

Housing Needs Report Westray



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Background

Introduction and Background

Westray, located in Orkney’s North Isles, is a community of around 600 people. It faces many of the same challenges that other island and remote rural communities face, including population sustainability and ageing, both transport and digital connectivity challenges and succession planning for agriculture and other industries.

One of the key areas of challenge on Westray is the availability of housing for both existing locals and those looking to move to the island.

The Westray Development Trust has already developed four one-bedroom flats in Pierowall and is now looking into the potential of developing additional housing to help meet potential need for additional larger family housing. The Trust has appointed L & L Fraser Ltd to undertake a housing needs assessment which will help identify any need for additional housing on Westray. This needs assessment will feed into the development of any business cases focusing

on the purchase of or development of housing on the island, as well as supporting funding bids for support from the Scottish Land Fund, Rural and Islands Housing Fund and Orkney Islands Council.

The Scottish Land Fund, Rural and Islands Housing Fund and Orkney Islands Council’s Housing Fund provide Westray with a significant opportunity to secure funding to help support the development of additional long-term rented housing on the island. Westray is one of several islands in Orkney, as well as some private developers on Mainland Orkney, that have already taken advantage of the funding on offer. The Westray Development Trust purchased and renovated the former Harbour Master’s House in 2019 using funding from the Scottish Land Fund and Rural and Islands Housing Fund. The property now boasts four one-bedroom flats.

Methodology

The housing needs assessment outlined below is designed to establish whether there is demand and need for additional housing provision on Westray, providing the Westray Development Trust with the evidence they require to make the decision on whether to pursue the purchase of existing properties or the development of new build housing.

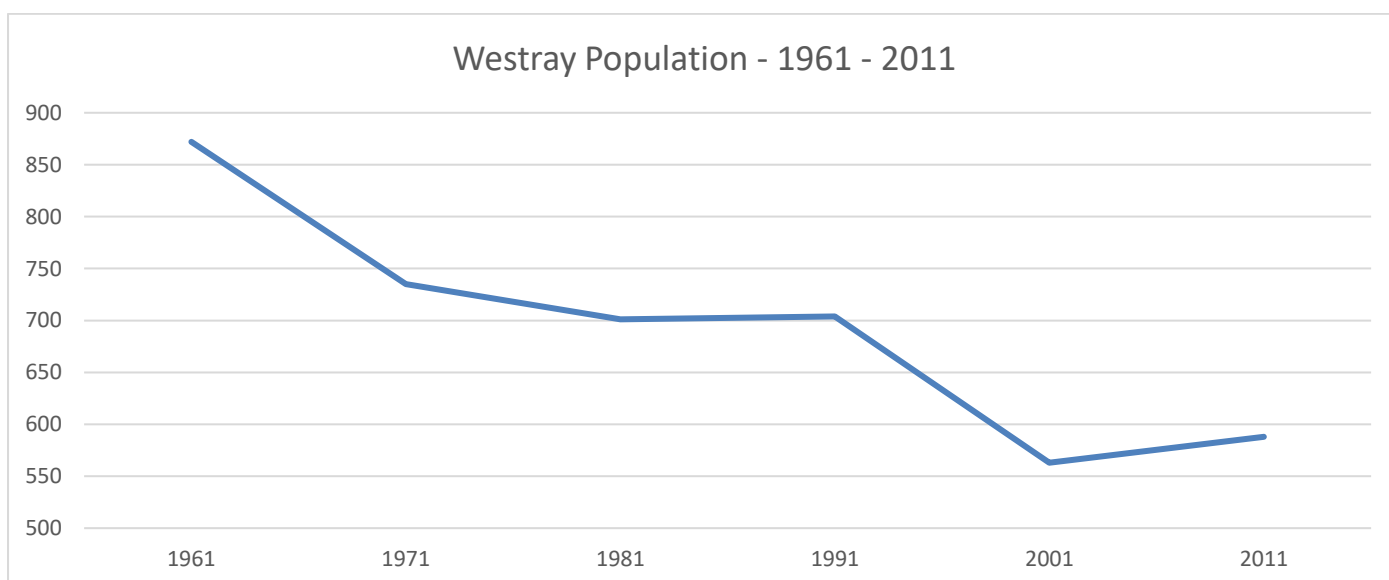
This report will utilise data from the local community taken from a survey that was available in paper form and online, other local data sets and relevant national datasets. Data utilised will include population and demographics estimates and projections, a housing market analysis, school roll forecasts and housing stock data, as well as the survey responses. This approach will combine the best data available to assess the housing needs on Westray, significant local housing market experience and expertise. A lot of the data available nationally is not available at the Papa Westray level, this limits the usefulness of the data, but it is used in places where it can add some background.

There were 64 responses to the survey, meaning roughly 22% of the 291 households on the island completed the survey. As is common with housing surveys and needs assessments, the data presented here provides a snapshot of the housing need and demand on Westray at the time of writing.

Background Data

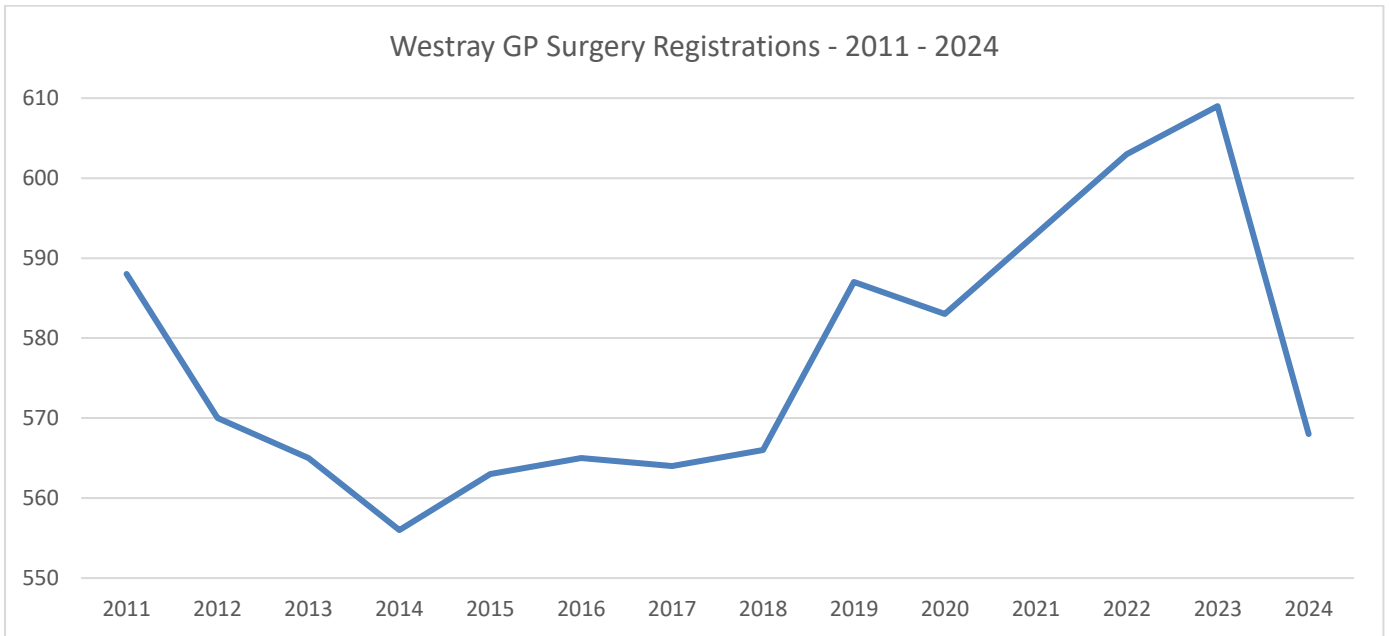
Population and Demographics

At the time of the 2011 Census Westray had a population of 588 people. Higher than any of Orkney’s islands, besides Mainland. Westray’s population had been on a steady decline since 1961 when there were 872 people registered in the Census. The low point was reached in 2001 at 563, before rebounding to 588 in 2011. The graph below outlines the changes over the years.



(Source: Scotland's Census)

The 2022 Census figures have not yet been released, so the graph below outlines the GP Surgery registrations at the Westray Surgery between 2011 and 2024 to give an estimate of the current population. The graph shows an initial drop in population from the 2011 Census figure of 588 to 556 in 2014, before the number of GP registrations rebounded to 609 in 2023, however in 2024 there was a rapid decline in initial numbers. Follow-up conversations with NHS Orkney have confirmed that NHS Orkney have not done a clear through their GP registrations to clear out people who have moved away but are still registered. NHS Orkney think the GP registrations total will increase over 2024 as those who have moved to the island register.



(Source: NHS Orkney)

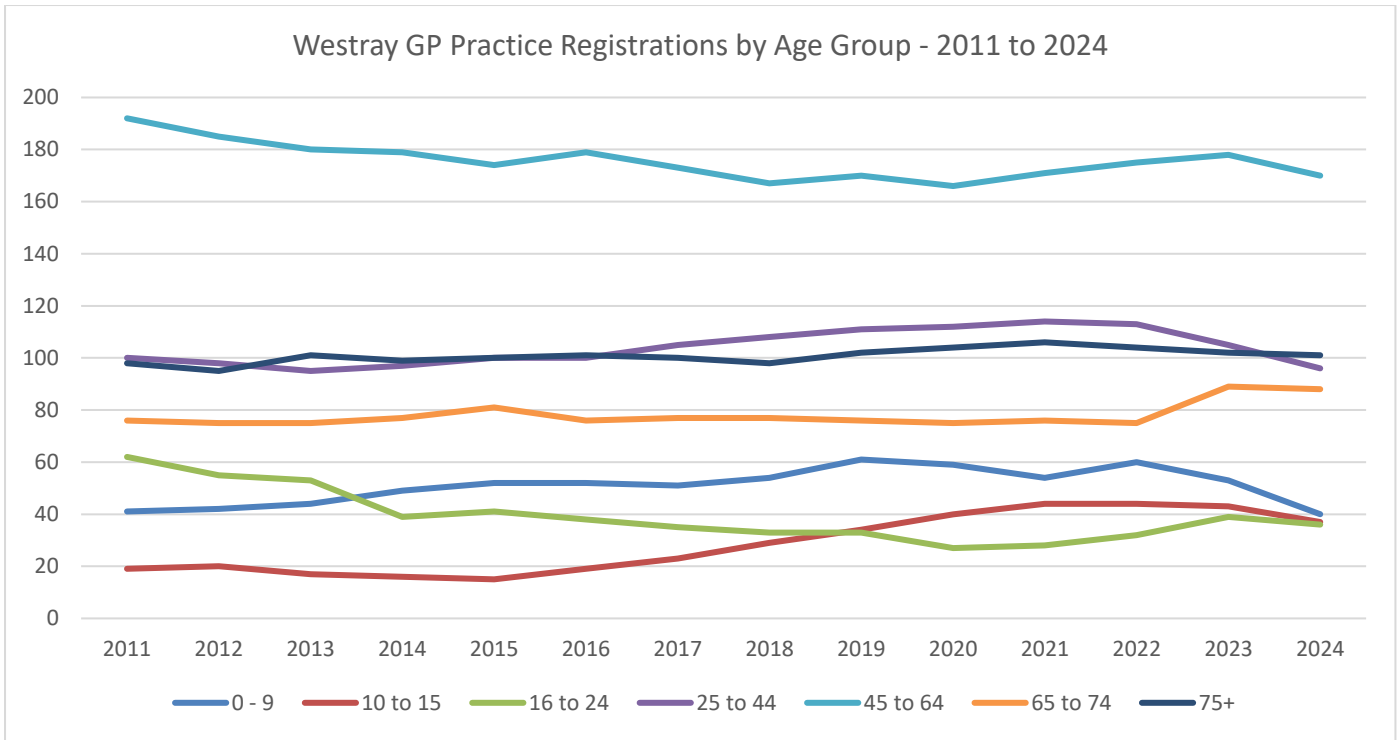
Expanding the GP registration data, we can see in the table below the breakdown of registrations by age group. The key working age population age groups of 16 to 24, 25 to 44 and 45 to 64 have dropped from a combined 354 in 2011 to 302 in 2024. A reduction of 52 people. This decline will potentially have an impact on the ability to fill job vacancies and deliver services if it continues. It also echoes the sentiment that young people have left Westray because they have not been able to find suitable housing.

