

THE GAIRLOCH ROUNDHOUSE

A Community's Cultural Re-imagining



PLANNING DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

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Fig. 1: (Front Page): Artist's impression of new roundhouse c. Gairloch Museum.

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Fig. 2: Artists Impression of the Roundhouse.

1 SUMMARY

Gairloch Museum is proposing to construct a replica of an Iron Age roundhouse to augment its existing outdoor exhibition, increase knowledge, celebrate local cultural heritage and enhance the visitor experience. The design is based on archaeological evidence obtained from the roundhouse group at Archtercairn, ten of around 200 roundhouse sites identified in the wider Gairloch area dating from the late Bronze and Iron Ages, 2800 –1600 years ago. The proposals have been informed by extensive consultation with stakeholders from local communities and external organisations.

Gairloch and Wester Ross hold special parts of both Scotland's natural and cultural heritage, the connection between the two being expressed through the traditional buildings built from local natural materials over 5,000 years. Gairloch Museum is a guardian of that heritage - a gatekeeper opening a door into the past for local people and visitors alike, fostering the connection between nature and culture that is vital at this time of nature and climate change.

Building a new roundhouse will be an act of living heritage - sourcing local natural materials, rediscovering traditional skills, and recreating a historic building form set in its natural landscape in open view of visitors and local people, planned to happen through the summer of 2026.

Making in place will lead people down paths walked by their ancestors, their hands repeating embedded patterns of place, sensing through touch and movement what people felt millennia ago, rediscovering the skills and knowledge that local people practiced for thousands of years, embedding a deeper cultural connection to place, making community stronger. For visitors, it will be a manifestation of place brought to life from the past, one seen emerging from the landscape through the course of a season, carrying the stories of past people, plants, earth and stone.

The outcomes will include enhanced local skills and knowledge, a more resilient, diverse and financially growing museum, a more attractive village landscape, and new opportunities for engagement and innovative partnerships. The grant-funded project will be delivered through supporting partnerships with Historic Environment Scotland, University of Highland & Islands, Edinburgh University, Sabhal Mor Ostaig and the Scottish Crannog Centre.

The size, design and materials of the structure are directly informed by the archaeological evidence of a timber structure, thatched roof and stone and turf walls. The roundhouse will be located beside the established outdoor museum exhibition area on the west side of the road from the Museum, which has established pedestrian access, linked to the public footpath network.

This location is within the area designated as '*protected from development*' within the recent Gairloch Local Place Plan (p.28), which includes the current outdoor museum area. However, we have consulted the community council and adjusted the location to address visual impact sensitivities. Therefore, we propose this building is a reasonable exception to this aspect of the local place plan, as it will be part of the outdoor museum display, which is consented, it is a non-commercial development, has limited 25-year design life, and its scale and materials are appropriate to its setting, with no permanent effect on the ground.

The proposal has received wide support from local stakeholders, is supported by many Council policies, and the team are happy to consider any comments made during the statutory consultation period. In this document, we set out the detail of what is proposed.

Achtercairn archaeology trail

Gairloch MUSEUM Visit the Museum to find out more about our prehistoric ancestors.

What will you see on the Trail?

People have been farming in the area above Achtercairn for nearly 5000 years. In prehistoric times they built roundhouses with stone walls and roofs of wood and thatch.

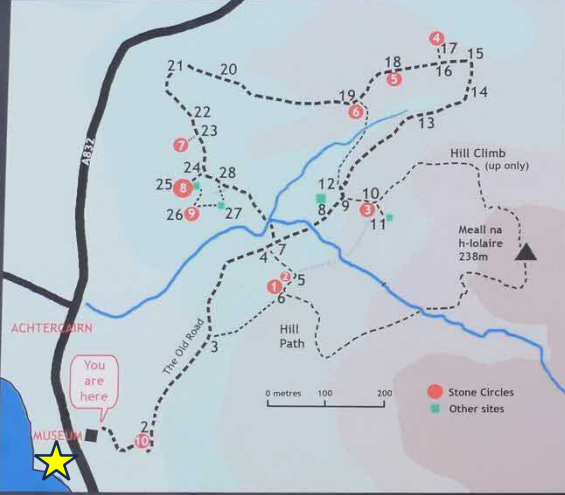
A smaller circle surrounds a work area used in 2750 BC (before the first Pyramid was built!). Later features on the trail include shieling huts and a large, Victorian sheep fank.

The trail passes through varied scenery, with plenty of wildflowers in spring and summer.

On the trail, you can see the ruined walls of eight roundhouses. There are prehistoric field walls everywhere.

Hill-walkers can take the difficult Hill Climb or the rough Hill Path to enjoy the view from the top of Meall na h-lolaire (the hill of the eagle).

One huge circle (below) is thought to be a ceremonial centre, dated 250 BC.



The trail is a circuit about two miles long. The route is marked by 28 numbered posts, shown as black numbers on the map above.

A map and guide explaining what can be seen at each post are available in the Museum.

For a more basic guide scan this QR code.

If you want a very short walk, follow the path up to the first roundhouse and back.

Please take care on this walk and choose suitable clothing and footwear. The paths are unsurfaced and rough in places, and may be wet and muddy after rain. Feel free to walk carefully around the roundhouses.





Achtercairn Archaeology Trail was established with the kind permission of Gairloch Estate.

Fig 3: The Gairloch Roundhouse Trail interpretation.

★ Proposed Roundhouse Location.



Fig 4: Finds from excavations at Roundhouse 10.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Applicant: Gairloch Museum

Gairloch Museum is a Scottish charity (SC010249), whose purposes are:

‘to promote and encourage interest in, and care for, the history, culture, beauty and character of the Parish of Gairloch, for the benefit of all who wish to be engaged in such advancement of its heritage, be they locally resident, visiting the area in person or in contact through any form of communication from afar.’

Gairloch Museum is an independent Accredited Museum in the northwest Highlands of Scotland. The museum cares for a collection rooted in the history, culture and natural environment of the historic Gairloch Parish and run a varied programme of exhibitions, outreach and community activity from our award-winning redeveloped museum in a former Cold War bunker.

Learn more at www.gairlochmuseum.org.

2.2 Unlocking Gairloch’s Roundhouse Prehistory

The Museum has been working to develop and share knowledge of the area’s prehistory since 1977, through desk-based research augmented by community and professional archaeological investigations on the ground. These have identified sites of up to 200 roundhouses in the vicinity of Gairloch, produced an information booklet and created a 3.5km Archaeological Trail linking 10 key sites from the Museum (Fig. 3).

A number of reports have been written on these excavations, and others are in process of writing, alongside analysis of finds. This research established that:

Roundhouses were the homes of local people for at least 50 generations, from ~800 B.C.E. to 400 C.E.

Each building was slightly different, but they had standard features and materials.

They had a round pole frame supporting a thatch roof, walls of turf and stone.

A central hearth in an earth floor, with a ‘carpet’ of plants, and single timber door.

Individual features include a possible clay bread oven.

While many of the sites have been relatively undisturbed by ploughing or tree planting, little remains of the superstructure and domestic artefacts because these were organic in nature –wood, leather, woven plants - and readily decayed in the soil. The surviving structure and artefacts are primarily made of stone. Today, all that can be seen in the landscape are low circles of collapsed stone. Some stone artefacts are on display in the museum, but they provide a poor representation of the culturally rich homes and lives of people 2,000 years ago (Fig. 4).

The purpose of the roundhouse reconstruction is to enable the Museum to understand and communicate how people lived in Gairloch 2,000 years ago more fully and more clearly than the physical remains allow. This knowledge and communication strategy delivers the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) for the Iron Age¹.

¹ ScARF Iron Age Panel Report, Hunter & Carruthers, 2012

2.3 Project Aims

The project will provide a high-quality, site-responsive, educational and interpretive structure that reflects the area's significant Iron Age archaeology.

