Achtercairn, Gairloch

Shared learning from a community-led mixed development

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Communities Housing Trust is a Company Limited by Guarantee (SC182862) and a Scottish Charity (SC027544)
What we do
Community-led, affordable housing and accompanying infrastructure, as well as pioneering a range of housing tenures, financial and technical solutions to create sustainable futures for rural communities.
Where we work
Some of our community-led projects across northern and central Scotland
Achtercairn site summary

- **25 affordable homes** (19 social rent and 6 low-cost home ownership) with 3 housing providers providing 5 tenures

- More than 40,000 visitors per year at GALE Tourist Information Hub (Scotland's first public Passivhaus building), community shop & café

- University of the Highlands and Islands learning centre

- Gairloch Farm Shop, with vet clinic

- Air Training Corps training facility
Shared learning: challenges

- **Planning**: Agreed to position the commercial and tourist facilities prominently, with homes behind.

- **Capacity**: Volunteer groups leading to longer timescale for delivery.

- **Capacity and momentum**: Having a central coordinator (CHT) to manage all stakeholders.

- **Funding**: Different stakeholders and solutions, over a long time period.
Successes: GALE Centre

- Scotland’s first public building to be awarded Passivhaus status
- More than 40,000 visitors per year at GALE Centre’s Tourist Information Hub
- Community shop & café stocking produce from over 40 local makers and producers
- Has enabled Gairloch & Loch Ewe Action Forum (GALE) to employ 20 local staff year-round, instead of seasonal work
- Growing space at the back provides produce for café, and learning opportunities for local groups
- A classroom for UHI, enabling learning for all ages and helping to reduce education inequalities, has now moved out to larger facilities. Space is now multi-use room for hire.
Successes: Gairloch Farm Shop

• Provided an opportunity for a new local business

• Stocks a variety of local produce from the wider area, creating many more business opportunities and supporting the wider economy. Their food and drink is primarily Scottish.

• A bustling destination, creating a geographic centre for the local community as well as visitors

• Provide space for ConanVets to hold a weekly vet clinic, a key service for the area
Further successes

- **Community engagement:** Formed the Achtercairn Development Group; high responses to needs surveys and open events
- **Partnership working:** At least 10 organisations and many more local groups and businesses involved in designing a Place Plan
- **Increased confidence of community:** project inspired Gairloch Museum to relocate and regenerate. They won Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2020.
- **Replicable model:** Collaborative, tailored, community-led approach to tackle a mix of needs/issues is already being adapted elsewhere – e.g. CHT & Staffin Community Trust are providing affordable homes, commercial units and an NHS health centre.
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