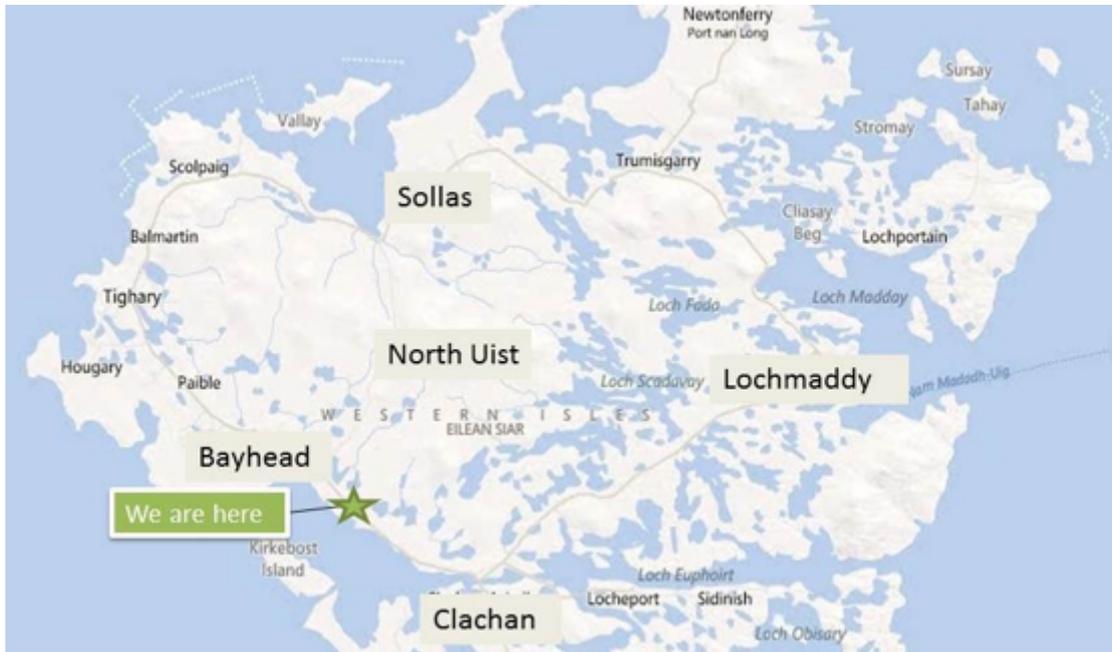




Isle of North Uist Community Development Plan 2018 - 2023



North Uist Development Company
Claddach Kirkibost Centre, Isle of North Uist, HS6 5EP
T: 01876 580 331 E: nudc@isleofnorthuist.com
www.isleofnorthuist.com www.facebook.com/isleofnorthuist
A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee No. 383175
Scottish Charity Number. SC041709



Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Development Plan is to lay out our vision for the next five years on how the North Uist community will best promote its sustainable development in the five years to come. NUDC will support a range of projects and partnerships designed to act as catalysts for growth.

The North Uist community faces a number of critical challenges, including depopulation and demographic imbalance. Revitalisation requires a variety of development solutions if it is to address these issues successfully, many of which will be outlined in this plan. The success of this plan will depend on continued wide-ranging community engagement and support, and upon multi-partner and agency collaboration.

A number of key projects have been identified that are considered critical to make progress in achieving the aims and the aspirations of the community, These will be led by NUDC directly, with support from local partners.

There is also a range of further projects being delivered by a number of community groups throughout North Uist which are also critical to achieving the plans aims. NUDC supports these projects and groups and promotes their achievements. These projects are listed in Appendix 2. There are also projects and groups which are currently progressing without NUDC support, although NUDC may have supported them in the past. In the main they either employ their own development workers or they are receiving support from the Economic Development Department of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

This Development Plan will hope to achieve the following positive outcomes:

- Promotion of community development, including rural regeneration following the principles of sustainable development;
- The provision of affordable housing in locations and of a type which meets market demand;
- The provision of assistance to people who are disadvantaged by reason of age, ill health, disability, financial or other disadvantage;
- The promotion of education including all forms of training for work and life skills;
- The advancement of the arts, culture and heritage, including support for the Gaelic arts and the protection of buildings and sites of architectural or historic importance;
- The protection and enhancement of the natural heritage and environment;
- The reduction of poverty through local income generation and assistance for those in need;
- Diversification of local industry;
- The improvement of access including better transport links and advocacy for stronger internet connections.

