

Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre Development Trust

Report on the Taversoe Inn, Rousay

Prepared by

**Matthew Merritt-Harrison
Merritt-Harrison Catering Consultancy**

July 2026

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Operational Review	4
2.1	Accommodation	4
2.2	Food service	4
2.3	Supply chain	4
2.4	Staffing and service	5
2.5	Working practices	5
2.6	Hygiene, health and safety	6
2.7	Licensing law compliance	8
2.8	Marketing	9
2.9	Training needs	9
3	Conclusion	9

1 Introduction

This report has been prepared on the instruction of the Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre Development Trust (the Trust) and is a review of the operation of the Taversoe Inn on Rousay.

Project brief

The original scope of the brief was to undertake an operational review, identify training needs, evaluate the facilities and prepare a report for the Trust.

Methodology

The approach to the project involved meetings with representatives of the Trust and a site visit to the Taversoe Inn, including a review of the dinner and breakfast offer, and comparison of the offer with what was actually being delivered.

On arrival at 2.30pm, the inn was locked up and there was no access until 4.00pm.

Photographs were taken of both the inside and outside of the premises, to inform the report.

There was limited engagement with the Taversoe team, but they were cooperative in respect of the site visit.

Verbal feedback was provided to the Trust following the visit.

Finally, the report was drafted, with options and recommendations for the Trustees to consider.

Background

Rousay is a beautiful island with a population of approximately 260 people.

The Taversoe Inn is the only hospitality facility on the island and consists of four letting rooms, a restaurant and a bar.

There is a second retail catering facility, comprising a bar and café, at the ferry terminal, next to the Trust's offices, but it is currently closed and no longer has a functioning kitchen. However, this is an ideal trading location, given that all residents and visitors to the island pass it on their way to and from Mainland.

The Trust acquired the inn some two years ago and set up a trading company in April 2026: Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre Trading Company Limited, SC318527 (the Company), as a wholly owned trading subsidiary of the Trust, but it has never traded. Normal practice is that commercial activities are traded via such companies, with any profit being donated back to the trust; however, this is not the case in respect of the Taversoe Inn.

2 Operational Review

2.1 Accommodation

There are four letting rooms which are of a good standard, with a small number of maintenance issues including a cracked mirror and windows that require attention. All rooms have a sea view and are being maintained well in respect of housekeeping.

2.2 Food service

The website for the Taversoe Inn has a page headed 'Fresh – Local – Flavour'. It states: 'Our menu is shaped by what the island provides. Each week, dishes change depending on the freshest local ingredients available, as we work closely with growers, fishermen, and producers of all sizes across Rousay and Orkney. This commitment means you won't always see the same menu twice, but it ensures everything we serve is fresh, seasonal, and full of character, with something to suit every taste.' This is, at best, factually inaccurate and, at worst, grossly misleading.

There was no lunch offer, but the dinner menu consisted of a choice of two starters or a soup, five main courses (three of which were chicken) and three desserts, all served with ice cream. There were no fish, vegetarian or vegan options, and other than one reference to Aberdeen Angus, there was nothing that showcased the Scottish or Orkney larder, or the taste of Scotland that visitors are so attracted by.

The range of food was a low to mid-market pub offering, with no discernible cooking skills required. Presentation was reasonable but not exceptional. Sauces such as barbecue or sweet chilli were bought-in products and the gravy was made with Tesco gravy granules.

2.3 Supply chain

Whilst JW Gray & Co were being used for some products, a proportion of what was in stock was from Lidl and Tesco, including chicken and mince. The haddock in the freezer was Icelandic. Whilst the tomato sauce on the tables was in Heinz bottles, the only bulk sauce in storage was an Alfee's product.

It is understood that some island residents assist with the collection of goods from Mainland, but it is unclear if they have valid vehicle insurance for commercial use, and if so, whether it covers transporting a third party's goods. If it does not, this may invalidate their insurance.

It is understood that the manager also uses his own car for the collection of goods and claims that the car's suspension has been damaged as a result of this activity. The vehicle is nine years old and the MOT record indicates that there have been suspension issues in the past. Therefore, the damage is more likely to be from the previous eight and a half

years' use than the last three months. It is not clear if there is business insurance cover on this car.

