



Isle of Tiree Retrofit Project

Using a collaborative approach to overcome the challenges of remote housing retrofits.

Framework: Greener Futures Partnership
Decarbonisation Delivery
(Scotland)

Client: West Highland
Housing Association
(WHHA)

Supplier: Procast

Project Overview:

Procast was appointed via the Greener Futures Partnership Decarbonisation Delivery (Scotland) framework to retrofit 16 West Highland Housing Association (WHHA) properties on the Isle of Tiree, the westernmost island in the Inner Hebrides.

The project focused on timber kit construction homes at Pier View, in Scarinish, the main village on the remote island, which has a population of around 650 people.

The primary objective was to enhance the overall energy efficiency of the buildings, resulting in reduced energy consumption, lower utility costs, and improved comfort for the residents.

Procast, a contractor specialising in retrofit projects, served as the main contractor for the project. The company focuses on energy efficiency improvements and works closely with housing associations to deliver complex retrofit solutions, particularly in challenging remote locations.

The project involved collaboration between multiple housing associations to deliver works across several islands, with benefits of the collaborative approach including economy of scale from shared resources, logistics and preliminary costs.

Project Timeline:

The project ran for nine months, strategically scheduled during the off-season when tourists were not present on the island.

This timing enabled Procast to secure accommodation for its workers, and for decanting residents during works, as well as providing a financial boost to the local economy during what would otherwise be a quieter period.



From beach views to building upgrades, retrofit works progress on WHHA homes in the heart of the Isle of Tiree community.



Retrofit Works:

Air source heat pumps, and solar PV systems, were installed, alongside internal wall insulation. External wall insulation was ruled out due to concerns over the practicalities and associated risks of stripping existing blockwork from the building in a location that is prone to extreme weather, and the impact of weather windows on the works programme delivery.

Residents moved out while the comprehensive internal retrofit work was completed, relocating to holiday homes on the island, and keeping their belongings in shipping containers that were located next to their homes.

Logistical Challenges

The remote island location presented significant challenges, including a limited four-hour ferry service once daily from Oban, limited accommodation options especially during tourist season, no local electrical merchants or building suppliers, extreme weather conditions (particularly high winds), and higher costs (often up to 40% higher than mainland projects).

Procast implemented several innovative solutions including hiring youth hostels for nine months to house workers, establishing a site compound, and chartering its own transport vessel.

It also transported materials for all of properties in the first month of works to eliminate delays, which was essential to the smooth running of the project, given the limited ferry service and challenging weather conditions.

Procurement frameworks were used to reduce paperwork, and Procast developed custom technical solutions adapted to the island conditions, as well as employing local people, including WHHA tenants.

Resident Engagement

Procast worked closely with residents to ensure that they were comfortable and well-informed during the works, employing a WHHA tenant, as customer relations officer.

She acted as a direct line of communication with residents and her role included finding suitable temporary housing for all tenants based on their needs, arranging transportation for those without cars, providing help for older residents to move their belongings, and keeping tenants updated on progress.



From beach views to building upgrades, retrofit works progress on WHHA homes in the heart of the Tiree community.



Greener Futures Partnership Decarbonisation Delivery (Scotland) Framework

These works were procured through the GFP Decarbonisation Delivery (Scotland) framework, developed with Contracting Authority Abri, on behalf of The Greener Futures Partnership (GFP), which comprises five housing associations – Abri, Anchor, Home Group, Hyde Group, Sanctuary.

It provides retrofit and professional consultancy services, which support the delivery of required decarbonisation to meet the targets as set out in the current energy efficiency standard for social housing (ESSH2).



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Long-term Benefits

The project delivered substantial long-term benefits for residents, including enhanced energy efficiency, reduced energy consumption, lower utility costs, and improved comfort in their homes.

It also created skills development and employment opportunities. A local electrician and WHHA tenant was trained in new systems, and his nephew was hired as an apprentice, remaining on the island as a result.

Moving forward, the availability of a local electrician trained to maintain the new systems will ensure faster repairs and a better service for residents.

The project's investment in local services and skills development, also brings broader economic benefits to the local community.

Lessons Learned

The Isle of Tiree's remote location and extreme weather conditions brought many challenges that required innovative solutions.

These included the development of tailored technical solutions for unique environments, particularly regarding insulation methods in high-wind areas. The Procast team created a scalable model that reduced costs by 30-40% compared to conventional approaches.

One major takeaway from the project is how collaborative procurement can help make projects in challenging locations economically feasible. It also demonstrated how leveraging economies of scale in remote settings led to significant cost savings.

Looking ahead, there are intentions to expand upon the partnerships formed by exploring further collaboration in repair services, joint procurement initiatives, and the potential for implementing a shared graduate trainee scheme.

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An aerial view of The Isle of Tiree, highlighting the unique setting for retrofit works at Pier View in Scarinish.



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