



# Social Enterprise **PLACES**



UIBHIST / UIST

# Social Enterprise Scotland Introduction

The case studies highlighted in this brochure showcase the impact and work of social enterprise in our rural communities and we're delighted to be able to highlight the fabulous work being undertaken in Uist, as part of our Social Enterprise Places initiative.

According to the Social Enterprise Census 2019, there are 122 social enterprises in the Na h-Eileanan Siar local authority area. The data also notes that with 45 social enterprises per 10,000 people the area is second only to Shetland, making this one of the highest concentrations of social enterprise bodies in Scotland.

The impact of social enterprise in our communities cannot be overstated. For many in remote and rural communities these organisations often provide vital services and reach out to many of those who feel isolated. As key employers they have a direct link to supporting the local economy, attracting visitors and future residents and, as the brochure and case studies here demonstrate, they make the area attractive and viable for all that live there.

We hope you'll be inspired and see how social enterprise organisations are supporting Placemaking across Scotland.

Chris Martin, CEO, Social Enterprise Scotland

## According to the Social Enterprise Census 2019



**122** social enterprises in the **Na h-Eileanan Siar** local authority area



**45** social enterprises per 10,000 people



one of the **highest concentrations** of social enterprise bodies in Scotland

# Uist Social Enterprises Introduction

**Social enterprise is part of our island way of life in Uist.**

For over 40 years, diverse community and social enterprises have met many critical needs within our island communities. They have created community assets and infrastructure totaling in the tens of millions, generated significant local employment, and contributed to the dense web of community networks that further enable community resilience and a more circular economy.

These are remarkable achievements for island communities totaling no more than 5,000 people across a chain of islands stretching 60 miles from Berneray to Eriskay. We are proud that, alongside our fellow islanders in Lewis, we received one of the very first Social Enterprise Place Awards within Scotland. And the same applies across so many Scottish islands that have such a high density of social and community enterprise per population.

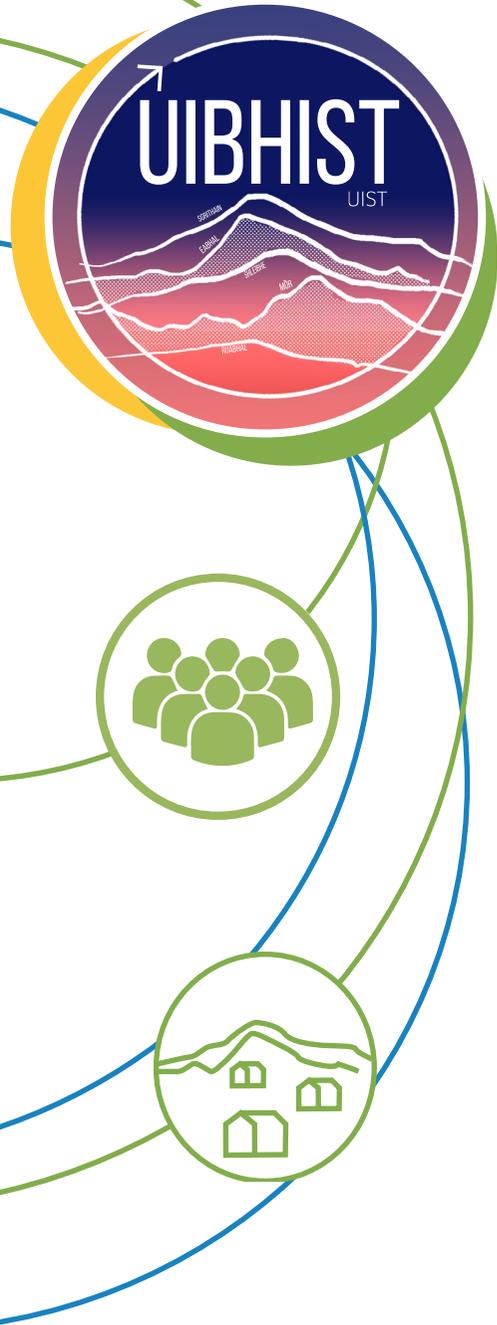
While social enterprise has been making a significant impact in our community over many years, we can also note that our social and community enterprises have played a critical role during the pandemic, responding swiftly to meet individual and community needs.

