

# **STRUAN COMMUNITY COMPANY LIMITED**

**Company Number 852708**

## **BUSINESS PLAN**

### **BACKGROUND OF PROJECT**

The Struan Community in North West Skye is one of the few areas in the island without a Community Hall. When the Struan Primary School was closed the Struan Community Council and the Struan Community Trust were very keen to seek to secure the premises for the Community via the Highland Council's Community Asset Transfer Scheme.

It was decided to form a Community Action Plan group with two members of the above two organisations together with two members of a third group the Struan Community Development Group who were also operating in the area at that time, but have since folded.

The aim of the CAP was to produce a Community Action Plan and Planning Aid Scotland were commissioned to assist in the development of the plan with funding provided by the Struan Community Trust and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

This agreement commenced in May 2023 and between then and September 2023 two questionnaires were sent out to residents and six face to face workshops were held to ascertain the views of the Community regarding the future of Struan.

Support for community stewardship of the school was overwhelmingly positive, with 94% of respondents supportive. The responses emphasised the opportunity to develop the School as a community facility.

The Action Plan was completed in February 2024 and copies of the full Action Plan and an Executive Summary are available.

### **ABOUT THE AREA**

Struan is a small scattered community comprising the main villager of Struan along with the surrounding townships of Meadale, Gesto, Coillore, Amer, Totarder, Balgown, Struanmore, Ullinish, Eabost, Ose, Caroy and Balmeanach with 250 to 300 residents. The local economy is heavily supported by tourism, fishing and crofting. The demographics of the community changed considerably during the last thirty years and although there are now some pre-school children in the village the population is very much an ageing population.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

The Struan Primary School is situated in the main village of Struan and has been situated there since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The older members of the community remember being told that the ground on which it was built was gifted to the community

and that if it ever ceased to be used as a school would be returned to the community. The community members are in favour of the building being returned by the Council to the people.

It has been used through the years for committee meetings and fund raising school activities that have always been very well supported by the community members.

### **CURRENT OWNERSHIP OF THE SITE**

The former Struan Primary School buildings are owned by the Highland Council. We have had the use of the building since the mothballing of the school in 2022 and we have acted as caretakers since the closure.

### **COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

A series of different avenues were used to ascertain the views of the community including public meetings, surveys, community mailing list, community newsletters and mail drops. Three visioning workshops and three planning workshops were also held. As already noted the community are fully behind the asset transfer of the school.

Quotations made directly by community members during the process about their feelings and aspirations have been included in the Action Plan such as “Struan’s strength is in the community: local events are really well supported. You can’t buy that,” and “Struan is full of characters of all generations trying to keep old traditions and values alive whilst moving with the times”.

### **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS**

As already noted Struan does not have a Community Hall so the plan is to convert the former Struan Primary School buildings into the Struan Community Centre or Hall. It is anticipated that some renovation or refurbishment of the building would be required initially and the intention would be to use local people with specialist skills to carry these out where possible.

A local History group and a Crafts group have already been established and regular Saturday coffee mornings have taken place. The History group has held successful displays on Saturday afternoons of old school photos, of crofting photos and on the Clarion newspaper that was published and distributed locally in the 1950s by the local shopkeeper at that time. These events have been very well supported with up to 100 people in attendance. The Crafts group meets regularly in the school on Thursday evenings. A series of antique furniture restoration slide shows and talks has commenced led by a community member experienced in this work. Also recently a parent and toddlers group started meeting in the building with set up funds granted by the Struan Community Trust. Various other activities have been held such as wreath making, bingo nights and quiz nights. The possibilities for activities being held in the premises would only increase once the community has ownership.

During the meetings held to develop the Action Plan community members came up with various ideas for future development of the building including a café offering food and drink and the chance to socialise.

The polytunnel beside the school could be developed as a community food source that could be sold locally.

Other groups could be set up such as keep fit groups and other ideas expressed include setting up a men's shed. Other suggestions for the use of the building were art, Gaelic, yoga or dance classes and hosting a hairdresser. The possibility of setting up a Men's Shed, or a Women's Shed have also been mentioned.

The existing toilets within the building would need to be improved and updated. The septic tank would need to be renewed in order to comply with current SEPA regulations. There are no public toilets at present in the village. People travelling from Broadford to Dunvegan via Sligachan will find no public toilets. This has caused numerous problems over the years and has been discussed by the Struan Community Council with the Highland Council on several occasions but has not progressed due to lack of funding available.

A new kitchen would need to be fitted.

The heating system is outdated and would need to be replaced by a more environmentally friendly system ideally run using renewable energy.

A longer term aim would be to have an EV charging point and a disposal area for motor homes. This would raise some income.

## **FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

The Struan Community Company Limited would on completion of the community asset transfer seek to set up a hall committee who would be responsible for the day to day running of the premises for the various activities. Long term a funded coordinator post may have to be considered.

The Directors of the Struan Community Company Limited would continue to be responsible for deciding on the future time scale for developing the buildings and the funding thereof.

The current directors of the Struan Community Company Limited are:

 Chair

I was born and brought up in Struan and attended Struan Primary School.

