



WEST HARRIS TRUST

Business Plan 2025-2030

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1.0 About The West Harris Trust

The West Harris Trust is a community landowning trust with 7225 ha of land on the west side of south Harris. It was formed to purchase three crofting estates belonging to the Scottish Government incorporating the crofting townships of Luskentyre, Seilebost, Horgabost, Borve and Scaristavore.

Following extensive consultation, the local community of 130 voted decisively in favour of purchasing the land in October 2008 with the mission to regenerate the local community which had been in long term decline. The purchase finally took place in January 2010 when the West Harris Trust was officially formed. West Harris is one of the most outstanding scenic locations in the UK and as the landowner, the Trust facilitates the availability of sites for business, housing and community purposes.

The West Harris Trust operates as a Company Limited by Guarantee (SC347176) and is a registered Scottish Charity (SC041920). It is governed by a Board of eight Directors representing the different townships within West Harris, supported by a small team of core staff responsible for day-to-day operations and advancing projects aligned with the Trust's mission and objectives. Since its inception in 2010, the Trust's activities have expanded significantly, delivering a wide range of projects that have generated substantial financial and social benefits for the local community.

At the time of the buyout in 2010, the Trust had a guaranteed annual income of only £1,654. This has risen up to £239,440 in 2023 and the Trust now manages assets of £2.2million, up from £59,000 in 2010.

The Trust's most significant developments and achievements to date can be summarised as:

- The delivery of Talla na Mara, a 500m2 multi-purpose community building, providing business opportunities and job creation
- The refurbishment of the former Seilebost School to provide high quality business space
- The creation of affordable homes through partnership working with the Local Housing Association
- Contributed to an increase in the local population up to 170
- Increased tourism facilities and visitor management activities in West Harris.

Recognised with the Outstanding Island Business Award at the 2024 Highland and Islands Business Excellence Awards, the Trust is well-positioned to expand its impact further across the next five years.

1.1 Vision & Mission Statement

Vision Statement

"West Harris is a thriving and vibrant community with an increasing and demographically balanced resident population, a unique natural environment, and a growing and sustainable economy providing a range of economic and community opportunities."

Mission Statement

"The West Harris Trust aims to increase the population of West Harris to 200 by 2030, working with partners to create a range of housing and economic opportunities to attract and sustain a growing and balanced population. The Trust will ensure it fully represents and engages the community of West Harris, and promotes the unique environment, heritage and culture of the area in a sustainable manner."

1.2 Review of 2018 - 21 Business Plan

This review sets out a summary of progress made by the Trust against key objectives in the 2018-2020 Business Plan, which was later extended to 2021 due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

This period saw the West Harris Trust consolidate its developments, expand its business activities and enhance its financial sustainability through new income streams.

Projects Delivered

Seilebost School Redevelopment

Redevelopment of Seilebost School to provide 4 campervan pitches with facilities and electric hook-ups, as well as rentable workshop space for small businesses and artisans.

New Stances at Talla na Mara

The Trust delivered 7 additional campervan pitches with facilities and electric hook-ups at Pairc Niseabost, Talla na Mara improving the local tourism infrastructure and generating additional income.

Sale and Development of Self-Build Plots

The Trust sold land to the Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) to deliver 4 shared equity houses. An additional self-build plot was sold during this period, contributing to the goal of increasing local housing availability.

Investigation into Electric Vehicle for Community Transport

While the investigation was completed, the Trust decided not to pursue the project further. Instead, lift-sharing to events was encouraged to promote sustainable transport solutions.

Sale of Renewables Company

The Trust sold its renewables company, including the wind turbine at Scarista, repaying all lending on these assets and significantly improving the Trust's financial sustainability.

Community Accessibility Improvements

A beach wheelchair was purchased for community use enhancing accessibility of the estate and supporting inclusive community activities.

'Growing West Harris' Community Project

The Trust delivered a two-year (2020-2022) community engagement project, 'Growing West Harris' aimed at reducing social isolation.

Horticulture Project

A community polycrub was built at Talla na Mara for local use to grow food, promoting sustainable living and self-sufficiency within the rural community.

Collaboration with Academic Institutions

The Trust collaborated with the University of the Highlands and Islands and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig to support a doctoral award. A PhD student is currently undertaking a study in West Harris on the past, present and future of the community-owned estate and how to build its resilience.

Projects Undelivered

Increase Capacity in Community Share Fundraising and Renewables

The project to increase capacity in community share fundraising and renewables was dropped. The Trust made two bids to purchase a hydro scheme but was outbid on both occasions.

