

Keose Glebe Community Buyout - Fantastic News!

Press Release [Embargoed until 12 noon on Friday 25th March]

'The land is our birth-right, even as the air, the light of the sun, and water belong to us as our birth-right.

Man cannot live without a part of the land. We cannot go up with the birds and take up our abode beyond the clouds. We cannot go down to the bottom of the sea and live with the whales.'

The words above were spoken by the Rev. Donald MacCallum (and formerly of this place) at the height of the crofting reform agitation in a past century, but the desire to own and possess land is perhaps ingrained into the psyche of Lewis people through long history.

Perhaps that encouraged a former generation here, with drive and determination, to successfully see the former church land become a crofting township in the 1930's.

It is therefore with great pleasure that we, the current community of Keose Glebe, announce that we have taken the next (big) step forward, and completed the community land buyout of the local estate on the 22nd of March.

While the land purchase itself has been central, the buyout process has also required the community to consider and develop its skills, plans and ambitions for the future, and how these can strengthen and grow social bonds and economic opportunity, for the long term benefit of all.

Training, feasibility works, valuations, mapping, business plans, company set-up, community consultation, legal undertakings and many other requirements have also had to be developed, funded and undertaken.

These have, in themselves, been rewarding and stimulating, but none of this could have been achieved by the community alone.

Today's outcome, and a firm foundation for moving forward, has only been made possible by both generous funding and, perhaps more importantly, the guidance, support and advice from the following bodies –

The Scottish Land Fund;
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar;
Highlands & Islands Enterprise;
the Muaitheabhal Community Windfarm Trust;
Marine Harvest;
Kinloch Community Council; and
Community Land Scotland;

All these agencies have played significant roles in this process at different and critical times, and so we would like to thank them for all their backing.

We would like to thank Calum Macleod of Harper Macleod LLP, Dr Calum Macleod and his team of consultants; John Macleod of Westside Surveys; Ruairidh MacIannan of the Valuation Office Agency, Keose & Glebe Community Association, and the other community estates on the island that assisted and encouraged.

We would also like to thank Murdo Morrison, the former landlord, for agreeing to sell the estate to the community, and for keeping us motivated to see the opportunity through to its conclusion. Both he and his family have been fine and worthy ambassadors and custodians for many decades and so we wish Murdo and Christine all the best in their new lives outwith the village.

Finally, we the Steering Group, would like to thank the whole community for its support, belief and enthusiasm over the last year.

While the Keose Glebe area has had a long and interesting history, this is a new and exciting chapter for us, and as we develop new projects and strategies, again with the help of those agencies that got us here, we look forward with a renewed sense of optimism that real and significant change (for the better) is within our grasp and capabilities.

The Keose Glebe Steering Group



Scottish Land Fund
Ionmhas Fearainn Na H-Alba

Delivered by



Funded by



muaitheabhal
COMMUNITY WIND FARM TRUST



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd's nan Eilean



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

COMMUNITY*
LAND SCOTLAND



Jackie Killeen, Director of Big Lottery Fund Scotland, said:

"Congratulations to the community of Keose Glebe on completing their land buyout of their local estate.

Owning and developing community assets recognises the strength of people who are at the heart of all communities – those who live and work in a place. Here at the Big Lottery Fund we have been supporting groups in urban and rural Scotland through the Scottish Land Fund and our Lottery funded community assets programme since 2006.

We know and understand the difference that community ownership is having across the country and we look forward to supporting more communities like Keose Glebe to make the right decision for them – delivering social, environmental and economic benefits for generations to come."

Cllr Alasdair Macleod, Chair of the Sustainable Development Committee, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said:

"The Keose Glebe buyout is warmly welcomed by CNES. This is a large step for a small community but this is a group with ambition and vision. The Comhairle has fully supported the aspirations of the people of Keose Glebe and will be fully supportive of the exciting challenges ahead."

David Cameron, Director of Community Land Scotland, said:

"Excellent news from Keose that the community have completed their purchase in a comparatively short time. This reflects the leadership and cohesion in the Keose community. There is no doubt that they will go from strength to strength as the years go by and the future is safe in their hands".

Steve Bracken, Business Support Manager, Marine Harvest Scotland, said:

"Marine Harvest has always been committed to supporting local communities in the remote locations in which we are based. We were approached by local people working on the community buyout and were delighted to be in a position to support them. We wish them every success for the future."

Sandra Holmes, of the Community Assets Team in Highlands and Island Enterprise, said:

"The community of Keose Glebe has shown great drive and determination in working together to develop a sustainable plan for the future of the Estate. It has been an inspiring experience working with them, over a relatively short timescale, to see their plans come together and agree a purchase of the Estate.

Community land ownership has now firmly taken hold in the Western Isles and we look forward to working with the Keose Glebe Steering Group to help them deliver their aspirations for the community."

A Kinloch Community Council spokesperson said:

"The villagers of Keose Glebe deserve huge praise for what they have achieved following months of hard work.

It is very fitting that the much loved and respected Morrison family are now able to hand the mantle of ownership over to those who have been their friends and neighbours for many years.

Those involved deserve huge praise for their efforts and the best wishes of the wider community as they take their first steps along what will hopefully prove to be a fruitful journey."

Iain M Maciver, Chairman of the Muaitheabhal Community Wind Farm Trust, said:

"I am pleased that the Trust was able to play a small part in supporting the people of Keose Glebe reach what will hopefully prove to be an important milestone for their village.

What they have achieved epitomizes a growing sense of self belief and determination which increasingly appears to whet an almost insatiable appetite for community ownership and empowerment throughout our Island.

It is clear that many now see community ownership as the foundation stone on which a sustainable community can be built. The Trust will hopefully be in a position to help those involved achieve their goal"

Ends

For more information, please contact Ishbel Macdonald at Keose Glebe Estate Ltd at keoseglebe@hotmail.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

- The Keose Glebe Estate is situated on a peninsula of land between the sea-lochs of Erisort and Leurbost, on the east side of Lewis. It extends to approximately 1,200 acres, almost all of which is subject to crofting legislation. 7 small islands around its coast are also included.
- The Community Buyout process began in March 2015, and concluded on the 22nd of March, 2016.
- There was 95% Community support for the buyout (on a turnout of 93%) in the independent vote held in November 2015.
- Historically, the estate was owned by the Church of Scotland and housed both the Parish Church and Manse. In the 1930's, the land was sold, and subsequently a crofting scheme was put in place by the Government.
- Initially, Harris Tweed weaving was the principle local enterprise (almost every home had a loom), and then for a thirty year period from the mid 1960's, seaweed processing on Tavay Island provided employment – latterly as a community run co-operative. That facility also supported the building of social housing in the village to support essential workers.



- That factory is no longer operational. Weaving is no longer pursued, and crofting activity has significantly diminished. We have lost our local school and recently the local Post Office closed. Coupled with an aging and falling population we are facing slow decline, and so the challenges we are facing revolve around creating employment opportunities, retaining and attracting families, and providing facilities to enhance community wellbeing and cohesion.
- Marine Harvest (Scotland) Ltd is the largest salmon farming company in Scotland producing more than 50,000 tonnes in 2015. Twelve people are employed at Marine Harvest's Loch Erisort salmon farm.
- The estate was previously owned by Mr Murdo Morrison of Handa, 18 Keose Glebe, having been in the Morrison family for over 60 years. The estate has a resident population of approximately 40.
- The Estate will now be operated on behalf of the community by Keose Glebe Estate Ltd - a not for profit company for which charitable status is being sought.