Covid also presented significant challenges, and it is an indicator of their rootedness and resilience, that these enterprises either continued to deliver vital services, or have now emerged again out of enforced hibernation.

As a community we have learnt much from the pandemic, including much that is relevant to our response to the far greater and longer-term challenge of the climate emergency. As we look forward, our social and community enterprises seek to respond to the climate emergency as a key priority. We also seek to build healthy, inclusive and resilient communities, to deliver to younger islanders who are our future, and to sustain and strengthen our Gaelic language, heritage and culture as treasured community assets, and for which we are also critical custodians on behalf of wider Scottish and global society.

The Steering Group for Social Enterprise Place Uist

# Our Place



Uist comprises 7 inhabited islands, stretching over 60 miles and linked by causeways in the southern part of the Outer Hebrides. We are a great place to live and work. We enjoy a stunning environment, close-knit communities still rooted in the land, and, as the heartland of Gaelic, a very strong cultural heritage and identity.

Uist also faces significant challenges, such as geographic remoteness and the legacy of demographic decline, very high fuel poverty rates and increasing housing shortages, the impacts of isolation and the economic impacts of austerity and Brexit.

Set out in the Atlantic, we are also on the frontline of impacts from the climate emergency, including rising sea levels and changes in weather patterns. The low-lying western coast of South Uist is now one of the most vulnerable coastlines in the UK.

At the same time, we are enterprising, resourceful and resilient island communities, determined to meet the needs of all and to find our own solutions. We have long demonstrated this by the many social and community enterprises that have grown over 40 years, by some of the highest volunteering rates in Scotland and by our rapid community response to Covid.

We are hugely confident and ambitious. For example:

- We have developed many community solutions to delivering core services such as care and childcare, adult and further education, and supporting those with mental health or isolation challenges.
- We are sustaining a cultural revival from young bands to a new £7m+ cultural centre, Cnoc Soilleir, and promote our culture and environment to a global audience.
- The largest community owned estate in Scotland is in Uist, and has increased the value of its assets sevenfold in a decade, including a wind farm and new harbour.
- Increasing numbers of younger people in their 20s and 30s are choosing to return, settle or stay in Uist as a vibrant and dynamic place that delivers wellbeing and quality of life. More than 10 percent run their own businesses. These young people are at the forefront of national campaigns on diverse issues such as housing, Gaelic, crofting and local air traffic control.

# Our social enterprises



Local research (in 2012) estimated that there was almost one social and community enterprise for every 100 people, and more than one community organisation (whether enterprise or not) for every 45 people on the islands. Our 50+ social and community enterprises range from internationally recognised centres of excellence to small community halls that provide essential local facilities.

For over 40 years our social and community enterprises have built extensive community wealth and assets, rooted in the lived experience, knowledge and skills of our communities. Without the growth of social and community enterprises over the past decades, Uist communities wouldn't have survived; lights here would have long gone out.

Local coops have played a vital role in sustaining retail, crofting and fishing. The award winning community paper Am Pàipear has been published since 1976. And our social and community enterprises now deliver numerous services, from essential services like land management, post offices and shops, home and childcare, to services delivering wellbeing and cultural identity. Social and community enterprises proved critical in sustaining our island communities during the Covid pandemic.

Further research (in 2013) by social enterprise Cothrom identified 117 development projects, planned or in progress in Uist. Community organisations, especially social and community enterprises, led or were involved in 111 of these. In 2012 the Third Sector generated 12% of jobs outside the public sector, and most of these jobs

were in social enterprises. In 2018, the same organisations generated 10% of all jobs for those in their 20s and 30s, supporting population revival.