The 16 to 24 age group has declined by 26 from 62 to 36, but is only three below the average of 39 for the period. The 25 to 44 age group has fallen by four from 100 to 96, but is well below the high of 114 in 2021 and the average of 104 for the period. The 45 to 63 age group has seen a decline of 22 from 192 to 170 and is currently below the average of 176.

The number of 0 to 9's has dropped by one from the 2011 census figure, but is well below the average of 51 for the period. The number of children in the 10 to 14's category is below the peak of 44 recorded in 2021 and 2022, but is well above the 19 of 2011 and the average of 29 for the period.

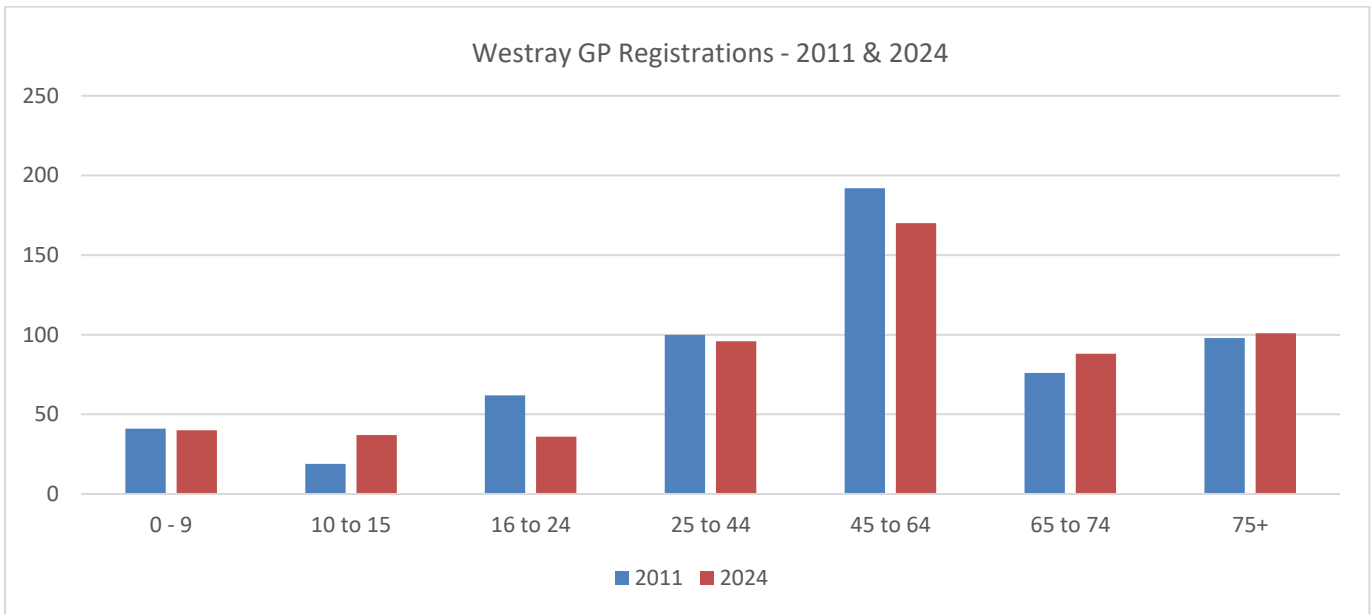
The older age groups of 65 to 74 and 75+ have both seen increases, with an additional 12 people in the 65 to 74 age group increasing it to 88, 10 above the average for the period.

This breakdown shows a similar pattern to that identified in Orkney's population in general and in the other North Isles particular where there is a decrease in the working age population and an increase in the older age groups.



(Source: NHS Orkney)

The graph below shows Westray’s GP registrations by age group in 2011 and 2024. A few of the age groups show minimal change from the start to the end of the period, namely the 0 to 9, 25 to 44 and surprisingly the 75+ age groups. However, some have seen a significant swing with a surprising increase in the 10 to 15 age group, as well as drops in the 16 to 24 and 45 to 64 age groups. The increase in the 65 to 74 age group is in line with many other areas in Orkney and indeed much of rural and island Scotland.



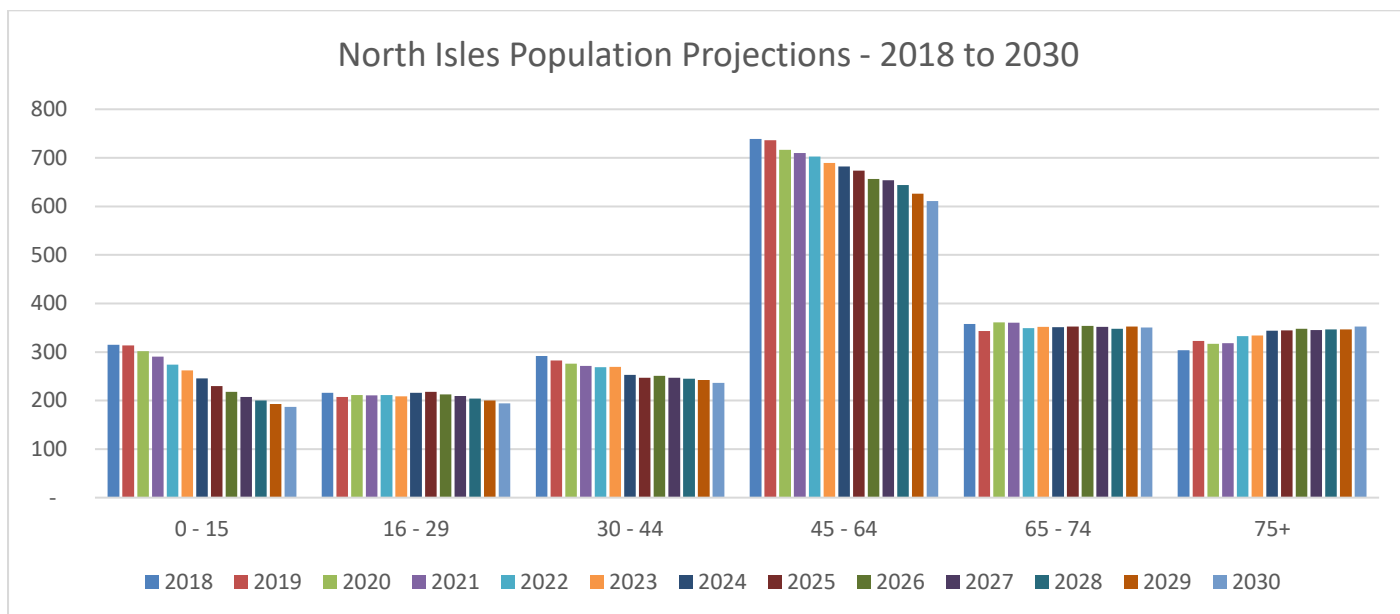
(Source: NHS Orkney)

The graphs above show the changes that have taken place in Westray’s population over the last 60 years. To help sustain Westray’s population into the future it is important to retain existing members of the community who want to remain on the island, particularly young people and families. It is also important to attract more people, particularly younger working age people and families, to Westray to help grow the population and fill in any skills gaps in the economy, as well as help sustain the primary and junior high school. Sustaining and enhancing the

population will require the development of additional housing and the better utilisation of some existing properties, like empty homes.

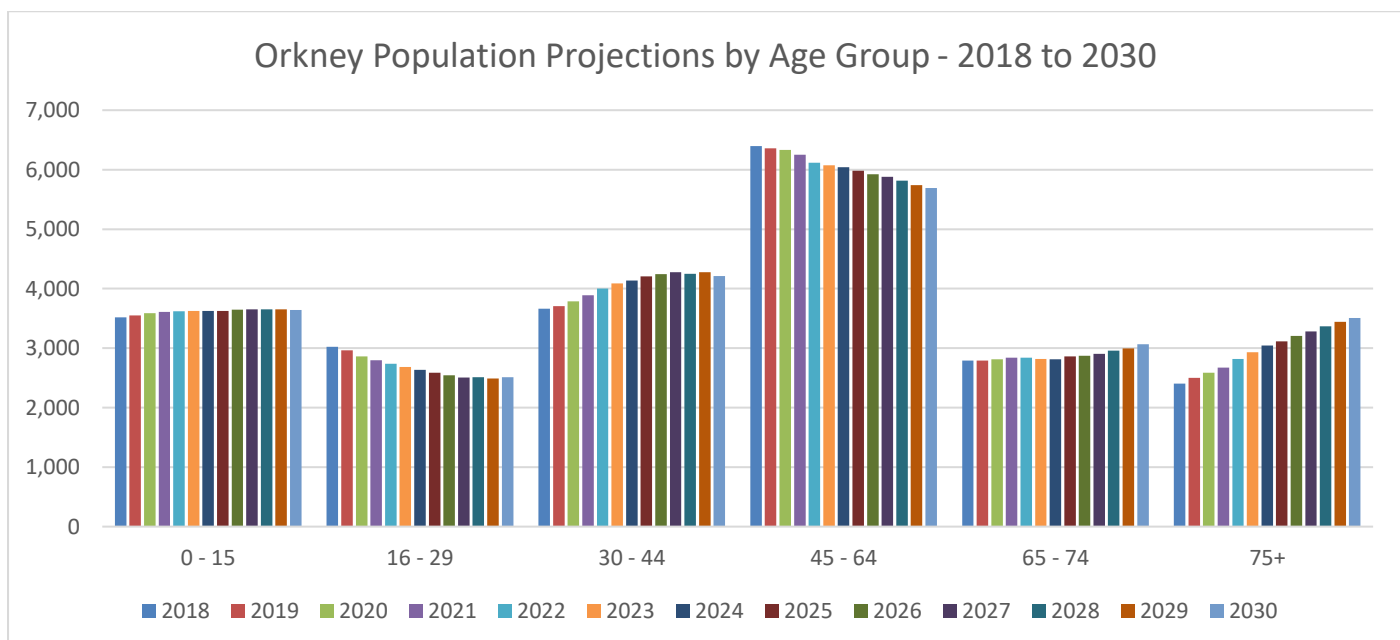
Population and Household Estimates

Population estimates for the North Isles ward between 2018 and 2030 project a drop in each age group, except the 75+ age group as outlined in the graph below. The largest drops are in the 0 to 15 and 45 to 59 age groups.



(Source: National Records of Scotland Small Area Population Projections 2018)

The graph below provides a comparison to the Orkney wide population projections over the same 2018 to 2030 time period. The graph shows similar patterns in some of the age groups, with some other age groups showing noticeable differences.



(Source: National Records of Scotland 2018 Based Population Projections.)

While the North Isles are projected to see a significant drop in the 0 to 15 age group, Orkney as a whole is projected to see a slight increase over the period. The 16 to 29 age group is projected to decline in both the North Isles and

Orkney as a whole, but surprisingly by a larger percentage in Orkney as a whole. The 30 to 44 age group is also projected to decline in the North Isles, but increase in Orkney as a whole.

The 16 to 29 and 30 to 44 age groups in particular are ones that Westray and other North Isles need to focus on increasing, or at the very least stabilising over the coming years. Accomplishing this will require a number of things, including good jobs, sustainable transport and digital connectivity, but also additional housing that is affordable and accessible to younger people and families. The recommended tenure options to accomplish this are laid out in the stock and recommendations sections below.

