



Development  
Trusts Association  
Scotland



*Case Study Series:*  
**DTAS Deep Dives**

*URRAS THIRIODH*  
**TIREE COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT TRUST**

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## DTAS Deep Dive: Tiree Community Development Trust

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### Background:

Tiree, a small island in the Inner Hebrides, attracts thousands of visitors annually due to its natural beauty, unique wildlife, and heritage. Alongside its heritage and unparalleled access to nature its tight-knit community makes it an attractive place for newcomers, and over the years the island has received many new faces, affectionately dubbed as ‘blow-ins’. However, despite its attractions Tiree faces a unique set of challenges shaped by its geographical location, poor transport links to the mainland, infrastructure, and an economy largely reliant on the seasonal tourism industry, and other traditional occupations like crofting and fishing.

With a population of just over 600 people, [Urras Thiriodh](#) or the Tiree Community Development Trust (TCDT) plays a pivotal role in addressing the island’s social, economic, and environmental needs. Established in response to growing concerns about the island’s sustainability, TCDT has since become the lifeline of the community, delivering vital services, managing assets, and working toward long-term resilience. However, despite the work the trust continues to do to uphold its community, with a lack of funding and resources and a community-owned wind turbine coming to the end of its life the trust faces many tough challenges ahead.

The Trust was set up following the creation of TREL, its renewable energy subsidiary. The merger of TREL into TCDT initially sparked local debate, particularly in such a small and close-knit community some locals were sceptical of newcomers’ involvement. However, overtime the trust has built a strong relationship with the community it serves based on clear open communication and the involvement of both locals and newcomers as staff, volunteers, and directors within the trust.

TREL manages the community-owned wind turbine—fondly known as "Tilly"—which proved to be a game-changer in terms of long-term income generation for the community. Originally, the turbine took four years to generate income, but today the turbine provides crucial funding for projects taken on by TCDT through the Windfall Fund. This consistent stream of income has allowed the trust to become a key organisation for community ownership with 8 community assets in ownership: a wind turbine, 2 harbours, a shop, an electric minibus, an art installation, 4 business units and a fuel station. This entrepreneurial spirit remains at the heart of the Trust's mission as they have tried over the years to minimise their reliance on unstable and short-term public grant funding mechanisms.

## Community Vision and Priorities:

The trust conducted comprehensive community engagement to develop its community development plan to identify its “community vision” and key areas of priority for the local community. The top four priorities identified were: housing, cost of living support, childcare, and climate change and sustainability.

### Housing:

Housing is one of the most pressing issues facing Tiree, as 75% of community survey respondents identified it as their top 3 priorities. With a significant shortage of affordable, year-round homes the issue of housing on the island is not just about shelter—it's about ensuring the long-term survival of the community and its economy. While there are job opportunities on the island, finding stable, long-term accommodation is a major barrier to population retention, particularly for young families and key workers. The trust is working toward creating affordable housing solutions that will allow people to stay on the island, by 2028 they plan to bring 16 additional homes into long-term occupation and develop a long-term housing strategy for the island.

The prevalence of second homes exacerbates this housing crisis; almost half of all housing stock on the island is made up of second homes, or short-term holiday rentals, that are typically only occupied in the summer months. Despite widespread agreement on the need for more affordable homes, the issue of second homes remains contentious. Some residents argue that these homes generate economic opportunities for tourism, while others feel they are driving up property prices and displacing locals. TCDT must navigate these differing perspectives as they work to create solutions that balance economic growth and tourism with the need for sustainable, year-round housing.

### Cost of Living Support:

The Cost-of-Living crisis has significantly impacted island communities, with rising costs of basic goods hitting island communities harder due to transport and fuel costs. The Trust funds the Cruas Project, a general cost of living initiative that also provides advice around tackling fuel poverty. Fuel poverty is a significant issue on Tiree, with nearly two-thirds of households affected due to poor housing insulation, expensive fuel, and the island's complete lack of mains gas. This service has been widely used by the community and operates on a confidential basis to minimise any community stigma around accessing this support.

### Youth Activities:

With a relatively high population of children and young people one of the Trust's key areas of operation is [youth services](#). A dedicated member of staff at TCDT runs a comprehensive programme of youth activities, including afterschool clubs, and summer activities programmes; these activities are designed with active participation of the young people of Tiree, in partnership with the local school, and they serve a very important childcare gap on the island. In addition to these dedicated services the Trust's youth engagement is particularly noteworthy, with a junior membership programme allowing young islanders to shape their own priorities and representation on the Trust's board, where a young director helps bring the voices of the next generation to the table.

### Climate Change and Sustainability:

TCDT also oversees the Tiree Ranger post to protect the island's ecosystem and manage the tourism industry sustainably. The island ranger has been in post for over 5 years and is widely loved by the community running an active Facebook page with daily updates, several guided walks to local natural heritage sites, marine life spotting sessions, and a variety of educational and recreational activities for children and young people.

The island's abundant marine life, and unique 'machair' ecosystem attracts thousands of tourists and researchers interests annually, however this fragile ecosystem must be tightly managed to avoid degradation. One of the key duties of the ranger post is wildlife monitoring and conservation, in line with the Trust's 'Strategic Framework for Sustainable Tourism', this involves monitoring and reporting, assisting in researching, managing the camping scheme, enforcing motorhome regulations and more. The Trust must contend with growing tourism pressures, balancing economic opportunities with the conservation of the island's ecosystem.

### Challenges and Future Plans:

Looking ahead, TCDT is focused on securing funding to sustain and expand its services. However, the future of their renewable energy project is uncertain, with re-powering the turbine unlikely

to be financially feasible without significant external support. Tiree Community Development Trust's renewable energy initiative has been crucial to its success, funding essential services and projects that would otherwise be impossible. Yet, despite its achievements, the Trust faces an uphill battle to ensure long-term sustainability in the face of financial uncertainty, infrastructure challenges, and the needs of an evolving community.

Long-term core funding and resources are essential for community anchor organisations like TCDT to ensure their sustainability and ability to respond effectively to local needs. Core funding provides the stability needed to maintain key staff, deliver vital services, and invest in long-term projects, such as affordable housing and renewable energy initiatives. Without reliable, unrestricted funding, organisations like TCDT face the constant challenge of relying on short-term grants, limiting their capacity to make future plans, innovate, or respond to emerging crises. Sustainable core funding empowers these organisations to continue serving as lifelines for their communities, especially in remote areas where they are often the only providers of essential services.

**Ultimately Tiree CDT's story underscores the importance of community-driven solutions, but also the need for greater support from public bodies to ensure that remote communities like Tiree can continue to thrive.**