



Region 9 in The Western Isles Take 2

Failte Gu Nan Eilean Siar





The Bayhead Bridge Centre
(photo right and left)
Hosted Region 9's
September Meeting
and was the base for
the Whole Trip.



The group were invited by Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Tighean Innse Gall and Hebridean Housing Partnership(HHP) to take part in the Highland and Islands Housing Liason Group (HILG) and Northern Areas Housing Associations Conference in Stornoway.



On the first day the group attended the reception for the HILG and went on a tour of the latest developments in the Stornoway Area. This was followed by an invitation to a working lunch with Tighean Innse Gall where they gained a greater understanding of the shared development constraints and opportunities.

The afternoon was taken up visiting Toabh Siar (the west side) and the world famous Callanish Standing Stones.





An extremely busy second day started very early, with a presentation on the role of the regional Networks to the HILG Conference. Kevin and George's presentation went down well with the delegates. Highlighting the Networks role and how it can help housing providers, tenants and the Scottish Government engage with each other.

This was followed by presentations from various social enterprises in the Western Isles and an invite from Alasdair Nicholson to visit his latest social enterprise Hebridean Chocolates. The North Harris Community Trust also took part and gave a very interesting presentation on the effects of community buy-outs. The Western Isles Credit Union recently set up yet operating very successfully drew on the experiences of the Glasgow delegates who had been members of various credit unions for a number of years.

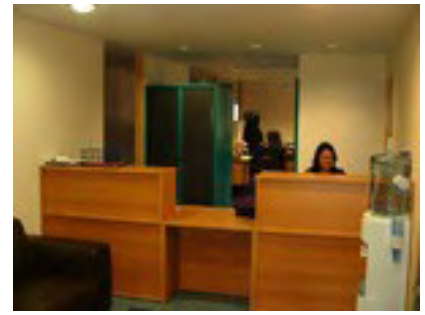
Lunch on the Wednesday was at the invitation of the head of Community Development at Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, Iain Watson and included a meeting with the housing and finance chairs Norman Macdonald and Norman Macleod and the Vice-convenor and Council Leader Angus Campbell.

This meeting was followed by a visit to the Hebridean Chocolate Factory, a Social Enterprise providing employment for people with learning disabilities. The factory was a big hit with the committee members especially the shop.

Wednesday night was back to The Bridge Centre for a Western Isles Forum meeting where the Housing Bill was discussed. The committee members were introduced to the Forum members including John MacIver who had joined Hebridean Housing Partnership from Glasgow Housing Association and so was an acquaintance of many of the Glasgow members.

Wednesday was also the annual Forum Ceilidh where the Forum as part of its community engagement showcases some of the local talent preparing for the National MOD. This year was Oidche Abhain a folk group who wowed the committee with their traditional blend of Folk and World music.





The Region 9 committee meeting was on the Thursday and again it was back to the Bridge Centre.

The lively discussion centred around the Housing Bill and the Private Landlords Consultation response, which the committee finalised at this meeting and submitted to the Government.

At the end of the meeting the committee were joined by Councillor Donald John MacSween Director of the Western Isles Foyer Project. Councillor MacSween explained the background to the project and took the committee on a very informative tour of The Bridge Centre amenities.

The committee were very impressed by the building especially its sustainability elements and ground source heating.

The visit was rounded off by a visit to a local business that had used an enterprise grant to re-establish a Brewery in the Western Isles. The unique brewing system was explained in detail, and the results critically examined.

Most of the group returned to Glasgow that night but as John was staying on anyways he spent Friday visiting HHP's new office in Balivanich on the Isle of Benbecula and visited a number of small HHP developments across the Southern Isles.

The visit was a great success and has raised the profile of the Regional Networks with housing providers across the North of Scotland.

Moran Taing Agus Slainte Mhor gu nan Uile Doune.



Left John Banks greets a local and soon has them eating out of his hand.

Right across North Uist.