Construct Housing for Rent and Purchase

Although progress was made on some aspects, this initiative is continuing into the next five-year plan, reflecting the ongoing need and dedication to delivering affordable housing in the area.

Extension to Talla Na Mara

This project is currently on hold due to a combination of factors including; staffing limitations, changes in the post-COVID tourism market and a reduced immediate need for expansion.

1.3 Review of 2022 - 26 Strategic Plan

The 2022-2026 Strategic Plan set out three main development priority areas for the Trust, which included;

1. Development of Housing Solutions

Progress: In 2022, supported by funding from the Scottish Government's Investing in Communities Fund, the Trust commissioned Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) to manage the development of new housing in West Harris. TIG is currently consulting with the local authority, HHP and the community to identify potential sites for new affordable homes.

Challenges: TIG has encountered several obstacles in identifying suitable land for development, including difficult topography and planning restrictions which have impacted the project's progress.

2. Bringing Talla na Mara Restaurant In-House

Progress: The Trust successfully took over the operation of the Talla na Mara Restaurant in 2022.

Challenges: As this is a new venture for the Trust, it is still refining the best approach to operating the restaurant to ensure it achieves profitability.

3. Improving the Energy Efficiency of Talla na Mara

Progress: In 2024, the Trust appointed a consultant Project Manager to lead on various elements of the Energy Efficiency project at Talla na Mara, aiming to reduce carbon emissions and enhance the building's long-term sustainability and operational resilience.

Challenges: The project relies on external funding to progress, and there is only a small selection of suitable suppliers on the island with constrained resources due to high demand.

Moving forwards towards 2030, the Trust plans to build on its successes, address remaining challenges and remain responsive to the evolving needs of the community it represents.

1.4 Summary of Goals 2025 - 2030

Over the next five years, the West Harris Trust is committed to advancing its mission of building a vibrant, sustainable, and resilient community in West Harris. By focusing on strategic goals including; community growth, economic development, sustainability and robust governance, the Trust aims to address both current and future community needs. The following priorities will guide the Trust in this journey:

Community Growth and Housing

To counter population decline and support a thriving community, the Trust aims to increase the local population to 200 by 2030. This will involve the development of diverse housing options and a concerted effort to showcase West Harris as a desirable location for both living and working. Key initiatives include:

- Delivering four new homes of mixed tenure specifically for permanent residents, ensuring accessible and varied housing options that support population growth and strengthen community stability.

Economic Development

The Trust is focused on stimulating local economic growth by fostering entrepreneurship, boosting tourism, and enhancing the local economy. This will be achieved through:

- Investigating establishment of new business premises to support the growth of local enterprises.
- Increasing tourism and visitor engagement at Talla na Mara by creating enriched visitor experiences, developing targeted marketing strategies, and expanding revenue streams to support the Trust's ongoing initiatives.

Cultural and Environmental Sustainability

Preserving West Harris's unique heritage and natural environment is central to the Trust's mission. This commitment includes:

- Implementing energy efficiency measures and green initiatives at Talla na Mara to reduce environmental impact and operating costs, thereby supporting long-term sustainability.
- Promoting local archaeology and cultural heritage through the creation of an archaeology trail, which will increase awareness and appreciation among residents and visitors alike.
- Hosting regular events and establishing a development fund to encourage inclusivity and engagement, fostering a sense of belonging within the community.

Governance & Organisational Resilience

A strong, adaptive governance structure is essential to the Trust's long-term success. To achieve this, the Trust will:

- Attract new skills and perspectives to the Board of Directors to enhance decision-making and bring fresh approaches to challenges.
- Strengthen its staffing structure to ensure adequate resources are available for implementing key projects and achieving strategic objectives.

Through these focused initiatives, the West Harris Trust will continue building a vibrant community that is well-equipped to thrive amid changing economic, social, and environmental conditions.

1.5 Current Arrangements

The Trust's current business as usual activities comprise of the following:

Estate Management & Maintenance

- General maintenance and operation of three serviced campsites and facilities across West Harris. Serviced campsites are open April through to October and require out of hours attention.
- Operation and general maintenance of Talla na Mara visitor centre, Seilebost School and the Cliff Shed.
- Crofting administration and other estate business.

Management of Business Operations

- Management of Talla na Mara Visitor Centre, Gift Shop and Restaurant, including events programme and local community engagement.
- Management of commercial leases in relation to Talla na Mara business units, Seilebost School business units, The Cliff Shed, telecoms and renewables.

