

Balmacara

Reraig, Balmacara, Kyle of Lochalsh, Highland

May 2023



- > **Community driven project**
- > **3 sustainable homes under CHT's Rent To Buy Scheme**
- > **Low carbon footprint**
- > **Local timber and materials used**
- > **Loyalty cash back for mortgage deposit**
- > **Land purchased from sports club**
- > **A fit-for-purpose sports facility for future generations**
- > **Worked with local companies**
- > **Employment and training opportunities during build**
- > **A wide range of funders involved**
- > **A showcase development for R.HOUSE**
- > **A partnership model demonstrating how a joined-up approach may be used in other communities**

Overlooking Loch Alsh near Kyle of Lochalsh on land previously owned by the Kinlochshiel Shinty Club, Grant Road is now a welcome addition to the community of Reraig, Balmacara.

This project driven by the community shinty club provided two homes, and due to local demand, a third home was provided. These homes were built by local contractors James MacQueen Building Contractors Ltd. and designed by award winning architect, Rural Design through the successful R.HOUSE partnership. From their nearby factory in Skye, local materials were used where possible to minimise environmental impact.

The tenure of the homes is Rent to Buy, which combines low cost home ownership with a loyalty cash back, following an initial rental period. The Rural Housing Burden title condition protects the ongoing affordability, with a discount of 20%, if they are sold in the future.

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Community involvement

The Kinlochshiel Shinty Club approached the Communities Housing Trust in late 2011 to explore opportunities for working together. The club had the vision that affordable homes for local people (and upcoming shinty players) would be a perfect fit with their goal of providing a state of the art shinty pitch. There were also financial benefits of working jointly.

Local contractors

Where possible, local contractors feature highly in our work. James MacQueen Builders Ltd. and award winning architects, Rural Design formed the company R.HOUSE, who were engaged in working creatively on this development.

“The R.HOUSE has been conceived to create an affordable and simple solution for new contemporary housing.... the simple forms and robust materials allows the house to fit comfortably in and around existing buildings, or an open site. Constructed to meet the rigours of the Highland weather and the highest standards of energy efficiency, the R.HOUSE is intended to provide a high quality home for years to come.”

www.ruralhouse.co.uk



Successes

The homes were advertised in the Lochalsh area with a strong response. The housing provided at Grant Road has allowed the release of some local authority homes to other households, thereby helping the housing system to revolve efficiently. The tenants have experienced lower running costs due to increased levels of insulation, an efficient wood burning stove and an MHVR system, all working together to make the homes more affordable to live in.

The Kinlochshiel Shinty Club have improved the access road to the pitch and set aside car parking. The club chose the name “Grant Road” in recognition of the previous landowners wishes to provide long-term community benefit.



Challenges

Establishing a financial package which included all elements of the project, and ensuring they all came together, was worked through positively which enabled the development to go ahead. Thanks to the Scottish Government’s continued loan funding for the Rent to Buy Scheme, we were able to build three properties in Lochalsh. Site servicing also proved a challenge in terms of drainage, although this was overcome with the contractors' help, resulting in a shared pumping station which connects each of the properties with the main sewer, allowing a provision to accommodate the proposed shinty pavilion. By using the same contractors to carry out site servicing for the shinty club and the house building, this resulted in a more coherent and cost-effective approach.