



# Region 9

Glasgow and the Western Isles (*Glasgu agus nan Eilean Siar*)

## **Failte gu Stornabhaigh agus nan Eilean Leodhais**

*The Region 9 Committee met in Stornoway on the 11th September 2008, at HHP's (Hebridean Housing Partnership) head office. A lively Committee meeting was followed by a welcome to the islands from Dena Macleod, Director of HHP, some of the board members and officers. Then an informative presentation from Stewart Wilson the Director of Tighean Innes Gall, a local development partner for new builds. Stewart's presentation took the committee through the many difficulties faced by the Partnership in their new build programme, including transportation costs and site access problems.*



*Stewart went on to discuss the new HAG funding regime and how it will make HHP's developments so much more difficult. Other staff members then gave presentations on the work of HHP and answered questions from the Committee, followed by a tour of some of the Partnership's schemes.*



### Glean Dubh– Blackwater.

*This larger development outside Stornoway has been sympathetically cut into the moorland, of an area of scenic importance. They were made single story so as to blend better into the environment. The peat moorland made for particularly difficult building conditions. The scheme was very pretty and blended in well with nearby private housing, whilst maintaining a traditional look. We were especially surprised at the amount of space on the scheme given over to greenspace, which gave it a very open look not unlike the way the old villages looked.*

### Perceval Road Development– Arras Cottages.

*This was our chance to visit a Hebridean building site and to see how the houses are constructed. Progress is as programmed with a completion scheduled for Feb 2009. All the timber frames to blocks were erected and roofing works were nearing completion, but it still gave a clear picture of the difficulties posed with building on a small brownfield site. Especially difficult on this site it seems was the existing drainage system, which requires a total remodelling.*

*Access roads and the sympathetic restructuring of boundaries were according to Stewart particularly problematic, with large vehicles having to be turned onto a busy road off a roundabout.*



### Elizabeth Haldane Court

*HHP's latest new build development to come on line is at Elizabeth Haldane Court. The development which is located on Church Street in Stornoway was designed by Gordon Anderson Associates and constructed by Uist Builders (Construction) Ltd. The 22 flats will provide more affordable rented accommodation in Stornoway, which is currently in short supply. One of the flats will be made available for much needed temporary Homeless accommodation. This is a striking building blending renewable materials with modern design. Most of the flats have now already been allocated and we all went away with a feeling that centralised developments may be compact but need not have small rooms. The access and boundaries were a particular problem with Stewart explaining how they were overcome after consultation with the Community.*

The second day was given over to looking at more traditional buildings with a visit to a number of sites across the Westside of Lewis or Taobh siar as it is known in the Gaelic.

*The blackhouses at Arnol and Gerranen were particularly interesting, especially as they were being reroofed and gave us a chance to view the traditional thatching methods. These buildings had been occupied till the early seventies, and still provided hostel and holiday accommodation today.*



*The interior shot of Arnol Blackhouse with the human habitation (ben) and the animal part beyond (butt). Hence the phrase Butt and Ben.*



*Gerranen blackhouse village (above and to side) gave us the opportunity to see how the old settlements were set out for shelter from the weather, and how this was still relevant today. Interestingly the whole village is heated by geothermal ground sourced heating.*



*We could not leave Lewis without visiting the world famous Callanish standing stones. This circle is older than Stonehenge.*

*We were all impressed by the scale of the whole site with its towering stones and stunning backdrop.*





This study trip evoked many happy memories from my gap year working with David Macbrayne. I worked in many parts of West Scotland as a relief dogs body – But I enjoyed my time in the Western Isles most. I came over every week during the Summer Season on the Loch Seaforth from Kyle on the Macbrayne Tours bringing tourists to the Islands. We stopped at the Royal Hotel for the long weekend. I did this for the summer season in 1970 and enjoyed it immensely. I was pleased to find the Islands as welcoming and friendly as I remembered them. I look forward with a better understanding of the issues affecting island communities yet I am more aware of the common bond with Glasgow that they have. *John Banks (Treasurer).*

My visit to the islands has made me aware of the common history the Western Isles has with Glasgow and how well the partnership between us works. Our shared goals and also our shared problems e.g. Homelessness will help us to develop as a Committee. *Greg Hine (Secretary).*



This is a beautiful and magical landscape, that really opened my eyes to the variety of my own country. It was an informative study visit that gave us an insight to how problems of one area can be mirrored in others but solutions cannot. *George McGuinness MBE (Vice-Chair).*

It was wonderful to share with my friends on the Region 9 committee my love for my home, and to show them the common bond that exists between Glasgow and the Western Isles. This is not the start; but the continuation of centuries of involvement. *Kevin Paterson (Chair).*