The project has four key aims:

1. **Heritage Interpretation:** To give physical form to the archaeological record and to interpret the findings of six community-led digs since 2012.
2. **Education:** To enhance the museum's ability to deliver immersive, curriculum-linked experiences for local nurseries, schools, and families.
3. **Traditional Skills Training:** To support the revival of local construction techniques such as turf building, timber framing, heather thatching, and dry-stone walling.
4. **Tourism & Community Benefit:** To increase footfall and visitor dwell-time in Gairloch, supporting wider regeneration goals and the museum's long-term sustainability.

2.4 Education & Engagement

2.4.1 During Construction

During construction, the Roundhouse exhibit will serve as a live demonstration of Iron Age construction, with an embedded public engagement programme of live interpretation, workshops, and public events accompanying the build, making the construction itself an educational and participatory experience, including:

- a public viewing area on the site boundary to enable the public to view the ongoing construction.
- an online public programme sharing the schedule of key activities.
- opportunities for public participation in workshop activities.
- a specific suite of events for school groups.
- guided tours of the site.
- time lapse photographic record.
- video and interviews with craftspeople for interpretation & documentation.

2.4.2 On Completion

On completion, the Roundhouse will serve as a functional venue for outdoor learning, events programming, and visitor engagement through Museum and community partners. The roundhouse, outdoor museum and events programme will support schools, families and self-guided visits.

There will be interpretation at the Roundhouse, illustrating its cultural heritage, linking to the roundhouse trail, interpretation within the indoor Museum and online resources that can be accessed by smartphones and QR codes.

The Roundhouse will be open during Museum opening hours, as a ticketed part of Museum Entry. Outside of these times, the Roundhouse, may be open for special events, or activities arranged with community and stakeholder partners, where it can act as a venue for events and activities in support of the wider community.

2.4.3 Gaelic Language

There is a specific intention to learn more about how Gaelic language relates to traditional building practices and to communicate the roundhouse through Gaelic language medium. A programme delivered in partnership with Sabhal More Ostaig will support research and inform the interpretation on site, adding depth to the project's cultural narrative.

2.5 Skills Training

Traditional skills are an important part of Scotland's intangible cultural heritage, which finds local form in the building materials and techniques specific to Wester Ross. A programme of traditional skills training is being developed with support from with Historic Environment Scotland, specialist craftspeople and other heritage organisations.

The construction activities provide several specific opportunities:

Sustaining Professional Traditional Skills: Opportunities for specialist craftspeople to develop their own individual skills in practice and to pass on those skills to the next generation through funded Craft Fellows, work experience placements and apprentices. This project has an important role in sustaining rare craft skills. The project will thereby contribute to sustaining Scotland's national reservoir of rare and vulnerable traditional skills. The project will offer a fully funded traditional skills placement for a local school-leaver, as a career pathway into heritage.

Fostering Local Skills Base: The Roundhouse construction provides the opportunity for a number of local volunteers to gain experience of the specific materials and techniques used to build the Roundhouse. This knowledge transfer will create the ability to repair and maintain the building within the local area and reinstate traditional skills and knowledge within the community.

Inclusive Lifelong Learning: Rediscovering forgotten traditional skills is an important route to regenerating cultural connection to place and can be a vehicle to foster community cohesion, individual wellbeing, employability, and life skills. The project will provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to learn by doing during the Roundhouse reconstruction. While physically strong people can create a drystone wall and pull heather, others with nimble fingers can braid rope from natural fibres or contribute to oral history.

2.6 Project Programme

The full-scale reconstruction of an Iron Age roundhouse is the centrepiece of activities marking the 50th anniversary of Gairloch Museum in 2027. It forms part of a wider three-year plan to enhance the museum's Outdoor Museum space.

The project is being delivered in three stages:

- 2024-5: Design development, partner engagement, fundraising, planning.
- 2026: Construction phase, skills training, education events.
- 2027: Interpretation Phase; launch, school & visitor programme.

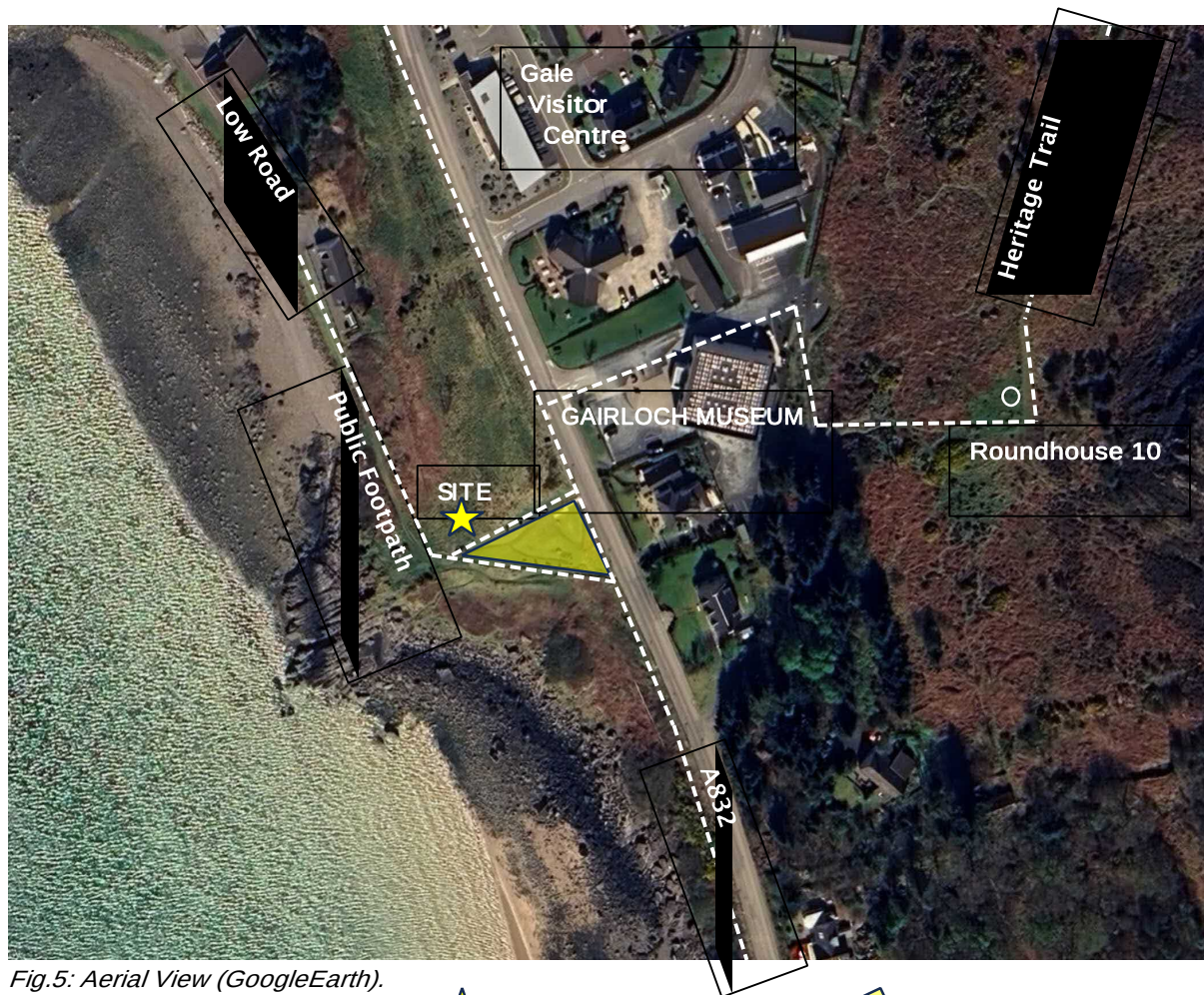


Fig.5: Aerial View (GoogleEarth).

★ Proposed Roundhouse Site ▲ Existing Outdoor Museum



Fig. 6: View of site, with indicative roundhouse location and size.

3 THE SITE

3.1 Site Location

The site for the Roundhouse exhibit is an area of rough, semi-natural grassland, immediately adjacent to the existing outdoor museum display and opposite the museum building, as indicated on Fig 5.