Social enterprises have created windfarms, new harbours/marinas, centres for training, recycling, culture, heritage, and community facilities worth tens of millions of pounds. Social enterprises like Ceòlas and Taigh Chearsabhagh are at the heart of the cultural revival. Stòras Uibhist and North Uist Development Company are key players investing in infrastructure. Social enterprises like Tagsa Uibhist have developed local horticulture in response to the climate crisis. And CoDeL shone a light on positive population trends in remote rural and island communities, and most recently on the resilience of peripheral communities in times of crises, changing national and international policy perspectives.

Through our social and community enterprises, our island communities deliver and influence well beyond what might be expected of such small communities. Collectively, our experience and skills, expertise and knowledge, are a remarkable resource for sustaining our own communities as well as helping communities elsewhere. A remarkable resource also for driving insight, research and policy-making for remote rural and island communities. We seek to engage in equal partnership with our local authority and public agencies, with national organisations and networks, to deliver the best for our island communities, our land and climate.



## Uist Riding School

**Established 1974**

- Supports healthier lifestyles and life choices through all-year outdoor activity.
- Offers riding lessons, pony and beach rides and therapeutic sessions for mental wellbeing for local residents and tourists.
- Provides accredited courses for young people.



## UCVO (Uist Council of Voluntary Organisations)

**Founded 1976**

- Delivers bespoke support for charities and social enterprises, represents the sector at strategic level, and collaborates with statutory agencies to deliver funding and set policy.
- Runs a volunteer-led charity shop, which raises funds for good causes.
- Produces the award-winning newspaper Am Pàipear.



## Co-Chomunn an Iochdair (Carnan Stores)

**Community cooperative set up in 1978**

- Supports agriculture and fisheries.
- Primary source for crofting and many other supplies in Uist.
- Profits from the business helped fund the building of the local hall in Iochdar, South Uist.



## Co-Chomunn Eirisgeidh (Eriskay Shop)

**Community cooperative set up in 1980**

- Supplies food and retail to the local island community.
- Makes a significant contribution to sustaining the Eriskay community, and delivers to local residents and tourists through food, gifts and a café.



## Cothrom (Gaelic for 'opportunity')

**Founded 1992, employs 23 staff**

- Provides adult learning, vocational training and apprenticeships.
- Offers diverse learning and employability opportunities for those facing challenges.
- Operates a recycling (furniture) and makers centre and year-round Gaelic-medium nursery.



## Taigh Chearsabhaigh: Arts and Heritage Centre

**Founded 1994**

- Champions heritage, visual arts and Gaelic language and culture.
- Runs award-winning museum and galleries offering a dynamic programme of cultural events for the local community and the island's many visitors, along with a busy café, shop and post office.
- Delivers degree courses in art through the University of the Highlands & Islands, and has its own in-house media production business, UistFilm.



## Ùrachadh Uibhist

### Set up 1995

- Provides community hub set up to relieve poverty and advance opportunities for Uist people. Services include an off-site nursery, soft play area, gym and meeting rooms.
- Manages Hebridean Kitchen producing preserves, chutneys and baked goods.
- Operates Kirkibost Café, a popular stop for community and visitors.



## Ceòlas Uibhist

### Founded 1996

- Promotes and nurtures traditional music, language, culture and heritage through events and projects at a local, national and international level.
- Runs an annual summer school attracting participants from across the globe, and year-round community events and classes, including Gaelic classes and immersion courses.



## Tagsa Uibhist

### Founded 1999, employs over 42 f/t and p/t staff

- Delivers care at home, respite services, elderly and dementia support and offers bereavement and mental health assistance.
- Delivers community transport for 85 people covering 60,000 miles last year.
- Offers therapeutic community garden space for community members to enjoy, learn about growing nutritious food, recycling and composting, and boost local food production.



## Ceann na h-Àirigh (Grimsay Community Association)

**Founded 1999**

- Provides a social and practical focus for the Grimsay community and for preserving, interpreting and developing their island heritage.
- Runs a community centre with community activities, café, post office, horticulture, heritage and archives including a Boat Haven heritage centre (opened 2020).
- Offers a refurbished house, let to young family.



## Outer Hebrides Tourism

**Founded 2005**

- Develops and sustains the tourism industry in the Outer Hebrides.
- Promotes responsible tourism through the PLACE campaign and has also developed ways in which visitors can experience Gaelic language and culture to give them a deeper understanding of island life.



