



**Annual Report: 2025 AGM of  
Urras an Taobh Sear ~ Staffin Community Trust**

**Church of Scotland, Staffin, Isle of Skye  
Tuesday, January 27 2026  
7.30pm**

Staffin Community Trust has pushed on with its project work and is pleased to have made encouraging strides in a hectic 12 months.

Among the year's highlights was the tenants moving into the seven new business units at Staffin Harbour and the long-awaited unveiling of Sùil nam Brà at Kilt Rock. The Nurse's Cottage has also finally been bought by SCT, almost a century after the Staffin community originally fundraised to build it.

Sadly, there were undoubted low points during the year. The loss of long-serving SCT director Dugie Ross who had done much on behalf of his people was particularly felt across Staffin, and indeed across the country.



*Dugie.*

Community development work is as challenging as ever. For the volunteers and staff there is considerable satisfaction – and often relief – when the projects are delivered. The impact which can be seen on a daily basis is rewarding: in enabling families to live in their own community, supporting local businesses and jobs, ensuring health care can be accessed in a modern building, remembering the efforts of those that went before us and so on. The role played by the volunteer board of directors and harbour steering group members is crucial.

They do it because they want to see the Staffin community prosper. If you are interested in getting involved and supporting the work of SCT please consider joining the board of directors.

### **Board & staff**

Aileen Taylor, who has connections to Glasphein, started with SCT in September as our new finance officer and has taken on this crucial role from Donald MacDonald. SCT is very grateful for Donald's work and support in the last two years. Once development trusts across Skye and the west Highlands deliver large capital projects

they have property, land and facilities to manage and the financial workload and statutory requirements increases significantly. The finance officer role is critically important. Sine Gillespie is the new part-time Gaelic officer for SCT - a post supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and she started last summer. Sine and board member Andrew Whitehead are currently working on a new project with St Andrews University. In the last few years SCT has to complete, as a charitable organisation, a full accountancy audit. Not only is this particularly expensive, with last year's fee coming in at £11,500, it can also take up a lot of time working on the audit. We were hopeful that a full audit will not be required this year after Scottish Government legislation changes but that not yet been confirmed.



Aileen.

SCT now has a range of interests across the community with the harbour units and the Crofters' Memorial, Lealt Gorge viewing platform and car park and the Nurse's Cottage. SCT already owns two homes, the health centre and two business units at Taighean a' Chaiseil. SCT take its responsibilities and obligations as a community landlord seriously and that takes up a significant amount of the working week. It is important we look after our tenants and also generate an income that will meet all of SCT's management and maintenance costs. For example, our insurance policies now cost more than £5,000 per year. SCT is a rural community trust with a charitable ethos but *must* be run like a business in order to pay the bills, meet its responsibilities and deliver projects.

### Acknowledgements

SCT is grateful for the support of Staffin Community Council, Talla Stafainn, Sgoil Stafainn and the Columba 1400 Centre. Progress is also made with the backing of our key funders, in particular the support and guidance of Highlands and Islands Enterprise which has funded the development officer post. The Scottish Land Fund and Bòrd na Gàidhlig are key funders, as are the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund and Islands Programme. We'd also like to thank Highland Council, including the Skye ward councillors, the Community Regeneration Fund team and the housing service. Sincere thanks to NHS Highland for supporting the Nurse's Cottage purchase by the community and we were also grateful to Tracy Thomson at the Royal Bank of Scotland Social & Community Capital.

Our constituency MSP Kate Forbes and her team at the Dingwall office are always on hand to provide invaluable support and advice for SCT. We have also enjoyed hosting our MP Angus MacDonald at the harbour since he entered office and appreciate the good working relationship we have with Ewen MacPherson and his team at the Kilmuir Estate (The Department) in Portree. SCT is also appreciative of the support of our insurers, NFUM in Portree, with Jake Sayles and his team.

### Sùil nam Brà - The Crofters' Memorial

A long-held ambition – which was suggested at one of the first SCT meetings way back in 1994 - was to commemorate Strì an Fhearainn - the Land Agitations of the late nineteenth century by acknowledging how the people of An Taobh Sear (east side) were the first community in Skye to take a stand against the injustice and oppression.

The ambition to mark the lasting impact our forebears had on the community - and



*Seonag Barbour, who is originally from Valtos, was a key speaker at the event.*



the land we live on today – was finally achieved in October 2025 as Sùil nam Brà was opened. The opening day began at Creag an Fhèilidh, with the cutting of the ribbon. Thereafter we renewed our crofting connections with seanchas and stories at Columba 1400. There was a lovely cèilidh in the evening.

Raffle prizes were crofting-themed and there was a beautiful cromag crafted and donated by former SCT secretary, Stewart Clark. We were delighted by the community's response to the event and gratefully acknowledge the contributions of our partners and funders.

### **The Nurse's Cottage**

On Thursday, January 8 2026 the Nurse's Cottage returned once more into community ownership. This an exciting opportunity for the community trust to deliver further affordable housing opportunities for Staffin, four years after Taighean a' Chaiseil opened, when demand far outstripped supply. The need for more affordable homes is still as great as back then.