Strategic & Commercial Development

- Driving the strategic and commercial development of the Trust's business portfolio. This involves creating and implementing robust operational, fundraising, and marketing strategies to support long-term growth.
- Identifying and implementing new opportunities for revenue generation and community engagement.

Our business as usual activities fund our operating costs, which mainly include; labour, management, admin, marketing and other personnel costs and our premises expenses which mainly include; scheduled maintenance works, insurances, utilities, security and signage.

2.0 Governance & Management Structure

2.1 Governance

The West Harris Trust is governed by a Board of Directors, a diverse group of individuals deeply rooted in the community. The Board currently has eight directors, many of whom have long standing connections to Harris and professional experience in areas such as education, crofting, and construction. The directors are dedicated to enhancing life in West Harris while preserving its cultural and natural heritage

The minimum number of directors required for the Trust is three. The board can consist of up to twelve directors, with eight elected by the members (referred to as Elected Directors) and four appointed by Nominated Members (referred to as Nominated Directors). Importantly, the number of Elected Directors must always exceed the number of Nominated Directors. Currently, three directors are nominated and six are elected.

Current Board of Directors:

- Norman Iain Mackay - Chair
- Andrew Macdonald - Vice-Chair
- Rhoda Macdonald - Secretary
- Richard Maclennan - Director
- Ann Parry - Director
- George Macleod - Director
- Neil Macdonald - Director
- Isobel Mackay - Director
- Morag Munro - Director

The Board meets bi-monthly to develop and oversee the organisation's strategic direction, business plan, governance and management. They also establish company policies and oversee budgets. Directors serve as ambassadors for the Trust, championing its mission by building relationships, participating in events, encouraging community involvement and fostering a sense of ownership among residents. An engaged Board is essential for building confidence and support from the community.

Ensuring the Board's collective expertise aligns with the Trust's goals and current priorities is also important to strengthen governance and ensure successful delivery of key initiatives over the next five years.

A Trustee Skills Audit is recommended to better understand existing skill sets and expertise within the Board. This audit can help identify areas in the business where members could be more actively involved and highlight any skills gaps that could be addressed in future recruitment. Trustees with expertise in human resources, marketing, or fundraising would be particularly valuable during the initial stages of implementing this business plan.

2.2 Management Structure

The Trust is currently undergoing a strategic restructuring to redistribute responsibilities and enhance focus across its charitable and commercial activities. The organogram below outlines the proposed revised management structure that is designed to establish a more resilient and robust organisation..

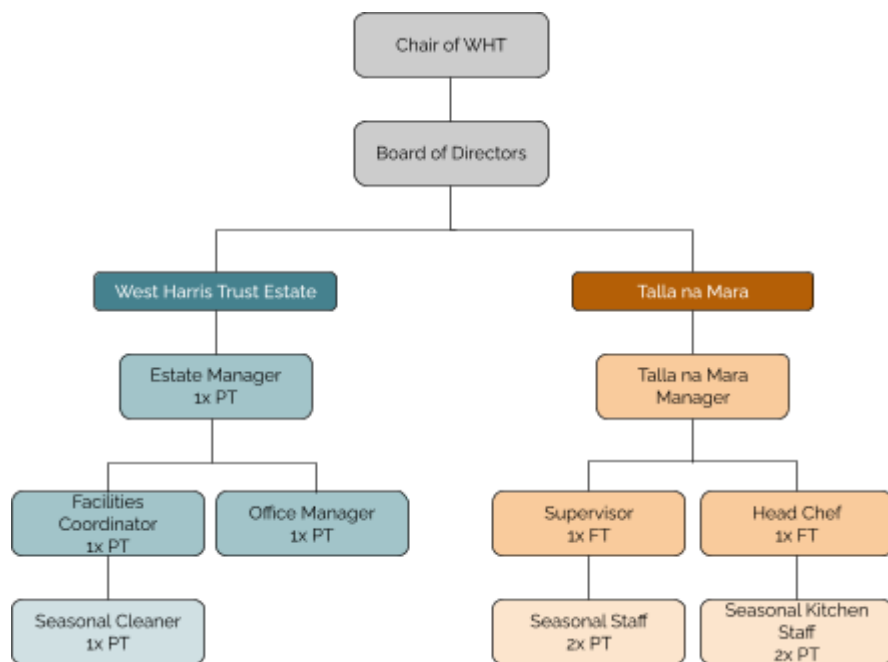


Fig.1 proposed organogram

The proposed structure will divide responsibilities into two distinct operational arms:

1. **West Harris Trust Estate**

The management of the Trust's estate will be overseen by an Estates Manager, who will be responsible for all land and asset-related operations.

