



Hope Cohousing

St Margaret's Hope, Orkney | <https://hopecohousing.org/>

1. We want to build high performing eco-aware homes. This should be standard for all new builds as:

- we are in the midst of a deep climate crisis.
- fuel poverty must be tackled. Orkney has one of highest rates in Scotland.
- there are major benefits to health and well-being for their residents.
- extra build costs are more than compensated for by health and well-being benefits, lower whole life costs, and lower empty homes rates.

Funders should support community-led projects to do this. A number of local authorities are building to these standards now.

2. We want to establish a cohousing community where residents:

- have and live in their own homes.
- share facilities and social areas.
- look out for, and support, each other.
- organise and manage their own community.

Cohousing is especially appropriate for older people. Hope Cohousing will be the first fully rental scheme in Scotland – and a blueprint for the future.

3. We want to create homes for older local people to help tackle:

- social isolation and loneliness.
- the shortage of suitable housing for older people in Orkney. Many live in below standard houses. They need homes that are designed for them, warm and affordable to heat, accessible, and near services.
- the lack of affordable rental homes in Orkney – a high proportion of properties are holiday lets and second homes.

4. We want modular/ kit construction as it is:

- eco friendly – it uses a much higher proportion of sustainable materials and addresses our net zero ambitions.

- appropriate for islands. Off-site construction combats high build costs due to lack of competition and labour shortages. It also means that much less time is lost to bad weather.
- replicable for other rural and island projects.

5. There is a lack of appropriate support in Scotland

- There is neither coherent regional or national structures, nor appropriate policies, for supporting the development of community-led rental housing.
- Local support for groups who want to set up housing projects is often lacking – especially in areas without a Community Development Trust.
- Not all local councils support community-led housing initiatives – luckily for us Orkney Islands Council has provided both support and land.
- Affordable help around choice of governance and legal status, finance, policy development, and fund raising is often difficult to find and access.

6. Lack of proper funding

- Cohousing offers not just homes but benefits for health and well-being yet the common house and shared spaces central to this are not properly funded by the relevant government bodies.
- Projects need to be at Building Warrant stage to apply for a grant from bodies like the Islands Housing Fund and this can cause them to fail.
- There is a significant gap in funding for community-led initiatives between the feasibility stage and application for Main Grant funding – finance is needed to cover development costs - in our case over £100,000.

7. The dysfunctional housing market. We suffer from:

- a lack of coherent and effective policies for housing over the last 40 years.
- an over-emphasis on home ownership and individual wealth creation and a failure to prioritise affordable rental and communal housing.
- a failure to fully encourage cohousing, housing co-ops and other community-led options. Warm expressions of interest are not often translated into meaningful support and funding.

Cohousing Scotland (of which we are a member) is working to build a support network for all community-led housing in Scotland. Their ambition is that a number of pilot projects be established which would demonstrate and test the practical application of cohousing. [<https://www.cohousing.scot/>]