



OUTER HEBRIDES LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

2017-2022

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

SUGGESTED THEMES

Based on a range of evidence sources we are considering the possibility of developing the new Local Housing Strategy (LHS) on 4 Priority Themes – **Housing Quality, Supply, Homelessness, and Independent Living.**

Each of these are summarised below along with a number of suggested Action points which could facilitate progress on the issue. They are presented purely as prompts for discussion through this LHS consultation phase and do not commit the Comhairle or its partners to any specific activity.

HOUSING QUALITY – this topic has been included primarily as a result of the findings of a Local Private Sector House Condition Survey commissioned by the Comhairle in 2016.

Surveys of just under 1200 dwellings were carried out representing approximately 10% of the Outer Hebrides private sector housing stock, including owner-occupied dwellings, the rented sector and vacant properties.

The comprehensive study has provided the Comhairle with up-to-date information on the current physical condition of the stock, energy efficiency information, socio-economic characteristics of householders and attitudes to housing and their community. The key findings clearly carry implications for future housing policy direction and are summarised below.

The Housing Stock:

- Owner-occupation is the main form of private sector tenure and 10.8% dwellings are private rentals.
- 10,450 dwellings (81.8%) are occupied and 2,318 (18.2%) are vacant. 7.7% were found to be vacant under 6 months and likely to return to the effective housing stock perhaps due to being bought or re-let. However, the vacancy rate is significantly above the Scottish average and highest within Rural Lewis and Harris and South Uist and Barra. 57.3% of vacant dwellings were considered as long-term or problematic.

Households:

- There are 10,450 private sector households in the Outer Hebrides comprising a population of 21,892 persons.
- An ageing population with an average age per head of household of 59 years and 42.5% of households with a head aged 65 years plus
- 18.7% of households comprise one single pensioner and 22.4% are older smaller households, i.e. 2 adults only, at least one of whom is of pensionable age.
- There is significant under-occupation within the housing stock with as many as 85.9% of dwellings having 2 or more bedrooms surplus to requirements.

- The average net household income is estimated at £19,201 per annum against the Scottish average of £25,300.

Housing Conditions:

- Of the occupied housing stock 2,035 dwellings (19.5%) are estimated to be in sub-standard condition according to Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 definitions.
- 344 dwellings (3.3%) are Below Tolerable Standard (BTS).
- 787 dwellings (7.5%) are considered to require extensive repairs while 1,506 dwellings (14.4%) are considered to be in need of urgent repairs.

Households and Housing Conditions:

- 1,327 households (12.7%) stated that at least one household member was affected by a limiting long-term illness or disability and 84.8% of those indicated mobility problems within their existing dwelling. Of those households 45.8% live in adapted dwellings while the remaining number live in households which have not been adapted.
- 6,205 private sector households (59.4%) are in fuel poverty and 2,199 households (21.0%) are in extreme fuel poverty which is significantly above the national average. Geographically levels of fuel poverty are above average in Rural Lewis/Harris. In common with the rest of Scotland, most strongly affected by fuel poverty are the youngest and oldest households and single parents.

Household Attitudes and Behaviour:

- Attitudes to housing circumstances and local areas are positive with 66.6% very satisfied with their current housing and 70.7% are very satisfied with the area in which they live.
- 31.5% of owner-occupied households have completed major repairs or improvements to their dwellings over the last five years. However, only 15.3% intend to carry out future improvements in the next five years. Barriers to improvement include finding value for money contractors and advice on finance.
- 71% of owner-occupiers have no mortgage commitments but only 8.8% would consider re-mortgaging to repair or improve their home.

To address this Theme we will consider Actions based on these survey outcomes incorporating Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency actions, a new look at the financial restraints affecting home maintenance and improvement activity including the potential for direct Comhairle financial assistance. Given that our current housing stock will provide the future housing solutions for the majority of the population it has to be maintained to the best of our ability.

Potential Actions which could progress this theme, and on which we would like your views:

1. Maximise external funding opportunities for energy efficiency work for Private Sector Housing.
2. Address issues affecting social rented sector properties exempt from the Scottish Housing Quality Standard within lifespan of the strategy.
3. Meet the Energy Efficiency Standard in all Social Housing stock by 2020.

4. Provide Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency Advice (including Switching to other suppliers) through Tighean Innse Gall.
5. Implement the Energy Supply Company by 2022.
6. Investigate the potential to provide advice and information to home owners on Repairs and Maintenance through a hub model.
7. Investigate and encourage opportunities for home owners to take out Equity Release in their property for repair and maintenance purposes. .
8. Consider the ability of the Comhairle to re-introduce a level of targeted Improvement and Repair Grants.
9. Explore the possibility of pooling all available housing resources under the “Our Islands Our Future” arrangements to enable expenditure on locally set priorities.

Please record your comments on these points and any additional suggestions you have on the consultation form provided.