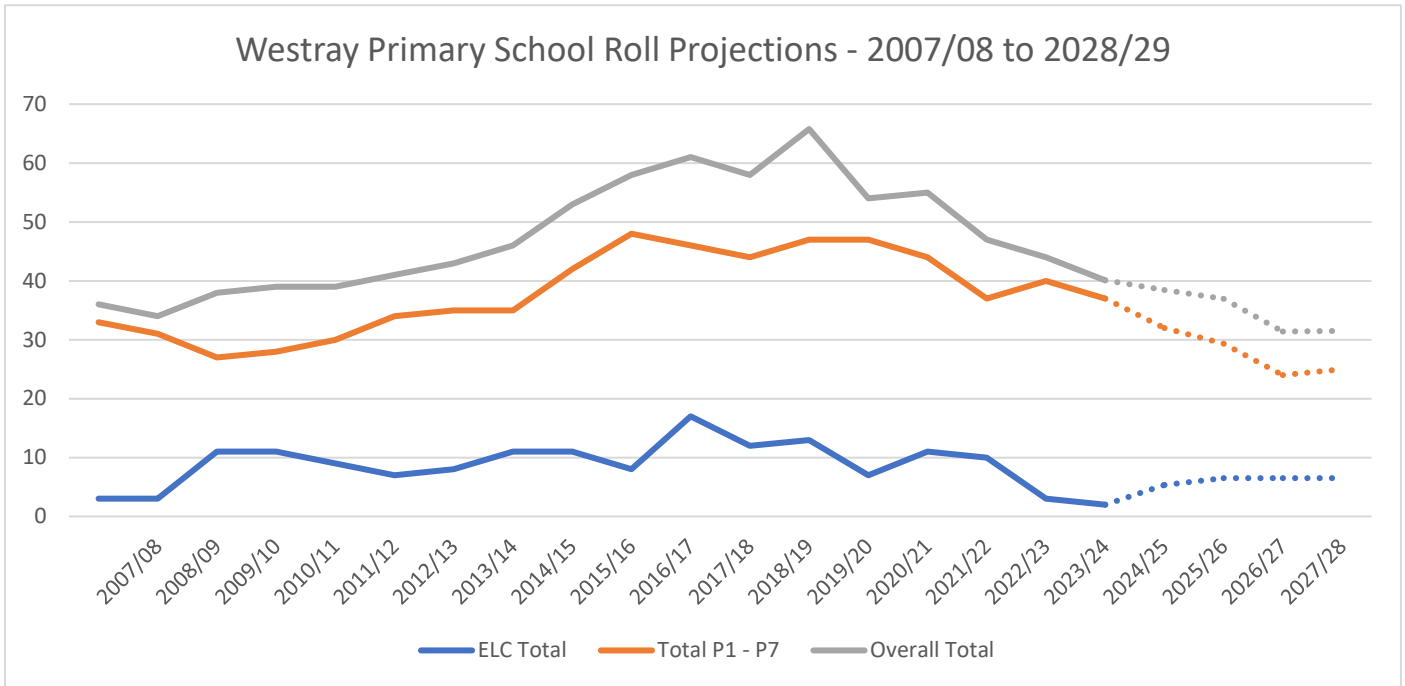
The 45 to 64 age group is projected to decrease in both the North Isles and Orkney as a whole, increasing the pressure on the working age population. The 65 to 74 age group is projected to stay roughly the same in the North Isles and grow in Orkney as a whole, while the over 75s age groups is expected to grow the North Isles by roughly 50 people. However, the forecast for Orkney as a whole shows a hugely significant projected increase. Old age care is expected to be a particularly pressing issue across Orkney in the future as the baby boomer generation moves into later life and the working age population declines and struggles to meet their care needs. A smaller projected increase in the over 75's population in the North Isles would certainly help due to the lack of care home and home care provision on the isles.

Additional housing, particularly family housing, as well as innovative ways of utilising the existing housing stock will be a key enabler for population retention and growth across the North Isles, including Westray.

School Roll

Westray Junior High School offers early years, primary school and secondary school up to secondary four provision. Pupils looking to stay on for secondary five and six need to stay on Mainland Orkney through the week to attend Kirkwall Grammar School.

Westray's early years numbers have fluctuated over the last 15 years, ranging from three in 2007/08, 2008/09 and currently in 2023/24 to as high as 17 in 2017/18. The low early years numbers are a real concern as there is the potential that it endangers the number of jobs within the early years setting of the school. Primary one to seven numbers have fluctuated between 27 and 48, with an average of 38. The projections developed estimate that the roll will fall in both the early years and primary one to seven, although the early years numbers are projected to potentially bounce back slightly later in the period. Totals could drop as low as 32 across early years and primary, which is a real fall from the high in 2019/20 when there were 60 children in the early years and primary element of the school and would be a real concern. Additional family housing to allow families to remain on the island and others to move to the island is vital if the school roll is to be grown.



(Source: Orkney Islands Council 2023 School Roll Projections & L & L Fraser Ltd)

In terms of the junior high school the total number of pupils in secondary 1 to secondary 5 has risen from 31 in 2022 to 35 in 2023. Numbers are forecast to drop a little over the coming years as fewer children move up from primary school.

Income and Employment

The most up to date data for the mean gross weekly household income in the Eday, Westray and Papa Westray data zone is £704.07 (Scottish Government, 2018). This is just above the Isles average of £698.94, but below the Orkney average of £726.35. It is estimated that the income figures for the data zone are skewed with incomes in Westray actually being higher, but with the combined data zone figure being lower due to lower income levels in Papa Westray and Eday, although there is no data available at the Westray level to confirm this.

Like most areas in Orkney employment levels are high, with Westray probably having the strongest economy of all of Orkney's outer islands. Much like the Orkney Mainland and other outer islands Westray has skills gaps that are difficult to fill with existing islanders. This requires new islanders to be attracted to the island to take up key roles in areas like education and health. Having sufficient housing available across a range of tenures and options to help attract these households is very important. Unfortunately, Westray like Mainland Orkney and other areas has experienced losing existing households and missing out on new households due to the lack of available housing.

As outlined above in the demographics section, Westray's population, like Orkney as a whole, is ageing. Westray however has a key advantage over any of the other outer islands in the form of the Kalisgarth Care Facility which allows older residents to remain on the island when they can no longer remain in their own homes. This facility provides excellent accommodation, as well as permanent jobs.

Retaining and drawing in more younger people and families is key to sustaining and growing the island. The shift to remote working over the Covid-19 pandemic, which has opened up the potential for longer term remote working, which would allow households to live on Westray but work for organisations from elsewhere in the UK and the world, is one of the only benefits of the Covid-19 pandemic. It offers communities like Westray the potential to offer a lifestyle change for those looking to leave behind urban living, while remaining in their current employment. The

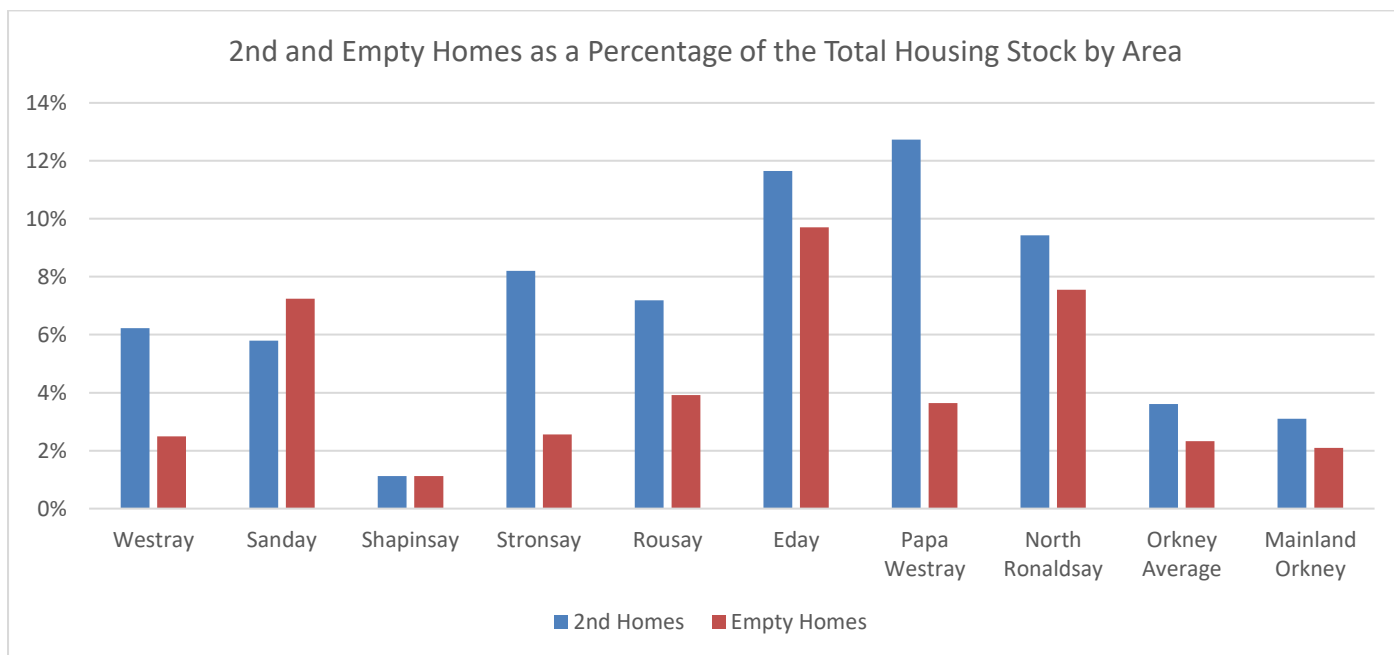
introduction of superfast broadband to parts of the island will make a huge difference and enhance remote working opportunities further.

The enhancement of remote working opportunities gives remote communities like Westray the chance to grow their working age population, without the need to provide employment for those they are looking to attract to the island. However, to be able to attract households who can take employment with them, housing is required and the lack of available housing on the island will impact on potential actions the Westray Development Trust or others might take to try and attract households with existing employment to Westray for a lifestyle change.

Housing Stock

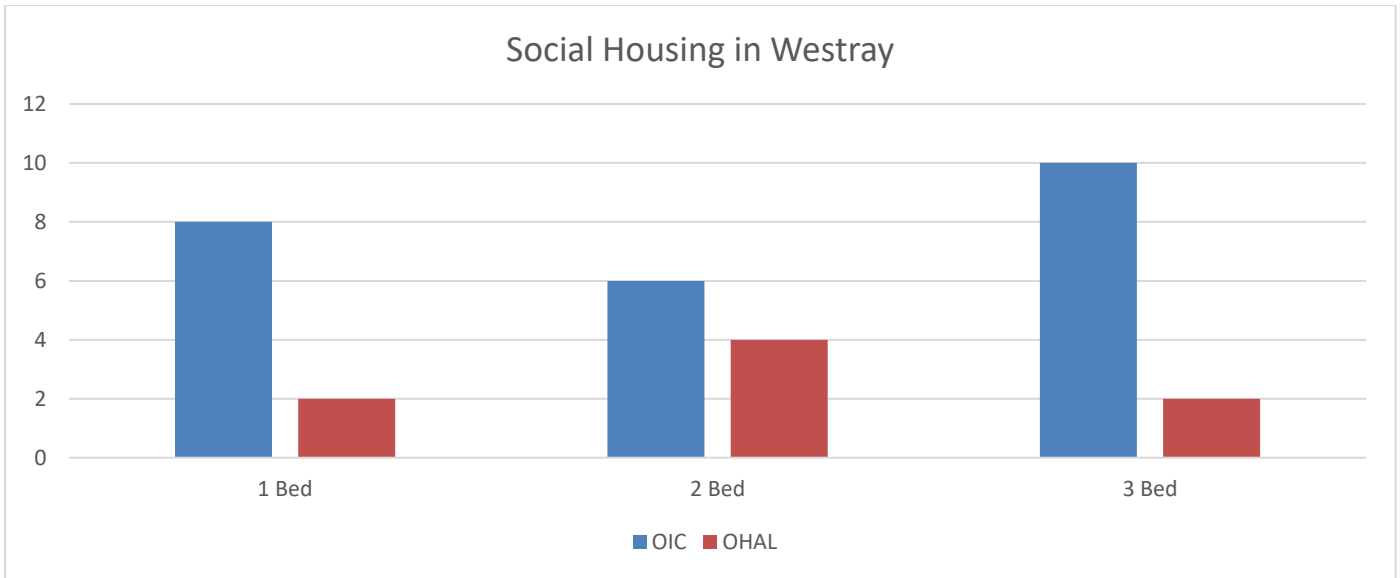
Housing Numbers and Tenure

Westray’s total housing stock stands at 321. This is the highest of any of Orkney’s islands by quite some way, with Sanday coming in second with 207. The graph below shows the percentage of total housing stock in each of the islands that are second homes or empty properties. All of the North Isles, except for Shapinsay, have higher percentages of second and empty homes than Mainland Orkney Westray is around average in terms of second homes at 6% of stock (20), but is below average for empty homes at 2.5% of stock (8). This shows that there are fewer properties in Westray being used as holiday accommodation and not long-term housing, or properties on the Council Tax Register that are classed as empty and unused. There may well be the opportunity for some of the second homes or empty properties to be brought back into full-time housing use with the new Council Tax increases for empty and second homes.



