

***Press Release ***

HMS Tern's Future Looks Bright

HMS Tern Naval Air Station in Birsay is a vital part of Orkney's WW2 heritage. Since being saved from demolition in 1986, there has always been the ambition to preserve and develop the site as a community facility and a visitor attraction.

HMS Tern was operational from 1941 to 1949 and fully closed in 1957. It was one of 4 local military airfields that supported the Home Fleet in Scapa Flow and has retained the greatest number of structures.

Birsay Heritage Trust have taken an active role in protecting and preserving several of the buildings on the OIC owned land. In the last 10 years, a dedicated sub-group of BHT volunteers have carried out clearance on the site, organised local tours and run community open days.

BHT's recent application to the Scottish Land Fund for stage 1 funding was successful. This will fund the business plan and survey needed to apply for SLF stage 2 funding for some structures and part of the surrounding land.

Orkney Islands Council (OIC) own 14 acres of the site, including the majority of the main structures. They have agreed to transfer ownership to the community for £1 plus legal fees. The runways and remaining land are owned by local agricultural businesses. BHT are hopeful they can purchase some of this additional land to enhance the visitor experience at HMS Tern.

Birsay Heritage Trust (BHT) is a registered charity formed in 1998 to; "continue the preservation of the historical, cultural and natural heritage of the parish of Birsay and to advance the education of the public in the history, culture, natural history and other features of life in the parish of Birsay, Orkney."

Issy Grieve, BHT's Chair, stated:

"We are excited to have the opportunity to progress this project. Our volunteers have done an amazing job so far, helping clear the debris from some of the important buildings. Securing SLF funding will be the first step towards preserving the site and opening it up to locals and visitors. The first phase will focus on the iconic Control Tower and Cinema buildings. We hope the local community will support our efforts"

An important part of the business plan is the community input. BHT along with their consultants, SKS Scotland, have put together a short survey to gauge community support for the project.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/hmstern>

More information on HMS Tern can be found on the Birsay Heritage Trust website, <https://www.birsay.org.uk/HMS-TERN.htm> and the HMS Tern Facebook page; <https://www.facebook.com/HMSTernOrkney/>

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