



2026

SUMMER

THE LATEST NEWS FROM URRAS
OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN
(GALSON ESTATE TRUST)

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URRAS OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN
GALSON ESTATE TRUST



Agnes Rennie
UOG CHAIRPERSON

Autumn seems to have arrived all suddenly and while there are many clues as we look around, some of those that were once synonymous with the area are no longer to be seen. For example, fields of ripening oats which were so lovely to look at and held the promise of a bountiful harvest.

Lamb sales have been held over the last few weeks and it has been very encouraging to see prices holding well despite the impact of the summer drought in the south and international turmoil. The Urras area has long been well regarded for the quality of stock and it's encouraging that buyers still recognise this.

It has been a very good year for growing fruit and vegetables, both in gardens and polycrubs and this has provided good produce. There's nothing quite as tasty as home grown summer produce to be enjoyed in Winter.

One thing we certainly did not experience in the past was the presence of deer in the Autumn, but in certain areas now the roar of the stags at rutting has become commonplace. On a still Autumn night this sound can travel for miles. The Urras continues to take advice from Nature Scot on deer population numbers and we work closely with local stalking syndicates to try to manage the deer population. I hope that many of you visited the Venison Festival at Cross Stores to collect your free venison pack and give us feedback on how you enjoyed it.

Tha càil an Fhoghair air a thighinn gun fhiost, agus ged a tha comharran ràitheil gu leòr rim fhaicean tha feadhainn a chleachd a bhith nam pàirt mhòr dhan choimhearsnachd nach fhaic sinn an-diugh. Tha mi smuaineachadh gu h-àraidh air na clàran mòra coirce ag abachadh sa ghrian agus an uairsin na h-adagan nan sreathan fada dìreach cho taitneach dhan t-sùil agus a' gealltainn toradh mu choinneamh a Gheamhraidh.

Tha e air a bhith air leth inntineach faicinn gu bheil prìs nan uan air cumail aig ìre reusanta a dh'aindeoin aimsir agus troimhe chèile an t-saoghail. Tha an sgìre againn air a bhith ainmeil thar ghinealeachan airson stoc math agus tha e misneachail gu bheil ceannaichean fhathast a' cur luach air a sin.

Tha bliadhna mhath fàs air a bhith ann son measan agus glasraich, gach cuid a-muigh agus bho chòmhdach agus sin a' toirt cothrom stòr a chuir seachad dhan reothadair a bhios againn tro mhiosan dorch a Gheamhraidh.

Aon rud nach do chleachd a bhith againn 's e langanaich nam fiadh mun àm-sa den bhliadhna, ach cluinnidh sinn gu leòr dhuibh anns na mìosan tha romhainn. 'S e fuam air leth a th'ann air oidhche ghealaich is na daimh gan dèanamh fhein aithnichte. Tha an Urras ag obair còmhla ri Nàdar Alba agus luchd-sealg ionadail gus feuchainn ri tomhais de smachd fhaighinn orra. Tha mi'n dòchas gun do ghabh cuid agaibh an cothrom pasgan sithinn a thogail bho Stòr Chrois agus gun innis sibh dhan Urras ciamar a chòrd e ribh.

Hardship Fund: Findings from the WICAS Report

Hardship Fund. Lesser-known fund with a big impact.

Many older folk in the estate have kept cosy under a heated blanket supplied by the Urras. These were distributed for free and paid for from the Hardship Fund. Another very useful addition to the community was the lifting cushion, which is used by nurses to aid in the lifting of someone who has fallen in their home.

The Hardship Fund may not get the same photo publicity and column space in local press as the development grants. Much of the activities/events /organisations it supports are not usually headline grabbing, however the Hardship Fund has a wide remit and vital role. It is responsible for making classes and events for young and old more affordable through subsidies; such as dance, gymnastics, badminton, football, kids club, youth club, Plòigh, Gentle movement, Day Club, Young at Heart, and Barvas Senior Citizen's dinner.

Financed by the Hardship Fund and of great benefit to estate residents was having Michael Black from Citizens Advice base himself in the Galson Estate, working out of the Urras office and doing home visits, twice-weekly, for 6 weeks. Michael was instrumental in helping people claim benefits they would otherwise not have known they were eligible for and was able to signpost others to available help, advice and support.



In a report drafted by Citizen's Advice following their Galson Outreach, they stated: *We have a confirmed financial gain of £30598.24 for the clients as a direct result of CAB assistance during the Galson outreach. This figure is expected to increase further for examples, once all relevant benefit applications have been determined. Currently five further benefit applications are waiting on decisions.*

In addition to benefit help checks, CAB referred to other agencies such as TIG for home energy advice and assistance. CAB surveyed the households they were in contact with and the responses speak for themselves:

- 100% were satisfied with the advice and information provided.
- 100% were satisfied with the overall service which they received.
- 100% would use the service again.
- 100% would recommend the service to others.
- Clients were appreciative of CAB taking time to meet them at home which made the advice process more accessible for them.