Company Information

NUDC was created in 2010, with the overall objective to promote the social, educational, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the people of the Uists and in particular the residents of the area known as North Uist and having postcode HS6.

The NUDC Board comprises nine directors from the community acting in an individual capacity rather than representing any particular organisations. It currently has an active island-based membership of 697, with additionally 58 “Friends of NUDC”, who live outside North Uist.

NUDC currently receives support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, which has established a network of Community Account Managers to encourage selected communities including North Uist, which want to develop and implement plans for local growth. This support funds the post of a Local Development Officer, which is currently filled by two part-time staff.

Background

NUDC’s previous Development Plan 2012 – 16 highlighted the aspirations for NUDC, and for a wide range of community-led projects. Many of these projects have been realised, and are currently contributing to the socio-economic development of the community. Inevitably, there have been some projects which have not been realised or are taking longer than originally anticipated.

NUDC's main focus throughout the life of the previous plan has been on the progress of our North Uist Renewables Project. This project, which aims to generate a sustainable revenue stream for the community through the construction of a wind turbine development, has consumed a large amount of resources, however it is now much closer to completion.

The current plan follows on from the previous plan. However NUDC's aims and projects, and those of the wider community, have been modified according to recent consultations and updated information on the community and its socio-economic status.

Aims and Objectives

The below aims, and the associated objectives underneath, have been shaped and informed by regular consultations with the community and local stakeholders.



Aim 1 – Foster a Dynamic, Sustainable and Viable Community

- Promote economic development and employment opportunities in the community and promote North Uist as a place to conduct business activities
- Improve our representation on policy-making forums according to the particular needs of North Uist
- Support and encourage community enterprise and locally based business
- Develop renewable energy opportunities and energy efficiency measures to provide community benefit
- Support and promote the creative industries
- Support initiatives that reduce dependence on external inputs, delivering local needs locally
- Support, improve and develop community facilities and infrastructure to meet local needs and contribute to a better quality of life for the North Uist community



Aim 2 - Promote and Protect the Community's Unique Natural and Cultural Heritage

- Protect, promote and enhance our unique natural environment and promote sustainable and innovative use of our natural resources
- Enable local management of new statutory designations
- Protect and promote the historical, archaeological and cultural assets of North Uist, and encourage research
- Retain and exhibit artefacts in a local facility

- Encourage the promotion of cultural activity in the community through Gaelic language, song, dance and music and creative industries
- Support and promote the value of our crofting and fishing industries and their heritage.
- Promote co-operation with other communities.



Aim 3 – Strive for a Demographically Balanced Community

- Welcome and encourage in-migration
- Support initiatives that encourage the relocation of online and remote workers to North Uist
- Support initiatives that encourage retaining youth and encourage young returners
- Promote training opportunities to enable the development of a skilled workforce
- Support equal access to essential services
- Encourage the retention and expansion of services for all age groups in North Uist.



Aim 4 – Make North Uist an Accessible Community

- Support initiatives that protect, enhance, improve, integrate and reduce costs of our transport, both to and from and on the island
- Encourage the development of tourism opportunities that provide economic diversity, sustain vital services and provide local employment as well as being appropriate to the environment, cultural heritage and community wishes.
- Support better internet facilities including campaigning for expansion of the fibre-optic installation for the whole of North Uist

This Development Plan has been framed around these Aims & Objectives, and aims to work alongside the new Locality Plan for North Uist & Benbecula, which is currently being drafted, and the Outer Hebrides Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).

Local Outcome Improvement Plan & Locality Plan

In 2015 the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 placed a duty on Community Planning Partners to demonstrate that they are making a significant impact on the achievement of outcomes as a result of partnership working. The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP) was required to prepare and publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) which set out the priority local outcomes it proposes to improve. These link with the 16

National Outcomes which outline what the Scottish Government wants to achieve over the next ten years.