SCT purchased the cottage from NHS Highland and we are grateful for the health board's support with this project. A formal announcement will be made later this month by SCT and NHSH.

The cottage was built by the Staffin Nursing Association in 1933, six years prior to the outbreak of the Second World War - and 15 years before the creation of the NHS. It illustrated what the Staffin community was capable of achieving as the



building was entirely funded by local people fundraising. District nurses lived in the cottage until the mid-1970s.



*The cottage looking north-west to Taighean a' Chaiseil, where the new health centre, Tobar na Slàinte, pictured below, was built*



### Staffin Harbour Development

Services – Before the hardstanding area was completed there was limited provision in Skye for a large boatyard where owners could securely store their vessels for emergency repairs or scheduled winter maintenance.



SCT purchased a Roodberg haulage trailer, a small workboat and a telehandler. This



*Lachie and Jock working on a boat haul with the Roodberg trailer and telehandler on the slipway.*

means we can lift boats, up to 10-tonnes in weight, from the sea onto our slipway and move them safely to our storage area.

The community-run service is growing steadily, last winter we had three boats in for maintenance work and storage. In 2025

we hauled 10 boats in and out, and we are determined to build on that momentum. Our harbour manager Lachie Gillies is ably supported by Charlie Elder and Jock Gordon when hauling boats out, which can take up to two hours. SCT needs to train up other people to support and grow the service and we are keen to do so this year. *If you are interested, please get in touch.*

Tenants - SCT was absolutely delighted to welcome our new tenants into the business units last autumn. We were heartened to the response to the units being built and the take up and commitment shown by our tenants, as we recognise it is a challenging economic climate for local businesses.

The harbour is now home to nine different businesses, with 16 jobs supported, and it is a lively and vibrant harbour which supports livelihoods and families.



The units are the new base for the Skye Xplorer boat tours, Bikes on the Brae bike hire and a Royal Yachting Association training centre; Organic Sea

Harvest; Skye Scallop Divers; James Jagger the experienced boat engineer and boat builder colleague Gareth Samuels; plus Gaelic education outdoor activities for children will be delivered by Spòrs Gàidhlig. There are also the popular Staffin Sea Sauna and several storage containers renting space.

New signage will be going up soon to promote the harbour businesses and other businesses in the community and SCT will support the tenants as much as we can.

More information on our tenants here:

<https://skyeecomuseum.co.uk/latest/tenants-make-their-home-at-new-staffin-harbour-business-premises>



**Site works** - There's been encouraging progress made on site with the new Harbour Facilities Building, as the picture shows, with led by main contractor Ewen MacColl Joinery and his team. The project is being supported by the Scottish Government's RCGF and Islands Programme funds. The building has a retail / business space, showers and WCs and it is scheduled to be completed by the start of March. SCT intends to advertise the building for rent,

details will be shared with the community very soon.

SCT recently went out to tender as we still have to deliver the final phase of the onshore works, completing the hardstanding area. This would further support the boat storage service and provide further space to support harbour operations. We are now working hard to secure the funding for these site works.

**Taighean a' Chaiseil**





SCT maintains the communal areas in the summer months and ensures the cost is kept to a minimum for the residents and business tenants. More than 300 native trees and

some conifers were planted in 2022 to create a wind break / green eco-belt at the rear of the properties and at the front. These have taken well with approximately 90% growing successfully. More planting will be carried out in the spring to support the biodiversity of the area.

The Stenscholl township met recently and is supportive of the cattle grid on the main road being relocated so livestock are kept away from the front of Taighean a' Chaiseil. A fencing quote has now been supplied by a contractor and the work will be done this spring, once the funding is secured. We appreciate everybody's patience with this.

### 2026: the Year to Come...

1. SCT will be working with Portree High School's senior pupils studying the N4 Rural Skills course at Staffin Harbour every week during term. They will work on harbour management, boating and marine skills training. This is scheduled to start in February and we are very keen to support the pupils in developing their skills. Our harbour steering group members are directly involved in this.
2. Nurse's Cottage – we will run a public consultation with the community encouraged to get involved as we work on developing the site
3. Construction of our harbour onshore area, using rock from Lealt Quarry
4. Completion of Harbour Facilities Building: we hope to have the new premises up and running in March all going well



*If you have any questions about SCT's work and aims please don't hesitate to get in touch with either Hugh Ross, Lachie Gillies regarding the harbour development and Sine Gillespie if it is about the Skye Ecomuseum and Gaelic projects. Call in and see us in the SCT or harbour offices or e-mail: [staffin.ido@gmail.com](mailto:staffin.ido@gmail.com) [staffinharbourmanager@gmail.com](mailto:staffinharbourmanager@gmail.com) or 01470 562 464.*

*Further updates and information about Staffin Community Trust via [www.skyecomuseum.co.uk/why-staffin](http://www.skyecomuseum.co.uk/why-staffin)*