The site address is Gairloch Museum, Achtercairn, Gairloch, Ross-shire IV21 2BH.

The national grid reference of the proposed roundhouse location is NG 80349 76605.

3.2 Site Ownership

The site is owned by Gairloch Estate, who support the project and have agreed to a long lease on the site.

3.3 Neighbouring Land Uses

To the Southeast lies the existing outdoor museum area with displays on geological and fishing heritage, and wheelchair accessible pathways fully accessible from the road, with a graded type 1 and whindust surface leading to a seated picnic/viewing area and exhibits. (Planning permission 20/012133/FUL). This area is freely open to public access, and it has already hosted pilot outdoor events. Steps made from recycled sections of the original Anti-aircraft Operations Room building (now converted to the museum) lead down to a levelled area containing two information boards and two bench seats. A wheelchair accessible route snakes down through the proposed steps. A path 1.2m wide was formed connecting the picnic/interpretation area to the existing Low Road public footpath.

To the Southwest is the public footpath to Low Road and leading into the northern part of Gairloch. Beyond the footpath lies the ground drops steeply to the rocky foreshore.

To the Northwest is an area of semi-natural grassland, not in active use, of which the site is part.

To the Northeast lies the A832 public road with dropped kerbs crossing into the Gairloch Museum building.

50m to the east, but not bounding the site, is a domestic residence, Clachan Garbh.

3.4 Site Character

The site is greenspace not in active use, a fenced open area of rough ungrazed grassland without any special ecological or heritage designations. Its open character offers attractive views of the western coastline and out to sea.

The topography of the site generally slopes gradually down from east to west. The proposed development will cover an area of approximately 80m².

3.5 Site Designations

The site is within the Gairloch settlement development area but not within a Conservation Area, or Scheduled Monument boundary.

The site has no ecological or heritage designations. See section 5.3.

3.6 Site Selection

A range of potential sites were considered for the new Roundhouse exhibit:

The site of the existing Roundhouse 10 was considered inappropriate as it would have involved significant damage to site of historic and archaeological interest and is inaccessible to people of reduced mobility. For these reasons this site option was rejected.

Locations within the immediate vicinity of the Museum building were considered but would have required the removal of car parking spaces (part of its Planning consent) and provided a poor visual setting for the visitor attraction.

A potential location to the rear of the Museum was deemed unsafe for public access because there was no pedestrian footpath or space to create one, and visitors would have to walk and wheel on the roadway used for service vehicle access with poor visibility, creating a potentially hazardous situation.

For these reasons potential locations around the museum building were rejected as unsuitable.

The proposed site was selected because it offered:

- o a sympathetic visual setting for the reconstruction as part of the established outdoor museum area, which has adequate space to support more visitor activity.
- o has an established accessible route for all abilities, with minor improvements.
- o offers visibility from the main road A832, enhancing views for visitors.
- o acts as a visual feature to the public footpath to Low Road.
- o has good visual oversight for security and safety.
- o can be integrated into the existing heritage trail.
- o has a supportive landowner.
- o has adequate space for construction activity.



Fig. 7: Museum model indicating the construction materials.



Fig. 8: Precedent roundhouse reconstruction at Abriachan.

4 PROPOSED DESIGN

4.1 Design Basis

The design draws directly from the archaeological features identified at the Achtercairn roundhouse group located immediately uphill of the museum, as articulated by the archaeological reports, some of which are in process, and through on-to-one interviews with a number of archaeologists and heritage professionals with expertise in Iron Age built heritage. The wider context of Iron Age heritage beyond the local area has also been taken into account.

The roundhouse reconstruction materials and techniques have been informed by consultation with individual specialist craftspeople, individuals and organisations involved in the reconstruction of the Crannog Centre, the Glencoe Creelhouse and a number of other roundhouse reconstructions.

Key technical consultees include:

- o Historic Environment Scotland
- o Dr. Tom Gardner
- o Scottish Crannog Centre
- o Dr. Tanya Romankiewicz
- o Brian Wilson
- o Neil Davidson
- o Caroline Nikolay
- o Chas Heath
- o Becky Little

Further background information on local craft building traditions has been sourced from the Museums photographic and oral historic archives.

4.2 Building Form & Materials

Based on a reasonable interpretation of the archaeological evidence, the roundhouse exhibit will have a circular plan, approximately 8.3m in diameter.

Low walls will be built with a local drystone rubble base supporting an upper layer of turf walling. There will be a single timber entrance doorway.

A round pole structure utilising appropriate species will support a conical heather thatched roof at approximately 45-degree pitch, rising to a height of approximately 5.6m. Joints will be pegged or bound with braided plant ropes.

Mirroring Roundhouse 10, the ground will be prepared with a shallow 'cut and fill' to accommodate the natural slope, and a land drain around the perimeter to keep the ground dry.

The building construction involves no concrete or metal materials, utilising only natural materials, sourced as close to site as possible. There will be no mains electricity or water services.



Fig. 9: Heather rope.



Fig. 10: Heather thatch.



Fig. 11: Pegged and bound joints.



Fig. 12: Roundpole structure.



Fig. 13: Split timber pegged door.



Fig. 14: Turf and drystone wall.

4.3 Access

The roundhouse exhibit will be accessed by an extension to the existing outdoor museum footpath network, which includes both wheelchair accessible gradients, and stepped access with handrail.

These paths directly link to the public footpath to Low Road and on north to Gairloch village, as well as the public pavement along the main A823 road. This has dropped kerbs at the crossing to the Museum building and car park, approximately 60m away, and on to the Archaeology Trail.

The new outdoor exhibit utilises the existing cycle and vehicle parking at the Museum building.

4.4 Signage & Interpretation

The existing signage and interpretation will be upgraded and augmented to include the roundhouse exhibit.

4.5 Drainage

The only drainage for the exhibit is a below ground land drain running around the outside of the walls, leading to a local soakaway. This will take rainwater falling to ground from the thatch roof away from the building walls.

There is no foul drainage.

4.6 Lighting

There is no lighting installation associated with the new roundhouse exhibit.

4.7 Security

The roundhouse exhibit will be secured with its door locked outside of Museum opening hours. The site has strong visual oversight from the Museum and main public road.

The Museum has never experienced vandalism or anti-social behaviour in its grounds and facilities.

4.8 Landscape Setting

It is proposed that the surrounding landscape is retained in its semi-natural condition, with no enclosure fence around the roundhouse exhibit, to retain the areas landscape character. A light touch maintenance regime will be managed by the Museum to keep an appropriate visual setting.

5 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

5.1 Planning Policy Context

The application site lies within the settlement envelope of Gairloch as defined in the Local Plan.

The planning policy context for the proposed roundhouse comprises the following documents:

- National Planning Framework 4 (2021).
- Scottish Planning Policy (2014, updated 2020).
- Highland wide Local Development Plan (2012).
- West Highland & Islands Development Plan (2019).
- Gairloch Local Development Plan 2 (2025).
- Local Place Plan (March 2025).

5.1.1 National Planning Framework 4

The focus in NPF3 was on supporting sustainable economic growth and the transition to a low carbon economy. NPF3 highlights the distinctive opportunities for sustainable growth in different parts of Scotland including rural areas and the coast.

NPF4 includes focus on improving health & wellbeing, increasing rural populations, improving equality, meeting carbon reduction targets and improving biodiversity.

5.1.2 Scottish Planning Policy

The purpose of the planning system is to increase sustainable economic growth and to enable high-quality development while protecting and enhancing natural and cultural resources.

The starting point for decision-making on planning applications remains the development plan. There is a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development.

Development which would be appropriate within a green belt may include recreational uses that are compatible with an agricultural or natural setting and development meeting an established need, if no other suitable site is available.

The SPP states that the planning system should support opportunities for enjoying and learning about heritage and the natural environment.

