



Hope Cohousing

Newsletter

21 December 2022

Welcome to this, our Christmas 2022 Newsletter.

It was back in 2019 that a group of friends began meeting and discussing the idea of setting up an innovative housing project for people in their later years in Orkney. We have come a long way since then, as set out below, but first here's a brief explanation of what the Hope Cohousing project is all about.

Our ambition is to create the UK's first affordable rental cohousing scheme. It is designed around the needs of older people and the contribution they can make to enriching life in local communities.



We will build six eco-aware homes, with shared amenities, a covered walkway linking the properties, and a garden. Our main target group is older people (over 60) who:

- are currently living (housed or unhoused) in Orkney **or**
- have immediate family resident in Orkney **or**
- have been permanent and primary residents in Orkney for a substantial period and wish to return.

What is cohousing?

Cohousing started in Scandinavia and is now a growing movement in many countries including the UK.

A cohousing project is a housing community designed, managed, and run by its residents. Members live independently in their own homes, supporting and looking out for each other. They also meet regularly to reflect on how things are going and to organise the smooth running of the project.

Shared spaces where people can meet, work together, and socialise are a central part of cohousing schemes. This way of living often leads to the involvement of their members in sustaining and developing the wider community.

The benefits of cohousing

People join cohousing initiatives knowing that they will be active participants in the development, management, and life of their community. There is now compelling evidence showing that cohousing:

- reduces social isolation and loneliness
- fosters agency, mutual aid, and wellbeing
- adds to the supply of affordable housing
- strengthens wider community life and sense of place

Senior cohousing offers, thus, an alternative model of living in later life. In contrast to approaches to old age that focus on independent living that transforms into care, cohousing looks to interdependence and mutual aid.

There are more details on our website: [Why cohousing is good for people and communities – the evidence](#).

Our progress

Thanks to support from Crown Estate Scotland, Orkney Islands Council, Islands Housing Fund (feasibility study) and the Scottish Government's Rural Communities Ideas into Action Fund we have:

- a site in the village close to shops, the main bus route, the doctors and to the Cromarty Hall
- detailed building plans

- planning permission
- building engineers and site reports
- developed a range of policies
- appointed the Communities Housing Trust as our agent to handle the execution of building work

Currently, we have almost completed the preconstruction phase:

- the scheme will go out to tender in early 2023
- the building warrant has been applied for
- funding discussions are progressing with the Islands Housing Fund, a building society, and a number of grant-making bodies.

Governance

A continuing task is to establish the best option for governance.

We anticipate this will involve:

- creating an overarching charity, which will draw upon the expertise of a wider range of trustees, and support other local community-led housing initiatives, particularly in areas where there is no Community Development Trust
- our current Community Interest Company being appointed as a Tenant Management Organisation whose responsibility will be the day-to-day running of the St Margaret's Hope project.

Members in the news

Two founder members of Hope Cohousing – Trish Spence and Elli Pearson – are the subject of a new video on The Orkney News YouTube Channel. They discuss their involvement in the early days of the Workshop and Loft Gallery in St Margaret's Hope. The Workshop was set up 'for the makers' and has successfully run on a cooperative model for over 40 years.



The video is part of a new series - 'Orcadian Stories'. [Click to watch the video](#) (15 mins.)

Friends of Hope Cohousing

We are now putting our Friends structure on a more formal basis, and as part of that we have set up a register. We'd like to encourage all newsletter recipients to sign up. You can do this by [clicking here](#). We will never share your contact details and will use them only to bring you news of developments.

If you have any questions, or would just like to hear more about the project why not come along to one of our regular monthly meetups? These informal meetings are held on the first Saturday of each month. Details on our website and Facebook page.

May we wish you a Happy Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

From The Hope Cohousing team.