2. **Talla na Mara**

West Harris' community and commercial hub will operate under the direction of the Talla na Mara Manager, responsible for driving visitor engagement, events, and venue activities.

To facilitate the revised management structure, the Trust will be launching a recruitment drive to fill key positions, offering valuable opportunities to contribute to West Harris's growth and sustainability.

2.2.1 Staffing and Workforce Development Challenges

The Trust faces several key challenges in recruiting staff for Talla na Mara, primarily due to the centre's remote location and limited local housing options, which significantly reduce the pool of available candidates. High living costs on the island create additional barriers, making relocation difficult for potential employees. This situation heightens competition for skilled talent on the island and impacts the Trust's operational capacity. Additionally, limited access to external funding restricts the Trust's ability to offer competitive salaries and benefits, which further impacts the recruitment and retention of qualified professionals.

To help overcome these challenges, the Trust has outlined several potential initiatives to support business operations:

- **Increased Board Involvement**

Encourage greater participation from the Board of Directors to provide additional capacity and oversight. A skills audit will help determine which directors are best suited to assist in specific areas.

- **Develop Existing Staff**

Explore ways to upskill and develop existing staff members who are already committed to the Trust. Consider joining the Association for Cultural Enterprises and gain access to their

online academy of training courses and conferences. Through this membership, staff can upskill on topics such as:

- Developing venue hire
- Expanding hospitality services
- Managing retail operations
- Leveraging West Harris as a film location

These types of courses not only help staff grow professionally but also motivate them to bring new ideas to the Trust

- **Explore Modern Apprenticeships**

Implement modern apprenticeship programmes to promote on-the-job training, attract local talent and make employment at the Trust more appealing. It is recommended to establish partnerships with local apprenticeship providers to support this initiative.

- Recommendation for apprenticeships in areas such as finance and digital marketing, which are high-priority skill sets currently needed within the organisation

- **Engage Remote Workers**

Engage remote workers to provide additional, specialised/strategic support. This support can be flexible and project specific to meet the Trust's needs and support development of staff in post.

- **Diversify Funding Applications**

Seek a wider range of external funding sources to support staffing and operational costs, enhancing the Trust's ability to create attractive recruitment packages and attract skilled professionals.

- **Improve Marketing Strategy**

Develop a strong marketing strategy for recruitment packs that showcases the unique opportunities and benefits of work with the Trust. Expand recruitment efforts by leveraging social media, professional networks (LinkedIn) and relevant forums and facebook groups.

- **Develop Volunteer Programme**

A volunteer programme could help supplement staffing. Although there has been little interest so far, a targeted marketing strategy and consultation could encourage more involvement and identify areas where volunteers would be willing to support.

The West Harris Trust recognises that achieving its operational and strategic goals hinges on an effective and resilient team structure. By undergoing a carefully planned restructuring process and actively addressing the unique challenges of recruitment in a remote location, the Trust is taking crucial steps to strengthen its workforce.

3.0 Strategy

3.1 Key Development Priorities 2025 - 2030

This strategy, defined by the Board of Directors during a dedicated workshop session, is structured around several key development areas, each targeting specific objectives that align with the Trust's broader mission of fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient community.

The following table outlines the development priorities, deliverables, and targets for the upcoming period of the West Harris Trust business plan, spanning 2025 to 2030.

KEY DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES 2025 - 2030						
DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY	DELIVERABLES	TARGET	PROJECT OWNER	BUDGET	PROGRAMME	TRUST RESOURCES REQUIRED
1 Development of affordable housing solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 1: Feasibility Study completed and development site identified for new houses - Phase 2: Advance project development to RIBA Stage 4 	Begin construction by 2030. Support overall mission to increase the population of West Harris to 200 by 2030.	Consultant	Phase 1: £86,212 Phase 2: Cost to be determined based on findings from Phase 1.	Phase 1: (ongoing) 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2026 Phase 2: 2026 - 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Management - Fundraising/ funding and financing partners