5.1.3 Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012):

Relevant policies include:

- 28 - Sustainable Design
- 34 - Settlement Development Areas
- 43 - Tourism
- 57 - Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage
- 61 –Landscape

Policy 43 (Tourism) of the Highland-wide Local Development (HwLDP) is supportive of developments which are:

- proportionate in scale
- preferably located where existing tourist facilities are complimented
- will increase the length of stay and spread of visitors
- will promote responsible access and interpretation to built, cultural and heritage features.

The proposal is located within the defined settlement of Gairloch and is considered to accord with the aforementioned policy compliance criteria. In particular, the proposal will improve visitor interpretation and access to other parts of the area.

The proposals are not considered to detract from the scenic quality of the area and accord with policies 57 - Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage and 61 –Landscape.

5.1.4 Gairloch Local Development Plan 2

Future aspirations for Gairloch focus on enhancing connectivity, supporting local businesses, and promoting eco-friendly tourism to balance economic growth with environmental preservation. Relevant policies include:

- Local Economy: Policy LE2 Develop improved facilities for tourists.
- Services and facilities Policy SF2: Create a better outdoor play facility for children.
- Nature and environment Policy: NE1: Protect areas of natural beauty.

5.1.5 Gairloch Local Place Plan

The Gairloch Local Place Plan was written before these proposals for the Roundhouse emerged and so did not take them into account. Nonetheless the proposals are broadly in tune with the spirit and recommendations of the Plan to protect landscape character, in particular to protect green space and open views to the sea.

The Local Place Plan for Gairloch makes reference to protecting green spaces from development and maintaining the aesthetic appeal of the area. It refers to '*preserving landscapes, wildlife and ecosystems*'.

Under the Natural Heritage Theme there is one policy proposal NE: Protect areas of natural beauty.

NE1 specifically makes reference to '*Protect green spaces from overdevelopment*'.

The Plan specifically designates the roundhouse site with an area '*to be protected from development*' to protect open and expansive views to the sea from significant visual impact. This designated area includes the whole of the existing outdoor museum (Fig. 15). This designation was specifically raised by members of the Community Council and local community in stakeholder consultations, where it was recognised that the principal concern behind this designation was to protect the open view to the sea from significant visual impediment.

Landscape visual impact is considered in section 5.4.

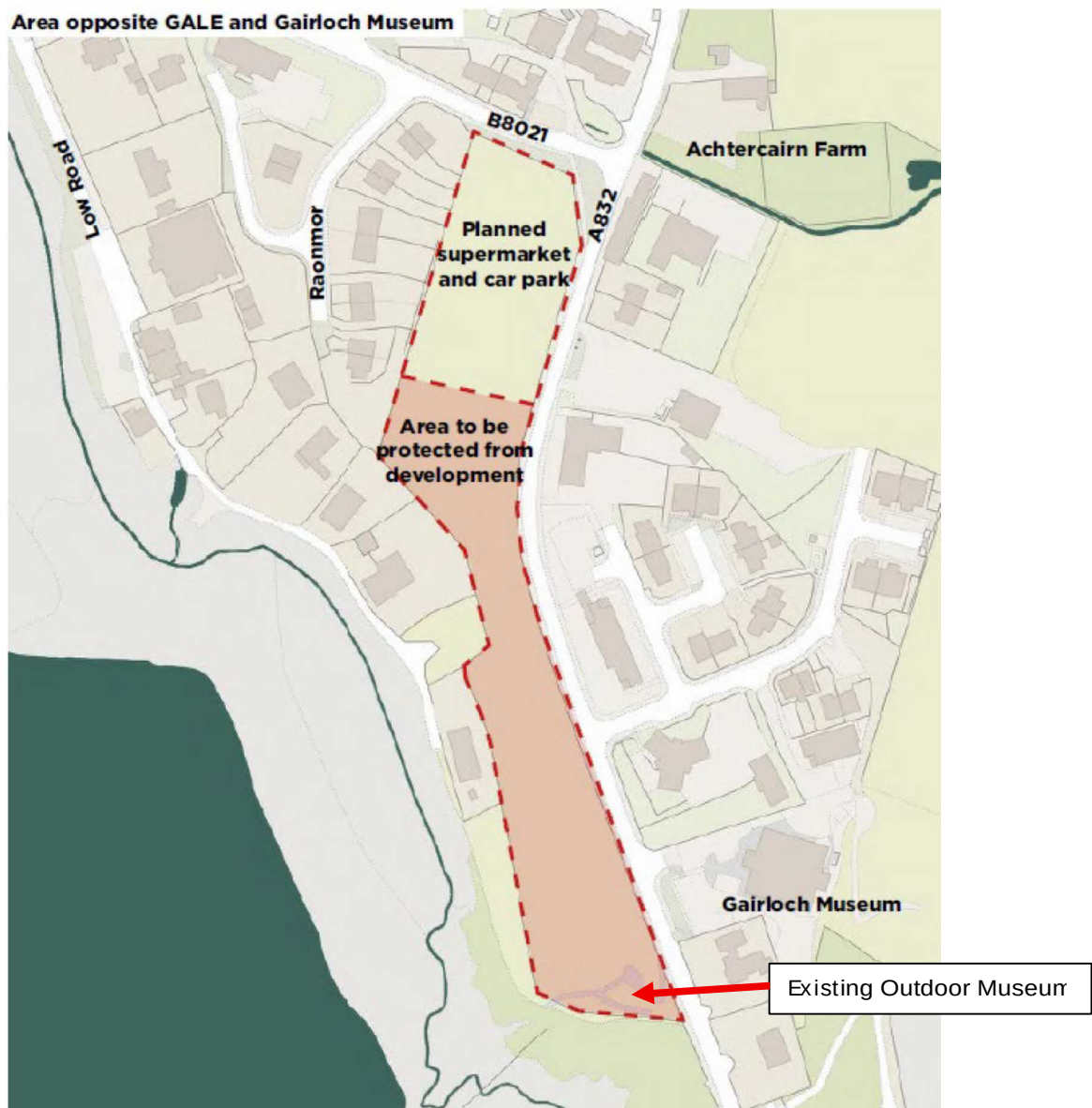


Fig. 15: Area designation, p. 28 of Local Place Plan 2025.

We propose that the new roundhouse exhibit does not compromise the concerns in this designation within the Local Place Plan, as it augments the existing outdoor Museum, which is an active use protected by this area designation. It is therefore not a new development as anticipated by the Plan and does not compromise the landscape character and the associated open and expansive views across the loch that the community wish to protect. Indeed, the proposals safeguard and enhance the site as public greenspace, as sought by the Local Place Plan.

5.2 Site Planning History

Relevant Planning consents include:

5.2.1 20-01133-FUL Gairloch Museum Landscape & Access Works

This Consent covers the Outdoor Museum, to which the roundhouse is an additional exhibit.

5.2.2 21-05855-FUL Erection of Retail Unit Coop

This consent included an archaeological assessment referred to in section 5.3.3.

5.3 Specific Technical Criteria

The following technical issues were considered in preparing the application:

5.3.1 Flood Risk

The site is not designated as being at risk of flooding in the current SEPA online flood risk map.

5.3.2 Natural Heritage

The site has no habitat designations, and no ecological surveys have been undertaken for the site.

The roundhouse exhibit will be built of local natural materials and involve no chemical or toxic materials or processes. It is therefore benign in habitat impact.

A construction management plan will be developed to avoid detrimental impact to the ground adjacent to the roundhouse, during the construction stage.

5.3.3 Built Heritage

The site has no built heritage designations.

An archaeological evaluation was completed in the area in 2023 for a nearby development². There are no known features at this location, and no structures are visible on historic mapping. Taken together with the results of the 2023 evaluation nearby, it is reasonable to conclude that the risk of disturbing significant archaeology at this site is minimal.

5.3.4 Net Zero Carbon

The roundhouse is an exemplar of low embodied carbon construction, utilising only natural materials, without synthetic processing. The construction process will largely be manual without the use of fossil fuel-powered machinery.

² Historic Environment Record at EH6010

The roundhouse will not have no electrical heating or power systems.