In the garden area, there were two cool boxes which required cleaning. It is not clear if these are used for the transport of chilled foods or, if not, how chilled food is safely sourced from Mainland.

Promoting product as fresh and local when it is not, is a breach of the Trade Descriptions Act. It is not clear who is responsible for maintaining and updating the website; however, it is live and the inn can be booked through it.

2.4 Staffing and service

Given the low volume of customers, service was not an issue, and the two members of staff could cope adequately with the service requirement.

Appropriate PPE was not being worn for food preparation, but simply an apron.

In the kitchen, the only wash hand basin was being used to store onions, and there were no disposable towels in the dispensers. This indicates that correct handwashing was not taking place.

Dirty mugs on the stainless steel surface indicated that drinks were being consumed in the kitchen, posing a risk of mouth to hand cross contamination.

2.5 Working practices

There are a number of working practices that need to be changed.

Cloth management was particularly poor, with cloths seen in a glass bowl, in a pile on top of the fire extinguishers, on work surfaces and on a table in the dining area, as well as on a chair outside the bedrooms and outside the rear kitchen door. Cloths are a breeding ground for bacteria and best practice is to use daily disposable cloths for cleaning, and disposable paper towel for drying equipment and utensils.

In the wash-up area, pans and utensils were left unwashed, and given that there was no lunch service, it can only be concluded that they were from breakfast. In the same area, sponge scourers were in use. It is not recommended that sponge scourers are used in commercial kitchens, as the sponge element is often a source of bacteria.

In the kitchen, there was a red bucket next to the dishwasher, and there were red mops in the same area and on the ground outside the kitchen door. The British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICSc) standard colour coding for cleaning equipment is that red should

only be used for toilets and washrooms. The lack of any other mops and buckets would suggest that they are also being used in food preparation areas, which is unacceptable.

There were multiple single-use food containers being re-used for a variety of purposes. These are designed for the safe storage of the original product and are not suitable for re-use, as they cannot be effectively sanitised and may be a source of chemical contamination if they are used interchangeably for a variety of purposes.

2.6 Hygiene, health and safety

The standards of hygiene, health and safety were far below the minimum required levels.

Kitchen

The first aid kit was located above an upright fridge, making it inaccessible for some. First aid should be readily accessible for all.

The oven required cleaning and the grill over the oven was filthy and required thorough cleaning. One of the two microwaves had a significant build-up of dirt on the top inside surface and required cleaning.

There are four tabletop fryers; three are under the extraction and the fourth is on a work surface with no extraction. This does not comply with DW/172, the standard for commercial kitchen ventilation.

The wash-up area was particularly poor. The dishwasher, which is relatively new, had a build-up of dirt at the bottom of the hood, indicating that it was not being cleaned on a regular basis, and the outside required cleaning.

The pot wash area was grubby and required cleaning, and there was one chopping board with black marks on it.

The insectocutor was not working.

Refrigeration and freezers

The standards in the fridges and freezers were poor and unmanaged.

In one fridge in the kitchen, there were saucepans and a stainless steel gastronorm container, neither of which had any form of dating or labelling. Whilst in this fridge, meat was stored below ready-to-eat products, in a fridge located away from the kitchen, raw chicken was located directly above ready-to-eat food, which is unacceptable and poses a significant risk of cross contamination. The fridge also had food debris in the base.

The seal on the kitchen fridge door was coming away from the frame, and the fridge would benefit from additional cleaning where the meat was stored.

The fridge behind the bar area had black bacterial growth around the frame and door seal.

The upright freezers had a build-up of ice and require thorough defrosting.

In an outside room, there are two chest freezers, one of which is no longer in use but cannot be easily removed, due to new plant being installed. The other chest freezer was disorganised but only had a small build-up of ice, although the lid was heavily soiled. In one of the freezers there were joints of meat that appeared to have been frozen on site. Given that there is no blast chiller, it is not clear how they had been frozen.

