



# NUDC UPDATE

February 2015

The year since the last AGM of North Uist Development Company (NUDC) has been more challenging than any of us could have imagined in February 2014. On the positive side, the diversity of projects, in which our directors and development workers have been involved, has continued to spread benefit and encourage positive development throughout the North Uist area – from Grimsay to Berneray, from Lochmaddy to Hougharry. In this Update you will find information on some of the projects we have been involved in, past and present.

Less welcome developments during the year have included the dashing of our hopes to establish a community and enterprise hub at the former Headteacher's House in Bayhead. We had believed that this building could coexist alongside the planned new Paible School. Unfortunately however, the Comhairle was not prepared to listen to our arguments in defence of the building, and we had to relocate to the Claddach Kirkibost Centre in September. The community and the businesses that were already based in the building unfortunately lost this valuable resource. However we now relish a new opportunity of working with Urachdach Uibhist to develop further the facilities and services offered to the community in the Centre. Another great disappointment has of course been the setback experienced by our Community Renewables Project, which was ultimately refused planning permission. This is covered fully inside this issue of NUDC Update, and we continue to work hard to ensure ultimate community benefit.

*NUDC's overall objective is to promote the social, educational, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the residents of North Uist (postcode HS6).*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7pm, 17<sup>th</sup> Feb at Taigh Sgìre Sholais, Sollas

All members welcome!

Non-members will be able to take out membership at the meeting.

The agenda for this meeting will include a special resolution to adopt a new HIE-approved constitution. (Core NUDC purposes will be unchanged).

## LOCHMADDY HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT

NUDC is working closely with the Lochmaddy Hospital Redevelopment Steering Group to develop a large project on the site of the former Lochmaddy Hospital. The hospital closed in 2000, since when the building has been empty and become increasingly derelict. In 2008 the Comhairle sold the building to a mainland firm of property speculators, since when it has continued to lie derelict.

The Steering Group is in contact with the owners, and the provisions of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 enable the community to make an offer for the property ahead of any attempt by the owners to put the building on the market. The basis of the proposed project is to provide new student accommodation on the site in partnership with UHI and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. This would enable Taigh Chearsabhagh to expand its courses up to degree level and would also fit with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's plans to provide Gaelic language teaching in Uist during the holidays. It is also hoped that, once Lochmaddy Primary School has closed, that can be brought into the project to enable Taigh Chearsabhagh to expand its teaching.

The project has the potential to provide considerable economic benefit to the Lochmaddy area and North Uist as a whole, as well as providing enhanced community facilities and spin-off benefits for local people. The Steering Group has conducted a detailed analysis of the economic, social and cultural benefits which would accrue to the community as a whole as a result of the project. It has analysed these according to the headings which emerged from the many community consultations which have taken place around the project: student accommodation; affordable housing; private housing sites; leisure facilities/play area; community garden/allotments; campsite/camper vans; renewable energy; nursery/childcare; business units.

The Group estimates that this project could by itself increase the population of North Uist by 5 per cent. This is through increased numbers of students attending courses, as well as additional teaching and support staff, also because history shows that those who attend Taigh Chearsabhagh's courses frequently end up making Uist their home after the conclusion of their studies. Working closely with HIE, the Steering Group has created a detailed brief for a feasibility study, which will establish what is and what is not possible on the site. This feasibility study is expected to be published in May.



**The Steering Group is made up of local residents, assisted by North Uist Development Company's two Local Development Officers. New members are always welcome, so to find out more, please contact either Alastair or Andrew. The Group also has a Facebook page, where you will find the latest information.**





## COMMUNITY RENEWABLES PROJECT

NUDC remains committed to developing a renewables project to create community benefit for the population of North Uist. We were of course very disappointed that our initial planning application was refused by Derek MacKay, then minister for Local Government & Planning, following an objection from the MOD and Government 'call-in' of the application. This was in spite of the fact that the Comhairle had given local approval. The project was to raise an annual income of £203,000 in years 1 to 15 and £476,000 in years 15 to 20, according to projections by Community Energy Scotland.

Since October the NUDC board has been working hard to find a way forward for this project to enable it to meet the community's objectives. Following meetings with Alasdair Allan MSP, Community Energy Scotland, Local Energy Scotland, the CNES director of development and the chair of sustainable development, we are now playing an active part in the steering group for the new Uist Development Scoping Exercise – an initiative spearheaded by the Comhairle to establish constraint-free locations where renewable energy development is possible, while also looking at alternative renewable technologies and local demand and usage of renewable technologies. The group involves all relevant stakeholders including NUDC, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, the MOD and the Scottish Government. The steering group has commissioned a feasibility study to consider the issues, and this is expected to report by the summer.