2	Investigation into the provision of new business premises	<p>- Phase 1: Conduct a comprehensive consultation with stakeholders to assess demand for new business premises and produce a detailed Consultation Report.</p> <p>- Phase 2: If demand is confirmed, proceed with project development to design and deliver suitable business units.</p>	By 2030, complete the consultation report assessing demand for business units to support local economic growth and the mission to increase the population of West Harris to 200 residents.	Consultant	As above	<p>Phase 1: 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2026</p> <p>Phase 2: 2026 - 2030</p>	<p>- Project Management</p> <p>- Fundraising / funding and financing partners</p>
3	Improve the energy efficiency of Talla na Mara & deliver on green initiatives	<p>- Conduct a feasibility study to identify ways forward to improve energy efficiency, repair faults and reduce running costs.</p> <p>- Implement recommended works based on the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Audit Report.</p>	By 2030, achieve a 20% reduction in running costs and a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions at Talla na Mara, creating a more economical and sustainable operation.	Consultant	<p>£200,000</p> <p>(exact costs to be confirmed as project develops)</p>	01/05/2024 - 31/03/2026	<p>- Project Management</p> <p>- Fundraising / financial support through grants or community funds</p> <p>- Marketing to promote project</p>

4	Investigate opportunities to improve visitor access and enhance offer at Talla na Mara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Produce a comprehensive feasibility report to assess opportunities for enhancing visitor access and offerings, ensure consultation with community and visitors. - Develop marketing strategy. - Explore the development of a weaving exhibition in available business premises to highlight local culture and crafts. - Assess the feasibility and costs of installing coach parking to accommodate future coach trips. - Investigate potential partnerships with the cruise ship market. 	By 2030, establish Talla na Mara as a visitor hub, with new attractions, improved infrastructure and strategic partnerships, including with tourism operators, contributing to local economic growth.	Board of Directors Centre & Events Manager	£100,000	Phase 1: 2024-2025 Phase 2: 2026-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Management to assess market demand and develop feasibility study - Marketing professional to develop strategy - Cultural experts to be engaged for developing the weaving exhibition - Outreach to engage with potential partners - Financial resources for feasibility studies, planning and initial development work - Fundraising
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5	Develop & Implement Marketing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a comprehensive digital marketing strategy - Consider redesign of websites and branding/logos - Use marketing to implement a clear visitor offer and visitor management plan - Design and produce marketing materials, including brochures for wedding and corporate hire, promotional leaflets for CalMac and other strategic locations, and digital contents for social media and the website. - Install digital donation points at strategic locations to encourage donations and facilitate easy financial transactions. 	By 2030, establish Tallana Mara as a well-known destination for weddings, corporate events and tourism, increasing revenue from these activities by 20% and securing sustained community support through donations.	Centre & Events Manager	£10,000	2024 - 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing professional to develop strategy - Resource to manage delivery of marketing strategy - Graphic design/content creation for brochures, digital materials and other promotional content - IT support for the installation and maintenance of Google Pay points and online payment systems - Funding for resources, design and printing of marketing materials - Funding to support initial setup costs for digital payment systems.
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6	<p>Improve West Harris accessibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit planning permission for the installation of a beach wheelchair storage container at Horgabost to facilitate easier access for visitors with mobility challenges. - Identify additional accessibility improvements needed such as pathways and signage - Explore possible partners and funding options to offer bike hire from Talla na Mara - Explore electric bike charging facilities at Talla na Mara 	<p>By 2030, ensure that West Harris is more accessible to visitors, including the installation of appropriate facilities and equipment to support inclusive access for all.</p>	<p>Estates Manager</p>	<p>£25,000 (£5,000 already received, £20,000 outstanding)</p>	<p>31/03/2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project management to oversee delivery and ensure compliance with planning regulations and timelines - Fundraising to secure the outstanding £20,000 required to complete the project
7	<p>Additional electrical hook-ups at existing sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a feasibility study to assess the installation of new electrical hook-ups at Seilebost. - Deliver a feasibility report outlining costs, potential revenue and site-specific considerations for the new hook-ups. 	<p>By 2030, increase site capacities and revenue from campervan and caravan visitors through the installation of new electrical hook-ups</p>	<p>Estates Manager</p>	<p>£5,000</p>	<p>2024 - 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project management to complete report and financial analysis of cost-benefit and potential return on investment - Fundraising: funding sources or grants to support the installation costs beyond the feasibility phase