5.3.5 Circular Economy

The construction process, using only biodegradable natural materials, will not create any waste, with excess materials being put to other uses, or composed back to earth.

Use of the roundhouse exhibit will not generate waste, and it does not have any waste management provision.

The museum facility has existing waste and recycling collection facilities. The new exhibit will not contribute to an increased waste load.

5.3.6 Accessibility

A guiding aim of the project design is to enable a high degree of physical and intellectual access to the full diversity of physical and neurodiversity within the community:

Physical Accessibility –so that everyone is able to access the building and participate in activities. Engagement activities will be planned to include people of varying abilities, as outlined in section 2.

For those with visual impairment, the roundhouse offers a multi-sensory experience of tactile surfaces and evocative smells, with options for audio enhancement through smartphones.

Cultural Accessibility –so that everyone has a place reflected in the community. The project will have a particular Gaelic language strand, reflecting built culture in the language of place. It will also have an online presence, enabling people across the world to access the project and its cultural heritage.

5.3.7 Transportation

The roundhouse exhibit is serviced by the established transportation links to the Museum.

Electric Vehicles: The nearest Electric Vehicle Charging Point is at Gairloch Community Hall, less than five minutes' walk from the Museum. Locally there are two other points, one at Gairloch Pier and one at The Old Inn.

Bike Parking: There is a bike rack outside the museum's front door.

Public Transport: There is a bus service that routes through Gairloch. The nearest bus stop is at the Sheiling, 5 minutes' walk away.

5.4 Landscape Visual Impact

5.4.1 Community Concern

The main concern raised in community consultation was about landscape visual impact, with clarity requested about the form, size and nature of the roundhouse, that this should be sympathetic to the landscape, that it would not set a precedent for inappropriate development in the area designated in the Local Place Plan.



Fig. 16: View of the proposed roundhouse from the east. The roundhouse is set within the outdoor museum setting and does not break the skyline.



Fig. 17: View of the proposed roundhouse from the north, the roundhouse is set into the slope and does not break the horizon.

The Adopted West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan September 2019 identifies all area on coastal side of the A832 as green network. Placemaking Priorities for Gairloch include *'Enhancement of green networks to provide improved opportunities for physical activity and access to the outdoors and increase accessibility within Gairloch. Maintain undeveloped coastal strips for open views across the loch. Maintain clear separation between distinctively different settlements of Charlestown and Gairloch. Safeguard, through appropriate siting and design, areas protected or otherwise important for nature conservation or landscape qualities in particular the Wester Ross NSA.'*

A series of meetings and communications were held to consult with the community council stakeholders to consider optimal options on the siting of the roundhouse. The outcome was that the initial proposed location was changed to bring the roundhouse somewhat to the east, to reduce its visual impact and relate better to the existing outdoor museum, while still giving it a suitable visual setting and avoiding conflict with existing drains.

The impact on views from the public road are indicated in Fig. 16 and 17. These show that the roundhouse has negligible impact on views of the sea, with materials and form that settle into the semi-natural landscape setting. The proposal therefore supports the maintenance of undeveloped coastal strips with views to the loch, while enhancing green networks to provide improved opportunities for physical activity and access to the outdoors and increase accessibility within Gairloch.

5.4.2 Neighbour Concern

Individual concern was also raised by the owner of a nearby residential property, Clachan Garbh, who provided a simulation of the roundhouse's visual impact on views from the property windows, Fig. 18, and requested that the roundhouse be lowered in height and moved further away.



Fig. 18: Projected view from Clachan Garbh.

In assessing this visual impact and options to reduce it:

- o It was not thought appropriate to move the roundhouse as requested, as this would take it farther from the established outdoor museum area and accessible level paths.

- o The final roof height will be determined by ground levels on site, but the pitch needs to remain authentic to historic precedent and ensure good rainwater runoff.
- o The visual impact indicated on the photographs was not assessed to be severe and such loss of view does not comprise a material Planning consideration.

5.5 Community Consultation

The museum's strength lies in its deep roots within the local community. With a volunteer team of over 45 and a track record of inclusive programming, it has established strong networks within the local community, as well as schools, craftspeople, heritage bodies, and academic institutions. This project will build on this throughout the project.

Numerous public and stakeholder consultation events have been held with the community, summarised as follows:

Initial consultation began in January 2025 with focused meetings involving local Parent Councils and schools to gauge interest and identify priorities for the Roundhouse project. These early conversations confirmed strong support for the idea and highlighted a shared interest in:

- Creating outdoor play and learning spaces
- Opportunities for Gaelic language integration
- Design that meets additional access needs.

As the idea developed, we gathered formal endorsements and letters of support from a wide network of stakeholders, including:

- Local Parent Councils and schools
- Toybox Pre-nursery and local nurseries
- Active Schools Coordinator
- Youth Development Coordinator
- High Life Highland
- Highland Council Rangers Service
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
- The Scottish Crannog Centre
- University of the Highlands and Islands
- TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland)
- Outdoor Woodland Learning Scotland (OWL)
- Historic Environment Scotland.

Feedback was positive, with a strong interest in heritage-based building methods and outdoor community learning. We also aimed to evidence a use-case through inviting statements of intent and have identified the following core uses/users:

- Local families and Toybox pre-nursery children for outdoor play
- Ranger service for Nature Tots early learning activities
- OWL group for membership meetings, CDP workshops and skills sharing events
- Highlife Highland sports and outdoor skills courses
- Gairloch Museum events programme: storytelling, Ceilidh House sessions, school workshops
- Local schools and nurseries for curriculum-linked workshops
- Visitors to the area / NC500.



Roundhouse Reconstruction

The Achtercairn Roundhouse
People have lived and farmed in the Achtercairn area above Gairloch Museum for nearly 5,000 years. In prehistoric times nearly 200 roundhouses were situated within 20 miles of Gairloch. Today, all that can be seen in the landscape are low circles of collapsed stonework. We wish to bring the prehistoric past to life with a reconstructed roundhouse, sited in our Outdoor Museum.

The Build
Based on archaeological evidence of community digs, we will reconstruct a roundhouse using traditional materials & techniques and invite the community to join in.

Activities & Immersive Learning
The roundhouse, Outdoor Museum and Events Programme will support school-, family- and self-guided visits including:

- craft activities
- foraging and plant identification walks
- forest school activities
- self-guided family nature walks
- gaelic tree alphabet
- traditional skills
- tree planting and conservation activities
- 'Defending our Homes' school sessions

The 2025 Dig
2025 will see the return of the Achtercairn Community Digs. Join us on May 3-9 and find out more about the roundhouses and our evolving plans.

The Outdoor Museum

The Achtercairn Trail
Behind Gairloch Museum you will find the Achtercairn Archaeology Trail - a 3km route that leads you around the sites of 12 roundhouses used as dwellings during the Bronze & Iron Ages.

Fig. 19: Public information poster.



Gairloch MUSEUM
Taigh-tasgaidh Gheàrrloch

Building the Roundhouse Open Day: Share your thoughts on our Iron Age Reconstruction Project



Come along to our Open Day to view plans for an Iron Age Roundhouse reconstruction at Gairloch Museum. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to talk through designs, answer your questions and hear your ideas. Find out how the project will support local learning, heritage skills and outdoor play.

 Gairloch Museum
Tuesday 15 July
4 - 6 pm

All welcome. Drop in any time.
Registered Scottish Charity: SC010249

Fig.20: Public event advert

As the project developed, more formal consultations processes emerged:

Gairloch & District Times (G&DT) –Public Open Day Advert (27 June). A notice promoting the upcoming public drop-in consultation event at the Museum.

G&DT –Feature Article (18 July issue). A full feature following the open day, offering additional detail, images, and reflections on the consultation. Submission deadline is one week prior.

Gairloch Community Council Meeting –14 July. We presented the project for discussion, with a subsequent site visit arranged.

Public Open Day –15 July at Gairloch Museum. A community drop-in event with printed visuals, project background, and opportunity for attendees to leave feedback and ask questions. Invitations were circulated through all local community councils, schools, nurseries, and other education providers.