(Orkney Islands Council, 2024)

There are 32 social rented properties on Westray. The graph below shows the breakdown of the stock by the number of bedrooms.

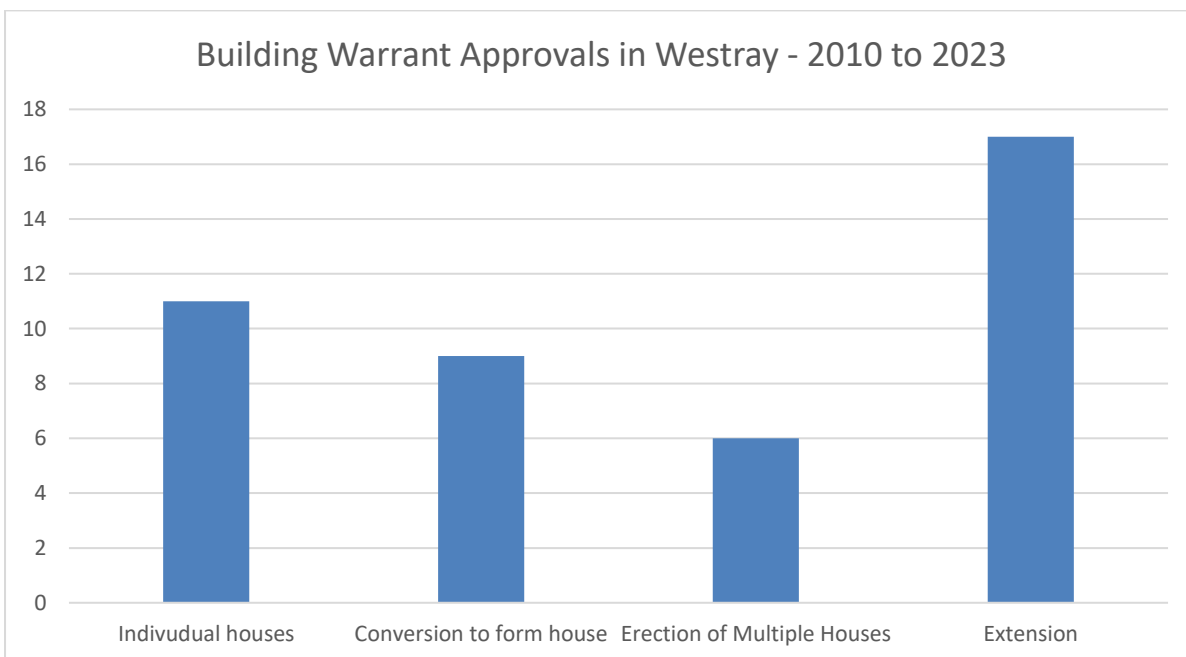


(Source: Orkney Islands Council & Orkney Housing Association, 2024)

The graph shows that Westray has a good mix of social rented housing stock across one, two and three-bedroom sizes. There are no four or five-bedroom social rented properties in any of Orkney’s outer islands. The Westray Development Trust’s four one-bedroom flats at Bayview provide some additional single person or couple housing, but the provision of additional family housing through projects like Jerusalem will enhance the available affordable rented stock and provide family housing that can be rented through a local lettings plan, rather than via the social rented housing waiting list. This will open up allocations to a wider and more varied demographic. Additional three and four-bedroom properties will provide extra accommodation at the larger end of the market, filling another need.

Property Completions

Westray is lucky to have an established island-based building contractor. This provides a huge benefit as it removes the need to try and get a contractor from Mainland Orkney. The table below outlines the new build completions, conversions and extensions that have been granted building warrant on Westray between 2010 and 2024.

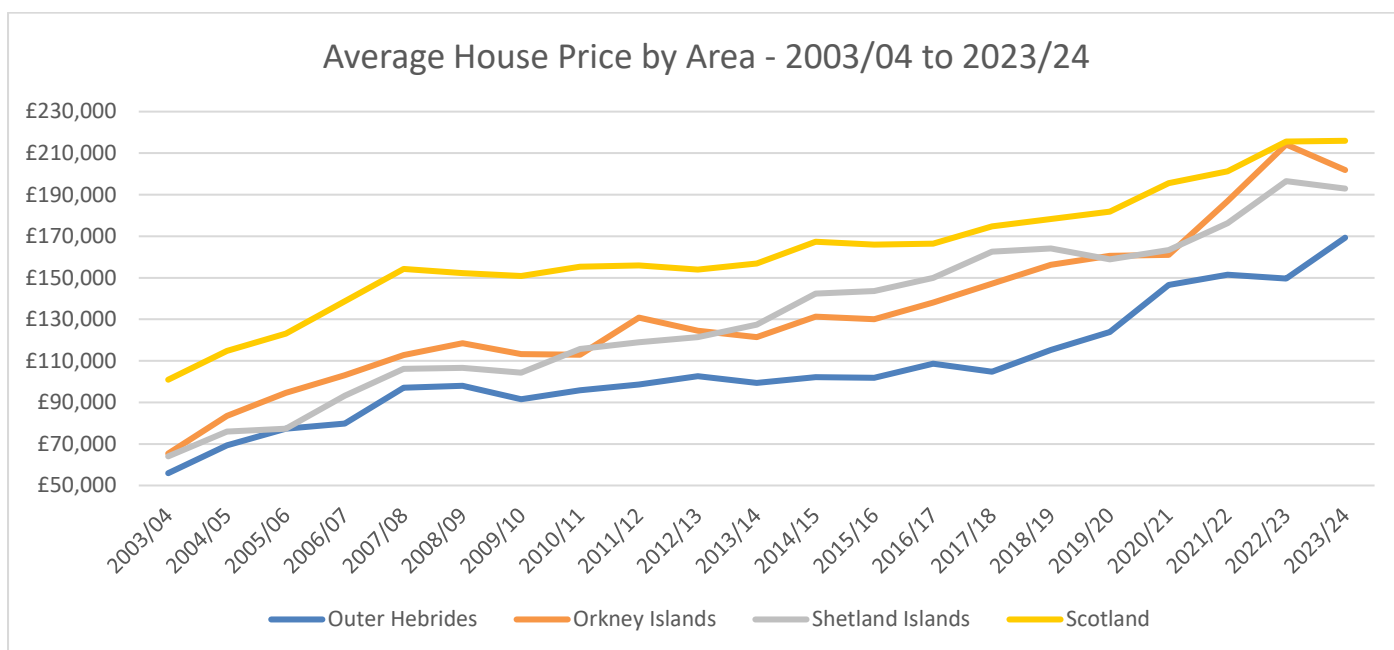


(Source: Orkney Islands Council)

The graph shows that there have been an additional 26 properties developed on Westray over the period and an additional 17 properties have had some form of extension added. These are quite healthy numbers and show that the building stock in Westray is expanding. Ten of the new builds/conversions relate to Orkney Islands Council (4), Orkney Islands Property Development Ltd’s Kalisgarth extension (2) and the Westray Development Trust’s Bayview project (4). That means there were only 16 private new build completions over the 14-year period. With the Council and Orkney Islands Property Development Ltd unlikely to look at any future development on Westray the impetus for future development falls upon households and the Trust.

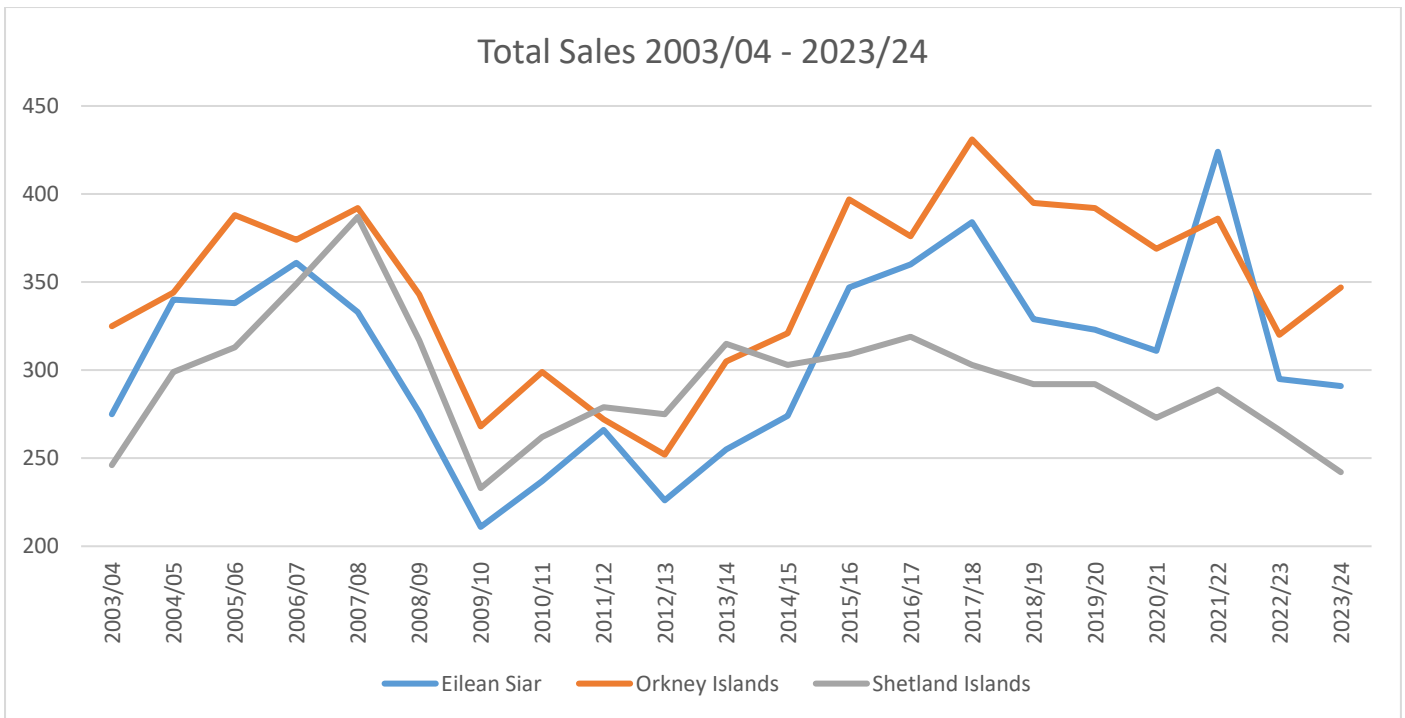
House Sales

The average house price in Orkney increased by £53,100 between 2020/21 (£161,081) and 2022/23 (£214,182), before falling by £12,281 to £201,901 in 2023/24. Even with the decline over 2023/24 there has still been a £40,820 increase in the average cost of buying a house in Orkney over the last four years and this has increased pressure on households, particularly younger and lower income households, who have not seen their incomes increase by anywhere near an amount that would make that an affordable increase. Orkney has seen the highest increase in house prices of any local authority in Scotland over the period from 2003/04 to 2023/24 with a 209% increase in prices. The Scottish average is 125% increase. However, Orkney has also seen the sharpest drop in prices in 2023/24 with a 5.63% decrease against the Scottish average of a 0.66% increase. The graph below shows the increase in house prices in Orkney between 2003/04 and 2023/24