8	Community Engagement through events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To ensure the Trust responds to wants/needs of community arrange a consultation - Arrange and deliver quarterly community events (4 per year) that cater to a wide range of interests and demographics, fostering stronger community bonds and increasing local engagement. - Events may include cultural activities, workshops, social gatherings and educational sessions to appeal to various groups within the community. 	By 2030, achieve a 50% increase in community participation at local events, strengthen social cohesion, enhance the visibility of the West Harris Trust through consistent and diverse event programming and contribute to creating a vibrant community.	Board of Directors Centre & Events Manager	£15,000	2025 - 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource to plan and deliver consultation - Event coordination to plan, organise and manage quarterly events - Marketing and communications to promote events successfully via social media, local newsletters and posters - Volunteers engaged to assist with event setup, operation and community outreach - Funding to cover event costs - Feedback mechanisms to assess event success and gather suggestions for future events
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9	Food Hub Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a community gardens project to increase local food production for use in the Talla na Mara Restaurant, promoting sustainability. -Link with marketing strategy, inspiring story for Talla na Mara 	<p>By 2030, achieve increased use of locally grown produce in the Talla na Mara Restaurant, enhancing the restaurant's reputation for using fresh, island-grown ingredients.</p>	Estates Manager	£20,000	2024 - 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Management to develop the project and submit to the Island Growth Deal for funding. - Marketing to promote project
10	Develop Archaeology Trail to improve knowledge of the local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create an engaging and informative archaeology trail that highlights significant historical and archaeological sites in West Harris. - Integrate the archaeology trail with the existing Hebridean Trail to enhance the overall visitor experience and promote cultural tourism. - Develop interpretive signage, maps and digital content to guide visitors and provide educational information about the sites in West Harris. Consider partnership with the digital archeology project that is currently being led by UHI North, West and Hebrides or a university. 	<p>By 2030, establish the archaeology trail and achieve awareness among both locals and visitors, promoting an understanding and appreciation of the area's historical and archaeological significance.</p>	Board of Directors Estates Manager	£5,000	2025 - 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource to identify and assess significant sites and create accurate, engaging content - Develop signage, maps and digital materials to support visitor engagement, ideally in partnership - Partner with local tourism to promote the trail to visitors and tourists - Funding to cover any costs to support

11	Start a West Harris Trust Development Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a Youth Fund to provide financial support for community enhancement projects or initiatives that offer new opportunities for young people in West Harris. Develop a plan for finding out what kind of initiatives need support. - Develop guidelines and an application process for the fund to ensure transparent access for all residents. - Promote the fund within the community to encourage participation and submissions. 	By 2030, provide community opportunities and support at least 10 projects. Foster a stronger sense of community, empower young people, and enhance local development.	Board of Directors	£2,000 per year (total of £10,000 over five years)	Fund Establishment and First Grant Cycle: By March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource for financial management and administrative support to set up and manage the fund - Marketing and outreach to raise awareness of the fund among residents
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4.0 Market Appraisal

4.1 Current Market

4.1.1 *Isle of Harris Demographics*

The Isle of Harris has a population of approximately 2,000 residents, contributing to the Outer Hebrides' total population of around 26,720.

The demographic trends in Harris mirror those across the Outer Hebrides, characterised by an ageing population, a large proportion of single-person households and a steady decline in younger residents, many of whom leave the islands in search of education and work opportunities on the mainland. This demographic challenge is exacerbated by limited affordable housing and high living costs, making it difficult to attract new residents to the island.

Tourism is a significant economic driver for the Isle of Harris and has grown significantly in recent years, fueled by iconic beaches like Luskentyre, ranked 13th among the world's top 25 beaches by TripAdvisor in 2020. From 2025 to 2030, trends suggest continued growth in both domestic and international tourism to the island.

4.1.2 *Outer Hebrides Tourism*

The Outer Hebrides draws around 219,000 visitors each year, generating approximately £65 million for the local economy. Tourism has grown steadily, increasing by about 5% annually, with visitors typically staying six nights. The majority are domestic tourists from Scotland and England, while about 34% are international visitors, mainly from Europe and North

America. Many are aged 45 and older, with a higher socio-economic background.¹

Popular with outdoor enthusiasts and those seeking natural beauty, the Hebrides is known for its peaceful, remote landscapes, the Hebridean Way trail, and cultural traditions such as Harris Tweed weaving and Gaelic heritage. Motorhomes and campervans remain the most popular accommodation for visitors seeking to explore the islands.

Tourism in the Outer Hebrides does face some significant challenges. Ferry service reliability is an ongoing issue as delays and cancellations disrupt travel plans and impact on visitor satisfaction and the income of local businesses dependent on consistent visitor flows.