Site meeting with Community Council stakeholders with the Architect and Museum Board –30 July 2025.

Aultbea Community Council Presentation –18 August. A further engagement opportunity to broaden public awareness and secure wider support.

Planned future consultants include continued involvement of stakeholders through Education Planning Group (consisting of representatives from schools, parent councils, HLH and HC, museum staff).

5.6 Conclusion

The proposed roundhouse exhibit is a natural development of a successful visitor attraction that celebrates local cultural heritage, fosters traditional skills, local employment and enhances the area for residents and visitors alike.

There are no significant material objections to the development, and it aligns with planning policy, and the application should therefore be consented.

APPENDIX 1: LETTERS OF SUPPORT



**Letter of support for the Gairloch Roundhouse Project application
on behalf of the 14 Directors of the
Board of Gairloch & District Heritage Company Ltd**

Gairloch Museum opened in its present location in July 2019. The resulting award of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020 was the highest possible sector recognition of how the conversion of a derelict, legacy monolith from the Cold War period had resulted in an independent, community-led Museum (founded in 1977) securing its own future and the heritage of its dispersed crofting communities. The planning, management and highly successful outcomes of the 'new Museum' project demonstrated the capacity and capability of our very experienced Board team to deliver a long-term, complex and demanding programme which engages the community, planning authorities, stakeholders and significant funders.

The Board's current commitment towards fulfilling our primary objective "to promote and encourage interest in, and care for, the history, culture, beauty and character of the Parish of Gairloch" is to build a replica roundhouse. This is an important stage in the development of our Outdoor Museum, which already takes advantage of our unique location to focus on the interpretation and stories of our geology, maritime history and that of the many roundhouses on the hillside directly behind the building.

Our Forward Plan, 2025-2028, prioritises 'Community Outreach' and 'Visitor Offer and Experience'. The construction phase of the Roundhouse project will provide new opportunities locally, including a funded placement, for young people to explore vocational pathways across a range of traditional skills, primarily thatching, drystone walling, joinery and soil archaeology, supported by craftspeople from Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Historic Environment Scotland. We are informed by the knowledge of architects and countryside rangers from across Scotland who have experience of similar Iron Age constructions.

Once completed, the roundhouse will be fully integrated into our, always ambitious, programme of events and activities, led by committed employed and volunteer staff. We are well-practised in ensuring learning and engagement meets the needs of diverse audiences, both residents and tourists. The accessible and intriguing space will offer, for example: Nature Tots sessions; story-telling, drama and music for all ages and interests; curriculum-linked outdoor workshops for schools and adult learning groups; and heritage interpretation of our ongoing roundhouse excavations in situ. It will become the base for our Ever Greener group's biodiversity developments, such as show beds for plants historically used for medicinal and dyeing purposes and a Gaelic Tree Trail. Discussions with potential partners have already taken place, and will continue, on the proposed activities, as is confirmed by the many expressions of support received. Encouragement for the project is coming from responses to community consultations and presentations across the area, and from Facebook posts.

Gairloch & District Heritage Company Ltd is a charity registered in Scotland.
Registration Number: SC010249
Registered Office: Achtercairn, Gairloch, IV21 2BH Company number: SC426095
Gairloch Museum • Gairloch • Ross-shire • IV21 2BH 01445 712287
secretary@gairlochmuseum.org
www.gairlochmuseum.org



The Board of Gairloch Museum has already made a considerable investment, both in time and financial contribution, to the long-intended Roundhouse Reconstruction project. This letter reinforces our unreserved support for such an exciting community-focussed development, which, we very much hope and intend, will be completed in time to enhance the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of our foundation in 2027.

Signed on behalf of the Board on 18 August 2025:-



Allan Templeton
Chair of the Board



Pauline Butler
Secretary

To Whom It May Concern

Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action Forum (GALE) Letter in Support of the Development a Roundhouse by Gairloch Museum

GALE is a Development Trust working across area between Torridon and Laide. The GALE centre is located approximately 150 metres from Gairloch Museum and 200 metres the proposed site of the Roundhouse.

In 2024 GALE purchased the building between the Gairloch Museum and the GALE Centre, with significant grant funding, as a community asset including community pub. The result is a hub of resources in close proximity to each other offering a variety of opportunities for local residents and tourists alike, all located in the 'centre' of the village – a Roundhouse would enhance and broaden this offer.

The proposed development approach will enable the local community to influence and feel part of a lasting addition to our local landscape. The commitment to offer adults and young people the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to build and then maintain the Roundhouse will deliver benefits that can only be secured and sustained through such projects. The benefits will extend beyond the development and construction phases offering the prospect for important growth in volunteering opportunities on completion and in the years ahead.

The land on the western side of the A832, opposite the Gairloch Museum, has benefitted greatly from the geological and historic artefacts development adjacent to the proposed site of the Roundhouse. The footpaths offer access to all and connect to a pathway which leads to the shore alongside An Rathad Isal. The Roundhouse will enhance this area further and substantially extend the Gairloch Museum Outdoor 'offer' complementing the paths developed at the rear of the museum which connect to the Achtercairn Archaeological Trail.

The proposed design including sustainability, historically accurate materials and construction methods will result in a development of both visual and historical interest. The completed building will bring to life the story of Gairloch's early settlers and how they lived in a way that only physical developments can.

Tourism is of huge importance to our community and the Roundhouse will enhance further the offer to those who visit. GALE and Gairloch Museum provide complimentary resources to visitors and the permanent population, and the Roundhouse will add further interest to the village centre, encouraging all to park and explore.

In summary, GALE is delighted and excited with the proposed Gairloch Museum Roundhouse development and offers our full support and willingness to collaborate where possible.

Michael Leng

Role – Social Care Investment Manager
Quality and Commissioning

My working days/hours are: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 9-5

Email: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]



Anna Black
Youth Development Officer
C/O Gairloch High School
Gairloch
IV21 2BP

Dear Sir/Madam

Gairloch Museum Roundhouse Project – Highland Council Youth Development Statement of Support and Intent

I am writing in support of the Gairloch Museum Roundhouse Project in my capacity as Gairloch Youth Development Officer for the Highland Council. The Museum have a long-standing history of supporting youth development in the area, offering volunteer opportunities, culture and heritage activities and events that enrich the lives of the young people in our remote rural area.

Highland Council Youth Development (HCYD) believes the Roundhouse will provide a unique cultural experience for visitors and residents alike. The siting of the Roundhouse in close proximity to the historical settlement area provides a relatable historical context, which combined with the traditional design and build will ensure the structure is sensitive to its surroundings.

The Roundhouse project will greatly enhance the Museum's offer to the young people in our community from the design and build phase – through traditional construction skills programme and a fully funded work placement opportunity – and as a long-term venue for outdoor learning and enrichment activities, such as traditional crafts, music, storytelling and arts. Gairloch ASG does not have a dedicated youth space and relies on community venues across the area to deliver out with school youth activities, so the Roundhouse will be a valued and unique addition. Uniting a range of local partners, the Project also offers the potential for intergenerational working, which I am keen to develop opportunities for our young people to experience.

HCYD is excited to be part of the working group to support the planning and development of the educational programme for the build phase and will actively promote and encourage young people to take part in the traditional skills training programme. HCYD will also support with the recruitment for the funded work placement. Throughout the build phase and beyond, HCYD will support site visits and associated activities for young people to learn about the Project. Additionally, HCYD will promote to other local and pan-Highland third sector partners to maximise the potential for wider community learning and development and securing long term engagement in the Project.

Your sincerely

Anna Black
Gairloch Youth Development Officer

Leacnasaide Cottage
Leacnasaide
Gairloch
IV21 2AP

6 August 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing in support of the Gairloch Museum's planning application to build a roundhouse.

I consider it to be a well considered project, and one that will benefit the whole community.

It will be a valuable asset for educating local children about Gairloch's prehistoric past and it will complement the museum's already excellent indoor exhibit.