The LOIP is for the whole of the Outer Hebrides, however it also initially identified two priority areas where additional focussed effort is required, one of which is North Uist & Benbecula. Using the Community Profile information, the OHCPP identified that North Uist & Benbecula are experiencing poorer outcomes and less improvement than other areas within the Outer Hebrides and within Scotland.

As part of the development of the Local Improvement Plan and Locality Plans, the OHCPP conducted extensive community engagement. This resulted in 'How Good is Our Place?', a survey with communities across the Outer Hebrides, which asked people and groups to identify their priorities for improvement using the Place Standard Tool. This is a tool which consists of fourteen questions which cover both the physical and social elements of a place. In addition, people were asked to identify the best things about their communities.

The findings for North Uist are available in Appendix 4 to this Development Plan. A Locality Plan aimed at specifically tackling these issues is currently being drafted by the OHCPP.

In response to the survey, the OHCPP has identified a small number of priorities which focus on tackling these issues going forward and they are presented in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), which now replaces the Single Outcome Agreement for the Outer Hebrides.

The vision of the LOIP is to promote and realise the full potential of the Outer Hebrides as a prosperous, well educated and healthy community enjoying a good quality of life and fully realising the benefits of our natural environment and cultural values.

The priorities of the LOIP, which directly link with the aims of NUDC, are:

- The Outer Hebrides retains and attracts people to ensure a sustainable population
- The Outer Hebrides has sustainable Economic Growth and all our people have access to appropriate employment opportunities
- The Outer Hebrides offers attractive opportunities that improve the quality of live, wellbeing and health for all our people

Community Consultation and Representation

As well as drawing on the engagement conducted as part of the Locality Plan, NUDC is in frequent consultation with the community of North Uist in a variety of forums, which continue to inform its activities.

Such forums have included:

- Consultation events connected with community projects with which NUDC is assisting. These have included community consultation organised by An Torc in connection with the Lochmaddy Hospital project.
- Consultations events connected with our own development projects. These have included community consultation organised in connection with the current NUDC project to acquire and develop the former Lochmaddy School.
- Previous consultations on earlier phases of the Development Plan, which have involved community councils, CNES economic development staff and members of the community.

NUDC also represents the community on a number of regional development organisations including:

- The Uist Economic Task Force
- Economic Development Officer Forum
- Western Isles Development Trust
- Outer Hebrides Tourism and 2020 Leadership Group – board level representation
- UCVO and TSIWI – board level representation

Implementing the Plan

This plan will be implemented by NUDC's directors and Local Development Officers, currently supported through HIE's Community Account Management programme. The plan belongs to whole community however, and NUDC will continue to engage with the community to ensure that it is implemented effectively. NUDC will also bring together other community groups, partners and agencies to help ensure the successful delivery of the outcomes laid out in the Plan. Once the final Locality Plan for North Uist & Benbecula is published, NUDC's Development Plan will be implemented as part of this wider plan.

NUDC will generate action plans with details of how and when each project that it leads will be delivered, including any action required by other partners. This will be used as the basis for monitoring progress. Short statements will be produced regularly setting out progress achieved and any action required to address changing circumstances. These can be circulated to NUDC members and the wider community to keep them informed through a range of platforms including NUDC's website, social media, newsletters, annual reports, community events and meetings.



North Uist – A Community Profile

North Uist is defined as the area encompassing the islands of Berneray, North Uist and Grimsay or in the HS6 postcode. It supports a population of 1619 (2011) of which 26.1% are aged 65 and over and 12.2% are aged under 16. The area is experiencing long-term population decline, an ageing demographic and low birth rates. Statistics show that between 2001 and 2008 there was a decrease of 7.4% in the total number of children and an increase in the number of residents of pensionable age – the highest in the Outer Hebrides.

Out of the total of 1,235 people in North Uist aged 16-74 a total of 867 (70%) are economically active. Of those who are economically active, most people are in full time employment, less than the Outer Hebrides average, while 15% were in part time employment. In island areas North Uist has the lowest percentage of unemployed.

