

GREAT BERNERA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Feasibility study (July 2014)



WHAT

Community purchase of the Great Bernera Estate by Great Bernera Community Development Trust (GBCDT).

HOW HIE HELPED

Technical support fees: £5000

- To part-fund a feasibility study into community ownership of the island, exploring community ideas for economic development opportunities.

Officer support:

- To refine the feasibility brief and assist with managing the contract.
- To make a strong application to the Scottish Land Fund, using the findings of the feasibility study.

OUTCOME

GBCDT was better informed to develop a realistic business case helping them to outline viable income generating opportunities and submit funding applications for acquisition.



BACKGROUND

In 2013 the owner of Great Bernera offered the island for sale to the local community, an idea that had been discussed in public meetings at various times in previous years. Wide public consultation subsequently generated a number of ideas for activities that would be of economic and social benefit to the island and community. Local challenges include an ageing population, depopulation, lack of housing and employment opportunities, and many of the ideas suggested reflected the community's desire to address these.

PROJECT DETAILS

To assess the realism of the ideas suggested during consultation the group commissioned two detailed feasibility studies. One focussed specifically on renewable energy and was funded from other sources. The other, more general, study looked at a variety of development options suggested by the community. Areas of particular interest were housing and tourism which are key to the social and economic sustainability of the island. Additional ideas considered included an outdoor activity centre, developing areas for agricultural use and bunkhouse facilities.

Ongoing community consultation was also run in parallel with the assessment of economic viability to ensure that all sections of the local community were engaged throughout the process. The community also had the chance to raise any concerns, and part of the feasibility was to address these as well as examine the potential benefits of community ownership.

HIE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROJECT

We assisted the group to refine the brief for the feasibility study and supported them through the tendering process and with managing the commission. This was also backed up with part-funding the costs of the feasibility study with a £5000 grant. Earlier support from HIE had helped the group to hold initial public meetings and form a suitable company for community land ownership. We have had an ongoing role with GBCDT and provided assistance with their Scottish Land Fund application, which was approved in May 2015.

OUTCOMES

HIE support helped to:

- Provide comprehensive information for the community to be able to make robust decisions on the economically viable options for ownership and management of the Great Bernera Estate.
- Raise community capacity of the Development Trust in managing the feasibility and ongoing community consultation.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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