After leaving school and college, I worked as a storeman at an agricultural firm taking over as Manager after a few years. I was continuously employed in agriculture, construction and as a plant operator for many years.

I have now been successfully self employed for the last 15 years and I also run two Townships in Struan.

Since my early 20s I have been involved with the Struan Community Council.

I was part of the Steering group which set up the Struan Community Trust, of which I have been an appointed Trustee for 15 years, serving as Vice Chair until 2014 and as Chair since 2014 to the present.

I was also a member of the group that delivered the Struan Community Action Plan.

I have recently been appointed as a Director of the newly formed Struan Community Company Limited.

I am heavily involved in the local Struan History Group and our family have been involved in business for over 100 years.

I have brought up my own family in the village meaning that four generations have been educated in Struan Primary School which makes me passionate about securing the school for the local community I was born and brought up in.

██████████, Vice Chair

I was born and brought up in the Struan area, married to a Struan girl and have two children who both attended the local Primary School.

Our family has deep roots in Struan and we are proud to be a part of its close-knit fabric. Watching my children grow up here, surrounded by familiar faces and the natural beauty of the area, has deepened my appreciation for what makes this community truly special.

After leaving school I trained as an electrician, which I continued to do alongside my current job as an Ambulance Technician working for the Scottish Ambulance service.

I also assist my wife running our self-catering glamping pod business.

My professional experiences have helped me develop a strong sense of responsibility and a practical approach to problem solving. Working in both trades and emergency services has allowed me to understand the diverse needs of our community and given me the skills to respond effectively to challenges, big and small.

I have always valued the sense of community and belonging that defines Struan and I actively participate in local events and initiatives aimed at strengthening our shared future. I have served on both the Struan Community Council and the Struan Community Trust and have recently been appointed as a Director of the newly formed Struan Community Company Limited.

██████████, Secretary

I was raised in Aviemore, a growing community, I finished my education and started work at Castlewynd Potteries as a design painter.

Thereafter I worked at MacRae and Dick garage where I met my husband, [REDACTED]. Once we were married we started a family and our two boys were born. I worked around raising them and doing various small jobs to support our family's budget. Throughout this time I was involved in community work, volunteering at the local playgroups and local swimming group. These groups were run at the small village hall which was the centre of so many community groups, events etc. I was involved in various fund-raising events which brought our community together.

In 1990 our family moved to Skye, to Ose after the purchase of Atholl Service Station, a local business which served the community of Dunvegan and the outlying areas. After the success of this, the business was expanded and we planned and built [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which allowed [REDACTED] and I to provide a garage service to meet the community's needs for repairs and MOTs. I completed the paperwork and bookkeeping for both businesses and have continued doing this to date.

I immersed myself in community based activities with both our children attending Struan Primary School where I was a PSA for 9 years. The school was the heart of the Struan community holding various events including coffee mornings, bric a brac sales etc. which I was involved in organizing.

I am currently a Trustee and the Secretary of Struan Community Trust which I have been since 2009. I have also been appointed as a Director for the newly formed Struan Community Company Limited.

Family values run through everything I do day to day and this extends to the value I place on the importance of being involved in our community. A strong community needs a hub, somewhere to get together, a focal point to share not only the happy times but also times when things are tough.

Struan Primary School would be the perfect premises for our community's hub.

[REDACTED], Treasurer

I was brought up and educated in Glasgow. My father was from Skye and my mother was from the Isle of Raasay, where most of our family holidays were enjoyed. After leaving school I worked with the Royal Bank of Scotland for four years after which I worked for and eventually managed a Cash in Transit service. I also studied at the Open University and was successful in getting a BA Honours degree in History.

I met my wife [REDACTED] who was born and brought up in Struan and we were married in Struan in 1977. Our two daughters were born in Glasgow and in 1988 we moved to Struan where both girls attended Struan Primary School and my wife and I both became involved immediately in community activities.

After moving to Skye until retirement in 2017 I worked in the voluntary sector helping people with alcohol and drugs issues. I managed the local Skye and Lochalsh Council on Alcohol and was the Chair of the Skye and Lochalsh Drug and Alcohol Forum for eighteen years. I was also a member of the Highland Drug and Alcohol Partnership.

I served as a member of the management team at the Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association for fourteen years, the last four as Vice Chair.

I was a member of the Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers' Management Board for over 10 years as Treasurer and also Vice Chair for 3 years. In 2009 I was elected as a Trustee when the Struan Community Trust was formed and served as Chair until 2014 when I stood down following the death of my wife. I was elected back onto the Trust in 2017 and have been Treasurer since then to date.

I have served two periods with the Struan Community Council and have been Treasurer and Vice Chair at different periods. I have recently been appointed as a Director of the newly formed Struan Community Company Limited.

I was a member of the small group who delivered the Struan Community Action Plan in 2023.

Volunteering has been a large part of my life and I feel that it is imperative for a thriving community to have people within the community who are willing to give their time to ensure that all members of the community can feel involved in what is going on in the community. We have lacked facilities in Struan, unlike many other communities in Skye, and the opportunity to have a community space would be a huge boon to Struan.