Increasing visitor numbers is putting growing pressure on local infrastructure and facilities that already struggle to cope with the demand of peak season. High numbers of motorhomes and informal camping contributes to waste management challenges and damage to fragile landscapes, complicating efforts to balance tourism growth with environmental protection.

Initiatives such as the Outer Hebrides Destination Strategy² have sought to address these concerns and build a sustainable visitor economy with improved infrastructure and targeted campaigns to promote respectful visitor behaviour and preservation of the unique environment and communities of the Outer Hebrides.³

The recent closure of the VisitScotland Information Centres across Scotland, including in Stornoway is reflective of modern preferences for digital-first tourism services. In the Outer Hebrides, this move has raised

¹ [VisitScotland Outer Hebrides Visitor Survey 2023](#)

² [Outer Hebrides Destination Strategy 2030](#)

³ [Responsible Tourism - PLACE Campaign](#)

concerns over limited visitor information access in remote areas where digital connectivity may be lacking. There is opportunity for Talla na Mara to establish itself more as a key information hub, providing essential services to tourists, such as local and cultural insights, travel advice, and encouragement to protect the landscape.

Throughout the 2025 season, the West Harris Trust aims to enhance its approach to tracking visitor numbers and gathering data. This effort will help the Trust better understand visitor trends and preferences, supporting decisions for sustainable tourism and community planning.

Additionally, the Trust aims to explore establishing representation on regional and national tourism boards in order to contribute to sustainable tourism strategy, and gain access to resources, data, and collaborative opportunities that support local initiatives and broader Outer Hebrides tourism goals.

4.1.2 Current Audiences

The primary current audiences of the West Harris Trust can be summarised as:

- **Tourists and Day Visitors:** Paicr Niseaboist, Talla na Mara, Seilebost School and the non-serviced camping sites across West Harris serve tourists and day-trippers. Talla na Mara restaurant attracts visitors with its stunning views of Nisabost beach, art exhibitions, and gift shops featuring local arts and crafts. Located on the popular Hebridean Way, Talla na Mara is also a frequent stop for walkers and cyclists offering rest and refreshment.
 - **Couples and Older Visitors:** particularly common during the quieter months at the start (April) and end (October)

of the season, seeking a peaceful experience in West Harris.

- **Families:** a significant proportion of visitors during the summer school holidays drawn by the area's natural beauty and family-friendly activities.
- **Local Community:** The Trust engages with its residents and Talla na Mara serves as a community hub, hosting social gatherings and activities like "Knit and Natter," coffee mornings, gardening clubs and Gaelic classes that foster community engagement and reduce isolation, especially among elderly residents.
- **Wedding and Private Event Guests:** Talla na Mara's scenic setting makes it a popular venue for weddings and private events.

4.2 Target Market

4.2.1 Target Audiences

A key target market identified by the Board for the next period is the cruise ship market following the expansion of Stornoway's deepwater cruise terminal, which became operational in 2024. The new terminal can accommodate some of the world's largest cruise ships and is set to greatly increase the number of passengers visiting the Outer Hebrides.

Talla na Mara is approximately a 50-minute drive from the port, making it possible to position itself as an attractive excursion destination. Improved infrastructure to accommodate coach trips will allow the centre to cater to large groups efficiently. Through forging partnerships with cruise lines and tour operators the Trust aspires to develop Talla na Mara as a key stop on cruise itineraries.

Talla na Mara already engages the wedding and corporate markets but there is ambition to develop and define our offers in these areas. The spectacular location of the centre is a unique selling point that distinguishes it from other venues on the islands.

The Trust aims to extend its reach with all current audiences through enhanced marketing efforts and remains dedicated to serving the local community by continuing outreach and engagement with residents. Talla na Mara will maintain its role as an essential community hub and resource for West Harris.

4.2.2 Future Opportunities

West Harris is a prime location for dark sky tourism due to its minimal light pollution, making it an ideal spot for stargazing, astrophotography, and witnessing the Northern Lights. The Trust could develop a winter offer for Paic Niseaboist designed around these experiences, perhaps partnering with local Astrology Clubs to deliver. Through targeted marketing campaigns, the Trust may be able to attract a new demographic seeking unique, off-season experiences.

There is also potential to expand engagement with educational and group tourism. The Trust often receives inquiries from schools,

universities or groups keen to learn more about the work of West Harris Trust, local history, archaeology, renewables, etc.