It will provide skilled local employment and training in traditional skills.

It will create a fully funded traditional skills placement for a local school leaver. Opportunities like this are rare in a community like ours.

Yours truly,

Clare Lumsden

To whom it may concern,

We write to support the Gairloch Museum's application for planning consent for the project. The roundhouse will be a great addition to the outdoor museum displays and will be another attraction for visitors.

Kind regards

Roy and Irene Macintyre

To Whom It May Concern

Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action Forum (GALE) Letter in Support of the Development a Roundhouse by Gairloch Museum

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The proposed development approach will enable the local community to influence and feel part of a lasting addition to our local landscape. The commitment to offer adults and young people the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to build and then maintain the Roundhouse will deliver benefits that can only be secured and sustained through such projects. The benefits will extend beyond the development and construction phases offering the prospect for important growth in volunteering opportunities on completion and in the years ahead.

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Tourism is of huge importance to our community and the Roundhouse will enhance further the offer to those who visit. GALE and Gairloch Museum provide complimentary resources to visitors and the permanent population, and the Roundhouse will add further interest to the village centre, encouraging all to park and explore.

In summary, GALE is delighted and excited with the proposed Gairloch Museum Roundhouse development and offers our full support and willingness to collaborate where possible.

Michael Leng

Role – Social Care Investment Manager

Quality and Commissioning

My working days/hours are: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 9-5

Email: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]



**Gairloch Primary School
Parent Council**

We, the Gairloch Primary School Parent Council, wholeheartedly support The Roundhouse Project's planning application. We believe the proposed roundhouse will have a minimal and sympathetic visual impact, blending naturally with the landscape, while delivering significant community benefits through educational and cultural activities, and representing an appropriate use of land for heritage-led community engagement.

As the Gairloch Primary School Parent Council, we represent the parents and carers of pupils at Gairloch Primary School and Nurseries, working to support educational and community initiatives that enrich the lives of the children. We are delighted to write this letter in enthusiastic support of The Roundhouse Project, which would deliver fantastic benefits to our community, particularly for the local children and their families.

The Roundhouse Project aligns closely with our aims to foster educational opportunities and community engagement. The proposed museum-led workshops, which may use the roundhouse as a venue, would potentially offer an immersive, curriculum-linked experience for the nurseries, school, and families. These workshops could provide a unique learning resource for Gairloch and surrounding areas, bringing history and traditional skills to life in a hands-on, meaningful way. The educational programme accompanying the build phase will further enhance this, offering our children a rare opportunity to engage with heritage crafts and local history.

The roundhouse's potential as a community venue is another compelling aspect of this project. Once completed, it may serve as a space for woodland learning, storytelling, traditional crafts workshops, and community celebrations. This will provide an inclusive setting for local groups, including our families, to come together.

We also appreciate the museum's early engagement with our Parent Council, which has allowed us to contribute ideas and feel invested in the project from its inception.

As a demonstration of our commitment, The Gairloch Primary School Parent Council proposes to:

- Actively coordinate family involvement in the roundhouse build phase, supporting public demonstrations and drop-in events focused on traditional building skills such as thatching, drystone dyking, joinery, and earth building.
- Advocate for the inclusive use of the roundhouse, ensuring it is accessible and welcoming for families with young children or those with additional support needs during the planning stage.
- Collaborate with project partners to provide feedback and evaluation, ensuring parents' voices shape future programming when the roundhouse is in use from 2027 onward.

We wholeheartedly endorse the Roundhouse Project's planning application and look forward to seeing its positive impact on our children and families.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if further information is required.

Scarlet Trevett
Secretary of The Gairloch Primary School Parent Council

§ Achgarve
Laide
Achnasheen
IV22 2NS



I am writing in support of Gairloch Museum's planning permission application to build a replica roundhouse.

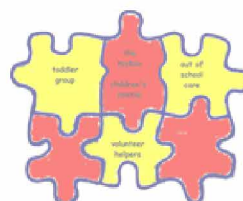
There are the remains of ten roundhouse on the hillside above the museum and building a replica will bring these remains to life for locals and visitors. Being fairly small and made from natural materials its carbon footprint will be very light and it will not detract from the view out to sea.

It is hoped that senior school students and other members of the local community will be involved in the building of the roundhouse, learning skills from the craftspeople who will be engaged in the construction. Participation in this, and the skills learned, will also enhance the CVs of the students. Once built, it will be a source of outdoor education for schools in the whole Gairloch Parish and beyond, and also be used for meetings for schools and community groups as well as adding to the whole experience for visitors to the museum.

Yours faithfully

Anne MacLennan

The Toybox Children's Centre
 Gairloch Primary School
 Achtercairn
 Gairloch
 Ross-Shire IV21 2BP
 Telephone: [REDACTED]
 Email: [REDACTED]



08/08/25

Ref: Gairloch Museum Roundhouse Project

I manage the Toybox Children's centre, a voluntary, charitable organisation which has been providing childcare for families in the Gairloch and surrounding area of Wester Ross for over 30 years. We mainly provide childcare for children under 3 years in term time with additional older children during holiday periods.

The above project offers real opportunity to have a safe outdoor space to play and learn with a strong focus on imagination and hands on experience. Children love making dens and using tents, so the idea of a real roundhouse is something they would love. Although our children are generally under 3 years old, they soak up information and ideas like sponges and will learn a huge amount about local heritage, how people once lived, tools used etc. etc. from this project. Older children who attend during the holidays will also have the opportunity to explore and interact with the roundhouse.

In terms of planning, to have a roundhouse, the typical dwelling in this area from the bronze age, would really help to give both locals and visitors to the area an idea of how people lived 2000 years ago and also that there are still some similarities between roundhouses and traditional crofts. The land the house will be built on is already attracting interest in terms of the items on display so it seems a good use of the land to further develop this. The project will give the community a sense of their place in time and the continuing use of the land. It will be an inspirational space to come together for community / visitor activities and learning. As a relatively small construction the visual impact will be in keeping with the area especially given the traditional methods of construction.

This will be a hugely valuable additional outdoor learning resource for us and e.g. families on holiday given the lack of amenities for young children to visit and experience. The museum has also approached us to give our input into ensuring the site will be appropriate and safe for young children to use. We really hope the Museum will be supported to make this project come to life for the benefit of the community and visitors to the area.

[REDACTED]
 Toybox Manager

*The Toybox Children's Centre is a Fully Constituted Voluntary Association Est. 1991
 Charity No: SCO 30007*



14th August 2025

Letter of support for planning

I would like to offer a statement of support for Gairloch Museum's application for planning for the round house. The round house will be visually in keeping with the area, and will form a natural landmark for the village of Gairloch.

There is a big community benefit to this project. The roundhouse can be used by other community groups and organisations to host woodland learning, storytelling, traditional skills workshops etc., and bookable for community celebrations. As a college, we are very interested in this aspect of the project, as courses can be delivered using local heritage through the archaeology trail, natural history and marine location.

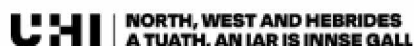
We would like to work with them to offer skills workshops to learn vocational pathways into traditional heritage building such as drystone walling, which would be supported by professional craftspeople. This will benefit young people looking for the relevant skills to enter the work place and for others wishing to upskill.

This project offers a wide post programme benefit to the community and we look forward to looking into what these opportunities would be.

Kind regards



Susan MacLean
Engagement Manager



UHI North, West and Hebrides

nwh.uhi.ac.uk

Gairloch Museum, Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BH

UHI North, West and Hebrides is the trading name of The Board of Management of UHI North, West and Hebrides which is a registered charity, number SC021215.

'S e UHI a Tuath, an Iar agus Innse Gall an t-ainm malairt a th' air Bòrd Stiùiridh UHI a Tuath, an Iar agus Innse Gall a tha na chathannas clàraichte, àireamh SC021215.