There does not appear to be an effective system of labelling and dating. All items in fridge and freezer storage should have a 'use by' date and, if appropriate, the date when they were frozen. Day dots are not effective, as they do not make it clear whether they refer to the day the item was chilled or the day it is to be used by. Furthermore, if no date is entered, items left for more than seven days can appear to be fresher than they are.

Dry storage

Food items, cleaning materials and other items are stored on shelves and in cupboards throughout the building. Whilst some of the storage is well organised, other areas are not.

Newly installed shelving does not meet food safety standards, as it is of chipboard construction. Food shelving should be stainless steel, coated aluminium or polycarbonate, to form a cleanable surface.

In the kitchen store cupboard, there were open bags of food that had not been resealed to keep the contents fresh and discourage pests.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

The management of COSHH items is particularly poor, with multiple open containers in the kitchen and bottles located throughout the premises. In the kitchen, a bottle of chemical product was located too close to ready-to-eat foods, and it appeared that domestic rather than commercial washing up liquid was being used.

Outside, to the front of the building, there are a number of cupboards with rusting tins of paint and other products. The shelving in this area is also rusting badly.

Equipment and facilities

There is a mixture of commercial and domestic equipment in the kitchen. Domestic cupboards and work surfaces are low cost, but chip easily in a commercial kitchen environment, resulting in the failure to maintain 'a continuous impervious surface'.

The ceiling in the kitchen is peeling and poses a risk of physical contamination of food.

The bins in the kitchen are open, rather than having foot-operated lids.

There are a number of maintenance issues throughout the building, including a rear door that does not shut correctly, the store area to the front of the building (noted above) and some of the double glazing units, which require professional attention.

The disabled toilet appears to be inaccessible for anyone in a wheelchair. However, this is not grounds for the storage of a high chair in the lobby of the disabled toilet.

Outside areas

Outside the kitchen door, there were multiple items of debris: a plastic box with unidentified items in it, cardboard waste, a glass cloth, a potato, a number of mops lying on the ground, chemical bottles, etc. Given the issue of rats on the island, food waste should not be left out in this way.

To the rear of the inn, where guests enter, there was a significant amount of clutter including scissors and a firelighter left on a table. There was also clutter and firelighting liquid by the barbecue.

The beer store was unlocked and contained power tools, bags of potatoes, chemicals and a bicycle.

There is no clear responsibility for maintenance of the garden or curtilage of the building. There is rubbish around the back and side of the building. The garden requires grass cutting, weed control and maintenance of shrubs.

Overall, this presents a very poor impression to guests.

Fire safety

There are a number of propane bottles at the front of the building, which require returning to the supplier.

The evacuation chart in the bedrooms is out of date, showing a residents' lounge which is now a laundry room.

The fire extinguishers in the kitchen need to be placed in appropriate locations, rather than being blocked by cloths and shopping bags.

2.7 Licensing law compliance

There did not appear to be a tariff on display in the bar area. This is required at all licensed premises.

It became apparent that two tariffs are in use: one for guests and one for islanders. This is contrary to Schedule 3, Paragraph 7 of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, which requires the same price to be charged to all customers on the same premises, and changes

to prices cannot be made unless 72 hours have passed. Having two tariffs results in different prices to different customers within the 72 hours, and is illegal.

A small amount of cash was seen on the bar in the morning. All cash should be processed via a till and it is not clear why this cash was there.

2.8 Marketing

A sign on the main entrance door, advising customers of the closure of the lunch service due to the ongoing works, while not specifically mentioning the Trust, implies that it is failing in its responsibilities. It is inappropriate for an employee to make such statements. If it is possible to produce evening meals in the facility, there is no reason why lunch cannot also be produced from a facilities perspective.

Some of the comments on the Taversoe Inn Facebook page are inappropriate, referring to stock running out. Any message in the public domain needs to be positive and reflect well on the Trust.

2.9 Training needs

There are significant training needs in respect of food safety and health and safety, specifically COSHH management.

Whilst the manager is a personal licence holder, further training is required, as he is unaware of Scottish licencing law.

3 Conclusion

The Trust is exposed to significant risk in respect of food safety and reputational damage, and needs to take steps to address the situation.