To capitalise on this demand, the Trust could develop cost-effective educational materials, such as handouts or activity sheets for self-guided exploration of the estate and brief presentations easily adaptable to different groups. Educational experiences can be offered for a small fee or donation with easy booking options available on the website. It presents an effective way to raise awareness of the Trust's work and mission.

With growing interest in wellness tourism, the Trust could consider developing off-season retreats focused on relaxation, mindfulness, and creativity. While the building currently faces heating challenges in winter, planned energy efficiency projects will enable Talla na Mara to provide a comfortable environment for winter. Such packages could support use of Talla na Mara during the quieter tourism season.

4.3 Marketing Strategy

The West Harris Trust will develop a comprehensive marketing strategy and implementation plan as outlined in Development Priority 5.0.

5.0 Risk Register

RISK		IMPACT	LIKELIHOOD	RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION STRATEGIES	OWNER	BOARD REVIEW
		Low / Medium / High					
1	Governance and Board Effectiveness				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure ongoing board training and succession planning to maintain a balanced and effective governance structure. - Regularly review governance policies and board performance. 	Chair	Monthly
2	Compliance with Regulatory Requirements				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain up-to-date knowledge of relevant regulations and ensure compliance in all activities. - Regular audits and reviews to ensure adherence to charity and company regulations. 	Board of Directors	Monthly
3	Financial Sustainability, particularly of Talla na Mara				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commission a strategic business modelling exercise to understand the best way to operate and manage the Trust's assets. - Diversify income sources and fundraising strategy. - Regular financial monitoring and Board reviews to track financial health of the organisation. - Progress with projects that aim to reduce operational costs and increase resilience of the organisation. 	Board of Directors	Monthly
4	Staff Capacity and Retention				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review management structure regularly to ensure effective - Invest in staff training and development to improve job satisfaction and retention. - Develop strong marketing that showcases the unique opportunities and benefits of seasonal 	Board of Directors	Quarterly

					working with the Trust.		
5	Economic Impact of External Factors				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor economic conditions closely to assess impacts on crofting and tourism. - Engage in active lobbying for supportive government policies. 	Board of Directors	Quarterly
6	Community Engagement and Support				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regularly consult with the community through surveys and meetings to ensure alignment with local community needs. - Foster transparency in decision-making and enhance communication through newsletters, website blogs and social media. 	Board of Directors	Bi-Annually
7	Environmental/Climate Change and Sustainability				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement sustainability measures, such as renewable energy projects and energy efficiency improvements to Talla na Mara to reduce carbon emissions. Track the Trust's environmental impact. - Work with partners to assess and mitigate climate impacts on local infrastructure. - Develop long-term plans to enhance the resilience of community assets against extreme weather conditions. 	Board of Directors	Bi-Annually
8	Operational Resilience Planning				Talla na Mara Wind Turbine could need replacement or major repair within the next 5 years. Installing an air source heat pump will allow Talla na Mara to run from a standalone heat source, future proofing the centre while decarbonising the provision of heat.	Board of Directors	Monthly
9	Housing Market & Statutory Constraints				- May impact on ability to successfully deliver key projects. Collaborate with local authorities and housing associations.	Board of Directors/TIG	Monthly

6.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the Trust meets its vision, mission and strategic goals, we will implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategy. This approach will involve regular monitoring to assess our progress, impact and effectiveness against the key deliverables outlined in the business plan.

Each project will have a designated owner who will be responsible for its delivery and oversight. These project owners will develop programmes for their respective projects, outlining specific milestones and allowing progress to be tracked.

The template below is a high-level method of progress and action tracking. Progress will be reviewed monthly by the internal project team and bi-monthly by the Board of Directors. During these reviews, project owners will present updates comparing actuals against set targets and

deliverables, recording any deviations or challenges encountered. If needed, revisions will be made to the business plan to ensure it remains a practical and realistic guide for achieving our long-term goals.

Overall success of the business plan will be defined by our ability to meet or exceed the set targets. This robust monitoring and evaluation strategy, with clear ownership and accountability for each project, will provide the clarity, direction and adaptability required to navigate the challenges and opportunities over the next few years.

Lessons learned will be documented by project owners and reviewed at completion, allowing us to integrate any insights into future planning and decision-making processes.

PROJECT MONITORING & EVALUATION						
DEVELOPMENT AREA	DELIVERABLES	PROGRESS UPDATE *actual deliverables + progress v programme	BUDGET UPDATE *actual budget spend	TARGET	TARGET DELIVERY *note any target adjustments	LESSONS LEARNT

Fig.2 project monitoring and evaluation template