West Coast OWL Group

**Outdoor &
Woodland
Learning**
SCOTLAND



To: Whom it may concern, Planning Department, Highland Council
Ref: Roundhouse and Gairloch Museum Project

West Coast Owl is happy to support the proposed planning application for the development of a traditionally built roundhouse for the Gairloch Museum Project. We feel it is an appropriate land use that will provide enormous community benefit.

West Coast Owl is a local community group network. We are an affiliated branch of OWL Scotland, covering Wester Ross, Skye and Lochalsh. Our network aim is to increase opportunities for outdoor learning across this region.

Our objectives are as follows:

Provide First hand learning experience

Increase the use of outdoors for exploring and discovery for learning

Using learning outdoors to help to develop a sense of place and belonging and develop a deep connection to the natural world

Increasing knowledge, skills and understanding of outdoor environments,

Increase opportunities for adults to learn and develop pedagogical skills for use outdoors

By using a range of outdoor environments encourage depth, breadth and progression in learning, including practical skills

Learning for Sustainability

Increase opportunities to learn about the natural world and how it links to social and economic factors locally, in Scotland and globally, by going outside.

Health and Wellbeing

To increase recognition of the way that learning outdoors impacts positively on health and wellbeing.

Statement of Support

West Coast OWL Group strongly supports the traditional roundhouse construction project at Gairloch Museum and the potential of the Outdoor Museum project more widely.

This project is highly complimentary to our own objectives and as such we feel it will be a vital resource in the region.

West Coast OWL Group is a volunteer led community network, working across various locations and the roundhouse will be a project and future venue that we would be most keen to promote through our membership.

The potential to access the venue ourselves for community networking / skill sharing events and CPD workshops in outdoor and woodland learning is something we would be very keen to follow up.

We would be pleased to collaborate in special events where our members have specific skills of interest.

Yours Sincerely

Melanie Prytz

Chair West Coast OWL Group
Ravenscraig Lodge, Craig, Plockton, Ross-Shire, IV52 8UB



From Jeremy Fenton

I write as the creator of the Achtercairn Archaeology Trail above the Museum with its ten stone circles and other ancient structures.

I certainly support the idea of building a new 'prehistoric' roundhouse below Gairloch Museum.

A newly built roundhouse would have many uses, one of which would be to show visitors what the stone circles originally might have looked like and to add interest to the Trail. It would also be an interesting venue for educational and other activities.

The building of it will shed light on ancient techniques, and employ various local skills today such as wall-building, woodwork and thatching. It will provide an original and really interesting venue for local activities. It will encourage more visitors to the nearby Museum.

A suggestion: to involve as many local people as possible in the building, how about asking everyone in Gairloch to provide a stone for the wall (perhaps named). The process of building the wall and making the roof should engage the interest of Gairloch as a whole.

I will respond to the planning application when it goes live. Meanwhile an impressive start has been made!

Jeremy Fenton
Ardmor, Achtercairn, Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BN

The Gairloch Museum Roundhouse Project

The proposed construction of an Iron Age roundhouse in the outdoor museum space is an exciting development in the story of prehistoric times around Gairloch bringing to life the archaeology trail that runs behind the museum. Not only will it serve as a space for numerous community activities it will also bring together and showcase the skills of craftspeople and involve those who wish to learn more about the ancient art of stonework, thatching and joinery. Visually pleasing and accessible to all it will showcase the museum's ongoing vision to bring history to life.

Fiona Macintyre



11 August 2025

To: Highland Council Planning Officers

Re: Gairloch Museum Planning Application, Roundhouse Project.

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, *Ionad Nàiseanta Cànan is Cultar na Gàidhlig* (The National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture) and a constituent partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands, has won an international reputation for research in Gaelic language, culture, folklore and history. Our groundbreaking research on the material culture of the Gàidhealtachd has led to partnerships with national and regional museums and cultural institutions, directly shaping our Gaelic-medium MSc programme *Cultar Dùthchasach agus Eachdraidh na Gàidhealtachd* (Gàidhealtachd History and Material Culture). This programme, uniquely, uses the Gaelic language to investigate Gaelic society from within, challenging externally imposed narratives and offering more authentic perspectives on the Scottish Gàidhealtachd.

In February 2015, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Gairloch Museum signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at advancing the Museum's future educational and research objectives. A product of the MoU was provision of support for the interpretation of the Museum's collections in new displays. Following the Museum's relocation to enhanced premises in 2019, the MoU is currently under review and will be renewed soon.

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Gairloch Museum share a deep commitment to fostering community-centred Gaelic development, revitalisation, and interpretation, and to promoting scholarship and knowledge exchange. Sabhal Mòr recognises the Roundhouse Project as a practical foundation for this ongoing institutional partnership; we welcome it as a creative catalyst for raising the profile of Gaelic in a region of vital cultural significance.

We welcome the Roundhouse Project's objectives to strengthen Gaelic-led interpretation and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, particularly through the creation of an appropriate and attractive venue in which to:

- establish a community hub for Gaelic language, oral tradition, and intangible heritage.
- deliver place-based Gaelic interpretation that engages local schools, families, communities, and wider audiences.
- enhance Gairloch Museum's Gaelic Development initiative through the Roundhouse.
- promote Gaelic cultural visibility through an innovative, high-profile project in the Highlands.

Should the project's application be successful, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig will:

- support the public engagement programme during the build phase, ensuring a robust and authentic Gaelic-led element.
- collaborate on the development of the Roundhouse interpretation plan, embedding Gaelic language and culture throughout, with a focus on traditional skills and the use and Gaelic names of traditional hand tools.
- research, develop and deliver innovative storytelling content, drawing on the museum's archival resources and Gaelic heroic literature.
- provide specialist training for museum volunteers to deliver Gaelic storytelling sessions in the Roundhouse.
- contribute to the broader strategic promotion and advocacy for the Roundhouse Project.

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is proud to support this initiative and looks forward to building upon our partnership with Gairloch Museum in advancing and promoting Gaelic culture and heritage.

Leis a h-uile deagh dhùrachd

Abigail Burnyeat, Ceannard Rannsachaidh | Head of Research

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Ionad Nàiseanta Cànan is Cultar na Gàidhlig • National Centre for Gaelic Language & Culture
Sleite, An t-Eilean Sgitheanach, Alba IV44 8R0 • +44 (0)1471 888000 • fios@smo.uhi.ac.uk • www.smo.uhi.ac.uk

The Sabhal Mòr Ostaig na chompanaidh nàiseanta clàraichte ann an Alba, le nìomh 180792. Oifis chlàraichte Coisrte Gàidhlig na h-Alba, An Teampa, 88R0, An t-Eilean Sgitheanach, IV44 8R0. Àireamh Cànannach: Mòrannach Clàraichte SC002938.
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland, number 180792 and having its Registered Office at Coisrte Gàidhlig na h-Alba, Teampa, Sleite, Isle of Skye, IV44 8R0. Registered charity no: SC002938.

|
2HT

45 Strath, Gairloch, IV1

08.08.2025

To Whom it May Concern

For about 20 years I have been a volunteer at Gairloch Museum – involved in arranging local historical exhibitions, writing booklets, researching local history, giving talks and undertaking genealogical research. I have watched the growth of the museum with great interest and have been impressed by the wide scope of activities and the range of events organised by the curators and the board members.

The proposed latest project, that of erecting a traditional roundhouse, is particularly exciting. There are a few examples of cottars' and early crofters' houses which can be seen and explored in the Gairloch area but the only experience which can be gained of roundhouses is viewing the stone outlines which can be found in various locations and reading about them in various books and booklets.

It is obvious that the museum has undertaken a great deal of research and that it intends to use the roundhouse, once established, for many community activities. What is particularly encouraging is that the local community is invited to contribute towards this project – both practically and theoretically.

Building a roundhouse will add to the knowledge of the local heritage. I whole heartedly support the preliminary work that is being undertaken to gain planning application and hope that this project will obtain approval and funding support so that in the not-too-distant future the roundhouse will become part of the outdoor museum and a welcome addition to 'past life in the Gairloch area'.

Dorothy Malone