## Stòras Uibhist

**Set up in 2006**

- Manages the 93,000 acre South Uist Estate comprising Eriskay, South Uist and parts of Benbecula, with total assets worth more than £30 million.
- Owns community assets including crofting and other land, a wind farm (three 2.3Mw wind turbines), Askernish golf course (120 year old 'Old Tom Morris' course restored in 2005), Lochboisdale Harbour (built 2015) and Grogarry Lodge, fishing and sporting activities.



## Uist Wool

**Founded 2008**

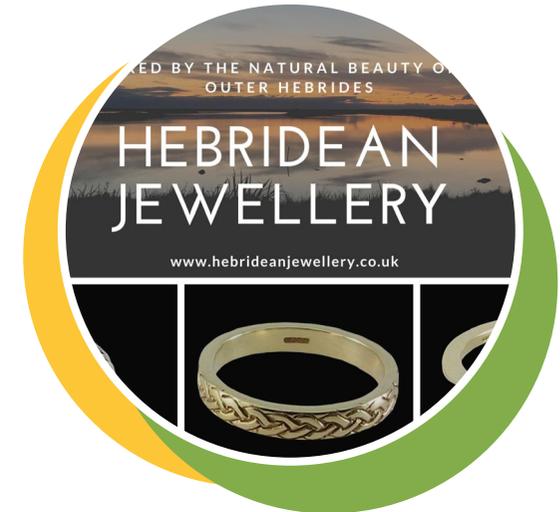
- Produces and retails high quality knitting and weaving yarns for an international market having created a community-owned spinning mill and shop in 2013, using eco-friendly and zero-waste processes.
- Purchases local fleece at a fair and competitive price, processing it in Grimsay, one of very few mills globally that run the entire process on-site.



## North Uist Development Company (NUDC)

**Founded 2010**

- Seeks to develop a sustainable and viable community through promoting social, educational, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing.
- Runs UistWind (2 x 900kW community wind turbines); took on ownership of the former Lochmaddy Primary School on behalf of the local community and is developing it into the North Uist Net Zero Environmental Community Hub and Environment Centre as a self-sustaining community enterprise due to open in 2022.



## Hebridean Jewellery

**Founded 1974, becoming a workers coop in 2011 and employs 16 full-time staff.**

- Manufactures quality handcrafted Scottish Celtic jewellery through an expert team of craftspeople.
- Creates new designs and utilises designs passed on by the business founder's father - a pioneer in the revival of Scottish jewellery in the 1940s.



## CoDeL

### Established 2018

- Highlights population turnaround on islands, which led to the Islands Revival Declaration.
- Delivers leadership and other programmes for young people in Uist campaigning on island issues, such as housing, Gaelic and crofting, and set up the Uist Beò platform.
- Engages with islands internationally, including leading influential research on the economic impacts of Covid on peripheral communities across the Northern Periphery and Arctic, from Canada to Finland.



## Cnoc Soilleir

### The new cultural centre, which meets Passivhaus standards, will open in Spring 2022.

- Will deliver HE/FE education, as well as informal learning, and embed these within the community as part of a joint venture between Ceòlas and UHI Lews Castle College.
- Will attract students and a younger population into the community and provide world class facilities.
- Will offer high class facilities for music and performance arts, nurturing, showcasing and attracting talent.



**40+ years**  
building extensive  
community wealth



**50+**  
social & community  
enterprises



**4**  
key priorities  
moving forward

# Moving forwards

The social enterprise community has committed to four key priorities:

## 1. Climate Emergency

We want to build on (a) our inherited knowledge and intuitive understanding about land and sea, (b) a rich biodiversity thanks to low-impact lifestyles, crofting and protected habitats, and (c) extensive activity and expertise in local food production, recycling, energy generation and resource use. **We want to create :**

**a green and sustainable Uist** positively acting on the Climate Emergency by reducing our carbon footprint: growing our own food; energy efficiency, generation and transition; reusing and upcycling our waste; education and knowledge sharing.