The Hebrides including North Uist has a weak economic base which is concentrated on a narrow range of sectors and especially reliant on primary industries and the public sector. With an annual budget of approximately £117 million, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is the largest employer in the Outer Hebrides, with 1814 full-time employees. The MoD, through its military base and private partnerships, employs over 100 people. These sectors are insufficiently diverse to sustain a young, educated population and, coupled with a lack of well-paid jobs, means those in the age range 15 – 29 years figure disproportionately among those who chose to leave the island.

Local businesses suffer from a lack of diversity. An audit of local businesses in North Uist was carried out in 2011. It is estimated that around 54% of the businesses identified fall within the tourism and culture sectors (5 hotels; 24 B&Bs; 44 self catering businesses; 16 arts related businesses; 3 visitor centres; 5 sporting related businesses).

Of the 791 households in North Uist, 602 (76%) are owned. Of those owned, 415 (52.5%) are owned outright, while 187 (23.6%) are owned with a mortgage or loan. North Uist has the highest percentage of houses which are owned in all island areas. North Uist also has the lowest percentage of social rented houses in all island areas.

Level 4 qualifications and above are held by 28.3% of the population, higher than the Outer Hebrides average. In island areas North Uist has the highest percentage of those with level 4 and above qualifications. Of the 1,579 people aged 3 and over in North Uist, a total of 1,077 people (68.2%) have some Gaelic ability while 502 (31.8%) have no Gaelic skills.

Further details of the North Uist population can be found at <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/factfile/population/islandpopulations.asp> and details of the economic and demographic structure of islands will be posted on the NUDC web site at <http://www.isleofnorthuist.com>.

The demographic imbalance illustrated by the reducing number of young people and increasing number of people in the upper age bands, along with the reliance on public sector and primary industries, and tourism among local businesses, presents a challenge for all the agencies with responsibility for the future sustainability of North Uist

NUDC Projects

NUDC has identified Key Projects that will assist to deliver its aims and objectives. These have been shaped by earlier work and are designed to assist with achieving the aspirations of the community expressed in the response to regular consultation.

- North Uist Renewables Project;
- North Uist Environmental Centre at Lochmaddy School
- Promotion of Affordable Housing on North Uist

North Uist Renewables Project - NUDC plans that the development of its wind turbine project will be the catalyst to create an income stream that will in turn fund further projects that can provide North Uist with a sustainable future. Therefore the focus of NUDC in the short-to-medium term is a commitment to the North Uist Renewables Project that will see a wind turbine development constructed on the island.

North Uist Environmental Centre – NUDC is about to conduct a feasibility study and options appraisal into the possibility of acquiring the former Lochmaddy Primary School, through the Comhairle’s Asset transfer Programme. The project is conceived as having three strands: 1) an Environmental Centre which will tell the story of the Lochmaddy Harbour Special Area of Conservation, will include a visitor centre for the renewable energy project and also a demonstration area for water source heat pump technology; 2) Arts and Gaelic learning in partnership with Taigh Chearsabhagh and Saoghal Mòr Ostaig; and 3) a bunkhouse which will make the major economic contribution to the Centre.

Affordable Housing – this is a critical factor in the successful economic development of North Uist. Local businesses require a larger available workforce to fill posts and create a bigger customer base. With a low unemployment rate, North Uist needs to therefore attract more people. This requires availability of suitable housing. For this reason NUDC will continue to work with the Comhairle, HHP and other agencies to ensure that the current Strategic Housing Investment Plan brings maximum benefit to North Uist.

NUDC Support for North Uist Community Groups and Projects

NUDC provides specific support to a range of Groups and projects in North Uist. These include:

- The Langass Community Woodland
- The Claddach Kirkibost Centre
- Spanish Bridge
- Tourism Development
- Berneray Historical Society

Langass Community Woodland – Urras nan Craobh Uibhist a’ Tuath manage the community woodland at Langass. NUDC has assisted the group with fundraising to support developmental improvements at the Woodland, and has been successful in securing funding from the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund to enable these works to be carried out. The Woodland provides a unique environment and is an important leisure facility, well-used both by locals and visitors. It is envisaged that, because of changes on the board of the Urras, NUDC assistance will continue to be required during the coming CAM period.