NUDC directors and development officers, ably assisted by the team at Community Energy Scotland, have worked very hard over the last four years to make the renewable energy project a reality. The biggest obstruction to its delivery has been the MoD's insistence that our turbines would cause interference with the Range Control radar. This is an argument which is not accepted any radar experts, apart from the MOD's own. The Range Control Radar is a 30-year-old system which is no longer used by civilian airports anywhere in the UK. However we are committed to finding a way forward, in partnership with all stakeholders, to satisfy the concerns of the MOD and enable the community to achieve its objectives. North Uist is now virtually the only island which is not being permitted to develop its considerable wind resources for community benefit. Meanwhile we are concerned about continuing depopulation and the fragility of the local economy. We believe that we can turn these indicators around if we given the opportunity to develop our renewable energy resources for the benefit of the local population.

*NUDC gratefully acknowledges the support of HIE  
through its Community Account Management  
(CAM) programme*

## UDAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

NUDC is collaborating with a CNES-led project to create a home for the artefacts obtained from the important archaeological site near Grenitote. The site was excavated over a period of 33 years by Iain Crawford, during which time he discovered a huge and highly significant landscape of domestic occupation, funerary and ritual behaviour. The resulting collection has been declared treasure trove and is now the responsibility of the Comhairle. NUDC is working with the local community and other interested parties to bring this collection to North Uist.

## HEBRIDES ARCHAEOLOGICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH CENTRE

To progress the work around the Udal collection, NUDC is one of the stakeholders in exploratory discussions to establish a facility in North Uist which would provide both a research base and also a visitor attraction. As well as archaeology, the centre might focus on the closely-linked subject of climate change and the affect this has had, and may have in the future, on coastal landscapes and human habitation. The Udal is one of few locations where a continuous 5,000 years of human habitation from Neolithic times to the present day can be demonstrated, and climatologists know for certain that the climate in the islands has changed quite dramatically in that time. It is now believed that modern climate changes are impacting in a more extreme fashion on the coasts of Uist than virtually anywhere else in Scotland. Therefore there may well be lessons to be learnt from the history of the Udal which will help our communities deal with coastal erosion, flooding and weather variability, which are predicted to become more likely.



The Udal project is now the subject of a Comhairle-funded feasibility study being carried out by Glasgow consultants EKOS. NUDC strongly believes that the collection should be held in North Uist and that consultations about what type of facility might be viable and sustainable to house the collection should be as wide-ranging and inclusive as possible.

**If you would like to participate in the discussions about how the Udal project is taken forward, the consultants EKOS are holding a community consultation on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February between 6 and 7pm in Taigh Sgìre Sholais. All welcome!**



### MOUNTAIN BIKE COURSE

A new 'pipeline' idea for the Development Company is the potential creation of a mountain bike course in North Uist. Aiming to provide a facility for a new generation of off-road cyclists in Uist, inspired by the success of South Uist cyclist Kerry MacPhee, the Development Company is looking for people to come forward from the community and help take this project forward.

### HEALING WELLS

This project will aim to identify and provide interpretation on some of the many healing wells in North Uist. A number of these are identified in *The Healing Wells of the Western Isles* by Finlay MacLeod, and have also been documented by Erskine Beveridge and Alexander Carmichael, but their special qualities and often even their locations are unknown to many people nowadays.

### CENTRE FOR GRIMSAY

Early in 2014, LDO Donna Matheson provided assistance with fund finding to the Grimsay Community Association, which has now acquired the former church on Grimsay as a community project. The Grimsay group has now employed its own development workers, Sarah Murphy and Matthew Topsfield, and NUDC wishes them well.

### BEN LEE WALK

Marking of the route is now complete. NUDC is working with Western Isles Support for the Environment (WISE), who have enlisted the support of a group from Liniclate School to build 40 metres of boardwalk. It is intended that this part of the project will be complete for Easter. Funding for the boardwalk has come from North Uist Community Council, Ward Funding and WISE. The next stage of the project is to look at funding for signage, a car park and a brochure. This project has now opened up a fascinating and beautiful part of North Uist for everyday walkers.