**a biodiverse Uist**, embedding big-picture thinking into our daily lives around the climate, pollution and biodiversity crises and maximising our carbon sinks such as the seas and peatland using nature-based solutions.

**a fairer Uist** following an inclusive circular approach with all involved in the path to net zero and sharing our local resources for the benefit of everyone in our community.

**a resilient Uist** prepared for the impacts climate change is already having on our islands and adapting to thrive in a changing world.

We are already developing a Local Energy Plan for Uist, and also want to engage in energy efficiency measures; monitoring and mitigation of climate change impacts, including a five-year resilience project; larger-scale local food production; implementing effective routes to net zero in key sectors; and creating an inclusive circular economy.



## 2. Young People

Young people are critical to the future of our island communities. For 40 years and more young people have contributed significantly to developing community enterprises in Uist, and taken leadership roles in many of them. They are campaigning on issues vital to our islands' future and responding to the climate emergency.

Our priority for young people focuses on young people of all ages (those in education, post-school, and those in their 20s and 30s, including many who return to our islands). We **seek to ensure that:**

**all can reach their fullest human potential**, that no one is left behind, and that all who want to, have the opportunity to live and work in Uist, including effective routes to employment and/or enterprise.

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**young people have effective voice and influence** ... from our communities listening and acting upon their opinions ... to young people taking on diverse leadership roles.

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Our commitment to young people has long been part of our way of life, and we seek to build on the extensive community infrastructure (e.g. from nurseries to adult learning) and the numerous activities (e.g. many sports clubs) already in place.

We seek to go where young people are, speaking and engaging directly with them, and ensuring that resources reach them, rather than just funding support workers. To work together with the statutory sector as valued and equal partners. To enable networking among young people throughout Uist. To remove barriers for young people living and working here, e.g. around housing, after-school childcare and transport.



### 3. Health and inclusion

We envision that people in all of Uist's communities have access to the services, support and information they need to be healthy and experience wellbeing in all stages of their lives, so that every person can reach their fullest human potential. We want our environment to be caring, inclusive, and compassionate, recognising the dignity of all in our communities and upholding health and wellbeing as an essential right.

Our strong sense of community and belonging, our commitment to fairness and inclusion, our tradition and lived experience of community resilience and self-help, our unique and vibrant cultural identity and the spectacular natural environment all contribute to achieving this vision.

As does the network of community organisations with in-depth understanding of local health and wellbeing, which already deliver diverse care and therapeutic services, befriending, advocacy and volunteering, adult learning and training, community transport, numerous sports clubs and cultural expressions.