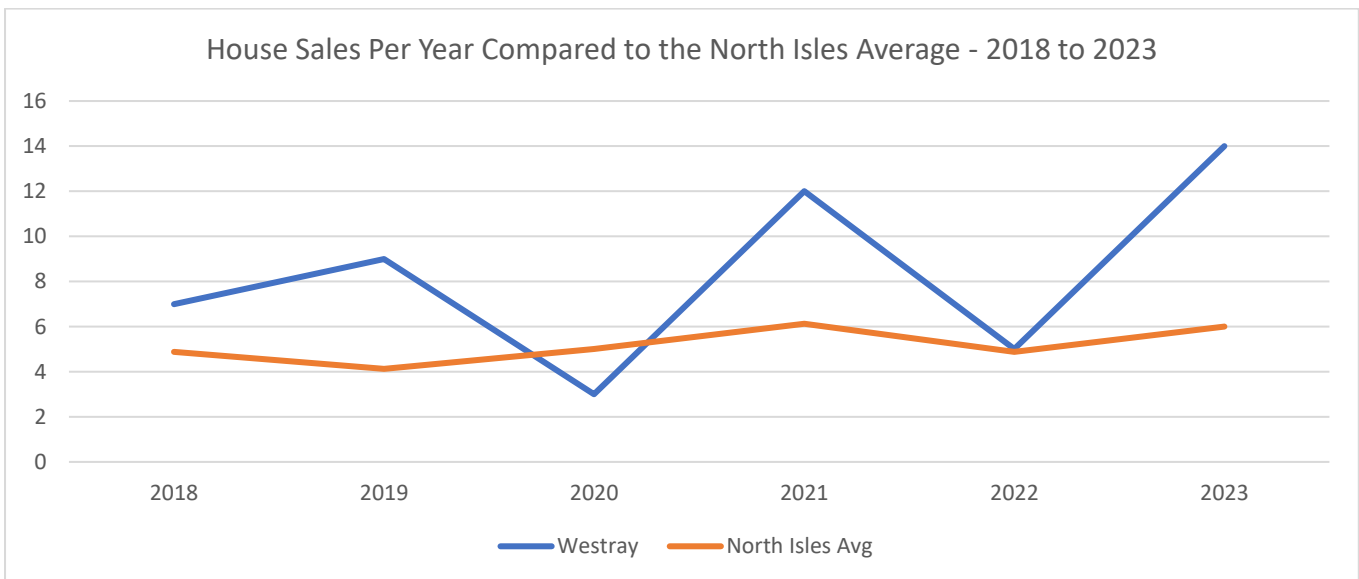
(Source: Registers of Scotland Monthly House Prices)

The number of house sales in Orkney has once again rebounded slightly in 2023/24 following the decline in 2022/23 caused by the rapid increase in interest rates and the dampening effect that had on the housing market. Sale numbers in Shetland and the Outer Hebrides continued to fall from the 2022/23 levels. This shows the strength of the demand for housing in Orkney. The correction in prices also shows the market correcting itself slightly as it has done a number of times over the 2003/04 to 2023/24 period, particularly after key events that have shocked the market, like the 2008 and 2012 financial crashes. The graph below shows the sales totals over the 2003/04 to 2023/24 period and shows the sharp decline in sales due to the 2008 crash, Covid 19 and the 2022 interest rate rises.



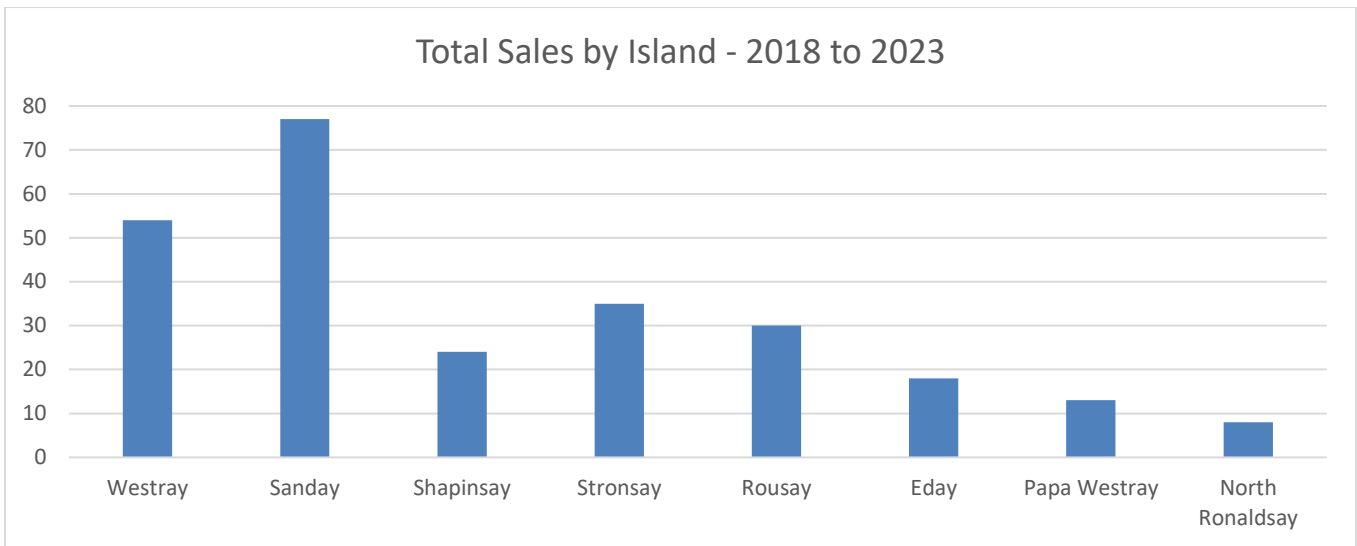
(Source: Registers of Scotland Monthly House Prices)

Turning to sales on Westray, Rightmove data suggests that four properties have already been sold on Westray in 2024. 14 were sold in 2023 and if the 2024 trend continues it looks like 2024 will be another high year for house sales on Westray. The graph below shows the trend of house sales on Westray compared to the North Isles average. There was only one occasion over the six-year period when sales in Westray were below the average and another where sales were equal to the average. In every other year sales were higher. This is entirely expected as Westray is the largest of Orkney's outer islands.



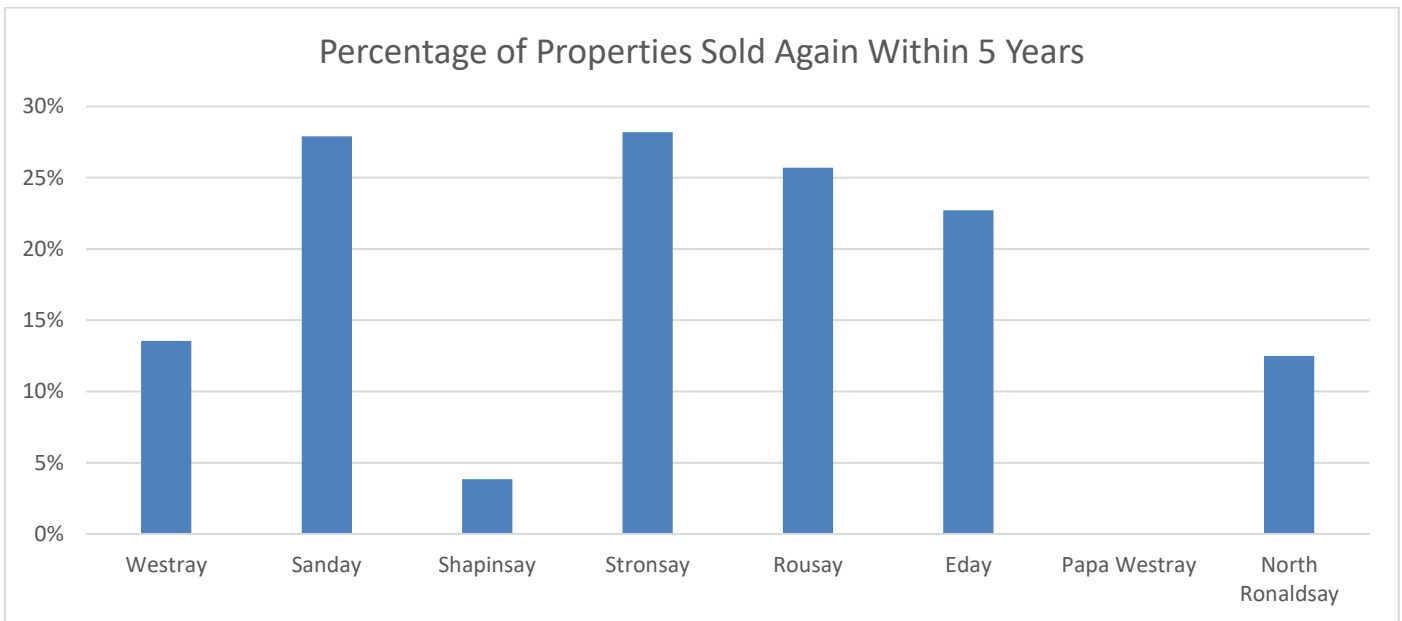
(Source: Rightmove)

Westray is second only to Sanday in the total number of sales over the 2018 to 2023 period. The graph below shows the breakdown across each of Orkney's North Isles.



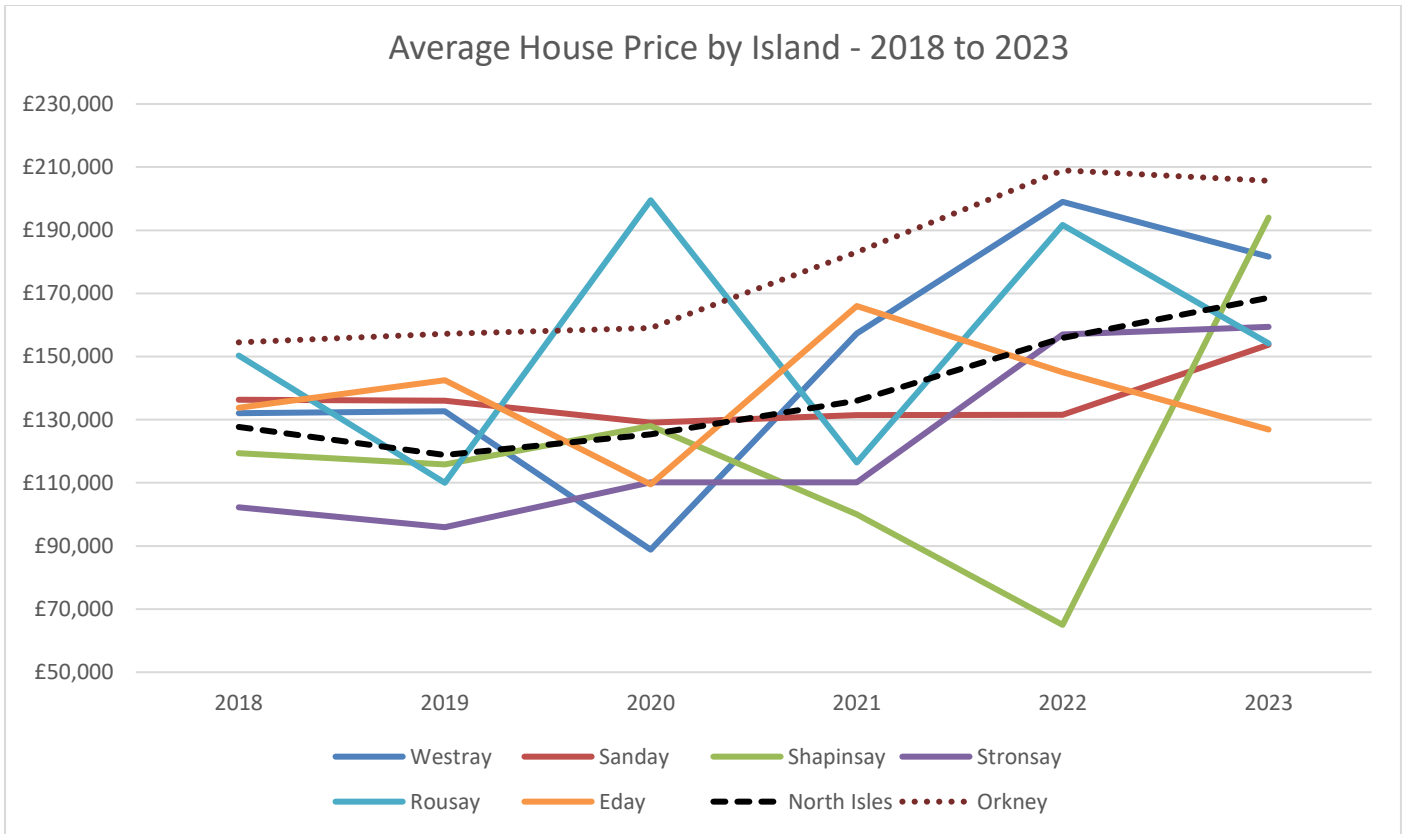
(Source: Rightmove)