We hope to invite Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS or CAB as it is commonly referred to) back next year as they provided such an invaluable service. Another branch of the Hardship Fund is the transport grant, allowing our local schools to attend many cultural and sporting events which would otherwise have been expensive for the schools or the parent councils to fund.

The Hardship Fund also is responsive to requests from community organisations, for example, Citizen's Advice, the community nurses and social work. The fund is flexible and can support these organisations to help individuals or households by buying essentials in a time of crisis. This help can be for clothing, kitchen essentials, beds, shopping vouchers, energy bills and vehicle repairs. More information on this coming soon.



Community Investment Fund Awards February - May 2026



Sgoil Lionail Parent Council **£2,000**

Alba Football Alliance **£1,500**

Ness Cemetery Association **£2,000**



Lucky2Bhere **£2,000**



Ness Football Club **£2,000**

Airidhantium Community Council **£1,800**



URRAS OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN
GALSON ESTATE TRUST

Investing in our Community

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn continues to subsidise a wide range of activities for children and young people across the estate area, helping to make participation more affordable for local families. Through this support, families collectively save approximately £35,000 each year against the full cost of attending activities such as Ploigh, after-school clubs at Sporsnis, Highland dancing with Claire Matheson, music tuition at Taigh Dhonnchaidh, arts sessions with An Lanntair and professional football camps organised by Ness Football Club.

Since the introduction of the subsidy in 2023, participation has increased significantly and remains high, with a number of sessions now operating at capacity. This demonstrates the value of making these opportunities accessible and affordable to more children and families across our community.

The subsidy is designed to benefit both families and the community groups delivering these programmes. With the average cost of running a session estimated at around £5 per child, reducing the cost to families to just £1 per session represents a substantial saving each week. At the same time, the subsidy helps participating organisations maintain a sustainable income, allowing them to continue delivering activities without passing the full cost of running them on to parents and carers.

Our investment helps ensure that children have access to a diverse range of opportunities to learn, explore their interests and try something new. These activities play an important role in building skills, confidence and physical wellbeing, while also encouraging friendships, social interaction and a sense of belonging.

Just as importantly, subsidised activities provide valuable childcare options, allowing parents and carers to work or meet other commitments, safe in the knowledge that their children are taking part in positive and enriching experiences.

Supporting children and families remains an important part of our commitment to ensuring that the Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn area is an exceptional place to live, work and enjoy.



Community Minibus

The community minibus has been in use since November 2025 and has already become a fantastic asset for the area. Local groups and organisations have been making great use of the bus, with over 50 bookings so far for football matches, community events, outings, and trips away.

It has been brilliant to see the bus being used so regularly and supporting so many different activities across the community.

To hire the Community Minibus, please visit: galsontrust.com/about-5



Transport Grants

Throughout 2024 and 2025, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (UOG) provided funding of up to 80% towards transport costs for schools and youth groups within the Galson Estate. This support enabled participation in a wide range of activities, including competitions and educational school trips. UOG remains committed to ensuring that children living on the estate have equal access to the same activities and opportunities as pupils at other island schools. In the current year, community groups and schools are able to make use of the UOG minibus; however, a small amount of funding remains available to support transport costs for whole school trips where a coach is required.

If you would like to find out more, or to complete a claim form, [please get in touch](#).

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Plòigh



Summer Plòigh was a roaring success, with 30 sessions taking place over two weeks and an impressive 541 attendances.

The programme offered plenty of familiar favourites alongside exciting new opportunities for children and young people. Spòrsnis Play proved a big draw each morning, while mountain biking was again a particular favourite with older children, who enjoyed exploring the Castle Grounds on two wheels.

This summer also welcomed new partner Falmadair, giving young people the chance to sail on the historic Sgoth Niseach. As well as learning how to crew this traditional Hebridean boat, participants heard stories about its history and place in island life.

Lionel swimming pool was well used during afternoon sessions, with activities including water polo and volleyball. The lifeguards added to the fun with water guns and even took requests for music!

There was also plenty for children who enjoy building, creating and gaming, with Lego Club, animation in Gaelic and Oh! Con games offering something different. The variety of sessions meant there was a wide range of activities for all ages and interests.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make Summer Plòigh such a success, including our partners, activity leaders, volunteers and, of course, all the children and young people who took part.

Look out for October Plòigh, running from 12-16 October. Spòrsnis will continue to lead the programme, with support from UOG. We look forward to seeing everyone there!





Cruise Excursions

2026 has seen 12 excursions visit North Lewis so far with another 3 to go before the end of the season. There were only 4 cancellations so far, 2 tours due to low numbers and 2 due to provider availability, and there have been no cancellations due to weather. These excursions have brought over 500 passengers and £15,000 to the organisations on the estate this year. This is set to be a similar number of passengers as last years cruise season but a higher income.

