



Hope Cohousing

# Newsletter

December 2023



Lighting this year's Christmas tree in St Margaret's Hope

## **Welcome to our Christmas 2023 Newsletter.**

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 life in local communities. We are looking to build six eco-aware homes in St Margaret's Hope as a lasting community benefit. There will be shared amenities, a covered walkway linking the properties, and a garden and polytunnel.

It has taken just over five years to get to this point in the development – which seems like an age – but it is quick for a cohousing project.

## **Progress**

We have had a busy year – making various improvements to the design; going out to tender; securing Part One of the Building Warrant; continuing to develop policies and governance arrangements; working on the financial package for the build; and supporting others developing cohousing projects.

## **Finalising key elements of the building**

Over the last 12 months we have continued to consider different elements of the design in terms of their value for money. Recently we heard that another five metres can be added to the top of the site. It allows us to have a natural, grass slope at the back of the housing rather than a wall of stone-filled steel cages (gabions) nearly the full width of the field. This both saves a large amount of money and enables a more ecological design. Our thanks are due to Orkney Islands Council for agreeing to release the strip of land needed for this. Funded by the Orkney Local Action Group (Scottish Government Funding) work is also being undertaken to evaluate air circulation and heating requirements.



## **Going out to tender and preparing for the build**

During the first half of the year we went out to tender– and were delighted to appoint an Orkney-based contractor as the preferred bidder.

We have also been working with the Communities Housing Trust - the leading organisation facilitating community-led housing in Scotland. With considerable experience of managing and overseeing developments in the Highlands and Islands, they will project manage the build.

## **Securing the building warrant**

Our architect – Grigor Mitchell – completed and submitted all the necessary paperwork for Part One of the Building Warrant. With Part One now secured, he is working on Part Two.

## **Who are these houses for?**

Hope Cohousing was set up to provide rented, accessible, warm homes for older people who need and want to live an active healthy old age in the heart of the village.

Our purpose is 'to provide for the relief of those in need in our community by reason of older age, social isolation, financial hardship or other disadvantage through the provision, construction, improvement and management of land and accommodation and the creation of spaces and opportunities for social interaction.'

Priority will be given to 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.

This is all set out in our allocations policy which has been reviewed and approved by the Islands Housing Fund, the Communities Housing Trust, and by our legal advisers.

## **Well being - working with Robert Gordon University**

Staff from Robert Gordon University have had a major input into the thinking behind the project and the design. At the moment we are discussing with them the possibility of mapping what we are doing against the new standards developed by the International Well Building Institute. These relate to the features of the development that impact human health and well-being, through air, water, nourishment, light, fitness, comfort, and mind.

## **Supporting community-led housing**

We get regular enquiries – and even some visits - from people interested in developing community-led housing in Scotland. The number of people using our website - [hopecohousing.org](http://hopecohousing.org) has nearly doubled in the last year. Part of the reason for this is that we have brought together and developed a number of resources to help others to set up and progress similar projects.

There is also growing cross-party recognition of the value of community-led housing initiatives like ours and those undertaken by community development trusts, for example, in Westray, Sanday, Shapinsay and North Ronaldsay.

Ariane Burgess, the Green MSP for the Highlands and Islands, secured a debate in the Scottish Parliament in April on a motion that highlighted the vital role of community-led housing in tackling the rural and island housing crisis. Liam McArthur - our Orkney MSP - spoke in support of the motion. He drew attention to the need to provide

further support to affordable housing initiatives undertaken by community development trusts and cohousing initiatives like Hope Cohousing. Earlier, in April, we were pleased to welcome Emma Roddick – the SNP MSP for the Highlands and Islands – who wanted to know more about our project. More recently, in a [Cohousing Scotland Conversation](#), Paul Sweeney – a Labour MSP representing the Glasgow region - argued that community-engaged housing has to be more central to local and national housing policies.

We are always pleased to talk about the potential benefits cohousing offers. Over the last few months, this has included a:

- presentation to research students at the University of Strathclyde;
- podcast hosted by Ariane Burgess exploring the potential of cohousing in Scotland; and
- a Cohousing Scotland Conversation on finance, governance, and getting to the build on budget.

## Monthly open meetings

Our monthly open meetings were held throughout the year and will continue in 2024. They provide an opportunity for local people to come along, talk about cohousing, and explore what it offers.

## New director

Claire Broadhurst, who many will know from her time living in St Margaret's Hope, was elected as a Director at this year's AGM. As well as having significant experience in community learning and development, she has also worked in the affordable and rental housing field.

*If you know people who want to find out more about cohousing why not point them to our website: [hopecohousing.org](http://hopecohousing.org).*

*Wishing you a Happy Christmas and New Year*

## Hope Cohousing

Our thanks to:



UnLtd  Award Winner



Islands Housing Fund - feasibility study  
Rural Communities Ideas into Action Fund  
 INSPIRING SCOTLAND

Orkney Local Action Group | Scottish Government Funding



THE INCHRYE TRUST