One telling piece of comparable data between Westray and the other North Isles is the percentage of properties sold between 2018 and 2024 were sold again within five years. Westray's figure of 13.56% is significantly lower than Sanday, Stronsay, Rousay or Eday and is only beaten by Shapinsay, Papa Westray and North Ronaldsay. This indicates a much more stable population in Westray when compared to their other large outer North Isles neighbours who are seeing a higher turnover of property.



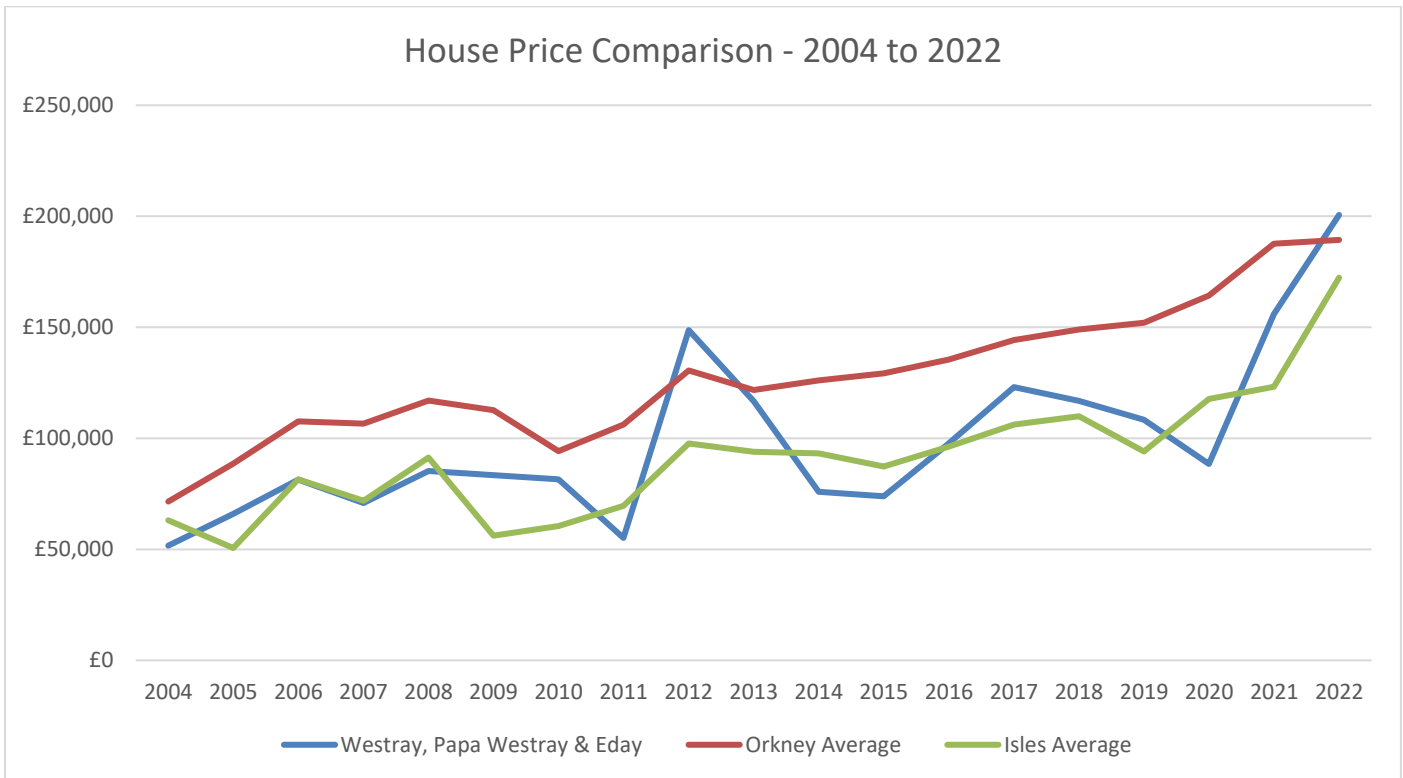
(Source: Rightmove)

In terms of house prices, the average house price in Westray was £181,643 in 2023. This compares to an Orkney average of £205,699 for calendar year 2023 and a combine North Isles average of £168,609. Since 2021 Westray's house price has surged to much closer to the Orkney average and well beyond the North Isles average. There was only one year when the Westray average was below the North Isles average and that was probably due to the very small sale numbers in Westray in 2020. These figures are outlined in the graph below.



(Source: Rightmove)

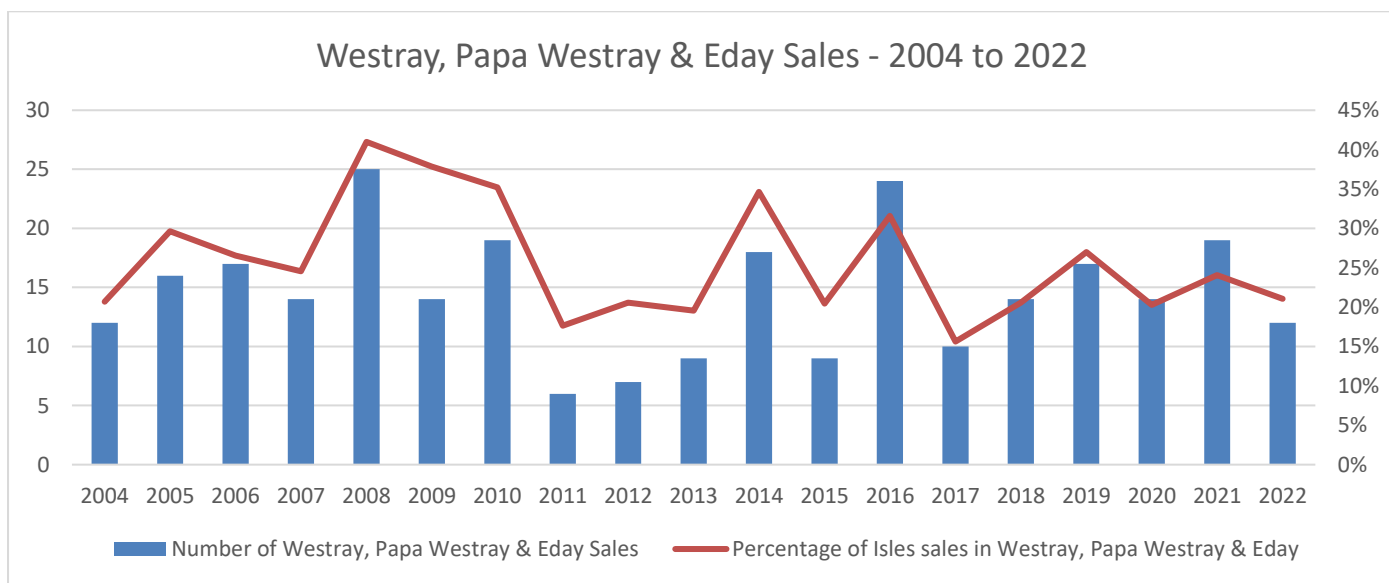
The graph below shows the change in house prices in Westray, Papa Westray and Eday, as well as the Orkney and North Isles averages between 2004 and 2022. Prices for Westray, Papa Westray and Eday fluctuate quite significantly due to the small number of sales making up the average.



(Source: Scottish Government, 2024)

The graph shows how prices in Westray, Papa Westray and Eday have fluctuated over the period 2004 to 2022, with some significant increases, including a huge rise from £55,000 in 2011 to £150,000 in 2012 and another significant increase from £88,518 in 2020 to £200,592 in 2022. This highlights the danger of small data samples, but still provides some interesting data. The graph shows that the Westray, Papa Westray and Eday data zone crisscrossed the Isles average throughout the period and was below the Orkney average for all but two years, both of which coincided with the significant average price increase which was probably due to a small number of well above average sales which will skew a small data sample like this. What can be seen from the data is that the trend line for all three areas has been upward and this will increase pressure on younger households and first-time buyers in particular.

The graph below outlines the volume of sales in the Westray, Papa Westray and Eday data zone between 2004 and 2022. It also shows the percentage of house sales in Orkney’s Outer Isles that took place in the Westray, Papa Westray and Eday data zone each year. The volume of sales in the Westray, Papa Westray and Eday data zone has fluctuated over the years, as would be expected. These range from 6 to 25, with an average of 15 sales each year. The percentage of total isles sales taking place in Westray, Papa Westray and Eday has also fluctuated from 15% to 41%.



(Source: Scottish Government, 2024)

Market research shows that there is currently (May 2024) one property for sale on the open market, Cleaton House which has a significant asking price of £450,000. There is an old croft which needs extensive renovations prior to being lived in. It is for sale for £70,000. There are also two serviced sites available for £25,000 each. The Trust are interested in another property which is available via private sale and another called Lastigar has recently been sold. There have been a further four sales in 2024. As outlined in the graph on page 11 there were 14 sales in Westray in 2023, but only five in 2022. This shows that the Westray housing market can be very limited and restricted with few options available to households. So far in 2024 the sales figures are comparable to what was seen in 2023, but it is unknown how many more properties may come to the market over the rest of 2024. With such a limited private sale market additional housing stock will need to be developed if the population of the island is to be enhanced and younger households in particular have the chance of remaining on or moving to the island.

