

Eriskay house is polystyrene-perfect



It may look like a conventional house, but beneath the pristine white paint lies a secret.

Rather than conventional bricks and mortar, the structure of Donald and Kathleen MacDonald's new house on Eriskay is composed of giant polystyrene blocks.

The blocks are clipped together like a giant Lego set, then concrete is poured in. The insulating properties of polystyrene create an ultra-energy efficient house.

Builder Roddy MacInnes explained some of the features that make the house so special.

He said: "We built the house on standard foundations, but the whole idea is to create an airtight living space.

"So the windows on this house have no vents, and there isn't even a letterbox.

"Once the concrete is poured, it's just one continuous wall around the house.

"We then put a special silicon render on the outside which can be painted, and plasterboard on the inside, so it looks and feels like a normal home.

"The other clever part of the design is the air pump which circulates air round the house.

"Heat is redistributed between the rooms rather than being lost to the outside.

"So if you are cooking a pot of soup, the heat will be retained and used in the house.

"And the air is filtered and cleaned once an hour."

The house was built for Donald McDonald, a property developer in Glasgow. It's currently being let out as a luxury, eco-friendly self-catering home.

Donald plays in the well-known band Eriskay Lilt, so it seemed natural to name the house Eriskay Lilt too.

Donald said: "I always watch 'Grand Designs' on the TV and this type of property often features.

"I was interested in a green home with reduced energy bills.

"The speed of the build was amazing, it went up very fast, it was good to see the progress."

The electrics in the home were installed by South Uist renewables company West Coast Energee. Donald is currently discussing with West Coast Energee the possibility of erecting a wind turbine on the site to create an even greener enterprise.

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Donald and Kathleen MacDonald outside Eriskay Lilt.

Passenger numbers plunge at isles airports

Passenger numbers are down significantly at Barra and Benbecula airports, according to figures released by Highland and Islands Airports (HIAL) last month.

Numbers at Benbecula fell by 25% between June 2012 and June this year.

There were 23% less passengers using Barra airport over the same period.

Figures for both airports show increasing numbers of passengers in 2013 until the cuts in air services between Barra, Benbecula and Stornoway in April this year.

This March, Barra had 11% more passengers than in the previous year.

By May there were 32% fewer.

For Benbecula, there were 3% more passengers in March 2013 than in the

same month in 2012.

But April saw the figure plunge by 16.4%.

Despite the declining figures, HIAL have reiterated their commitment to providing air services through these airports.

A spokesman for HIAL said: "We are committed to providing these lifeline air services to these communities.

"There is no question over the future of the airports.

"It is part of our public service remit and the routes are subsidised by the Scottish Government."



Benbecula airport.