### GEOLA BHEÀRNARAIGH

NUDC is working with a local community group in Berneray who are aiming to build a St Ayles rowing skiff. The project will be part of the Scottish Coastal Rowing Association, which has members all around the coast of Scotland, including a number of other locations in the islands. The boat is supplied as a kit, and the first stage is to build it, which will be taking place in the coming months. Thereafter the project will switch to the operation of the boat, which takes a crew of five and is envisaged rapidly to become a popular attraction in Berneray, possibly including regattas and participation in other events. The group has been fortunate to have received the proceeds from the sale of the previous Grimsay-built sailing boat, the Seallach. This has given the group a flying start to their fund-finding.

### ONLINE BUSINESS & COMMUNITY GROUPS DIRECTORY

Those who have looked at the Development Company website, [www.isleofnorthuist.com](http://www.isleofnorthuist.com), will be aware that there is an extensive business directory featured on the site. This also now includes a listing of community groups. If you are looking for a business, whether it might be a builder or a B&B, a mechanic or a retail business, you may very well find their details in our listing. Equally if you run a business or a community group and your details are not listed or are incorrect in any way, please let us know. We are about to start offering expanded listings for businesses, for which there will be a small annual charge. If you would like to find out more about this please get in touch.

## North Uist Development Plan

In partnership with the community, NUDC is currently updating the 2012-2016 Development Plan. This document aligns our work with Scottish Government strategy, HIE strategic outcomes, the Comhairle's Corporate Plan and also the Uist & Barra Diversification Plan of the Hebrides Range Task Force. Anyone who would like to input to these discussions will find the current plan available for download from the homepage of our website, and is welcome to contact us with suggested amendments or additions.

### Membership

NUDC membership now stands at 700, plus 50 'friends' (who do not live in the HS6 area). All members are welcome to attend the AGM of the company and speak on any relevant topic, and they have full voting rights on company business. Friends of NUDC may attend the AGM but do not have voting rights. It is difficult to contact everyone in person, so if you know someone who is not yet a member but who would like to support the projects, the membership application form is available from the NUDC website or call the office on 01876 580331 or feel free to visit in person. The office at Claddach Kirkibost Centre is normally staffed between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Also, if you have not already provided us with an email address, please forward it to us, so that we can keep you up to date with the latest developments.

## OUR DEVELOPMENT WORKER TEAM

We were sad to lose Donna Matheson from our team in November. The company appointed Andrew Ross as her replacement to the role of part-time Local Development Officer. Andrew is working alongside Alastair MacLeod as a job share, making the equivalent of one full-time post. Andrew has in the past been a director of NUDC, a position which he stepped down from before taking on the LDO position. He also has considerable experience of voluntary working for community organisations in Berneray and Uist over the last ten years.



Alastair and Andrew can be contacted by calling in at The Claddach Kirkibost Centre, by phoning 01876 580331 or by emailing [alastair@isleofnorthuist.com](mailto:alastair@isleofnorthuist.com) or [andrew@isleofnorthuist.com](mailto:andrew@isleofnorthuist.com) The current LDO position lasts until the end of June 2015 and is funded by HIE Innse Gall via its Community Account Management programme.

North Uist Development Company, Claddach Kirkibost Centre, Isle of North Uist, HS6 5EP  
T: 01876 580331 E: [nudc@isleofnorthuist.com](mailto:nudc@isleofnorthuist.com) W: [www.isleofnorthuist.com](http://www.isleofnorthuist.com)  
[www.facebook.com/isleofnorthuist](http://www.facebook.com/isleofnorthuist)

A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee No. 383175  
Scottish Charity Number. SC041709





## **North Uist Development Company**

Annual General Meeting  
held on  
Tuesday 17 February 2015 at 7pm  
at Taigh Sgìre Sholais, Sollas

### **AGENDA**

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Approval of Minute of 2014 AGM
3. Adoption of New Constitution
4. Chair's Annual Report
5. Approval of Accounts for Year ending 31 March 2014
6. Appointment of Directors
7. Appointment of Auditors/Accountants
8. Views of members and plans for the coming year.
9. Date of first meeting of New Board of Directors

**North Uist Development Company, Claddach Kirkibost Centre,  
Isle of North Uist, HS6 5EP. Tel: 01876 580331.**

**[nudc@isleofnorthuist.com](mailto:nudc@isleofnorthuist.com)**

**Company No: SC383175 Charity No: SC041709**