Existing Community and Social Rental Properties

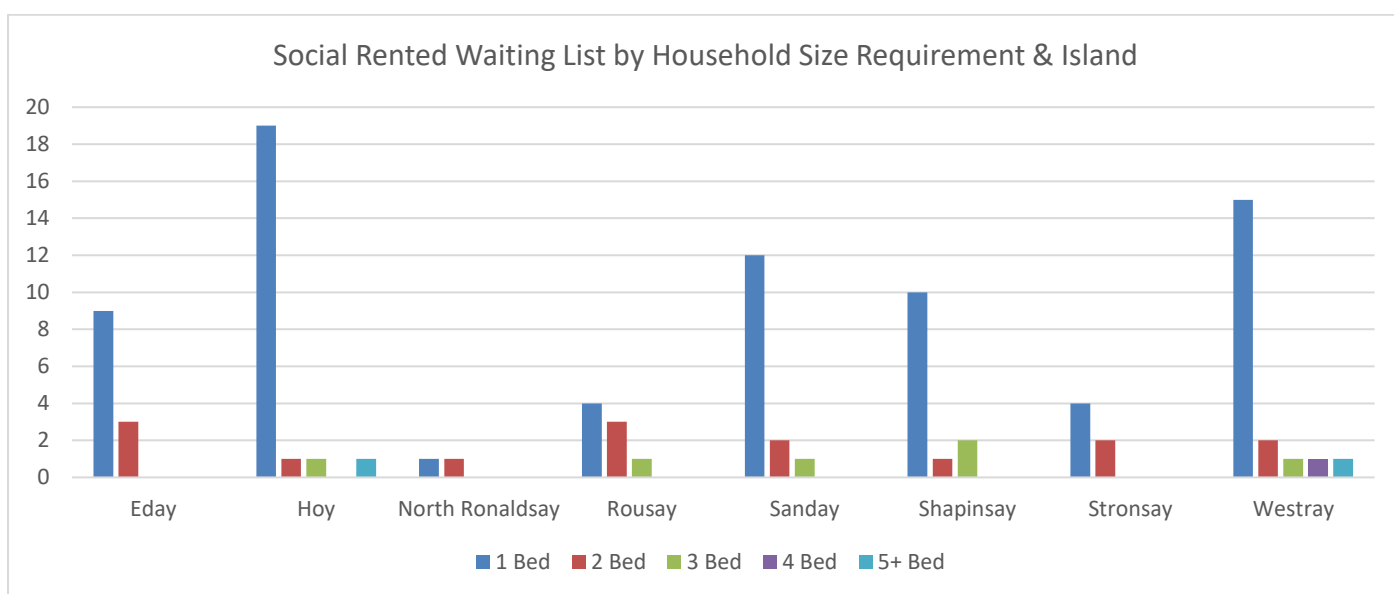
Both Orkney Islands Council (24) and Orkney Housing Association (8) have social rented housing on Westray and Orkney Islands Property Developments Ltd also provide five flats and two semi-detached houses for older people at the Kalisgarth Care Facility, the only development of its type in Orkney’s outer islands.

The Westray Development Trust own four flats at Bayview in Pierowall. Two of these flats are currently occupied and the Trust are advertising the other two flats, but have so far been unable to attract tenants. The fact that two one-bedroom flats are available and are proving difficult to let does not impact upon the potential need or demand for larger family housing. A number of things have changed in Westray since the 2017 housing needs assessment was undertaken. This includes Brexit, which saw a significant percentage of the Eastern European workforce that lived on Westray and largely worked in the crab factory and bakery. The closure of the island’s crab factory and the associated reduction in the number of Eastern European households who were living in very poor caravan accommodation vastly reduced the expected market for one-bedroom accommodation in Pierowall.

Social Rented Housing Waiting List

As outlined above Westray is second only to Hoy in terms of the amount of social rented housing stock there is on the island. This section will explore the social housing waiting list in Westray and compare it to the other islands, as well as the Orkney total.

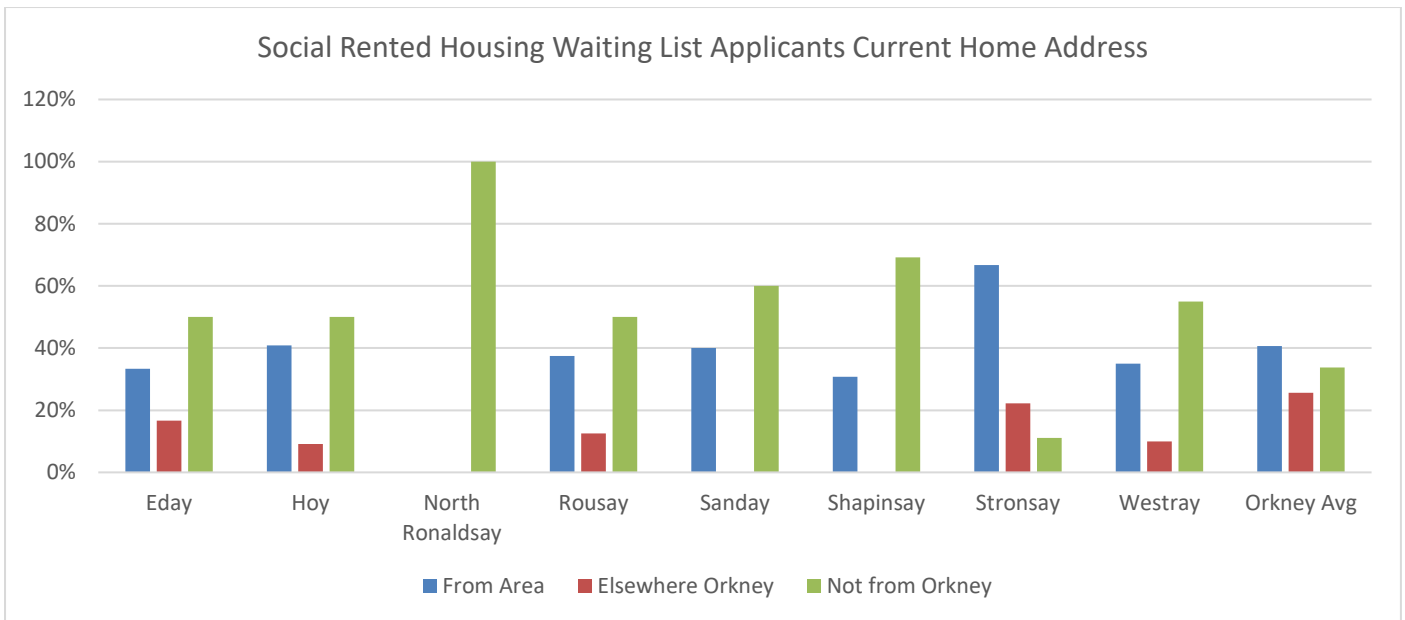
The graph below outlines the total households on the social rented housing waiting list for each of Orkney’s outer islands by the bedroom size required by each household.



(Source: Orkney Islands Council, May 2024)

The graph clearly shows that the vast majority of households are eligible for a one-bedroom property across the majority of the islands. This reflects the wider picture in Orkney as a whole almost exactly. However, while a household may be eligible for a one-bedroom property there will be a significant number of households within this category who are either young couples or older households who would prefer a two-bedroom property that would allow them to either have children or have separate bedrooms or space for an overnight carer or additional space for storage. That would reduce the one-bedroom total and increase the two-bedroom totals. The fact that the Westray Development Trust has two one-bedroom flats advertised which it is currently struggling to let adds to the evidence that the one-bedroom figure for the social rented housing waiting list is probably made up largely of households who would rather have a two-bedroom property to grow into, than those who actually want a one-bedroom property.

The table below outlines where the households on the social rented housing waiting list currently reside. The graph clearly shows that for all areas, except Stronsay which has a very low percentage of applicants from outside Orkney, more than 50% of applicants were from outside Orkney. The second highest percentage for all areas except Stronsay was from those already on the island, with those in other parts of Orkney making up the smallest group. This has been the case for the majority of islands for years. The Orkney average is very different with those within the current area being the highest percentage, followed by those outside Orkney and finally those in other areas of Orkney.



(Source: Orkney Islands Council, May 2024)

The figures outlined in the graph show that there is a demand from households outside Orkney to move to Orkney's islands. This has generally always been the case, but the figure should be treated with caution. Quite a number of households looking to move from outside Orkney will select a number of different islands in their application without knowing a huge amount about the places they are expressing an interest in. This means that should a property be offered on a particular island to one of these households there is a higher chance that it will either be rejected or that the household will not remain on the island in the long-term.

Housing Needs Survey Responses

As part of the needs case an island wide housing needs survey was undertaken. The results are outlined below.

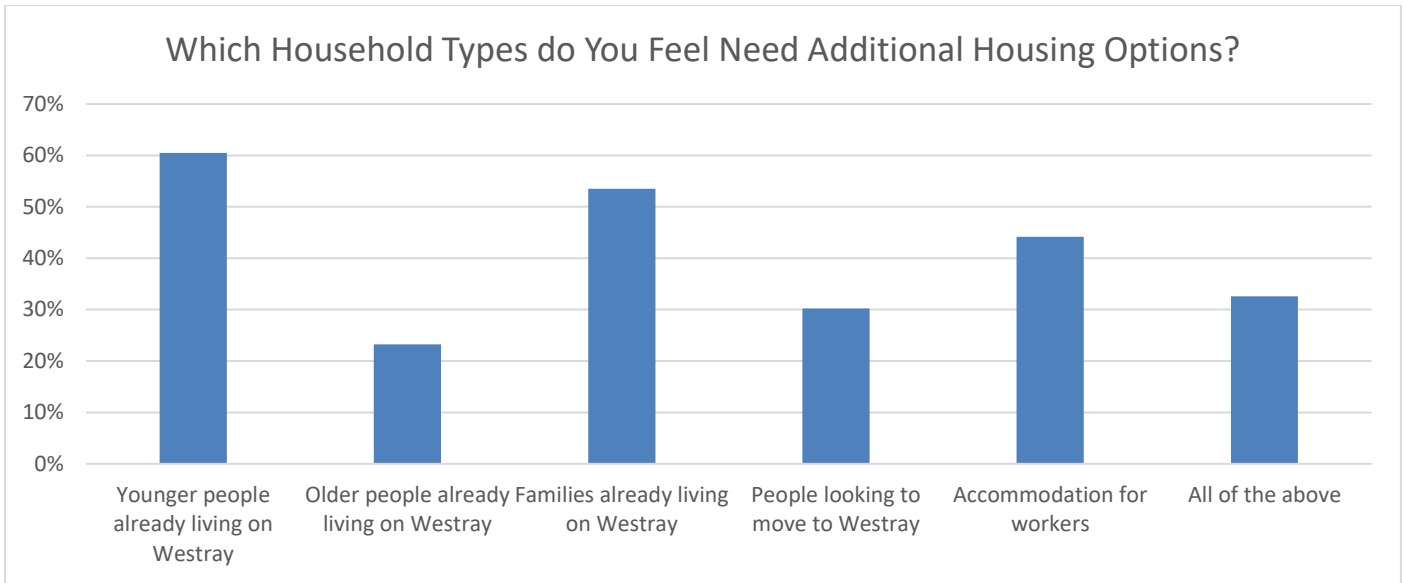
Responses Overview

There were 64 responses to the survey of the Westray community. This indicates a 22% return rate from the estimated 291 households on Westray. There were also a significant number of comments within the survey, the vast majority of which were positive in terms of support for the work the Trust is doing, but also in terms of the need for additional housing for people either already on the island or looking to move to the island, specifically those looking to take on some vital roles within the community. Comments will be reviewed in the section below.

Need for Housing

The vast majority of comments in the survey support the need for an increase in the amount and availability of long-term housing on the island. This was echoed in the answer to the question 'Do you feel additional housing is required on Westray?' where 52 of the 64 respondents (81%) answered yes.

A question was asked about the types of households who survey respondents feel housing is needed for and the graph below outlines the responses. Accommodation for young people already on Westray came out top with 60% of respondents feeling this was important. Families already living on Westray was second at 53%, while accommodation for workers was third at 44%. All of the above came next at 33%, showing the feeling expressed by a number of respondents that the development of any housing would be welcome and would help the island. People looking to move to Westray came in fifth with 30% support and lastly housing for older people already living on Westray. This was of no real surprise as Westray already has the Kalisgarth care facility which provides care for older people who are unable to manage to live independently. The significant support for housing for younger people and families already on Westray shows where respondents feel priority should be given.

