

Kit homes bring back character to islands

By Heather Rose

THE Skye Bridge may be the most obvious structural link between the largest of the inner Hebrides and mainland Scotland. But now there's a new structural link bringing that picturesque location to the notice of the rest of the UK.

Skye Homes, set up in 2002, is proving the beauty of the island's homes can complement the landscape in areas outwith Skye.

Soon more home-hunters will be making this connection when Skye Homes joins the line-up of exhibitors at the Scottish Homebuilding and Renovating Show at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow next weekend, May 17 and 18.

For Skye Homes founder John MacDonald launching this kit home-based company was the continuation of a family tradition. His father, and generations before him, were stonemasons who built stone houses all around the island. Yet John had originally been destined for a very different future. He had studied engineering in



Glasgow and worked with Shell, returning to his homeland at holiday times.

"My father wasn't getting any younger," said John, "and I always had it in my mind to come back to Skye to carry on the family building company which he had set up after the war."

It was some years after returning to Skye and the family business that he decided to launch the new venture, a business that was part of MacDonald Brothers Builders during its formation period, before becoming a company in its own right in 2005. John had become

aware of the growth of timber frame housing but felt these could be more akin to large rectangles, offering maximum floor area for minimum cost.

"I felt the traditional-looking croft houses and estate houses on Skye are so beautiful they complement the environment, the mountains and the hills," he said. "These new boxes were changing part of what is now our natural environment. When we looked at the countryside we were seeing lots of very modern buildings."

"There were very few people supplying traditional-looking

houses with the unique aesthetic that would fit into the environment in an actively representative form with all the advantages of timber frame and lots of internal space, so I decided to start Skye Homes."

The designs can be tailored to meet buyers' specific requirements. But Skye Homes can also offer a bespoke service working with the client and creating a property in the Skye theme which matches the client's needs and budget.

Although comparatively new to the timber kit sector, these Skye homes have been capturing the imagination of house-hunters. Already they have surfaced in the Shetland Islands, the Inverness area, Argyll and Bute, the west coast, the Borders, the outer isles, Ireland and the south of England.

The kits range in price from around £14,000 to £15,000 up to around £60,000 to £76,000.

Much to the delight of Skye Homes, planners, too, have welcomed this residential connection with the island's traditional pattern of living. "Whilst there is always a place for modern design, for innovative design, I think the planners have been very pleased with what we have produced," said Mr MacDonald. The

Scottish Homebuilding and Renovating Show is taking place at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow, on May 17 and 18.
Info: www.skyehomes.co.uk

BUILD:
The homes are spacious but reasonably priced

INNOVATIVE:
John MacDonald

