



HIFAR LTD  
( Housing Initiatives for Arran  
Residents)

HIFAR Ltd is a company limited by  
guarantee (Company No. 317445)  
& a charity registered in Scotland (No.  
SC039180)

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## **Sannox Church Project**

## Hifar's Proposal

Sannox church on the Isle of Arran has very special significance to local residents, past and present. The place of worship of the last community on Arran to be subject to the infamous Clearances, it ceased to be a place of worship during the 1970s. Subsequently the church was used intermittently for services, weddings and funerals. Since the passing of the last occupant of the adjoining manse the church has not been used at all and both buildings have fallen into disrepair. For several years the United Reform Church has debated the future of the church, manse and adjacent property known as Dundarroch (currently still utilised as a Christian retreat).

The URC synod has now decided to release the church, associated buildings and grounds and its preferred option of disposal is for development into affordable housing. To this end URC has enlisted the assistance of Scottish Churches Housing Action, a charity committed to eliminating homelessness in Scotland, to help choose potential partners and manage the legalities of transfer.

HIFAR (the Housing Initiative for Arran Residents) is an Arran-based charity committed to the provision of affordable housing for those living or wishing to live and work on the island, but for whom the asking price of open-market houses is beyond their means and the prospect of attaining social rented accommodation is neither likely nor desirable.

HIFAR was contacted by URC in 2007 as a potential deliverer of the Sannox development. The intervening months have seen a firming of resolve by both parties to bring the project to fruition and we now find ourselves ready to present a firm proposal in the form of a business plan.

While many problems remain to be resolved, one of which may prove very difficult, a particular issue needs to be addressed now and for this we are asking your help:

The development plan consists of converting the manse and Dundarroch into 2 dwellings each, with an option on what to do with the church. Conversion into another dwelling would make economic sense in terms of per-unit cost and would provide an additional house but, given the emotive history and rare beauty of the site, both URC

and HIFAR see the restoration of the church to a "working building" as being of greater benefit to the community of Sannox and Arran. This vision is shared by the vast majority of locals and, as we know from letters to our local newspaper, by ex-pats and visitors alike. One suggestion is to renovate the interior in such a way as to provide a "quick-change" facility, from art gallery to museum to church, the conversion taking no more than a couple of hours.

The problem lies in combining the housing development with the church renovation. It is difficult to justify funding requests for affordable housing when the church aspect adds a large per-unit overhead.

To this end we propose separating the housing development from the church renovation. While remedial work on the manse will necessitate repairs to the church, the bulk of the renovation costs can be isolated and funded separately. We envisage creating a Sannox Church Renovation Fund, made up of donations from all those who share our desire to bring this project to a desirable conclusion. The projected cost of renovation is between £120,000 and £150,000.

As of now, this proposal remains theoretical – we are not asking for donations as yet. What we require is a demonstration of support for this idea. A letter or email stating your willingness to offer a donation should the fund be created and an indication of the amount you would be prepared to donate will provide us with strong evidence of public support for our proposal and give us a pointer as to whether the fund is a viable idea. We will not use any details you supply to contact you directly unless you specify otherwise – another open letter will be produced as and when the fund becomes a reality.

Please contact us as soon as possible. See back page for details.

Thank you for your support.

HIFAR Limited .