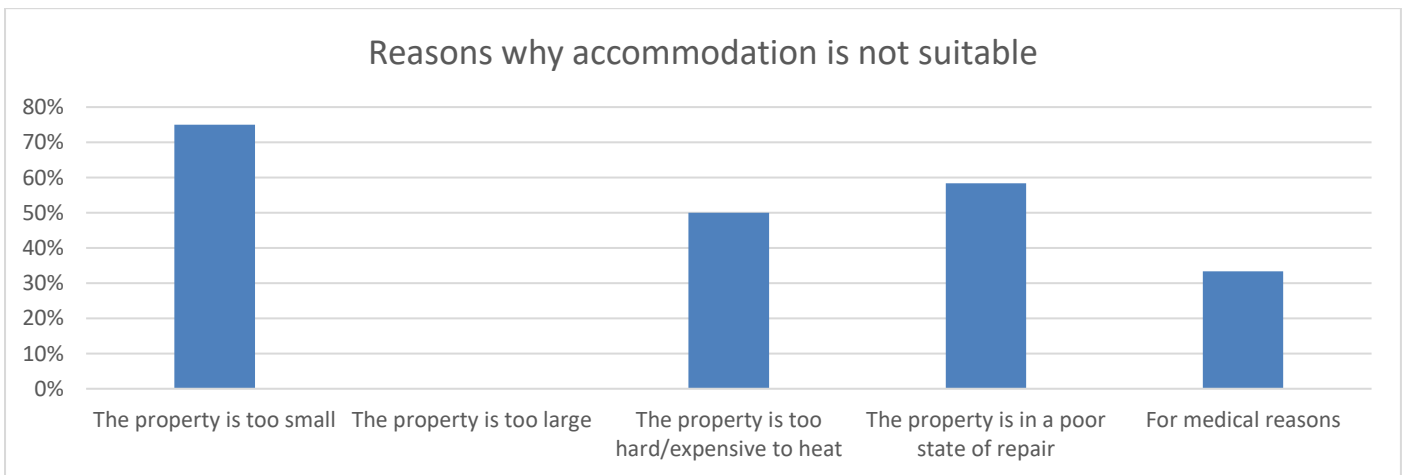


(Source: 2024 Westray Housing Needs Survey)

Building on the question around the household types most in need of additional housing and the feeling that younger people already on Westray was the key priority group, a question was asked about whether respondents were ‘concerned that local young people may be being priced out of available housing options?’ 46 of the 52 responses to this question, making up 88%, replied that they were concerned.

Perceived Local Demand

Of the 51 responses 39 respondents (76%) said their current accommodation was suitable for their needs. 12 respondents (24%) said their accommodation was not suitable. The main reasons respondents gave for their property not being suitable were being too small (75%), the property is in a poor state of repair (58%) or that the property was hard or expensive to heat (50%).



(Source: 2024 Westray Housing Survey)

The responses show the need for additional family sized properties as no respondents said their property was too large and nine households said their current property is too small for their household. As outlined above there was significant support for housing that would help younger people and families stay on the island and a number of comments in the survey touched on the lack of larger properties on the island. This adds weight to the case for the Westray Development Trust to look into developing additional family sized three and potentially even four-bedroom houses. The one-bedroom properties at Bayview provide a great resource for smaller households and the potential of an additional two-bedroom property would help provide capacity at that size as well.

There was significant support for additional housing for younger people. 88% of respondents were worried that younger Westray households are being priced out of the market for housing by people looking to move to the island from elsewhere. This is a problem that is prevalent all over rural and island Scotland and community led housing initiatives are a key way of providing at least some of the additional housing required.

Perceived Incomer demand

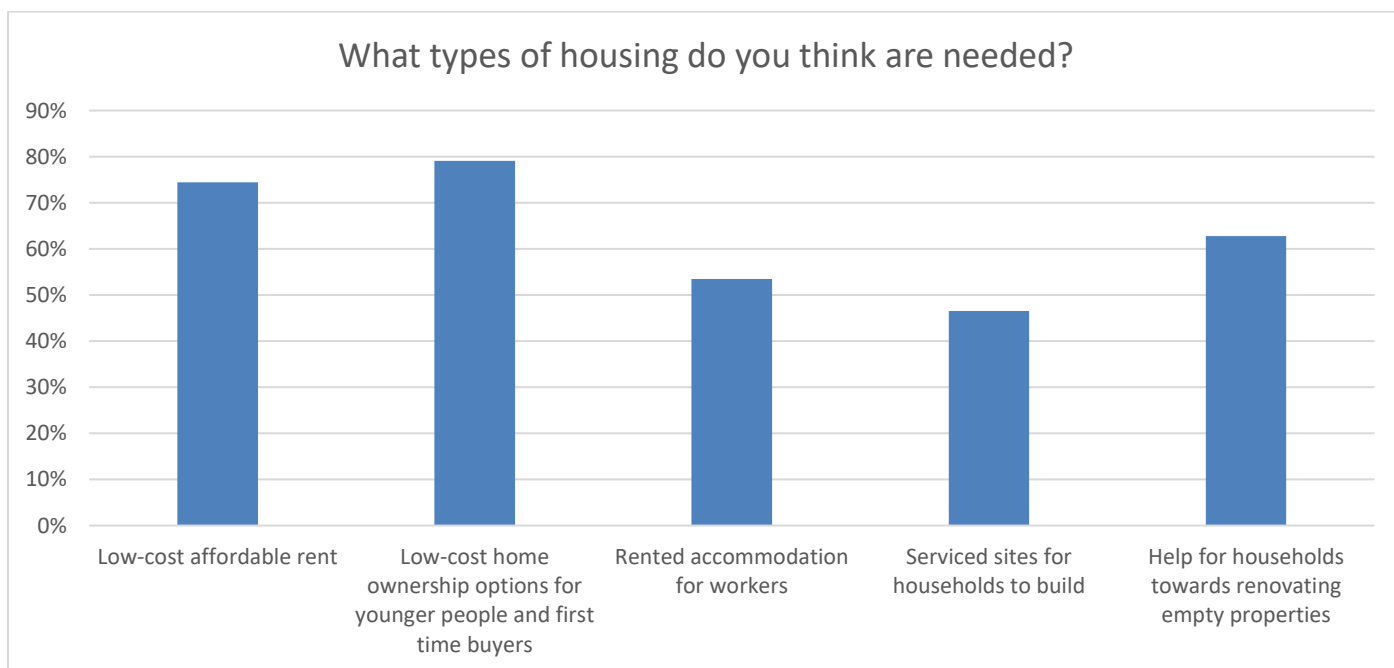
30% of respondents (13) feel that housing for people looking to move to Westray is required and 44% (19) feel that housing for workers is required. These figures are nowhere near as high as the support for housing for young people and families already living on Westray, but they do show an understanding that the island will require to draw in people with specific skillsets for specific roles that cannot be filled on the island. As outlined above, it is important to retain as many young households and families as possible, but it is also important to try and attract new households to Westray, particularly if there are skills gaps or jobs that need to be filled. Supporting the school roll with additional children is also something that could be accomplished by drawing more people to the island.

The use of a local lettings plan will allow the Trust to focus priority for available housing on the most pressing needs at the time of allocation. This will help any housing that is developed to be as effective as possible.

Housing Types

Survey respondents were asked what types of housing they felt were needed on Westray. The graph below outlines the responses and show support for a range of household types, primarily focused around low-cost home ownership options (79%), low cost affordable rent (74%) and help towards renovating empty properties (63%) as the top three. This reinforces the theme in the survey for additional housing to support helping younger people and families already on Westray into suitable housing. The fact rented accommodation for workers (53%) and self-build sites (47%) also received support shows that respondents also understand that additional housing for other demographic groups is also important, but not as important as providing housing for local young people and families.

Help with renovating an empty property also scores highly at 63%, which is an interesting and positive response as it is a tenure type where the Trust could potentially help support households accessing an empty property to renovate, without the need to invest money themselves.



(Source: 2024 Westray Housing Survey)

Support for Proposed Projects

The housing survey asked the community if they supported the Westray Development Trust's proposal to develop additional housing on the island. 46 of the 52 people who answered the question (88%) said that they supported the Westray Development Trust developing housing projects. This is an excellent endorsement of the Trust's proposals to develop additional housing on Westray.

There were a couple of comments raised about the potential that the Trust purchasing property for rent may take away business from private landlords or stop private developers developing additional private rented accommodation. There is a small possibility this might be the case, however, it is much more likely that any development by the Westray Development Trust is likely to replace long-term lets that may be withdrawn from the rental market due to the new requirements that are being placed on landlords around energy efficiency etc. As is the case in many other parts of Scotland it is more likely that private landlords will leave the long-term rental sector rather than develop additional rental housing. There is also the fact that what is being proposed is community led rental housing, which is generally let out at rent levels much closer to social rented housing than the private rented sector. This will enable households that cannot afford private rented properties the potential to rent at a more affordable level.

Other comments suggested that the real housing needed was housing that young locals could purchase so they can get themselves on the housing ladder. This is certainly something that the Westray Development Trust could look at as part of its next phase of housing development. The property that is initially being considered has space for three new build properties on the neighbouring field. This would be the perfect site to potentially develop housing for low cost home ownership.

Survey Comments

There were over 45 comments on different elements of the survey. Many of these have been touched on through the proceeding sections. Key take aways are that the vast majority of respondents who commented feel that additional housing is needed on Westray, especially to help retain and attract younger people and families. Rental housing, at an affordable rent, is seen as a good step, but many respondents would like to see more done to try and help local young households get onto the property ladder themselves. The flats at Bayview were held in good regard and many of those who commented said that with the flats now in place larger family housing should be the priority. The high cost of housing being a barrier for locals was also raised by a number of other respondents.

There were also some comments against the need for additional housing or the Westray Development Trust developing housing. However, these were very much in the minority.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The above statistical assessment and survey response provides the required evidence that there is a need for additional housing on Westray. Particularly family housing for young people to grow into and for families already on Westray and looking to move to the island. The report outlines how the housing market in Westray isn't easy for local young people to operate in and they are often priced out of the market by households looking to move to Westray. The analysis above also evidences the support of the community for the Westray Development Trust to develop additional housing to help sustain and enhance the community and help some households, particularly young local households, meet their housing needs. This section of the report will outline the recommendations taken from the assessment and the associated conclusions.

As outlined above Westray, like several other communities in Orkney, is looking to sustain and enhance its population and community. There is a clear indication from the housing survey conducted that the island's population feel housing is a key issue for the island and there are concerns that properties that come up for sale will

either be purchased as second homes or will go to wealthier older people, rather than the younger locals of those looking to take up some of the key roles on the island.

There was a robust response from the Westray community to the housing survey that was published, with around a 22% response rate. The vast majority of respondents are supportive of the Trust focusing on housing as a priority and the proposal that the Trust looks to purchase and develop housing. The consultation did not ask about a specific property, but rather asked about community support for the concept of the Trust purchasing and developing housing. The potential that the property currently being explored, Jerusalem, could much like the property that was initially identified, Lastigar, be purchased from underneath the Trust meant that it was felt more appropriate to focus on the concept rather than a specific property in case that property became unavailable and a further consultation would need to take place on a different property. This could enhance feelings of consultation fatigue.

In light of the analysis, housing needs survey responses and conclusions outlined above this report recommends that the Westray Development Trust look to secure Jerusalem should the purchases and any required renovations be affordable and renovate it as a two-bedroom property for affordable rent. The report also recommends that the Trust start to explore the potential for phase two of the project and the three new build properties that could be developed on the site quickly to try and ensure access to funding from the Rural and Islands Housing Fund. The report recommends that low cost home ownership models be explored with the Scottish Government that would allow the Trust to develop housing and then sell equity shares in the properties to local young people, with the Scottish Government hopefully retaining the remaining equity stakes.

It is also recommended that the Development Trust consider engaging with Orkney Islands Council's Empty Homes Development Officer to try and identify any empty properties that may be available for redevelopment. Several respondents mentioned empty properties as opportunities for redevelopment and if households could be supported to purchase and renovate empty properties, without the need for the Trust to undertake the development it would allow a few households to meet their housing need and help provide additional housing units to the island.