The majority have experienced the 'From Hooves to History' tour where they visit Sweeny at Air an Lot to see the highland cows and get the opportunity to feed them while also hearing stories from the croft; and then move on to the Comunn Eachdraidh where they either visit the facilities, have a look around and shop, have tea/coffee and a biscuit or also have a guided tour from a local knowledgeable guide. There has also been a visit to Clan MacQuarrie Community Centre for a stop off for facilities use and a quick cup of tea/coffee and shortbread, alongside another tour group who attended the Taste of North Lewis experience at the beginning of September.

We are now working on our 2027 proposal to be sent to the excursion companies and look forward to welcoming more cruise passengers next year.



Home Repair Service

Our Home Repair Service Has Launched!

As part of our Community Climate Action Plan, home energy was identified as a key concern for people living on the Galson Estate. In response, we have been putting actions in place to help improve home energy and make homes warmer and more energy efficient.

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new Home Repair Service, a six-month pilot scheme available to households on the Galson Estate where at least one resident is aged 60 or over.

The service can help make your home warmer and more energy efficient through practical improvements and small repairs. Labour costs are covered by UOG, meaning you will only need to pay for any materials required.

What can the service help with?

- Window and door repairs
- Guttering and pipes
- Slate repairs
- Small general repairs
- Leaks
- Door mechanisms
- Draught-proofing

The service is funded by UOG and provided by local handymen Donnie Campbell and Alan Gray.

Interested in finding out more? To make an enquiry, please email office@uogltd.com or call 01851 850411.

Deer and Goose Management

The chiller trailer was located at the Trust office and was there for three months in total. Its availability has allowed the stalking season to begin earlier, enabling more deer to be culled and processed while avoiding the effects of higher summer temperatures.

The trailer was returned to NatureScot in September, and its use provided UOG with a valuable opportunity to assess whether a more permanent deer-processing facility on the estate could be feasible. The experience has helped inform our thinking around the practical requirements, benefits, and potential challenges of establishing such a facility locally.

Consultation on the wider proposal is still underway, and having the chiller trailer available has been an important part of this process. As part of the feasibility work, it is also important to understand whether local residents would be interested in eating and purchasing venison.

To help explore this, we held a Venison Festival in partnership with Cross Stores in September. The event provided an opportunity for residents to sample venison, learn more about its provenance and sustainability, and share their views on the potential for locally processed venison. If you tried the venison and haven't yet shared your feedback, please scan the QR code below to let us know what you thought.

Venison Festival Feedback



Invasive Species Management

When the weather has allowed, our team has been spraying Gunnera across the estate. Large areas treated in previous years are now mostly clear, showing that treatment is working. However, scattered outbreaks continue to appear, so ongoing treatment will be needed each year.

Our community sprayers, trained in January, have also been carrying out treatment. A huge thank you to everyone who has volunteered their time and worked hard to tackle this invasive species - your efforts are making a real difference.

Japanese Knotweed has also been identified on the estate. While we are not permitted to spray it in residents' gardens, we are actively managing it in other areas.

Thank you to everyone supporting our work to tackle invasive species across the estate.



Staff Update

We are delighted to welcome Ryan Carr, a Tourism graduate of Edinburgh Napier University, who is moving to the island from his home in Broughty Ferry to join Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn as our new Tourism Coordinator. We would also like to thank Highlands and Islands Enterprise for its support in funding this post.

Tourism is one of our key priorities, and Ryan's role will focus on enhancing the experience of those who already visit North Lewis. Our aim is not simply to attract more visitors, but to encourage those who come to explore and appreciate the wider area, discover local businesses and make the most of the experiences and attractions available across our communities.

Through the Visit North Lewis brand, Ryan will work with local businesses, community groups and tourism providers to develop experience packages and strengthen connections across the visitor offering. This could encourage visitors who come to attractions such as the Butt of Lewis to spend more time exploring the area, visiting local shops, enjoying local experiences and contributing to the wider local economy.

By working collaboratively, we hope to retain more of the value generated by tourism within our communities, while ensuring visitors enjoy a richer and more meaningful experience of North Lewis.

You can find out more through the [Visit North Lewis website](#).



Become a member

Do you live within the Galson Estate for more than nine months of the year and want to get involved with the community, support local development, and keep up-to-date with your local community land trust?

Membership of the trust costs just £1 and is available to all those over 16 years of age who are:

- resident within the Galson area, or
- resident within the Isle of Lewis and registered with the Crofters Commission as the tenant of a croft within the Galson Estate area, or
- resident elsewhere and registered with the Crofters Commission as the tenant of a croft within the Galson area and actively working that croft.



Stay in touch



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**Become a
member online or pop
into the office to
complete a form**

Habost Household Waste & Recycling Centre

Managed by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, operated by Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn.

**The opening hours change twice a year, please
visit the website to check current opening hours.**

We have a list of accepted and prohibited waste items on
[our website](#).

You will find the access road to Habost Amenity Site next
to the garage at 55 Cross Skigersta Road, HS2 0TQ.

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