SUPPLY – The Comhairle has recently completed a new Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) for the years 2017-2022 as required by Scottish Government (SG). Its purpose is primarily to provide estimates of the number of new houses required in the area. This underpins the policy direction of the Local Housing Strategy, and also informs other related corporate documents. The justification for including Housing Supply as a potential priority comes from the outcomes of this exercise.

The HNDA process is carried out using software provided by the SG. The software is pre-populated with statistical information relating to Household Projections, Existing Need, Income Growth, House Price Projections and Tenure Affordability. It also enables the input of local data to reflect local circumstances. A wide range of modelling can be carried out to assist with scenario planning and this process provides an estimate of the number of additional homes required across four tenures:

- Social Rented
- Below Market Rent
- Private Rented
- Owner Occupation

The Comhairle focused on 4 scenarios which produced a range of housing need estimates over the five years of the HNDA and LHS lifespans, as shown in Table 1 below.

Scenario 1: Core Model - Using the core data provided with the HNDA software without any amendments. This provides a useful baseline figure for comparison with other scenarios.

Scenario 2: HHP Waiting Lists - This Scenario uses HHP Waiting List figure of 438 applicants (as at April 2016).

Scenario 3: More Households Able to Buy - This Scenario considers the current high demand for Shared Equity housing by assuming a higher percentage of the population will be able to afford to buy.

Scenario 4: Low Migration - This Scenario estimates the impact of Low Migration in terms of Household formation as a way of examining the impact of decreasing population.

Table 1: Scenario Outputs

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Social Rent	36	34	34	32
Below Market Rent	8	15	15	6
Private Rent	7	13	4	6
Buyers	17	32	42	14
Total	68	94	95	58

The consultation on this issue will involve consideration of the future approach to increasing housing supply, the potential amount and type required, the split between the Stornoway Housing Market Area (the town of Stornoway, Point and Broadbay excluding Tolsta) and the Rural Housing Market Area (the rest of the Outer Hebrides) and the policy direction it is designed to support. Discussions will be based on the minimum need figure for additional housing units derived from the HNDA process using the recommended Scottish Government assessment tool. The scenarios applied to that exercise provide a range of alternative estimates and possible tenure options and are a credible indicator of future need and demand based on the Stornoway and Rural Housing Market split. HHP's waiting list will also be considered as it provides another indicator of expressed need and demand in the areas in which social rented housing is currently provided.

Suggested Overarching Targets 2017-2022

- Deliver 245 additional affordable properties (105 Social Rent, 60 Shared Equity and 80 Extra Care)
- Deliver 75 housing units through Open Market Shared Equity, Croft House Grant Scheme, and other subsidised routes
- Increase Private Rent by over 50 properties (10 per annum)

Related Potential Actions

1. Promote Open Market Shared Ownership to achieve 20 units over the period (4 per annum).
2. Develop other mechanisms targeted at the first step in the housing ladder (Rent to Mortgage, Self-Build, etc.).
3. Support Community Landlords in developing housing opportunities.
4. Develop and retain an ongoing land bank for up to 50 affordable housing units in the Stornoway Housing Market Area and up to 25 in rural areas.
5. Deliver a programme of action to bring Empty Homes back in to the effective housing supply.
6. Implement an action plan to expand the Private Rented Sector across the islands.
7. Seek to influence ongoing work within the SG to encourage Crofter Housing Grant Scheme development and investment in the area.
8. Consider whether the emphasis for encouraging new housing provision should be on the Stornoway area or rural areas throughout the islands.

Please record your comments on these points and any additional suggestions you have on the consultation form provided.

HOMELESSNESS - The Comhairle has a statutory duty to help homeless persons and those threatened with homelessness and in the period 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016, a total of 155 households made a homelessness application.

The majority of presentations continue to be made to the Comhairle in Stornoway. Proportions presenting have remained fairly consistent across the area offices other than an increase for Barra. Over this period 70% of presentations were from Lewis, 3% from Harris, 22.5% from Uist and 4.5% from Barra. This is representative of the total number of households in each area as shown below.

	Lewis	Harris	Uist	Barra
Total number of households by area	8,846	911	2,232	587
Total number of households presenting as homeless	108	5	35	7
Breakdown of homeless cases by area	70%	3%	22.5%	4.5%
Proportion of homeless households to all households by area	1.2%	0.5%	1.6%	1.2%

Household types presenting in the Western Isles generally remain consistent proportionately locally and nationally. The main household type presenting continues to be single people with 47% of applications being made by single men and 23% by single women.

The main reason given for presenting as homeless continues to be a dispute within the household with 50% of applicants citing this as the reason for homelessness in 2015-2016. Of those who presented for this reason, 32% stated that there was abuse in the relationship. Numbers of those disclosing domestic abuse rose from 18 households in 2014-2015 to 25 in 2015-2016.

We believe that addressing the needs of this significant number of applicants in the local context requires tackling homelessness to be a strategic priority. We suggest an approach looking at the shortage of permanent accommodation and the resulting impact on households of lengthy temporary accommodation stays and potential issues arising from Welfare Benefit changes which may affect the affordability of other housing options and some forms of temporary accommodation.