[REDACTED]

I was born and raised in Dunvegan, Isle of Skye.

I left Skye to find work as a mechanic in Fort William and Aviemore, I eventually secured a position with MacRae & Dick, Aviemore where I met my #wife and started a family. We had two sons.

I was also in the retained Fire Service for a number of years.

In 1990 I was given the opportunity to lease Atholl Filling Station in Dunvegan and we moved to Skye. In 2004 we built [REDACTED] where both myself and my wife and eldest son work to this present day.

I have been a football coach for Dunvegan Girls' Football Club and we successfully reached the semi-finals in Perth.

I trained to be a football coach and did this for a number of years until I damaged my knee.

I am currently on the board of Trustees of Struan Community Trust and I am glad that we supported and financed so many improvements to the local village and beyond.

I have recently been appointed as a Director of the newly formed Struan Community Company Limited.

Struan is a very close community and there are lots of exciting plans that could happen to expand and encourage locals to remain in the area and not to have to move away.

Struan School would be an ideal hub for the community to come together for lots of different events and fund raising.



For 39 years I was employed by Highland Council in the Primary Education Sector – 11 years in Portree Primary and 28 years as Head Teacher at Struan Primary. For the latter three years I became a Cluster Head Teacher covering Carbost Primary as well as Struan Primary.

During my teaching career I held a number of elected Office-bearer positions on a variety of curricular and administrative committees.

For 12 years I was a Pupil Supervisor for Secondary girls attending the residential Portree Girls' Hostel, which initially included weekend duties on a rota basis.

In the Struan community where I have been resident for 40 years, I served for many years on the Community Council and held Office-bearer positions during that time including Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, at different times.

After retiral I served for 5 years on the Board of Management for the local Portree branch of the YMCA, and for most of that time was the Line-Manager for the Senior Youth Worker.

With six others I was a Founder Trustee of the Struan Community Trust serving for eight years and re-joined in 2021, continuing in that role presently.

I have recently been appointed as a Director of the newly formed Struan Community Company Limited.

In my previous Congregation of Bracadale Free I was the then equivalent of the now designated Safe-guarding Officer and I was also a Trustee.

The natural and cultural history of the Struan Community and the Isle of Skye has always been of great interest and my knowledge of both continues to increase.

My name is [REDACTED] and I have also lived on Skye. My family and I live on our croft in Struan and I work part time as a Dispenser and Administrator in a local Medical Centre in Dunvegan. My children attended Struan Primary School.

I've always believed in being part of the local community and getting involved where I can. Back in 1996 a few friends and I approached the Highland Council to ask if we could use the old, unused Struan Schoolhouse as a space for a toddler group. They agreed, and we created Struan's first baby and toddler group. This was my first real step into volunteering in the community and I've been involved ever since.

Over the years I've helped on School Boards, the Struan Community Council and the wind farm steering group. Currently I'm a boys' Brigade leader, a community first responder and a long-time Trustee of the Struan Community Trust. I have recently been appointed as a Director of the newly formed Struan Community Company Limited.

Being part of local life and helping to support social and recreational activities has always been important to me. I hope to continue contributing to the community and helping make the most of our hall in the former Struan Primary School buildings and shared spaces for many years to come.

## **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

The Struan Community Trust receive community benefit payments annually from Vattenfall Wind Farm part of which is situated in the Struan area, the remainder being in Edinbane. The Struan Community Trust have successfully managed the distribution of grants since 2010 and if proposed wind farms receive planning permission in the Struan area in the next few years substantial community benefit monies will be available. While it would be the intention that the initial hall committee would be run on a voluntary basis we are aware that a paid co-ordinator would be required for the long term. There are funds available at present to carry out some maintenance work that would be needed in the short time but it would be the intention to apply for grants from various bodies for any future long term developments.

## **CURRENT COSTS AT STRUAN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Highland Council has given figures for current costs for the now closed Struan Primary School.

In 2024/25 the total costs were £1,617.21 made up of £125.69 for water charges and £1,491.52 for electricity.

In 2023/24 the total costs were £8,817.71 made up of £6,460.21, planned maintenance of £75.00, reactive maintenance of £2,571.20 and a rebate of £288.70 for water charges.

In 2022/23 the total costs were £12,635.88 made up of £98.13 for water charges, £10,749.75 for electricity charges and £1,788.00 for reactive maintenance.

### **RISK ANALYSIS**

We are aware that the former Struan Primary school building is an old building but it is in fairly good condition for its age. We are confident that both short term and long term there is the necessary support and expertise in the community to maintain it. The prospect of substantial monies coming in the future from proposed new wind farms would result in great potential benefits to the community and make some of the more ambitious projects identified in the Business Plan become realities.

### **CONCLUSION**

The residents of Struan have overwhelmingly supported the proposal for the asset transfer of the former Struan Primary school. Over the past two years during events held at the school some members of the community met with other members of the community for the first time despite having lived in the area for some time. The fact that there has not been a community building for people to meet has been extremely disadvantageous to the residents and this opportunity to address that issue must be progressed. This will help the community to address issues and ideas included in our Struan Community Action Plan and will enable the Highland Council to pass the buildings to the community.