#### **To further deliver on this vision we plan:**

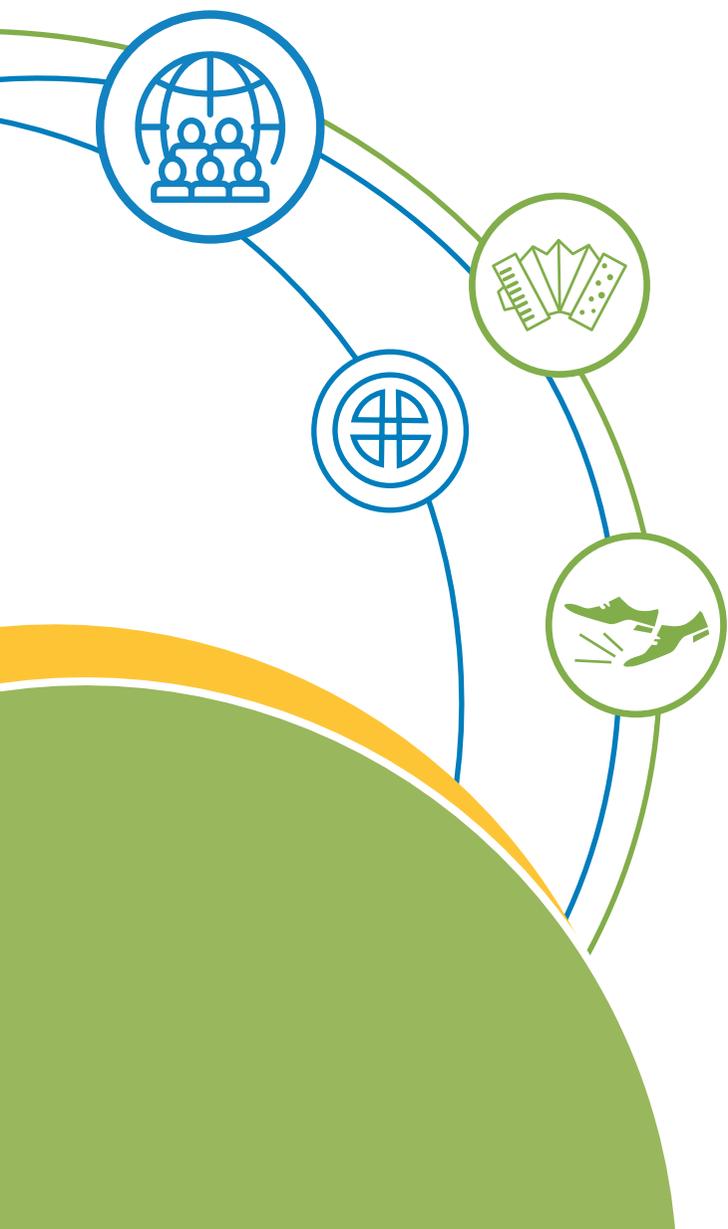
**to develop more integrated and holistic** mental health, addiction and social isolation services involving statutory and third sectors; including improved psychology services, greater access to diverse therapies, community hubs across Uist and other community solutions to deliver equitable, inclusive and person-centred health services.

**to encourage and support people** to lead active and healthy lives, and grow and consume nutritious food

**an educational programme** on mental health, addiction and associated stigmas, on suicide, self-harm, and domestic violence, delivered in schools and the wider community

**increased investment** in community transport

**support** for those experiencing domestic abuse.



#### 4. Gaelic language and culture

Uist is a key part of the “Gaelic heartland”. Gaelic is still the living spoken language of a large percentage of the population, and is particularly strong in the fishing, crofting, construction and public sectors. There are community enterprises, like Ceòlas, Cnoc Soilleir and Taigh Chearsabhaigh, Gaelic-medium nurseries and the Feisean (annual summer schools for children), community classes and events, Gaelic medium education in schools, and active young Gaelic campaigners, that strongly support Gaelic within the community. Despite this, Gaelic remains in a precarious state in Uist, with the lack of affordable housing now a significant contributing factor.

##### **We aspire:**

**to establish protected recognition** of the indigenous language of the Gael in the vernacular communities across Uist and to re-establish and strengthen Gaelic as the language of the community

**to promote the environment** where lapsed Gaelic speakers or those for whom the opportunities to use the language have been limited can regain confidence and fluency in the language in a placed based context.

**to promote greater meaningful acquisition** of Gaelic, and its use in a range of settings

**to celebrate and stimulate greater appreciation and respect**, access and engagement with Gaelic culture and history, including in song, dance, music and the arts

**while also generating** employment, investment and opportunities for young people.

These aspirations will require significant action on the ground in Uist, by diverse individuals, groups and organisations in our communities, as well as significant changes in policies that impact on the use and survival of Gaelic as a thriving language within our communities.



CoDeL's support for the Social Enterprise Place Award for Uist is delivered through the Smart Islands in Scotland and Ireland project.



THE SMART ISLANDS PROJECT IS PART-FINANCED BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OUTER HEBRIDES LEADER 2014-2020 PROGRAMME

The Social Enterprise Places Scotland programme is delivered by Social Enterprise Scotland and seeks to promote the work and impact of social enterprise organisations throughout our communities. Supported by the Royal Bank of Scotland and Scottish Government we're always interested to hear from you and look at how we can highlight your area as a Social Enterprise Place too.



Do you want to highlight how social enterprise has made a difference to your place?

Get in touch if you want us to help promote your place.

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