Berneray Historical Society – CEBh is at the very early stages of a project, intended to secure the future of The Gunnery on Berneray, which is the oldest building on the island, is situated in an iconic location, but is on the Buildings At Risk Register. The group may require a support for a Community Right to Buy application. The NUDC directors have agreed to provide initial support for the project.

Sponish Bridge, Lochmaddy – The Hebridean Way long distance walking route is unable to pass through Lochmaddy currently due to the fact that Sponish Bridge, linking the village with Sponish, is closed by the Comhairle for health & safety reasons. NUDC has been working to source funding for the necessary repairs, or alternatively to encourage the MoD, who built the current bridge in the 1980s, to carry out the necessary repairs. Although it might be possible to obtain funding, a more intractable issue is that of the ownership of the bridge, since the owners of the land on either side and the Comhairle are all denying responsibility. The project therefore remains ongoing.

Claddach Kirkibost Centre – NUDC has worked extensively over the past year to help Urachadh Uibhist, who manage the Claddach Kirkibost Centre, to find new use for the part of the Centre which was vacated by the Saoghal Beag Nursery in 2016. This project has been largely successful, and there is now one commercial tenant in that part of the building, a popular and profitable community gym, a new improved space for the Toddler Group and an exhibition space, which was occupied during summer 2017. Most significantly, NUDC wrote and submitted an application to LEADER to match HIE funding for an Innovation & Development Manager in the Centre. This was successful and it is envisaged that the manager will come into post during April, at which point NUDC’s involvement with CKC will wind down.

Tourism Development Work – in February 2015, the NUDC board asked one of the LDOs to go on to the board of Outer Hebrides Tourism to represent the interests of North Uist. Since then NUDC has been fully involved in tourism discussions affecting North Uist and also represented on the TOH2020 Leadership Group. NUDC believes that tourism will be an increasingly important driver of economic development in the future and is keen to take a leadership role in discussions with the relevant agencies to facilitate this. A number of NUDC’s own projects, and projects with which LDOs are assisting, support a tourism growth agenda.

Engagement with Additional North Uist Projects and Groups

North Uist is a CAM-supported area and this support is delivered via North Uist Development Company. NUDC therefore has a role in maintaining an overview and engagement with such projects, even where it is not formally involved.

These projects include:

- Sealladh Hiort
- Carinish School
- Taigh Chearsabhagh
- Grimsay

Sealladh Hiort – the project to develop a St Kilda Centre in North Uist, as part of Slighe Hiort, is led by a capable and enthusiastic community group, which has recently constituted itself as a SCIO. Early in its development NUDC's assistance was formally requested to help with certain constitutional issues. However formal assistance is not required by the group at the present time, although NUDC LDOs are members of the group and continue to attend in a personal capacity.

North Uist Historical Society – CEUT has a well-developed project to acquire the former Carinish School for its own archive and as a tourist development. The facility is also being used for digital learning under the e-Sgoil programme. This project of CEUT is being supported by the Comhairle Regeneration Officer.

Taigh Chearsabhagh – NUDC has worked closely with TC on a number of projects, including the former Lochmaddy Hospital project (An Torc) and also the ongoing work around affordable housing provision in North Uist. Taigh Chearsabhagh itself has recently appointed a CEO and a new board chair. The board is supported by the Comhairle Regeneration Officer.

Grimsay – Grimsay Community Association has a project to develop a range of activities in the former Grimsay Free Church, which the organisation acquired in 2016. NUDC provided assistance to the Association up until late 2014. Their work is now supported by the Association's own development officer.

The Future for Community Account Management (CAM)

The wind turbine project is currently at a critical stage in its development, with discussions ongoing with the MOD and the project funders. A community share offer is being launched in the spring of 2018, and the company is relaunching its trading subsidiary as a Community Benefit Society, which will manage the community share offer and ultimately take ownership of the turbines themselves.

Commissioning of the turbines is expected to take place in June 2019. In the long term it is intended that revenue from the project will fund the NUDC project

worker post. It is expected therefore that a reduction in the current reliance on CAM funding will start on a phased basis in the financial year 2019/20, as revenue from the project is able to be used for this purpose.

Until such time CAM will remain crucial to bringing the wind turbine project to fruition and also supporting other community projects within North Uist.