Potential Actions which could progress this Theme, and on which we would like your views:

1. Ensure a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate Temporary Accommodation.
2. Develop further protocols and referral systems with partner agencies to improve partnership working.
3. Develop range of options to support young homeless persons.
4. Develop and implement Housing Options Procedures.
5. Develop an online Housing Options Guide.

6. Review and implement Housing Support Procedures.
7. Agree a revised protocol with Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) regarding the provision of units for temporary accommodation.
8. HHP to consider revising their Allocation Policy regarding applicant eligibility for one and two bedroom properties.

Please record your comments on these points and any additional suggestions you have on the consultation form provided.

INDEPENDENT LIVING – The Western Isles Health and Social Care Partnership has a vision that:

By 2020 the people of the Western Isles will be living longer, healthier lives at home, or in a homely setting. We will have an integrated health and social care system, which focuses on preventing ill-health, anticipating care needs and supporting recovery.

The partnership aims to achieve this by prioritising support for people to stay at home or in a homely setting as long as this is appropriate, and to avoid the need for unplanned or emergency admission to hospital wherever possible.

Community Care in its widest sense is already well embedded in care practice throughout the islands and it is increasingly being recognised by other professions that a warm, good condition property of a type appropriate to an individual's needs is the central requirement for the enhanced delivery of successful home based services.

The anticipated specific role of housing in assisting achievement of these objectives is set out in the Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) which is an integral part of the Partnerships' Strategic Plan.

The HCS was developed through consideration of information arising from the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2016, and an overview of activity related to provision and spends on adaptations and preventative services, housing waiting lists, current provision and demand for adapted properties. Along with an analysis of the level and nature of local homelessness provided by the Comhairle, and evidence gathered from partnership groups on perceived service gaps, a comprehensive evidence base allowed priority housing related issues to be agreed:-

- The continuing need for adequate funding for adaptations provision across all housing tenures and for the preventative work of schemes such as Care and Repair, Minor Works and Home Safety.
- The ongoing commitment to improving energy efficiency and general house condition particularly in the private sector, with a view to maximising the potential to maintain older and vulnerable people in their own homes for as long as appropriate.
- Continuing work towards reducing Fuel Poverty across all housing tenures and targeting particularly vulnerable households whenever possible.
- Maintaining social rented sector new build housing development throughout the Islands (with ongoing provision of specially adapted properties within these as appropriate to demand) through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP).
- Seeking to introduce an Extra Care Housing model with flexible 24/7 health and social care input as an alternative to traditional residential care opening up new possibilities for older people to remain in a homely environment for longer.

- Addressing service gaps to widen housing options for clients with mental health needs, dementia, learning disabilities, autism, and addictions through provision of extra care/supported accommodation, as relevant to the client group.
- At an early stage identifying the potential for the AHSP to contribute to the provision of these enhanced accommodation models as well as additional / alternative funding sources.
- Also at an early stage identifying potential funders and providers of the required support services for any new specialist accommodation.

When these issues are considered within the context of demographic projections, their relevance becomes ever more obvious.

The older adult proportion of the population is projected to increase across Scotland but is greatest in the Western Isles, with 37.1% of the population predicted to be aged 65+ by 2037. We will also see a rise in numbers of people living alone. The latest census estimates suggest that the Western Isles already has the greatest proportion of lone pensioner households in Scotland – and this is likely to increase into the future.

The impact of overall depopulation and an ageing society is that we will have a smaller workforce to support our health and social services, and a smaller number of unpaid family carers. This presents a very challenging circumstance to support our older citizens into the future and requires review of current provision and serious consideration of service redesign. The latter also provides opportunities to identify enhanced options for other vulnerable groups.

It is crucial that we mitigate the risk factors that will undermine the successful delivery of community care services by ensuring that homes are warm, well maintained and adapted.

The consultation issues on this theme therefore mirror the Housing Contribution Statement and cover adaptations, home safety and minor works schemes which all contribute to extending people's ability to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. We also wish to get your views on aspirations to increase housing options for vulnerable groups, which are currently being explored through the Mental Health Redesign process and Extra Care Housing proposals arising from a review of residential care provision.

Related Potential Actions

The draft actions which could help progress this theme are:

1. In consultation with Integrated Joint Board (IJB) identify suitable resources to meet demand for Disabled Adaptations.
2. In consultation with IJB review the delivery mechanism for providing Disabled Adaptations.
3. Home Safety aspects of Minor Works scheme – seek to expand in consultation with IJB.
4. Work with partners to develop Extra Care Housing option within residential care re-provisioning plan.
5. Update/Develop Disabled Adaptations procedure and agree delivery mechanism.
6. Ensure appropriate accommodation options within Mental Health Redesign Plan.

Please record your comments on these points and any additional suggestions you have on the consultation form provided.